Mushoku Tensei: Isekai Ittara Honki Dasu
(Jobless Reincarnation: I Will Seriously Try If I Go to Another World)

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{ C-Editor's note: The occasional punctuation error or confusing sentence may be due to the process of translating from Japanese to English. }

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Mushoku Tensei: Isekai Ittara Honki Dasu - Volume 1

I'm a 34 year old homeless and jobless person.

I'm plump and ugly, a nice guy who regrets how he lived his life.

I wasn't homeless three hours ago; I was a veteran NEET who hadn't left my room for the past year.

{ C-Editor's note: A NEET is a person Not in Employment, Education or Training. }

However, my parents had passed away without me noticing.

As a NEET, I didn't even attend the family meeting, let alone the funeral.

And in the end, I was chased out of the house.

I banged loudly on the walls and floor, flailing about as if no one was at home, for no one spoke up for me.

I was masturbating in my room on the funeral day when my siblings suddenly rushed in, dressed in mourning clothes, and declared that they were severing all relations with me.

I ignored them, and my younger brother took a wooden bat and destroyed the computer I valued more highly than my life.

Half-crazed, I lunged at them, but my older brother has a dan rank in karate, and I was viciously beaten in turn.

I sobbed and begged for forgiveness in an unsightly manner, but I was chased out the door, and didn't even have time to change my clothes.

I endured the throbbing pain in my chest (most of my ribs were probably broken), and walked unsteadily on the streets.

My siblings' rebukes from when I left the house resounded in my ears.

They were harsh insults that were difficult to take in.

My heart was completely broken.

What did I do wrong?

All I did was masturbate to a mosaic-less loli video during my parents' funeral.....

What should I do next?

No, my mind does indeed know.

Find a job or part time job, then a place to live in, and buy some food.

How should I go about this?

I don't know what I should do to find a job.

Hmm, I still know about going to "Hello".

{ C-Editor's note: Hello Work is the Japanese government's agency for introducing jobs. }

But though I'm not showing off that I have more than 10 years experience in staying indoors, how the heck should I know where Hello is? Furthermore, even if I go to Hello, I'd heard that it only introduces you to a job.

I'd have to bring a resume, go to the recommended place, and take an interview. I'd have to go for an interview in a dirty sweatsuit covered with sweat and blood.

Heck, if I can get employed, even I wouldn't employ a fellow wearing something crazy like this. Maybe I would sympathize with him, but I definitely wouldn't employ him.

Are there any shops that sell resume papers?.

Stationery stores? Convenience stores?

Maybe a convenience store might have them if I do go there, but I don't have any money.

And then, what will I do if I settle all of that?

Assuming that I do get lucky, manage to borrow money from a financial institute, get a change of clothes, and buy some resume papers and stationery.

I'd heard that you can't complete the resume if you don't record your residence.

It's over. Right at this moment, I finally found my life reaching its end.

.....Hah.

It started to rain.

It was the end of summer, when it starts to turn cold. The icy rain pierced through the clothes that I'd worn for I don't know how many years, mercilessly stealing my body heat away.

..... If I could start over from the beginning.

I couldn't help saying that.

I wasn't born as such a rotten human.

I was born as the third son in a somewhat wealthy family. Two older brothers, one older sister, and one younger brother. The fourth in amongst the five siblings. In primary school, I was praised as clever despite my youth.

Even though I wasn't considered great at studies, I was good at games, a brat who's pretty good at sports. I was even once the center of attention in my class.

Then in junior high school I entered the computer club, consulted magazines, and saved enough money to assemble a computer. I stood out amongst my family, none of whom could write a single line of code.

The turning point in my life was high school..... no, it started in the third year of junior high. I was so busy tinkering with the computer that I neglected my studies. Thinking back on it now, that was where it all started.

I thought that learning stuff was useless for the future. I felt it couldn't be used in real life.

In the end, I entered the most idiotic high school, considered the worst in the prefecture.

Even so, I thought it was nothing.

I felt I would succeed if I got serious, and that I was different from those other idiots. That was what I thought.

I still remember the incident back then.

While queuing up to buy lunch at the cafeteria, there was a fellow who cut the queue.

I grumbled a few sentences as if I was acting out of righteousness. That was due to my strange pride and the chuunibyou personality I had.

{ C-Editor's note: Chuunibyou or Eighth Grade Syndrome is a condition where someone has a delusion of importance and/or has a special gift or power. }

Unfortunately, he was my senpai, and one of the two most dangerous people in the school.

I ended up being punched in the face until it was swollen, stripped naked, and tied in front of the school.

He took a lot of pictures, and easily distributed them all over the school. .

I fell to the bottom of the hierarchy in an instant, got laughed at by others, and even got the nickname of "Foreskin boy"'.

I didn't go to school for a month, and became a hikikomori. Upon seeing me like this, my father and brothers said irresponsible words to me like, Bring out your courage, do your best.

I hadn't been the one at fault.

Nobody in that sort of situation would continue to attend school. There is no way.

Thus, no matter what anyone else said, I adamantly continued my shut-in lifestyle.

I felt that the peers who knew me were all looking at my pictures, mocking me.

Even if I didn't go out, as long as I had the computer and internet, I could spend away my time. Due to the internet's influence, I got interested in many things, and did a variety of stuff. Assembling plastic models, painting figurines, creating weblogs. My mother was willing to support me and it seemed she would come up with the money to help me out for as long as I requested it.

But I was sick of them all in less than a year.

I lost my motivation whenever I saw someone being better than me.

To others, I was merely fooling around. But as I was alone with so much time, hiding in my dark shell, I had nothing else to do.

No, even when I think back on it, that was merely an excuse.

At the very least, it would have been a better choice to become a mangaka and started publishing terrible web comics, or to become a web novelist and started posting novels.

Many people who shared similar circumstances did something like that.

I made fun of and slighted those people.

Mocking their creations, thinking myself as a critic, saying things like "It's worse than shit", criticizing them.

Even though I did nothing at all.....

I want to go back.

If it's possible, I want to go back to primary school, my life's highest point, or back to the middle of junior high school. No, even if it's one or two years ago. Even if it's a little bit of time, I could still do something with it. Even though I gave up halfway through, I could start over no matter what.

If I put in my utmost effort, even if I didn't become the best, I could at least be a pro.

"....."

Why didn't I do anything up till now?

I once had a lot of time. Even though I didn't leave my room during that time, I could have done a lot of things as long as I sat in front of the computer. Even if I couldn't make it the top, I could have stayed somewhere in the middle and continued to put in effort.

Manga, novels, games, or even coding. If I had put in every effort, I should have been able to make small accomplishments. Even putting aside whether the accomplishments could be turned into money.....

Ah, never mind. It's useless.

I never worked hard before. Even if I went back to the past, I would probably trip in a similar place, and stop at a similar place. I ended up like this because I could never cross the hurdles a normal human could.

"Hm?"

Somewhere in the heavy rain, I heard people arguing.

What's that commotion about?

It's annoying. I don't want to be involved. Even though I was thinking that, my feet wanted to head over to them.

"---- That's why, you----"

"You're the one-----"

Entering my sight seemed to be three high school students having a lovers' spat.

Two guys and one girl. They were dressed in the now uncommon collared student uniforms and a sailor uniform.

It seemed there was some sort of a harem war going on. The taller boy was quarreling with the girl, and the other boy was trying to mediate, but the two quarreling parties weren't listening at all.

(Hmm, I had something like that before)

I once had a somewhat cute childhood friend in junior high. She might have been considered cute, maybe a four or five. She participated in the track and field club and had short hair. She had the kind of appearance that would cause two or three out of ten people to turn back. However, I was very passionate over a particular anime and felt that those in the track and field club should have a ponytail, so I thought she was an ugly girl.

However, her home was near mine and we frequently shared the same class during primary school, so we went home together more than once. We had plenty of chances to talk together, and also bickered at times. It's a pity. In my current state, just listening to the words "junior high", "childhood friend", and "running club", is enough for me to cum 3 times.

By the way, I heard that childhood friend got married seven years ago.

I overheard this rumor from the living room, where my siblings were talking.

Our relationship wasn't bad. We were able to talk without reservations since we'd known each other from a young age.

I don't think she liked me, but if I'd studied hard and entered the same high school, or if I'd joined the track and field club and entered the same school by recommendation, I might have raised a flag. If I make a serious confession, we might even be dating each other.

{ C-Editor's note: Raising a flag is a condition in game programming that causes a variable to change, refers to condition cleared to become a boyfriend. }

I could have flirted and bickered with her like the trio, and we might even have done perverted things in an empty classroom after school.

Hah, what eroge is this?

(Come to think of it, these people are really damned riajuus. Just explode already.... Hm?)

Suddenly, in that instant, I realized.

A truck was charging towards the trio at a tremendous speed.

Also, the driver of the truck was lying prone on the wheel.

He was driving in a sleep-deprived state.

And the three still hadn't noticed.

"D-d-d-Danger!!"

I tried to warn them by yelling, but I haven't used my vocal cords fully for over ten years, and the cold rain and the pain in my ribs caused them to shrink further; The teeny-weeny, trembling voice I eked out vanished in the rain.

I must save them. I have to. At the same time, I thought: why do I need to save them?

I had a gut feeling that if I didn't save them, I would regret it five seconds later. I would absolutely regret it if I saw those three people getting smashed into a bloody pulp by a truck.

Regret not saving them.

Therefore, I had to save them.

In any case, I thought I would probably starve to death by the roadside soon after. At least for that moment, I hoped to have some satisfaction.

I didn't want to be left regretting at the very end.

--I ran and hobbled along towards them.

My legs were not moving as I wanted, as I had not moved them much for the past ten years. It was the first time in my life that I wish I had exercised more. The broken ribs were pulsing with excruciating pain, hindering my every step. It was the first time in my life that I wished I had taken more calcium.

It hurt. It hurt so much that I couldn't run.

But I still ran. Ran.

I was running.

The arguing boy hugged the girl when he noticed the truck approaching in front of his eyes. The other boy had his back facing the truck and had not noticed, was merely surprised by his companion's sudden action. I grabbed his collar without any hesitation and used all my strength to pull him back. The boy was pulled away and fell to the roadside, out of the truck's path.

Good. Two more to go.

Just when I had this thought, the truck was already in front of me. I had just planned to pull them from a safe distance, but as I pulled them back, the recoil caused me to move forward.

It was to be expected, and it wouldn't even have mattered if I weighed over 100kg. As a result of sprinting with my trembling legs, I got dragged forward by the momentum.

I felt a light behind me the moment I got hit by the truck.

Was that the rumored light of the flashback before death? I couldn't see anything during that short instance. It was just too fast.

Did it mean that I did so little in my life?

I was sent flying onto a concrete wall by a truck 50 times heavier than I was.

"Puhh.....!"

The air in my lungs was pushed out. My lungs spasmed, demanding air after the hard running.

I couldn't utter a sound. But I wasn't dead yet. The accumulated fat was probably what saved me.....

But once I thought that, the truck appeared in front of my eyes again.

I was flattened like a tomato between the concrete ground and truck.

When I woke up, the first thing I felt was my eyes being dazzled.

Light filled my vision, and I narrowed my eyes in discomfort.

Once my eyes adjusted to the brightness, I found a young blonde woman gazing at me.

A beautiful girl..... No, a beautiful woman would be more appropriate.

(Who is it?)

Beside her was a man of a similar young age with brown hair, giving me a stiff smile.

A strong and arrogant looking man. His muscles were amazing.

Brown hair, arrogant type. Looking at his DQN appearance, I should have been repulsed. Strangely enough though, I did not feel he was unpleasant.

{ C-Editor's note: DQN, Dokyun, an internet based term with derogatory intentions, pointing towards the delinquents, people who are not bright or crass people who uses violence, sometimes also pointing towards people who have no common sense or are just plain ignorant. }

His hair was a pretty brown color, probably because it wasn't dyed, I guess.

"-----XX-----XXXX"

The woman cracked a smile as she watched me and said something.

What is she saying? Feeling fuzzy, I could not hear clearly and didn't understand it at all.

Could it be that it's not Japanese?

"------XXXXX----XXX," the man replied with a gentle expression. Really, what did he just say? I couldn't understand it at all.

"------XX-----XXX"

A third person's voice came from somewhere.

I couldn't see them.

I tried to sit up and ask them, "Where is this place, and who are you guys?"

Even if I was a hikikomori, I still wasn't a complete failure at communication.

I could still do something like this.

"Ah, Ah------"

But I couldn't tell if what came from my lips was a groan or just heavy breathing.

My body couldn't move.

I felt sensations in my fingers and wrists, but I couldn't move my upper body.

"XXX--XXXXX"

In the end, the man carried me up.

This is a joke, right? My body weighs over 100 kilograms, and he lifts it up so eas....

No, maybe I had been in a coma for dozens of days, and it caused my body weight to go down.

It was such a huge incident. There was a large possibility that I lost an arm or a leg.

(A fate worse than death, hah.....)

On that day.

Those were my thoughts.

A month passed by.

It looked like I was reincarnated. I finally realized that fact.

I had become a baby.

I confirmed it when I was carried up with my head supported and my own body appeared in my sight.

I didn't know why I still had my past memories, but there was nothing bad about retaining them.

Retaining memories upon reincarnation-----anyone would have entertained such delusions at least once.

But I didn't think that such a delusion would become reality.....

The first couple I had seen when I opened my eyes seemed to be my parents.

They were probably in the earlier half of their 20s.

Clearly, they were younger than me in my past life.

From the perspective of a 34-year-old, it was alright to call them young.

It really made me envious that they had children at that age.

I already noticed it from the start, but I didn't seem to be in Japan.

The language was different, my parents' faces didn't appear to be Japanese, and their clothes even seemed to be that of a native village.

I couldn't see anything resembling an electronic device (the person who wore a maid's apron was cleaning with a cloth), and the utensils, bowls, and furniture were coarsely made from wood. It was probably not an advanced, developed country.

The light was not produced light bulbs, but from candles and lamps.

Of course, there was the possibility of them being very poor and unable to afford the electricity bills.

.....Maybe that possibility was very high?

I thought they surely had some money, as there was someone dressed like a maid.

But it wouldn't be strange if it was a sister of one of my parents. It would be a normal thing for her to be cleaning.

I certainly wanted to start afresh, but living in a family that could not even afford to pay the bills made me very restless.

Half a year passed by.

Listening to my parents' conversations during this last half-year, I had started to understand things bit by bit.

My English grades couldn't have been considered good, but it seems true that learning it can be quite a slow thing when heavily influenced by a native language. Or could it be that this body's mind was pretty good? Maybe it was because of my young age, but I could remember things quickly.

By this time, I was able to crawl.

Being able to move is a wonderful thing.

I had never felt such gratefulness for being able to move.

"He'll run somewhere else when I move my eyes away from him."

"Isn't it good that he's active? I was so worried when he didn't cry at all when he was born."

"Even now, he doesn't cry."

My parents had this discussion when they saw me crawling everywhere.

I was not at an age when I'd cry loudly when hungry, after all.

But even if I tried to hold it in, the stuff that comes from below would still leak out, so I just left things alone as they were.

Even though I could only crawl, once I did so, I understood a lot of things.

First of all, this family was relatively well off.

The building was a two-story wooden house, and there were over five rooms. They had one hired maid.

At first I thought the maid was my aunt or something, but her respectful attitude towards my parents made it seem she wasn't family.

The place was a village.

From the scenery I could see from the windows, it was in a tranquil landscape of farming plots.

The other houses were scattered around, and on one side of the wheat fields I could see two, three families.

It was quite a rural place. I could not see any electric wires, lamps, or anything similar. Perhaps there wasn't a generator nearby.

I had heard that foreign countries place their wires underground, but if that was the case, it was strange that this house did not have electricity.

It was too rural. It was painful for me who had been jostled by the wave of civilization.

Even if it was reincarnation, I still wanted to have a personal computer.

That way of thinking ended on a certain afternoon.

With nothing to do, I climbed up onto the chair as usual, intending to admire the field's scenery. When I looked out the window, I was shocked.

Father was waving around a sword in the courtyard.

(Wha, huh? What is he doing?)

My dad is still waving that thing at his age? Chuunibyou?

(Ah, crap....)

Due to the shock, I fell down from the chair.

My undeveloped hands grabbed the chair, but they were unable to support my body and the heavier back of my head hit the ground first.

"Kyaa!"

I heard a scream just as I hit the floor.

My mother spotted me and dropped the washed laundry, her hands over her mouth, looking over me with a deathly pale face.

"Rudi! Are you okay!?"

My mother rushed over to me in a panic and carried me up.

She looked me in the eyes and placed her hand on her chest, looking relieved

".....Phew, you seem fine."

(Madam, it's better not to move someone after their head just received a blow,) I reminded her in my heart.

From her anxious attitude, it seemed I had fallen in quite the dangerous manner.

It seemed possible that I might become an idiot due to the knock on my head. Not that that would be any different.

There was a throbbing pain on the back of my head. At least grabbing the chair with my hands had lowered my velocity.

As my mother's reaction didn't seem panicky I assumed there wasn't any blood. It was probably just a swelling.

Mother took a careful look at my head.

Her expression seemed to say, if there's an injury it'll be serious.

Finally, she placed her hand on my head,

"To be safe..... Let the power of God be converted into a bountiful crop, and bestowed unto those who have lost the strength to stand once more, 『HEALING』"

I nearly burst out, "Hey, hey, is this this country's [Pain, pain, go away quick]?"

Or was it that, along with my sword-wielding father, my mother was also a chuunibyou?

A warrior and cleric's wedding?

Just when I was thinking that.

My mother's hand emitted a dim light, and, in an instant, my pain disappeared.

(..... Eh?)

"See, it's okay now. After all, your mum was a renowned adventurer, " my mother said in a boastful manner.

I was instantly plunged into confusion.

Sword, warrior, adventurer, healing, chanting, cleric. All these terms echoed in my head.

What was that just now? What did she just do?

"What's wrong?"

My father looked in the window from outside when he heard my mother's scream.

His whole body was sweaty as he had just been swinging his sword.

"Listen to me, dear. Rudi actually climbed on top of a chair.....and nearly got gravely injured."

"Well well, it's not good if a boy isn't active."

A slightly worried mother, and a father who didn't treat it like a big deal and placated her.

This is a commonly seen event.

But, my mother didn't back off, perhaps because of the back of my head hitting the ground first.

"Just a moment, dear. This child isn't even a year old. Would you worry a little more!"

"Despite that, a child is meant to grow up falling down to become sturdy. This way he will become healthy. Besides, even if he's injured, can't you just treat him?"

"But I'm really worried, I keep thinking of him getting heavily injured and me being unable to treat him....."

"He'll be fine."

My dad said that and embraced her tightly.

My mum's face turned red.

"I was worried when he didn't cry at all in the beginning, but if he's so naughty, he will surely be fine....."

My dad kissed my mum.

Hey, hey, you're showing this to me on purpose right? Both of you!

Later on the two of them put me in the next room to sleep, moved on to the second floor, and started in on the task of making me siblings.

Even if the two of you go to the second floor, I can still hear the nyan nyan noises, damn successful offline people...

(But, magic huh.....)

Later on, I started paying attention to the conversations between my parents and the maid.

And then I heard a lot of terms not in my vocabulary.

Especially the names of countries, districts, and various other locations.

Some proper nouns I had never heard before.

Maybe this place is.....

No, I was certain of it.

This wasn't Earth, but some other world.

A different world that has swords and magic in it.

At this moment, I had a flash of inspiration.

.....If it's this world, perhaps even I can achieve it.

If it's a world of swords and magic, a world deviated from my previous life and what I know as common sense, perhaps I can do it.

To live like a normal person, to work hard like a normal person, to be able to climb back up if I fell down, to live my life fully.

I had been full of regret when I died in my previous life.

Dying full of burning restlessness over my impotence and the fact that I had accomplished nothing.

But the me who experienced all that,

Having retained the knowledge and experiences of my previous life, perhaps I could really do it.

--To live on seriously.(from a hikimori's pov)

Lilia was once a guards-maid for Asura's concubines.

A guards-maid is a maid who is also a guard.

Guards-maids will usually do a maid's job, but if anything happens, they will take up a sword to protect their master.

Lilia faithfully accomplished her duty. As far as her work as a maid is concerned, there were no complaints.

But as a sword fighter, her ability is average, a dime a dozen.

And thus, she got careless in a battle against an assassin who targeted a newly-born princess, and she got injured in the leg by the enemy's dagger.

The dagger was coated with poison that was specifically meant to kill royalty.

There was no detoxification or healing magic that was capable of treating such a calamitous poison.

The wound was immediately treated, and she survived thanks to her doctors trying a variety of methods to cure her, but there were side effects that lingered.

There was no problem caused to her everyday life, but she could never run or stomp again.

The kingdom then sacked her without hesitation.

It wasn't an uncommon occurrence, and Lilia accepted this fate herself.

Having lost her abilities, it was a given that she'd lose her position.

Even though she wasn't given compensation money, she considered it fortunate that she wasn't secretly silenced because she served in the inner palace.

Lilia then left the capital.

The mastermind behind the assassination attempt wasn't found.

Having understood the rules of the concubines' staff, she knew there was a possibility she might become the next target.

Perhaps the palace let Lilia wander to leave to lure out the mastermind.

She always wondered why she, who had no significant background, had been accepted in the inner palace. It was now that she finally understood; they simply wanted to hire maids who could be used and discarded.

No matter the reason however, she had to leave the capital as quickly as possible, for her own safety.

Even though the kingdom treated her as bait, she had no obligation to stay as she was not ordered to in any way.

And she had no sense of duty to fulfill.

Lilia discreetly switched stagecoaches while traveling, and arrived at the Fedoa region, which had extensive agricultural lands and was located at the border.

It was a relaxing place of vast wheat fields, with the exception of the fortress city Roa, where the ruler lived.

Lilia intended to find work there.

But, as her leg was injured, she was unable to find a job that required physical strength.

She could resort to teaching swordsmanship, but it was best for her to be hired as a maid, because the salary was higher.

At this border, there were many who could wield a sword, and many who could teach swordsmanship, but a maid thoroughly versed in domestic affairs was relatively rare.

Since the supply was so little, the salary would be bigger.

However, it would be dangerous for her to be hired by the ruler of Fedoa, or any high class noblity of similar status...

Such people would surely have relations with the king.

If they knew she was a maid who once worked for the concubines palace, there was the possibility that she would be treated as a political tool.

And for that reason, Lilia stayed far away.

She didn't want to experience a near-death situation again.

Even though it was a little unfair to the princess, Lilia hoped to stay far away from the royals' contention for power.

But, if her salary was too low then there wouldn't be enough money to send to her family.

Trying to find a safe job and a guaranteed salary sure wasn't easy.

After running around everywhere for nearly a month, Lilia came across a recruitment note.

A lower class knight from Buina village, located in the Fedoa region, was looking to hire a maid.

On the top of that, the note said he would give special priority to someone with experience in taking care of children or who had knowledge of midwifery.

Buina was a tiny village on the edge of Fedoa.

A village among villages. An extremely rural village.

It was very inconvenient, but this was the place that she sought.

The employer being a lower class knight was also an unexpectedly fine find.

And most importantly, she recognized the prospective employer's name.

Paul Greyrat.

He was Lilia's protégé.

A noble's profligate son, who on one day, suddenly barged into the dojo where Lilia was learning swordsmanship.

According to him, he had left home after a quarrel with his father, and had come to the dojo to learn swordsmanship.

Albeit a different style, he too did study swordsmanship at home, and soon after, surpassed Lilia.

Lilia was not amused by this fact, but she had since understood that she had no talent, and gave up.

Paul, who was utterly brimming with talent, was later banished from the dojo after making a mistake.

He only left Lilia a single sentence, "I'm becoming an adventurer."

A man like a tempest.

It was 7 years since they went their separate ways.

At that time, he had actually become a knight and gotten married...

Though she didn't know what sort of hurdles he had experienced in his life, Paul wasn't a bad guy as far as Lilia could remember.

If she told him about her problems, she was sure that he would help her.

If that didn't work out, then she would just mention some past events.

There were a few things she could use to negotiate.

Having contemplated all these factors, she headed to Buina.

Paul employed Lilia without any fuss.

It seemed he was really anxious as his wife Zenith was about to give birth.

Lilia had been taught extensively in midwifery for the princess's birth. Moreover, she was someone that Paul was acquainted with and he knew her background.

Lilia was received with a warm welcome.

Her salary was also more than what she had expected, so her wish was achieved.

The child was born.

There weren't any labor issues or anything. It went just as she was trained for in the inner palace.

There were no problems at all. It was very successful.

However, the child didn't cry when he was born.

Lilia broke into a cold sweat.

The baby drew out amniotic fluids immediately after he was born, but he merely lifted his head up without any emotion, and made no sound.

The expressionless face was reminiscent of a stillborn child.

Lilia touched the baby, and he had a heartbeat. He was breathing too.

But he just wasn't crying.

Lilia remembered the words of a senior guards-maid.

That babies who don't cry at birth usually have complications.

The instant when she thought of this.

"Ah, ah." The baby looked over to her, and mumbled something in his grogginess.

Lilia relaxed after hearing that.

Even though there was no evidence for it, she felt that there would be no problems.

The child's name was to be Rudeus.

He was an uncanny child, never crying or fussing. At first, she assumed his body was slightly weaker, and that taking care of him wouldn't require much effort.

But, such a notion only occurred at the beginning.

After Rudeus learned how to crawl, he started to move everywhere in the house.

Everywhere in the house. Kitchen, back door, storage, cleaning equipment place, fireplace..... etc.

He even climbed onto the second storey, though one couldn't imagine how he did so.

Either way, he would disappear whenever nobody kept an eye on him.

But, he would always be found somewhere in the house.

Rudeus never left the house.

He would occasionally look outside the windows, but it seemed that he was still scared to go outdoors.

Lilia was instinctively afraid of this baby, and one had to wonder when it began.

It was probably the moments when she found him after his disappearances.

Most of the time, Rudeus would be smiling.

Sometimes he'd be looking at the vegetables, staring at the flickering candle flames, or just looking at panties that were yet to be washed.

Rudeus mumbled sounds and showed a smile that made people feel simply disgusted.

It was a smile that naturally disgusted people.

When Lilia was working in the inner palace, she'd had to go to the main palace for her missions, and the higher ranked officials nobles that she met there had similar smiles.

They were bald, had pudgy bellies, and were leering at her when they stared at her breasts. Very similar to a baby that was born not long ago.

It was exceptionally scary when she had to carry Rudeus.

His nostrils would flare, the corners of his mouth would rise, and his breathing hastens as he buried his face into her chest.

And then he would make strange noises, "Huuu" and "Orhhh", seemingly laughing as he made these sounds.

At that instant, Lilia's whole body was dominated by a terrible shivering cold.

And she has the urge to throw the baby and smash him into the ground.

This baby was not cute in any way. That smile caused fear in others.

It was the same smile the high ranking officials had when they bought many young female slaves.

He was supposed to be a baby who was just been born.

Lilia felt unbearable discomfort, and even experienced feelings of peril when she thought things over.

This baby was very strange. Could there be that there was something bad possessing it? Or perhaps it was something similar, like a curse.

Having thought this through, she started to feel extremely anxious.

She went to the item shop, and spent the pitiful amount of money that she had to buy some necessary things.

When the Greyrats went to sleep, she did her home's ritual to chase evil away.

Of course, this was kept from Paul and his family.

The second day, after carrying Rudeus again, Lilia understood.

It was useless.

And he was still as disgusting as usual. It was eerie that a baby would show such an expression.

Zenith said, "When feeding this baby milk, he will lick..."

This had become just outrageous.

Paul had no restraint when it came to women, but never did he become disgusting to this extent.

This was too strange to be dismissed as hereditary.

Lilia remembered again.

She had heard of a story in the palace.

In the past, an Asuran prince was possessed by a demon. To revive that demon, he would crawl around on his limbs every night.

And when an unsuspecting maid hugged him, the prince stabbed her with a knife hidden behind him, killing her.

It was too scary.

Is Rudeus something like that?

There was no doubt. He was that kind of devil.

He's still obedient for now, but one day he'll awaken, and when everyone is asleep, one by one he'll.....

Ahh.....It's too early, too early to decide this. I shouldn't have taken this job.

"I'll get attacked sooner or later.

.....Lilia was a person who seriously believed in such superstition.

During the first year of her work, she was still afraid of him.

But she didn't notice when Rudeus' unpredictable movements started to change.

He didn't disappear as and when he wanted, and usually stayed in Paul's study on the second floor.

Speaking of the study, it was just a room with a few books.

Rudeus stayed there without leaving. Lilia secretly observed him, and found him mumbling to himself while reading a book.

It was a meaningless mumble.

Or was supposed to be, at least, for it wasn't a commonly used language in the Central continents.

It was still too early for him to be learning how to talk. Of course, he had yet to be taught alphabets.

He was just an infant looking at a book and making random sounds.

Or else it would be just too strange.

Lilia always had the feeling that those sounds carried meaning and structure.

Rudeus seemed to understand the contents of the book.

It was too frightening.....Lilia always thought that, when she observed Rudeus from the gap in the door jamb.

However, she never felt disgusted with him for some inexplicable reason.

Come to think of it, that unknown source of discomfort gradually disappeared from the moment he confined himself to that room.

Though he occasionally showed his disgusting smile while she carried him, it didn't feel unpleasant.

He wouldn't bury his face into her chest, and he wouldn't suddenly pant.

Why had she always found him scary?

Recently, she began to feel that he was sincere and hardworking, and didn't want to disrupt him.

Zenith seemed to share her sentiments.

After that, Lilia felt that not to care for him was better.

It was an idea that went against common sense.

In fact, it was abnormal for human beings not to care for a child that was born not long ago.

But recently there were signs of knowledge in Rudeus' eyes.

He showed only "chikan" eyes a few months back, but at this point, there was a strong will and dazzling knowledge in them.

{ C-Editor's note: Chikan - Pevert/Molester. }

What should she do? Even though she had knowledge of taking care of children, the inexperienced Lilia found it hard to discern.

She couldn't remember whether it was her guards-maid senpai or her mother back in her hometown who said this, that there was no one correct way to bring up a child.

At the very least, she no longer felt disgusted, uncomfortable, or frightened.

So she decided it was best not to disturb him, and let him revert back to how he was originally.

--Let's just leave him as he is.

Lilia finally concluded.

About 2 years has passed since I was reincarnated.

My legs and waist were starting to become strong enough for me to walk on my feet.

And I was beginning to learn this world's language.

Having decided to live on seriously, I started to consider what I could do.

What did I need in my life?

Studying, sports, and skill sets.

As a baby, there was little I could do. The most I could do was to bury my face into someone's chest.

And when I did that to the maid, she made an unhappy expression.

That maid definitely hated kids.

Realizing that I can do sports a little later in life, I started searching for books in the house to learn words

It's important to be literate.

There's a near 100% literacy rate amongst Japanese, but many had poor English skills, so they balked at the idea of going overseas, and even treated foreign languages as a mere skill set. Therefore, learning this world's words was my first assignment.

There were five books in this house.

Could it be that books in this world are expensive, or that Paul and Zenith don't read books?

It was probably both these reasons. It was unbelievable to me, who owned thousands of books.

Though they're all light novels.

There were only five books, but they were sufficient for me to learn to recognize words.

This world's language was similar to Japanese, so it was easy for me to pick up.

Even though the letters were completely different, learning how to speak went very smoothly.

I'll be fine as long as I memorize enough vocabulary. It's beneficial to first understand how to speak.

Father read me the contents of the books many times , so learning the vocabulary went smoothly.

Perhaps it had something to do with this body's ability to memorize well.

After being able to read the language, I found this book's content very interesting.

In my past life, I never thought of learning as interesting. Thinking back about it, it was exactly the same as memorizing information from the internet. How can it not be interesting?

Nevertheless, did my father really think an infant would be able to understand the contents of that book?

It was fine for me, but any normal one-year-old kid would have frowned and started bawling.

These were the five books at home.

. <<Traveling Around the World>>

This is a guidebook that contains the name and unique characteristics of various countries in this world.

<<Fedoa's Monsters, Ecology and Weaknesses>>

A book that described the monsters that appeared in the Fedoa region, and ways to handle them.

<<Guide to Magic>>

A guidebook that explained how to use magic attacks, from the elementary rank to the advanced rank.

<<Perugius' Legend>>

A fairy tale about a summoner named Perugius, who traveled along with his companions, battling the demon gods, saving the world, punishing evil, and rewarding the good.

<<Three Swordsmen and the Labyrinth>>

It's the adventure of three talented swordsmen of different sword styles who encountered each other, and entered the labyrinth.

Leaving aside the two battle novels, the other three let me learn a lot.

Especially the guidebook about magic.

To me, who came from a world without magic, the things recorded here got me really interested,

Reading through it, I understood a few basics.

1. First of all, magic can be broadly classified into three categories.

[[Attack Magic]] --- Attacks a target [[Healing Magic]] --- Heals a target [[Summoning Magic]] --- Calls out something

Three types. Easy to understand.

There are various functions, but according to the guidebook, magic was originally developed for war. It still isn't really used much besides battle and hunting.

2. To use magic, you must have mana.

Conversely, as long as you have mana, you could use magic.

There are two ways of using mana.

[[Use the mana within your body]]

[[Draw out mana from something that contains mana]]
It must be one of these two.

I can't think of a good example. It's probably something like a home generator for the former, and a battery for the latter.

A long time ago, people used only their mana to use magic; as generations passed, magic was researched into, the difficulty spiked, and the mana required increased exponentially as a result.

This was fine for the people who had a lot of mana, but those with lesser mana couldn't use that sort of magic.

Thus, the magicians of the past thought of ways to draw out mana from elsewhere to fulfill the magic's requirements.

3. There are two ways to activate magic.

[[Incantation]]
[[Magic Array]]
There's really no need to explain here, right? To activate a spell, either to utter a chant through the mouth, or draw a magic array.

Magic arrays were the norm a very long time ago, but at incantation is currently the mainstream.

In the distant past, the simplest incantation required about one, two minutes.

It wasn't very long, but this method was very difficult to use in battle.

In contrast, once a magic array was drawn, it could be used repeatedly.

There was a certain magician who successfully reduced the incantation time. Thus, incantation became the norm.

The simplest incantations took about five seconds, so basic magic attacks could be used with incantation.

But unless the situation was urgent, complicated magic spells are still cast with magic arrays.

4. A person's mana is set when they are born.

A normal RPG increased your MP as you level up.

But this doesn't look the case in this world.

Basically, everyone's a Warrior by profession. Just saying that term makes me feel like there was something of a change.....

What about me? Hmm.

Apparently, the amount of mana one possessed was hereditary.

The fact that my mother was capable of magic meant I could probably hope for certain amount of innate mana.

It's a little worrying. Even if my parents are talented, I don't think my genetic makeup is capable of that.

In any case, I began to try out the simplest magic.

The guidebook contained methods for both incantation and magic formation, but since incantation's the norm, and there's no place for me to draw magic arrays, I started with incantation.

It seems that the more complicated a spell was, the longer the incantation time would be. In fact, extremely complicated spells had to be chanted in conjunction with magic arrays; that's not a problem in the beginning , however..

It seems a skilled magician can use magic without incantation.

Voiceless incantation, or reducing the chants; Something like that.

But why was it that a skilled person didn't need incantation?

The amount of mana required to cast the technique doesn't change, and even if you level up, your MP won't increase either.....

Or was it the more skilled you are, the less mana you'd use?

No, even if that does decrease one's mana usage, there's no reason to skip steps.

'.....Whatever, I'll just try it out first.

I hold the guidebook in my left hand, stretched out my right, and read out the words.

"Bestow the protection of water on the place thee demandest, let thine crystal clear flow here, WATER BALL"

I felt the sensation of blood gathering in my right hand.

My blood feels as if it's being squeezed out, and a water bullet the size of a fist appeared in front of my right hand.

"Whoa!!"

The moment I showed amazement, the water bullet fell onto the floor, dampening it.

The book said the water bullet should be shot out, but it had fallen instead.

Perhaps my concentration had been broken, causing the spell to fail.

Concentrate, concentrate.....

The sensation of blood gathering in my right hand. This, this, this feeling .....Mmmm.

I once again raise my right hand, recall that feeling from before, and imagine it in my mind.

I don't know how much mana I have, but it's best not to think that I can do this many times.

Concentrate, and let every attempt be successful.

First, I had to imagine it, then repeat it over and over in my mind, then cast it in reality.

If it ended in failure, I'll imagine it again in my mind. Until I can do it perfectly in my head.

This was how I practiced every move in fighting games in the past.

Because of that, I didn't really fail when I tried to execute a combo.

I should have no problems if I practice using this method..... I hope.

"Brea....the....."

A deep breath.

I send the blood flowing from my toes and top of my head into my right hand, using that feeling to gather power.

And then, have the feeling of firing it out from my palm...

Carefully, carefully. With every heartbeat, gathering it bit by bit.....

Water, Water, Water, Water Bullet, Water's Ball, Water Ball, Water Ball Panties.....

Evil thoughts were mixed in to it. One more time.

Concentrate, squeezing out waterrrrrrr.....

"HAH!"

I unconsciously shouted like a monk, and the water bullet came out.

"Eh, huh.....?"

Plop.

The moment I showed surprise, the water bullet fell way too quickly.

"..... Ah."

Huh...I didn't chant just now, right?

Why did.....?

What I did was to recall the feeling of using that spell and imitating it in my mind.

But can it be that just redoing the flow of the magic made incantation unnecessary?

Was voiceless incantation that simple?

Wasn't it supposed to be an upper class technique?

"If it's that easy to succeed, what's the use of incantation?"

Even a novice like me can cast magic using voiceless incantation.

Concentrating the mana in my fingertips, and determining the shape in my mind.

That was bascially it.

In that case, incantation was completely unnecessary. Everyone can just do this instead.

(..... Hm.)

Can it be that incantation's the activation of magic?

There's no need to replicate the feeling of gathering blood; I can just complete it if I let out my voice.

It might be something like that.

It's just like an automatic car. One can actually change it to manual and it'll still work.

"Incantation will automatically cast magic."

There'll be several advantages to using incantations.

Firstly, it's easy.

Instead of explaining it as gathering the blood from the blood vessels in my body, everyone can simply recite it and succeed instead? Both teacher and student will have an easier time.

And after teaching this over and over again, it'll become [[incantation is something quintessential]].

Secondly, It's convenient to use.

Needless to say, attack magic's meant to be used in combat.

Instead of closing your eyes and going "mmmmmmm" while concentrating, it's faster to recite it quickly.

It's a question of which is easier, to run with all of one's strength while drawing a clear picture, or to run with all of one's strength while chanting.

"It must be different for various people. Maybe there are those who would find it easier with the former....."

I quickly flipped through the magic textbook, but I found nothing on voiceless incantations.

That's weird. Based on my experience, it wasn't that hard.

Maybe it's a special talent I have, but others can't use it at all.

Maybe I can think of it this way.

A magician typically starts out as a beginner and ends up as a veteran, and everyone uses the incantation method to cast.

After thousands of times, their bodies would be used to incantation.

And when it came to voiceless incantations, they didn't know what to do.

Therefore, as it's not disseminated, it's not recorded in the guidebook.

"Whoaa, that explains it!"

Then that means I'm not an ordinary person.

That's amazing, right?

It's like I'm using a tip sheet.

"They used a Crime Catalyst without singing an Oratorio!?"

"But all I did was use this catalyst like normal and open the gate."

{ C-Editor's note: This is a reference to the light novel "Tasogare-iro no Uta Tsukai". }

That kind of feeling?

Woohoo, I'm getting excited!

Ah, no no. Calm down, cool down.

The past me was deceived by this feeling.

Because I'm better at using the computer than the average person and got that feeling that I was some kind of chosen one, I became greedy and eventually ended up a failure.

I have to be humble. The most important thing is to not treat myself like someone superior to others.

I'm a novice. A novice.

A novice with beginner's luck and managed to hit the bowling pins with a strike.

I just have beginner's luck. I don't think I'm a talented person with talent. I should be working hard on this.

Good. I needed to first rely on the chant to use a spell, then based on the feeling I experienced when casting I could practice the voiceless incantation repeatedly.

I would just use that format to learn.

"Then let's do it again."

But when I stretch out my right hand, I feel strangely sluggish.

It's as if there's something heavy on my shoulders.

The feeling of fatigue.

Is it because I'm concentrating too hard?

No, I was at least considered a pro at internet gaming(self-proclaimed). I was a man who could continue hunting for six full days without sleeping if I needed to.

My concentration wouldn't vanish from just two attempts.

"That is to say, my MP depleted....?"

Goodness...if they say the mana amount is decided at birth, my mana's only enough to fire two water bullets?

That's just too little, right? Or is it because I'm a beginner, my efficiency when using mana properly is really low?

No, how can that be?

To be safe, I tried firing off the spell one more time, but in the end I fainted.

"Oh really, Rudeus, If you're sleepy just go to the toilet and then sleep on the bed."

When I woke up, I was treated as if I'd fallen asleep when reading the book, and wet the floor.

Damn. I got scolded for wetting the floor even when I'm so old.....

Damn it..... Damn it..... Eh, I'm only two, right? Wetting the bed is still forgivable.

But seriously, isn't my mana's too little?

Hah..... This made me feel really powerless..... Well, even if it's 2 water bullets, the next thing is how to use it.

In any case, I should practice to the point where I can fire it right away.....

Hah.....

The next day, I was fine even after firing four water bullets.

I only felt tired after the fifth shot.

"Huuuh...?"

Based on my experience yesterday, I know I'll faint if I fired another shot, and I decide to stop.

So I began to think.

My current maximum's six shots. That's two times more than yesterday's.

I looked at the barrel's-worth of five water bullets, and wonder,

The reason why the number of shots increased by 2 times from yesterday till today.

Was it because I was already tired yesterday, or was it because I consumed more MP yesterday?

I'm casting them all through voiceless incantation, but there shouldn't be any difference between the two methods.

I don't get it.

Maybe the number will continue to increase tomorrow.

It's the next day.

The number of water bullets I could create had increased.

Eleven times.

It feels like I can increase the number of shots I can fire with the number of shots actually fired.

If my theory's true, by tomorrow, I should be be able to use the spell 21 times.

Another day passed.

To confirm my guess, I casted the spell five times, and stopped.

Another day passed,

And my limit became 26 times.

My limit really is the same as the number of times I had cast the spell.

(You actually bluffed me.....!)

What do you mean a persons total mana is decided at birth?

You're determining talent, an intangible thing you can't even see with your own eyes.

A child's potential isn't what an adult can determine!!

"Well, this also means that I can't just blindly trust something from a book."

This book's probably saying something like, "Human's happiness has a limit." That sort of thing.

Or was it referring to the results of training?

Did it mean that after rigorous training, there's a mana cap?

No, it's still too early to draw a conclusion. This is still just a hypothesis.

Something like..... Yeah, like, it's based on how much you can grow, or something.

When casting magic during infancy, the maximum value will increase exponentially, or something like that.

Ah, I can't ignore the possibility that maybe it's due to my special body.

..... No, it's not good to treat myself as special.

In my original world, it's said that the athletic abilities does increase exponentially during puberty.

But the problem was that after puberty, no matter how hard one try, there's not much progress.

Even in this world, for something like magic, a human's body structure shouldn't be any different.

It's basically the same.

Then, there's only one thing to do.

Train as hard as possible before puberty ends.

From the next day onwards, I depleted my mana to the fullest every day.

At the same time, the number of spells I could use increased.

As long as I can remember the feeling, it's easy to use voiceless incantation.

Anyway, my short-term target's to completely master elementary magic.

Elementary magic is just as the term implies. It had the lowest rank amongst all attack magic.

Water and flame bullets are considered the basics even amongst the elementary spells.

There are seven difficulty ranks to magic.

[[Elementary, Intermediate, Advanced, Saint, King, Emperor, God]]

I read that an ordinary educated magician can improve his specialized magic up to the advanced rank, while the typical uneducated is able to cast elementary to intermediate ranked spells.

If we're going by the rank beyond Advanced, based on this system, those called a Fire-Saint or Water-Saint can be considered to be one of a kind.

The Saint rank.

I'm yearning that a little.

But that magic guidebook only has fire, water, wind, and earth systems, up to the Advanced rank.

'Where can I learn spells ranked Saint and and above.....?

No, it's better not to think too far ahead.

It's the same too for RPG Maker, If one started off by creating the strongest monster, there's a high chance of being dejected.

One should start from the slime.

Though I didn't even finish the slime even though I started from it.

{ C-Editor's note: This is a reference to his past attempt to make a game with RPG Maker. }

Now, the book contained the following elementary water spells.

Water bullet: A water bullet that can be shot. Water Ball.

Water shield: Water that rises from the ground to form a wall. Water shield.

Water arrow: A 20cm dart that's fired. Water Arrow.

Ice strike: Creates a column of ice to smite an enemy. Ice Smash.

Ice weapon: Forms a sword of ice. Ice blade.

I tried out everything.

Even though each spell was elementary, the amount of mana it took to cast them varied.

Using the water bullet as my standard. A single cast expends two to twenty water bullets worth of mana based on the spell.

Basically, I practiced only water magic.

It would have been a problem if I'd tried the fire magic and caused a fire disaster.

Speaking of fire, it seems the amount of mana used is correlated to the temperature. The higher the rank, the colder the ice got.

While the book said certain spells should fly out of my hand, whether it water bullet or water arrow I could never get them to work properly.

But I'm unable to shoot anything, whether it's the water bullet or the water arrow even though the book tells me so.

Why's that so? Where have I gone wrong.....

Hmmm. I don't get it.

The book had said something about a spell's size and speed.

Can it be that after creating the bullet, I still need to control it using magic?

Let's try it out then.

"Oh?"

The water bullet became bigger.

"Ohhhh!!"

Plop.

"Oh....."

But it still fell onto the floor.

After that, I tried various means to change the bullet's size.

I created two different bullets at the same time.

I changed the size of the bullets at the same time.

But even though it's a new discovery, none of the bullets look like flying forward..

Fire and wind aren't affected by gravity, and can float in the air. In the end though, they'll still disappear after a certain amount of time.

I tried using wind to shoot a floating fireball, but it felt wrong somewhere.

Hmmm.....

2 months later.

At the end of all the mistakes, I finally succeeded in making a water bullet fly.

By now, I've gotten a basic understanding of the concept behind incantation.

There are certain steps to incantations.

Creation >> Setting of size >> Setting of firing speed >> Activation.

Within this, the magic spell is done once the user determines the size and speed.

Which means after the chant,

1) The spell automatically takes shape.

2) After this, within a fixed time frame, increase the mana input to adjust the size.

3) After the size adjustment, during a fixed time frame with extra mana input, was the adjustment of the speed setting.

4) Once the preparation period's over, the magic spell leaves the caster's hand, and automatically flies towards its target.

This is the sequence of the entire thing.

This is most probably correct...I think.

The trick is that after chanting, I need to add more mana twice.

If there's no adjustment to the size, the firing speed adjustment won't occur.

It's no wonder that when I tried to fire the bullet, the only thing that happened was the size changing, nothing else.

And to add on, when I'm doing voiceless incantation, I'll have to process all of these by myself.

Even though it's a hassle, it can reduce the time needed to change the size and firing speed.

It's possible to be several times faster than an incantation.

Also, modifications can be done during the creation phase of a voiceless incantation.

For example, what the book didn't record was how to freeze a water bullet to create an ice bullet.

If I practice this, I might be able to use the Kaiser Phoenix attack (My face's full of pride).

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to an attack move in Dragon Quest Dai's Great Adventure. }

With different ideas, I can create a variety of effects.

This is becoming interesting!!

..... But the basics are definitely important.

I'll have to wait until my overall mana increases before experimenting.

[[Increase my mana capacity]]
[[Use voiceless incantation until it's as easy as breathing]]
These are my two assignments.

It's easy to have setbacks if I suddenly have a large goal.

It's best to start of with something small.

Alright, time to work hard.

And so, I kept practicing elementary magic until I nearly fainted.

3 years old.

Recently, I finally got to know my parents' names.

My father's name is Paul Greyrat.

And my mother's name is Zenith Greyrat.

My name is Rudeus Greyrat.

The eldest son of the Greyrats.

Even though I'm named Rudeus, my parents always shortened each other's names whenever they called each other, and shortened mine to Rudi. Thus, I only got to know my full name after a very long time.

"Oh, Rudi really likes books."

As I'm always walking around with a book, Zenith lets out a laugh.

They never lectured me or tried to take the book away.

I always have a book tucked under my armpit even when I'm eating. However, I won't read the magic textbook in front of my family

It's not to hide my talent. It's just that I don't know how magic is viewed exactly in this world.

In my previous world, witches were prosecuted during the Middle Ages.

It was when any spellcasters were treated as heretics and burned.

There are practical books like this in this world, so the use of magic probably won't be deemed as heresy, but it may not necessarily be viewed in a positive light.

Maybe the common understanding is that magic can only be used after becoming an adult.

Since it's a dangerous act that would cause fainting after overexertion.

Some might think of it as being a detriment to growth.

And with that thought, I decided to keep my understanding of magic from my family.

Maybe that fact was already long revealed when I shot magic spells out of the window

And I had no choice then. I wanted to see how fast I could shoot them anyway.

The maid (I think her name's Lilia) occasionally looked at me with a dangerous expression, but my parents continue to be happy-go-lucky, so I felt it's still okay.

If I'm stopped here, I guess it can't be helped, but I don't wish to miss out the growth period.

Talent will rust if it's not grown when it needs to be grown.

I have to make use of this period as much as I can.

However, I had to put this secret magic training to an end.

It was a certain afternoon.

My mana capacity had grown quite a lot, so I started to try some intermediate spells, reciting a water cannon spell with the mindset of simply trying it out.

Size: 1, Speed: 0.

Like usual, I just wanted to do it to fill up the barrel with water.

I just thought it would end up overflowing at most.

But unexpectedly, an absurd amount of water was released, smashing a big hole in the wall.

Left shocked, I was unable to think of what to do due to shock.

A hole opened in the wall is undoubted proof that I used magic.

And there's nothing I can do about that.

I quickly gave up.

"What happened!? Whoa....."

At first, it was Paul who rushed in.

And then he stared at the wall with his mouth agape.

"Wai-hey, what the..... Rudi, are you alright.....?"

Paul's really a nice guy.

No matter how anyone looked at it, I'm definitely the one who did this. However, he's worried about my body.

"Monsters...? But in this vicinity?" Even now, he's mumbling stuff like that, while looking around warily.

"Oh my..."

And Zenith followed him into the room.

She was calmer than Father.

After looking at the ruined wall and the puddles of water on the ground,

"Oh...?"

Her eyes sharpened as she stared at the page of the magic textbook where I had left it open.

After looking at me and the book, she crouched down in front of me, and stared at my eyes with a gentle expression.

Scary.

There's no smile in her eyes.

And I continue to focus my faltering eyes on Zenith with all my might.

I learned something when I was a NEET. When you did something wrong, a stubborn attitude will only make things worse.

Therefore, I can't avoid her eyes.

This is a moment when a sincere attitude is needed.

I can't avert from the person's eyes, and I have to meet them face on. This alone will make me look more sincere.

It doesn't matter what one think. The main aim is to appear sincere.

"Rudi, did you read out loud what is written on this book?"

"I'm sorry."

I nodded, and apologized.

When something wrong was done, it's best to simply apologize.

After all, only I, nobody else, could have done this.

If I'm to come up with a shoddy lie, my trustworthiness will decrease.

I lied as much as I wanted in the past, and became untrustworthy as a result.

I will not make the same mistake again.

"No, wait, this is an intermediate....."

"Kyaa! Did you hear that, darling!? Our child's a genius after all!!"

Paul's words were overpowered by Zenith's scream.

She grabbed Paul's hands and jumped around in exhilaration.

How energetic.

Was my apology ignored?

"No, you, erm, I haven't taught him any words anyway!"

"Let's hire a home tutor right now!! This child will become a remarkable magician in the future!!"

Paul was still perturbed, while Zenith was completely delighted.

It looks like Zenith's exuberant over the fact that I used magic.

And maybe I was worrying too much, thinking that on children shouldn't be using magic.

Lilia remained calm as she quietly cleaned the room.

This maid probably knew that I was using magic for quite some time, or she already had a feeling that I was somehow doing it.

Perhaps she didn't think it was a bad thing, so she didn't take it to heart.

Or maybe she just wanted to see the happy faces of my parents.

"Hey dear, go out to Roa tomorrow and put up a job request!! This talent must be properly trained!!"

Zenith was getting excited by herself, making a ruckus about genius, talent.

Am I considered a genius for being able to suddenly cast magic?

Is it my parents' doting on me too much? Or that using intermediate magic spells is considered amazing? I'm unable to tell.

No, perhaps it's really my parents doting on me.

I never used magic in front of Zenith before

"I guess it's true." But since she did say those words, maybe she already thought I was a genius.

It's baseless.....

Ah, no.

I suddenly remembered.

Because I was always alone.

When I was reading, I would occasionally read or repeat phrases that I liked.

And ever since I came to this world, I would mumble to myself while reading books.

At first it was Japanese, but after I learned how to talk, I would subconsciously use this world's language.

And then, when I mumbled to myself, "Rudi, that is-----" Zenith would teaching me the meanings of those words.

Because of that, I remembered quite a lot about the fixed terms of this world. Well, never mind about that.

I never said anything to anyone, but I learned the letters of this world by myself.

My parents didn't even teach me how to talk.

From my parents' viewpoint, it'll seem that "Our child can read words we never taught him, and read out loud the contents of a book.

That's definitely a genius.

If it's my child, I'll also think that he's a genius.

In the past, the same thing happened when my younger brother was born.

He grew up fast, and did everything faster than me and my older brother.

Saying words out, walking on his own feet.

My parents were also optimistic; whenever their kids did something, even if it's nothing too big, they'll go "That kid's definitely a genius"

Well, I'm a damned NEET who dropped out in High School, and my mental age is more than 30 years old.

Without that much experience, I'll be a miserable wretch.

That's 10 times! 10 times!

"Darling, get a tutor!! We'll definitely find a good magic teacher in Roa!!"

And then, when they find someone with talent, the one thing all parents would do would be to get the best education for him.

In my previous life, my parents praised my younger brother's talent, and let him learn all kinds of things.

And so, Zenith suggested to hire a magician to be the home tutor.

But Paul objected to this idea.

"Wait, didn't we decide that if he's a boy, we'll make him a swordsman instead?"

If it's a guy, he'll take up a sword. If it's a girl, she'll learn magic.

It seemed that was decided before I was born.

"But he can activate intermediate spells at this age!! If he starts training now, he will become an amazing magician!!"

"But a promise is a promise, right!?"

"What promise!? Don't you always break your promises!?"

"My matters have nothing to do with this now, right!?"

And so, a couple's quarrel began at that moment.

Lilia calmly cleaned up the room.

"Let him learn magic in the morning, and learn swordsmanship in the afternoon. Isn't that fine?"

After the quarrel persisted for a while, Lilia finished up her cleaning, sighed, and suggested that, ending the argument.

And so, the idiot parents subjected me to study while ignoring what their kid wanted.

Oh well. I guess it's good since I decided to live on seriously.

And because of those reasons, our household decided to hire a tutor.

It seems the income as a tutor, for a noble child, is rather good.

Paul's one of the few knights in this area, and still had the status as a lower-class noble. Thus, he's able to provide a salary befitting of his status.

But this is a village area far away from the capital.

Thus, as befitting of the border, it's rare to get outstanding talents here, let alone magicians.

Would they be able to hire someone just by sending a request to the Magic guild and the Adventurer guild?

Even though I had such worries, the unexpected thing was that we quickly found a tutor, and that tutor will come in tomorrow.

This village had no inn, so the job offer includes accommodation too.

According to my parents' guess, the one arriving is probably a retired adventurer.

Young people won't come to the countryside, and a court magician can easily find work at the capital.

In this world, only magicians ranked advanced and above are qualified to become a magic tutor.

An consequently, an adventurer's rank is probably above intermediate.

The one coming is probably a middle-aged or old man who spent his life devoted to researching on magic.

That person probably has a beard, giving the impression of a sage.

"I am Roxy. Please give me your guidance."

But contrary to my expectations, a young girl came along instead.

She's probably of similar age to a Middle School student.

She's dressed in a brown magician's robe, her light blue hair in braids, and her compact body felt just right.

The white skin, devoid of any suntan, was accompanied with sleepy half-opened eyes. She had curt-looking lips, and though she's not bespectacled,, she does give the image of a studious girl always working in the library.

She's holding a bag in one hand, the other hand holding a staff a magician would use.

And thus, she met with the 3 of us in this house.

"....."

"....."

My parents were speechless as they look at her.

That's to be expected.

It was beyond what we expected.

We imagined the tutor to be someone who had weathered many years.

But the person who came was a little fellow like this.

To me, who had played a lot of games, a loli-like magician wasn't something out of the ordinary for me.

Loli, half opened eyes, brusque.

With these 3 qualities, she's perfect.

Please be my wife.

"Ah-ah, you're, that, home tutor?"

"Ah, that's, really---"

With my parents stuttering, I quickly added,

"You're really small."

"I don't want to hear that from you."

I was immediately refuted.

Maybe she has a complex about it.

Even though I wasn't referring to the chest.

Roxy sighed.

"Hah. Anyway, which one's the student I'm supposed to teach?"

She looked around as she asked,

"Ah, it's this child."

Zenith introduced me, who was in her arms.

I gave her a wink.

And she immediately widen her eyes, letting out a sigh,

"Haaa. I guess it happens from time to time, huh, that there are idiot parents who think their child has talent after growing slightly..."

She quietly grumbled.

I heard that!! Miss Roxy!!

Well, I couldn't agree more with that.

"What is it?"

"It's nothing. However, I think that child of yours doesn't understand the concept of magic, right?"

"It's fine. Our Rudi here is very talented!!"

Zenith said something any stupid parent would say.

Roxy sighed again.

"Haa, I understand. I'll try my best."

She probably assumed it's useless to say anything else.

And with that, it's decided that in the morning, it'll be Roxy's lessons, and in the afternoon, it'll be swordsmanship studies under Paul.

"Well, let's start from the magic textbook..... No, before that, let's test how much magic you can use, Rudi."

For the first lesson, Roxy brought me into the courtyard.

The magic lessons are mostly done outdoors.

She too understands what'll happen if magic is used in the house.

And she won't break the wall like I did.

"Let me demonstrate. Bestow the protection of water to the place where thou demands, let the crystal clear stream appear here, 『Water ball.』"

When Roxy recited the spell, a basketball-sized water bullet was formed in her hand.

It flew towards one of the trees at high speed.

Crash.

The branches snapped easily, and the fence got soaked.

Size 3, speed 4. Around there, I guess.

"How's that?"

"Yes. That tree's one Mother raised with such care. I guess Mother will be angry."

"Eh!? Really?"

"No doubt."

There was that one time when Paul swung his sword and cut the branches. The fury Zenith had wasn't just the ordinary level of terror.

"Isn't this bad? Got to think of something.....!!"

Roxy frantically ran to the tree, and picked up the fallen branches.

And with her face red, she took the branches.

"Uu.... let the power of God be converted into a bountiful crop, and bestowed into one's who had lost their strength to stand up once again, 『Healing』"

It's another chant.

And the branches are back to how they were before.

"Phew."

Wow. Amazing.

Anyway, got to praise her.

"Phew."

"Teacher, you know how to use healing magic!!?"

"Eh, yeah. I have no problems up to the intermediate rank."

"Amazing!! That's amazing!!"

"No, if you train properly anyone can do things to that extent."

But though her response was somewhat curt, the corners on her lips showed otherwise by curling upwards, and her nose seemed to twitch slightly, proudly. She's happy.

I only shouted "amazing" twice, and she's already this happy. That's too easy.

"Now then, Rudi. Try that."

"Okay."

I raise my hand.....

Oops, I haven't used a water bullet chant for almost a year. Now I can't remember it.

Let's try out what Roxy just said, Erm, erm,

"Erm, how do you say that again?"

"Bestow the protection of water to the place where thou demands, let the crystal clear flow appear towards here."

Roxy replied indifferently. Maybe this is within her expectations.

But even if you replied so indifferently, I can't remember it in one try.

"Bestow the protection of water to the place where thou demands..... water ball"

I really can't remember it, so I simply shortened it.

I make it a little smaller and slower compared to the water bullet Roxy made.

If I make it larger than hers, she might end up pouting.

I'm very generous when it comes to younger girls.

The basketball-sized water bullet flew out with great force and a whoosh.

And the tree falls over with a loud crack.

Roxy looked at me with a complicated face.

"You shortened the chant?"

"Yes."

Is that bad?

Come to think of it, voiceless incantation was never recorded in the magic textbook.

I've been using it quite casually, but maybe I touched upon something taboo, I guess?

Or is she angry because it's 10 years too early for me to be using voiceless incantation.....

Under that scenario, is it better for me to refute by saying , So what about it, who'll want to use such a lame chant?

"Do you usually shorten your chant?"

"Usually..... I don't chant."

I didn't know how to answer that question, so I just told the truth.

It'll be revealed either way when I attend her lessons from now on.

"Voiceless incantation!?"

Roxy widened her eyes, staring at me with a skeptical look.

".....I see. So you usually use voiceless incantation. I see. Do you feel tired?"

However, she immediately reverted to her prim expression.

"Yes. I'm fine here."

"Is that so? No complains about the size and strength of the water bullet here."

"Thank you very much."

Roxy finally gave a smile.

A large grin in fact.

And she muttered,

"..... Looks like there's some worth teaching him, huh?"

Like I said, I heard what you just said.

"Now then, let's hurry to the next spell..."

Roxy looked rather excited, and just when she's about to open the magic textbook,

"AHHHH!!!"

A scream rang behind me.

It's Zenith, who came to check on us.

The drinks on the tray she's holding falls onto the ground, her hands covering her mouth as she stared at the snapped tree.

A sorrowful expression.

Replaced with the color of fury the next instance.

Ah, this is bad.

Zenith stormed over and approached Roxy.

"Miss Roxy!! Will you please not treat our home as an experiment platform!!"

"Ehh!! But this was done by Rudi....."

"Even if Rudi did this, you're the one who allowed him, right!?"

Roxy looked thunderstruck, completely shocked, her eyes blank white as she lowered her head.

Well, you can't push the blame onto a 3 year-old kid.

"Yes..... You're right."

"I hope this won't happens again!!!"

"Yes, I'm very sorry, madam....."

And that, Zenith cast healing magic to splendidly repair the tree, and return back into the house.

"To think I made a mistake so quickly....."

"Teacher..."

"Haha, I might be fired tomorrow."

Roxy sat on the ground and began to draw [[の]].

She really can't take any setbacks.

I patted her shoulder.

"....."

"Rudi?"

Even though I patted her shoulder, I don't know what to say to console her, since I haven't communicated properly with anyone for almost 20 years.

Sorry, I really have no idea what should I say at this time...

No, calm down.

Think about it carefully. How will a protagonist in an ero-game try to console her in such a situation.

Hmm, I'm sure it's something like this.

"You didn't fail just now, teacher."

"Ru-Rudi...?"

"You're accumulating experience."

Roxy stared at me in surprise.

"Th-that's true. Thank you."

"Yes. Please continue with the lesson."

And so, from the first day onward, I managed to get along with Roxy.

The afternoon's about training with Paul.

There's no wooden sword fitting my body size, so training's basically physical here.

Jogging, push-ups, sit-ups, and so on.

Anyway, it seems Paul's plan is based around getting me to move first.

On days when Paul's unable to train me due to work, it could be said that basic body training was something that cannot be missed every single day.

That's the same no matter which world it is.

I'll try my best.

As a child, my physical body can't endure the training for an the entire afternoon, so swordsmanship will end in the early afternoon.

Because of that, I'll expend my mana till dinner.

Magic spells expend different amounts of mana depending on the 'changes to the size'.

For example, if the default is 1 for voiceless incantations, additional mana will be expended the more I expand the spell and increase the speed.

The law of conservation of mass at work.

But in contrast, for some reason, the smaller I make it to be, the more mana I have to use up.

I really don't understand the logic.

Creating a single droplet of water requires me to use much more mana than creating a fist-sized water bullet.

It's really strange.

I asked Roxy this question I always had, but the only answer I got was "That's just the case".

It looks like it's still unsolved.

I still don't understand the reason.

But this isn't a bad method for my training.

My mana capacity has increased quite a bit recently. If I don't use some large spells, I won't be able to expend it all.

If I simply want to wear out my mana supply, I just need to use maximum output until it runs out.

But now it's time to try training my dexterity.

Thus, I decided to do some very delicate works.

Using magic to do small, refined and delicate work.

For example, the creation of an ice statue, lighting a fire on my fingertip, or writing words on the board.

I tried splitting the soil I obtain from the courtyard into parts...

And even things like hanging a key in front of the knob.

Earth magic does affect metals and minerals to some extent.

But the more metallic the item was, the more mana I had to expend.

I guess it's really hard to change things that are sturdier.

The smaller the control target, the more delicate, complicated the task was, and the more accurate and efficient it is, the more mana that had to be expended.

Throwing a baseball with all my strength.

Slowly leading a thread through the hole of a needle.

The amount of mana required for these two actions was roughly the same.

Also, I tried using various types of magic at the same time.

I needed to use at least 3 times more mana.

So if I use 2 different systems of magic at the same time, and cast them gently, precisely, swiftly at the same time, I can easily deplete all my mana.

And after continuing such training everyday------

I end up unable to deplete all my mana even after casting spells for half a day or more.

I guess this should be enough. My heart started to waver.

My lazy bones are starting to tell me that this should be enough already, right?

Each time, I yelled and scolded myself.

Muscles grow numb if one slacks off in training.

Surely mana works the same way. I can't neglect my training just because I had some increase in capacity.

While casting magic in the middle of the night, I could hear some irritating yelping noises.

Where are they coming from? Of course it was from Paul and Zenith's room.

Busy working.

Maybe in the not-so-distant future, my younger brother or sister will be born, I guess.

I think it's good to have a little sister.

Yup, I don't want a younger brother.

The image of my younger brother smashing my computer with a bat with all his strength still remained.

I don't want a younger brother.

A cute sister is better.

"Goodness gracious..."

In my past life, if I heard something that annoying, I would immediately slam the wall and floor to shut them up.

Because of that, my older sister never brought a guy back home again.

Such nostalgia.

At that time, I always thought the people who did that were the malice that painted my world.

I always thought those bullies were mocking me from a place I could not reach out to. Thus, I always had some rage within me that I couldn't vent.

The ones who pushed me into the dark, unpleasant space however were looking down at me, saying. Why are you still in that place?

There's nothing more humiliating. than that.

But recently, I changed my thinking.

I'm not sure if it's because my body became that of a kid, because of my parents, or because I'm working hard for my future myself.

But I'm about to eavesdrop on their actions with a magnanimous, supporting attitude.

Hmph, I'm an adult too.....

I can more or less guess what's going on just from listening to the noises.

It seems that Paul's very good at this.

As for Zenith, she'll be knocked down after a while, being all breathless and such, but Paul would say something like "It's still early~", and keep on attacking.

Just like a protagonist in some sexual humiliation ero-game.

An unspeakable amount of stamina.....

Hah, since I'm Paul's son here, maybe I too have that kind of energy!?

Awaken.

For the Heroines!!

Grant me the pink colored development!!

Well, that initial enthusiasm's wilted recently though, and I'm able to calmly head towards the toilet while passing through that creaking corridor.

Just so you know, the creaking would stop whenever I pass by their room. It's really interesting.

That day, I walked to the toilet to indicate my presence, this son of theirs who's able to walk.

Well then, shall I greet them today?

Papa, mama, what are you doing naked? That's what I'll ask.

I'm looking forward to their excuses. Kukuku...

With that thought, I quietly head out of the room.

But another guest was there already.

The blue-haired girl's squatting in the dark corridor, peeking into the room through the door's gap.

Her face's flushed and she was holding in her quickened breath, but her eyes glued into the inner rooms.

I can see her hand reaching beneath her robes, doing some inviting movements.

I quietly return back to my room.

Roxy's a lady at an appropriate age.

I'm generous enough to pretend not to notice her in indulging in this kind of thing.

.....Just kidding.

Well, I saw something good.

4 months have passed.

And I'm able to use all the intermediate spells.

And so, I started taking night classes from Roxy.

Oops, there's nothing erotic being taught during these night classes.

The content of the studies are mostly miscellaneous knowledge.

Roxy's a good teacher.

She doesn't stick too much to the curriculum.

She's teaching me progressively according to my understanding.

She's highly adaptable to the understanding of the students.

She picks a question from the prepared textbook to test me; if I'm able to get it correct, she'll move on to her next one.

If I don't understand, she'll teach me patiently.

And this alone makes me feel like my view of the world has broadened.

In my past life, there was a time where a home tutor was hired, when my older brother was taking his exams.

There was once when I felt interested, and listened in on the lesson.

However, it wasn't any different from what was taught in school.

Compared to that, Roxy's classes are easier to understand, and interesting.

A class where I'm certain to get answers for my questions.

Moreover, it's a teacher at the age of a junior high school student teaching me, budding with regards to sex.

That scenario's the best for me.

If it's the past me, that delusion alone will cause me to masturbate 3 times.

"Teacher, why's magic only used in combat?"

"Actually, you can't say it's just used for combat only..."

Roxy will always answer any of my sudden questions seriously.

"Hmm, indeed, where shall I begin.....? First of all, magic is said to have come from the ancient long-eared race."

WHOA, elves!!

Do they really exist!?

Golden hair, green clothes, wielding bow, and always getting bound by tentacles!!

Oops, calm down.

They're probably different from what I know.....

Though as the word imply, they have long ears.....

"What are the long ears?"

"Hmm, long ears are a race living North of the Millis continent ."

According to Roxy's words,

A very long time ago, before the war between humans and demons broke out, the world was still in chaos, and wars arose everywhere. During that time, ancient long-eared race were able to communicate with the forest spirits, manipulating the earth and winds to fight off the invaders. It's said that was the world's oldest magic.

"Heh? It's recorded down in history too?"

"Of course."

Roxy nods away at my mocking words.

"The magic now is derived from the human race imitating the ancient long-eared race's magic during the wars back then, and evolving it. Humans are especially good at such things."

"The human race is very good at such things?"

"Yes, the human race is always the one creating new things."

It seems the human race loves to invent.

"The reason why magic is used only in combat is because it's basically only used in those situations. Even if magic's not relied on, there are things around us we can use to do what we want."

"The things around us refer to?"

"For example, if you need a light, you can use a candle or lantern, right?"

I see, that's something very common.

Compared to using magic, a tool is definitely simpler.

That's kind of logical.

Though if it's voiceless incantation, it's even simpler than using a tool.

"Also, not every type of magic is suited for combat. For example, with summoning magic, you can call out a similarly ranked magic beast or spirit."

"Summoning magic!! Can you teach me someday?"

"No, I have not used it either. Also, among the tools, there are magic items as well."

Magic items.

I can basically imagine it from the wording.

"Magic items are?"

"Items that contain special effects. The inner portion are inscribed with a magic formation, so one can use it even if he's not a magician. However, these magic items require expending a lot of mana."

"I see."

Basically as I imagined.

Come to think of it, it's a pity that Roxy can't use summoning magic.

Attack magic and healing magic concepts could still be understood, but I have no idea how summoning magic worked.

Also, there was a lot of vocabulary that suddenly appeared.

The human-demon war, familiars, spirits.....

"Sensei, what's the difference between magic beasts and magic creatures?"

"Not much difference."

Basically magic creatures are creatures that experienced some changes.

And once magical creatures increased in number by chance and become a race, after generations they would possess a certain amount of intelligence and become magical beasts.

It's just that even if they possessed intelligence, they were still called magical creatures if they attacked the human race.

In retrospect, regarding magical beasts that became vicious over generations, there were examples where they reverted back to magical creatures.

There are no clear lines.

Magical creatures (Monsters) = Attack humans.

Magical beasts = Don't attack humans.

This line of thinking should be fine.

"That is to say, the demon races evolved from monsters?"

"Not at all. The demon races had been named that long ago during the human-demon war."

"It's that human-demon war that was just mentioned?"

"Yes. The first war was about 7000 years ago."

"That is certainly a very long time ago."

This world's history was actually that long.

"That's not considered very long. Humans were still fighting up until 400 years ago. From 7000 years ago, the human race and the demon races continued to fight each other."

I thought 400 years was considered a long time, but it actually persisted for nearly 7000 years.

Was the relationship that bad?

"Hah, I see. So in conclusion, what does the demon races point to?"

"To define the demon races is quite troublesome.....

If it's really necessary, 'The races that stood on the side of the demon races during the previous war' should be the easiest to understand.

Of course, there are some exceptions."

"Ah, to add on, I'm also from a demon race."

"Oh, I see."

A demon was here as a home tutor.

Did it mean that there was no ongoing war now?

It's best when we are at peace.

"Yes. To formally put it, it's the Migurd race from the Bigoya area in the demon continent. Didn't Rudi's parents look shocked when they saw me?"

"I thought the reason was that Sensei looked small."

"I'm not small."

Roxy rebutted me. She looked like she took this thing very seriously.

"They became shocked when they saw my hair."

"Hair?"

I thought it was pretty blue hair.

{ C-Editor's note: The Japanese word for blue (Ao) also covers the colour green. This is like in English light blue and dark blue are both shades of blue, in Japanese blue and green are both shades of Ao. }

"The typical rumor is that the closer the demon race's hair is to green, the more violent and dangerous it is. Especially when my hair looks like it's green under different lighting....."

Green.

Was that this world's warning color.

Roxy's hair was a pretty green that made people eyes wake up.

She played with her fringe as she explained.

Her actions were really cute.

If there were blue hair in Japan, it must be a punk or an oba-chan.

{ C-Editor's note: Oba-chan - a cute way to say old-lady. }

No matter which type it was, that unnatural feel made me feel disgusted.

But Roxy's hair didn't have that unnatural feeling and it didn't make me feel any disgust.

It could be said that it suited Roxy's sleepy expressions.

If she was a female lead in an ero-game, she was definitely very suited to be conquered first.

"Your hair is really pretty."

"..... Thank you for the compliment, but you should leave that kind of talk for a girl you like in the future."

"But I like Sensei."

I said without hesitation.

I'm not a person who hesitates.

I'll express my love to all the cute girls.

"Right. If you haven't changed your thoughts 10+ years later, we will talk about it again."

"Okay, Sensei."

Even though it was reflected lightly, I didn't miss Roxy's slightly happy expression.

Even though I didn't know how much a good guy's training in ero-games could be used in this different world.

But it can't be said to be completely meaningless.

Something like this dokidoki line might be a clichéd joke in Japan, but it might be a fiery trail to a romantic love.

{ C-Editor's note: Dokidoki - meaning the sound effect for a fast heartbeat. }

Yup, what the heck am I talking about?

Roxy's cute and H. If I can just raise a flag.

But the age difference is quite big.

What's going to happen in the future?

"Going back to that topic, 'the brighter it is, the more dangerous it is' is complete superstition."

"Ah, it's all superstition."

I really thought it was a warning color.

"Yes, the Superd race from the Babinos area is a green-haired race, and they committed a lot of atrocities during the war 400 years ago. That is why they have this rumor, so it really has nothing to do with hair color."

"Many atrocities?"

"Yes. During the 10+ years war, their crimes made both parties feel fear and hatred. Their race is very dangerous, and after the war, they were prosecuted and chased out of the demon continent."

Chased out after the war ended?

That's amazing.

"Are they really that hated....."

"It is simply so."

"What did they do?"

"Well this, I only roughly..... it's just that, I only heard this in my childhood. I heard they attacked a friendly location on the demon races' side and killed all the women and children, or they annihilated every single enemy and then killed their allies. There are also stories about how if you don't sleep at night, a Superd will eat you up, and things like that."

Shimaachau oji-san?

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to a character from the anime Bonobono. }

"The Migurd race is one that's similar to the Superd race, so they were also implicated in the past. Even though your parents will tell you this sooner or later....."

"Remember this."

Roxy emphasized.

"If you see someone that has emerald hair and a ruby-like stone on their forehead, don't approach them. If you have no choice but to talk to them, you must not anger them."

Emerald hair, ruby stone on the forehead.

This seemed to be the Superd race's special trait.

"What happens if you anger them?"

"He might kill your entire family."

"Emerald colored hair and ruby stone on the forehead, right?"

"Yes, the thing on their forehead can see the movements of mana. It's their 3rd eye."

"It can't be that there are only women in the Superd race?"

"Eh? No? There are men too?"

"Will the stone change blue after doing something?"

"Huh? N-no? At least I have never heard of that before."

What the heck are you saying? Roxy tilted her head, confused.

I just wanted to ask for my own satisfaction.

"But that kind of trait is easily recognized right?"

"Yes. If you see them, immediately fake something like "I need to go right now" and avoid them. Suddenly running away might anger them."

Like running away from some delinquent will only make them chase after you.

I had such an experience.

"Based on the things you told me, it will be fine if you respect them?"

"I think it's fine if you don't insult them openly. It's just that since there are many differences between the human race and the demon races' common sense, you might make them angry over some stuff. It's best not to use snide remarks."

Hm.

They seemed to be easily provoked.

But rather than saying we're being hurt, it's better to say that we're afraid.

That feeling of, "oh that guy is going to be scary when he's angry, it's best to avoid him." Something like that.

Scary, scary.

I don't think I can reincarnate after being killed again.

Best to avoid them with everything I have.

The Superd race, don't mess with them.

I carved it into my heart.

The magic classes progressed smoothly.

Recently I could use all the advanced magic.

Of course it's using voiceless incantations.

Compared to the usual training I had, it's as easy as picking my nose when using the advanced magic.

Though the advanced magic are mostly AOE, so using them felt very restrictive.

Rain over a large area - what could I do with it?

I actually had this thought, but it seemed that Roxy produced rain when she came here and received praise for it.

I heard this from Paul when I stayed at home.

Besides that, Roxy received multiple requests from the villagers and used magic to solve various problems.

"I found a large rock when I was turning the soil, please help me Rokaemon!"

{ C-Editor's note: A Doraemon reference. Roxy + Doraemon = Rokaemon. }

"Leave it to me, Dan*rako."

"What magic is that?"

"This magic wets the soil around the rock, and then I'll change it to mud with earth magic, making it combination magic."

"Woah, that's incredible, the rock is sinking!!!"

"Hmphhhh."

That kind of feeling!! (probably)

"As expected of Sensei. You're helping others."

"Helping others? No, this is earning pocket money."

"You're charging?"

"Of course."

What a cheapskate!

Even though I was thinking that, it seemed normal to the villagers.

Because no one else could do this in the village, they kept praising Roxy.

Give and take.

It's my perception that's wrong.

Helping others without compensation is a must.

This is the feeling of a Japanese person.

The norm was to charge money for it.

This was the norm (to charge money). Common sense.

Well, because I'm a NEET who didn't even talk about helping other less fortunate people, I'm treated as a troubled person by my family.

Hahaha.

One random day, I asked.

"Should I call Sensei Shishou?"

{ C-Editor's note: Shishou is an ancient Japanese word for teacher that is more respectful than Sensei. }

In the end, Roxy showed a look of disgust.

"No, you will most likely easily surpass me. It's best not to call me that."

It seemed like I had the potential to surpass Roxy.

I felt a little embarrassed when I got praised like that.

"You wouldn't call someone who's weaker than you Shishou, right?"

"Not at all."

"I hate it. Someone who's better than me calling me Shishou - isn't that embarrassing yourself?"

Is that the case?

"Is it because Sensei is stronger than Sensei's teacher that you say this?"

"Listen to me, Rudi. Shishou, this thing, is someone who can't teach you anything more but still expects things from you ---- This troublesome existence."

"But Roxy won't do that, right?"

"Perhaps I will."

"Even if that's the case, I will still respect you."

Even if it's Roxy who takes up an attitude of asking me to do things.

I will still smile and respect her.

"No, I might be jealous of my student's potential and say something ugly."

"Such as?"

"A mere dirty demon, or something like that, shouldn't go to that village, etc."

Were you criticized like that?

Poor thing.

Discrimination is a bad thing.

But the superior-subordinate relationship had always been this way.

"That's okay, it's just a little thing."

"Just because a person is a little bit older doesn't mean it's totally okay!! A teacher-student relationship without a certain strength will make each other unhappy!!"

I was cut off.

It seemed that her relationship with her teacher was far worse than I imagined.

Because of that, I never called Roxy Shishou.

But I decided to always call her that in my heart.

This girl who still retained a little childishness taught me many things that a book could not.

I'm 5 years old now.

On my birthday, my house held a small party.

This country didn't have the custom of celebrating birthdays every year. However, the norm was that after you reach certain ages, your family members would give you some gifts.

Those certain age points are 5, 10, and 15 years old.

It's easy to understand this norm since you become an adult when you turn 15 years old.

To celebrate that, Paul gave me a pair of swords.

Two swords.

One is a real sword that's too heavy for a 5 year old child. The other is a short wooden sword.

The real sword was forged and sharpened.

It's not meant for a child to use it.

"In a boy's heart, there must be a sword to protect the people important to him-----"

I grin lightly while ignoring his long speech.

Even though Paul is very passionate about his speech, he was cut off by Zenith with a "Too long" at the end.

Thus, he had to end it with "Therefore, you need to put this away carefully and use it only in times of need."

Paul probably wanted me to have the resolution and self-awareness to use a sword.

I received a book from Zenith.

"Because Rudeus seems to like books."

The book that was given to me is a plant encyclopedia.

I couldn't resist letting out a "Woah."

In this world, books are expensive. Even though there is a technique to make paper, there isn't any way to print on them, so most books are hand written.

The encyclopedia is very thick, and there are also illustrations accompanied with it to make it easy to understand.

I can't tell how much was spent on this.

"Thanks, mum. I always wanted this."

And I got hugged tightly after saying that.

I received a staff from Roxy.

A rod around 30 cm in height with a small ruby-colored stone adorned in front of it. The overall appearance is very modest.

"I created this a few days ago. I forgot about it because Rudeus knew how to use magic from the very beginning. Usually, the teacher will make the staff personally to allow students to use elementary rank magic. I'm terribly sorry about it."

There seems to be such a standard.

Roxy hates to be called Shishou, but she didn't want to ignore this standard.

"Yes, Shishou, I will take good care of it."

Roxy shows a bitter expression after hearing what I said.

The second day, I started practicing real sword techniques.

Basically, the primary training is to swing the sword and have a proper stance.

Examples include practicing the form and striking the wooden dummies in the courtyard or having dad as the opponent while learning footwork and shifting my body weight properly.

It is a pleasant feeling to start from the basics.

In this world, sword techniques are highly viewed.

Even in books, heroes are primarily seen using swords as weapons. Though they also used axes and maces, these people belonged to the rare parties.

Nobody uses a spear because the previously mentioned Supard race uses tridents. Spears are weapons of the evil demons, a common knowledge. Even the books have evil demons appearing there as a indiscriminate monster who kills off and devours both parties, regardless of friend or foe.

Because of such a background, the sword techniques are much more involved here than in the previous world.

If you become an expert, you can break boulders with a swing of the sword and even strike down opponents far off in the distance with a sword flash.

In fact, Paul could break boulders.

I continued to praise him constantly to try and understand how the logic works, letting him demonstrate repeatedly. Paul looked delighted when his young, but capable of advanced ranked magic, son is happily applauding and praising him.

Except no matter the times I saw it, I couldn't understand the logic behind it.

Since I didn't understand it, I requested him to explain it.....

"Bam on the ground and swoosh one time!! That sort of feeling."

"Like this!?"

"You silly fool! You're booming the ground and kablaming one time, right!! You must bam on the ground and swoosh one time! Do it more gently!"

That kind of feeling.

Based on my conjecture, this world's sword techniques contain mana.

Compared to magic spells which could be seen with the eyes, sword techniques are specialized to enhance the physical body, and the metallic components in the sword itself reinforces this aspect. Otherwise, how do you cut the boulder before you even finish that high speed movement? Is that even possible?

But Paul isn't conscious of using mana.

So he can't explain it to me.

But if it can be replicated, perhaps it can be used as boost magic for physical body reinforcement.

I'll work hard.

In this world, there are 3 mainstream styles of sword techniques.

--------- One of them is the Sword-God style.

The sword technique acts like offense is the greatest defense. It is a style that places emphasis on striking faster than the opponent.

A certain kill that's swifter than swift.

If you fail to hit the opponent, then just "hit away" until you do.

If you compare it with the original world, it's like the style from the Satsuma prefecture.

{ C-Editor's note: It is suggested that the style used in Japan's Satsuma prefecture need not have the 2nd strike. }

---------- The second is the Water-God style.

This style is the complete opposite of the Sword-God style.

A defensive style that builds its foundation upon parrying and countering.

As the style primarily focuses on defense, moments where one takes the initiative to attack are rare.

When you reach the saint rank, you can counter any kind of attack.

Any kind of attack ------ Including magic and projectiles.

It is a necessary style for classes like the palace knights or nobles, where the goal is to protect someone.

---------- The third one is the North-God style.

Rather than saying the style uses sword techniques, it is better to describe it as a way of fighting.

No special techniques. Merely react based on the situation.

According to Paul, even though it's based on reactions, it also relies on feints and usage of one's surroundings.

This really is something fantastical.

It gives off Jackie Chan vibes.

The North-God style also includes the healing of wounds and being able to battle when afflicted with disabilities. Therefore, it is popular among mercenaries and adventurers.

These 3 styles are called the 3 Major Styles, and there are people in this world who use all 3 styles.

A swordsman who hopes to become an expert in every style and swing the sword until death.

But that type is rarely seen.

If you want to quickly become strong, it is common to just start off with the strong points of each style.

Paul primarily uses the Sword-God style, but he's also capable of using the Water-God and the North-God style.

If you only rely on the Sword-God Style or the Water-God style, you will find it to be insufficient when you roam the outside world.

Just to add on, the sword techniques are also ranked.

Elementary, Intermediate, Advanced, Saint, King, Emperor, God.

And each style already has "God" in their names.

Even if a elementary ranked Water-God style swordsman can also use Water-God ranked magic.

Also, you usually call a swordsman "Water-God" or "Water-Saint." For a magician, you need to add that it's ranked, like "Water-God ranked" or "Water-Saint ranked".

For example, Roxy is a [Water-Saint ranked magician.]

I have to learn 2 styles: the Sword-God style and the Water-God style.

The offensive Sword-God and the defensive Water-God.

"But dad, based on what you said, isn't the North-God style the most balanced?"

"Don't be foolish. That's just using a sword to fight. It's not a technique."

"I see."

The treatment is that bad for the North-God style?

Or is it just that Paul detests it?

Well, even though he hates it, Paul still has an advanced rank in the North-God style.

"Rudeus, you have the talent for magic, but there are no drawbacks in learning sword techniques. Become a magician who can avoid the Sword-God style's attacks."

"Like a..... magic swordsman?"

"Hm? A magic swordsman is a swordsman who uses magic. In your case, it's the opposite right?"

What's the difference?

Even if it's based on a warrior or magician profession, a magic swordsman is still a magic swordsman.

No matter what, learning the sword techniques well can be applied to magic itself.

The problem is that Paul unconsciously strengthens his body, so he can't teach me.

Looks like I need to learn it myself, but can I really learn it just by training the body alone?

"..... Actually, you do hate the sword techniques right?"

Paul asks me with an unsettled expression as I lapse into deep thought.

Because I am praised as gifted with magic after all.

Paul is agonizing over whether I'm willing to learn sword techniques.

But don't get me wrong. I don't hate learning sword techniques. I just like learning from Roxy more than having two stinking males in the courtyard drenched in perspiration.

I'm an indoor type.

Even though this isn't a question that I like.

Since I already decided to live in this world seriously, I'll put my effort in whether its sword techniques or magic.

"No, I hope to have sword skills on the same level as my magic."

Paul becomes moved by my words, nods happily, and picks up the wooden sword.

"Good, then we will start right now. Attack me!!"

He's such a straightforward guy.

Magic techniques or sword techniques. I'm not sure what I should have as my primary focus in the end.

Honestly it doesn't matter.

"Yes, dad!!"

But it's good to be filial to my parents early.

Back in the past, I was still bothering my parents when they died.

If I treated my parents better, my siblings wouldn't have chased me out of the house.

So I need to treat them with importance.

As I take my first step into sword techniques, my magic lessons have progressed into practical uses.

"If you activate Water Fall, Heat Island, and Icicle Field in this order, what will happen?"

"You will create fog."

"Indeed. Then how do you dispel the fog?"

"Well, reheat the earth again."

"Correct answer. Then go ahead and try again."

Creating the current situation with various magic spells in a specific order.

This is called [Melded Magic].

Although how to summon rain is recorded in the textbook, there aren't any notes on how to create fog.

Therefore, a magician will use different magic systems in a specific order. In doing so, one can replicate a natural phenomenon.

There are no microscopes in this world.

Natural phenomenons are not explained.

Melded magic contains the past magicians' creativity and hard work.

Well, I don't need to do something so troublesome.

As long as you produce clouds and make it rain near the ground, it will suffice.

But a man-made phenomenon allows one to understand it easily.

If you ponder on things, you can do a lot.

It might be too difficult on my mind though.

"Magic can really do anything."

"It can't do everything, don't put your trust into it so much. Please calmly do what you can possibly achieve."

Even though Roxy refutes me, my mind has stuff like railguns and cloaking devices popping up.

"Also, if you brag and say that you can do everything, people will push impossible tasks onto you."

"Is that Sensei's experience?"

"Yes."

I see. I should take note of this.

It would be troublesome if I were forced.

"But are there people who force things on magicians?"

"Yes, because there aren't many advanced ranked magicians."

Out of every 20 people, only 1 can take up combat.

Out of every 20 of these people, only 1 is a magician.

Something like that.

A magician is 1 out of 400?

Even though it's not rare to be a magician.

"And a human graduating from a magic school..... As an advanced ranked magician, it's about 1 in 100." Advanced ranked magicians, 1 in 40000.

With the ability to use intermediate and advanced ranked magic to make melded magic, the number of things that can be done will increase immensely.

Therefore, they are prodigies who are highly sought after by every faction.

This country's home tutor must also possess advanced magic and above.

It is a powerful effect for one's position.

"There are magic schools?"

"Yes. Only big countries will have magic schools."

Come to think of it, I always felt there would be something like a magic school.

Is it about to start? The school arc.

"But, the biggest is probably still the university in Ranoa."

Oh, there's a university, too.

"What's the difference between this university and other schools?"

"There are very good facilities and teachers. Compared to other locations, you can receive higher quality lessons."

"Did Sensei come from there too?"

"Yes. Well, magic schools are usually places that require high social standing. As a demon race, I can only enter magic universities....."

As nobles go to Ranoa's magic school, it isn't a place where non-human races can enter.

Even though discrimination against the demon races is dwindling, the way of doing things haven't changed completely.

"Ranoa's university doesn't require high social standing or pride. Even if you have some crazy theories, you will not be rejected as long as the logic is correct. Also, due to the acceptance of various races, there is also research done on magic unique to specific races. If Rudeus wants to start on the road of magic, I would suggest entering the magic university."

Is it because it was her Alma Mater? Roxy keeps praising the university.

Well, that's something for the future.

I might get bullied if I enter at the age of 5.

"It's still too early to make a decision....."

"That's true. I think following Paul's direction, becoming a swordsman or knight, isn't bad. There are also people who are knights and study in the magic university. Please don't think that you have to only choose the sword or magic path. You can also choose the route of a magic swordsman."

"Yes."

It seems that she is the opposite of Paul. Roxy isn't unsettled by whether I hate magic or not.

Recently my mana capacity has increased, and I'm starting to understand the principles.

Due to that, my attention during classes is starting to wane.

Moreover, I started taking magic lessons when I was only 3 years old.

I'm starting to get sick of it.

Maybe I am being misunderstood.

Paul saw my talent for magic.

Roxy saw my passion for the sword.

2 people with their different reasons pointed the middle road out for me.

"But this is something very far away."

"To Rudeus, it is indeed."

Roxy smiles with a hint of loneliness.

"But I am almost out of things to teach you. When you are nearing graduation, this matter should be discussed."

..... Graduate?

Ever since I came to this world, I have not left the house.

I am conscious of the fact that I have never left.

I am truly afraid.

If I walk out of the courtyard and see the scenery outside, my past memories will quickly awaken.

The memories of that day. The pain on the side of my stomach. The piercing cold from the rain. Regret. Despair. The pain from being run over by the truck.

All these memories will return to me, as if it had just happened yesterday.

My legs are shivering.

I can look outside from my window or walk to the courtyard with my own legs.

But I am unable to take another step.

Because I know.

That peaceful scenery of the fields might instantly turn into hell. The seemingly peaceful sights are unable to accept me.

In my past life, I had countless delusions when I was unable to sleep.

What if Japan suddenly went to war. What if a bishoujo suddenly appeared and became my neighbor.

If that happened, I would definitely be able to work hard.

I kept deluding myself so as to escape from reality.

I dreamt of it countless times.

In my dream I'm not Superman, and I still possess the same level as an average person. And like an average person, I was able to do what my limits allowed me to do. I could live by relying on myself.

But I'm going to wake up from this dream.

If I take a step outside this house, I may possibly wake up from this dream.

And when I wake up, I will return to that moment of despair.

That instant when I was drowned by regret.....

No, this isn't a dream.

How can there be such a realistic dream like this.

If you tell me that this is a VRMMORPG, I might still accept it.

This is reality.

I keep convincing myself.

This reality is not a dream.

Even though I understand that it is a fact, I am unable to take a step outside.

No matter how much effort I put into my heart.

I swore to live on earnestly with my lips.

But my body is unable to keep up.

I really want to cry.

The graduation test is to be held outside the village.

When Roxy told me that, I let out a weak groan of resistance.

"Outside?"

"Yes, outside the village. The horses have been prepared."

"Can't it be done at home?"

"No."

"It can't be done.....?"

I am completely lost.

My heart knows it. That I have to take a step outside the house gates.

How can I be a hikikomori in this world.

But my body is refusing it. It still distinctly remembers that past event.

On that fateful day in my past life, I was beaten and bruised all over by delinquents, viciously mocked by them, and my heart was left with huge psychological damage.

That fateful day when I had no choice, but to shut myself indoors.

"What's wrong?"

"No..... that..... there might be some monsters outside."

"In this area, it's almost impossible to run into monsters if you don't approach the forests. Also, even if we do run into them, I can handle it by myself since they are weak. In fact, even Rudei can handle them."

Roxy shows a surprised expression when I keep finding all sorts of excuses up till now.

"Ah, I think I had heard of it before. Rudei, have you never left the house?"

"Mmmm... yes."

"Are you afraid of it? The horse."

"I-I'm not afraid of horses or things like that."

Actually I sort of like it.

I also played the game Japaneses Derby.

"Haha. I'm relieved. You have areas that match your age."

Roxy got the wrong idea.

But I can't say that I'm afraid of going out.

That is something much more embarrassing than being afraid of horses.

I still have my pride.

A pure scintilla of pride.

I don't want to be looked down by this young girl.

"Oh well, it can't be helped. Here."

Seeing that I am unwilling to move, Roxy suddenly carries me on her shoulders.

"Wha!?"

"If you just sit on it, you soon won't be afraid."

I don't struggle.

My heart is wavering as well, and I'm thinking of just leaving it to her.

Roxy throws me onto the back of the horse.

Then she also climbs up and takes hold of the reins.

The horse patters forward.

I simply leave the house in that manner.

This is my first time outside the courtyard after coming to this world.

Roxy is slowly moving forward in the village.

From time to time, the villagers will throw us unreserved gazes.

No way.

My body is tensing up.

I am still afraid of being looked at.

Especially those mocking and unrestrained gazes.

Surely they wouldn't court trouble with us with mocking words.

They probably wouldn't.

They don't recognize me.

In this world, only the people in that small house know me.

Why are you looking at me.

Stop looking, go back to work.....

.....No.

It's not me.

They are looking at Roxy.

Some of them are greeting Roxy.

Ah, that's right.

She has already established her position in this village.

Even though the discrimination against the demon races is quite severe in this country.

And in this rural area, this contrast is even more apparent.

Within a short period of 2 years, she has become a figure who everyone is willing to greet.

When I think of this point, Roxy's back looks so reliable.

She knows where to go, and they mutually know her.

If I receive any unwanted comments, she will definitely defend me.

Haah, I can't believe that I find this young girl, who peeked at the events in the master bedroom, to be so reliable.

Thus, my body's tension fades away.

"Kalajav's mood is pretty good. It's feeling happy that Rudei is riding it."

Kalajav is the horse's name.

Of course, I can't read a horse's mood.

"Is that so."

I replied nonchalantly as I leaned backwards, the back of my head hitting Roxy's flat chest.

How comfortable.

What exactly am I afraid of.

This is such a peaceful village. Who will bully me?

"Are you still scared?"

She asks and I shake my head.

I am not afraid of other people's gazes anymore.

"No, I'm fine already."

"See, it's just like I said."

My heart has more breathing space.

The surroundings enter my eyes.

Fields and houses, like stars in the sky, stretch out into the distance.

The feeling of a village.

I can see a considerable number of people within this huge radius. If they are more packed up, it might possibly turn into a small town.

If there were windmills, it might possibly let people think of Switzerland.

Ah, there are water mills.

After relaxing, I become conscious of the silence for a while. I have never experienced this kind of silence when I was with Roxy in the past.

I have never tried to stick so closely to her. Even though it's not unbearable, it is embarrassing.

So I decide to strike up a conversation.

"Sensei, what does this field grow?"

"It's mainly Asura's wheat, the component for bread. There are also small amounts of green vegetables and Bardius flowers. Bardius flowers can be refined into spices in the capital. The rest are ingredients for the dining table."

"Ah, that's green chili. Sensei is unable to eat that."

"N-not unable to eat it. I'm just not used to it."

I ask question after question.

Today, Roxy said that this is the last test.

That is to say, her working as a home tutor is about to end.

Roxy is an impatient person. Since today is the final day, it is possible that she will leave this house tomorrow.

Today is the last day. Let's talk a bit more.

But I can't find anything interesting to talk about. I can only keep asking things about the village.

Based on Roxy's descriptions, this village's name is Buina, and it is part of the northern Asuran Kingdom's Fedoa region.

There are about 30 families here, mainly farmers.

My father Paul, is the delegated knight of this village.

His duty is to observe the farmers' situation, to be the mediator for the village's quarrels, and to defend the village from monsters. Such is his job.

In other words, a recognized bodyguard of the kingdom.

But even if that's the case, this village has a rotation of youths in charge of security.

So when Paul finishes his rounds in the morning, he stays at home in the afternoon.

It's basically a peaceful village, so there's nothing much to do.

As we finished these topics, the fields around us gradually thinned.

I didn't have anything more to ask, and the silence went on for a period of time.

Approximately another hour passed.

There aren't any fields surrounding us anymore. We have arrived in a completely untouched grassland area.

This is the kind of grassland that stretches towards the horizon.

No, at the furthest one can barely see some hints of a mountainous area.

At least this scenery can't be seen in Japan.

It gives me a feeling that there is a place like this in a textbook, like the Mongolian grasslands.

"It should be fine if we are here."

Roxy directs the horse to a lone tree and ties the reins onto it.

Then she carries me down from the horse.

We are finally face-to-face.

"I'm going to use the saint ranked water attack magic, Cumulonimbus. This technique is a magic that creates lightning strikes with violent rain."

"Yes."

"Please copy what I do."

Using a saint ranked water magic.

So it is this. The content of the final test.

Roxy is about to use her biggest spell. If I'm capable of learning it, she will not have anything more to teach me.

"Because I'm only demonstrating, I'll just maintain the spell for a minute before dismissing it, and then..... You pass if you can make the rain last for an hour."

"Is it because it's a secret technique that you only did it in a deserted location?"

"No, I'm worried that people will get hurt or the farmers' crops get damaged."

Oh.

It's rain at a natural disaster level?

That's quite amazing.

"I'm starting."

Roxy raises her hands to the skies.

"Oh great water spirit, the son of the lightning emperor who ascended to the skies!! Fulfill my wishes, rain down your ferocious blessings, and show me your strength to this tiny existence! Let your godly hammer strike the anvil, and demonstrate your authority, and devour the earth with water!! Ah, the rain!! Destroy and wash everything away!!『Cumulonimbus!!』"

She chants every word out like an aria.

It lasts over a minute.

The surroundings turn dark immediately when the chanting ends.

A few seconds later..... heavy rain falls from the sky.

Violent winds spring up around us as lightning appeared in the midst of the dark clouds.

Among the sounds of the waterfall-like rain, streaks of purple lightning ran through the clouds, causing loud booms.

The electricity in the clouds slowly becomes stronger.

The lightning continues to grow, as if to make the light become stronger.

.....It strikes the earth.

Krash!!

And it strikes the tree.

My eardrums are buzzing and my eyes are in spirals.

I almost fainted.

"Ah!!"

This is the sound Roxy utters when she makes a mistake.

The clouds disperse in an instant.

The lightning and rain stop.

"Uwawa....."

Roxy face turns green as she ran towards the tree.

I look over in her direction. The horse that we brought has collapsed with smoke rising from it.

Roxy brings her hand over to the horse and begins chanting.

"Oh merciful mother of gods, please heal this one's wounds, and let him recover with a healthy body 『EXHealing』."

Roxy uses the intermediate ranked healing magic in a panic, and after a while, the horse wakes up.

Looks like it's not dead.

Intermediate ranked healing magic cannot bring the dead back to life.

The horse shows a frightened expression, and Roxy's forehead breaks out cold sweat.

"Phew, phew..... That was dangerous."

This horse is the only horse our family has.

Paul takes great care of it everyday, and would sometimes ride it outside far away with a smile...

Even though it's not a famous breed, it is Paul's long-time companion. One might even say that his love for the horse is just below his love for Zenith. Such is the importance of this horse.

Of course, Roxy, who has lived with us for 2 years, knows it.

I also know that Roxy witnessed Paul being in a trance while clinging onto the horse's back and was surprised by it.

"Please, keep this a secret?"

Roxy says in a half-crying voice.

She's a little clumsy.

But she works hard. I also know that she stays up late into the night to prepare my lessons.

I also know that she doesn't want to be looked down on because of her young age, and always tries to present herself with dignity.

I really like that appearance.

If there wasn't such a large difference in age, I would like to marry her.

"Don't worry, I won't tell father."

"Uuuu..... Please do so."

If only we met at the same age.

"Uuu....."

Even though Roxy is in a half-crying state, she quickly shakes her head, slaps her cheek, looks at me with a solemn expression.

"Then, please go ahead and try. I will take care of Kalajav."

The horse still shows an afraid expression and is ready to run away at any time now, but Roxy clings to it tightly with her body and reins it in.

Even though I feel that she is unable to restrain it, the horse slowly calms down. Roxy maintains her position and starts chanting something.

And then the the two of them are covered by earthen walls.

A fortress made of earth is completed quickly.

This is the advanced ranked earth magic, Earth Fortress.

With this, it should be fine even if they receive lightning strikes.

Alright, time to start.

Let me think what the chant is.....

"Oh great water spirit, the son of the lightning emperor who ascended to the skies!! Fulfill my wishes, rain down your ferocious blessings, and show me your strength to this tiny existence! Let your godly hammer strike the anvil, and demonstrate your authority, and devour the earth with water!! Ah, the rain!! Destroy and wash everything away!!『Cumulonimbus!!』"

I say it all in one shot.

The clouds start to gather.

At the same time, I understood 『Cumulonimbus』.

Creating clouds somewhere in the middle stratosphere along with complex movements to form storm clouds. It's probably something like that.

If mana isn't poured into the formation, the clouds will stop forming and dissipate.

(Never mind about the mana, it's too tiring to raise your hands for 1 hour.....)

No, wait.

A magician requires a spirit of creativity and research.

Do you really need to maintain the posture like collecting Genki for an hour?

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to a Dragon Ball Z attack. }

That's right, this is a test.

It isn't about maintaining the same position, but about using melded magic after creating the clouds to sustain them.

I almost fail to think of it. The things I've learned are about to be used.

"Let me think. I saw it before on television. The process of how clouds form....."

There are still some of the clouds that Roxy made earlier.

It's something about how water evaporation spirals up. To create a certain rising air flow, you need to let the bottom part become warm, or something like that.

And I need to ensure that the upper section can be quickly cooled down....

When I try to do this, half of my mana is actually taken away.

But if it's done this way, then it should be able to maintain itself for more than an hour.

While looking at the rainstorm, I enter the fortress made by Roxy with satisfaction.

Roxy is sitting in the dark corner, her hands holding onto the horse's reins.

She sees me and nods.

"This fortress will disappear after an hour, so you can stop the magic before then."

"Okay."

"Don't worry. Kalajav is fine."

"Okay."

"Don't keep saying okay. You need to control the clouds outside seriously for an hour."

Hm?

"Do I need to control it?"

"Hm? Did I say something strange?"

"But is there a need to control it?"

"Of course. saint ranked water magic is also magic. If you don't sustain it with mana, the wind will blow it away."

"But I already made it so that it can't be blown away.....?"

"Huh? What.....!?"

Roxy, who seems to have noticed something, runs out of the fortress.

The fortress immediately falls apart.

Hey hey, aren't you going to continue controlling it?

The horse will get buried alive.

"Arara."

I quickly take over and walk outside.

Roxy stares blankly at the skies.

".....Is that so, the spiraling tornado will bring the clouds upwards....!!"

The skies are filled with the ever-growing clouds that I created.

I think I did a pretty good job.

I watched a random show in the past that used science to explain the process behind huge tornadoes.

Even though I can't really remember its contents.

I just tried it relying on my instinct, and in the end I seem to have done it pretty well.

"Rudei. You pass."

"Eh? But it hasn't been an hour?"

"There's no need to wait. It's enough if you did this much. But can you make it disappear?"

"Ah, yes. Although I need a bit of time."

I lower the temperature at the bottom part of the storm while increasing the temperature of the top. Then I create an air flow towards the ground before finally using wind magic to forcibly blow the clouds away.

Roxy and I are completely soaked by the time I'm done with it.

"Congratulations. The you right now is at the Water-Saint ranked."

The bishoujo in front of me with water dripping from her fringe announces it to me with a rarely seen smile.

The me who had never achieved anything in life has finally accomplished something.

A strange sensation seems to spread across my abdomen.

I know this feeling.

It's a sense of fulfillment.

I finally feel it in this moment, that this is my [First step] after coming to this world.

On the second day, Roxy, who hasn't changed in the past 2 years, packs up her luggage and stands in front of the gates.

My parents didn't change too much either since Roxy came.

I am the only one who has grown taller.

"Roxy, it's fine if you want to continue staying in our home. There are many things I haven't cooked for you...."

"That's right. Even if your job as a home tutor is over, you have done many things for us last year. The people from the village will definitely welcome you."

My parents are trying to keep Roxy.

Somewhere along the way, Roxy and my parents have become close.

Well, she's always free from the afternoon to the evening. If she did something every day, she should be able to get a lot of contacts.

A thing unlike a protagonist who has to do a lot of things, otherwise their stats won't change.

"No. Thank you for saying this, but this situation has let me realize my weakness. I will tour the world and polish up my magic skills."

She seems to have received a shock after I caught up with her in rank.

She told me in the past how she hated students surpassing the teacher.

"Is that so. Here, what can I say. My apologies, it seems our son has made you lose confidence."

Paul, what the heck are you saying.

"No, this event has made me learned not to be too full of myself. I'm actually grateful for this."

"It's okay to be proud of yourself if you can use saint ranked water magic."

"I understand that even if you don't rely on that, if you base it on creativity, then you can come up with even stronger magic."

Roxy smiles bitterly while stroking my head.

"Rudei. Even though I tried my best, I am unable to teach you at my current level."

"This isn't true. Sensei gave me many things."

"I'm satisfied if you say that..... Ah, right."

Roxy searches her mantle with her hand and pulls out something tied with a ribbon.

"Congrats on your graduation. Because I didn't have time to prepare, take this and bear with it."

"This is.....?"

"Migurd's protection amulet. If you ever come across a hostile demon, you can present this with my name. You might come to an understanding..... probably."

"I will treat it with care."

"It's only a possibility. Don't believe in it too much."

Roxy smiles at the very end and sets off.

I don't know when my tears started flowing.

She really gave me a lot.

Knowledge, experience, technique.....

If I didn't meet up with her, I might still be studying inefficiently with my hand holding onto the magic textbook.

And most importantly, she brought me out.

To the outside world.

Merely that.

Roxy brought me out.

This event carries an important meaning.

Roxy only came to this village for 2 years.

Roxy, who didn't know how to communicate well with others.

As a person from a demon race, Roxy couldn't have been treated well by the villagers.

It wasn't Paul or Zenith, but Roxy who brought me out to the world. This important meaning.

She only brought me outside of the village.

But the thought of just taking a step outside the gate was definitely a shadow within my heart.

And she cured it.

Just passing through the village.

My heart has been released and freed from the darkness.

She didn't have the intention to make me become a better person.

But it is undeniable that she dispelled my heart's shadow.

I took another step outside the gates yesterday when we got drenched.

There is only the ground.

The normal ground.

I'm not shivering.

I can finally walk outside.

She did something no one else had done.

Not even my parents or siblings did it in my past life.

She did it.

Taking on the responsibility to give me courage without any rebuke.

She did not do it consciously.

I understand that.

She did it for herself.

I know that.

But I still respect her.

I respect the small girl.

I swear it in my heart to respect her until her figure disappears.

My hands are holding onto the staff and amulet that Roxy gave me.

As well as the various knowledge she taught me.

I suddenly remember.

The panties that hadn't been washed and were stolen from Roxy are still in my room.

I'm sorry.

I decided to try going out.

It wasn't easy for Roxy to bring me out. This shouldn't be wasted.

"Dad. Can I go out to play?"

On a particular day, I asked Paul while carrying a botanical encyclopedia.

Kids around this age will run off to unknown places in the blink of an eye.

Even though I won't go very far away, not telling someone will make my parents worry.

"Outside? To play? Not in the courtyard?"

"Yes."

"O-ohh. Of course."

He easily agrees.

"Come to think of it, there wasn't really any personal time given to you. We made arbitrary decisions to let you learn magic and sword techniques at the same time, but playing is also important for a child."

"I'm grateful to have met a great teacher."

I actually thought Paul was a very strict person in regards to education, but in reality he has a tender side to his thinking.

I even considered the possibility of being requested to train my sword techniques for the entire day. What a waste of my efforts.

Even though he's a person who belongs to the instinctive side, he's not the "if there's a will, there's a way" type.

"Come to think of it, you actually want to go outside, hm. I always felt your body was weak in the past. Time passes by really quickly."

"Did you consider my body to be weak?"

This is the first time I've heard of it. I haven't caught any illnesses.

"Because you didn't cry at all when you were young."

"Is that so. Well, isn't it good there's nothing wrong? You raised a cute and robust kid, heh."

I show a funny face to Paul, and he smiles wryly at me.

"You're actually making me worry when you're not acting like a kid."

"Which part are you unsatisfied with when your eldest son is reliable?"

"No, nothing really."

"It's okay if you educated me with an unsatisfied expression to become a worthy successor to the Greyrat family."

"I can say without pride that your dad is a wild child who only thinks of flipping girls' skirts all day long."

"Flipping skirts hmm?"

This world also has it?

This guy, actually saying that he's a wild child.

"If you want to be worthy of the Greyrat's name, bring a girlfriend back."

What? We're that type of family?

Aren't we protecting the borders? Aren't we lower ranked nobility?

There aren't any formalities or anything? No, in any case we're only lower ranked. Then let it be that way.

"I got it. Then, I'll go to the village to find a place where I can flip skirts."

"Ah, you must treat girls nicely. Also, don't be haughty because you're strong and capable of using magic. The strength of a male doesn't exist for the purpose of putting on airs."

Oh, that was well said.

Indeed, indeed, I really want to let my past brothers listen to that too.

That's right, just using brute force to do things is pointless.

Paul said it very well. I'm also a logical person.

"I understand Dad. The purpose of being strong is to act cool in front of girls!"

"..... No, it's not like that."

Eh? The topic isn't going towards that direction?

Oops. Hehe.

"I'm just kidding. It exists to protect the weak right?"

"Mmmm, that's right."

As we finish talking about this, I place the botanical encyclopedia under my arm and stick the rod Roxy gave to me on my waist. As I prepare to depart, I suddenly remember something and turn my head.

"Ahh, that's right. Dad, I will go out from time to time in the future, but I'll tell someone if I go out and I won't miss my daily sword and magic practice. I'll come back before dusk and I won't go to dangerous places."

"Ah..... Hoh."

I'll make things clear just in case.

Paul suddenly becomes speechless.

Actually, these are supposed to be your lines right?

"Well, I'm heading out."

".....Be careful on the road."

Just like that, I walk out of the gate.

After a few days.

The outside isn't scary. It's smooth. I even manage to cheerfully greet the people who pass by.

Everyone knows me too. Paul and Zenith's kid. Roxy's disciple.

I'll introduce myself to the people I meet for the first time. I'll say hello to the people I meet the second time. Everyone replies to me with a smile on their face too.

It has been such a long time since I felt so relaxed.

More than half of the reason for this is due to Paul and Zenith's fame. The rest is thanks to Roxy.

These are basically Roxy's efforts.

I'll take good care of the divine artifact (panties).

Well now,.

The goal of going out is to rely on my own feet (including my foot between my legs) and memorize the surroundings' geography.

If I memorize it, I won't be lost even if I suddenly get chased out from home to chase after skirts.

At the same time, I wanted to investigate the plants.

Incidentally, I have the botanical encyclopedia and I can identify what's edible and what's not, as well as differentiate between medicinal and poisonous plants..... It's good to identify them when you're horny.

That way, even if I'm chased out from home I won't get hungry.

Roxy just gave me a rough idea about the village plants, wheat, vegetables, and ingredients for creating perfume.

The ingredient for creating the perfume are flowers from the plant named Bardius, which resembles lavender.

A faint purplish color, and also edible.

With emphasis on eye-catching plants, I compare the plants I see with the botanical encyclopedia.

But the village isn't very big, so there aren't many varieties of plants.

After a few days, my routes have become broader, and I started moving in the direction to the forest.

There are many types of plants in the forest.

"Based on rumors, it is more dangerous inside the forest because mana tends to gather there easily."

The areas where mana tends to gather easily will have a higher chance of creating monsters.

This is because creatures will undergo sudden changes due to the mana.

Though I don't know why mana gathers inside the forest easily.

But this area has very few monsters here since the village will hunt them periodically, making it safer.

Monster Hunting is exactly as the words mean.

Every month, knights, hunters, and the self-patrolling team of men will go out in full force to enter the forest and clear them out.

But it is said that deep inside the forest, there might be the possibility of a fearsome monster.

Even though I know magic and have some form of fighting strength, I'm still a NEET who has never fought before.

I can't be arrogant.

I don't have actual combat experience. It would be terrible if I made a mistake because of complacency.

I have seen a lot of people dying like that..... in manga.

Also, I'm not a hot-blooded person. I feel that avoiding fights is the best.

If I see any creature, I'll run to Paul and report it.

I'll do just that.

I climb up a small hill as I think.

There's a huge solitary tree that stands high above.

It's the biggest tree around here.

I am planning to check out what sort of trees here are the biggest.

And at this moment.

"Demons shouldn't stay here!"

The voice carries along with the wind.

It reminds me of a hated memory.

The kind that made stay home as a NEET.

As well as the nightmarish time when I had the nickname, "Uncircumcised Dong".

And this voice greatly resembles the voice that used to call me that.

Clearly distinct voices belonging to bullies.

"Get lost!!"

"Eat this!"

"I managed to hit!"

I take a look over and find the field that turned into a marsh-like area from the recent rainy days.

In the field, I see 3 mud-covered kids throwing mud at a small boy.

"You get 10 points if you hit the head!"

"Okay!"

"I got it! I got it!"

Woah. This is really irritating. Bullies spotted. These delinquents feel that it's fine to do anything to the lower ranked people in society. Buying air guns and shooting at them. It's clearly stated that you can't shoot at humans. They don't even treat them as humans.

You can't treat them as humans.

And talking about that small boy, it would be fine if he runs away quickly, but I don't understand why he's taking his sweet time.

I take another look at him, and finally realize that he's carrying something like a basket in front of his chest, hugging it to protect it from the mud.

Thus, he's unable to avoid the attacks from the bullies.

"He's carrying something!!"

"The demon's treasure!!"

"He must have stolen it from somewhere!!"

"Hitting it gets 100 points!!"

"Steal the treasure!!"

As I run towards the bullying boys, I create a mud ball using magic. The instant I'm within firing distance, I throw it with all my strength.

"Wah!"

"What's wrong!?"

I hit the face of the one who looks like the leader.

"Ouch, it went into my eyes."

"What are you doing!!"

"Get lost if it doesn't concern you!!"

"Are you trying to become the ally of the demon races!!"

The target changed to me in an instant.

This is the same no matter what world it is.

"I'm not the ally of the demon races. I'm the ally of the weak."

I said with pride, but the young boys feel they are standing on justice's side.

"What the heck are you acting cool for!!"

"You're the kid from that knight, right!!"

"The nobles' 'young master,' hah!!"

Arara, this is bad. My identity has been divulged.

"Do you really think it's good for a knight's kid to do this!!"

"I'll tell other people the knights have become allies with the demon races!!"

"Tell our brothers to come now!!"

"Brother!! There's a strange person here!!"

The kids use Call For Allies!

But it isn't effective at all.

However, my legs are trembling!

Gosh, even though it's 3 people on the other side, the fact that my legs went weak because of the kids' shouting is really too embarrassing.

Is this the result of being bullied into a NEET.....

"S-shut up! You're the worst for bullying 1 person when you have 3!"

They showed a Huh~? expression.

A-annoying.

"You're the one who's annoying, what are you shouting for, idiot!!"

Because I'm angry, I throw a ball at them. It misses.

"Idiot!!"

"Where did this guy pick up mud from!!"

"Who cares, just throw back at him!!"

I'm treated with thrice the retaliation. I rely on what Paul had taught and use my magic to avoid them all elegantly.

"I c-can't hit him!!"

"Why are you evading!!"

Hahaha, it's nothing special if you can't hit me!

They keep throwing for a while, but after realizing they can't hit me, they stop as if they were finding it boring.

"Ah~ahh! This is boring!!"

"Let's go!!"

"I'll tell others that the knight's kid has become an ally of the demon races!!"

We didn't lose. We only got tired of playing.

Leaving this line of argument behind, the 3 brats walk to the other side of the wheat field.

Success! I won against bullies for the first time in my life!

W-well, it's nothing much to be proud of.

Well, come to think of it, I'm still not good at fighting. It's great that it didn't turn into a fight.

"Hey, are you alright? Are your things fine?"

In any case, I turn my head back to look at the young boy who was thrown at.....

"Wooah....."

There's a bishounen who makes people think he's not of the same age.

Hair slightly too long for a child, sculpted-like nose, small cute lips, pointed chin. His porcelain-like skin ----- along with an expression like a frightened rabbit, creates an indescribable aesthetic beauty to him.

Damn. If Paul was more of a bishounen, then maybe I would also.....

No, Paul isn't bad. Zenith is also very good-looking.

This face has no problems.

Compared to the previous face that was full of fat cellulose, there's absolutely no problem.

Definitely, yup.

"Um..... Um.... I'm f-fine...."

The young boy shows me a weak expression.

He's almost like a small animal, making people feel like there's a need to protect it.

This is an instant hook to any shotacon onee-san if they saw him.

But he's dirtied by mud everywhere now.

Mud is everywhere on his clothes. Half of his face is covered with mud, and his hair has been turned into the color of mud too.

It is a miracle that he managed to protect the basket.

There's no choice.

"Put the things down and kneel beside the drain over there for a while."

"Eh.....? Eh.....?"

Even though he is bewildered, I don't know why he still followed the order.

As if he is unable to go against any orders.

Well, if he was able to go against orders, he would have retaliated just now.

The young boy goes down on all fours and faces toward the drain.

If any shotacon onii-chan saw that, he would have definitely done something that is illegal..

"Close your eyes."

I adjust the temperature of the water to appropriate level with fire magic.

I create warm water at around 40 degrees.

And pour it over the young boy.

"Waah!!"

I grab the panicking young boy's neck and wash clean the mud from his hair.

Even though he resisted at the start, after he got used to the temperature, he quietens down.

His clothes..... Well, it's better to wash it at home.

"Alright, this should be enough."

After washing the mud off, I use fire magic to create a hot wind like a hair-dryer as I use a handkerchief to carefully wipe the young boy's face.

Along with Elf-like long ears, his emerald-colored hair also appear before me.

The moment I saw the color, I remember Roxy's words.

"Absolutely do not approach the race with emerald-colored hair."

Erm?

No, there's something slightly different.

I remember it's.....

"To those with emerald colored hair with a ruby-colored stone on their forehead, do not approach them."

Yup, that's right.

The race that has a ruby-colored stone on their forehead.

The young boy has a big forehead with a beautiful white color.

OK, it's safe.

He's not from the dangerous Superd race.

"T.... Thanks....."

I come back to my senses after he thanks me.

Hey, hey, that made me jump a little.

I give conceited advice to him with the slight intent of venting my embarrassment.

"Hey you. If you don't fight back they will always come after you."

"I can't win....."

"The most important thing is to have the will to fight back."

"But they are always bigger kids..... I'm scared of pain....."

I see.

If he resists, they will call other people to completely force him into submission?

This is certainly the same in any world.

Because of Roxy's efforts, the adults accept the demon races, but children are different.

Sometimes they are incredibly cruel.

If anyone is slightly different, they will reject them.

"It must be hard on you. Because your hair color resembles that of the Superd race, you got bullied."

"Are y-you fine with it.....?"

"It's because my teacher is also from a demon race. What race are you from?"

Roxy said the Migurd race is close to the Superd race.

Perhaps he is also something like that.

I ask him with this line of thought, but the young boy shakes his head.

".....I don't know."

Hmm, you don't know?

Perhaps it's because of his age?

"What's your father's race?"

"..... He's half-human, half-elf."

"How about your mother?"

"Human, but she has a little of a beast race lineage....."

Half elf and 1/4 of a beast race lineage?

That is why he has this kind of hair.....?

When I am thinking it through, the young boy's eyes fill with tears.

"......So, even though my father says..... I'm not from a demon race..... but, my hair color, is different from my father and mother's...."

I comfort him by stroking his head.

But it's also a big problem if the hair color is different.

There's the possibility of his mother committing adultery with another guy.

"The only difference is the hair color?"

"..... My ears, are longer than father's....."

"I see...."

Green haired, long-ear magical races..... it could be possible that anywhere has that.

Hmm, even though I don't want to ask too much about another person's home, I'm also a bullied child, so it's best to help him. It's too sad if he gets bullied just because of his hair color.

The fact I got bullied is partly my fault.

But this young boy is different. Reincarnating and then relying on himself is impossible.

He has been pelted with mud because his hair color is slightly green since birth.

Uuuu..... just thinking of that makes me frightened enough to pee.

"Is your father nice to you?"

"..... Yes. Even though he's scary when he's angry, he won't get angry if I listen to him."

"Is that so. How about your mother?"

"She's very gentle."

Hoh. From his voice, his parents are very loving toward him.

No, you can't really be clear about these things.

"Alright, let's go."

".....Go, go where?"

"I'll follow you."

Following the kid will allow me to see his parents. It's super logical.

".....W-why do you want to follow me?"

"Well you see, those guys might come back. Let me escort you. Are you going back? Or do you want to send this basket somewhere?"

"I'm sending food..... to father...."

His father is half-elf?

When it comes to elves in story books, they are long-lived, solitary, and arrogant to other races. They are well-versed in archery and magic, especially water and wind magic. With bona fide long ears.

According to Roxy, "Basically the description fits, but they aren't really a race that's closed off."

Just as expected, are the elves beautiful in appearance? No, elves being beautiful is merely Japanese imagination. In Western games, they are frail-looking and don't really look that pretty. There are some cultural differences in our countries.

Although, from looking at this boy, one would know that his parents must be a striking combination of charm.

"May I ask..... why are you protecting me?"

The young boy stutters, with his actions seemingly raising a desire to protect him.

"Because my father says it's a must to be an ally of the weak."

"But..... you will get shunned by others."

That's true.

If I help bullied people, I'll get bullied too ---- A common thing.

"Then how about you play with me. From today onward, we're friends."

"Eh!?"

So let's form a tag-team, yeah.

Chain bullying usually happens after the helped party betrays its benefactor. The person who got help should take up responsibility and be grateful to the person who helped. Although the circumstances around this boy are different, there's a more deep-rooted reason to his bullying. I doubt he will betray me and join in the bullying.

"Ah, do you need to help with housework?"

"N-no."

I also need to listen to his opinions, but he shakes his head with a weak expression.

His expression is just too amazing. He will absolutely hook onee-chans with shotacon tendencies.

Well this idea is pretty good.

He will definitely be very popular among the girls with his face. Then, if I'm with him, anyone who's left over might take notice of me. Even though my face isn't anything special, if we two guys stand together, we will look like a quality catch.

Any girls who are not so confident will change their target to me.

I prefer them over the girls brimming with confidence.

It should work. Girls will move together with uglier ones to accentuate their beauty. I'm the opposite.

"Syl...ph-----"

He quietly whispers, but I didn't really hear the latter half of it. Sylph, huh.

"It's a great name. Just like the spirit of the wind."

As I say it, Sylph blushes and nods.

Sylph's dad is also a bishounen.

Long pointed ears, shining golden hair, and a little body without muscles. He doesn't stain the reputation of a "Half-elf" in the slightest, and as a male he inherited the good points of the elves and the human race.

He's standing on the top of the watch tower, his hand holding a bow while overseeing the forest.

"Dad, this, bento....."

"Ah, I'm always troubling you, Luffy. You didn't get bullied today?"

"No, someone helped me."

Introduced by his eyes, I make a simple greeting.

Luffy is his nickname huh. Why is there a feeling that he will suddenly extend his limbs?

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the One Piece character. }

If Sylph was so optimistic, he might not have been bullied.

"I'm pleased to meet you. My name is Rudeus Greyrat."

"Greyrat..... You're Paul's family?"

"Yes. Paul is my father."

"Ohh, I heard of you. You're really a polite child. Oh, my apologies. I'm Rawls. I'm usually hunting in the forest."

According to him, this watch tower is meant to observe if any monsters come from the forest. It is manned 24 hours a day, patrolled by the men of the village. Paul also takes the shift, so Rawls has met up with him before, and the two of them have discussed their children with each other.

"Our child appears this way because she resembles our ancestors a little. Please get along well with this child."

"Of course. Even if Sylph is from the Supard race, my attitude will not change. I swear upon my father's name."

After hearing that, Rawls utters a voice of admiration.

"You understand about honor at such a young age..... I'm envious of Paul having such an excellent child."

"Being excellent when one is young does not mean that one will continue to be excellent. It's not too late if you want to be envious. You can wait until Sylph grows up."

I also comfort Sylph at the same time.

"I see..... You're exactly as Paul described."

".....What did father say?"

"He says he loses confidence as a father when he converses with you."

"Is that so. Well, I will do some wrong things from now on so he can give me a sermon."

The corner of my sleeves is pulled as I'm talking about this. When I look back, I see that Sylph is lowering his head while pulling on my sleeves. Is it too boring for a child when adults are talking?

"Rawls-san. Can we play for a little while?"

"Ah, of course. But don't approach the forest."

It isn't really necessary for this point to be said.....

But it's probably insufficient.

"There's a really big tree up on the hill when we came here. We will play over there, and I'll bring Sylph back before the sun sets. But if you don't see us when you return home, then the possibility of us being in some form of trouble is very high, so please search for us then."

"Ah..... Hah."

Well this is a world without handphones. Reports, communications and discussions must be held up.

There is no possible way to completely avoid accidents. It is imperative to immediately take corrective actions.

Even though there is good national security in this country, one wouldn't know what sort of dangers are lurking.

Amidst Rawls' stunned gaze, we walk towards the big tree in the hills.

"Well what should we play?"

"D-don't know..... I never played with f-friends before....."

Sylph seems to be hesitating about the "friends" issue. He probably didn't have any friends before.

How sad. Even though I don't have friends now either.

"Hmm. Come to think of it, I'm also one who has stayed indoors until now. What shall we play?"

Sylph fidgets with his hands and looks up to me by raising his head.

I'm about the same height as he is, but he's bending his body while raising his head to look at me.

"Erm, why do you change between I (BOKU) and I (ORE) from time to time?"

"Hm? Ahh. It's impolite if you don't change your speech accordingly to match the person's position. It's necessary to use polite speech towards someone with a higher position."

"Polite speech?"

"It is what I did earlier."

"Hrm?"

He doesn't seem to understand, but this is something that one will slowly learn.

This is how one becomes an adult.

"Instead of this, about that earlier, teach me."

"That earlier?"

Sylph blinks and uses his hands to explain.

"The hot water that gushes out from your hands, and the hot wind that blows. That."

"Ah--. That."

The magic that I used to wash off the mud from him.

"Is it hard?"

"Even though it's hard, if you practice, anyone can do it..... probably."

The recent capacity of mana has increased so much that I don't know how much I have. Plus I'm not sure about the average mana capacity of the people here.

Although, it is just using fire magic to heat up water. If it's not using voiceless incantations to create instant hot water, then anyone is probably able to replicate it using melded magic. So it should be fine. Probably.

"Alright. From today onward we will have special training!!"

Sylph and I played like this until dark.

When I reach home, I find Paul in a bad mood.

He's showing off an angry expression. Both of his hands are on his waist as he's standing in the veranda.

Hm, did I screw something up? If I think about it, there's only the divine artifact that I carefully kept (panties) but had been discovered.....

"Dad, I'm home."

"Do you know why I'm angry?"

"No."

Pretend that I don't know. If the pa..... divine artifact isn't actually discovered, then I'm digging my own grave.

"Just earlier, Mrs. Ada came to look for me. It seems that you hit her kid Somar."

Ada, Somar. Who?

I begin to think of the names that I have never heard before.

Basically, I only greeted others in this village.

Announce my own name and the other people will say theirs too. Are there any among them who's named Ada? Feels like yes and no.....

Hm? Wait.

"Is it about today?"

"Yes."

I met Sylph, Rawls, and the 3 brats today.

That means Somar is one of the 3 brats?

"I didn't hit him. I only threw mud."

"Do you remember what I said earlier?"

"Being strong isn't for the purpose of being cool?"

"That's right."

Oh hoh.

I see. Come to think of it, those guys said they would announce that I had become the ally of the demon races.

I'm not sure what sort of lies they hit me with, but in any case, they're directed at me.

"I'm not sure what sort of rumors dad heard....."

"No!! If you did something wrong, you must first apologize!!"

I get scolded hard.

I'm not sure what he heard, but he doesn't seem to suspect it.

What a pain. In this situation, even if I say that I helped Sylph because they were bullying him, it will sound a lie.

But I can only start from the beginning.

"Actually, I was walking on my way....."

"Don't find excuses!!"

Paul's getting more and more impatient. Never mind lies, even my explanations won't get through.

Even though it's okay to say sorry first, I don't think it's good for Paul.

I don't want my younger brother or sister to meet such unfair treatment either.

This style of education is not okay.

"....."

"What's the matter, why are you being quiet?"

"Because anything I say is an excuse for you to scold me."

"What did you say!?"

Paul looks at me in fury.

"Getting angry and forcing a child to apologize before saying anything, it really makes me envious that the adults' methods are so convenient and easy."

"Rudi!!"

Paa, my face receives a fiery strike.

I got hit.

But that is to be expected. Provoking someone will certainly mean getting hit. Of course it will happen.

So I stood firmly. I haven't been hit for nearly 20 years.....

No, I was beaten all over when I left the house, so that's 5 years.

"Father, I have done everything I can to be a good child. I have never betrayed my parents' lessons, and I have accomplished things with all my efforts."

"That has nothing to do with today, right?"

Paul didn't expect to hit me.

He's obviously in confusion.

Well, that's good.

"No, it has everything to do with it. I have worked hard to gain father's trust and to have a peace of mind, yet father doesn't listen to any of my explanations, trusts someone whom I have never met blindly, and then yells at me before finally hitting me."

"But that kid Somar really did get hurt....."

He did?

That isn't something I did. Did he do it to himself?

He might have done an accident faker stunt.....

But in any case, it's such a pity. I'm the one with justice on my side.

It isn't a lie about falling down by accident.

"Even if he got hurt because of me, I will not apologize. Since I have not betrayed Father's lessons, I can even raise my chest up to say that it was done by me."

".....Wait, what exactly happened?"

Oh, are you finally interested? Well, that's your decision to not listen.

"Didn't you refuse to hear any excuses?"

As I counter with my question, Paul displays a pained expression. It seems he needs another push.

"Don't worry father. I will act as if I didn't see 3 people hitting a defenseless person. I might as well join them to make it 4 versus 1. I will even announce everywhere that bullying the weak is Greyrat's proud lessons. Then when I grow up, I'll leave home and not call myself a Greyrat anymore. Disregarding that kind of violence in both verbal and physical abuse, and continuing to allow it to happen, makes me feel ashamed to call myself a Greyrat."

Paul becomes speechless.

His face turns green and then red, as if he is very conflicted.

Is he angry? Or does he need another push?

Give it up Paul. I'm a 20+ year old guy who has constantly found excuses to situations one couldn't win. If there's the slightest opening, I can debate things to a draw.

Plus I'm completely in the right.

You simply don't have any chance of winning.

"..... I'm sorry. It's father's mistake. Tell me about it."

Paul lowers his head to me.

That's right. Pointless insistence will only make both parties unhappy.

If you're wrong, just apologize. This is for the best.

As my mood lightens up, I state things in detail to explain the incident.

I heard voices as I climbed up the hill. 3 kids were throwing mud from the wheat field. After I threw mud at them twice and quarreled with them, they left after insulting us with a few lines. After that, I used magic to wash the kid clean and played with him.

Something like that.

"Then if there's a need to apologize, Somar should do it to Sylph first. It's easy for the wounds on a body to heal quickly, but it isn't for something done to the mind."

".....You're right. It's father's fault. I'm sorry."

Paul lowers his shoulders in defeat.

I remember what Rawls said earlier today when I see him this way.

"He seems to lose his confidence as a father when he converses with you."

It might be possible that Paul is trying to teach me a lesson to show his side as a father.

Well, he only fails this once.

"There's no need to apologize. If you feel that I did something wrong, please scold me without reservations, but please listen to my explanations. Even if it doesn't explain enough or sounds like an excuse, I would have something that I want to say. Please try to understand my thoughts."

"Aah. I will take notice of it, but I don't think that you will actually make mistakes....."

"Then treat it as an educational experience and use it on my future siblings."

"......Let's do that."

Paul's expression is completely full of defeat and self-mockery.

Did I overdo it? Losing to a 5 years old kid. Mmm. I would be shocked too if it was me.

This guy is still very young for a father.

"Come to think of it, father, how old are you?"

"Hm? 24 years old, what's the matter?"

"I see."

Having me at 19 years old?

Even though I don't know the average marrying age, if he's commonly having to face monsters or wars, it's kind of appropriate to marry at 19?

A guy who's younger than me, marrying someone, and having to worry about his child's education. Honestly, which part of the 34 year-old me who's jobless, homeless, achievement-less, actually wins compared to him.....

Oh forget it.

"Father, can I bring Sylph here to play next time?"

"Eh? Ahh, of course."

I enter the house as I'm satisfied with his reply.

It is good that Paul doesn't discriminate against the demon races.

--Paul's point of view--

My son got angry.

He, who has never expressed himself much before, has a quiet fury within him now.

How did things end up like this?

The incident happened this afternoon when Mrs. Ada came to our home to make a huge fuss.

She brought her child Somar, who has been touted as a horrible brat by others, and the corners of his eyes are bruised. As a swordsman, I had enough experience to see that it was the sign of being beaten.

Mrs. Ada wasn't very clear, but in any case my son has hit Somar.

Hearing this, I am actually relieved.

It was probably Rudi wanting to join Somar and company to play.

But my son is different from other children. He's a Water-Saint ranked magician at his young age.

He must have arrogantly said something and got into a fight after being rebutted.

Although my son is honest and smart, he still resembles a child in some areas.

Mrs. Ada makes it seem like a great deal, but that's just a kids' quarrel. Based on what I see, that injury wouldn't leave a scar.

I'll finish things with a few lines of scolding.

Children will surely quarrel, but Rudi is more powerful than any other child. Besides being a disciple of the young Water-Saint ranked magician Roxy, he's also taught by me and trained his body since he was 3 years old.

It would have been a one-sided affair.

It should be okay if it's only today, but if he gets too emotional, he might overdo things.

Plus, Rudi's so smart that he should be able to solve things without hitting Somar.

I must teach him that fighting is a lack of thinking things through, and he needs to consider the aftermath before acting.

I need to be stricter here.

But things didn't turn out the way I envisioned.

My son didn't intend to apologize at all.

Never mind about him apologizing, he's even looking at me like he's looking at a bug.

Maybe from my son's point of view, it's a fight against numbers, but he needs to realize that the stronger you are, the more you need to be conscious of your own strength.

Furthermore, he even injured someone. In any case, I'll let him apologize. He's really clever. Maybe he can't accept it for now, but he will find an answer by himself sooner or later.

While I thought of that and used a harder tone to scold him, he refuted me with a few sarcastic remarks.

I lost my temper to his provocation and hit him.

Even though I wanted to teach him that the strong need to be conscious of their own strength and not use violence against the weak.

I actually did it first.

I was wrong earlier, but I am on the side as an educator so I can't apologize.

Teaching someone not to do what I just did - this argument simply doesn't hold water.

While I'm incoherent, my son went on to state he has done nothing wrong and said if it's not okay, he will leave this home.

I nearly said the words, "then get lost", but I restrained myself.

I have to restrain myself at this moment.

I was the one who originally couldn't bear my home's formal rules and my strict father's rebukes, before finally having a huge quarrel and leaving home.

I inherited my father's blood. Inherited that stubborn, rigid father's blood.

Rudeus is the same.

Looking at this stubborn part, Rudeus is indeed my child.

That day, when I was told to leave immediately, I couldn't find a way out and really left home. Rudeus would probably leave too. Even though he said he will only leave after growing up, if I told him to leave, he would definitely leave immediately. We are alike in this aspect.

It seems that father fell sick not long after I left and died. I heard that he terribly regretted that day's quarrel.

And to this incident, I blamed myself.

No, to be clear about this, I was drowning in regret.

And right now, if I told Rudeus to leave, he would surely do so, and I would regret this.

Both of us would regret this.

Endure it. I must learn from experience.

Also, didn't I decide it then? I won't become like my father.

".....I'm sorry. It's father's fault. Please tell me."

I naturally apologized.

And Rudeus's expression also relaxes, and he explains it lightly.

Based on what he said, he incidentally saw Rawls' kid being bullied, so he helped that kid.

There wasn't any beating. He only threw mud, and there wasn't a fight at all.

If what he said is true, then what Rudeus did is indeed something for him to be proud of. But instead of praising him, I didn't listen to his explanations and hit him.

Ahh, I remember now.

I had experiences like this when I was young. Father didn't listen to me and only pointed at my weakness. I was unhappy every time over this.

What a failure. What's with, "It's a must to educate him"?

Hah.....

Rudeus didn't blame me, and even consoled me at the end. What an amazing son. Is this really my son..... No, even among the people who Zenith might have had an affair with, there wasn't anyone who was so brilliant.

Uuu, is my seed that good.....

Rather than saying I'm proud, I think my stomach is hurting.

"Father, can I bring Sylph over?"

"Ah? Ahh, sure."

But I think I should be happy over my son's first friend.

I'm 6 years old now.

There isn't much change in my lifestyle.

I practice sword techniques in the morning. If I'm free in the afternoon, I'll investigate my surroundings or practice magic techniques on the hill where the huge tree is at.

Blasting wind to increase the speed of the sword, creating a shockwave to let my body sharply reverse in direction, forming quicksand to hinder the enemy's footsteps.....

Some people might think that sword techniques will not improve if they keep thinking of using dirty tricks.

But I do not think of it that way.

There are two ways to become good at fighting games.

The first is to consider ways in which the weak can beat the strong.

The second is to raise my abilities and train.

Right now I'm thinking of the former.

My goal is to beat Paul.

Paul is very strong. Even though he's not mature enough as a father, he's first class as a swordsman.

If I prioritize the 2nd method and wholeheartedly train my body, it's indeed possible to win sooner or later.

I'm 6. After 10 years, I will be 16 and Paul will be 35.

And after another 5 years, I will be 21 and Paul will be 40.

There is no meaning if I win "sooner or later" in this fashion.

If I beat an opponent past his prime, he would just give an excuse like "Hah, if I was still in active duty..."

There is only meaning if I beat the opponent at his peak condition.

Paul is 25 years old right now.

Even though he has left active duty, his body is in peak condition. I hope to win at least once in the next 5 years.

It will be in sword techniques if possible. Otherwise, I'll mix it up with magic spells and fight in close combat.

While I think about it, I train against Paul's image in my mind again today.

If I go to the huge tree on the hill, I have a high chance of meeting Sylph.

"Sorry, did you wait very long?"

"No, I just arrived too."

After saying lines that are similar to those when a couple meet up, we start to play together.

In the beginning, the Somar kid from earlier and the other brats would come running to us. In the midst of it, there were even upper grade primary school kids joining in, but they were all driven back. Every time, Somar's mother would come running to our home to make a huge fuss.

I finally understood why. Even though Somar's mother claims to be talking about the kids' incidents, the truth is that she likes Paul. The kids' quarrels are just an excuse for her to come running to see him. What a silly thing.

Somar probably feels very irritated as well every time he receives a graze and brought over to us. Looks like he's not trying to be an accident faker. It's quite embarrassing to suspect him of doing that.

They have been driven back 5 times.

They finally didn't come after one abrupt day as a checkpoint. They occasionally watch us play from afar, but they don't talk to us if we come across each other.

They seem to have decided to completely ignore us.

With this, the incident appears to be resolved, and the huge tree on the hill has become our territory.

I began to teach him magic under the guise of playing.

If he can control magic, then he should be able to fend off the brats by himself.

In the beginning, Sylph could only release elementary ranked magic 5 or 6 times before running out of breath, but in the span of 1 year, his mana capacity has grown considerably. Even if he practiced magic for half a day, he would have no problems with it.

"There's a limit to mana capacity."

There's very little truth to this line.

But magic spells are a different thing.

He is extremely weak in fire magic. He's very skillful in wind and water magic, but he's no good when it comes to fire magic.

Why? Is it because of the Elven blood within him?

No.

I learned during Roxy's classes about the [specialized system] and [weak system].

If it's based on these words, everyone has their own specialized and weak systems.

I once asked him, "Sylph, are you scared of fire?"

Even though he replied with a "No.", when he showed me his palm, there was an ugly burn on it.

When he was 3 years old and both of his parents were not paying attention, he grabbed a metal rod that was in the fireplace with his hand.

"But I'm not scared of it anymore."

Even though he says that, he might fear it subconsciously.

This experience might affect his weak system.

If you consider the dwarves, there are many who have water as their weak system.

The dwarves typically stay near the mountainous areas, playing and having earth as their companion. When they grow up, they learn smithing from their fathers and live by digging mineral rocks as a livelihood, so their affinity is with fire and earth. However, their activities on the mountain will frequently be met with sudden hot springs, or floods caused by huge rainfall, so they are especially weak with water.

It's probably something like this, and not directly related to race.

Just to add on, I don't have any weak systems.

That's because I was raised up comfortably.

You don't really need to use fire to create warm winds and water.

But teaching him such concepts are troublesome, so I just let him learn fire magic. There's no disadvantage in being able to use fire anytime. Salmonella will be destroyed if you heat things up. One doesn't want to be poisoned to death from food, so they need to thoroughly cook it.

If you use elementary magic to cure poison, most of the poisons can be neutralized.

Even though Sylph struggles with it, he doesn't complain and keeps on training.

That's because he's the one who asked for it.

Sylph, who's furrowing his forehead as he's using my rod (the one Roxy gave me) and my magic textbook (taken from home), looks really beautiful.

Even a male like myself thinks that way. He will definitely be very popular in the future.

(A jealous heart is a father's heart.)

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the manga Totsugeki! Pappara-Tai. }

A voice like that suddenly rings in my mind. I quickly shake my head.

No, no. Jealousy has no meaning. Plus, it should always be this strategy.

Ikemen's fishing bait strategy.

With Sylph as the big ikemen and me as the regular dude, women will flock to me, lalala.

"Hey, Rudi. How do you read this?"

As I sing in my mind, Sylph uses his finger to point at the opened page, looking up at me.

That gaze is too powerful. Emergency. It makes people want to hug and kiss him.

Resist!

"That's 『Snow avalanche』."

"What does it mean?"

"It refers to a huge quantity of snow that has been gathered on a slope. When the slope is unable to sustain its own weight, it collapses. During the winter, there's snow that occasionally drops from the rooftop right? This is the bigger sized version."

"Is that so..... Amazing. Have you seen it before?"

"Snow Avalanche? Of course..... not."

I only saw it on television.

I let Sylph study the text book. At the same time, I can teach him how to read the book and write letters. Studying the language doesn't have any bad points.

Even though I don't know what the literacy rate is in this world, it definitely wouldn't be like Japan's near 100% literacy rate.

There is no magic spell that allows people to understand words in this world.

The lower the literacy rate, the more important it is to know it.

"I got it!!"

Sylph makes a triumphant shout. I watch him succeed at casting the the intermediate ranked magic, 『Ice pillar』. A large ice pillar grew out from the earth, glowing under the sunlight.

"You're very familiar with it now, hmm."

"Yup!! .....But this book doesn't have what Rudi used?"

Sylph tilts his head and asks.

"Hm?"

I remember as he talks about the spell that I used. It's about the incident with the hot water.

I flip the magic textbook and point at two places.

"It's written in here. Waterfall and Heat Hands."

"....?"

"Use them together."

"....?"

He still tilts his head.

"How do you chant both at the same time?"

Crap. I said it based on my instincts. That's right, it didn't describe how to chant two different words at the same time.....

Now I can't laugh at Paul for being an instinctive type.

I demonstrated the voiceless incantations while casting 2 magic spells at the same time.

Sylph's eyes widen. Voiceless incantations is certainly classified as a higher ranked skill in this world. Roxy is unable to do it, and it's also said that only 1 teacher in the magic university is able to do it.

So I shouldn't teach voiceless incantation, but Roxy's melded magic spells.

I personally don't think it's too difficult, but achieving similar results should be enough.

"Teach me that."

"'That' refers to?"

"The one where you don't need to speak."

But Sylph doesn't think it that way.

Of course, it appears that using 2 different magic spells at the same time is better than casting a single spell.

Hmm..... Well, if I really can't teach him, then he will choose melded magic by himself.

"Hmm, sure. Well, just use the same feeling when you're casting a magic spell. Gather the mana from your body to your finger tips and try casting the spell with chanting to replicate the feeling. Once you gather the mana, try to remember what spell you're using and squeeze it out from your hands. Try doing that. Start with water bullet."

Did I teach him well?

I can't explain it to him very well.

Sylph closes his eyes while uttering a hmmm sound, twisting his body like he's doing a funny dance.

Trying to do something based on feeling is difficult.

Voiceless incantation is processed in the mind, meaning that different people will have their own methods of doing it.

I felt that foundations were important, so I let Sylph use incantations to cast magic for the whole year.

As expected, it should be harder to use voiceless incantations the more you use chanting. It's like using your right hand to do things till now and then changing to your left. It's an extremely difficult task to suddenly change.

"I succeeded! I succeeded Rudi!!"

But things didn't go the way I imagined.

Sylph happily shouts and casts the water bullet spell repeatedly.

Though he kept using chanting, perhaps it was only for one year. Just like removing the training wheels from a bicycle. The sensitivity of a youth. Or was it Sylph's innate talent?

"Good. Well then, let's try all the magic that you have learned using voiceless incantation once."

"Yeah!!"

Well in any case, it will be easier for me to teach if he knows how to use voiceless incantations.

That's because I'm letting him do what I do.

"Hm?"

Suddenly, rain started to drizzle down.

I turn my head upwards. The skies have already been covered with dark clouds.

The next moment, heavy rain starts to fall.

Usually I pay close attention to the weather to ensure that we could reach home before it rains, but I was careless when Sylph managed to use voiceless incantation.

"Ah---- ah, this rain is really heavy."

"Rudi, you can make rain, so can't you stop it?"

"Even though I can do that, we're already wet. Besides, the crops won't grow if they don't receive rainwater. I won't interfere with the weather unless there are complaints about the weather being terrible."

We run towards the Greyrat household while we talk.

It's because Sylph's home is very far away.

"I'm back"

"S-sorry for disturbing....."

As I enter the gate, I see the maid Lilia with a big towel standing at the door.

"Welcome back, Master Rudeus..... and your friend. Hot water has been prepared. Before you catch a cold, please go up to the 2nd floor and dry your bodies. Master and Madam will be back soon, and I need to help them prepare. Are you fine by yourself?"

"No problem."

Lilia probably predicted that we would come back wet from the heavy rain. Even though she doesn't speak much, especially towards me, she's definitely a capable maid. Even if I don't tell her, she still takes another big towel out as she sees Sylph.

We take off our shoes and walk barefooted, drying our hair and feet while climbing to the 2nd floor.

As soon as I enter the room, I see a huge barrel containing hot water. In this world, never mind showers, there isn't even the culture of bathtubs, only using this to rub and wash the body.

According to Roxy, there seem to be hot springs.

Well, for me, who doesn't like to shower, this is enough.

"Hm?"

As I strip naked, Sylph seems to be fidgeting around while blushing.

"What's wrong? If you don't take off your clothes, you will catch a cold, right?"

"EH? Mmm, mm....."

But Sylph still doesn't move. Is he shy when taking his clothes off in front of others.....

Or does he not know how to take off his clothes by himself? It can't be helped since he's only 6 years old.

"Here, raise up your hands."

"But..... Erm....."

I let Sylph raise both of his hands and take his shirt off.

His white skin without any muscle tone is revealed before me. When I try taking his pants off, he grabs my hands.

"N-no....."

Is he feeling bashful of being seen by others?

I was the same when I was young. During kindergarten, I felt really embarrassed being seen by other kids of the same age when showering naked after swimming lessons.

But Sylph's hands are cold. If this drags on, he will really catch a cold.

I forcefully take hold and pull on his pants.

"S.....Stop....."

As I reach for his underwear, he hits me on the head.

Sylph glares at me in tears as I look up.

"I won't laugh at you..."

"N-not about that..... N-NO.....,!!"

He is refusing earnestly. This is the first time I have seen him rejecting so much.

I feel a little shocked.

Is it something like that, a rule where elves cannot be seen naked?

If it's something like that, then it's not good to forcefully strip him.....

"I got it, I got it. Then you must promise. You need to change afterwards. Wet underwear is really uncomfortable, and if you get too cold, you might hurt your stomach."

"Okay....."

I let my hand go, and Sylph nods in tears.

He's really cute. I really want to be in good terms with this cute kid.

Suddenly, I feel like playing a prank on him in my heart.

Isn't it unfair that I'm completely nude?

"An opening!"

I pull down his underwear in one stroke.

Go!! The naked pendulum!

"E.....i. Nooo!"

"..... Eh?"

Sylph screams.

The next instant, he covers his body.

At that moment, what entered into my eyes wasn't the commonly seen pure short sword.

Of course, it's not some ominously patterned dark blade.

What was there,

No, what wasn't there is ----------

..... That's right. Nothing.

There isn't the thing that should be there.

I have seen it countless time in my past.

Sometimes there's mosaic, and sometimes there's none. That one day I would want to taste the real thing and let a black last white cannon paper handkerchief meet one day ---------- that is something that I just saw.

Sylph is.

He..... is a she.

My mind goes blank.

Did I just do something that I can't laugh away.....?

"Rudeus, what are you doing....."

I vigorously snap my head back. Paul's standing there. When did he come back? Did he run after he heard the scream?

I don't move a muscle. Paul doesn't move either.

Sylph collapses into a heap at the side, completely naked.

And my hands are holding onto her underwear.

My cute baby boy is exerting its ferocious youth. I have already gone into a situation beyond justification.

The underwear from my hand drops onto the floor.

There's heavy rain outside, but I can only hear the underwear quietly falling.

--Paul's POV--

When I finished my job and reached home, I saw my son attacking his childhood friend, a young girl.

I nearly scolded him without thinking it through, but I became cautious. Perhaps there was a hidden reason for this too. The previous failure cannot be repeated. In any case, I handed the sobbing girl over to my wife and maid, and use the hot water and cloth to wipe my son's body.

"Why did you do that?"

"I'm sorry."

One year ago when I tried to teach him a lesson, he showed a will to never apologize, but he readily did so now. His attitude is quite strange too, like vegetables pickled in salt.

"I want to know the reason."

"We got drenched. I was thinking the clothes should be taken off....."

"But she didn't want to?"

"Yes......."

"Father has said before that you must be gentle to girls, right?"

Rudeus doesn't have any explanations. What did I do when I was around his age?

I think there were words like "But" and "Except that".

I was a kid who always found excuses. My son really is splendid.

"Well, a kid like you will have some form of interest, but forcing is a no."

"..... Yes, I'm sorry. I won't do it again."

I felt a little sorry after looking at my son, who looked like he received a shock.

Being fond of women is definitely within my blood. I was so full of vigor and energy that once I see a cute girl, I would definitely try and go after them. Even though I have settled down now, I didn't know the meaning of "restraint" in the past.

This is probably hereditary.

It's perfectly logical that my son, who's full of reason, is probably agonizing over his instinct.

Why didn't I notice this before..... No, this isn't the time to sympathize with him.

I need to teach him with my experience.

"You shouldn't apologize to Father. You need to apologize to Sylph. Got it?"

"Sylph, erm..... Will she forgive me....."

My son falls into greater despair after saying that.

Come to think of it, my son has been very attached to that kid. The incident one year ago was also meant to protect her. In the end, he even got hit by his dad.

From then onward, he played with her everyday and protected her from other children. He never put down his sword techniques and magic spells, but he still spared time for her. And when he got close to her, he even gave his own treasured rod and magic textbook as gifts.

I can understand why he would feel down when he considers the possibility of getting hated by that kid.

I'm the same too. I will feel down if I get hated.

But don't you worry son. Based on my experience, there's a huge chance to turn this around.

"Don't worry, it's fine. You have never done anything mean to her up until now. If you apologize with sincerity, she will definitely forgive you."

My son's face brightens up a bit.

My son's so smart. Even if he commits this mistake, I'm sure he will definitely rescue this relationship.

Furthermore, he might even make use of this failure to capture her heart.

Such reliability and scariness.

After my son finished the bath, his first line to Sylph was:

"I'm sorry Sylph. Because your hair is very short, I always thought you were a boy!!"

I thought my son was such a perfect person, but he is surprisingly super dense in some areas.

This is the first time I thought that.

--Rudeus's POV--

I apologized, consoled, and praised her, before I was finally forgiven.

Because Sylph is a girl, I'll call her Sylphy from now on.

Her full name seems to be Sylphiette.

I actually mistook such a cute girl for a boy. It looked like Paul was completely speechless over my discernment of things.

I didn't think that a "you're actually a girl?!!" incident would actually happen.

What choice did I have? Her hair was even shorter than mine when we met. Even though her short hair isn't a trendy haircut like in the modern world, her hair isn't as short as a monk's. She has never dressed once like a girl. Light brown shirt and pants. That's all. If she wore a dress, I wouldn't mistake it either.

No..... Think rationally.

She gets bullied because of her hair color, so she definitely wanted to cut her hair short so it wouldn't be as visible. Because of the bullying, she definitely wanted to run too, so instead of a dress, pants would have been more convenient. Sylphy isn't very rich, so after making pants, there wouldn't be enough to make a skirt.

If we met 3 years later, I wouldn't make this mistake either.

I was completely into the idea that she's a cute guy, but actually there weren't any actions that seemed particularly androgynous.

If she..... Bleh, forget it.

Whatever I say is an excuse.

Since I know she's a girl, my attitude must change accordingly as well.

Whenever I see the tomboyish Sylphy, I always feel a little strange.

"Sy-Sylphy looks really cute. Isn't it better if your hair is longer?"

"Eh.....?"

Perhaps if her appearance completely changes, my feelings can change too.

So I suggested that.

Even though Sylphy doesn't like her hair, her emerald hair shines underneath the sun. I really wish she keeps her hair long. It would be best if it's in a ponytail or twin tails.

"I don't want....."

But from that day onwards, Sylphy grew wary of me.

She openly avoids it, especially when it concerns any physical contact.

I really felt a little shocked since she was so obedient in the past.

"Is that so. Then let's practice voiceless incantation magic today."

"Okay."

I straightened out my expression and hid my emotions. Sylphy only has me as her friend, so she can only play with me. Even though she has some reservations about me, she's still willing to play with me.

So I'll just let it be today.

Right now, my capabilities in this world are basically like this:

『Sword Techniques』

Sword-God style ： Elementary ranked

Water-God style ： Elementary ranked

『Attack Magic』

Fire system: Advanced ranked

Water system: Saint ranked

Wind system: Advanced ranked

Earth system: Advanced ranked

『Healing Magic』

Healing system： Intermediate ranked

Detoxification system： Elementary ranked.

Healing Magic is categorized into 7 ranks as expected, and it comprises of 4 systems: Healing, Barrier, Detoxification, and Divine Attack.

But unlike Attack Magic, there are no cool names like a Fire-Saint or a Water-Saint.

But there is something like a saint ranked Magic Healer or a saint ranked Detoxification Healer.

Healing is just as it sounds: a magic spell that heals wounds. At first you can only heal scratches, but if you get to the emperor rank, it seems like you can even regenerate missing limbs. However, even if you get to the god rank, you can't revive dead things.

Detoxification is also the same as it sounds: curing poison or sickness. At higher stages, you can even create poison or medicine to cure poisons. Status affliction related magic seems to be saint ranked and above, and very difficult to learn.

Barrier magic is magic that raises one's defense, creating a defensive wall. In simple terms, it's support magic. Even though I'm not very clear about the details, I roughly know that it can increase the speed of cell regeneration to treat light wounds, or create excess chemicals in the brain to lessen the feeling of pain. Roxy doesn't know how to use it.

The divine attack system seems to be magic that's effective against spirits or evil races, but it is kept secret by the Divine Priest Fighters. The magic university doesn't teach it either, so Roxy isn't very clear about it.

Even though I have never seen spirits before, it seems they are really ghosts in this world.

If you don't understand the logic, then you can't use voiceless incantation. It's really inconvenient.

Plus, even though there's a logic to Attack Magic, I don't know if the other magics also have their own set of logic. Although I know magic is something that seems to be able to do everything, I have no idea what I can change to achieve this.

For example, making something float up or sucking it into my hand, using my mental abilities to control it.

I feel like it can be replicated, but I'm not someone with telekinesis, so I don't know how to do it.

Just to add on, I am very hazy over the process of healing wounds. That is why I am unable to use voiceless incantation with Healing Magic. If I had the knowledge of a doctor, I might be able to use voiceless incantation with it.

The other types are also possible to replicate with magic if you know the relevant details.

Or perhaps if I participated in sports, my sword techniques can advance a step further.

When I think of it, I feel my previous life had wasted a lot of time meaninglessly.

No.

It's not a waste.

It's true that I didn't work or go to school, but I wasn't always hibernating, and I had many interests and played many games when others were busy working and studying.

The game's knowledge, experience, and way of thinking can be used here in this world.

It should be.....!!

Though, it's not of any use now.

This is an incident that happened during Paul's training.

"Haaaah......."

I let out a sigh.

I thought my open sighing would make Paul angry, but he's grinning from ear to ear.

"Haha. Let me guess, Rudi. Are you feeling sad that you're being hated by Sylphiette?"

I didn't sigh because of that reason.

But even if that's not the reason, the incident with Sylphy is part of my troubles.

"That's right. My sword techniques aren't improving and I'm hated by Sylphy. Of course I feel like sighing."

Paul smiles like a Cheshire cat and sticks the wooden sword into the ground. He leans on it and looks down at me.

It can't be that this guy is trying to treat me like a joke right.

"Father can help you think of an idea~"

He said something unexpected.

My mind starts moving like clockwork.

Father = Paul = Very popular. Zenith can be said to be a beautiful woman, and there's the incident with Mrs. Ada. Even Lilia, who got touched on the butt, was happy. Is there some sort of secret to not get hated by a girl?

The way of offline life?

Well, because he belongs to the instinctive type, I might not be able to understand it, but perhaps I can consider his suggestion.

"If you would please."

"Hm, should I say it, hmmm~"

"Should I lick your boots?"

"No, hey, why are you so subservient suddenly?"

"If you don't tell me, I'll tell mother about you ogling Lilia."

"This time it's high handedness..... Wait, what!? Did you see that!! Okay, I got it. It's my bad for putting on airs."

I'm just baiting you with the ogling of Lilia.....

Could it be ----- Adultery?

Ah well. I already said that this guy is super popular. Let me listen to the popular guy's lecture.

"Listen well, Rudeus. Women-"

"Yes."

"Sometimes like men to be strong, but they like the weak parts about them too."

"Oh."

I heard something like this before. Motherly instinct?

"You have only shown your strength to Sylphiette, right?"

"Is that so? I didn't realize it myself."

"Think about it carefully. If you're being compelled by someone who's apparently stronger and shows off their desire, what will happen?"

"I'd feel scared."

"Right?"

He's talking about that day. When he became a she.

"So you also need to show off your weakness. Protect someone with your strong points while you let your weaknesses be protected by the other person. You must build that kind of relationship."

"Oh!!"

That was easy to understand! It makes people feel like Paul isn't the instinctive type!

Just being strong isn't okay. Just being weak isn't right either. You must be both to get popular!!

"But how do you show off your weakness?"

"That's easy. Aren't you being troubled now?"

"Yes."

"Just tell your bottled up troubles to Sylphiette and it will be done. Tell her that you're feeling low and very troubled because she has been avoiding you."

"Then what will happen next?"

Paul laughs.

A malicious smile.

"If it goes smoothly, she will approach you on her own. She might even console you. Then you will be revived. No one will be unhappy when you get your spirits up."

"!!"

So that's the answer. Using my attitude to control someone's feelings.....

Incredible. But the plan might not succeed right?

"B-but if it doesn't work?"

"Find me again. I'll teach you the next step."

There's actually a 2nd trick. Schemer. This guy really is a schemer!!

"I see. Then, I'm going off!!"

"Go ahead."

Paul shoos me with his hand. I run off burning with anxiety.

"What did you teach to my 6 year old son....."

A voice seems to come from behind.

I reached the huge tree too early. Sylphy's not here yet.

I usually bring a wooden sword along with me and wipe my body before I come here, but I'm full of sweat right now. What should I do? I have no choice. I should start practicing in my mind. I swing my wooden sword in my mind, doing combat. First I should show off my strength. Then my weakness. Weakness. How should I do that? That's right, I need to make myself look despondent. Then, what next? The timing, hm. Should I do it all of a sudden? That would be too abrupt. Maybe I should adjust accordingly to the flow of the conversation. Can I do it? No, I must do it.

I swing the sword as I think in confusion. I don't know when my grip suddenly turned weak. The sword slips out of my hand.

"Guuh....."

The sword lands where Sylphy is at. My mind turns blank.

W-what should I do? What should I say?

"W-what's wrong Rudeus.....?"

Sylphy looks at me, her eyes wild. What, asking me why I came here?

"Erm, Haa..... haa, I'm just feeling it's regrettable or something if I can't see Sylphy's cute expressions."

"N-no, I'm not talking about that. Your sweat."

"Haa..... Haaaa.... Ah, sweat? What.....?"

I pant and approach her, but she shows a frightened expression and retreats. Just like before, she doesn't want me to approach her and backs off.

Even though I'm so smitten by you in this way, you pull back in this way.

I'm just kidding.

"......."

I wipe the perspiration off my forehead. My breathing's becoming stable. Good.

I display an expression full of stricken grief, place my hand on the tree, and make a figure of self-reflection. My shoulders drop down, and I sigh heavily.

"Hah..... Recently, Sylphy is really cold....."

Silence persists for a while.

Is that enough? Is that enough Paul? Should I have been weaker, or was it too fake?

"!!"

My hand gets gripped tightly from behind. I feel the soft and gentle warmth. I turn back, and Sylphy is right there.

W-Woahhh!

So close. Sylphy hasn't been so close for a very long time. Paul-san! I made it!!

"Because, recently Rudeus, is a little strange......."

Mmm. I am aware of that point.

Needless to say, I didn't treat her the same way recently.

From Sylphy's point of view, perhaps my attitude has changed a lot. Like knowing that the opposite person is a wealthy woman searching for a marrying partner.

She will definitely feel uncomfortable. But what sort of attitude should I use?

I can't do it if it was in the past. I'm with such a cute girl, how can I not be tense?

The same age and a cute young girl. I really don't know how to get along with her.

If I'm at the adult standpoint, maybe if Sylphy was older, I might be able to use some knowledge from Eroge and handle it. If she was a boy, I could use the experience when I was with my younger brother.

But she's the osananajimi, and she's a girl. Of course, I played games that get along with girls in H ways, but that's nothing more than a delusion. Also, I simply don't want to have a relationship with her in that manner. Sylphy's just too young.

She's not in my AT field of defense.

{ C-Editor's note: A.T. Field is Absolute Terror Field, used as a defence shield in the anime series Neon Genesis Evangelion. }

It's temporarily something like that. But I'm looking forward to the future!!

Let's throw that all away first. She's a kid who's being bullied. Nobody stood on my side when I was bullied, so I hope to become her companion. Regardless of a boy or girl, this is the only thing that will not change. But it's difficult if I want to treat her the same way as before. I'm also a boy, and hope to build a good relationship with girls.

For tomorrow!!

Urgh..... I don't understand. What should I do? If I had just asked Paul about these matters.

".....Sorry, but I don't actually hate Rudeus."

"S-Sylphy....."

After I show off an expression of uselessness, Sylphy strokes my head.

And she smiles at me with relief. A gentle smile.

My heart skips a beat.

Even though it's apparently my fault, she apologizes to me.

I grab her hand tightly.

Sylphy looks up at me, blushing.

"So, can we be like before?"

The effect from asking this sentence when she looks up at me is powerful.

Enough to make my heart determined.

I am determined.

That's right, she hopes for the usual.

To maintain the same as before, I need to treat her just like before, as much as before.

To let her not be afraid and awkward, I need to hide the fact that I'm a guy to get along with her.

It can only be that. I should only be that.

Let's do it.

A donkan protagonist.

{ C-Editor's note: Donkan is dense, insensitive, thick headed. }

Zenith has been diagnosed as pregnant. My brother or sister is going to be born.

The family members have increased. Yowzer Rudi-chan!!

Zenith has been troubled all these years.

In the past, she would sigh and suspect whether she was unable to have any more children, but about 1 month ago, she started to feel a change in her. She was getting tired easily, getting nausea, vomiting, etc. These are the common signs of pregnancy. Since she still remembered those feelings, she went to a doctor and was diagnosed as pregnant. Basically, it wasn't wrong.

The Greyrat family was overjoyed with the report.

If it's a boy, he will be named this. If it's a girl, she will be named that. There's the room too, along with how the kid can use Rudi's old clothes.

The topics were endless.

The laughter kept coming in on that bustling day. I was frankly quite happy, and made my opinion that a younger sister is better. That's because my younger brother destroyed the most important thing to me (using a baseball bat).

And then.

A month later, there was another problem that sprang out.

The maid Lilia is discovered to be pregnant.

"I'm sorry, I'm pregnant."

Lilia plainly announces the fact that she is pregnant when the family gathered.

At that instant, the Greyrat family freezes.

(Who did it.....?)

No one tries asking in this atmosphere.

Everyone faintly feels it. Lilia's a hardworking maid. She sends almost all of her salary back home. To solve the village's problem, she frequently goes out with Paul, and is different from Zenith who stays in the village to help out with the clinic. She almost doesn't leave the house except for work. There were no news that Lilia is especially close to someone either.

Could it be that she did it with a stranger.....

But I know one thing.

After Zenith became pregnant, Paul was forced to stop having sexual activities, and when he couldn't find relief for it, he snuck into Lilia's room at night.

If I was a straight child, I might even have thought that they were playing poker.

Unfortunately, I knew. The two of them did it not during father's absence, but mother's absence.

I really wish they would be more careful. Didn't 2 random people say this before?

"Ye laddies!! 'Ye can do it if you try.' are very good words. They teach us the importance of contraception!!"

{ C-Editor's note: This is a reference from the manga series Kinnikuman. }

I really want to let Paul, whose face has turned green, know those lines.

Well, I don't really know if there is the usage of contraception.

Of course, I don't intend to divulge this matter and cause a family break up.

If it's the usual, I would not forgive anyone who lays his hands on the maid.

But I have received much favor from Paul about Sylphy's matter. I'll forgive him this once.

A popular guy has it hard. That is why if he gets suspected, I'll cover for him. I can even be his alibi. After I set my determination down, I make eye signals towards Paul to tell him to be at peace.

But at the same time, Zenith looks at Paul, full of suspicion.

And coincidentally, both of us have our lines of sight on Paul.

"S-sorry. I-it's probably, mine....."

This fellow gives up all too easily.

How pathetic..... No, honest men should be praised. He always likes to gather the family members and act noble by teaching me:

"Be honest" something like that,
"Be manly" something like that,
"Protect girls" something like that,
"Don't do dishonest things" something like that.

So he probably can't tell anything but the truth.

Isn't that good? I don't dislike that part about you.

(But the situation has become pretty bad.....)

I think that as I look at Zenith. A Hannya mask is appearing behind her.

{ C-Editor's note: A Hannya mask is used in Japanese theatre representing a jealous female demon. }

Just like that, including Lilia, we start an emergency family meeting.

The first to break the silence is Zenith.

She leads the initiative.

"Well, what are you going to do now?"

From how I look at it, Zenith is exceedingly composed.

She only gave her husband who committed adultery, a mere slap without falling into hysteria.

Paul's face still has a red handprint.

"Please allow me to quit this job after helping Madam give birth."

The one who replied is Lilia. She is also exceedingly calm. Perhaps in this world this is a very common thing. The owner and the maid with an affair. Once it becomes a problem, she leaves the house.

Hm.

If it's the usual, I will be interested in such a tragic story. But this atmosphere is making me unable to even twitch. After all I have restraint. Unlike Paul.

Just so you know, Paul is curling up in one corner.

A father's dignity? The heck is that?

"What about the child?"

"I plan to raise him in my hometown after I give birth in Fedoa."

"Your hometown is in the south right?"

"Yes."

"You will be exhausted after giving birth, and you probably can't take the long journey right?"

".....Perhaps, but I don't have anywhere else to go to."

Fedoa is placed at Asura's northern section.

From my knowledge, the cities at the southern side of the Asuran Kingdom require a full month's journey even on horse carriages. Even if it's only a month, Asura's kingdom security and weather is quite good. If you take a carriage the journey isn't very harsh.

But that's only for ordinary travelers.

Lilia doesn't have money. If she doesn't have the money, she can only walk.

Even if the Greyrat family gives her the fees for traveling, the danger doesn't change even if she takes a carriage.

A mother who just gave birth setting off alone to journey. If I'm a bad guy, what will I do if I meet her?

Of course I'll attack her, that's a golden goose right there. It's asking others to "please attack me". Taking the child as a hostage and then imprisoning the mother. Stealing all her money and belongings first. And there seems to be some form of slavery system, it will be a done deal if the mother and child get sold too.

Even if Asura is the most secure place in this world, it doesn't mean there are no bad people out there. She probably has a high chance to get attacked.

Zenith is right. Physical strength is a problem. Even if Lilia manages to endure it, what about the child?

Can the child last a full month's journey?

Impossible right?

Of course if Lilia collapses, the child will also accompany her. If they fall sick, they also don't have the resources to look for a doctor, and at the end they will go down.

My eyes can already visualize the scenery of Lilia carrying her baby collapsing in the snowstorm.

I don't want Lilia to die in that manner.

"But honey, that's really....."

"Shut up!!"

Paul tries to argue by stammering, but after Zenith's flat rejection, he curls up like a child in the corner.

In this matter, he has no speaking power. Hmm. Looks like Paul has already been eliminated out of the equation.

"....."

Zenith bites her fingernails in pain. Looks like she's hesitating.

She doesn't hate Lilia to the point of killing her.

Actually, the relationship between the two is very good. They have been maintaining the household for 6 years together, one can even see them as good friends.

If the child in Lilia isn't Paul's.

If Lilia got raped in an alley and got pregnant because of that, Zenith will definitely allow..... no, she will forcefully protect her, and let her child be raised here. From the flow of the conversation, this world doesn't have the concept of aborting a child.

I think there are two conflicting feelings in Zenith's heart.

The feeling of her fondness for Lilia and the feeling that she has been betrayed.

I think Zenith is plenty admirable that she's not leaning to the latter emotion. If it's me, I will surely be jealous enough to chase her out.

The fact that Zenith is able to keep her cool has something to do with Lilia's attitude. Lilia isn't finding an excuse for herself, and only plans to take responsibility. Taking all the responsibility towards the family she has betrayed, that she has always served.

But the one who should take responsibility in my opinion, should be Paul. It isn't right for Lilia to take all the responsibility.

This farewell cannot happen in such a terrible way.

I decided to help Lilia. I have received plenty of care from her. Even though we didn't have much interaction and she rarely speaks to me, but she has taken very good care of me.

Every time when I am soaked with perspiration from practicing sword techniques, she will have prepared a towel for me. If I got drenched from the rain, she will also prepare hot water. During the cold nights she brings me a blanket. When I forget to pack the books back to the shelves, she will pack them fastidiously.

And most importantly.

The most important, and that is of most importance.

She knows the existence of the Divine Artifact, but she kept it a secret.

{ C-Editor's note: If you can't remember, Divine Artifact = Roxy's panties. Unwashed. }

That's right, Lilia knows.

Back then when I still thought Sylphy was a boy.

It was raining then. I was studying the botanical encyclopedia in my room with complicated feelings. It was then when Lilia entered and began cleaning. I was absorbed in reading the book and I didn't notice Lilia cleaning near the hiding place of the Divine Artifact. When I noticed her, it was already past redemption. Lilia's hand was holding on to the Divine Artifact.

I was utterly shocked. It's true that the 20 years of my neet life, that my room was completely messy without caring if there's anyone beside me. There's even a folder on the computer's desktop with the file name [Erotic pictures]. That is perhaps why my hiding techniques have grown rusty. But I didn't expect it at all that it was found so easily. I even tried earnestly to hide it..... Is this the living thing called a "Maid"?

Something in my heart starts to crumble, and the blood starts to leave my brain.

The witch hunt had begun.

Lilia said: "What's that?"

I said: "Wwwwwwwwwhat's that, ttttttthat."

Lilia said: "There's a smell to it."

I said: "Ses-- That may or may not be the smell of sesame oil?"

Lilia said: "Whose is this?"

I said: "..... Sorry, it's Roxy's."

Lilia said: "It's better to wash it."

I said: "How can that be washed!!"

Lilia puts the Divine Artifact back to the Divine Holding Place (the hiding place).

And she left the me who was trembling, and left the room.

On that night I was prepared to face a family meeting.

But nothing happened.

I was shivering the entire night. But when it turned to the 2nd morning, nothing happened at all.

She didn't tell anyone.

I'll repay this favor.

"Mother, I can get two siblings at the same time, why is the atmosphere so heavy?"

I must be like a child.

Lilia's pregnant. That's great, there are even more family members. Why are you getting angry?

I try to cut in based on this type of feeling.

"That's because she and your father had done something that's not allowed."

Zenith replies with a sigh. Bottomless fury creeps into her voice. But, that fury isn't pointed at Lilia. Zenith knows it clearly herself.

Who has the most fault?

"Is that so. But can Lilia resist father?"

"What?"

So, even if it's unfair to Paul, he has dug this grave himself. Please bear all the blame.

I'm sorry, the repayment for Sylphy has to wait.

"I know. Father's holding on to Lilia's weakness."

"Eh? Is that true!?"

Zenith seems to believe my random lies, looking back at Lilia in surprise.

Lilia is expressionless as usual, but she seems to have an idea about this and her eyebrow moves a little. Is it really true that she had some weakness. But from how it looks, the one whose weakness has been caught is actually Paul.....

Whatever. That's just as well.

"Earlier, when I went to the toilet and passed by Lilia's room, I heard father saying..... If you don't want 'that' to come into open daylight, you better obediently spread your legs or something like that."

"Wha!! Rudi, what are you saying....."

"You shut the hell up!!"

Zenith piercing shriek cuts Paul off.

"Lilia, is what he said true?"

"No, that kind of thing is....."

Lilia wants to say something, but her eyes are wavering.

She's thinking of something. It might even be that she has played that kind of "play".

"That's true, you can't say it out loud from your mouth....."

Zenith arbitrarily comes to an understanding of her own based on Lilia's attitude.

Paul looks flabbergasted with his eyes darting in confusion, even though his mouth is wide open he couldn't say anything, becoming like a goldfish.

Good. Now for the finishing blow.

"Mother. I feel that Lilia isn't in the wrong."

"Yes."

"It's father who is in the wrong."

"........Yes."

"Father is in the wrong, but Lilia's getting punished, this is too strange."

".............Yes."

There's not enough of a reaction..... A little more.

"I'm really happy to spend time with Sylphy, so I think it's better that my siblings should have friends of the same age."

".....Yes."

"Also, mother. To me, both of them are my siblings."

".....I got it. Sheesh, I really can't win Rudi."

Zenith takes in a deep breath.

You're giving me a lot of trouble, mother.

"Lilia, stay in our home. You're already one of us!! I'm not allowing you to leave by yourself!!"

She lays down the order.

Paul opens his eyes wide, Lilia in tears while she covers her lips with her hands.

And thus, this matter comes to a close.

Just like that, all the blame has been gathered onto Paul, and things settled down.

In the end, Zenith looks at Paul as if a pig is going to be slaughtered.

In some professions this might be a reward, but my balls shrank for that moment.

Zenith brings that look in her and returns to her room alone.

Lilia's crying. She still has the expressionless look, but her tears keep flowing from her eyes.

Paul's hesitating whether he should hug her shoulders.

Well, I'll leave it to the playboy.

I chase after Zenith to the master bedroom. If this incident causes Zenith to divorce Paul, it's also a problem.

I knock on the door, and Zenith immediately comes out.

"Mother. The earlier stuff I said was a lie. Please don't hate father."

I said without any preface to it.

Zenith looks dumbfounded for a moment, but she immediately smiles wryly and strokes my head.

"I got it. I didn't think that I will like that sort of bad guy. That fellow is stupid and lustful, so I had prepared myself for when it ever turned out like that. But it just happened so suddenly that I was too shocked."

".....Is father that fond of women?"

I pretended to not know anything and ask.

"Yes. He is better recently, but he didn't care about the consequences in the past. It might even be possible that there's Rudi's older brother or sister."

As she talks, the strength of the hand stroking my head becomes stronger and stronger.

"Rudi can't turn out to be that kind of adult okay?"

She rubs my head firmly, no, she's grabbing my head with more and more strength.....

"You can't treat Sylphy lightly okay?"

"Ow, ouch, of course mother, ouch~"

I feel like my actions from hence forth have been severely warned.

But, it looks like things should be fine now. Whatever happens will be Paul's effort.

But, our family's father is really mischievous.

There's no 2nd chance, mister.

The 2nd day.

The sword training is extremely strict.

I already helped you to comfort mother, can you not place your anger on me?

--Lilia's POV--

I'll be blunt.

This pregnancy is my own fault. That's because I know I seduced Paul.

When I came to this house I didn't plan it at all. But, after listening to their heavy pants every single night, cleaning after their room that has the full scent of the night's aftermath, I would've accumulated sexual desire.

At first I settled it myself.

But, as I watch Paul train with the sword in the courtyard everyday, an unquenchable fire in my body starts becoming bigger.

Every time I see Paul train, I think of my first time.

I was much younger that time, and it was during the days in the dojo. The person was of course Paul, and it was a forced attack during the night. Even though I didn't hate him, but I didn't like him either. The first time wasn't very romantic, and I shed tears right then.

But right after that, the fat ministers were there.

Once I thought that Paul was better than them, I didn't mind that incident as much...

As I heard Paul was hiring maids, I was thinking of using that time as negotiation material.

The Paul that I have not seen since back then, was much manlier now.

The youthful boy has disappeared, and he had become an intense and rugged man.

In front of such a man, I actually managed to hold on for 6 years.

At first, Paul didn't flirt with me.

If it stayed that way, perhaps my own desires will be put out.

But his occasional sexual harassment lit up my fire.

Even though I can endure it, but I am conscious of the fact that I was on a tight balance.

Zenith's pregnancy broke that balance.

Using Paul's sexual desires as a chance for myself, I seduced him into the room.....

So everything is my fault. Pregnancy is my punishment. A punishment for losing to my desires and betraying Zenith.

But I was forgiven.

I was forgiven by Rudeus.

That smart child accurately understood what happened, guided the flow of the conversation accurately, and even laid down the perfect trap.

As if he had encountered something like this before and remained calm.

That's too scary..... N, no I can't talk about him like this anymore.

I always found Rudeus to be scary and avoided him in the past.

Rudeus is very clever. He must have noticed that I was avoiding him intentionally. But, he still saved me. Even though he must have felt uncomfortable.

Compared to his own feelings, he chose to save this child.

I felt ashamed that I found him to be frightening and avoided him.

He's my savior. A person that deserves my respect.

I'll serve this person with the greatest respect till the day I die. No..... I can't repay it by myself when I consider about the part where I looked down on him.

That's right.

If this child grows up safely and well.

I'll let this child follow Rudeus.

I'll let him serve Master Rudeus.

--Rudeus POV--

Nothing special really happened the next few months.

Sylphy's growth is apparent. She can use voiceless incantation up to the intermediate rank. She's also able to slowly perform the delicate controls.

Comparatively, my sword techniques' ranks aren't changing much.

Even though I'm improving, I still haven't left a mark on Paul's body, so there's no real feel to it.

Also, Lilia's attitude seems to be better. She has always been wary of me in the past. Well, it's to be expected since I've been whoosh-whoosh-whoosh casting magic since I was young.

Even though she basically keeps her expressionless face, her words and actions make me feel like she respects me a lot. Even though I find the feeling of that to be pretty good, it will make Paul lose his position, so I hope she stops that appropriately.

In any case after that incident, Lilia begins to talk to me a little.

Mainly about Paul.

Lilia actually learned sword techniques in the same dojo.

At that time Paul was very talented, but he didn't like practice. And he usually skips practice to play in the city. And Lilia lost her virginity due to Paul's sneak attack during the night when she was sleeping. Paul was afraid of revealing this incident and escaped.

She plainly describes to me the events that happened.

The stocks in Paul's shares began to plummet the more I hear Lilia's described events.

Rape plus adultery. Paul's a scumbag.

But Paul's personality isn't that of a bad person. He's wild and free like a child, the type that brings motherly instinct out. He tries hard to be a father. But he's terribly weak in being patient, and whatever that he thinks of, he immediately puts it into action, he's definitely not a bad person.

"What's the matter, why are you staring at me. Do you want to be as cool as your father?"

He asks me during sword training as I look at Paul.

This fellow is always trying to joke.

"A man who nearly caused a family to break up with his adultery, is cool?"

"Uuugh....."

Paul shows a pained expression. I warn myself to be careful when I look at that expression.

Even though I'm the donkan type. I won't cause affairs, except with girls trying to fight over me. I'm that type who will try to cause that sort of thing.

"Well, with this matter as a warning, please don't lay your hands other than mother."

"L, Lilia is fine right?"

This guy seems like he hasn't suffered enough.

"The next time mother might leave to her hometown without saying anything....."

"Ugh....."

Surrounded by 2 women, is this guy trying to create a ménage à trois? Getting a beautiful wife and a maid that he can attack anytime, while teaching his son sword techniques in the rural area living a decadent life.

Hey hey, that's making people too envious. Isn't that one of the best ending?

Like a certain light novel, laying hands on both Louise and Tabitha and still be fine?

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the light novel series The Familiar of Zero. }

Should I stop chasing the donkan type and learn from him.....?

No, no. Calm down. That family meeting, that final look on Zenith.

Do you want to be looked at with that eyes?

It's enough to have 1 wife.

"If you're a guy you should understand right?"

Paul is still insisting on it. I understand it, but I don't agree with it.

"What are you trying to let your 6 years old son understand?"

"Aren't you drooling over Sylphy. That kid will definitely become a beauty in the future."

I can only agree with that.

"I guess. Even though I think she's very cute now.]

"Isn't that easy to understand."

"I guess."

Paul's a scumbag, but we still find it easy to talk.

Even though I look like a kid, I'm past the mental age of a 40 years old NEET. A true scumbag.

Only limited to a game, but I like girls, and of course I like a harem. My base quality might even be the same as Paul's fondness for women.

This feeling happened after I talked with Paul after I forcefully stripped Sylphy.

After that incident, I feel that Paul is willing to approach on his own and be frank about things. Because I showed off my weak side, he isn't forcing himself to be a strict father, meaning that he has grown as well.

"Hehe....."

I suddenly notice Paul grinning.

He's not looking at me, but behind me. When I turn my head back, Sylphy's standing right there. She rarely comes to our home.

When I look closely, she's fidgeting a little with her face dyed red in color.

She must have heard what I said earlier.

"Hey, repeat that one more time for her to listen~"

Paul's teasing is really classic.

I laughed through my nose. Really, you don't get it.

Paul's still naive in some areas.

Even if something that comes from the heart, you will get used to it if you hear it too many times, and the thrill of it will become weaker. You must let people feel like you're very dense, but it will be more effective if you let out your true heartfelt words once in a while.

It can only be once in a while. You can't do it the 2nd time.

So I just smile and wave at Sylphy.

Also, Sylphy's just 6. It's 10 years too early to talk about this thing.

If you praise her as cute and continuously spoil her, she wouldn't become a good woman.

My older sister is a fine example.

"A-about that. Rudeus, is also..... cool, too?"

"Is that so, thank you Sylphy."

I smile faintly and reveal (my supposed) shining teeth.

Sylphy's really good at socializing. I almost thought it was real when she looked at me with her eyes full of admiration. Praising Sylphy as cute is my true words, but that doesn't include any romantic love in it.

At least for now.

"Then father, I'm off."

"Don't push her down in the grass!"

Who would do that. I'm not you.

"Mother!! Father is -----"

"Wahh, stop, stop.....!!"

Today is another peaceful day for our family.

After a while, Zenith started to go into labor.

It was really hard that time. Because it was a breech delivery.

Lilia is also unable to move, so the midwife from the village is called to help out. But the old lady has no solutions either.

Zenith's delivery is that severe.

Going into labor for so long, both mother and child had lapsed into a dangerous situation.

Lilia is using all her knowledge and moving around. I also try to do what I can, constantly releasing healing magic to help out.

With our efforts, the delivery is successful.

The child comes into this world without issues, and is crying energetically.

It's a girl. A sister. Luckily it's not a younger brother.

At the moment where we get relieved, Lilia also shows signs of giving birth.

That's the moment when everyone is relaxed and tired.

That word premature labor is dancing in my heart.

But, this time the midwife succeeds. She handles the breech delivery terribly, but she seems to be experienced in premature delivery. As expected of her age.

I follow the midwife's orders. Kicking the frightened Paul's butt, I let him carry Lilia to my room. In the meantime I used magic to create hot water, tried my best to gather clean cloths, and returned to the midwife.

The rest is handed over to the midwife.

At the child's birth, Lilia calls out Paul's name lovingly.

The sweaty Paul firmly grabs her hand.

The child that was just born is smaller than Zenith's daughter, but this kid also cries out healthily.

This side is also a girl.

Both are female. Both are sisters.

Both side are girls? ----- Paul says and laughs in a silly way.

A stupid father's face. This is the 2nd time I've seen that expression.

Come to think of it, Paul's really too miserable. After all, the female faction in our home has grown 2 times. At this scenario, who has the smallest foothold?

Probably the father who committed adultery with a maid that gave birth.

My goal is to be a respectable older brother, but Paul will definitely not get respected, probably.

Zenith's daughter, Norn.

Lilia's daughter, Aisha.

These are the names that have been given to them.

I'm 7 years old now.

My two sisters, Norn and Aisha, are growing up without any problems.

They cry whenever they wet the bed, dirty their diapers, get hungry, or feel something is wrong. They even cry when there's nothing wrong.

It's normal to cry at night. It's normal to cry in the morning. They cry even harder during the day.

Paul and Zenith are quickly crumbling mentally.

But only Lilia is full of energy saying:

"This is the right thing, this is actually definitely raising children! It was too easy with Young Master Rudeus! You can't call that raising a child!"

She takes care of the babies with her experience.

Adding on to it, regarding the matter of crying in the night, I have already gotten used to it due to my younger brother, so I don't take notice of it.

I'm not really bragging, but I have already experienced taking care of a baby due to my younger brother. Looking at me changing the diapers, washing the clothes and cleaning up, Paul gives off an expression of being useless.

This guy is just like the Japanese males before the war who knew nothing about housework.

Even though he's very skilled in swordsmanship, and receives deep trust from the villagers, he's half baked when it comes to being a father.

This is already the 2nd baby..... Sheesh.

Talking about here, I'll treat it as restoring Paul's reputation and talk about his good points.

About this person who has all sorts of weakness all over him, and no matter how you look at it he's a scumbag Paul, I acknowledge him.

Why? Because he's strong.

First is Paul's sword techniques rank.

Sword-God Style: Advanced
Water-God Style: Advanced
North-God Style: Advanced

All the styles are advanced.

Talking about advanced, it's said that people with talent would have to spend 10 years on each stance in order to reach the advanced rank.

If you compare the advanced rank to kendo, it's about 4th to 5th dan. The intermediate rank is about 1st dan to 3rd dan or so, and as a common knight, reaching the intermediate rank is enough to qualify. The saint rank requires the upper rank 6th dan and above, but I'll ignore this first.

This example is, Paul has kendo, Judo, Karate reaching the strength of 4th dan.

And all of them are trained halfway before abandoning it.

Even though he's not a decent human being, his strength can be guaranteed. Also, even though he's only 25 years old or so, his practical combat experience is in abundance.

The advice that he gives is very cunning and practical.

Due to him being too much of an instinct user, I can't understand even half of it, but I know that what he says is all correct.

The 2 years I've spent learning from Paul, haven't let me rise above the elementary ranks. After a few more years, I don't know how my physical strength will improve, but currently no matter how I do mental training, I can't find a way to beat Paul. Even if I use magic or play around with strategies, I feel like I absolutely can't win.

I've seen Paul fight a monster.

More accurately, it was him who showed me. After being notified that there was a monster, he said [Observing is also a form of experience] and dragged me outside, letting me watch his battle from afar.

To tell the truth.

He's too damn cool.

His opponents are 4 monsters.

3 <<Assault Dog>>, that look like trained Doberman,
1 <<Terminate Boar>>, a wild pig-like monster with 4 arms.

It seems that the wild pig has led the dogs and appeared deep within the forest.

Paul easily handles them, and cuts off their heads within moments.

Let me say this again, that is too damn cool.

How should I describe it? His entire battle feels like he is full of elegance. What makes me excited is how there's an unfathomable rhythm to it, looking aptly presentable.

It's not adequate to describe it with words. If you really need to use a word to describe, it's charm.

Paul's battle style is full of charm. It draws people's trust, made Zenith fall in love with him, Lilia yielding her body to him, and I can understand why Mrs. Ada is so hot and infatuated with him.

The number one man in the village whom you want to sleep with.

Well meh, whatever.

I'm grateful for his existence. I'm grateful this powerful existence is beside me.

If there was no Paul here, I might have easily turned out to be arrogant in this world.

Like challenging a monster recklessly just because I know some magic, but I can't hit the <<Assault Dog>>, and get cruelly bitten to death.

No, perhaps it might not be monsters, but men.

Arrogantly challenging an unbeatable enemy.

A scenario that happens all too easily.

Trying to punish the bad people, but getting wiped out instead.

The warriors in this world are strong beyond comprehension.

If one is serious, he can run at the speed of 50 kilometers. The dynamic vision and reaction aren't normal.

Because of healing magic, one wouldn't easily die, but the opponent can kill in one strike.

The existence of monsters has made the human race adapt and become strong.

Furthermore, Paul who's so powerful is only at the Advanced rank. Judging from the swordsman, there are many people out there that are more powerful. In this world, the famous people and monsters, there are way too many out there that Paul is not a match for.

There is always someone better than you.

Paul's existence taught me this natural conclusion.

Although, no matter how many good points he has, he's a useless father at home.

Even if you're an Olympic gold medalist, you're still a criminal if you commit a crime.

One random day, I practiced like usual with Paul learning sword techniques.

I can't win against Paul today also. I probably can't win tomorrow too.

Recently, I don't have the feeling of improvement. But if I don't continue training I will not improve.

Even if there's no sense to it, the process of training will become my skill.

Probably.

It will right? There's no mistake to it?

As I'm thinking of this and that, Paul suddenly remembers something and says:

"That's right Rudi. About school you....."

When he reaches the middle of it, he stops.

".....Never mind. Nothing, let's continue."

Paul raises his wooden sword as if nothing happened.

I didn't miss that.

"What, school.....?"

"The school refers to the Fedoa region's capital's Ranoa style education system. It's in charge of teaching language, history, etiquette and mathematics."

"I think I've heard about this in the past."

Usually a child your age will attend school..... You don't need it right? Learning language and mathematics?"

"Hm, that's true."

I'll treat it like Roxy taught me Mathematics.

After the two girls were born, the finances dipped slightly into the red, and I helped take a look at the account books. In the end, they were shocked. I was afraid of being called a genius or something, so I immediately brought out Roxy's name.

In the end, Roxy's evaluation went up again, that's fine with me.

"But I'm interested in school. Aren't there a lot of kids the same age as me gathering together? I might be able to make friends."

But Paul spat at that.

"It's not a fine place that you believe it to be. There's no flexibility to the etiquette lessons, there are a huge bunch of useless rules, and there's no meaning if you learn about history. You will absolutely get bullied, and when the brats from the nobles gather together, they will cause a fuss if they aren't number one. If they see you, they will form a party to bully you. Something like why are you better than me despite the fact that I have a duke as my father."

It's like he experienced it firsthand.

I heard that Paul left home due to his father's strictness and the disgusting nobles.

The etiquette and history lessons are there to give vanity to the Asuran nobles, they are probably something that make people feel oppressed.

I will surely also feel the same way since Paul and I are similar.

"Is that so. I thought there might be daughters of the nobles out there who are cute."

"I suggest you give up. The nobles' daughters might wear make up and do up a hairstyle and put on perfume, but once they get into bed, because they don't do any physical activities, their body shape is really terrible. Well, there are those out there who like the sword, and have a pretty good body, but most of them use a corset to cover up things, so if you don't strip them you won't know. Father has been deceived many times....."

Paul looks up to the sky as he says that, and his words are subtly persuasive.

Even though he talks like a scumbag, because of these experiences, he has managed to get a good wife like Zenith, so his words have deeper meaning to them.

"Then..... I won't go to school."

There are many things I want to teach Sylphy.

Also, if I know I'll get bullied and still go there on purpose, there must be something wrong with my mind.

Didn't I become a NEET for 20 years just because I got bullied.

"That's right. Instead of going to school, you should become an adventurer and go into dungeons."

"Adventurer.....?"

"That's right. Dungeons are a good place. Because the girls don't wear make up, you can tell whether they are pretty. Regardless of a swordsman or warrior or a magician, they have really good bodies."

Putting the scumbag comments aside.

According to the books, dungeons are a form of monster.

It is merely a simple cave that has warped due to the accumulation of mana, and finally changed to a dungeon.

At the deepest part of the dungeon, there is said to be a source of power, a mana Crystal, and there is a protector that protects it (Boss).

The mana Crystal is bait that has a strong temptation.

The monsters that are drawn into the dungeon, will die from triggering a trap, starve to death, or be killed by the protector.

The dungeon will absorb the mana from the monster.

But, there is also the possibility where the monster eats the mana Crystal, or occasionally gets buried when the dungeon collapses.

The dungeon sounds like a monster because of this fuzzy description.

Also the monsters are not the only ones drawn to the mana Crystal.

Humans are also foolishly drawn to it.

It seems that the mana Crystal can be used as a catalyst for magic, so the price for it is extremely high. Even though the price is determined by the size, even a small mana Crystal will sell for enough that one would be able to play around for a year. Furthermore, while the monsters are only eyeing the mana Crystal, humans aren't merely going for that.

There are monsters that have years of mana in them, or there are adventurers' equipment that have been left behind.

There is also another bait.

Magic Items.

Magic items are different in the sense that they do not use the user's mana and still cast magic. It's just that the majority of the magic Items do not have very useful abilities.

Most of them are trash.

But amongst them are cheat-like items that make even god ranked characters pale.

If something like that is sold, they can earn tremendous amounts of money, and there are people who are drunk on the dream of getting rich overnight entering the dungeons.

Most of them collapsed in their journey, and the mana that dungeons receive make it even bigger and deeper.

And thus, there is a huge amount of treasure sleeping in the deepest part of the dungeon.

There is a confirmation of the oldest and longest dungeon situated in the central continent of the red dragon's sacred mountain region - at the Dragon Crying mountain foothills [The Dragon-god's Hole]. According to articles, this has been around since 10,000 years ago. The estimated deepest part is at 2,500 floors. It's said that there is a certain hole that connects the top of the Dragon Crying mountain to the bottom of the dungeon, and if you jump from there you can reach the deepest part of the dungeon in an instant, but using that method no one is able to come up.

Just to add on their hole doesn't spew lava.

The Dragon-God's hole is meant to catch red dragons.

Sometimes the dragon that passes by will be sucked in.

The verification of this cannot be ensured, but since it's a monster that has lived for 10,000 years, it wouldn't be strange if it's capable of doing something like this.

Additionally, the dungeon that is recognized to be the hardest difficulty is situated in the Heaven's continent 『Hell』, and the center of Ringus's sea [The Demon-God's Cavern]. The entrance to these two places are very difficult to access, and it is very difficult to supply things there. It is said that the dungeon is very deep and there's no way to explore it step by step, so it's rated as the highest difficulty.

The above is the knowledge that I know of the dungeons.

"I read the things about dungeons in a book."

"<<The 3 swordsmen and the dungeon>>? If you can explore the legendary dungeons like the book, you will definitely leave your name behind in history. Do you want to try working towards that?"

--- <<The 3 swordsmen and the dungeon>>

The 3 genius swordsmen that later on went to become the Sword-God, the Water-God, and the North-God, who challenged a huge dungeon after several setbacks. During the journey they had laughter, fought amongst them and had farewells, and they finally succeeded in conquering the dungeon.

The dungeon they went into is 100 floors deep.

"Isn't that a made up story?"

"That's not the case. It's said that the various styles came from the dungeon."

"Eh. But if it's so lucky to become a god ranked person, even if I try hard I won't become anything right?"

"Father tried before. Rudi can certainly do it."

Later on Paul tells me a story, about a ghost race youth who entered with a human swordsman and entered the water-fish's nest dungeon, where they lost a companion but insisted on beating the water-fish race. There was a half baked magician who fell into the dungeon by accident, and was picked up by the party who had just lost their magician, and woke his dormant potential and became strong.

He's telling me this as if he has been trying to find an opportunity.

Come to think of it, Paul said he wanted me to become a swordsman.

He must have thought that after I listen to the stories, read the <<The 3 swordsmen and the dungeon>>, I will be in admiration of the terms, dungeons, adventurers and swordsmen.

Dungeons. Interested.

Even though I find it interesting, at the same time I find it's dangerous.

That's because the characters that appear in the book died abruptly.

In the book <<The 3 swordsmen and the dungeon>>, there are other characters that appear besides the 3 swordsmen.

But with the exception of the 3 swordsmen, they all died.

Some of them got hit by a fireball and turned into charcoal. Some of them fell into a hole and turned into soup. One of them got cut into two when the adventurer's head raised up. They didn't receive a scratch from the monsters fight, but once they got careless they got wiped out by the traps.

Even though the 3 swordsmen elegantly avoided the traps like protagonists, but I don't think someone as careless as me can avoid them. I'm the donkan type after all.

"How about it? Adventurers are interesting right?"

"Are you joking?"

Why should I intentionally go to such a dangerous place like I'm seeking thrills.

If it's possible I wish to be like Paul surrounded by women.

"Chasing after girls' butts suits my character."

"My dream is to be like father to be surrounded by a few of them."

"Is that so, is that so. But it's better to chase after one butt."

Paul points to my back, and I turn back to find a sullen Sylphy behind me.

Such misfortune.

Recently in my room, I'm teaching Sylphy a lot of things.

To explain the details of the theory behind voiceless incantation, it's faster to teach from the basics of physics and maths.

Even though I'm the lowest in my class during middle school. I entered an idiot high school with much difficulty, only to stop in the middle of it.

Therefore I can teach only a limited amount of things.

Even though learning isn't everything in school, I regret that I didn't study more things.

Sylphy has basically understood how to write and read, as well as 2 digits additions and subtraction. Teaching her the multiplication tables is a little harder, but she has a pretty sharp mind. I'm sure she will even catch on to division soon enough.

Along with magic, I teach her about science.

"Why does water that's heated up become steam..... air?"

"Well, the water vapor has evaporated into the air. But if you want to evaporate it, temperature is a must. So when you make it hot, it will be easier to evaporate."

I'm currently teaching her the concepts about evaporation, condensation, sublimation.

"......?"

A face full of incomprehension.

But she's a straightforward kid, she absorbs things quickly.

"Well, you should just know that anything will melt if you make it hot, and it will condense when it cools down."

Since I'm not a teacher, it should be enough like this.

Sylphy's smarter than me. If she tries it out on her own, she will get it. If she uses magic I won't be afraid that there isn't enough experimentation.

"Will rocks also melt too?"

"You need a really high temperature."

"Can Rudi melt rocks?"

"Of course."

Even though I say that I have never tried it.

Recently I managed to roughly separate the air. Using this, I can forcefully add in oxygen and hydrogen, so I can achieve the temperature for melting a rock, but it's possible that I might burn myself, so I didn't want to try it.

Just to add on, there's an advanced ranked magic called [Molten rocks].

No matter how you look at it, it's a melded magic that mixes earth and fire, but it's classified as advanced fire magic. Even though it's classified to a certain system, there's a relationship to other systems. If you want to increase the fire power you can just keep on pouring mana into it, but if you use combustible materials, you can increase the power more effectively.

This is what I understand to this point.

But that is it.

My magic level didn't change very much from the time Roxy said her farewells.

Even though I tried combining magic, or use various methods, or using science to increase the strength.

From the surface, perhaps the level has risen quite a bit.

But I'm feeling the bottleneck of it. With my knowledge, I am unable to accomplish something harder. If there's some difficulty in my past life, I could have searched it online, but this world doesn't have something so convenient.

Who should I learn it from.....

"School?....."

It seems there is a magic school. Even though Roxy has some slight criticism to the magic school, I should be able to enter it.

"Is Rudi going to school?"

I mutter to myself, and Sylphy looks at me with very uneasy eyes.

Every time she turns her head, her green hair will also move.

I told her with the frequency of every month [It's better to keep longer hair] has finally succeeded, lately Sylphy has started to let her hair grow.

Even though the length is only about a girl's short hair, the slightly untidy emerald like hair will move along with her head.

It feels great.

There's just a bit left for a ponytail.

"I won't go there. Father also says I will get bullied and I can't learn anything there."

"But Rudi has been strange lately."

Really?

I didn't realize that. Did I do something stupid again?

Even though I'm carefully trying to act like a Donkan character in front of Sylphy.

"I've been strange since birth."

I reply with half of the intention to inquire about it, Sylphy creases her forehead and shakes her head.

"That's not it. How should I put it? It's like you're not energetic....."

Oh. That's what she means.

I think too much. I thought I did something stupid again.

I got worried by her.

"That's because I'm feeling the bottleneck. I didn't improve much on magic and sword techniques."

"But..... Rudi is really amazing?"

"For my age it's probably so."

Indeed, in this world, I might be really amazing at my age.

But, I still haven't done anything. Magic as well, I'm just relying on my past memories and managed to notice on how to use voiceless incantation, and do it slightly better than others.

But because my past life's ability to memorize things is low, now I have already reached my limits, and I'm unable to advance. How many times have I regretted not being able to learn more things, now I can't relearn it. Also, my past life's common knowledge might not work here. There are many rules in this world that I don't know. I can't keep relying on my past memories right?

Magic is this world's logic.

So I need to understand this world.

"I feel that it's time to move on to the next stage."

Sylphy's magic is getting better and better, and she has become smart.

Looking at her, my heart is burning with anxiety. I'm useless for being the only one not moving forward.

Even though I keep saying that I'm a donkan protagonist, after I grow up, I might be ditched by Sylphy.

"Are you going somewhere?"

Sylphy asks me with her brows creased.

"Indeed. Father also says that it's better for me to become an adventurer and enter the dungeons, and there aren't a lot of things I can do in the village..... If I want to I should either go to school or become an adventurer..."

I didn't think too much and just randomly say it.

"N.... No!"

Sylphy suddenly shouts and hugs me.

Woah. What what what's wrong?

A love confession?

When I am thinking about that, I realize Sylphy is trembling all over.

"Miss Sylphy Ette?"

"N, o, no..... no!!"

Sylphy tightly hugs me till the point I feel I can't breathe.

Did Sylphy feel something over the lost and silent me.....

"N, no, don't go..... Uuu, uuu, hic."

She sobs.

Her small shoulders are trembling violently. Her face burying in my chest.

..... What, what. What's wrong?

I first rub Sylphy's head, and softly pat her back.

At the same time the butt..... No, no I'm not Paul.

Leave the butt alone.

I wrap my arms around her back, and use my whole body to experience Sylphy's touch.

She feels so warm and soft. I bury my face in her hair and I smell something nice.

Ah, this is great. This, is really great..... I feel like.....

"Uu, I don't want you to go. Don't go, anywhere....."

I come back to my senses.

"Ah, ahh....."

I see. That's how it is.

Recently, Sylphy has been coming to our home in the morning a lot more.

Once she comes over she will look at me happily practicing sword techniques, then training magic or learning.

We have been doing something like this.

If I leave one day, Sylphy will be all alone. Even if she uses magic to chase the bad kids away, she won't make any friends.

Once I think to there, my heart finds her to be even cuter.

She's only liked by me.

That's something that only belongs to me.

"I got it, I got it. I won't go anywhere."

I actually have to throw such a cute child behind to go somewhere else?

Improving my magic?

So what? I already can use saint ranked and advanced ranked magic, if something happens, I'll be a teacher like Roxy. Before I can reach the age of an adult, I'll spend my time with Sylphy.

Let's do that.

Growing up together, raising her a little to suit my taste.

The Hikaru Genji project.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the famous Japanese novel Genji Monogatari. The Hikaru Genji project is a plan to raise a young girl into an ideal wife. }

Hehehehehe.

..... Ha!

Nooooo! Calm down calm down calm down.

Didn't you decide to be a donkan type?

Why did you suddenly plan that.....

But, but.

A donkan type isn't a reason for doing a Hikaru Genji project..... right?

Wait! What am I thinking about!!

But.... Bah. How much should I pretend not to know what this child feels?

She's only 6 years old.

She sticks very closely to me. I can feel her goodwill towards me.

But, that shouldn't be in the sense of romantic love.

Then let's keep that.

But when should I keep that?

10 years old, 15 years old..... or later.....?

What if I'm hated by Sylphy?

Even though the like score is currently at MAX, there's no guarantee that it wont drop.

During then, can I hold it in.....?

I..... can't!!

There are things humans can and cannot do!!

Look at her. She's so soft, warm and gentle, and she smells so nice.

She's trying to tell me her feelings, and I'm supposed to ignore that?!

That's too strange right?

If we're conscious of each other, I should move on to the next step.

I shouldn't hold it in by myself and not move forward. We should move together as one!!

Should I waste my time on mistakes?

Even though I know it's a mistake and not correct it?

I've decided!! I will raise Sylphy as a type that I like!!

Oh, I'm giving up as the donkan type!! Sylphy----------!!

"Hey Rudi..... There's a letter for you."

Paul comes in and I return from my [World].

I hurriedly push Sylphy away.

That was too dangerous. I nearly became a scumbag boss character.

I need to thank Paul.

But this time I managed to hold onto my true feelings. I still have my limits.

I managed to restrain myself this time. Can I restrain myself the next time.....?

The letter is from Roxy.

"Dear Rudi:

How have you been?

Time really flies, it has been 2 years since our farewell.

Now that I'm not continuing to drift, I can finally write a letter to you.

I'm staying at the Shirone capital. It seems that I became famous after entering a dungeon as an adventurer, and I got hired as the Prince's home school tutor.

Teaching the prince has made me recall of the days in the Greyrat family.

The prince is similar to Rudeus. He's not as good as Rudi, but his magic potential is distinct and he's also very clever. Also, he's the same as you since he spies on me changing clothes, and steals my pantsu. He's always full of himself and is different from Rudeus in that department, but his actions are like yours.

Should I attribute that to heroes being lustful?

I'm worried if I'm going to be attacked during this employment period.

What's so good about this weak and frail body.....

Ah, am I being impolite and disrespectful to the crown by writing all this.....?

Well, I'll talk about that later. I think it should be okay since I'm not saying bad things behind his back. The kingdom wants to appoint me as the court magician, even though it's for a limited time.

It's just so that I'm doing magic research, that's a coincidence.

Oh, that's right. I can finally use Water-King ranked magic.

The library in Shirone kingdom has books related to Water-King ranked magic.

I thought I was unable to take another step after learning saint ranked magic, but I can actually do it if I try.

Rudeus must be capable of using Water-Emperor ranked magic by now. Or should I say, that all your other systems have reached saint ranked. The studious you might even have touched the Healing Magic or Summoning Magic by now right?

Or have you started going onto the route of a swordsman?

Even though there's a bit of a pity, but if it's Rudeus, no matter which road you choose it's okay.

My target is to be a Water-God ranked magician.

I have said before that if you find you have a bottleneck in magic, you can try knocking on Ranoa University's doors.

If you don't have a written introduction, you will have to undergo a test. Though, if it's you, it should be easy to pass.

Well then, I'll end it here.

- Roxy

PS: By the time you reply, I might not be in the kingdom, you don't need to reply."

This letter is such a wake-up call.

Damn it.

I search for Shirone on the map.

It's a small country situated in the Central Continent southeast area.

It's not too far away from a straight line. But the mountains in the Central Continent have red dragons, so there's no way to pass it and you need to go around a long way by the south side.

A faraway kingdom.

Furthermore, the Magic University in Ranoa requires traveling in a roundabout way to the Northwest.

"Hm....."

Roxy didn't teach me any king ranked magic.....

It's because she didn't know.

On the reply letter I didn't write anything noteworthy.

That's because I didn't want Roxy to know of my useless status.

Even though I'm not sure how amazing I am in her eyes, I didn't want to disappoint her.

But, coming back to think about it. Magic University?

Roxy once said that it was fantastic there.

But, it's too far away.

I can't throw Sylphy away.

What can I do.....?

Anyway, I added a PS on the letter:

"Also, I'm sorry for stealing your pantsu."

The 2nd day after the letter arrived, I state my thoughts when the family gathers.

"Father, can I make a selfish request?"

"No."

I get immediately refused.

But, Zenith sitting on the side knocked on Paul's head. Lilia sitting on the other side also added an attack.

Because of the pregnancy saga, Lilia also sits at the dining table to have her meal. In the past, she fulfilled her status as a maid by serving from the side, but she's now family.

It's okay for polygamy in this country?

Whatever.

"Rudeus. Whatever you need just say it. Father will satisfy you."

Zenith says gently while looking at Paul who's grasping his head.

"Young Master Rudeus has never said something selfish before. It's time to test Master's dignity and reliability."

Lilia helps me too.

Paul straightens himself again, crosses his arms and raises his chin, making him look important.

"Rudeus actually states he has a selfish request. It must be something that's out of my league."

Paul gets hit again, and falls flat onto the table.

These are the small jokes during family time.

Then I tell them.

"Actually, I feel that my magic learning has reached a bottleneck. I wish to go to Ranoa's University to learn....."

"......Oh."

"But after I told this intention to Sylphy, she started to cry and doesn't want to be apart from me."

"Oh, this playboy, who do you resemble? Eh?"

Paul get hits a 3rd time with a 2 chain attack.

"So I want to go to school with her, but her family isn't as well off as ours. So, I want to make a request to pay school fees for both of us."

"Oh......."

Paul puts both of his elbows on the table, and uses a sharp gaze on me like a superior officer.

This is the gaze he uses when he holds a sword.

The only moment when Paul deserves respect.

"No."

Paul says the same thing as before.

This time it's real.

Zenith and Lilia are also quiet.

"There are 3 reasons.

Number 1, you're still learning sword techniques. If you put them down now, your skill will become undeveloped. As your teacher, I can't let you put them down now.

Number 2, about money. If it's only you, we can still handle it, but we can't do that if you want us to handle Sylphy's as well. The fees for the Magic University are not cheap, our household's money isn't like hot water where you can constantly run it.

Number 3, your age. You're only 7 years old. Even though you're a smart kid, there are many things you don't know. Your experience is severely insufficient. We can't throw away our responsibilities as parents."

As I thought, that didn't work.

But I'm not giving up.

Paul is different from the past. He will think about it and give reasons. That means if I satisfy these 3 conditions it will be fine. Don't be anxious. I don't need to go right now.

"I understand, Father. Then, I'll continue practicing sword techniques as usual, about the age problem how many years do I need to wait?"

"That's right..... 15, before you're 12 years old you must stay at home."

12 years old hm.

I remember you're an adult once you're 15 years old.

"Can I ask why it's 12 years old?"

"Because when I left home, I was 12."

"I see, I got it."

12 years old to Paul is something that can't be negotiated.

Since I don't want to belittle his pride as a male, I can only shut up and nod.

"Then the final problem."

"Oh."

"Please introduce a job to me. Since I am literate, and able to use math, I can become a home tutor or teach magic. It's best if the salary is high."

"Job? Why?"

Paul looks at me with serious eyes, as if to intimidate me.

"I'll earn Sylphy's school fees."

".....This can't be said that it's good for Sylphy."

"Yes. But this is for myself."

"....."

Silence persisted for a while.

It's not a comfortable atmosphere for me.

"Is that right..... I see....."

Paul seems to have thought of something and nods.

"I got it. I can help you ask about it if it's this matter."

Paul uses a reliable expression to reply to me. It's different from Zenith and Lilia's troubled expressions.

"Thank you very much."

I lower my head in thanks, and dinner continues.

--Paul's POV--

I can't believe Rudeus said something like that.

My son is growing up too fast.

It's usually when one at least reaches the age of 14 or 15 before they say something like that.

Even for me I was 11 years old, which is when my Sword-God style reached the advanced rank.

People who are unable to say something like that will never be able to say that in their life.

"If you rush ahead too fast, you will die early..... huh."

Once before, a warrior said something like that to me.

Of course, I ignored him when I heard that.

The people living around me are just too leisurely. The time when the human race has power is very short, but no one wants to run. The things that can be done should be finished completely. Even if you get blamed for it, when it reaches to that point one can talk about it later on.

Well, even though I did all that and had a kid, I relied on my relatives on the noble side for a way to become a knight.

I'll put this aside first.

Rudeus's lifestyle is even more urgent.

I felt worried when I looked at him.

The people around me when I was young must have also thought of the same thing.

But Rudeus is different from me who's wild. Anything he does is all planned out.

Is that Zenith's blood?

"Well, let father tie you for a bit longer."

I wrote a letter as I thought that.

A few days ago Rawls also discussed a matter with me. Sylphy's sticking way too much to Rudeus.

From Sylphy's viewpoint, Rudeus must be a prince charming who rescued her from a hell-like childhood. Teaching her various things like an older brother, and finally realizing their difference in gender. Rawls also said, if Rudeus can win her over it will be for the best.

I also thought that having such a cute kid as a daughter in law wouldn't be bad, but when I listened to Rudeus today I changed my mind.

Right now the situation is about the level of brainwashing.

I have seen that type many times during the time when I was with the nobles.

Relying overly on their parents. People who are like dolls.

Although it's still okay if the relied people are still there.

Even if it's a doll, you can still act out an interesting play if you control it well. If Rudeus still loves Sylphy, she will be alright.

But Rudeus has inherited my blood.

The blood with a fondness for women.

It's possible to have another relationship with a woman by accident. No, since he inherited my blood, he will definitely do it and more.

In the end, it's possible that Sylphy won't get chosen.

At that point, the abandoned Sylphy will be unable to stand. Like a broken doll, she will never stand again.

I will not allow that to happen, that my son caused such a cute kid's life to be destroyed. It's not a good thing for my son either.

I write a letter.

I pray that I receive a satisfactory answer.

But the next thing.

How can I convince my son who's good at arguing.

I guess I'll use brute force.

It has been a month since I told Paul I wanted to work.

Today, Paul receives a letter.

I feel that a reply is about to be given to me, so I prepare myself.

It will most likely be after sword training, after lunch, or maybe dinner.

As I think about it, I continue to train in sword techniques earnestly.

As I continue training, Paul says:

"Rudi, I want to ask you something."

"What is it, father?"

I listen to Paul carefully with a stiff expression.

After all, this is my first job including my past life.

I need to work hard.

"You..... Ah. If I wanted you to separate from Sylphy, what would you think?]

"Huh? Of course I don't want to."

"That's true."

"What's wrong?"

"No, nothing at all. Even if I told you, you would turn things from black into white."

The instant he says that.

Paul completely changes.

A blood thirst emits from him to the point that I can feel it even though I'm a novice.

"Eh!?"

"......!!"

Paul takes a step forward along with a silent pressure.

Death.

This word flashes across my mind.

I instinctively use all my magic to attack Paul.

An explosive wind is created in between Paul and I, using wind and fire magic at the same time.

I jump backwards, boosted by the hot wind pushing me backwards.

I have simulated this many times.

With Paul as an opponent, there's no chance of winning if I don't pull away from him.

Even though the explosive wind does damage to me, I can gain some distance if I can frighten away the opponent.

But Paul pays no attention to it, and charges forward like the earlier pose he had.

(It's ineffective after all!!)

Even though I expected it, I still feel dread welling up.

I need to take the next step for evasive maneuvers.

The back is impossible. The opponent is moving forward too quickly.

I instinctively think of that. I create a shock wave to hit my body on the side.

With the force of the shock wave, my body flies to the side.

The sound of the wind being cut grazes my ear, making my body break into cold sweat.

I see Paul's sword swinging where my head was earlier.

Good.

The first strike has been avoided. This point is advantageous. Even though the distance is still very close, I can take the next step to pull away.

I can see my victory.

I sink the earth where this guy is going to step next.

Paul steps onto that small pitfall.

Just when I think of that, he shifts his body weight instantly on the other leg, and continues to charge at me without delay.

(It's not good enough if you don't disable both legs at the same time!?)

I created a marsh at my feet.

Before I sink, I cast a water current and slide backwards like I'm skiing.

(Shit, it's too late.....!)

It was too late when I had this idea.

Paul steps onto the solid ground on the edge of the marsh.

The force that he stepped on makes the ground sink.

There's only one more step left to come close to me.

"U, uaahhh!!"

I use the sword to engage him in panic.

A clumsy strike that doesn't belong to any style.

I feel a slippery, hateful feeling on my hands as I swing the sword with brute force.

(It has been deflected by the Water-God style.....)

I only know that.

After the Water-God Style deflection comes the counter attack.

Even though I know that, I can't react to it.

Like a slow motion cut scene, Paul's sword swings towards my neck.

(Ah. luckily it's a wooden sword.....)

My consciousness dives towards darkness as I feel the strike on my neck.

When I wake up, I find myself in a small box.

I feel the surroundings move shakily, and I guess that I'm in the middle of some mode of transport.

I try to sit up, but I can't even move a finger. I lower my head, and I find myself wrapped in ropes like a bamboo mat.

Layers after layers of tight wrapping.

(What happened.....?)

I turn my neck and find a huge Nee-chan sitting in front of me.

Chocolate skin, a revealing leather outfit, rippling muscles, and full of scars all over her body.

Wearing an eye patch with sculpted like face gives off an Anego vibe.

{ C-Editor's note: Anego meaning she's like the leader of a gang or yakuza. }

This Nee-chan completely feels like a female amazon warrior from some fantasy story.

Also she has beast like ears and a tail like a tiger's. Her fur is very thick.

Is she from a beast race?

She notices that I'm looking at her and meets her eyes with mine.

"How do you do, my name is Rudeus Greyrat. I'm sorry to speak with you under such circumstances."

I offer my name first. The basics in conversation is to speak first.

You can hold the initiative if you strike first.

"You're really polite for Paul's son."

"That's because I'm also my mother's child."

"That's true. You're also Zenith's son."

I feel slightly relieved when I see that she knows my parents.

"I'm Ghyslaine. Please give me your regards from tomorrow onwards."

From tomorrow onwards?

What's she talking about?

"Erm, thanks. Please give me your regards too."

"Aaa."

In any case I use fire magic to burn the ropes.

My whole body is in pain. Is it because I slept in a funny posture?

I stretched out.

A sense of freedom.

Even though I'm already used to a small room and moving only my fingers, being tied up in front of this very S looking sister makes me feel somewhat weird.

I look at my surroundings, and where I am can only be described as a small box.

There's an area for one to sit on, so I sit opposite of Ghyslaine.

There are windows on both sides, and one can look outside. It's a grassland that I have never seen before.

As expected, I'm in some form of transport.

The shaking is tremendous, and I feel like I will get carsick if I ride on this for too long.

There's a pitpat sound coming from the front. Probably a horse.

Which means I'm in a carriage.

Why am I with this macho nee-chan sitting in a carriage?

.....Hah!!

Could, could it be, that I've been abducted by this muscle woman!?

Does she want the lovable me as a toy for comfort purposes!?

No, I, I don't really mind muscular women, but I already gave my heart to a girl named Sylphy.

Can you please be gentle the first time.....?

Nonononono!!

C-c-calm down. I need to calm down during this time.

Counting prime numbers can allow me to calm down.

Prime numbers are numbers that can only be divisible by one or them self..... This is what the Priest-san who has given me courage said before.

{ C-Editor's note: Priest-san is Enrico Pucci from the Japanese manga series Jojo's Bizarre Adventure. }

3, 5, and then, 11? What's next, 13? Then, then next is.....

I CAN'T REMEMBER!!

Prime numbers whatever I need to calm down.

Cool down and think. Why have I landed in this situation?

Good. Breathe in deeply.

"In..... hale....."

Good.

Let's rearrange things from what I know.

First, Paul suddenly attacked me and caused me to faint.

Once I woke up, I found myself tied up in a horse carriage.

I'm afraid he knocked me unconscious for some reason and threw me in a horse carriage.

There's a woman who said, "Please give me your regards", in this horse carriage.

Coming back to Paul, he said something strange before he attacked me.

Something about leaving Sylphy. Something about Sylphy's too good for you. She's not your thing.

T-that damnable lolicon..... Is he trying to lay his hands on my Sylphy!?

Wait. He didn't say something like that in the second half?

Hm?

I don't understand when it comes to the part about Sylph.

Damnation. It's all Paul's fault.....!

Well, let me try asking first.

"Excuse me."

"You can call me Ghyslaine."

"Ah, then call me Rudi-chan."

"I got it. Rudi-chan."

Looks like she's the type who doesn't get jokes.

"Ghyslaine-san. Did you hear anything from father?"

"Call me Ghyslaine. You don't need to add -san."

Ghyslaine says that while retrieving a letter from her pocket.

And she passes it to me. I take it, but there's nothing on the envelope.

"Paul gave me that letter. You read it. Because I don't know how to read, you need to speak it out loud."

"Okay."

I open the letter and start reading.

『To my dear son, Rudeus.

By the time you read this letter, I will probably not be in this world anymore.』

"What!?"

Ghyslaine shouts in surprise and stands up.

The carriage's ceiling is surprisingly high.....

"Please sit down Ghyslaine. There's more."

"Hm. Is that so."

She sits down obediently.

I continue reading.

『------- This is the first time I want to try writing a joke. You got bested badly by me, and after that you got sadly knocked unconscious and tied up with ropes and thrown into the carriage like an imprisoned princess. I think you're not clear on what happened, and you can ask that muscle daruma..... Even though I want to say that, that fellow's brain is made up of muscles, so she couldn't explain it properly for sure.』

"What!?"

Ghyslaine shouts in anger and stands up.

"Please sit down Ghyslaine. The next few lines are in praise of you."

"Hm, is that so."

She sits down obediently.

I continue reading.

『She's a Sword-king.

If you want to learn sword techniques, you won't find anyone better unless you go to the holy grounds of the swordsmen. Her strength can be guaranteed by Father. I have never won once against her..... Except in bed.』

Don't write useless stuff, idiotic dad.

But Ghyslaine looks pleased.

That guy's really popular.

But you're really strong, Ghyslaine-san.

『Well, talking about your job, you're appointed as a home tutor for the young lady staying in the city of Roa within the Fedoa region. I hope you can teach her language, math, and simple magic. She's an extremely willful lady, and violent to the point where the school has requested her not to come anymore. And up to this point, she has driven away several home tutors..... But, I think if it's you, you will be able to solve it.』

Solve what? This is so irresponsible.

"Is Ghyslaine very willful?"

"I'm not the young lady."

"That's true."

I continue reading.

『The muscle Daruma is the bodyguard hired for the young lady and the sword tutor. She seems to want you to teach the young lady magic and language, in exchange for teaching you the sword. Please don't laugh at her for having muscles for brain. She will become serious (Laughs).』

"What.....?"

There's a vein popping out from Ghyslaine's forehead.

This letter might be explaining the situation, but at the same time, it is probably trying to get a rise out of Ghyslaine.

What relationship do these two have?

『Even though her teaching capabilities aren't good, it's quite worth it if you can save on lesson fees.』

Lesson fees.

I see. I'm to learn sword techniques from this person. Because Paul belongs to the instinctive, he helped me find a better teacher.

Or did he feel despair over me who didn't improve at all?

Can you please take responsibility till the end.....?

"How much would one usually need if they wanted to learn from Ghyslaine?"

"2 Asuran Gold Coins for 1 month."

2 Asuran Gold Coins!!

Even if it's Roxy, she only received 5 Asuran Silver Coins per month.

4 times the amount. I see. It's indeed worth it.

Just to add on, 1 person needs around 2 Asuran Silver Coins per month for living expenses.

『You're going to stay at the young lady's house for the next 5 years to teach her.

In these 5 years, you're forbidden from going home or writing letters. Because of you, Sylphy is unable to become independent. Not only that, even you're becoming dependent on her, so I'm forcing you to live apart.』

"Wh.....at.....?"

Eh, why?

Wait.

.....Eh?

Are you kidding me? I can't meet Sylphy for 5 years?

And I can't write letters?

"What's wrong? Have you separated from your sweetheart, Rudi-chan?"

I showed a face of despair and Ghyslaine seems to ask me in a pleasant manner.

"No, I was just chased out of the house by a father who isn't like an adult."

I didn't even have the time to bid farewell.

You really did it, Paul.

"Don't be so sad, Rudi-chan."

"Erm."

"What?"

"I think I would like you to call me Rudeus."

"Ah, I got it."

But once I think about it rationally, Paul is also really right here.

Indeed, if Sylphy grows up like this, she might become like an Osananajimi in a poorly made Eroge. Always sticking to the protagonist, and treating the protagonist as if he's the world and be a satellite revolving around him. A character without a self identity.

If it's in the real world, getting along with friends in school, that reliance will gradually disappear over the process of learning things, but Sylphy doesn't have friends because of her hair color.

Even after 5 years, the possibility of her sticking to me is very big.

Even though that's okay for me, the surrounding adults don't think that.

Which is good. Not a bad judgment.

『In regards to your salary, you're being paid 2 Asura Silver Coins every month. Even though it's cheaper than the average home tutors, it's quite a lot for a child's pocket money. If you're free, go to the city to learn how to use money. The thing about money is that if you don't use it normally, you wouldn't use it well in an emergency. Although, I feel that my son will still use it well even if he doesn't learn how to..... Ah, even if you make a mistake don't use it to buy women okay?』

I already told you not to write this useless stuff.

Or is it that? Something like ostrich club?

{ C-Editor's note: Dachou club/ostrich club is a trio comedy act that involves a leader who hands out roles, a tsukkomi straight man and boke funny man. }

Please don't do that.

『And then. After 5 years, if you didn't give up on teaching the young lady language, math, and magic. As a special reward, the employer will pay the university fee amounting to 2 people's worth. Such is the contract.』

I see.

In these 5 years, if I take the home tutor job seriously, he will fulfill what I want to do.

『Well, Sylphy might not want to follow you 5 years later, and your passion might cool down and have a change of heart. We will persuade Sylphy on this matter seriously.』

Persuade seriously..... I have a bad feeling. Papan.

{ C-Editor's note: Papan - sound effect of heart skipping a beat. }

『I wish you well within these 5 years. To learn all sorts of things at a new place, and reach a greater height.

- The great intelligent Father Paul.』

What intelligence.....!?

Didn't you use brute force!!?

But this time, his judgment makes me tip my hat off.

Doing things for me, and for Sylphy as well.

Even though Sylphy might become alone, if she doesn't solve things by herself, she won't be able to grow up no matter whenever.

It's not okay to rely only on me.

"Paul really loves you."

Ghyslaine says. I laugh wryly and reply:

"We were pretty cold before this. But once he saw that we were pretty similar, he got close to me. But, isn't Ghyslaine the same....."

"Hm? What about me?"

I read out the last line.

『PS: If the young lady is agreeable with you, it's okay if you lay your hands on her, but the muscle Daruma is my woman, so don't touch her.』

"He said that."

"Hmph. Send that letter to Zenith."

"Got it."

Just like that, I was set to head off to the largest city in the Fedoa region, Roa.

Even though I have many ideas about this, I'll set them aside. I should wake up a little. Mmm, this is just as well. I can't be with Sylphy. I don't have any regrets. Mmm.

I keep telling myself that.

(But I really want to see her at least once a year.....)

My heart still has some reservations.

--Paul's POV--

"T-that was dangerous....."

I look down at my son who fainted and my dirtied shoes.

Because today is the last day I'll be teaching him how to use the sword, I wanted to act seriously to scare him by showing the dignity of a father, but I didn't imagine that he would use magic against me with lightning reflexes.

Not to attack me, but to restrain my movements by using magic.

And, that is all different kinds of magic.

"As expected of my son. His combat sense is amazing."

Even though it was just an instant, I actually had to use 3 steps when I completely took him by surprise.

Especially on the last step. If I had any hesitation, my legs would have been restrained and wiped out immediately.

Taking 3 steps against a magician. If there were other companions, they would have covered his left and right to protect him. Or if he was further away, I would have needed a fourth step.

I lost completely on the contents.

Even if you just throw him into some party to search in a dungeon, he would be useful enough as a magician.

"As expected of a genius who made a Water-Saint ranked magician lose her confidence....."

My son is utterly terrifying.

But, I'm delighted.

In the past, I would have felt only jealousy when someone was more talented than me, but unexpectedly, when it comes to my son, I only feel pleased.

"Ah, now is not the time to talk about this. If I don't hurry up Rawls and the rest are all going to come."

I quickly tie my unconscious son up with rope, and throw him into the horse carriage which just arrived.

The timing is just right, Rawls is coming over.

Sylphy too.

"Rudi!?"

Sylphy sees the tied up Rudi and plans to rescue him. Suddenly casting intermediate ranked magic with voiceless incantations. Even though I easily avoid them, the magic has speed and power besides the voiceless incantation.

If it was anyone else they would have probably died.

What the heck did this Rudi teach?

I pass the letter to Ghyslaine, placed Rudi in the horse carriage and told the driver to set off.

I look towards the side, and Rawls is kneeling beside Sylphy teaching her something. That's right. Teaching is the parents' job. The portion that was given to Rudi must be taken back by your own hands, Rawls.

I sigh, and use warm eyes to look at them, then I hear Sylphy's voice in the wind.

"I understand. I will become strong to help Rudi.....!!"

Mmm, you're being loved, my son.

Seeing this scene, my two wives come out from the house.

Because it would be dangerous, I told them to watch from inside the house, but they are probably coming out now to see him off.

"Ah, my cute Rudi's leaving."

"Madam. This is training."

"I know Lilia. Oooh, ooh Rudeus!! Go ahead and venture off child!! The poor me whose sole child has been snatched away!!"

"Madam, young master is no longer the sole child."

"That's true. There're already two sisters."

"Two .....!! M-madam!!"

"It's okay Lilia. I will also love your child!! Because, I, also love you!!"

"Ooh!! Madam, me too!!"

They act out such a scene while seeing the horse carriage off.

Because Rudeus excels so much, these two shouldn't worry so much.

But coming back to them, these two have such a good relationship. It would be nice if they were as good to me.

Or should I say, I will be happy if they don't work together so well to bully me.

"But when the other children grow up, Rudi won't be here...."

Rudi seems to be planning to be a cool older onii-chan. Too bad.

My cute daughters' love will be monopolized by me.

Ho ho.

Wait a minute. After this, Rudeus will receive training from the talented trainer Sword-king Ghyslaine.

5 years later, he will be 12 years old. His body will be very fit.

Once he returns he will be able to use magic and do a mock battle with me. Will I be able to win against Rudeus?

Oh shit. My dignity as a father will be in danger 5 years from now.

"Mrs. Greyrat, and Lilia. Since Rudeus is gone, I want to start training a wee bit."

Zenith shows a surprised look. Lilia whispers into Zenith's ears.

"It's because he nearly lost to young master Rudeus. He's feeling danger now."

"He's always been like that. He won't put in effort unless he nearly loses."

Doh. This father's dignity is already in danger.

(Well, it's not really a concern when it comes to dignity)

Because I know how a father who always shows off his dignity looks like, I think from the bottom of my heart that I'll just be a useless Ossan who constantly has trouble with women. The target is a father who cares without being overbearing. At least before the 3 children become adults.

I look at Zenith.

Her body is good enough to let people feel that she hasn't given birth twice.....

(Well, that will be extended until she has the fourth or fifth. Hehe.)

Putting aside the fourth or something.

(Rudeus.....)

I also don't like that method.

But, even if I tell you that you wouldn't listen, and I don't have the confidence to persuade you.

But just watching and not doing anything would be a failure as parents. Since I don't have enough ability, I can only request other people, but that is it. Even though I did it with brute force, the intelligent you should be able to understand that.....

No, even if you don't understand that, it's okay.

The things that will happen there will not be experienced in this village. Even if you don't understand, just react to the things in front of you and that will become your strength.

So hate me.

Hate me and curse that you're not capable of opposing me.

That is how I grew up with my father oppressing me.

Since I am unable to oppose my father, I left my home.

I regretted over it and reflected over it. I don't wish for you to experience the same thing.

But I got strength from leaving home.

Even though I don't know if this strength can win against my father, I got the woman I want, protected the things I wanted to protect, and at least I was able to suppress my young son.

If you want to oppose me, then go ahead.

After you bring back strength.

Gather enough strength that wouldn't lose against this brutish father.

Looking out to Rudeus's horse carriage, Paul thinks that to himself.

My name is Zenith Greyrat.

I was born in the holy country of Milis. It is a country with a long history. It's very suitable to describe the country as beautiful but inflexible.

I am born as the second daughter of that country's earl family.

I was a flower in a greenhouse during that time. I thought that everything I saw in my surroundings was the entire world. Such was my ignorance.

Although it's not really suitable to say it myself, I felt that I was a good child.

Never going against my parents' requests, and my grades in school were excellent.

I followed all of Milis's church teachers, and I had a smooth time learning social etiquette.

I was even termed as 『Milis's young lady standard』.

My parents also must have felt that I was a daughter to be proud of.

But I continued to grow that way. I would one day be in a party with an arranged marriage.

That will most likely be the eldest son from a random earl family. Straight as an arrow, with a proud heart, and keeping Milis's teachings as his absolute principles. A prime example in the Milis's nobles. I'll be married to someone like that. Giving birth to children. And I'll be an earl's wife who wouldn't feel ashamed no matter where I went, and be annexed in the holy country of Milis's nobles' list.

That is my life. A "road" for the Milis's noble's daughters.

But I didn't walk on that "road".

On the day I became an adult, when I was 15.

I fought with my parents. I revolted against my parents and left home.

There was a reason why I had hated the requests from my parents that I had always followed.

I had felt jealousy over my sister who was wilder than me.

With various reasons, I turned my back on my [road].

It is very difficult to continue living if nobles turn away from their "road".

But the fortunate thing is that I had learned healing magic in the noble school. And I managed to learn to the intermediate rank.

Although the holy country of Milis is a country that's very advanced in healing magic and barrier magic, most of the people will only learn healing magic until the elementary rank. If one learns healing magic to the intermediate rank, that person can work in Milis's hospital, so it is heavily favored upon in school.

And thus, I arrogantly believed that I would be able to go living on very well when I reached there.

I was too naive.

The me who didn't even know where to sort out a place to stay immediately got targeted by bad guys.

They told me they were "Currently hiring a magic healer", and hired me who didn't know the market value into their party. Their offer was much lower than elementary ranked magic healers, but they insisted that they paid out a higher price.

I was foolish enough to trust their skin-deep sincerity, even though there were many good people in the world.

If I followed them, I would have been asked to do things that were much worse. Being used as a shield against monsters, or to have kept using magic until I fainted. And I might have even been asked to give up my body.

And the one preventing all this was the young warrior Paul Greyrat.

After teaching the bad guys a lesson, he forcefully took me back to his traveling party.

If their party member Elinalize didn't explain to me in detail, I would have thought Paul was a bad person.

In any case. This was how Paul and I met.

At first, I hated Paul.

He's obviously a former Asuran noble, but the way he speaks is like a thug. Frequently breaking his promises, and getting rash easily. Greedy, condescending to me, and likes to feel other people's butt, and completely doesn't hide his perverted thoughts.

But I know he's not a bad guy.

Even though he looked down on me and mocked me for not understanding how the world works, he always said that there was no choice, and helped me out.

Paul's the complete opposite of me, but he's reliably wild and actually quite dashing.

It didn't take very long until I fell in love with him.

But he has many charming ladies around him, and I'm a follower of Milis.

Milis's teaching has "A couple must only love each other" as its doctrine.

Even though I left home, I was raised up with these teachings around me, and it's also taught in school as common sense, and thus the Milis teachings have been deeply engraved in my heart.

Then on one day I said it.

"If you don't sleep with any other woman again, I can sleep with you."

He agreed to it with a smile.

I knew he was lying.

But I still thought that was not a problem.

If I get lied to, I can give up on him completely.

But I was still too foolish. Too careless. Too naive.

Because I actually got pregnant after one time.

I didn't know what to do. I was extremely uneasy.

I didn't think at all that Paul would actually take responsibility and marry me.

And the child that I gave birth to,

Rudeus Greyrat.

---------- Rudi.

Rudeus is sitting beside his sisters' cradles.

His expression is very serious.

His face is reminiscent of Paul's shadow. He has his lips tightly closed, and keeps changing glances from his sisters.

"Ah-, Ah-----!"

The moment Norn mumbles, Rudeus's expression tightens.

And in the next moment.

"Burururu."

Rudeus sticks out his tongue and makes a funny face.

"Yaa, waa, ha, ha!"

Norn smiles happily, looking at his expression.

Rudeus nods at Norn's smile, satisfied, and changes back to the serious expression.

"Wuuu, ah!"

This time it's Aisha who talks.

And Rudeus immediately moves to her side.

"Arbububu."

He squeezes his face and does something strange.

"Gyaa--- Ah, ah."

And Aisha smiles happily too.

Rudeus shows the same smile as when he did it to Norn.

Rudeus keeps repeating that from just now.

"Haha....."

I chuckle a little when I see Rudeus's smile.

That's because Rudeus doesn't smile much.

He always seems to be unsatisfied with something. Regardless of learning magic or the sword, he's always doing something with a serious expression.

He has never even smiled in front of his parents.

Even if he smiles, it is made on purpose.

But he's showing that expression to his sisters, and smiles satisfactorily after seeing his sisters' smiles.

I feel happy just looking at him.

It is very different from before.

"Phew....."

I sigh when I think of Rudeus when he was younger.

I was overjoyed when I saw Rudeus's magic talent, but after a while, I started to suspect whether Rudeus was looking down on his parents, not loving them.

Because Rudeus wasn't close to me at all.

"..... But that's not the truth."

What changed my mind was the time with the pregnancy incident.

Lilia got pregnant and Paul admitted to it.

That time I felt I was betrayed.

Betrayed by Paul. Even betrayed by Lilia.

Especially when Paul broke his promise. My anger almost reached the point where it nearly exploded. If I had failed to restrain even for one second, I would have screamed and thrown Lilia out, or I might have even left.

Before the marriage, I thought to myself once he lies to me, I would give up on him and leave him.

I had forgotten about it, but it has continued to reside in my heart.

My emotions had been pressured to the point of destroying the entire family.

But Rudeus dispelled my thoughts.

He acted out like a child and solved the situation neatly.

Even though what he did wasn't considered right.

Even if I based it on Rudeus's speech, I couldn't forgive Paul.

But I saw the truth of his inner heart within Rudeus's speech.

"I am uneasy over the break down of the family's relationship."

I thought it over when I found out about this point.

This child is treasuring his family in his own ways.

When I think of that, my suspicion over whether he loves his family disappears.

And at the same time, I easily forgave Paul and Lilia.

If Rudeus wasn't there, it wouldn't be that way.

"Hm, Norn-chan's really cute, You will become as beautiful as Mother. If you grow up, let's shower together."

Rudeus holds Norn's small hands to coax her.

The usual Rudeus, who's always so serious, is fawning his sister in a childish manner. That's really -----

(Too reliable.....)

I found Rudeus to be amazing. But recently, he's also very reliable.

It was utterly exhausting when Norn and Aisha were born.

The two girls cry day and night, and after feeding them, they would vomit. When we washed their bodies in the water, they would defecate in there.

Even though Lilia says this is normal, that this is how it is, I still couldn't sleep at night.

But Rudeus has done many things for the babies.

The way he does it is very skilled.

As if he has done it before.

It can't be possible that he still remembers how he was taken care of. He must have watched how Lilia did it.

As expected of Rudeus.

Even though it makes me unsatisfied that he does it better than his parents, in truth, it's a really big help.

I have never heard of or seen any child who's as reliable as Rudeus, who can take care of his sisters that were just born.

Looking at Rudeus, I'm reminded of my brother in the holy country of Milis. He's as serious as Rudeus. Studious and talented, and praised by father to be an example for nobles, but he's overly cold to his family, and treated his sister like air.

Even though he's impressive as a noble, I can't respect him as my brother.

But Rudeus probably won't be like that.

He will definitely become a brother respected by his sisters.

In fact. He even plans it that way. When he was looking at his sisters with Paul, he declared "My goal is to be a respected brother."

I can't wait to see how Rudeus, Norn, and her sister grow up to be.

"Ah! Wahhh!"

Norn starts crying while I think of that.

Rudeus' body trembles a little, and he makes a face for her.

"Wah! Wah!"

But Norn doesn't stop crying.

Rudeus touches her diapers to check whether she peed, picks her up, and looks at her back for rashes while Norn sobs in tears.

If it was me, I would have certainly yelled for Lilia to help out. Then I remember that Lilia went out to buy things. I start to panic.

But Rudeus isn't in panic.

He eliminates every reason, claps his hands, and tells me:

"Mother. It's time to feed her."

I realize the time when he tells me that.

Watching Rudeus play with the sisters makes the time pass quickly.

"Alright. Alright."

"Here. Have a seat."

I sit on the chair according to Rudeus's direction.

I reveal my chest while I carry the crying Norn.

As predicted by Rudeus, Norn is hungry and immediately sucks on me, drinking the milk in relish.

Every time I feed her, the strong emotions that I'm a mother begin to surge up.

".....Hm?"

Suddenly, I realize Rudeus's gaze.

Everytime I feed her, Rudeus always stares at my chest.

And that gaze isn't like a 7 year old child's, but a gaze full of lascivious desires.

If you place Paul together with him, you will find that the two of them have the same exact gaze. It makes me feel comforted, but when I think that he's already like this at this age, I feel uneasy for the future. Will he be like Paul and lay his hands on many girls, making them cry?

"What's wrong Rudi? Do you want it too?"

"EH!"

I tease him, and Rudeus comes back to his senses and shifts his eyes away.

Then, with his face red, he tries to find an excuse to explain himself:

"No. I'm just thinking that Norn can really drink."

"Haha."

I can't hold my laughter in when he displays such a cute demeanor.

"You can't have it you know, this belongs to Norn. Rudi already drank a lot when he was young, so you should be patient."

"..... Of course, Mother."

Even if he says that, his expression looks like he feels regretful.

That kind of Rudi is rarely seen. It makes me want to fawn over him.

Let me just tease him a bit more.

"If you really want it, you can wait until you marry a wife and beg for it."

"Yes. I will try asking for it."

Uh oh. I thought he would be angry and bicker with me, but he looks like he had an epiphany and replies.

He discovered that he has been mocked?

Even though it's slightly disappointing, this does fit his personality.

"..... You can't force it okay?"

"I know."

This serious response makes me feel a little lonely.

"Gerp."

Norn burps after finishing her meal, and I place her back into the cradle.

I use a cloth to wipe my chest, and Rudeus stares at it again.

Hm. Looks like the person who will be this child's wife will have a hard time.

The strongest candidate is Sylphy, but that child is always so obedient to him. It looks like even if she's not willing, she won't strongly refuse it.....

Alright.

I'll teach Rudeus a lesson when it comes to that.

As a mother.

Paul only taught him how to conquer girls. I'll teach him about the things after that.

"Guu."

After Norn has fed, she shows a face of satisfaction, and soon starts making sounds.

She must be tired.

"Drink more, and sleep more. Quickly grow up okay?"

I stroke Norn's head as I tell her that.

"Ah! Waaa!"

Rudeus did the same thing to Aisha that he did to Norn, carrying her up, checking her diaper, and confirming that there were no rashes or insect bites.....

In the end, he carries Aisha and looks at me with a troubled expression.

Rudeus rarely shows an expression like that.

Even though it makes me happy to see different types of expressions, I don't really wish to see him so gloomy.

"What's wrong?"

"That is. Mother. Today, Lilia is quite late."

"That's true."

She is usually back by this time if she goes out to buy things.

Did something happen?

..... No. There's a group of merchants that are coming from the city of Roa. She did say that she would buy more things than usual, so she would spend more time today.

"That, about Aisha."

"Yes?"

"She's probably hungry."

"I see."

When I think carefully about it, since Aisha is fed together with Norn, she should feel hungry at the same time.

Usually, I feed Norn while Lilia feeds Aisha.

I notice Rudi's troubled expression now.

Rudi uses that expression and says with trepidation.

"About that, Mother, I'm not sure when Lilia will be back. It's probably fine to let Aisha wait a little, but if Aisha continues to cry, Norn will cry too. That....."

I'm a sincere follower of Milis.

And because of that, I blame Lilia for breaking up the one man, one woman, promise from Paul. I know they are not Milis's followers, but I don't want to bend my own thoughts.

This must have been discovered by Rudi.

Will he make his mother unhappy because of one word.

Will she do something terrible to his sister.

He must be carrying this uneasiness.

To Rudi. Regardless of Norn, Aisha, and me. Everyone's family.

And....., Since things have turned out like this, I should do it.

But, is that really fine.

Will I feel unhappy when I feed Aisha.

And then, if my expression gets seen by Rudi, will he hate me, or look down on me?

"Sheesh. What are you saying? Here. Quickly give me Aisha."

I chase away my own fears, use the most gentle tone I can muster, and tell Rudi.

"Okay."

Rudi hands Aisha over to me gingerly.

I carried Aisha, and let her feed on the other side.

If Aisha isn't willing, I will probably feel unhappy. But Aisha doesn't care, and feeds in big gulps.

"......Phew."

I sigh with relief, using a volume that Rudi can't hear.

The same feeling comes to me when I fed Norn.

The feeling of being a mother.

How unbelievable.

Why did I think I wouldn't be willing to feed Aisha?

Why did I think I would be unhappy during the time I fed her?

Why did I think I needed to tolerate that?

The answer is simple. I know it.

Because I'm a mother.

In the end, there's no difference. A Milis follower or something else.

"She seems to be enjoying herself."

"That's because Mother is delicious."

"Please don't give flattery like that."

Rudi seems to be enjoying himself, watching Aisha feeding on me without any unhappiness, and relaxes.

He must have thought that this was also the responsibility of protecting his sisters.

That's really admirable.

It's not a lie that he wants to be a brother respected by his sisters.

"It's not flattery. I can still remember the taste."

"Are you for real?"

I smile while I stroke Aisha's head.

After a while, Aisha also finishes drinking, and leaves my chest.

I place her back in the cradle, and she starts to sleep like Norn.

Rudi uses an expression gentler than usual to look at me and Aisha.

"Rudi."

"Yes, what is it?"

"Can I touch you?"

"..... There's really no need to ask me. Just touch me if you like to."

Rudi sits beside me and raises his head to me.

I stroke him on the head softly.

Rudi has never made me worry since his birth, so I didn't really feel like a mother when he grew up, but recently it feels different.

I feel from the bottom of my heart that I'm this child's mother.

"....."

I feel a sudden burst of warmth, and look up to where it's coming from.

The summer glow is pouring in from the windows.

A scenery of endless golden-colored wheat fields outside the window.

A peaceful summer afternoon.

I feel really content.

"It's great if things can continue like this."

"Yes."

Rudi agrees with me.

He must also feel at peace during this time.

But what makes me feel happy is Rudi's presence.

If it wasn't for Rudi, a follower of Milis like myself would bemoan the fact that I have become one of two wives, and would have left this house with Norn, or blamed Aisha and Lilia.

Luckily, Rudi is around.

If he wasn't a clever and wise child, I wouldn't experience something like this now.

"Rudi."

"What is it?"

"Thanks for being born"

Rudi looks like he's at a loss.

Then, scratching his head, he says with embarrassment.

"I should be the one thanking you."

I laugh again when I see Rudi's cute actions.

Mushoku Tensei: Isekai Ittara Honki Dasu - Volume 2

I'm currently running.

I'm fleeing away with all my strength from the beast's claws.

I escape with all my concentration, carrying with me a heart full of fear.

Over the stairs. Jumping through the courtyard. Sometimes using magic to cling to the roof. Sometimes falling down.

"Where are you?!"

That fellow releases a roar and chases after me.

No matter where I run.

I'm quite confident in my physical strength.

After all I have been running since I was 2 or 3, training in the sword.

But this bit of self confidence has been shattered.

That fellow, as if to mock my efforts, chases me without running out of breath, with blood red hair flying in the winds.

That fellow does not know the meaning of "giving up". No matter how far I run, the instant I relax, will be the moment that fellow closes the gap bit by bit.

"Haaa..... Haaa....."

I'm starting to run out of breath.

I can't keep running. I'm already unable to escape.

I'll hide. There's only that option.

"Gulp....."

I hide in the shadow of the stairs, observing from the area that allows observation of the plants, when I hear the beast roaring from the center of the mansion.

"I will never forgive you!"

This roar makes my legs tremble.

I am Rudeus Greyrat. 7 years old.

I have bright tea colored hair. I'm a robust bishounen, and a former 34 year old NEET.

Because I didn't go to my parents' funeral and got chased out by my family, I got killed by a truck. But because of fate's bad joke, I have retained my memories and reincarnated as a baby.

I have reflected on my past life acting as a horrible human being, and in these 7 years, I have worked hard to live earnestly.

Learning how to speak and write, learning magic, training in the sword, establishing good relationships with my parents, and even meeting a cute childhood friend named Sylphy. To be able to go to school with Sylphy, I have complied to the job's request, letting me earn for two people's share for the school fees, and come to the city of Roa.

If I complete the job for the young lady's education, the employer will pay for the school fees ——— Even though it's supposed to be something like that.

"Come out wherever you are! I'll crush you into bits!"

I look out from the observation area, and shiver from the beast's noises.

Trembling from the violent incarnate that is in the shape of a young girl.

—— Why has it turned out this way?

I'll have to trace it back to 1 hour ago.

When we reached Roa, it had turned into evening.

The distance between the village Buina and Roa is about a day's journey on a horse carriage.

If you count the time, it's about 6-7 hours. You can say that's far, but if you said it's near, it wouldn't be untrue.

The city of Roa, is indeed one of the largest cities around here, as it is a bustling place.

The first thing that I see are the walls.

They surround the city to about 7-8 meters high, and look very reliable.

Around the city gate, there is an unending flow of traffic, and once we're inside, I immediately see all sorts of hawkers.

And right at the place where we just entered, there are a series of inns and stables.

The citizens are mingling with the merchants, there are people wearing armor walking by, and the entire place looks like a fantasy out of a storybook.

There are some people carrying huge luggage sitting right at an area as if they are waiting for something.

What could it be?

"Ghyslaine, do you know what that is?"

I ask the person sitting opposite me.

Having beast's ears and a tail, and wearing very revealing leather clothes with chocolate-colored skin underneath them, is a huge guy with muscles —— No, it's a female swordswoman.

Ghyslaine Dedorudia.

Third in the Sword-God style rankings, a formidable swordswoman having the title of a Sword-King, has agreed to teach me swordsmanship where we are going to.

She's the second teacher to me.

"..... Kid."

She reveals an irritated expression to my question.

"Are you treating me as an idiot?"

Ghyslaine glares at me fiercely, scaring me.

"Ah no. I'm just. I don't know what that is, so I wanted to ask....."

"Ah, sorry. That's what you meant."

Seeing that I'm about to break into tears, Ghyslaine swiftly replies.

"That's the waiting area for the public carriage. Going from city to city requires that, and if you pay the driver money, you can take it."

Ghyslaine points to the shop houses one by one, telling me that this is a weapon store, that's a bar, and over there is some trading association. Hey wait, that's a pretty suspicious shop.

Even though her appearance frightens people, she's very friendly.

We enter into a corner, and the atmosphere changes.

After the numerous stores catering to the adventurers, as we progress forward in the horse carriage, we see many residential shops.

There must be people dwelling deep in the alley.

It looks like a planned placement.

If there are enemies around, the people surrounding here will defend, while the citizens escape into the heart of the city, or escape from the opposite direction.

Since it's this kind of concept, the more you go in, the grander the horses are, and even the shops are taller.

The deeper you go into the center, the richer the people.

And then, right at the center of the city, is the tallest building.

"This is the owner's mansion."

"Rather than saying it's a mansion, this is more like a castle."

It is said that 400 years ago, this place was held as the last line of defense. It's a city with a long history.

So this is the castle in the city.

But only the part about history is true, the nobles that are at the capital deem this as a place where many low class adventurers reside in.

"It seems that the Ojou-sama's noble status is quite high since we're coming here."

"Not exactly."

Ghyslaine shakes her head.

But since the Lord's mansion is already in front of my eyes, based on the earlier deduction, the people staying around here are obviously high class.

..... Or maybe not. Staying in this area situated near the borders, the rank might not be anywhere high.

"Eh?"

As I think of that, the driver greets the person at the mansion's gate.

And enters it.

"Is that the Lord's daughter?"

"No."

"Is it not?"

"Almost."

Is there some deep meaning to it? I just don't get it.....

The horse carriage stops.

When we enter the mansion, we are brought into a room that looks like it is meant to entertain guests.

The butler points towards the two sofas.

This is the first interview for me.

I'll do this carefully.

"Please sit over there."

I obey and sit down, and Ghyslaine leaves without saying a word and stands at the corner of the room.

Which can oversee the entire area.

If that happened back in my past life, I would think it was chuunibyou.

"The young master is about to come. Please wait a moment."

The butler pours a liquid that resembles red tea into a very high class teacup, and waits at the entrance.

I drink the steaming liquid.

It isn't bad. Even though I don't know how to sample the quality of red tea, this must be quite expensive.

From the start, there was no beverage prepared for Ghyslaine. It seems like I'm the only one treated as a guest.

"Where is it!"

When I ponder over this stuff, a huge voice and angry footsteps travel from the side of the rooms.

"Is it here?"

A robust looking man roughly enters the room.

His age seems to be around 50 years old, and his dark brown hair is mixed with a little white hair, but he seems to be in a pretty good shape.

I place the cup down and stand up, bending my waist to 90 degrees.

"I'm pleased to meet you, my name is Rudeus Greyrat."

The man snorts in dissatisfaction.

"Hmph, you don't even know how to make a greeting!"

"Old master, Rudeus-dono has never left Buina village. He's still young and hasn't had the time to learn etiquette. Please forgive that small rudeness....."

"Shut it."

The butler doesn't speak after he gets shouted at.

This old Master guy should be the one who hired me.

He looks like he's really angry. As if I'm inadequate somewhere.

Even though I want to greet with care, it seems that noble's etiquette has its set of rules.

"Hmph, Paul doesn't even teach the formalities to his son!"

"I heard that Father hated the stiff rules, and thus he purposely did not teach me."

"An excuse right away! You're the same as Paul."

"Does father always find excuses?"

"What do you think? Whenever he opens his mouth, it's an excuse. If he wets the bed, he finds an excuse. If he quarrels, he finds an excuse. If he lazes in his studies, he also finds an excuse."

I see. That's true.

"If you want to learn something, at least know etiquette! You didn't try it at all and that is how you turned out this way!"

But what he says isn't wrong and not without reason.

I have only learned magic and the sword, and I never thought about learning something new.

Perhaps my vision is too narrow.

I must reflect on it earnestly.

"You are right. This is indeed caused by my own hands. I apologize deeply for this."

The old master stomps on the floor with his feet as I lower my head.

"But it seems that you didn't use it as an excuse, and tried your best to present a formal pose! I'll allow you to stay in the mansion!"

I don't really get what's going on, but it seems that I have been forgiven.

After the old Master throws down this line, he turns his body vigorously and leaves like a storm.

"Who is?"

I look at the butler and ask.

"The Lord of Fedoa. Sauros Boreas Greyrat-sama. He's Master Paul's uncle."

So that guy's a lord.

He's a little too overbearing. I really worry about his ruling. Well, there are many adventurers here, so if he doesn't have that imposing figure, he probably won't be able to handle the duties of a lord.

Hm? Greyrat, Uncle.....?

"That means he's my Grandfather's brother?"

"Yes."

I had already guessed that Paul utilized the relationship that he broke off.

But come to think of it, his old home is amongst the high ranking nobles.

That guy must have been a young master from quite a good place somewhere.

"What's wrong Thomas? Why is the door always open?"

Another person enters from from the other side of the door.

"But father looks quite happy. Did something happen?"

A man with a slender body and bright tea-colored hair.

According to the way he describes father, he must be Paul's cousin.

"Young Master. I am really sorry. Old Master has just met Rudeus sama and seems to be pleased with him."

"Hoh, a child that Father took notice of..... Did he choose wrongly? Hmm."

He says while walking to the sofa opposite of me, and sits down.

Ah, that's right, I better quickly greet him.

"Pleased to meet you, my name is Rudeus Greyrat."

I lower my head with almost the same bow that I did earlier.

"Ah, my name is Philip Boreas Greyrat. When nobles do their greeting, they will bring their right hand to their chest and lower their head slightly. From the way you did it, you must have gotten scolded."

"Is it something like that?"

I imitated Philip's actions and raised my head a little.

"Something like that, but the way you greeted isn't bad. If a blacksmith greeted Father that way, he would have probably been happy. Sit."

Philip sits back down with a plop.

I follow his directions to sit.

..... Has the interview started?

"How much exactly do you understand?"

"He said that if I teach the Ojou-sama here for 5 years, I will be supported with the fees to go into the Magic University."

"Is that all?"

"Yes."

"I see....."

Philips puts his hands under his chin, as if to think about something, and his eyes look at the table.

"Do you like girls?"

"Not to the level of Father."

"Is that so? Okay. You pass."

Ah? Ara?

That was too fast, right?

"As of now, that child only favors two people, Edena who teaches etiquette, and Ghyslaine who teaches the sword. Before this, 5 people have been sacked. One of them was a man who has even taught in the royal palace."

Even if he taught at the royal palace, the way he teaches might not be good, but I didn't say that out loud.

"..... Does this have anything to do with liking girls?"

"Not at all. Because Paul is one who would try anything for a cute girl, I'm wondering if you're the same."

Philip shrugs his shoulders.

I'm the one who feels like shrugging. You actually grouped me together with that guy.

"To be clear, I don't hold any expectations of you. Because you're Paul's son, I want you to try in any case."

"Whoa. That's a little too clear."

"What's the matter? Do you have the confidence?"

I don't really have it.

But even if I don't, I can't say it out loud in this atmosphere.

"I'm not too sure until I meet her....."

If I fail at this job and search for another, I'll be laughed at very hard by Paul. Saying something like you're still a child or something.

Are you kidding me?

How can I be laughed at by a guy who's younger than me?

Muuu....

"If it doesn't work out in reality....., let's try acting it out."

I'll use my previous life's knowledge.

A method to tame the Ojou-sama.

"Act out. How does that work?"

I describe it cleanly.

"When I'm with the Ojou-sama, we will get kidnapped by a certain family's bad guy. I'll use language, math and magic to escape with the Ojou-sama, and return with our own strength to the mansion."

After listening to my words, Philip keeps quiet for a while, but quickly understands the plot and nods.

"In other words, you want her to take the initiative to learn. Interesting. But will it be that smooth?"

"I think that it has a better chance than the adults educating her."

A plot that usually happens in anime and manga.

After witnessing or living through an incident, a child who hates books will learn the importance of learning.

Even if it's a self directed and self acted scene.

"Is that something that Paul taught, whatever that you said, a method to having girls feeding from your palms?"

"No. Even if Father doesn't do all that, he's still very popular."

"Popu..... Pffff....."

Philip snorts in laughter.

"That's true. That guy always had the ladies luck. Even if he stands there, there will be a girl coming up to him."

"Anyone that Father knows seems to have hooked up with him. Even Ghyslaine over there seems to be one."

"Ah. That's really something to be envious of."

"I worry whether he will lay his hands on my friend in Buina village."

After I say that, I begin to really worry.

5 years later, she will grow up.

When I go back, Sylphy has become one of my mothers. Oh my god.

"You don't need to worry about that. Paul is only interested in girls who are "big"."

Philip looks at Ghyslaine in the corner as he says that.

"I, I see."

I look at Ghyslaine. She's huge.

Zenith and Lilia are also big.

What do I mean by big?

Of course, it's the boobs.

"If it's 5 years, it should be fine. A mixed elf blood. Even if they grow up, they won't be so big. Also, I think Paul wouldn't be so sick."

Is that so?

And this guy actually knows that Sylphy is an elf.

Then, as a precaution, I'll treat everything that has happened in Buina village, to have been thoroughly investigated.

"I should say something like, "Will you try and seduce my daughter"?"

"What exactly are you worried of from a 7 year old kid?"

That's really too rude. I won't do anything at all. At most, she will fall in love with me. (I'll lead her).

"But judging from Paul's letter, you were playing too much with that girl in the village, and he had to forcefully make you leave. Even though I think it's a joke, after listening to your plans just now, this might not be fake."

"I'm only just a friend of Sylphy."

And I want to raise my only friend to be my obedient girl.

—— Even if you tear my lips apart, that will never be said out loud.

Some things that don't need to be said, shouldn't be said.

"Well, fine. Nothing will progress if we just talk. I'll let you see my daughter. Thomas, bring her!"

Philip stands up as he finishes saying that.

Just like that, she and I meet.

— This shrew is really haughty.

The first time I saw her, I made this judgment.

She's older than me by two years. The corner of her eyes are raised, and she has wave-like hair.

Her hair color is crimson. It's as if it's a pure red that has been painted on.

Two words. Totally explosive.

Perhaps she will become pretty, but most of the guys will think [It's impossible between me and her].

Maybe a natural M..... Nah. Not even that low class.

In any case, she's dangerous.

Every cell in my body is screaming for me to not get close to her.

"Pleased to meet you. My name is Rudeus Greyrat."

But, in any case, I can't run away.

I'll use what I learned just now.

"Hmph!"

She snorts the same way her grandfather did from the first look.

She stands with both of her feet planted to the ground, looking at me with a condescending attitude. Looking down from above.

She's taller than me.

She displays an unhappy attitude after seeing me, and says:

"What the heck? Aren't you smaller than me!? Are you joking to let someone like this teach me!?"

Wah wah blah. Her pride seems to be really high.

But I can't retreat from this.

"I think that it doesn't have anything to do with age."

"What did you say!? You dare to argue with me!?"

Her voice is so loud. My eardrums are about to shatter.

"It's merely something that Ojou-sama can't do, that I can do."

With that said, Ojou-sama's hair seems to turn straight,

I have never seen anger that can materialize.

This is utterly frightening.

Guh. crap. Why do I have to be scared of a child who hasn't turned ten?

"What? You're too arrogant. Do you know who I am?"

"You're my older cousin."

I hide my fear, and answer.

"Cousin.....? What's that?"

"My father's cousin's daughter. You can say that you're my Granduncle's daughter."

"What kind of confusing rubbish is that!"

Was it something incorrect?

Well, maybe saying the name of the relative is easier.

"Have you heard of the name Paul?"

"How can it be possible that I heard it before!?"

"Is that so?"

I feel surprised that she doesn't know the name.

In any case, I'll talk to her.

You must keep on talking. The god of walkthroughs once said that.

The next instant that I think of that.

Ojou-sama raises her hand.

Pam!

"..... Eh?"

That was too sudden.

The Ojou-sama suddenly strikes me.

My mind is a little confused, and I ask her.

"Why did you hit me?"

"Because you're so arrogant when you're smaller than me!"

"Oh, I see."

The cheek that was hit stings.

That really hurts.....

The second image. Violence.

I really have no choice.

"Then, I'm hitting back."

"Hah!?"

I didn't wait for her reply and slapped her.

Pu!

That sounds really weird.

It is probably that I'm not used to slapping. Well, never mind. It probably still hurts.

"When you hit people, it hurts."

Do you understand now ——? As I prepare to say that, I saw that Ojou-sama raising her fist in fury.

The Deva King. Exactly the same.

Without waiting for me to think, she hits me.

I stumble backwards, and she continues with a kick.

My entire body flies backwards, after that impact to my chest.

The next moment, she has mounted me.

My hands are sealed with with her legs.

A, ara? I can't move?

"Wait, hey."

My awkward voice is covered by the Ojou-sama's roars of fury.

"You actually attacked me! I'm going to make you regret it!"

The punches come flying at me.

"Ow, owww, s, stop, eh, no, stop that."

After the 5th punch, I finally use magic and escape from under her.

I hold my trembling legs together and stand up. Raising my hands, and preparing to use magic to engage her.

I use a wind magic shock wave aimed at the Ojou-sama's face.

".....No, longer can be forgiven."

The Ojou-sama's face receives the blow and flies upwards, but she doesn't stop for one moment, and comes running like a monster.

After seeing that expression, I realize I am wrong.

I quickly run away in a tumbling manner.

That isn't an arrogant Ojou-sama.

That's like the protagonist in a delinquent manga.

Maybe I can use magic to beat her senseless.

But she will absolutely not listen to me.

And once that Ojou-sama is revived, she will find me for revenge.

I can try using Magic to bring her down every time.

But she will not feel any setbacks.

And she's different from the protagonist. Regardless of how despicable an act is, she will definitely use it.

Like throwing a vase from the second floor, or hiding in some corner and using a wooden sword to cut me.....

She will use everything that she has, and return ten times the revenge.

And she will not have mercy.

This isn't a joke. I can't use healing magic if I don't chant it.

And the battle doesn't end, she will never listen to me.

Using brute force against her.

That is not an option I can ever choose this time.

And then, we go back to the beginning.

After that, Ojou-sama gets tired and gives up looking, and returns to her bedroom.

She didn't discover me.

But she nearly found me. When that red haired devil walked in front of my eyes, I couldn't feel that I was alive. I have never thought I would experience the feelings of the protagonist in a horror movie.

When I return to Philip in exhaustion, he smiles wryly to me.

"How was it?"

"Nothing works."

I half cry when replying.

When I got hit by her, I almost thought I would be killed. When I escaped, I almost cried out.

I haven't experienced that for a really long time, and when I think about I remembered that, such a long time, which means I had experienced something like this before.

Still. This isn't psychological trauma.

"Then, are you giving up?"

"I will not give up.]

I haven't done anything.

If I gave up so soon, wouldn't that mean that I got hit for nothing?

"I need to request something from you."

I lower my head to Philip with force.

I need to let that beast know the meaning of true terror.

"I got it. Thomas, go ahead and do the preparations."

Philip instructs the butler, who then leaves the room.

"But on that topic. The idea that you thought of was really interesting."

"Is that so?"

"Yes. You are the only one amongst the tutors that came up with such a big plan."

"..... Do you think it will work?"

I feel a little uneasy.

Can I settle that Ojou-sama with my petty tricks?

Philip shrugs.

"That will depend on your efforts."

He's completely right.

With that, the plan is executed.

I enter the room that has been allocated to me, and it seems to be filled with high grade goods everywhere. A huge grand bed, intricately designed furniture, beautiful window frames, and modern bookshelves.

If I had coke and a PC, I could live here happily for the rest of my neet life.

It's a good room.

Perhaps I have the Greyrat name, and it's a room specially prepared for me to stay in, instead of giving me a servant's room.

Speaking of servants. I don't know why there are are so many maids that are from the beast races.

In this country, I heard that the demon races are discriminated against. Are the beast races an exception?

"Haa..... Darn you Paul. You actually sent me to this crazy hell."

I sit on the bed with my strength leaving me, and I hold my head that has a dull ache.

The place that I was hit still stings.

I mutter the chant to cast healing magic, and heal the wounds.

"But, compared to my previous life, this is fine."

The process of kicking me out of my home was the same, but this time it's different, and I don't need to roam the streets. A complete difference.

Paul has arranged my life properly. A job and a place. Also, isn't there pocket money? That's an amazing level of care. If my siblings could've done that in my past life, maybe I could've pulled together.

Helping me find a job, providing a place for me to stay, and watching over me and not letting me run.....

No, that's still insufficient.

A 34 year old neet without work experience. They had no other choice but to abandon me.

Plus even if they suddenly do something like that, I can only vent. I probably wouldn't even want to work.

Pulling away from my love (computer), I might even commit suicide.

Only now works.

The job that has been found, and the determination to earn money. The current now.

Even though it was done by brute force, the timing was picked very well. I might have blamed Paul wrongly. But what's with that? That crazy violent creature. This is the first time in my 40 year life that I have seen that.

It can't be used by two kanji characters. It is the incarnation of violence.

That was like a boiling water hardware.

It nearly caused me to have a trauma. I nearly, or maybe you can already say I peed my pants.

"I feel like whatever I do, she will go crazy."

It even seems like she will just view me as "The enemy" and go crazy.

For that Ojou-sama, I'm merely a target.

I will be quartered.

"..... No wonder she got chased out of school."

The way she attacked people can only be deemed as well practiced.

That is a way to beat down people. Regardless of whether the opponent can or cannot retaliate, she will just hit them without care.

Even though she's only 9 years old, the process of how she makes people feel helpless is too practiced.

Can I teach someone like her.

Philip and I discussed it over.

Let her get kidnapped and experience helplessness.

And then, I'll rescue her. She will then respect me, and obediently receive my guidance.

The plan sounds simple, but I know the basic process.

If she doesn't do something unexpected, it should progress smoothly.<another example of probable reversed meaning, found a number of these>

But will it really be smooth?

That level of violence is beyond my imagination.

Using all her strength to roar and yell. Biting down on her prey, and then tearing it to bits.

A violence that triumphs will.

If she gets kidnapped, will she not feel a thing?

If I rescue her, will she do an expression as if all this was to be expected and say, "Why didn't you come earlier, trash."?

It's possible.

It's possible if it's that Ojou-sama.

She might do something unexpected, and I must think of a solution for everything. I must put down my determination.

No matter what, this cannot fail.

I keep thinking it through.

The steps to make this plan work.

But as I think about it, my thoughts are sinking into a marsh.

"God. Please bless me to succeed....."

I can only pray at the end.

I don't believe in God in the slightest.

But, just like many Japanese, when something happens, we seek God's protection.

Saying something like, "please let me succeed".

When I discovered that my divine artifact, (panties) was left in my room, I cry.

My god (Roxy) isn't here.

–Status–

Name： Ojou-sama

Profession: Granddaughter of the lord of Fedoa

Personality： Violent

When talking to her： Doesn't listen

Language： Only able to write her name

Math： Single digits

Magic： Not even a scintilla

Sword： Elementary ranked in the Sword-God style

Etiquette: Boreas's style greeting

The people that she likes： Grandfather, Ghyslaine

When I woke up, I found myself inside a small and dirty warehouse.

The sunlight was pouring in from the window with metal bars installed it.

My entire body hurt, and after I ensured that there weren't any broken bones, I started to chant Healing Magic in a small voice.

My hands were tied behind my back, but this was not really any trouble to me.

"Alright."

I am completely healed, my clothes are not torn.

Very good. The strategy is progressing smoothly.

The plan for convincing Ojou-sama was this.

1) First of all. Going with Ojou-sama to the clothing store.

2) Because Ojou-sama is very mischievous, she will want to run out of the store by herself.

3) Usually Ghyslaine will be beside Ojou-sama as her guard, but she will not notice Ojou-sama by 『coincidence』.

4) Even though I'm following her, to her, I'm just a brat who's weaker than her and submitted into being beaten on the follow after quarreling with her, so Ojou-sama doesn't take notice of me at all.

5) I will be treated as her follower, and move with Ojou-sama around the area. Gradually moving to an isolated place in the city (She seems to admire adventurers).

6) At this point, the bad people that the Greyrat family arranged will appear.

7) Easily knocking Ojou-sama and me out. Then kidnapping and bringing us to the neighboring city, and locking us up.

8) I will use magic and escape from the area.

9) Realize that this is a different city.

10) Using the money hidden in my underwear, and taking a horse carriage back.

11) Teach Ojou-sama when we reach home.

Up until now, it had gone smoothly until step number 7.

The next thing would be me using the Magic, knowledge, wisdom, and courage to escape from here in style.

To keep the realism, I still needed to improvise an act.

I don't know if it will succeed, and feel slightly uneasy.....

"..... Hm?"

But this place is slightly different from the arrangement.

The entire warehouse is full of dust, and the corner has a broken chair and an armor full of holes.

Didn't they say the place wouldn't be shabby.....?

Well, even though it's an act, there's a need to bring out the real stuff. Let's just take it.

"Urgh..... hmm.....?"

After a while, Ojou-sama also woke up.

Opening her eyes. Realizing she's in a foreign place, and trying to get up, but also realizing that her hands are bound behind her, and in the end, falling to the ground like a worm.

"What is this!?"

Ojou-sama discovered that she couldn't move and started making noise.

"Stop joking with me! Don't you know who I am!? Let go of me!"

What a terrible yell. I had once thought of it back at the mansion, but she has never tried to control her voice at all.

Can it be that she does it so that she can cover the entire house with one yell, in that incredibly big mansion?

No. She probably has never thought about it. The Ojou-sama's grandfather, Fedoa's lord, is the type that also uses a voice to pressure others. The grandfather had used his voice to intimidate both the servants and Philip, and Ojou-sama must have witnessed it countless times.

Kids like to imitate things, especially the bad stuff.

"You're too noisy, you shitty brat!"

While the Ojou-sama was creating a racket, the door got opened roughly, and a man entered.

He has ugly clothes. His entire body stinks with a face full of stubble, and a bald head.

If he presented a name card with bandit written on it, it would be quite persuasive.

The acting is quite good. Now I don't need to worry about my acting being seen through.

"You stink. Don't come near me. You stink too much! Don't you know who I am? Ghyslaine will immediately come and cut you into half!"

Bam.

With a noise that sounded like it hurt very much, Ojou-sama got kicked by the man.

She uttered a noise that a lady will never make.

Her entire body flew up and finally knocked against the wall violently.

"Damn you! What are you trying to be arrogant for!? I know you two are the grandchildren of the lord!"

The man mercilessly stepped on the immovable Ojou-sama whose hands were bound behind her back.

Hey. Isn't this a little too much?

"Ow..... It hurts a lot..... Stop..... Ah..... Stop..... Ow..... Stop....."

"Tch."

The man kicked Ojou-sama for a while and finally spat at her face. Then he turned around and glared at me. As I avoid his eyes the next instant, I got kicked in the face once, and I flew out.

"..... Ouch!"

That really hurt. Even though it's an act, can you please not hit so hard?

Even though I did say that, I can use Healing Magic to heal wounds.

"Hmph! Acting like you're happy.....!"

The man walked out of the warehouse.

I heard that as he walked out of the door.

"Quieter now?"

"Yeah."

"You didn't kill her right? If you injured her too much, the money will go down too."

What? Their dialogue is really strange.

If it's just great acting..... that is fine, but it doesn't feel like that.

Could it be, you know, that?

"What? Well there's nothing much to it. At most, it's good enough for that boy to be alive."

It's not good at all.

"....."

After I couldn't hear their voices anymore, I counted a full 300 seconds, and burned the ropes with Fire Magic, and moved over to Ojou-sama.

Ojou-sama still had blood flowing from her nose. Her eyes were unfocused, and she kept muttering something in her mouth.

When I listened closely, it was something about, absolutely cannot be forgiven something, I'll complain to grandfather something, and afterwards, some dangerous words that weren't really suited for the ears.

In any case, I'll check her injuries and confirm it with my hand.

"Ahhh!"

Ojou-sama met my eyes, and trembled, as if she felt that pain.

I used a finger over my lips, and signaled her to be quiet.

I confirmed the positions of the injuries from her reactions.

Two of her bones are broken.

"Oh merciful mother of Gods, please heal this one's wounds, and let her recover with a healthy body."

I quietly chant the intermediate ranked magic, and heal Ojou-sama's body.

Healing magic isn't effective by pouring more mana into the spell. I don't know if it will completely heal her.

Hopefully the bones are not set wrongly.....

"Eh? Ehhh? It doesn't hurt....."

Ojou-sama looks at her body in surprise.

I go closer to her and whispered in her ears.

"Shh. Don't be so loud. Your bones are broken, and I just used healing magic. Ojou-sama, we seem to have been kidnapped by bad people. They are the sworn enemies of the lord. Our next step should be....."

Ojou-sama completely doesn't listen.

"Ghyslaine! Ghyslaine, save me! They are going to kill us! Quickly save me!"

I quickly hide the ropes underneath my shirt, and run to the corner. My back faces the wall, and I hide my hands behind my back, acting as if I'm still tied up.

The man breaks open the door in response to Ojou-sama's full efforts in screaming.

"Shut up!"

And he kicks Ojou-sama even longer than before.

I'm really speechless over her learning capabilities.

"Damn it. If you scream again, I'll kill you!"

I even get kicked twice.

I didn't do anything at all. Please don't kick me. I really feel like crying.....

I think of that while I move over to Ojou-sama.

"Urgh..... Uuuu....."

This is too much.

I'm not sure what happened to her bones, but judging from her mouthfuls of puked blood, it seems that her organs have ruptured. The bones in her hands and legs have all been broken.

I don't really know too much about medical stuff, but if she's left like that, she will probably die right?

"Let the power of God be converted into a bountiful crop, and bestowed into one's who had lost their strength to stand up once again. 『HEALING』"

In any case, I'll use elementary ranked magic to cure her a little.

Ojou-sama isn't vomiting blood anymore. She probably wouldn't die now..... Maybe.

"Uuu.... I-it still hurts, h-help me heal..... Ah.]

"I'm not doing that. If you're healed, aren't you going to get kicked again? Please use your own magic."

"H-how do I know to use..... that?"

"If you learned it from before, you can use it right now."

I throw down a line like that and move towards the door.

I then place my ear against the door, wanting to listen to what they say.

The more I think, the more I find this to be strange. No matter what, hitting Ojou-sama till she's half dead is over doing things.

"Then, are we going to sell to that guy from the last time?"

"No. It's better to ask for ransom."

"Wouldn't we get caught?"

"It doesn't matter. We will go to another country."

Judging from their words, they really plan on selling us.

Requesting someone familiar to pretend to attack the girl, and in the end, we meet the real deal. That sort of development?

Where did it go wrong? Did the ones who were supposed to kidnap us get targeted by them? Did they target us from the start? Or did Philip really intended to sell his daughter?

That last possibility isn't really possible.

..... Whatever. I'm not going to think about this now. No matter what, the things I'm going to do aren't changing.

It only lacks the 『safety』.

"Compared to selling, ransom is higher right?"

"In any case, we better make a decision before tonight."

"No matter which decision, it is right."

They seem to be discussing whether to sell us or seek ransom from the lord. They look like they are planning to leave here tonight.

In that case, I better move while the day is still bright.

"Alright."

But, what should I do?

Break out of the door and subdue the kidnappers? After beating the kidnappers to a pulp, Ojou-sama will respect me.....

I don't feel like it will happen that way though–.

I think she will feel that she would've won, if not for the part where she was tied up.

And in the end, she will think that violence is the only way. That will not work.

I must teach her that there's no advantage to using violence, otherwise, I'll get hit in the future.

I need to let her feel helpless.

(..... Ah. It's possible that I may not beat the kidnappers anyway.)

I'm pretty sure that I will lose if the kidnappers are as strong as Paul.

In that case, I will be killed. Without a doubt.

Alright. No matter what. Without contact with the kidnappers, we will escape from here.

I look back and check Ojou-sama's condition.

She's glaring at me in anger.

Hm.

I'll do my assignment in any case.

First, I'll use earth and fire magic and seal the gaps on the door. Then, slowly use fire magic to melt it slowly, making it unable to move.

This door will become a door that does not open, but it won't last if the door is kicked hard. This is only a precaution.

After that, I move towards the window. Even though I consider focusing and melting one of the iron bars with fire magic, I think it will be too hot and give up.

After trying different solutions, I use water magic and change the earth surrounding the window into mud, and successfully take the entire bars down. The hole is large enough to allow a child to slip through.

That way the escape route is ensured.

"Ojou-sama, it seems this time we have been kidnapped by the sworn enemies of the lord, and they are discussing to wait till tonight to bring their companions and torture us to death."

"You are l..... lying..... right?"

Of course I'm lying.

But Ojou-sama's face turns green immediately.

"I don't want to die yet, so I'm running on my own..... Goodbye."

I push myself up where the metal bar was previously on the window.

At this time, there's a sound coming from the direction of the door.

"Hey, why isn't the door opening!? What the hell!?"

Fierce banging comes from the other side of the door.

Turning her head back, Ojou-sama looks at the door in fear-like despair, and looks to me again, repeating this a few times.

"Ah..... D, don't leave me behind..... Save me....."

Ara. You calmed down so fast. That's a surprise.

Even if it's Ojou-sama, you would still get scared under these circumstances.

I immediately go near Ojou-sama and whisper in her ears.

"..... Before we reach home, you must completely listen to me. Can you promise me that?"

"Listen, I'll listen, I'll listen okay.....?"

"Can you promise not to shout? Ghyslaine isn't here."

"I promise, I promise..... H, hurry, coming in..... they are, coming in.....!"

Ojou-sama nodded forcefully.

Her entire face is full of fear and anxiety. Completely different from the time when she hit me.

It's most important that she experiences the emotions of being hit one-sidedly.

"If you break your words, I will absolutely leave you behind."

I say something that sounded as cold as possible, while I bury the door with earth magic.

Then I burnt the ropes with fire magic, and completely cured Ojou-sama with intermediate ranked magic.

Finally, I climbed onto the window and pulled Ojou-sama up.

After climbing out of the warehouse, I found that this was a different city.

No walls. At least this isn't Roa.

It's not the size of a village, but can be considered as a small town. If I don't continue moving to the next step, we will immediately be discovered.

"Phew. I think it should be fine if we escape to this place over here."

The Ojou-sama talks loudly. Does she think she's safe now?

"Didn't you promise not to speak loudly before we reached home?"

"Hmph! Why should I keep your promise!?"

Ojou-sama says it like it's a natural thing.

This damn brat.

"Is that so? Then I'll part here. Goodbye."

"Hmph!"

Ojou-sama snorted without a care and turned around. Right at this time, an angry roar came from far away.

"Bloody brats! Where did you run away to!?"

Either they kicked the door down, decided to check the window to see the situation and found that the bars were missing, and discovered that we escaped and chased us right away. It should be something like that.

"..... Ahhh."

Ojou-sama gave a small scream, and runs back immediately.

"I-I was just kidding just now. I won't talk loudly anymore. Bring me back."

"I'm not Ojou-sama's servant, and I'm not a slave."

I'm a little pissed over this condescending attitude.

"W, what, aren't you the home tutor?"

"Aren't you mistaken?"

"Eh?"

"Ojou-sama said you were not satisfied, so I'm not officially hired.'

"I, I'll hire you....."

She turned her head to one, as if she's very unwilling.

I need to make a definite promise with her.

"You're saying that now. But once you reach the mansion, you're going to break that promise like just now right?"

I used a cold voice as much as I possibly can.

Without any emotions, I plainly said that.

But my tone was saying that you would never fulfill that promise.

"I won't. I won't break that promise..... Save, please save me....."

"If you promise to not talk loudly and listen to whatever I say, you can follow me."

"I, I got it."

Ojou-sama nodded obediently.

Very good.

Then, I'll move on to the next step.

First of all. I take out 5 Asuran Large Copper Coins from my underwear, which is my entire fortune now. Just to add one, the copper coins are 1/10 of a silver coin. It's a sum that doesn't make people be at peace. But it should be enough with this.

"Please follow me."

I moved away from the angry roars, and moved towards the town's entrance.

At the entrance, there was a guard lazily standing at the watch tower.

I gave a copper coin to him.

"If you see someone looking for us, please tell them that we went outside of the city."

"Huh? What? Kids? I understand that, but are you playing hide and seek? Hmm, so much money..... Are you from some noble families? Really now....."

"Please do that."

"Ahh. I got it."

I found his reply to be perfunctory, but at least that will buy us some time.

Then we just go straight to the area where the public horse carriage is at. I have already confirmed the price against the wall. I also check the current location.

"This is a town next to Roa called Widin."

I whispered in Ojou-sama's ears, and she seemed to hold true to her promise, whispering to me too.

"How do you know that?"

"Isn't it written there?"

"I can't read it....."

Very good. Very good.

"It is convenient if you can understand it. Because the way to use the public transport is also there."

Honestly. We were transported here within a single day.

Coming to a foreign city makes me feel really uneasy. My trauma is about to reemerge.

No. No. I'm already different from the time where I didn't even know where "Hello" was.

{ C-Editor's note: Hello Work is the Japanese government's agency for introducing jobs. }

Come to think of it, Paul sounds like Hello on the letters.

When I was thinking of nonsensical things, I felt that the angry roars were approaching.

"You bastards! Where have you been hiding at!? Get out right here!"

"Let's hide....!"

I grabbed Ojou-sama, hid behind the toilet at the waiting area, and locked the door.

Footsteps transmitted from the outside.

"Where did you go you bastards?"

"Don't think you can escape!"

Woahhh. That's really scary.

Can you not make that noise while you're searching? You should at least use a gentler voice. I might even be lured out. Although, it's probably impossible.

Finally, the voice goes distant. I can temporarily relax.

But I can't be careless. Sometimes people who panic will search the same spot several times.

"..... W, will it be alright?"

Ojou-sama covered her mouth with a shivering hand. Her body is in jitters.

"Well, if we get found, we'll have to fight for our lives."

"I, I see..... Alright.....!"

"But we probably can't beat them."

"Is, is that so.....?"

Ojou-sama suddenly got her fire back, and I corrected myself a little.

If she suddenly runs out and fights them, I'll be troubled.

"But just then, when I looked at the fees to take the carriage, I saw that we will need to change horse carriages twice if we set off from here."

"..... Change?"

Ojou-sama showed off a face with "so what."

"The horse carriage starts off at 8 in the morning, and 1 horse carriage sets off every 2 hours. It is the same in other towns. Therefore, setting off from here needs 3 hours. It's about to reach the 4th carriage. Which means....."

"Which means?"

"Even if we get to the next town, there's no horse carriage heading to Roa. We will need to stay a night at the next town."

"..... I, I see, ah."

Ojou-sama looked like she was about to shout out, but she still held it in at the end.

Be careful. Don't make huge noises, okay?

"I have 4 Asuran Large Copper Coins to get from here to the next town, rest a night there, and set off from there to Roa, using the money here will barely."

"Barely..... be enough right."

"Yes. Enough."

Ojou-sama exhaled with relief.

But now is not the time to relax.

"That is if we're not lied to in coin change."

"Coin change.....?"

What's that? Ojou-sama showed off that expression.

Perhaps she has never used her money to buy something before.

"The boss at the inn and the station will think that we can't count as we're children. Then, they might not give us the correct change. At that time, we can point out the error, and they will give use the correct sum. But if we don't know how to count....."

"What will happen if we can't count?"

"Then we won't be able to get a horse carriage, and we'll get caught by those men....."

Ojou-sama trembled again, as is she was about to pee.

"Ojou-sama. The toilet is right there."

"I, I got it."

"Then, I'll take a look outside."

The moment I wanted to exit the room, my sleeve was pulled.

"D-don't go."

After excitedly witnessing Ojou-sama's peeing, we go outside from the toilet.

The men seemed to be gone.

I'm not sure if they continued searching for us outside, or within the city.

If we got discovered, I could only use all my magic to immobilize them.

I prayed in the hopes of defeating them, and waited at the corner at the same time. Once the time was up, we handed over the money to the driver and got onto the horse carriage.

We finally reach the next city.

To show Ojou-sama how cruel the world is, I found a run-down place for lodging, and slept on the haystacks.

Ojou-sama seemed to be agitated to the point where she couldn't sleep.

Every time she heard a sound, she would sit up and stare at the door in fright. After a while she found nothing, and would sigh with relief—- Repeating this process constantly.

On the 2nd day, we took the first carriage out.

Ojou-sama's eyes were bloodshot. It was perhaps due to insufficient sleep, but she didn't dare to close her eyes and alertly watched behind the horse carriage.

A few times, there were riders that caught up to the horse carriage, but they were not the kidnappers.

Perhaps they were left behind in the distance. Perhaps they gave up.

I thought that without care.

After a few hours, nothing happened, and we were back at Roa.

After passing through the reliable city walls, we could see the mansion from afar, and my heart was set with the emotion of safety.

My thoughts subconsciously believed that it was safe already.

After getting down from the horse carriage, we walked to the mansion. Our steps were fast and light. After traveling in the horse carriage and sleeping on the hay for the first time, I also felt tired.

And as if to catch this weakness —- Ojou-sama suddenly got pulled into the alley.

Too careless.

"......Eh?"

I realized only after 2 seconds.

My eyes only left for 2 seconds, and within that time, Ojou-sama had gone missing.

I really thought that she disappeared into thin air. At the corners on my eyes, there was a strip of cloth that had the same color as Ojou-sama's clothes on the wall.

I immediately gave chase.

Entering the alley, I saw two people's figure's carrying Ojou-sama.

"Hmph!"

I immediately casted the earth magic to make a wall.

From my hands, the magic created a huge earthen wall in front of them.

They could only stop in front of the sealed pathway where the earthen wall suddenly appeared.

"What the heck!?"

"Mmmph!"

Ojou-sama's mouth has been covered. There were tears in her eyes.

They are really too good at this, covering her mouth within seconds.

And Ojou-sama seemed to have been struck, her face is red.

The opponents are two humans, and they are male.

One of them is the violent person who kicked me. The other one is probably the person that he talked to. Both of them look like bandits, and both of them have a sword on their waist.

"So it's this brat. You could have quietly gone back to your home....."

The two people got a shock from the sudden wall, but once they looked back at me, they smiled.

The violent person walks towards me without caution.

The other one carried Ojou-sama. Is there anyone else.....?

In any case, with the intent to intimidate them, I cast a small fireball on my fingertip.

"What? You bastard!"

Looking at this, the violent person pulled out his sword.

The other person became alert, placed the sword on Ojou-sama's neck, and slowly retreated.

"You damn brat. I was wondering why you were so calm. You're actually a bodyguard magician..... No wonder you escaped so easily. Damn it. I was fooled by your appearance! Are you from a demon race!"

"I'm not a bodyguard. I haven't been officially hired."

Even though I'm not from a demon race, there's no real need to correct it.

"What? Then why are you interfering with us?"

"No, I'm supposed to be hired after this."

"Oh, it's for money?"

For money.

He's right about the money. I do intend to earn the fees for university.

"I don't deny that."

The violent person's mouth curled at the corners after listening to my reply.

"In that case, come help us. Among our customers, there's a perverted noble who wants to buy girls with high social standing. If we're to get a ransom that's also possible. I heard that she's the very precious daughter of the lord here. They will give whatever we want."

"Oh....."

I made a sound of being impressed, and Ojou-sama's face immediately turned green.

Perhaps she knew that I was becoming her home tutor to pay off for the university fees.

"Then, how much can we get?"

"It's not pocket change like 1 or 2 gold per month. It's a lump sum of 100 gold coins."

The violent person said proudly.

Even though I don't know how much that really means, it feels like the person is saying, "Wow 1 million dollars". "That's really amazing right?" He's like a kindergarten kid.

"Hehehe. kid, you might look young, but you're actually of a considerable age right?"

"Hmm? Why would you think that?"

"With that magic and that calm attitude, one look and we know it. The demon races have those kind of people. You must be troubled over your appearance right? Well, you should know the importance of money right?"

"I see."

From a person that doesn't know anything, he would treat it that way. Indeed. My mental age is past 40 years. You're totally right. As expected from Mr bandits.

"Indeed, living to this age, I know the importance of money. I was even thrown into a foreign land without any money."

"Hehehe. You see right?"

Even though, before that, I was living without any worries.

Nearly 20 years of neet life. Full of Eroge and internet games. It was half of my life.

From there I learned something.

I can betray Ojou-sama.

Or my scenario with Ojou-sama can start here from helping her.

"Therefore, I'm very clear, that there are things more important than money."

"Don't talk about these pretty words!"

"They are not pretty words. You can't buy 『Dere』 with money."

{ C-Editor's note: Dere = fawning affection or being lovestruck/lovey-dovey. Used in the compound words Tsundere and Yandere. Imagine Ojou-sama being affectionate to Rudeus. }

Oh shit. I said the truth in my heart.

"Dere? What is that?"

The violent person seems to be confused, but the reality of the negotiation has broken down. His irritating smile was gone, and he placed the sword at Ojou-sama's neck with a solemn expression.

"The hostage is with me. Throw away the fireball in your hand!"

"..... Can I throw it into the air?"

"Do it. But don't think of throwing it at us. Even if you're fast, you won't be faster than the sword in my hand. I'll cut this bitch's throat and use her as a shield."

He didn't let me dissipate it. No. Perhaps he didn't know.

From the time to cast the magic out is automatic.

He wouldn't understand this part if he had never learned magic before.

"I got it."

I manipulated the mana of the fireball before shooting.

I created a special type of fire ball, and then fired it with a strange sound accompanying it.

A massive explosion happened in the air.

"Wha!"

"Wut!?"

"Mmmmph!?"

An ear splitting explosion struck the ears. During the instant when everyone looked up, there was a glaring flash of light, and a temperature that seemed to burn the skin.

I began to run.

Casting magic as I ran, I created two types of magic that I used the most.

On the right hand was the wind magic "True Sonic Boom."

On the left hand was the earth magic "Rock cannon."

I released them at the two of them.

"Ahhh!"

The sonic boom struck the one carrying the Ojou-sama.

"Urgh!"

Ojou-sama fell from his arms and I caught her safely. Princess-style carrying.

"Tch! Don't look down on me!"

I looked at the other person, and saw him cut the rock in two.

"Uwah....."

Crap. He actually managed to split the rock. Even though I didn't know his style, it's a terrible thing. If he's as good as Paul, it will be troublesome. I might not be able to win against such an opponent.

"Awawawa.....!"

I used wind and fire melded magic and created a shock wave near my feet, and flew towards the opposite direction.

This shock wave is strong enough to make me feel like the bones in my legs have snapped.

In the next instant, a sword struck the place where I was just at earlier. The blade slices across the tip of my nose, leaving a wind-splitting sound.

That is too dangerous.

But he's not as fast as Paul. Then I just need to concentrate and handle him. I have already done countless fights against swordsmen in my mind. If I just follow according to what I practiced, I will be able to handle it.

I prepared the next magic spell in the air.

First is a fireball aimed at that guy's face.

The speed is slightly slow.

"Just this alone!"

That guy discerned the fireball clearly and prepared to face it by raising his sword.

At the difference in timing when he strikes it, I use water and earth magic, and create a quicksand at his feet.

Even though he handled the fireball, his feet are completely buried in the extremely viscous mud. Sealing his movements.

"What!?"

Very good. We have won.

I am sure of that.

The enemies are unable to run, and although they managed to deflect the fireballs, I'm already out of their range. Even though I'm carrying Ojou-sama, once I find somewhere with people, it's our victory. Otherwise, I can call for help.

—- Just when I think of that.

"Don't think of running!"

That guy suddenly throws his sword.

With that, Paul's lesson springs to my mind. The technique of throwing the sword in the Northern-God style if their legs are injured.

It's a technique to throw the sword at an opponent far away.

The sword flew straight at me with high speed.

I instinctively felt that I was unable to escape from it.

The sword flies like a slow motion cutscene.

The destination is my head.

————————Dead.

The word "dead" flashes across my mind the next instant.

A brown tea colored something flew in front of my eyes.

At the same time, something like a vase crashed onto the floor, and the sword fell onto the floor.

"Eh?"

In front of my eyes is someone's back.

A wide back. I raised my head, and saw ears on the head.

She's Ghyslaine Dedorudia.

"Leave the rest to me."

As she said that, the instant her hands moved to the sword on her waist, —— a red flash cut across the air.

"..... Ah?"

The head of the guy stuck in the quicksand falls onto the ground.

Even though he was so far away. Even though the sword couldn't possibly reach there.

"W, where did you come from ....."

The instant Ghyslaine's tail moved, the other person's head fell down onto the ground as well.

Smack. A sound like that. I can even hear it from here.

My mind couldn't even catch up with that.

"....."

I looked at the two collapsed bodies a few meters away in a daze.

This really doesn't feel like something real. What happened? I really have no idea.

Eh? They died?

These questions floated up my mind.

"Hm, Rudeus. There are only 2 enemies?"

I came back to my sense when I was questioned.

"Ah, yes, thank you, Ghyslaine, nee-chan."

"Nee-chan is not needed, Ghyslaine is enough."

Ghyslaine turned back and nodded to me.

"I suddenly saw an explosion in the air, and I came running to check it out. Looks like my judgment was correct."

"F-fast. You just defeated them so quickly....."

It didn't take more than one minute since the first time I used magic.

That was too fast no matter how you look at it.

'I was nearby, and it wasn't very fast. As long as it's a Dedorudia's warrior, an opponent like that can be killed instantly. But Rudeus, is this your first time fighting the Northern-God style?"

"This is the first time that I experienced in trying to kill each other."

"Is that so? You must take care. These guys won't give up before they die."

Before they die.

Indeed. I was at death's doorsteps.

My legs trembled when I recalled the instant when the sword flew towards me.

A moment where we tried to kill each other.

That was just what happened.

"L, let's go back."

If I had made one wrong move. It would've been death.

I haven't considered before. This is a different world.

A world with sword and magic.

What will happen to me if I die the next time.....?

The unknown fear turns my blood cold.

When I return to the mansion, Ojou-sama sat on the floor as she just lost all energy.

Her body seemed to be in a heap after the tension had been released.

The maids ran to Ojou-sama in panic.

Looking at the maids intending to help her, Ojou-sama knocked away the outstretched hands and stood up shivering like a newborn deer.

She stood up with her arms beneath her chest like the Deva King.

She seemed to have regained her aura after reaching home.

The maids stopped moving after discovering her strange posture.

Ojou-sama suddenly pointed her finger at me and said loudly.

"It was a promise before we reached home! I can talk now right!"

"Mmm, yes, you can talk now Ojou-sama."

I felt that I failed after hearing her extremely loud voice.

An incident to this extent wouldn't be able to bring a violent and arrogant child back.

Especially after that first brawl to the death. My entire body was trembling. Perhaps Ojou-sama had realized that. Thinking that I'm only good with talking, but actually very weak.

"I'm especially allowing you to call me Eris!"

But Ojou-sama's sentence throws me by surprise.

"Eh?"

"I already said I'm especially allowing you to call me that!"

—— That means. Is it, Ok?

I can be a home tutor?

Wo, woah, are you serious!? D, did I succeed? That's amazing!

"Thank you very much, Eris-sama!"

"You don't need to add -sama! Call me Eris!"

Eris imitated Ghyslaine, and maintained that posture while sitting down on the ground with a plop.

With that, I became Eris Boreas Greyrat's home tutor.

–Status–

Name: Eris Boreas Greyrat

Profession: Granddaughter of the lord of Fedoa

Personality: Violent

Talking to her: It's not completely impossible

Language: Only able to write her name

Math: Only addition

Magic: Is interested in it

Sword: Elementary ranked in the Sword-God style

Etiquette: Boreas's style greeting

People she likes: Grandfather, Ghyslaine

The mastermind behind this kidnapping event is the butler, Thomas.

He had some ties to the perverted noble that the earlier bad guys mentioned.

That perverted noble had an interest long ago in Ojou-sama, and wanted to "mistreat" that arrogant and violent beast.

Thomas got brainwashed by the money, and let the two men arranged by the perverted noble into the plan made by me.

Really. There's this sort of traitor around.

If you want to do this sort of thing, please inform me okay?

But he miscalculated, as he didn't think that I had the capability to escape from the two men. And they aren't as loyal as he thought.

The perverted noble denied it all, and there was no way to punish him.

Saying something about insufficient evidence based only on Thomas's testimony, and that there was no proof with the two men's deaths. With no other evidence pointing towards that perverted noble, something like that, whatever.

The parts that are dubious cannot be used as evidence. I think this is the so-called politics.

The incident was treated as if Ghyslaine handled it all.

Letting the whole world know that the Greyrat family had hired Sword-King Ghyslaine as their mercenary, making this incident as a deterrent, and also showing off the family's power and wealth.

After I was questioned, they ordered me not to participate in this matter, and let Ghyslaine handle it all.

If my presence is found out by other Greyrat family members, things will become complicated.

This is also politics right?

But to think that there are other Greyrats.

"This is how it's going to be. It's fine with you right?"

"Yes. I shall obey respectfully to~.... it."

Philip explains the above to me in the reception room.

I only know that Philip is the lord's son, but in reality, he's handling the duty of being the mayor of Roa. This incident is fully handed to Philip to settle.

"In spite of your daughter being kidnapped, you're really composed."

"If she was still missing, I'd be anxious."

"You're quite right."

"Well. Regarding the matter about Eris's home tutor....."

Philip starts to talk about the future matters, when the door is once again kicked open violently, and the energetic Jii-san enters the room.

{ C-Editor's note: Jii-san is how you address a male senior citizen or Grandfather. }

"I heard it!"

The person who barged in is Sauros.

He makes a rude entrance into the room, and grabs my head.

And roughly strokes me.

"I heard it was you who rescued Eris, right!?"

"What are y-y-y-you saying? It's the secretary (Ghyslaine) who did it by herself. I didn't do anything!"

Sauros' eyes flashed. The eyes of a beast.

S-scary.

"You bastard. You dare to lie to me!?"

"N, no, it's Philip-sama who wanted me to do that....."

"Philip!"

Sauros spins around and gives Philip a round-house punch.

Bogun~ a sickening sound like that resounds in the room.

"Guuh!"

Philip gets knocked over behind the sofa after his face receives the punch.

That is really too fast. The speed of that punch is something that Eris can't even match.

"You bastard! You don't even have one word of thanks to your own daughter's savior! Are you teaching all this silly acting from the nobles?"

Philip who is laying sprawled on the floor calmly replies.

"Father. Even though Paul has disowned his ties, he still holds the Greyrat's family blood. With this, his son Rudeus has naturally inherited the Greyrat's family blood and is a member of our family. Compared to some material rewards, I think it's better to treat him like a family member would."

Even if Philip has been beaten onto the floor, his tone is exceedingly indifferent.

He might already have gotten used to it. Getting punched by Sauros.

"If it's that, then good! Don't do the crap that the nobles do!"

Sauros drops onto the sofa after hearing Philip.

It seems he won't apologize when he hits someone. He's someone like that I think. This is a world of physical punishment.

Come to think of it, Eris didn't apologize to me after hitting me.

She also didn't thank me after I rescued her..... No, I'll leave this matter.

"Rudeus!"

Sauros crosses his arms and raises his chin. His eyes sweeping down over me.

I seem to have seen that somewhere.

"I have something to request of you!"

Is that the attitude to request something from someone?

He's really like Eris in this regard. ——— No, this is the real deal. The kid is just imitating.

"I hope that you teach Eris magic."

"About this."

"Eris just asked me of that. She said that Rudeus's magic has left a deep impression on her and she doesn't want you to go."

{ C-Editor's note: "has left a deep impression" in Japanese can also mean "has burned into my eyes." }

Actually. It's exactly as it sounds. You want to learn a magic that burns the eyes right?

"Of course....."

I actually planned to immediately agree, but I shut my mouth in an instant.

It might be possible that Eris turning out that way is because of Sauros's pampering.

Even though it can't be completely put that way, just looking from the fact that she imitates Sauros, she should have been influenced in a pretty big way.

For Eris's maturity, she cannot be pampered anymore.

Even though I don't have the obligations to make Eris grow up well, I can't teach anything when she's like this.

Looks like I need to correct her bit by bit, starting from where I can see her problems.

"This matter should not be requested from Sauros-sama, but to let Eris herself come over to request personally."

"What did you say!?"

Sauros suddenly raises his fist up like a volcano about to erupt.

I cover my face in panic. This Jii-san is really a nuclear bomb.

"S-she obviously has something to request of people, but she doesn't want to lower her head. Do you want to raise Eris to be like that as an adult?"

"Oh! That was well said! You're right!"

Sauros knocks his fist back onto his knee with a noise and nods forcefully.

And then, with an incredible volume.

"ERI————-S! Come to the reception room right now!"

I feel my eardrums nearly shatter.

How much lung capacity do you need to be able to let out such an incredible sound?

But Eris is the same way. Is there no civilized way to transmit a message like using the servants?

These damnable rural hicks.....

Philip sits back on the sofa again, and that butler (I think his name is Alphonse) who replaced the former one closes the opened door. I hear that Sauros always comes and goes like the wind, so the door won't be immediately closed.

He really likes to push open the door with force, but he doesn't really like to pull it. This is really a selfish Jii-san.

"Yes!"

A reply comes from somewhere in a room.

Within a moment, I can hear the pit-pat noise of running.

"I'm coming in!"

Even though she doesn't have her grandfather's aura, Eris also pushes the door forcefully and enters the room.

It's like all of Eris's actions are based on using her grandfather as a standard. Kids really like to imitate. hmm.

If it wasn't for the first day that I got beaten, I might have felt touched by this, but I need things to be clear today.

This bad habit must be changed.

"Ah....."

Eris sees me sitting down, and raises her chin and stares at me.

Is this the Boreas's family intimidation posture that's taught?

"Ojii-sama. Have you helped me request the matter?"

Boreas stands up with a flourish, and crosses his arms while looking at Eris.

The exact same pose.

"Eris! When you have something to request from others, you need to lower your own head and request it!"

"Even though Oji-sama promised to help me just now....."

"Cut the crap! If you don't request it yourself, we're not going to hire Rudeus!"

Eh?

W, what!?

Ah, but, that's true, that's.....

Oh shit. Did I just dig my own grave!?

"Urgh, urgh....."

Eris stares at me red-faced. That isn't out of embarrassment, but fury and humiliation.

If it wasn't for Ojii-sama here, even if you went into the depths of hell, I'd find you and turn you into minced-meat. That kind of expression.

That's utterly terrifying....

"P, please...."

"Is that the attitude of requesting someone!"

Sauros yells.

Are you really qualified to say that?

"Guh....."

Eris suddenly grabs her red hair after hearing that, making twin-tails out of it. Improvised twin-tails. And she winks.

"P,please teach Eris magic, nyan~☆"

{ C-Editor's note: "nyan" is the Japanese equivalent to the English "meow" cat sound. }

Huh!?

Is this a dream? My consciousness has flown to the clouds, like I'm in a nightmare.

"You don't need to teach me language, nyan~☆"

Whhooaatt~~ Am I dreaming!?

W, what's happening. What's going on?

Extra dimension machine is activating!?

Quickly install the 2 dimension machine and transport me into the world of Manga!

"You also don't need to teach me math, nyan~☆"

In conclusion. Very scary. Bloodcurdling.

Despite her cute expressions, my heart has fear written all over it.

The corners of her lips are smiling, but there's no smile in her eyes. That's the eyes of a predator.

Is this this world's attitude in requesting someone!?

I can't believe this.....

"Just teach me magic only, nyan~☆"

What did you say? You're joking right? Did your attitude turn for the worse?

Please look at Eris' expression again.

Her face is flushed with anger, written on it is if it's not for this situation. I'll punch you so hard that you will fly straight to heaven from the deepest depths of hell.

Anger 8, humiliation 2, there's actually 0 in embarrassment.....?

S, Sauros Jii-san please smack her head and tell her off.

"Mmm. Eris is really cute. That's okay right? What do you say Rudeus?"

There's only the doting Jii-sama on the side.

Who!?

Where did that fierce reliable Granduncle run to!?

"Old master is very fond of the beast races. The time when Ghyslaine was first hired too, he had the final word."

The butler reminds me seriously. Oh, that's how it is. That's not twin tails, but ears. And that really does look like drooping ears. Come to think of it, there are a lot of maids who are from the beast races.

Ehhh, so that's how it is?

Sigh.....

"Eris."

Eris' father steps into the spotlight!

Oh. You're still here! Quick. Please smack her head and scold her, Philip-san!

"It's not good enough if you don't twist your waist up!"

Well, this side is useless too.

OK, I see. This is how it is.

The Greyrat family, including Paul, are people like this.

Actually, Paul is considered to be more normal, right?

"Excuse me, Sauros.....Sama, can I ask a question.....?"

"Ask what?"

"G, guys also have to do something like that?"

"You big moron! Guys have to be like guys!"

Even though I'm completely confused, let's just end things that way.

This is seriously normal. The most normal in terms of sexual fetishes is Paul.

That guy just likes big boobs.

B, but wait a moment. Just think about it carefully.

This is the most normal thing to me, but this is still a mistake.

"....(Stares~)"

I once again quietly observe Eris.

I only see her face full of anger and humiliation, like a lion biting the metal fence.....

But this is also okay if I don't think about the future right?

No, wait a moment. If I turn it the other way around. Think about the future.

Doesn't Eris hate something like this!

She also rejects this formality!

If she tries requesting something from me in the future in the same manner.

A minute later, a small fry (me), will most likely get torn to shreds.

Very good. I'll do the exact opposite and end this habit!

"Is this the attitude of requesting something!"

My loud voice echoes in the mansion.

After that, I spend a long time with a huge speech explaining.

They are finally moved with my words. And from then onwards, the Boreas's style of "Request" is abolished.

On one hand, Ghyslaine praises me for the efforts, while Eris starts to look at me with cold eyes.

It has been a month since I have taken up the job of a home tutor.

From almost the very start, Eris was unwilling to attend classes.

When it comes to math and reading, she will immediately disappear into thin air and wouldn't appear until it was time for swords lessons.

There are of course situations with exceptions. She will only pay full attention to the magic lessons.

The first time she used the spell Fireball, I can't find any words in my vocabulary to describe how happy she was. And while she looked at the curtains that were burning intensely, she said,

"One day I'll cast huge fireworks like Rudeus."

I extinguished the fire, and strictly warned her not to use fire magic when I'm not around. The ignited curtains' light cast a glow over her. No matter what angle you view it from, she has a face of an arsonist, but she looks quite spirited to learn. Just basing on her looks, her other subjects should be fine.

That's what I thought, but my prediction was completely off the mark.

Eris hasn't the slightest interest to come to class when it comes to language and Math.

If I teach her the lesson, she will immediately run away. If I try to catch her, she punches me before running away.

If I continue to chase her, she will turn around and beat me up before continuing to run away.

I think she understands the importance of Math and language due to the incident that happened a while ago, but it seems that she still really hates it with a passion.

When I complain to Philip, he indifferently shrugs it off with,

"It's also the home tutor's job to make the student listen in class."

I can't refute that.

I start to find Eris.

Even though Ghyslaine comes earnestly to learn language and Math, she's ultimately a companion.

How can I teach Ghyslaine alone?

But, it's not easy to find Eris.

Compared to me, who just came one month ago, Eris has stayed here for many years. Her familiarity with this area compared to me is just too large a difference. Don't even talk about hide and seek.

The previous home tutors have expended tons of effort on this matter.

However. No matter how big the mansion is, the area is still limited. In the end, she still can be found.

The teachers who found her got beaten by Eris without exception.

At first the teachers quit over this.

But there's also a home tutor who in reverse beats Eris. Violence against violence. It was something that I initially planned.

But that teacher got attacked in the middle of the night by Eris with a wooden sword and received injuries that would have taken months to heal, and therefore quit over this.

The only one who can fend off Eris's day and night attacks is Ghyslaine.

I have no confidence in fending her off.

Even if I do find her, I'll be destined to be sent to the hospital.

If it's possible, I don't want to look for her.

I don't want to be beaten beyond recognition.

If she attends magic lessons, isn't it okay to just teach her magic? But Philip orders me to teach her Math and language. He also says that it must be around the level of what I teach her in magic. Even stating,

"Compared to magic, other classes are actually more important."

I can't argue against that.

Perhaps I should re-enact another kidnapping incident.

Kids who don't listen have to be punished.

When I think about that, I finally find her.

Her whole body buried in the hay located in the stables, with her stomach revealed to the air, sleeping comfortably.

"Fuuu~..... Fuuuu~....."

She's in deep sleep. That face is really like an angel's.

But, if you're just lured in by the outer appearance, that's a Devil Reverse.

{ C-Editor's note: Devil Reverse is a reference to the Fist of the North Star manga series. }

That is if you get punched by the Devil's fatal fist, and then vomit huge amounts of blood.

Yet when it comes to that, I must wake her up.

In any case, I pull Eris's shirt down to cover her stomach to prevent her from catching a cold.

In the mean time, I massage her chest area.

My hermit living in my heart gives out an assessment.

"Hmm I see, it's still only AA, but the chance of growth is very high. When she grows up she will rise to above E grade. You need to massage them everyday for them to grow. This is also part of training. Hoh, hoh, hoh."

Thank you very much, mister hermit.

After I thoroughly enjoy it, I greet her in a small voice.

"Ojou-sama. Please wake up, Eris Ojou-sama. The time for the pleasant Math class is up."

She doesn't move at all, well I have to hand it to her.

It can't be helped that the panties are taken off from kids who don't listen, you know?

I slowly reached for her loose dress, and at this time.

"!"

Eris's eyes suddenly open.

Her gaze slowly moves from my hand on her thigh, to my face.

"Grrrrr"

A face that has the signs of sleeping, is accompanied by the grinding of teeth.

The next instant, Eris raises her fist.

The face!? I quickly bring my hands to block the face.

"Guuuh.....!"

The impact comes from my solar plexus.

I kneel down in agony.

There's no Reverse. There's only the Devil.

"Hmph!"

With a snort, she kicks me again.

Stepping over me, Ojou-sama leaves the stable.

I have no other options.

I turn to Ghyslaine for help.

Even though, from Paul's mouth, Ghyslaine's brain is also made of muscle. From her recent of learning Language and Math, her persuasion level will surely be higher. If it's her, Eris should listen.

This is my easy way out.

Ghyslaine expresses an indifferent attitude from the start, but I use water magic and cry to plead with her, and finally got to her to reluctantly agree.

She's so easy to bluff.

Right, show me what you got.

We never discuss it specially, and I leave everything to her.

Ghyslaine's actions start during the magic lesson's break time.

"I used to think that the sword in my hand was enough."

She suddenly talks about the past.

She used to be a spoiled brat, and found a teacher who accepted her, and how she became an adventurer, the first time having comrades —— A long introduction and the tale spinning from there..... all of them are a troubled past.

"When I was an adventurer, everything was left to others. Weaponry, armors, food, expenditures, the daily necessities, contracts, maps, directions. The importance of the weight of filling and carrying a water bottle, the maintenance of fire coals, the torch sealing the use of the left hand..... These are the important things that I found out after leaving my comrades."

Based on her story she left her party 7 years ago.

In other words, it's because Paul and Zenith left to retire in a rural place, and thus the party disbanded.

Even though I noticed signs, but to think they are really from the same party.

"Even though there are other party members' thoughts, but Paul's who in charge of the vanguard and the only healer Zenith, have left the party. Even if the party doesn't disband, they will split up in the end. That's a natural thing."

That's a 6 men party.

Warrior, swordsman, swordsman, magician, priest, thief.

If you use the professions to explain, it's that kind of combination.

Even though Ghyslaine is only a Swords saint during then, but her attacking power is very high.

Warrior (Unknown): Tank

Swordsman (Paul): Tank and attacker

Swordsman (Ghyslaine): Attacker

Magician (Unknown): Attacker

Priest (Zenith): Healer

To add on, the so called thieves, using Ghyslaine's words, are in charge of miscellaneous stuff.

From opening locks, checking for traps, constructing camps and trading with the merchants.

A literate person with a flexible mind, usually handled by smart people.

These people are usually from merchant families.

"Calling them treasure hunters would be correct right....."

I say that, but Ghyslaine snorts and replies:

"That fellow always steals the party's fund to gamble, calling him a thief is good enough."

"Stealing from the fund, wouldn't he get beaten up when he's discovered?"

"No, that fellow is very talented in gambling, and he always wins money and return, it's very seldom that he will lose below half of the funds. When times are tight he's also very prudent."

It seems to be something like that.

But even if you can increase the funds, how can you forgive something like that.....

I can hardly understand it.

I don't mean to brag, but I have never got the bad habit of gambling.

Although I spent over ¥100,000 on the internet.

{ C-Editor's note: About $1,000 in USD. }

Well, there's already a Paul who's loose with women in the party, the ethics in the overall party probably isn't that strict.

Everyone has a different baseline. There are more rules when there are more people.

"But what's the difference between Swordsman and warriors?"

I ask that as I'm slightly interested.

If they are in the front lines, there shouldn't be a need to differentiate.

"If you use a sword and your style belongs to the 3 main styles, you're a swordsman. Anyone else who uses a sword and doesn't belong to the the 3 main style, you're a warrior. Even if you are from the 3 main styles, you're a warrior if you don't use a sword."

"Ehh, a swordsman actually has something special like this."

Or rather the 3 styles are special.

The technique that Ghyslaine used was incredible

I don't even know when she used her blade.

Just moving a little, and the opponent's head rolls.

After I ask her about it, it seems that it's named as 'Light of the long sword', a secret technique from the Sword-God style.

"Then a knight is?"

"A knight is a knight. If you're under the kingdom or lord's employment, you're a knight. The educated ones knows language and math. Some of them know simple magic. But most of them come from nobility, and their pride is very high."

They are educated because they attended school, probably.

"Was my father a knight at that time?"

"I'm not too sure about that, I remember Paul called himself a swordsman."

"I hear there's magic swordsman and magic warrior?"

"These are people who knows magic, and they give their own titles. Regardless of what profession, it's their personal freedom to call themselves whatever."

"Oh~"

Eris's eyes seem to be glittering and she listens attentively.

She will not ask me or Ghyslaine to bring her to a nearby dungeon right?

This really makes me uneasy. Compared to adventuring, I would rather to be surrounded by girls and have an Eroge-like lifestyle.

Ah, oops, the original plan is to let Ghyslaine talk about the importance of Language.

I let my curiosity get the better of me without me knowing, and cause her to divert from the topic.

But the fortunate thing over this unfortunate incident is, Eris coming in the second day with her asking for Math and Language lessons.

This is all thanks to Ghyslaine. After that she continues to talk about her troubled past.

Just listening to her will make stomachs get upset, but thanks to that, Eris might have already recognized that this must be something to be learned.

Although it's possible that she's attending classes to listen to Ghyslaine's stories, finding it to be interesting. In any case, it's good enough if it works out.

I did consider about the possibility of doing this earlier..... but, without that incident, I think that Ojou-san wouldn't listen a single word from me.

Before that incident, she used a look like she's looking at ants.

So that time is not a wasted effort.

No matter, ending like this is good enough.

First of all, as the first lesson, I teach her the basic arithmetic operations.

Because Eris has gone to school, and hired home tutors, she still knows the basic addition.

"Rudeus!"

"What is it, Eris-kun."

I point to Eris who raises her hand vigorously.

"Why is it necessary to learn division?"

She doesn't understand the importance of division and subtraction.

Before that, she's very poor in subtraction.

I always feel that she will get stuck at the changing of digits and give up math.

"Instead of talking about the importance, this is basically just the reverse of multiplication."

"I'm asking you what use this has."

"Alright, if you have 100 silver coins and you need to share with 5 people, what should you do?"

"You're talking the same stuff like that previous teacher!"

Eris smacks the table with force.

"That is why! Why! Do you need to share! Is there a need to share!"

Ah, yes, the children who don't want to learn will have excuses like this.

But, truthfully this really isn't important.

"Who knows, go ask the 5 people. It's only convenient when you want to share equally."

"You said convenient, that also means that you don't need to use subtraction right?"

"When you don't wish to use, of course you don't need to use it. But not wanting to use and not being able to use, these two are very different indeed."

"Mumumuu....."

When I said the words "can't use", the prideful Eris shuts her mouth. But, this isn't solving the problem right now. If I let her continue with this line of excuses, there's no need to learn Math anymore.

At this time I can only rely on Ghyslaine.

"Ghyslaine, did you have problems when it comes to dividing equally?"

"Hmm, there was once when I lost some of my food supplies, and wanted to distribute the rest of my food over a few days, but I failed. In the end, I didn't eat and drink for 3 whole days. I thought I was almost dead.

Halfway through the road, I really couldn't stand it anymore, and picked up the monsters' dung to eat, and caused a stomach upset. I resist the urge to vomit, pain in the stomach and the diarrhea, and I still needed to fend off the surrounding monsters—-"

The past story lasts for 5 minutes, making my stomach twist.

I listen to it with a pale face, but it seems that in Eris's ears this is a heroic tale.

Her eyes are glittering as if there are stars in them.

"So, I wish to learn division, please continue to teach."

Since Ghyslaine has already said something like that, Eris can only become obedient.

The Sauros family seems to have much affection for the beast races, even if they don't show it, Eris also keeps on approaching Ghyslaine.

If it's from Ghyslaine, Eris will listen obediently. Like a younger brother following his elder sister, no matter what she does he will imitate her.

"Then, we will progress with the boring repetition practice. Please answer all of these questions. If you don't understand something, please ask."

Things progress step by step just like this.

Ghyslaine is exceptional as a teacher, as well.

She will—— point out where I didn't do it right, and give her sincere opinions.

Paul points out mistakes, as well, but he only states that it is not right. Never even implicitly suggesting what my mistake is, he did not teach me how to get it right.

Today is the same as usual; Eris and I are holding swords facing each other, training and receiving guidance simultaneously.

"Remember the pose when stepping out, and keep your eyes on the opponent."

Crack.

The wooden sword in my hand has been knocked away by Eris' wooden sword.

"If you step out earlier than the opponent does, look closely at the direction where the opponent moves, and cut in that direction. If you're slower than the opponent, he will escape from the sword's path."

Unable to react, I am hit squarely by Eris's sword.

The heavy impact passes through the defensive armor stuffed full of cotton, and effectively transfers to my body.

"You must react to your opponent's steps and eyesight to predict their actions!"

I get hit again.

"Rudeus! Don't use your mind and think! Just think where the enemy will step to and swing the sword!"

Do you or do you not want me to think?

"Eris! Don't stop! The opponent hasn't given up yet!"

"Yes!"

There's a clear difference between us.

Eris makes a vivacious reply. I construed her reaction as meaning that she has energy remaining; unfortunately, I do not have a drop of vigor left.

Admittedly, this girl has enough energy to thrash me incessantly. She demonstrates this until Ghyslaine stops her.

Not allowing me to counter attack, Eris seems to be trying to vent her anger that had accumulated in the Math class.

Damn it.

But this month I have felt the rise in my abilities quite clearly.

Having Eris, who is around my level, as a competitor has been a great help.

No matter what it is, having someone around your level will substantially aid your growth.

Although Eris is a hair's breadth stronger than me despite our similar abilities, her strength is relatively insignificant compared to Paul or Ghyslaine.

I can still understand what the opponent does.

If I can understand my opponent then I can defeat him/her.

I was hit earlier with that strike, so I will guard on that area.

I do a deliberation based on my aforementioned syllogistic reasoning.

Against Paul, the difference in ability is too much so my prudence vacillates. I am incapable even following his moves, so I get knocked out rather pitifully and quickly.

Even if I were listen to his advice, there's too much of a difference in the basics, so it can't help at all.

hence I have always questioned my every move.

When Ghyslaine teaches me something, even if there's a problem like the one mentioned above, I understand her explanations well enough to make do. But she talks about countering and handling at the same time, so I hesitate when using a technique.

But, with Eris as an opponent, there will inexorably be different results if I do something different or use tricks

Even though I hesitate, the difference in technique is minute and I can still attack her.

Perhaps it won't work the second day, or Eris will use a different technique, but the things that couldn't be done yesterday are accomplished today, or the techniques that have not been experienced yesterday are shown today, with the small incremental experiences adding up, we are definitely growing.

As expected, having a rival has great advantages, with overlook-able demerits.

There's a target to chase and surpass is all.

Perhaps the ability value has only increased by 1 or 2 points, but, to the people whose differences are very slight, this is of utmost significance.

Without our conscious knowledge, we have become stronger.

But in terms of growth, Eris is much faster.

If you let a goat and lion train together, of course the lion will get stronger quicker than the goat.

But having been trained by Paul every since I began to walk, I feel unsatisfied by this.

"Rudeus is still not good enough!!"

Eris crosses her arms and looks condescendingly at me lying sprawled on the ground.

In the end, she gets scolded by Ghyslaine.

"Don't brag, Eris. You have been learning the sword for much longer."

Only during the sword lessons will Ghyslaine call her name directly.

She says it's a must.

"I got it! And Rudeus also knows magic!"

"As you say."

Only my magic standard is recognized by her.

"But it's really strange. Rudeus's reactions become slow when the opponent attacks him....."

"Because I'm scared. I'm afraid of the opponent in front of me attacking me."

Just as I finished speaking, my head gets smacked by Eris with a punch.

"What are you talking about! You're useless! Because of that you're being looked down!"

"No, Rudeus is a magician. This is enough."

Ghyslaine immediately adds in, but in the end Eris nods like a know-it-all.

"Is that so? Then it can't be helped!"

Eh? Why do I have to be hit?

"I'm sorry, I don't know how to correct your bad habit about your legs trembling. This is something you need to overcome yourself."

"I got it."

As I am now, my legs tremble regardless of who I am facing as an opponent. I still have a long way to go.

"But after I began to receive Ghyslaine's instructions, I have definitely been improving."

"Paul belongs to the instinctive type, he's not good at teaching others."

An instinctive type!

Ah, so something like this also exists in this world.

"What is this "instinctive type"?"

"Any person who does not grasp techniques consciously, and instead chooses to rely on his gut feelings and instincts is an 'instinctive type'."

I answer her question, and Eris immediately pouts.

She probably belongs to the instinctive school.

"What's wrong with being instinctive?"

It's really difficult to answer Eris's questions in the first place due to her obstinate characteristic, but now I am asked whether being an "instinctive type" is good or not.

Because we are learning the technique of the sword right now, I let the teacher answer.

I look at Ghyslaine.

"It's not that it's bad. But even if ones's talented, if one doesn't use his mind to think then one won't become strong. In addition, the 'instinctive types' are not suited to teach others either."

"Why aren't they suited to teach?"

"Because they do not understand the techniques that they use. And if one doesn't understand everything, one precludes the prospect of learning a subsequent harder technique."

Based on the Sword-King, everything up to the advanced rank are related to the basics. Only by establishing all the basics, and by being able to handle different situations with different reactions, can one become a Sword-Saint.

To climb higher up, one can only rely on tiring diligence and talent.

In the end, it's still talent.

"I also belonged to the instinctive type, but after I began to think with my mind and got the theory down, I became a Sword King."

"That's amazing."

I'm impressed from the bottom of my heart. Correcting the actions that have always been done, and succeeding in it.

This isn't something that can be easily accomplished.

"Isn't Rudeus a Water-Saint ranked magician?"

"I'm actually the instinctive type..... But magic and the sword techniques are different, as long as you have magic you can do it."

"Oh, is that it..... But, the basics are important too right?"

"I understand that. But rather, it's because of my teacher teaching well that I was able to become saint ranked."

Come to think of it, I always remind myself that the basics are important, but I heavily favor the "Voiceless incantations".

So what's the basics of magic?

Roxy's classes are more towards development rather than the basics.

All things considered, Roxy is also a genius type, and doesn't really favor the basics either.

Hmmmmm.....

"In any case I don't plan to become so strong, so it's okay!"

Eris interrupts my thoughts with her confident line.

In middle school, I said something like that about not becoming number 1, and didn't put in effort.

I plan to correct her thoughts,

"But I will try hard to become strong like Ghyslaine and Rudeus."

Unnecessary. She has a clear target.

She's different from the past me.

After the lessons from morning and afternoon are over, it's time for a break.

That day, I decide to head to the library.

That's because I saw Eris and Ghyslaine carrying magic teaching materials, so I thought the library might have a magic textbook.

Because I didn't know where the place is, I let the maid with dog ears bring me there.

"Ah."

I meet Philip's wife halfway on the road.

Her name is Hilda, and has the same flaming red hair like Eris, and a tsunami-like chest. Looks like I can expect good things from her daughter's growth.

I was once introduced to her, but I didn't really interact with her.

Let me think, I think it's a single hand placed on the chest.....

"Madam, today's a good day....."

"Tch."

Hilda scoffs at me and ignores my greeting.

I freeze in the same posture.

"Rudeus-sama....."

"No, it's okay."

The maid with dog ears tries to console me, but I stop her with my hand.

But I still received a little shock. Did I get hated by her. But I didn't seem to do anything right.....

Come to think of it she doesn't have any other child other than Eris.

No, I feel like if I find out and there's really one, and if the case is worse than Eris, I feel like my job load will multiply 3 or 4 times.

I can't dig my own grave.

When I reach the library I see Philip in there.

"Are you interested in the library?"

Philip looks expectantly at me.

I don't know what he's expecting.

"Hmm, yes slightly."

"Then go ahead and take your time."

I accepted his offer, and looked around the library, but there's nothing I am hoping to find.

I was hoping to find a magic textbook like the one Roxy had, but all the documents are related to politics and are restricted from being taken out of the library. Magic textbooks are rare in this world, and it's not like you can find one anywhere.

It did not go well at all.

But I find some History books in the corner. If I'm free I'll skim over them.

After a day's work, I'm in my own room preparing material for tomorrow's work.

Basically it's questions for math and listening notes for language-

-as well as the practice for teaching magic.

I didn't prepare a learning schedule, and if I don't have anything else to teach within these 5 years it will be trouble, so the lessons are not progressing too fast. In any case, to prevent anything unclear, I carefully reviewed the plan for education.

It was the same feeling when I taught Sylphy.

Magic practice is very important. Because I don't chant when I cast magic, I keep forgetting the mantras.

The only time when I earnestly memorized the words are from the detoxification and healing magic, and I have never memorized Attack Magic.

The teaching materials are the same as the textbook in my home.

Eris and Ghyslaine also have that.

Based on the explanation, there were hundreds of books that went on sale that were written a thousand years ago.

Before the appearance of the book, there's a need to find a teacher to learn from, and the so called teachers are mostly able to only use all the elementary ranked magic. One can find a teacher after much trouble, but there's nothing to be learned, cases like these are plentiful.

Even though it's on sale, the books available are really low in quantity, and even if you sell them in the market, the people who aren't interested in magic will not take a look at them.

There's no printing technology in this world either.

This book that sold in a large volume was 50 years ago.

Thanks to the materials that can be cheaply bought, the numbers of magician have increased by a great amount.

The magicians are conquering the world..... no, but amongst the Asuran nobles they are taught a substantial amount.

But, what's the reason that led to the increase of the magic materials.....

I think as I flip the pages, and written on the book is [Published by Ranoa's university.]

They are really good at business.

Just like that, the days as a home tutor, quickly flies by.

–Status–

Name: Eris Boreas Greyrat

Profession: Granddaughter of the lord of Fedoa

Personality: Violent

Talking to her: She will listen a little

Language: Able to write her family names

Math: Has trouble with subtraction

Magic: She wants to work hard on it

Sword: Elementary ranked in the Sword-God style

Etiquette: Knows the common greeting

The people she likes: Grandfather, Ghyslaine

Another half a year has passed by again.

Recently Eris, who had turned a little meek, has started to get violent again.

Why, why, who's the one that caused this mess?

Even though I feel a little flustered, I notice something.

There are no holiday breaks.

After the evening meal, I call Ghyslaine and the etiquette teacher into my room.

To add on, the etiquette teacher isn't staying inside the mansion, and she comes from her own house from the city to work.

So I had the butler notify her.

"First of all, I'm pleased to meet you, my name is Rudeus Greyrat."

"My name is Edona Leilon, I'm in charge of teaching Eris-sama etiquette."

I place my hand to my chest and casually introduce myself, but Edona returns with a proper greeting.

As expected of an etiquette teacher.

Edona is a middle-aged female and one can see the fine lines on her face.

She has a plump face, with a gentle smile that matches her warm image.

"I'm Ghyslaine."

Ghyslaine is the same as usual with muscles. I point to the chairs to suggest that they be seated. After the two of them sit down, I pour the drinks that the butler had prepared before hand, and go into the topic.

"Today I looked for the two of you for one reason, to discuss the schedule for Eris-sama's lessons."

"Schedule?"

"Yes, right now she is, training the sword in the morning, has free time in the afternoon, learns etiquette in the evening, it is something like this right?"

"As you say."

Eris subjects have Language, Calculation, Magic, History, Sword Training, Etiquette, 6 subjects in total.

Using modern terms, it's national language, math, Physical education and moral education.

Even though there's no clock, lessons don't continue to progress for hours and hours. Usually lessons are split into three sessions, with breakfast, lunch and tea time as the indicators for breaks.

After breakfast > Lesson > After lunch > Lesson > After tea time > lessons > After dinner > Free time.

There is no hired History teacher, when Philip is free he will come to teach her.

"Because I'm here, even the time during evening can be used, and we have completely made use of the entire day."

"Indeed, the Ojou-sama's lessons have been progressing smoothly, and the Old master is also very concerned."

Isn't that right.

"It is true that the lessons have been progressing well, but there's a problem."

"Problem?"

"Yes, learning everything day after day, has caused Ojou-sama to accumulate a lot of stress."

Eris is always in an irritated mood during the lessons in the Math class, after facing some questions that are slightly difficult, she will rush at me.

That's too dangerous.

I don't know when I will be mounted on.

That's too dangerous.

"Even though everything is normal right now, she might lose it in the future, and run away from the lessons or something."

"Well....."

Edona covers her mouth with her hands, nodding earnestly in agreement.

I have never seen etiquette lessons before, but Eris should be paying attention in class.

I heard that Edona is Eris's nursing mother, but I don't know why Eris likes her.

"So I'm proposing that we pick a day and not teach anything every 7 days."

To further add on, there's a calendar in this world, and there are also months and days, but there's no concept of 1 week.

A year has several days that are deemed as rest days, but Sunday doesn't exist.

I use 7 as the number because it's easy to remember, although I don't know why it's so special in this world.

It's seen as a lucky number, and there are 7 ranks in the sword techniques too.

"And the rest of the 6 days, we can proceed with Language, Calculation, Magic, History, Sword Training, Etiquette with 6 subjects."

"Can I ask a question?"

"Please go ahead, Edona-san."

"If you distribute it like that, the lessons for Etiquette will only become 3 times, the wages....."

You're actually thinking about money! But I don't want to blame Edona, since I'm also working for the money.

Edona is concerned about the part where "Will the wages be cut since the lessons are lesser?".

I have discussed this with Philips earlier, and there's no problem.

Furthermore the wages are paid monthly, even if there's a class missed, the wages are still given.

Of course, if there's not even a single class taught, there will be probably be someone being fired the next month.

You don't really need to say it out loud right?

The people who don't understand the world should be sacked earlier.

"Of course things wouldn't be distributed like that, Language and Math only need to be taught twice a week. However there's no meaning if you don't train in the sword everyday, even though magic lessons need to be learned everyday But there's a limit in using mana, so you don't need too long to train it, so I plan to spend the extra time for Language and Math classes."

Even though this was planned out, it starts out like this.

"Today I use the waterball X times, the water fell down Y times. Then how many times can I still use the waterball" — A question like that.

A question based on the number of times Eris and Ghyslaine used.

Compared to staring at the numbers in the room, I am using more of the practical stuff, since it's something that is related to them.

Since you can't see the number of times you used mana, the right answer is that it is difficult to answer it with certainty.

Well, the more mental calculation you used, the more you will get used to it, making the brain is the goal.

The lesson for voiceless incantations and science is also planned to start in the near future.

But I need to wait for her to grasp Language and Math first.

"I'm a little sorry to Edona-san, the etiquette lessons have to be cut to 3 to 4 times a month."

"I understand."

Edona nods readily to agree.

And thus, 1 day has 3 lessons, 6 days 18 lessons. The distribution for Etiquette is 5 lessons, Sword Training 6 lessons, Language 2 lessons, Math 2 lessons, and Magic 3 lessons.

I feel there's not enough time for the lessons, but since the lessons are mostly about repetitive training, I'll think about it later.

"If there are situations when you are unable to teach, please inform me."

"Can you explain in detail?"

"I'm always at the mansion, once I'm free I'll do classes, so if you want to go on a long leave that's also okay."

"I understand."

Edona keeps smiling, I don't know if she really understands.

"Furthermore, I want to have a meeting every month on the first day."

"And why is that?"

"If we teachers can coordinate better, we will be able to handle things once there are things that have gone awry. That's what I think. Even though there's no real need to, but this is to raise effectiveness, just in case. Is that not possible?"

"No, I didn't mean that."

"Rudeus-sama is actually so small, but you're very considerate of Eris-sama's well being."

I kept feeling that she's finding me funny in her eyes. Oh, whatever.

With that, I get a break.

After 1 week, we come to our first rest day, and Ojou-sama sits uneasily, fidgeting.

It's the first time that she's free the whole day.

After I greet Philip, I decide to go to the city to have a walk, and I didn't know when Eris and Ghyslaine are at the door.

"Where are you going?"

"Roa's city 'Let's sight see~'."

Hey! I did that in a pose like that.

"Let's sight see..... That means you're going to the city alone?"

"Do you see anyone else?"

"You're too mean, I have never gone out alone before."

Eris stomps on the floor angrily.

"If it's Ojou-sama alone you will get kidnapped by someone right?"

"Didn't you get kidnapped too!"

Ah, it's something like that, I got kidnapped, too.

But I'm also a member of the Greyrat's family, perhaps I can be ransomed for money.

But.

"If I'm kidnapped, I can escape on my own."

I smile as I say that, and see Eris raise her fist.

I quickly take a pose to defend myself, but the punch didn't seem to come.

This is rare.

"Take me too!"

Oh, so it's something like that. Up till then the punch has always come first before talking, Ojou-sama has grown up.

Of course I didn't have any reasons to refuse, compared to moving alone, two people are safer together.

"Then, let's move out now?"

"Is it really okay?"

"Ghyslaine will be coming along right?"

"Yes, my duty is to protect Ojou-sama."

Right at the meeting, Ghyslaine doesn't understand the idea of a rest day at all.

Therefore, it's better to let her stick closely to Eris.

She's originally hired to be a guard, that's something to be expected.

"Wait a while for me, I'll go prepare, Alphonse! Alphonse!"

I look at Eris running wildly in the mansion, her piercing yells are like before.

"Rudeus."

I turn my head around as I hear Ghyslaine call me, she's standing right beside me.

I look up, and she's nearly 2 meters tall, I think even when I grow up I can only look up at her.

"Don't be overconfident in yourself."

I am given a warning.

Was it because I said I am able to return on my own?

"I know, I just wanted to make Ojou-sama more hardworking."

"I see, then if there's anything just call me out, I'll save you."

"Hmm, at that time, I'll release another huge firework."

I think back to the kidnapping incident.

"Ghyslaine, have you told Ojou-sama something like that?"

"Hmm? Tell her what?"

"You should add on, that she can only scream at places where she can be heard."

"I got the message, but what is it for?"

"During the previous kidnapping, Ojou-sama's yells nearly got her killed."

"..... If I'm able to hear them, I would have gone over."

But, she was really absurdly quick during that time, if it's Ghyslaine she will make it in time no matter where she is, and her ears are very good.

Furthermore, Eris's call for help is not Philip and Sauros, but Ghyslaine.

This woman is really reliable.

"You need to inform her that under certain circumstances she cannot call for help."

Just as I finish talking, Eris is back. Are these clothes for going out, I have never seen them before.

I praise her clothes, and I get a punch in the head.

What did I do wrong?

The city Roa in the Fedoa territory is the biggest here, but even though it's the biggest, compared to the entire wheat fields in the village Buina, it's much smaller.

You only need to spend 2 hours to walk one full round around the city's walls.

But this is a walled city, and the 7-8 meters tall walls surround the entire city.

But it's not a perfect circle, due to the ground's shape, and I can't confirm the exact length.

It's probably around 30 kilometers.

It completely doesn't feel big, and cities that are surrounded like this should be very few. Even though I have never been to any other walled cities, I am very clear that it's not an easy task to create a wall this big.

If there's a magic to create walls like this, it will certainly be king ranked or emperor ranked.

Or is this built by hand from scratch?

As I think about it I leave the noble's gathering area, and arrive at the wide space where many people are passing through.

This stretch is the area for the merchants, because it's very close to the nobles' territory, there are many beautiful shops.

But I can see some rare open field merchants.

I peek a few looks at the expensive merchandise that is lined up.

"Welcome young master, young lady, please take your time and peek."

I enjoy the RPG-like item shop's Ossan's words, and look at the merchandise.

I record the goods down onto a piece of paper, and truthfully, it's all strange products.

The aphrodisiac is 10 gold pieces, record, record.

"What are you writing, I can't understand it at all!"

Eris screams in my ear, on that day that ear nearly went deaf.

I look down, and realize that I have subconsciously written in Japanese.

"I just want to write down a little, it's enough for me to understand it."

"Just tell me what you're writing."

Ojou-sama's really peremptory, but I don't have any reasons not to tell her.

"That's the name of the merchant goods and prices."

"Why are you investigating that?"

"Investigating that is the basics of the net game."

"Net..... what is that?"

I think even if I tell her she will not understand, and I just turn to another topic and point towards a product; a small accessory.

"Look, you see this? That stall is selling for 5 gold coins, you can buy it here for 4 gold coins and 5 silver coins."

"Ohhh, young master, you have good eyes, the things that I'm selling is cheap right?"

I ignore the Ossan and turn towards Eris.

"Eris if you haggle the prices here to 3 gold coins, and then sell at the other stall for 4 gold coins, how much can you earn?]

"Hmm, let me think, 5-3+4, 6 gold coins!"

Oh my god, what are you counting.

"No, wrong, the right answer is 1 gold coin."

"I, I got it already!"

Eris pouts to one side.

"Do you really understand it?"

"We originally have 10 gold coins, isn't this 11 gold coins now."

Woah, you finally got it. Wait, isn't this addition?

Well never mind, I'll praise her in any case.

Her pride is really strong, she will only improve if she gets praised.

"Woah, you got it right, wow, Eris's really smart."

"Hmph, of course."

"Erm, young master, that's called resale, it's not something to be praised, you can't do that."

"Don't worry, I won't do it. If I really want to do it, I'll tell the other side you're selling 4 gold coins here. I'll take 1 big copper coin as information fee."

The Ossan shows an exceedingly unhappy expression and looks at Ghyslaine for help, but Ghyslaine is paying full attention to the things I'm saying.

Having understood that saying anything else is a waste of time, the Ossan droops his shoulders and sigh.

Sorry about that, since we're just looking around, please let us off.

"Even if we're not doing any buying or selling, we need to know the various prices of things."

"So what if you do know the prices!"

"An example, even if you don't go to a shop, you can guess the price."

"What use does that have?"

What use?? Erm, when you resell you can earn money.... ah no. Alright, I'll leave the spotlight to Ghyslaine.

"Ghyslaine, what use do you think this has?"

"......No, I don't know."

Oh shit, really? You don't know? I thought you really understood it. Whatever, I'm not teaching anyway.

"Is that so, then it really might not be of any use."

In the end this is a lesson for myself, even if I don't understand it's okay.

If I see a market, I'll first investigate the products' information.

I have always done this so it can't be wrong.

Even though I think of it like that, this is the first time I'm personally checking prices out, so I can't really be sure whether there's any use to it.

"If it's possible there's no use to it, why do you still need to do it?"

"Because I think there's a use for it."

Eris has an expression that looks like she can't accept it.

It's not like I can answer every question.

Some of the things require your own thoughts instead of them being taught to you.

"Try thinking on your own, if you think it's useful, then learn from me, if you don't, just laugh at me."

"Then I'm the one who's going to be laughing at you right?"

"Ahahahaha."

"Why are you laughing now!?"

I get punched again, sniffle.

I check out the surrounding merchants, but the prices at the higher classed merchant doors are too high, I'll give it up.

I slowly move towards the outer city, and the prices of the merchants' goods have a distinct change, going down from the price of 5 gold coins to around 1 gold coin.

It's still a little expensive, but it's something that I can afford.

The customers have certainly increased, from people who look like nobles to adventurers.

Since it's around 1 gold coin, I can still barely afford that price.

When I record down the prices to my notes, a shop suddenly enters into my eyes; it's a bookshop.

When I enter the store, I notice that it's surprisingly quiet.

You can say that it's a shop that mainly sells erotic books.

There are two bookshelves that have the same titles with 2-3 books placed together.

A book is roughly 1 gold coin, with some of the books kept in a glass cabinet.

The average is around 8 gold coins, with the most expensive with a price tag of 20 gold coins, is that the shop's most valuable treasure?

The owner recognizes me as a person who's not a customer, and he doesn't greet me.

His judgment is correct.

I take down the book's title, and the owner looks at me with suspicion.

Arara, there's no problem, I didn't touch the books.

Plus I didn't take photos.

An encyclopedia is around 7 gold coins, if 1 gold coin is around ¥100,000, you need ¥700,000.

{ C-Editor's note: About $7,000 in USD. }

On my home's mother, what sort of absurdity is this.....

But as expected, the encyclopedia books seem to be really expensive. The must-see book <<Shigu's Summoning Magic>>, needs 10 gold coins.

My monthly salary of 2 silver coins doesn't allow me to fulfill the conditions of buying this.

The most expensive book is the <<Asura's kingdom royal court's etiquette>>, this book has no meaning at all to me.

"What are you looking at that's so interesting?"

Eris asks me, probably bothered by the fact that I'm only looking and not recording.

"No, I'm thinking they aren't really interesting books."

"I heard that people say that you like books?"

"Where did you hear it from?"

"From Otou-sama."

{ C-Editor's note: Otou-sama is the polite way to say Father in Japanese. }

Philip hmm? I did ask him to let me look at the study.

"I, I can help you buy a book."

"You're saying it so easily, do you have any money, Eris?"

"Oji-sama will give me!"

{ C-Editor's note: Oji-sama is the polite way to say Grandfather in Japanese. }

Indeed. But spoiling her too much isn't good.

Even though I want it.....

Even though I want it!

"I don't want it."

"Why!"

Eris pouts, she does that when she's unhappy.

If her mood continues to deteriorate, she will come after me like the devil.

But it's still fine for now, she still has her senses about her.

"Eris cannot give out money freely."

"What do you mean?"

Eris eyebrows knit together, she's getting more irritated because she doesn't understand.

Lately I can gradually gauge Eris's Fury-O-Meter.

How should I go about this. When it comes right down to it, is there any meaning to let the girls from noble families learn the importance of using money?

"I'm teaching Eris right now, do you know how much money I get?"

"..... 5 Gold coins right?"

"2 silver coins."

"That's cheap!"

Eris shrilly exclaims, and on one corner is the owner with an you're-too-noisy expression.

"Not at all, my achievements are poor and my age is small, as well, it's quite appropriate for me."

Plus there's the fact I will be paid the fees to go to university.

"B, but Ghyslaine has a salary of 2 gold coins. Isn't Rudeus teaching me a lot of things?"

"Ghyslaine has the accomplishments and the rank of being a Sword-King. She's even acting as your bodyguard, therefore Ghyslaine's salary is higher."

Plus there's the bad habit from Boreas Greyrat's family.

If it's from them, they will do something like 「Girls from the beast races shall receive special treatment!」.

"Then, how much salary can I get if it's me?"

"You don't know magic, your sword techniques are not up to par, and without any accomplishments, Ojou-sama's salary even if it's the highest it can go, it won't cross 1 silver coin."

Eris's becomes speechless, and in addition to the above, she has never received pocket money before.

"When you want to buy something for someone, please earn the money with your own hands and talk about it later."

"I got it....."

Eris's droops her head with a rarely seen cheerless expression, if she's always like that I will have an easier time.....

"Well, you can ask Philip-sama for some pocket money."

"Really?"

Eris raises her head, I feel as if her affection-O-meter to me has gone up.

Well, even if she's not given any pocket money, giving her anything whatever she wants is spoiling her too much.

It's best to give her a bit of money and let her learn it herself.

After recording some of the important book names I walk out of the book store.

I have an overall impression after spending a day to take a look at the things I want to buy.

When I look up to the skies, there's a castle floating up.

It's mixed amongst the clouds, but the fleeting appearances are definitely there.

"Wha!"

I point up to the skies, and the surrounding people look up to that direction, but soon lost interest in it.

Hah? You saw that right? Only me? The only person who saw that Castle in the Sky is me?

Father's a liar?

{ C-Editor's note: A line from the movie "A Castle in the Sky". }

"Are you seeing that for that the first time? That's the 『Armored dragon king』 Perugius's sky fortress."

Do you know that Lady..... Ghyslaine!

But coming back to the topic, sky fortress.

Woah, that's really damn cool-.

"What's Perugius?"

"Don't you know that?"

I seem to have heard it before, but I can't recall it.

"What's that?"

Ghyslaine, with a little surprise on her face, tries to choose her words.

But this time Eris crosses her arms and appears in front of me.

"Let me teach you!"

"If you would please teach me."

"Alright! Perugius is one of the three heroes that defeated the Demon-God Laplace."

Eris says that with pride. The Demon-God Laplace, I seem to have heard from somewhere....?

"He's really, really strong, leading 12 followers in the sky fortress to Laplace's fortress."

"Wow, that's really amazing."

"Incredible right!"

"Ojou-sama is really learned, thank you."

"Ufufu! Rudeus still can't make it!"

If I refute her now, I will definitely get beaten. I learned that a long time ago.

Due to that, I went back to investigate.

After inquiring Philip, I got to know there's a book with information somewhere around here, and after much effort I finally find it.

And once I see it, it's actually the same book as the one back in the village Buina.

<<Perugius's legend.>>

I once firmly thought that it's a fairy tale, but it seems to be History.

"Armored Dragon-King" Perugius, no one knows where he comes from or where his upbringing occured. That year, the young him without any fame, was brought in by the Dragon-God Urupein to the Adventurer's guild, this was the earliest record.

Perugius shows his might within a very short period of time, partying up with the Dragon-God Urupein, North-God Kaaruman, the Twin-Emperor Migus・Gumis, and defeated every enemy.

Because Perugius is treated like a younger brother, it wasn't known when he was given the title of "Armored Dragon" amongst the "Five Dragon Warriors" working for the Dragon-God.

He's used his abilities during the Laplace battle without reservations, and he used his token magic, creating 12 familiars, which are

– Void

– Darkness

– Brightness

– Wave

– Life

– Earthquake

– Time

– Roaring storm

– Destruction

– Observation

– Insanity

– Atonement

Controlling the strongest familiars and summoning the ancient sky fortress called "Chaos Breaker", they began to fight Laplace to the death.

But even with all that, it still fell short and didn't manage to kill Laplace, ultimately they were only able to seal him.

After seeing his strength and the "Chaos Breaker's" dignity, the title "Armored Dragon King" started to spread.

The Asuran kingdom for the reason of acknowledging his efforts, decide to establish a new age title.

This is the current "Armored dragon year". (To add on, this is the Dragon Age year 414.)

The "Armored Dragon King" isn't working for any kingdom or governing any territory, and flies around the world with Sky Fortress "Chaos Breaker".

Nobody knows his intentions.

But really 400 years, hmm, is he really still alive?

It's not an empty fortress flying around aimlessly with no directions right?

If there's a chance I will definitely take a look.

The second day.

Eris mood is good enough to reach the point of surprising people, perhaps it's the reason of playing the entire day yesterday.

Or perhaps it's related to just going only to the higher class stores.

Regardless, looks like setting a rest day is a correct thing to do.

"Bring me out to play the next time!"

Eris does her usual pose, her face slightly blushing.

What's the reason for blushing?

Anger? Humiliation? What? Can it be embarrassment?

How's that possible, it's that Eris!

"I say...."

My expression is a little troubled, and Eris grits her teeth, and twists her waist, both her hands grabbing her hair and says.

"P, please bring me out nyan?"

"Okay, b-bring you out, I'll bring you out alright, please don't do that."

I stop her in a hurry, that's really quite cute, but it's terrible for the heart.

I feel that I will be receiving a karma-O-meter for that, and when the karma comes back to haunt me it will be paid by punches.

"Hmph! It's good that you understand."

Eris brings her hair back, and before the hair settles, Eris sits back on the desk with a plop.

"Then, you can continue with the lessons."

"You're full of energy today."

"Because, if I'm not a good child, you won't bring me out right!"

O, Ojou-sama is so sensible!?

"T, that's right, I'll bring you out if you're obedient!"

I finish the lesson today with moved emotions.

–Status–

Name: Eris Boreas Greyrat

Profession: Granddaughter of the lord of Fedoa

Personality: A little violent

Talking to her: She will listen for a while

Language: Able to read many things

Math: Knows subtraction

Magic: Currently learning the elementary rank

Sword: Elementary ranked in the Sword-God style

Etiquette: Knows the common greeting

The people she likes: Grandfather, Ghyslaine

A year has passed by.

Eris's education is progressing smoothly.

Her talent for the sword seems to be pretty good, before she was 10 she had already reached the standards of the intermediate rank.

The intermediate rank can be said to be able to contend with an average knight.

Ghyslaine says she can reach the advanced rank in a few years time.

She's only 9 years old and yet..... Is our Ojou-sama a prodigy?

What about me? If you ask me, I'll turn away my eyes.

Eris in regards to language, well you can say it's going fine.

Particularly because Ghyslaine talked about her terrible past ordeals because she couldn't read.

She was unable to do anything because of that, got deceived by all sorts of bad people, and in the end ended up as a slave for sale.

That's why Eris desperately tried to learn by heart.

The improvement in math isn't very apparent. I'm not sure what sort of things will happen to Eris in the future, but this world doesn't seem to need the usage of advanced math, so I feel that it's best to take things slowly.

In 5 years to be familiar with the 4 basic arithmetic operations, I'll make this my goal.

The magic lessons are progressing smoothly too, but there's a feeling that we're reaching the bottleneck soon.

She can basically use all the elementary ranked magic, and she's familiar with all the magic systems other than earth magic, and in comparison Ghyslaine only learned fire magic.

They both attended the same classes, but why is there such a difference?

Is water, wind and earth magic something that Ghyslaine isn't familiar with?

In any case, there are some things in the magic textbook that cannot be used even if you chant it.

Regarding this part, I also did not work hard in memorizing it, so I don't really understand.

Also, I tried to let them learn voiceless incantations, but the return is meagre.

Sylphy immediately caught on to it, perhaps this is an issue of age.

Or perhaps Sylphy has that sort of talent.

I don't really know, maybe I have taught them something useless.

It's about time to go into the intermediate ranked magic, but Ghyslaine and Eris are both sword fighters.

It should be enough to learn the elementary ranked magic to clear some unimportant miscellaneous stuff.

I think this is fine if it's done this way.

I believe one day it will be of use.

Although I feel that in regards to every subject, it's progressing smoothly, but it seems that Etiquette classes has run into a problem.

Eris' 10 years old birthday is fast approaching.

The age of 10 years old is special, and according to noble customs, the 5 years old, 10 years old, 15 years old birthdays will be done with a grand party to celebrate the birthday.

The mansion's courtyard will be open, and receive the citizens' gifts, and will also invite the nobles from the city to participate.

Because Sauros is a boorish officer, the earlier plan was to have a self-help buffet style party with plenty of wine.

But Philip intercepts the idea, and changes it to a dance party, reasoning that it's easier to allow the nobles to attend it.

When it comes to the party, the one with the biggest headache is Eris.

At any rate, she's unable to dance. She can't even do the easiest dance steps.

"This is too big of a problem if the main actress is unable to dance."

Edona says this during the staff meeting day held at the beginning of the month.

I asked about Eris when she was 5 years old, and received the reply that dance classes are only necessary after the Asuran nobles are reaching 10 years old. This means there was no need to learn dancing.

The sword and magic schedules are all suspended to hold an emergency training session for Etiquette classes.

The sword training in the morning still doesn't change, and after having lunch, a little bit of magic is practiced to allow the food to digest, and after that every class is practicing dancing.

The more I see Eris' appearance, the more I feel that she's under a cheerless and irritated mood.

"Pardon me for asking, does Rudeus-sama know how to dance?"

Edona who just turned up after the magic training ends, asks me.

"No, I can't do it."

"Then if you can't, please join in the practice. Rudeus will also attend the dance party also right?"

"A, ah-. I will, participate?"

I look at Eris, and she nods in a matter-of-fact manner.

"Of course Rudeus will attend." (Polite)

Is this due to the Etiquette classes? Eris's used some strange words.

No, it's not something important.

"I seem to be required to attend."

"Then if you need to attend, it wouldn't be too good if you don't know how to dance."

"No, it will be okay if I stay in a corner and act as a young child."

Edona doesn't even show a strained smile.

She always has a gentle smile on her face that doesn't break.

I notice that other than this expression, this person doesn't show any other expressions.

In other words, a poker face.

"If one is attending a party for the first time, that person might feel more nervous than the usual self. There might be a moment where one steps on the dance partner's toes, furthermore the guests might feel discouraged looking at Ojou-sama's tender age. To resolve the tension, if it's possible, I wish you will become....."

Edona looks at me several times, but she still has a smile on her face.

After beating around the bush, you just want my help right?

Eris' dance lessons are progressing with such difficulty.

There's no helping it, even though I don't want to lend help in something that I'm not familiar in, but since she already puts it that way I can't refuse right.

No matter what I'm still the head teacher.

"I see, alright I understand. But I won't pay for the fees okay?"

"Of course, but in reverse I will be troubling Rudeus-sama."

Because of this dialogue, I also join the dance lessons.

Edona's teaching methods are really too lousy, no, as a teacher it's roughly like that.

You must do this, that's how you do that, in any case you should remember it. Something like this.

What's important, what's the crux, and points to take note of, all of that aren't taught.

I also met a teacher like that during my middle school, whatever, I'll just think of my own if I don't understand, since I'm not a child anymore.

"I got it."

After 3 days, I have grasped a few different dances.

The so called dance is only to match the rhythm and do the fixed footsteps.

You don't even need to practice for the simplest dance.

Maybe it's because I actively used the experience when I played dance dance revolution during my middle school, there's not much of a problem.

"That's magnificent, Rudeus-sama really is a genius."

Eris frowns when she sees Edona praising me.

Something that she is unable to do for months has been easily done by someone else, her heart cannot remain calm for sure.

But I haven't been slacking for the past 3 days learning the dance steps, I have been observing Eris's problems.

And I finally understood clearly, her dancing is too fast and rigid.

Even though dancing is very compatible with the Sword-God style, but things are contrary to expectations, one is supposed to do a graceful step according to the rhythm, but she does it in the fastest speed possible, completely disrupting the dance partner's rhythm.

Eris' base instincts feel repressed by the rhythm that is disrupting her. No matter what it is she will insist on her own steps, without being affected by others. This is a talent in combat, but it might disrupt one's self during dancing.

After all you need to match your dance partner's actions.

Edona has secretly told me, that she has never met such a talentless student, but the truth isn't like this.

If she's capable of moving at high speeds, it means that she's able to dance, it's just the method of teaching her isn't very good.

Even though correcting it is a little troublesome, but I have a card up my sleeve.

"Eris, close your eyes, let your own rhythm control your body movements."

"... What are you thinking of, when you're asking me to close my eyes!"

"... Rudeus-sama?"

Edona's poker face crumbles slightly.

No, it's not like that. These people are so rude, you're actually suspecting a gentleman like myself.

"I'm going to use a magic trick to let Eris dance."

"Eh! Is there a magic like that?"

"No, it's a magic trick, not magic. It's a miraculous phenomenon."

Eris tilts her head in question, but she listens to me and closes her eyes.

During the sword lessons, she has seen countless rhythms, high speed, finely tuned, sharp, but there's no orderly rhythm.

Since you can't make an accurate prediction, it's easy to disrupt the opponent's rhythm, and I definitely can't do that sort of whimsical natural rhythms.

"I'll clap my hands now, please use your dance steps in place of evading an attack, and follow my lead."

With that I clap with an orderly, pan~, pan~, pan~.

Eris matches me step by step by moving her body.

This continues for a while, and I added a noise in a random interval.

"Haii! Haii!"

The timing is before the clapping, and Eris slows down for a slight moment, and only reacts to the claps.

"T, this is!"

Edona raises her voice in surprise.

Eris continues to do the dance steps, even though it's still a little fast, but it's not at a pace that cannot be followed.

"You did it, you did it Ojou-sama!"

"Really!?"

Edona grasps her hands and expresses a rarely seen excited smile, shouting.

Eris opens her eyes in delight and replies with a large smile plastered on her face.

"You're not done yet, don't open your eyes, you need to remember that feeling okay?"

"Remember what, it's just seeing through the false actions and avoiding the attacks!!"

That's right, this is also taught in the sword lessons.

In Ghyslaine's evading the attacks lesson, she will demonstrate a false movement with a noise, and we need to avoid the real attack without getting confused by the false movements.

Compared to reacting Ghyslaine's false movements that's full of bloodlust, following my simple sound is much easier compared to that.

Just to add on, on this topic my results are better than Eris.

She's too honest and easy to fool with false movements.

"Eris, the things you learn on a lesson, can be applied to other lessons. Sometimes if there are things that you can't do well, try thinking if other lessons have something similar, please think about this okay?"

Eris opens her eyes wide, an unusual thing, but she doesn't argue and nods.

With that, dancing should have no issues.

"As expected of Rudeus-sama, you only spent 1 year and managed to teach Ojou-sama math."

Edona seems to be certainly impressed with me.

You actually said that, did you consider Eris learning math to be utterly hopeless?

Hm, but I did receive a lot of trouble for that. Still, half of that success belongs to Ghyslaine and I can't be conceited.

"I say, Edona, I think this is a revelation, the sword has similarities with dancing."

Edona shows an expression of disbelief, I have seen a miracle, ohhh the god out there, you're actually in front of me right now with expression right? You're exaggerating too much.

"But, there's a dance that specifically swing the sword."

"Ara, is there something like that?"

"Y, yes, I read it on a book."

Sword Dance is a common thing in my Chuunibyou knowledge, but it's possible that this world doesn't have something like that.

"Did that literature book write where it comes from?"

"T, the book says it's seen in a desert country."

"The desert..... Is it the Begaritto continent?"

"I'm not sure. Unexpectedly, it might belong to the demon races in the demon continent. I heard there are many small tribes, and there are people who can use the sword and dance."

I say something irresponsible.

"I see, with such an accumulation of knowledge, Rudeus-sama is really a fountain of intelligence."

Edona uses her poker face, seemingly accepting my made up stories.

"That's right, Rudeus is amazing!"

I don't know why Eris proudly replies that.

That's great, praise me more.

I'm the type that will improve if you praise me, fuhahahaha!

On the day of the party, I take my position at the corner of the courtyard.

At the beginning of the party, Philip and his wife are handling the visiting middle class and lower class nobles to the Greyrat's family.

I should say that these two are fighting, no matter how it is they won't show any sign of weakness.

In the case of Sauros receiving the guest, they are frightened by his wild attitude and loud voice, and there are quite a lot of people scuttling to escape.

The final chance to catch the people escaping, is the place where the main actress is at.

Eris has no authority, doesn't understand politics, and regardless of anything she will say "Please refer to Otou-sama".

There are a few good looking youths introducing themselves, as well as middle aged people introducing their sons to her.

There are a few children who are about the same age, but almost all of them are fat.

They must be living in comfort at home, I feel like I'm seeing myself as I once was before.

When I feel a sense of familiarity, the party starts.

As planned, I'm Eris's first dance partner. We're going to do the simplest dance for children, but because she's the lead, we are standing right in the middle of the courtyard.

Just treat it like it's during practice, hopefully we don't fail.

"W... w... w... what the heck...!"

Eris is extremely nervous and moves stiffly like a robot.

I decide to mix slight feints into my steps. Afterwards, Eris quietly mumbles [what the heck.] And returns to her usual condition.

After the dance is over, Edona finds me to speak with me.

Looking at Ojou-sama from afar, one can see that she's not tense anymore.

She asks me what I did, and I reply that I did the same thing during practice.

I added that it is originally the training for the sword.

Hearing that, the amazed Edona laughs secretly.

Since my mission is accomplished, I can go out and seek food.

There's some highly uncommon food here.

Examples include an unknown fruit that's made into a sour pie, or a meat dish that uses the entire cow's head, and beautifully arranged cakes.

When I was eating these food with relish, my eyes met with Ghyslaine.

She was not hinting anything to me in her eyes, but she was drooling.

I'm also a guy who can understand the situation.

I packed some of the food with a napkin and had a maid send it to my room.

The bodyguards and maids can eat something better than the usual fare, but there wouldn't be any food like what's here right now.

When I am about to finish transporting the food, I suddenly spot a young adorable girl in front of my eyes.

She took the initiative to talk with me, announcing her name and saying a small speech.

She seemed to be a girl from the middle class nobles, but I forgot her name.

She invited me to dance, and after I told her I only knew some basic dancing, we move to the free courtyard area.

I felt that I danced pretty well.

After the dance, another girl came up to me and asked for another dance.

What the hey, am I popular?

While I was self indulgent with that, the girls keep on inviting me one after another.

There's even a Obaa-san who's over 30 years old, and even a kid smaller than me who doesn't even know how to dance.

Other than the people with a really large difference in height, I basically danced with every one of them.

I'm a Japanese person who knows how to say NO, but after saying OK to the first person, it's not convenient to refuse other people.

Even though I have the mind to do it, but I'm not really good at remembering faces and names, and it is exhausting.

When everything is about to end, Philip came over to me to explain.

It seems that Sauros heard someone inquire about the identity of the youth who danced with Eris in the beginning, and Sauros proudly revealed that the youth was a person holding the name of Greyrat.

Which means, it was all Jii-san Sauros' fault.

Even though it's something like that, I can't blame him.

That child who successfully squashed Ojou-sama's tension, is that Sauros-sama's illegitimate child?

He must have felt happy when he was asked that.

At first it was planned not to reveal my Greyrat's surname, but after 3 rounds of wine it can't be helped.

This means I'm treated as a branch family member, where I will become famous sooner or later, and they send their daughters or granddaughters to me.

But I asked Philip, if that's the case isn't it strange to send them when the party is about to end?

He sees me packing the desserts with the napkins, and waits for me to finish before talking.

Whatever I do is reflected in someone's eyes.

I ask Philip on how to handle the girls who come up to talk, and he says that I can just vaguely respond to it.

Looks like he doesn't want me to participate in politics in the future.

Or is he planning to let me rely on someone else to become a political power.

But I don't have any interest in that, so today's popularity is just a bubble dream.

No wait, but if I become someone amazing, I can eat all kinds of cute girls using money.

"But, I suggest you don't do anything that will disgrace the Greyrat's name."

That sudden inspiration that I have is immediately doused by Philip's icy remark.

The person who comes to find me last is Eris. To add on, she's not wearing the lively outfit like her usual self, it's a water-blue colored dress.

Her hair is tied up with flower ornaments adorning her hair, and she's considerably adorable.

Because it's the first party, guests after guests keep greeting her, and I think she's quite spent.

I'm not sure if it's because the main actress is herself or because the party is very successful, she's a little excited.

"May I have a dance?"

In front of me isn't the usual Eris who's loud, unlady-like, cheeky, and rude.

Inviting me to dance is someone who wouldn't lose to any of the girls who have approached me so far, and is acting out the part of a graceful lady.

We come to the middle of the hall, and the music playing is something that we have never practiced before, with a slightly difficult, brisk rhythm to it.

"Ahh, uuuu....."

Eris immediately shows her discomfort. This is all because you forced yourself to act mature.

Eris casts a glance at me to plead for help, and I add in feints that match the music.

Even though it's different from usual, a rhythm like this should actually be easier for Eris.

Since these dance steps are vague, I'm not sure if Edona will be surprised or angry when she sees it.

We held our hands together, and step in and move back like we're practicing sword training.

This is very irregular combined with the music, and it must be quite unique to the viewers.

But, Eris is completely into it, and she smiles.

The girl who constantly wore a sullen expression was laughing with an expression that matched her age.

Just being able to see that made attending this party worth it.

The dance ends and is followed by applause.

Sauros comes running and lifts us both onto his shoulders, and merrily runs laps around the courtyard while laughing.

What a spirited grandfather. Seeing that, the people around start laughing too.

Yeah, this has been a fun party.

When the party ended, I called Ghyslaine and Eris up to my room, actually calling Ghyslaine is enough, but when I invited her she's together with Eris, so I brought her along as well.

Seeing there's delicious food on the table, Eris's stomach growls. She was nervous and excited during the party, so she didn't eat anything at all.

I brought out the cheap wine that I bought from the city from the cupboard.

Even though it's prepared for Ghyslaine, Eris says that she wants to drink it as well, so I prepared 3 cups, cheers.

This country requires one to be above 15 years old before you can drink, but I'm going to put that aside today.

Sometimes it's good to let loose.

"The timing is just right, so I'm going to give the two of you gifts."

I bring out two magic wands from the dresser beside the bed as I talk.

"W-what is that?"

"It's considered as a birthday gift I guess."

"Ehh, but I want this!"

Eris points towards the things that I practiced making using magic, using earth magic to create many intricate models.

There's a dragon, ship, and one might say a 1/10 sized figurine of Sylphy placed there.

Not to praise myself, when I was 20 years old back in the past, I was into making models, and even created my own coating paint.

But the painting materials are expensive here, and there's no spray paint equipment to apply it.

But since I did it with passion to create a panties for the model, the overall structure is quite detailed.

Even though it's something like that, it's still done by an amateur...

By the way, a 1/10 sized figurine of Roxy is sold to a merchant for 1 gold coin.

She must be touring the world right now.

Well, returning to the topic.

"This is my shishou's custom of giving disciples a magic wand. But since I didn't know how to make it and I didn't have the money to buy the materials, so I'm a bit late with that. If it's acceptable please take it."

Ghyslaine stops after hearing that, stands up and kneels down on one knee with respect.

Ah, I know this, this is the pose of Sword-God style for showing respect to the teacher.

"Yes! Rudeus-shishou. I receive this with much gratitude."

"Umu, there's no need to be so formal."

Ghyslaine accepts it with humble respect and looks at the magic wand, seemingly happy.

"I can call myself a magician now."

Ah, is that it, you can call yourself that now?

I didn't hear Roxy talking about it, no, in any case you're still elementary ranked, you're not counted right.

Or can you call yourself a magician if you start practicing magic?

My shishou has never explained it to me in detail.

"Erm, Eris do you want this?"

I half jokingly bring the 1/10 Sylphy's figurine to my hand, but I see Eris shakes her head.

"No! I want, that magic wand! I want that magic wand!"

"Okay, here."

Eris stretches her hand to take it, but perhaps because she saw Ghyslaine's attitude, she immediately corrects her posture, and receives the magic wand with both hands respectfully.

"T, thank you very much, Rudeus-shishou."

"Umu, please take good care of it."

Eris glances at Ghyslaine next, and after Ghyslaine notice her glance she pauses for a few second blankly, then shakes her head.

"I'm sorry, my race doesn't have a custom like that, and I didn't prepare anything."

I was thinking of what it was, it's actually asking for presents. Come to think of it, this was happening when I was moving the food back.

Ah, Eris sits back at the sofa with disappointment.

The servant giving the owner presents, even though there's no custom like that, but receiving nothing from her favorite Ghyslaine-oneechan, she's indeed a little pitiable.

Let me correct the situation a little.

"Ghyslaine, there's no need to prepare something special, if there's anything on you, or a lucky charm that can be used as a present too."

"Hmm."

Ghyslaine thinks for a while and then removes a ring from her finger.

A ring carved out from wood, with the signs of age on it, I'm not sure if there's any magic added to it or the material itself, there's a green light slightly emitting from it.

"This is a charm that my tribe passed down, if you wear this it's said that you won't be attacked by evil wolves at night."

"Are you really giving me that?"

"Yes, it's just a superstition."

Eris carefully receives it, wears it on her finger and hugs her hands tightly to her chest.

"I, I'll take good care of it."

She's even happier compared to receiving the magic wand from me, well, since it's a ring, girls, probably will like it more.

At this time a question rises from me.

"Superstition, huh? That means Ghyslaine has been attacked by evil wolves at night?"

"Yes, that was a difficult night to fall into sleep, Paul invited me to swim....."

"Aaah, it's best not to say anything else, I can guess what happens next."

Not good, if this topic continues, my stock valuation will fall, damn this Paul, that wanker is always in my way.

"Is that so, well, you probably won't want to listen about the things that your father did."

"Isn't that right, here, go right ahead and eat. Even though it's already cold, enjoy the food. You're my students so there's no need to restrain yourself.]"

Eris's memorable birthday passes by without incident.

The second day I find Eris lying beside me.

Wooah, I have become an adult, nooo (shy).

..... How's that possible.

Thinking back about it a little.

She suddenly wanted to sleep, and collapsed in my bed in exhaustion.

Seeing that, Ghyslaine said she should also go back, and in the end left Eris behind and returned to her own room.

You're not a man if there's food in front of you and you still don't take it.

Gehehehe, it's time to be a baaaad boy.

I licked my lips in an evil manner and approached the edge of the bed.

Then I saw Ghyslaine's ring being worn on her finger, and she's hugging the magic wand tightly that I gave; Eris' figure with a satisfied smile, sleeping away.

The Big Bad Wolf with the despicable face had been drawn away.

"That charm is really useful....."

I mumbled without touching Eris one bit, and slept quietly on the edge of the bed.

It's still quite early now, looking out of the window, the day is just about to break, but it's still very dark.

I went outside to walk for a bit. Even though it's not bad to look at Eris's sleeping face, once she wakes up I'd get punched.

I don't want to get beaten.

I walked silently outside the room to the slightly cold corridor, pondering on where to go next.

The mansion's main gate will not open until a certain time, so I can't go out and there are very few choices.

I have basically searched everywhere for the past year, but there are some areas that I still don't know, for example, there's a tower isolated from the mansion.

Even though I was told not to approach there, I'm still interested in it.

Or perhaps, I might be able to receive something good, for example I might get someone's panties that has been dried by the wind.

Thinking about the good stuff, I climbed up to the top of the mansion, after searching around at the top, I finally find a spiral staircase that pleased me.

That's probably the entrance to the tower.

As I climb up I hear something enticing like nyan, nyan voices, so I climb up without trying to make any sound.

Sauros is at the highest level, in a room that I'm not sure can be entered, doing something very naughty with a Nekomimi maid.

I see, so that's the reason why you don't allow people to come here....

I wanted to enjoy things till the end, but Sauros discovers me.

The maid has already discovered me from early on, after the maid finishes the business, she immediately passes by me and climbs down the staircase.

"..... Is that Rudeus?"

He's different from the usual voice, small and stable, sage mode?

"Yes, Sauros-sama. Good morning."

I just wanted to greet him with the noble's formalities, but Sauros's hand stops me.

"No need, what are you doing here?"

"Because I saw a ladder, so I wanted to climb up."

"Do you like high places?"

"Yes."

Even though I say that, if I look out from the window, I'll tremble in my legs.

Like and satisfaction is different, even if I conquer the world and make the highest tower, my room will be built on the first floor.

"Come to think of it, what is Sauros-sama doing here?"

"I'm praying to that gem."

Ahh? This mansion's praying culture is quite decadent, I think to myself but I really don't mind that.

He's usually so strict but he's also a Greyrat's member, birds of the same feather.

"Gem?"

I look outside the window, and there's a red gem floating in the air. It's pulsing with a faint light, and I can see some changes from inside.

What's that, amazing. Is that floating in the air by magic?

"May I know what is that?"

"I'm not sure"

Sauros shakes his head.

"That was discovered 3 years ago, but, it's not something bad."

"How can you be so certain?"

"It's better to think that way."

I see. That's true, since you can't grab a hold of it. If you think it's something bad, it's bad for the health. Why not think that it's something good and pray towards that, maybe gem-san's mood might turn for the better.

Let me pray too, please drop a pretty girl from the skies.

"Rudeus, I'm going to ride horse to travel for a while, do you want to come?"

"I'll go too."

Sauros's jii-san just did it once, but he seems quite spirited. Today's a free day, it seems I'm permitted to play for a while.

Oh yeah! ..... Sounds like it will be very tiring.

"Come to think of it."

"What?"

"Is Sauros-sama's wife not here?"

I hear a gritting sound, and discover that Sauros is grinding his teeth, and I feel cold sweat on my back.

"She's dead."

"I see, I am very sorry for asking something like that."

I apologize earnestly, he just did the birds and the bees with the Nekomimi maid, I might have made him remember something unhappy.

Looks like it's best not to ask why Eris doesn't have any siblings.

"Then, let's go."

"Yes."

Today will be a rest day, and I'll let Eris work hard from tomorrow onwards.

–Status–

Name: Eris Boreas Greyrat

Profession: Granddaughter of the lord of Fedoa

Personality: A little violent

Talking to her: She will listen with attention

Language: Able to read things almost perfectly

Math: Remembers the multiplication tables up to 9*9

Magic: Roughly knows the elementary rank

Sword: Intermediate ranked in the Sword-God style

Etiquette: Will not be embarrassed at a party

The people she likes: Grandfather, Ghyslaine

After Eris' 10th birthday she became more obedient. She also listens attentively in classes, and the number of times I get hit has lessened.

I am released from the fear of domestic violence, and my heart is more composed.

Because of that, I started my own studying.

First of all, I started a rough investigation into the world's history from the history book I found in the library.

According to the book, the world started 100,000 years ago and it's a really fantastical history.

Based on the chronological table, it's something like this.

— 100,000 years ago —

There were 7 worlds back then, and governed by each god. They are called "The Gods of Ancient Times."

The gods are different from each world.

The human world, the Human-God.

The demon world, the Demon-God.

The dragon world, the Dragon-God.

The beast world, the Beast-God.

The sea world, the Sea-God.

The heaven world, the Heaven-God.

The void world, the Void-God.

At that time, there's something like a barrier that isolates the world, and there is no easy way to travel through and from.

The citizens of one of the worlds don't even know the existence of other worlds.

The only people who knows the existence of the other worlds are a portion of the Gods, and individuals that have very strong powers.

— 20,000 – 10,000 years ago —

An evil Dragon-God was born in the dragon world. He possessed exceptional power, and destroyed the barriers between the worlds, and he commanded the <<5 Dragon Warriors>> to destroy the other worlds.

The citizens of the worlds had their worlds destroyed and were continuously chased, until finally they escaped to the human world.

After that, because of these events the <<5 Dragon Warriors>> betrayed the Dragon-God, and the leader of the <<5 Dragon Warriors>>, the Dragon-Emperor, teamed up together with the 4 Dragon-Kings and battled with the exceptionally powerful Dragon-God. A death match of 5 versus one, and in the end it ended up as a tie.

Because of the battle, the dragon world was destroyed. In the end there's only the human world left, which is this world.

— 10,000 – 8,000 years ago —

This era is called the Age of Chaos. The ancestors of the human race here enter into a chaotic war between the other worlds' citizens.

There's almost no data contributing to this era, but according to the scholars, after a very long time, each race is respectively segregated.

The beast races stayed in the forest, the sea race governed the oceans and the heaven race controlled the high grounds. The dragon race was nearly destroyed and they went into hiding. The void race can live anywhere, so they were everywhere.

And then, only the human race and the demon races were fighting ceaselessly on the plains. At that time, the Central continent and the Demon continent were linked together, and was called the Grand continent.

— 7,000 Years ago —

With the advancement of magic and martial skills, the population also increased.

At this time, there was the human-demon war, and just like the meaning of the words, this was a huge head on collision between the human race and the demon races.

That's something like the world war back then in my previous world. The war not only included the human race and demon races, other races were also involved in this long war.

— 6,000 years ago —

The human-demon war had repeated a regular streak of fierce battles for 1,000 years, and the hero Alus and his 6 companions defeated the <<5 Great Demon-Kings>> and the <<Demon Worlds's Great Emperor Kishirika>>.

From the words alone the Great Emperor is probably a female, my mind suddenly has an image of Eris laughing in high pitch, wearing a full set of SM clothing.

Talking about the Hero Alus... Isn't it the Hero vs the Evil Dragon?

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Dragon Quest roll-playing game. }

— 5,500 years ago–

With the human race's naivety and ignorance, as well as believing themselves to be powerful after defeating the demon races, frequently picked fights with the other races.

There were civil wars happening too, and fights were commonplace. Also, the demon races were treated as slaves to be used.

This nearly went on for 500 years.

— 5,000 years ago —

The 2nd human-demon war exploded out, as if to avenge the 1000 years of hatred, the <<Demon World's Great Emperor Kishirika>> raised the banners again.

Again with Kirishika, is that a succession of a title name? But it seems that it's not that, the Demon World's Great Emperor is an immortal, even if she dies, 1,000 years later she can be revived.

Being called as the Great Emperor, that means she's much more powerful than the other emperors.

The demon, beast and sea races formed an alliance to surround the human race, driving the human race to a corner.

— 4,200 years ago —

The 2nd human-demon war ends, the human race that's fond of wars, finally overturns the situation after 800 years of bitter battles.

It's thanks to the accomplishments of the golden knight Aldebaran.

This fellow was a serious cheating bastard, he vanquished an army of 10000 by himself, defeated all the important people and fought the Great emperor on a 1 on 1 duel.

He released a special move at the end, separating the Grand continent by piercing a great hole, and created the surrounding Ringus sea.

Based on one theory, he's called the Human-God. The Aldebaran that I know is able to kill anyone if he uses his ultimate skill, but this world's Golden knight is ridiculous.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Knights of the Zodiac manga series. }

Even though there's a lot of suspicious details, but at the end of the war's conclusion, the continent is split into 2 and it's the truth there's a new ocean formed in the middle.

In any case, it's lucky that the continent split into 2, and the long-awaited peace has finally arrived.

— 4,200 – 1,000 years ago —

The era goes over quickly, the world is at peace, but the demon races are driven out of the central continent.

The human race used cunning methods and sealed the demon races on the Demon continent.

The soils at the central continent are very fertile and extremely suitable to stay there. But the Demon continent is a place that easily gathers mana and is infertile.

The human race slowly forces all the lowly demon races to the Demon continent, as if twisting the ropes slowly to tighten the noose on the neck, sealing the Demon continent away.

They developed a silent agreement with the other races, to avoid another human-demon war.

The Demon races might have tried some resistance, and used foreign ties to pressure their opponent, but no war broke out.

It's uncertain when it happened, but it became truth that the Demon races were unable to go out from the Demon continent.

Due to the harsh surroundings and the competition over finite resources, the demon races easily fell into a state of civil war.

The demon races adapted to the environment, but the population had decreased by a lot.

— 1,000 years ago —

The Demon-God Laplace, in this long History, there are quite a few Demon-Kings and Demon-Emperors, but the only Demon-God that's known is Laplace.

Laplace immediately brought the demon races together, and subjugated the Demon continent. The records of this war still exist, and it's handed down from the military history.

Even now, Laplace is the idol within the Demon continent. Laplace created a united demon kingdom, and proceeded to nurture the demon races with a tough hand.

— 500 years ago —

Laplace suddenly starts a military campaign.

The beast race and sea race took a long time to persuade, and Laplace begun to attack the central continent.

The human race was in for a bitter fight that cannot be compared to anything in that came before. First Laplace's army invaded from the south, and the Human race's forces gathered there.

Red dragons were placed at the central continent, and the mountains could no longer be passed through.

With the Northern area being attacked as well, the human forces were split up, and the southern area fell all at once.

The situation soon turned into a flanked attack, proceeding from 2 directions attacking west area.

— 400 years ago —

The cornered human race finally brought out the their trump card, the 7 heroes persuaded the sea race, released the ocean's blockade and allowed the access to Milis continent.

The reasons that the Milis continent isn't being attacked are many, there's a holy Milis barrier and robust holy knight army, and there are poor conditions to allow the army on land, etc.

Also the reason why they are trapped was due to the Grand Forest on the northern side. The demon and beast races had formed an alliance, and did not allow the Milis kingdom to easily move.

Thus the 7 heroes persuaded the beast races, but even if you say "persuade", it's the 7 people who kidnapped the various tribe's children as hostages and threatening them. After much editing, this was actually written as receiving the children's help.

Are you trying to deceive me?

On the day of the final battle, the final kingdom left behind in the human race is the Milis Kingdom, who rallied the entire army to resist. After a short time, the 7 heroes led the holy knights and the beast races, and assaulted the Laplace army.

After the fierce battle, 4 of the 7 heroes died, but the entire main Laplace army was completely routed, and successfully sealed the Demon-God Laplace.

The only 3 survivors are, Dragon-God Urupein, Kaaruman, the Armored Dragon King Perugius.

They are called the <<The three heroes who vanquished the Demon-God>>.

..... You didn't vanquish right?

Laplace was defeated, but the human race was also exhausted and it was impossible to continue fighting. Therefore a treaty was signed with the moderate's Demon-king.

They will remove the blockade from the Demon continent, and the demon races can travel freely to other continents.

Also the discrimination towards the demon races are all banned.

In other words back in my world, it's the Universal declaration for human rights.

— The current era —

The discrimination towards the demon races' society is still as deep as before, but overall it can be said as peaceful.

Based on this I finally made things clear.

1) The reason why 7 is a lucky number.

This is due to History. 7 Worlds, 7 heroes. Lucky number is 7, unlucky number is 6. The <<5 Dragon Warriors>> and the <<5 Demon-Kings>> plus the boss is 6.

2) The long eared race (elves), charcoal race (dwarves), the small human race (halflings) and many races are associated with the demon races, and there's even a theory about the Age of Chaos creating a new race.

Perhaps there's something related to the void race which appeared the earliest, and some races that are unrestricted by age.

The Demon World's Great Emperor Kishirika is like this, and there are many undying devil kings.

Maintaining an undying body status, perhaps it's a magic in this area.

Because of the time spent on learning history, I know more or less the languages in this world.

The common languages in this world are:

– The Central continent, the human language

– The Milis continent, the Beast-God language

– The Heaven continent, the Heaven-God language.

– The Begaritto continent, the Fighting-God language.

– The Demon continent, the Demon-God language.

– The entire sea, the Sea-God language

In any case the various continents use names that are related to their gods.

But only the human race isn't the Human-God language, be wary of divine punishment.

The human language in the central continent can be split into 3 types, there are some differences in the various human languages.

But the only differences are something like American English and British English.

I'm using the western area's human language in the central continent, and the western area's language is also used in the northern side. But it's best not to use that elsewhere.

It's common knowledge that the western area has rich people, so bad people will be attracted to them.

The Milis continent is split into Northern region and the southern region, the northern region uses the Beast-God language, and the southern region uses the human language.

There are sea people residing in the ocean, although I don't know where I heard of the term sea people, I've never seen their city.

Besides my monthly salary, and selling my figurines, I do part time jobs in my free time (doing miscellaneous stuff for Philip, and reselling things that I bought several months ago.)

Every day is a busy day, and I finally earned some small change.

The money is enough to buy [Shigu's summoning magic], but that book was bought by someone else already.

I'm interested in the summoning magic, but I can't help it. I can't buy something that's already gone.

I think of spending the coins in my hand, and what kind of things can be bought with 5 gold coins. This time, a book about foreign languages comes into my eyes.

After looking at the stories in history, and seeing the languages in the stories, I suddenly think that it is important to learn about languages.

So I start to learn about other languages.

First of all, I start from Ghyslaine who also knows the Beast-God language, and wanting to learn about the Demon-God language, I write a letter to Roxy, letting her tell me what she knows.

I'm 9 years old, it has already been 2 years since I became the home tutor for Eris.

I spent a year to learn the Beast-God language, which Ghyslaine helped out a lot. There's also no need to spend a lot of time, the words to remember aren't a lot, as long as you know the formula, holding a conversation is easy.

The past me was terrible at foreign languages, but this body's memory isn't bad. Right now I'm learning the Demon-god language, and the demon races' language books are very cheap.

The bookstore's owner also said before.

"I don't know what's written on top alright?"

It's 7 silver coins, but after bargaining it's 6 silver coins

After that, another 3 months pass by. The job of translating is quite difficult. In other words, no, I'll just say it straight. I don't even know what's written on it.

At least tell me the topic and perhaps I can fill in the gaps.

But I don't even know the contents of it, and I can only give up when I don't know it at all.

It's easy to learn the Beast-God language thanks to Ghyslaine, but it doesn't end there. Because the book that I used as a teaching material "Perugius's legend".

Even though it's just a supplementary aid, with the book "Perugius's legend" next to my hand, picking up the vocabulary is much easier.

But I don't understand the Demon-God language at all.

How did the archaeologists read the words? I believe it's picking the vocabulary.

Trying to seek out the vocabulary, considered all sorts of possibilities, hmm it should be something like that.

Hmmm, well, I don't know what vocabulary at all. I completely have no idea.

One day I finally receive Roxy's reply, I didn't receive any news for over a year, and I thought that something wrong happened to the letter, or Roxy isn't at Shirone's kingdom anymore.

I finally receive it, just having the letter alone makes me feel overjoyed, is Shishou still well?

I suppress my impatient feelings, and receive the letter from the maid.

The letter.... or it's more like a package. Inside is a heavy wooden box, not really big, it's about the size of a telephone directory.

I take out a letter and a relatively thick book from the box. There's no title on the book, and there's an animal leather covering the cover. It feels like a cover for a telephone book.

I'll take a look at the letter first.

Before I opened it I take a sniff at it, and there is Roxy's personal scent to it.

"To Rudeus-sama

I read your letter that you sent, it has been some time, and you're already all grown up.

I didn't think that you managed to become the Fedoa's lord granddaughter's home tutor, that really made me astonished.

Coincidentally, I failed at the interview for this job. Perhaps it has to do with connections.

If I weren't undertaking the job of the Prince's home tutor right now, perhaps I might be jealous.

Not only that, you actually got to meet the Sword king Ghyslaine, and you are even taken in as a disciple.

Ghyslaine is a very famous character, no matter what, she's number 4 in the Sword-god style.

Sigh, the 5 years old Rudeus who peeked at me showering is gone.

You're a person that has become distant now.

I'll get to the real topic.

You want to learn the Demon-God language right? There are many people in the various demon tribes who have their own unique magic that the human race don't even know.

There probably isn't any documents to them, if you know how to converse in the Demon-God language, once you go to the tribes in the future, you might learn something. Of course, you need to build a good relationship.

Even though it's impossible for average magicians, but if it's Rudeus you should find it easy.

With my hopeful expectations, I wrote teaching materials for Rudeus which I written by hand. I spent quite a bit of time on it, and please keep this well, and I'll be happy if you don't throw it or sell it away.

If I see this in a bookstore I will probably cry.....

Talking about stores, a few days ago the Prince secretly ran to the city and bought a figurine exactly the same as me.

The robes are removable, and even the mole on my body is the same, I really don't get it at all.....

If there's nothing that happens, I will send this letter out.

From Roxy

PS: If you carry a magic wand in an adventurer's party, you're usually recognized as a magician."

I see.

That incident about you bathing is a misunderstanding, I didn't peek at you. I only saw it by coincidence, it's really, a coincidence.

Even though I know the timing to Roxy bathing, the fact that I saw it was a coincidence, and that moment where I consciously went to jog at that timing, totally a coincidence.

But going back to the letter, Ghyslaine's number 4?

Sword-God, Sword-Emperor and Sword-King?

Ah, there are 2 Sword-Emperors right? So there's only 1 Sword-King?

Since there are countless people in this world using the Sword-God style, I thought there are over 10 people who are Sword-Kings, but I didn't expect there would be only 1.

Also Roxy's statue seems to be sent there by coincidence, the prince really has some great eyes.

Ahh, compared to this thing.

The book that's sent over is hand written by her. I'm not sure what's written in it, but you don't really need to spend half a year right?

It's specifically written for me, so I'm sure it's a guide to read the Demon-God language, so I'll work hard on learning it.

I sit down properly and open the book.

NOW READING....

Hehe, Rudeus is entering reading book mode.

"This is, really too amazing."

I look at the book's contents, and I really find it hard to suppress my emotions.

This is a book of teaching materials, and it resembles more like a dictionary. It translates all the Demon-God language to be human language.

This is probably referenced from Shirone's palace's dictionary books and written out.

Each word has a detailed description, even the pronunciation is also there, a complete coverage.

But this isn't as moving just like that, the latter half in the book contains all the knowledge of the tribes.

You can't do this in this tribe, you can't do that in another tribe, and there's a somewhat badly done side drawing explaining "This is a special trait!!".

The fact that Roxy wrote this with all her heart is really charming

The most detailed content about the Migurd's tribe actually filled 5 pages.

Roxy for the sake of letting me learn about her tribe has put in effort, and I really feel her charm.

"Basically the Migurd's tribe is fond of sweet things."

Are you serious?

But coming back to this book, I really have to take my hat off to Roxy if this book is written in less than a year.

If there's a chance to meet her, please let me lick her feet.

I'm sure it will be delicious.

Well then.

This book can be said to be my strongest teaching material, even though my results weren't good in the past, but this body's memorizing power is unusually good.

Within another half year, I should be able to completely grasp this book. At least I want to say a few simple sentences.

I'll work hard.

–Ghyslaine's Point of view–

Rudeus is starting to seclude himself in the room, he's trying to do something again, every time that youth will make me feel astonished.

When I first met him, I felt that's not really a reliable youth, and it's that overconfident Paul who's over doting his child and forcefully pushed him over to here.

I have a duty to Paul.

I don't have any other feelings other than that, but I have a duty. Even if he can't be Eris Ojou-sama's home tutor, I will express my wishes to have him stay in the mansion.

This is what I thought would happen.

But he successfully gained Ojou-sama's trust within the blink of an eye, and managed to attain the post of the home tutor.

The kidnapping incident was planned by Rudeus alone, although I heard the butler was greedy and made use of this incident, when I rushed to the scene, Rudeus was fighting the two men that were hired by the butler on equal grounds.

Even though I'm not completely certain, despite facing an advanced ranked North-God style swordsman, he used two different types of magic or possibly a combination of it and overwhelmed them in a truly unique way.

While it might be that they underestimated him as a child, carrying that battle sense at that age is an innate thing.

Even if it's me, if I start a battle at over 100 meters, I will most likely lose.

Not only his combat ability, he compiled a learning schedule or something for Ojou-sama, and effectively progressed the classes.

His classes are also very easy to understand, I didn't even think that I could also learn how to read and write and do maths, to even receive a magic wand....

I'm labeled as the delinquent in the village, I was taken away by a journeying swordsman even before I reached 10 years old, became a Sword-Saint but was ostracized by my party.

I managed to find a party that accepted me with much difficulty, but I was told by a frivolous man who's full of bad ideas, that my brain is made of muscles and thus I don't need to think.

If I go back now, what expressions will the people in the village show, just thinking about it makes me curl the corners of my lips and smile.

I did not think that I could learn so many things from a child who's young enough to be my son.

After the party disbanded, I led a life where I was robbed everyday, getting robbed until I was penniless.

Since Shishou disciplined me strictly not to take from other people things, I did not steal anything.

Without any job and on an empty stomach, on the time where I nearly starved to death, it was Sauros-sama and Eris-sama who saved me.

The respect I have for the two of them, is also extended to Rudeus.

Shishou..... Sword-God-sama will probably get angry and say something like "Is that brat worthy to be ranked equally as me!?", so I'll just call Rudeus Sensei.

I'll treat Rudeus with the respect of a sensei. He really has a lot of patience, being able to teach me Maths and Magic.

Even though I tried working hard on it, but I'm not a person with good memory, I'll commit the same mistakes over and over again.

Even if that's the case, Rudeus has never shown any signs of annoyance, and will sincerely and earnestly teach me.

Also every time he teaches me, it will be a different method to allow me to understand the concept.

Thanks to his efforts, I am able to completely grasp the elementary ranked fire and water magic within less than 2 years.

I'm not sure if it's Rudeus education plan, he didn't immediately start lessons to teach the intermediate rank, but started lessons to train us to use voiceless incantations.

Under the situation of not being able to use both hands, one can still use simple magic. It's quite logical.

So it's very easy to understand, and once I can understand I can put effort into it.

But no matter how hard I try I am unable to do so.

My shishou who's Sword-God-sama has told me countless time to be "Logical".

"Being 'Logical', refers to the foundations."

This is the golden advice from Sword-God-sama (Shishou), training in the foundation after a long period of time, will logically allow me to attain the essence of the sword.

The young me who hated training in the foundations, my Shishou tirelessly trained me. He kept repeating lessons to let me practice.

I finally attained a sword king's strength that I don't deserve.

Rudeus's training closely resembles Sword-God-sama's training.

"I want to use a prettier magic."

I feel that this is enough.

In a practical combat, the most reliable thing isn't an advanced magician who takes a long time to chant to use a powerful magic, but an elementary or intermediate ranked magician who can use magic ingeniously according to different situations.

I always felt that a magician was useless during duels against people, but I have changed my mind completely after seeing Rudeus.

Moving at high speeds while using magic spells to attack and hinder the enemy, this kind of opponent is an unimaginable strong foe for a swordsman.

I heard that he was always facing Paul as an opponent, that immature Paul will definitely go after Rudeus and knock him over with his full strength during training.

From the conclusion, Rudeus has obtained perfect experience in handling a swordsman. It's a fluke, but Paul sometimes will do something useful.

However, this could be a misstep, and Rudeus might find it meaningless to battle, and end up burying his talent.

He doesn't have the talent in the Sword-God style.

He overly seeks rational things, and overthinks too much.

Training the foundation in a rational manner, and executes it with even more rational ways, and ends up with an illogical conclusion.

Although it's not a bad thing when I consider Rudeus's character, but I'm afraid he's training the sword based on his knowledge in magic.

Still, this is completely different in the Sword-God style where things are decided in a heartbeat, compared to preparing the endless possibilities when one takes the first step.

Paul probably didn't tell him that he's best suited for the North-God style.

Unfortunately I only know how to use the Sword-God style so I can't teach him. But I have my connections, if 3 years later Rudeus wants to learn the sword, I'll point him to a North-God style user.

The only thing that I did is to continue teaching him in the basics of the Sword-God style.

If he has the basics down, he should improve in the North-God style if he learns it.

In the end, it's whether he decides he wants to to continue training in the sword.

Even if he didn't meet any famous teacher to teach him, he will probably still succeed as a magician.

Reaching the god rank isn't something humans can understand, but he can probably reach the emperor rank.

The magician named Roxy must have agonized over on how to educate him for the future.

Even though I think that she's quite embarrassed from running away from Rudeus, but I don't intend to blame her.

I probably should even thank her, because of her, I'm able to use magic.

Learning from a dumb teacher will only curb the student's growth. Perhaps one day will arrive where I will agonize over who can teach him the sword.

The more I think the more I get lost.

I don't know what Rudeus is doing. Even though it's a rest day, he's different from the carefree Ojou-sama, and he usually does something novel.

Recently he said he wanted to learn the Beast-God language, and after dinner he would carry a book in his hand and come to my room.

A language that can only be used in the huge forest, even if you learn it what can you do with it?

But Rudeus only spent half a year learning it, it's not difficult to express yourself in the Beast-God language, and he can probably hold a daily conversion perfectly.

"With that, I can probably go to the 'Grand Forest'."

Why does he want to go there to the sealed area, I ask him.

"Eh? No, erm how should I say it? Ah, I can probably meet some cute girls, the nekomimi ones."

That moment I believed it, this child is indeed Paul's son, inheriting the Greyrat's blood.

That's right, the Greyrat family members always cast me strange glances.

As a woman, even though I'm being stared at I won't feel bad about it, but it's not that case.

The points where they look at are strange.

Most of the males will look at my chest. They will first look at the face, then pretend to look elsewhere while looking at my chest.

Then they will cast their eyes further down, to the stomach, between my legs and my thighs, and if my back is facing them they will look at my butt.

Even though I don't really mind.

But the Greyrat males were different.

I thought at first they were looking at my face and butt.

Well, it's okay to just take a look, since I don't expect them to move on to the next step.

Paul is also that kind of person who is curious.

Even though I thought something like that, but I felt their eyes were looking at somewhere strange.

The glances were slightly above my head, if you say they were looking at my butt it's a little off position.

I was thinking where they were looking, and they were actually the ears and tail.

Eris ojou-sama, Sauros-sama, even Philip-sama.

Before I went out to receive Rudeus, I asked Philips why they looked at the ears, and he replied without any changes in his face while looking at my ears.

"Because the 'Boreas' family likes the beast races."

And he said even though he didn't inherit the noblity, he's different as he's a [Notus].

"He's Paul's son, the fact that he likes pretty girls won't be wrong."

He added on.

At that moment, I thought it will probably be something like that.

But I couldn't believe Rudeus is Paul's son after seeing how gentlemanly he is.

Furthermore he's a hardworking person that Paul can never match, and he's a diligent person that Paul can never match, and he's a austere person that Paul can never match..... which is not true.

In any case, I thought he might not be Paul's son, that's the truth.

But I changed my mind, he's absolutely from Paul's blood.

"You're indeed Paul's son. The same human race with the common language is unable to satisfy you."

"Stop with the jesting. Please don't say that kind of stuff.]"

No, actually this isn't a joke.

He will definitely become a playboy.

Lately the looks that Eris give Rudeus are becoming strange.

Even if I don't understand the relationship between men and women very well, I still know it.

It's the same when Zenith was attracted to Paul.

Lately Rudeus seemed to have learned the Demon-God language. After the beast races it's the demon races?

That youth is planning to conquer the entire world's girls.

Paul also said something similar, saying that he will run all over the central continent and establish a harem or something.

In the end Zenith caught him and he gave it up, but that will seems to have passed on.

Really, these pair of worthless father and son.....

No, I should respect Rudeus.

The only one that I should despise is Paul. Rudeus is just saying that, and he hasn't done anything yet.

Hasn't done anything yet.

He's a respectable youth.

Umu.

"What's wrong Ghyslaine?"

When I was thinking about this, Eris ojou-sama appears before me, she has grown up a lot in these two years.

The first time I saw her was around 5 years ago, at first I thought she's an uncontrollable willful girl.

The first time she attended sword lessons, I gave her so much [painful love] that she couldn't even stand up.

She took a wooden sword in the middle of the night to attack me.

Even though she didn't get her revenge and was more obedient, she was waiting with sharp eyes for the next few months to get her revenge.

I was a bad apple back in the past, and I felt an affinity for her actions.

I was like that too.

At first when she practiced the sword, she always grumbled about "This is not good", "I don't want to do this". But she's becoming obedient recently.

After last year's party, she basically wouldn't make a fuss and won't get her dress dirty.

Rather than saying that she's learning it from the etiquette class, I think it's fairer to say she's imitating Rudeus.

Did Rudeus say something during the 10 years old birthday?

He must have said some Paul-like ensnaring words that sent shivers to her womb.

But on that 10 years old birthday, Eris ojou-sama did sleep in Rudeus room.

It's not possible..... No, it's possible.

But in any case I wouldn't be surprised if something did happen that night.

The guys who can handle Eris ojou-sama can be counted on one hand.

"I'm thinking about Rudeus stuff."

"Hm? Why?"

Eris tilts her head and asks.

Her eyes are a little jealous. Don't worry, I won't steal him away.

"I don't know why he's learning the Demon continent's language."

"Didn't he say it before!"

He said something? I try to remember what Rudeus said, but I don't remember since he abruptly started learning languages.

"What did he say?"

"He said it might be useful in the future."

Come to think of it, he said the same things when he recorded the shop items and the prices.

In the end what use did it have?

I think back about the past parties where the thief is quite familiar about the necessities pricing.

The thief suddenly found a shop and said that the healing medicine was at half price compared to market rate, and I remember past events about buying fake goods.

No, now that I think about it, if you don't know the market rate, you might buy inferior goods for 2-3 times the price and still not discover it.

At that time I was unable to state it clearly, but now that I reflect on it, it's best to know the information.

Thanks to the Maths that I learned from Rudeus, I won't be scammed about the change I received back from merchants, but I really did get deceived many times in the past.

Even though I learned maths, I can't see myself as a merchant.

"Don't talk about the stuff on Rudeus, even if we keep thinking we won't understand, if you're free Ghyslaine help me train with the sword."

These few days she's paying full attention to the sword.

I don't know what happened, but perhaps she feels something that makes her anxious.

Rudeus is only 9 years old now, and compared to the Ojou-sama then, the current Rudeus is easily seen as more mature.

Never mind about studying, Math and Magic, he even has the ability to hold conversations and has the social experience. Even though he's not following the etiquette policies but he's very polite.

His actions are proper like a merchant and is a little humorous.

Even though one can't really get used to his pranks of sexual harassment, but it can be seen as his charm.

Is he really only 9 years old?

Even for a normal conversation, it's easy to believe he's 40 + years old.

Now that I think about this, the Dragon king's country will frequently have a con like this.

The bandits who know how to write will pretend to be a noble youth and send letters to children nobles, and after getting their trust and meeting on a random day, they will catch them and sell to slave merchants.

I think that Eris Ojou-sama will have at least one thing that will win over Rudeus, which is the sword.

I will be satisfied with that.

"Alright. Eris, we will go to the garden."

"Okay!"

Eris ojou-sama nods enthusiastically.

Eris ojou-sama is one who's talented in the Sword-God style. If she earnestly continues the path of the sword, she might surpass me one day.

She might only be the intermediate rank, but with the result of teaching her the foundation for 3 years, there's a recent manifestation.

When she steps out sharply and swiftly, her body's already covered with "Fighting Spirit", and if she can self consciously use the "Fighting Spirit", she can easily reach the rank of an advanced ranked Sword-God style swordsman.

If she can completely control it, she will become a Sword-Saint.

That will probably be something not too far away, even though I'm not sure how much Eris ojou-sama will grow, but if she can become a Sword-Saint during the time I teach her, I'll let her meet with Shishou.

If it's possible, I'll bring Rudeus along.

What sort of reaction will Shishou make when Shishou meets them?

Haha, this really makes one look forward to it.

–Status–

Name: Eris Boreas Greyrat

Profession: Granddaughter of the lord of Fedoa

Personality: A little violent

Talking to her: She will listen with attention

Language: Improvement in writing too

Math: Still weak in division

Magic: Can't use the voiceless incantation

Sword: Intermediate ranked in the Sword-God style (almost advanced ranked)

Etiquette: Imitation of a lady

The people she likes: Grandfather, Ghyslaine, Rudeus

After experiencing various things, I'm about to reach 10 years old.

I spent the entire year on learning languages, Demon God Language, Beast God Language, as well as the Fighting God Language.

The Fighting God Language is similar to the Human Language, learning it isn't very difficult, and it feels like it is English mixed with a little German in it.

The only differences are the vocabulary and the way of how things are expressed.

The grammar is basically the same as the Human Language.

This world's languages aren't very hard.

Once you remember one thing, the others are easy to apply.

Perhaps it's affected by the fact the world has been deeply involved in war.

But there are no literary contributions to the Heaven God Language and the Sea God Language, along with no people who know how to use it, so I am unable to acquire them.

In regards to using the sword, I'm finally at the intermediate rank. Eris has already risen to the Advanced rank within less than 2 years, so I'm already not her match.

I experience a distinct difference in talent.

But she's also training on her rest days, so she's also affected by that.

I spent time learning on languages while she trains in the sword. It's a natural thing that there would be a difference.

In regards to Magic, I am training in it to the extent by making figurines.

I'm capable of making minute details so I should have improved.

But even if that's the case, I have certainly reached a bottleneck.

Well, since I'll be going to the Magic University to study, there's no need to hurry.

With all things considered, I have already been here for nearly 10 years and I feel deeply moved.

Just before a month away from my birthday, Eris and the people in the mansion start becoming busy, did something happen?

Something like an important person visiting, or some person in the Greyrat's family, or Eris's fiancee.....

No, surely not, that can't really be. How can Eris have a fiancee (Laughs).

But I still felt a little uneasy, so I started to investigate.

I tailed behind Eris magnificently, and found her happily talking to the maids.

Ghyslaine was also there as well, and it seems that she didn't notice me, staring at the food (fresh meat) meant for dishes.

"I want to see Rudeus surprised, he will probably be overjoyed in tears!"

"That's difficult to say, even if Rudeus is surprised, it is unlikely he will show it on his face."

"But he will be happy right?"

"Of course, he has probably had a lot of great hardships since he's from the branch family."

Actually I didn't go through a lot of hardships.....

But what are they talking about?

Are they talking behind my back? Even though I'm confident I did pretty well, but perhaps I'm the only one who thinks that way.

Did I affect the members in this house?

If I did that I'll be confident that I'll cry.

"We won't be in time for Rudeus birthday!"

"But if we hurry too much we won't be able to do it well."

"If we don't do it well, he won't eat it?"

"No, if it's Rudeus-sama, even if it turns to cinders he will eat it."

"Really?"

"Yes, if Sauros-sama is there."

Oh, so that's what it was? Preparing for a birthday party?

"If Rudeus wasn't born in that family....."

Eris says with pity in her voice.

I see, after I grasp the contents of the conversation, I leave the place.

In any case it seems that I'm not a person who can really be shown to the public.

That's true, now matter how you cut it, I'm still that fellow's son.

But I don't mean it that way.

This is something I know after staying here for a few years.

Paul's original name is Paul Notus Greyrat.

"Notus" is Paul's noble name, and he broke off ties from the Notus family.

Right now it's his cousin or younger brother that's the head now.

Well it's fine if things come to an end like that.

However, some people don't think that things have come to an end, because the current head of Notus is even worse than Paul, and they are keen to change that.

The current head is very sensitive, and is spending great effort to eliminate possible candidates who can replace him.

Even though I'm not interested in this area, but there are people who might be thinking that Paul's son has the Boreas' family backing him up, and he's planning to back the Notus family name.

The so-called authority wielders will jump at shadows. The worst case will be assassins being sent over, so there's a need to stay low.

Well going back to the earlier eavesdropping.

About Rudeus's pitiful status.

I could have originally received a standpoint that's not below Eris, but I'm given a treatment like a servant, so it's pitiful.

And in the custom amongst the nobles' custom.....

As a very special day for a 10 years old, the party cannot be overdone. Pitiful, that's really so pitiful.

Eris who has not asked Sauros-sama for a selfish request in a very long time, requested him of this, and it's decided that there will be a birthday organized for me privately.

A small family party that only the people in the mansion will attend.

A party for me.

Don't say something that will make me cry.

And to be honest, that's really dangerous.

Even though I know it, but I didn't realize the birthday when you reach 10 years old is so special. Also the party that I commonly know of, isn't as grand as Eris's birthday, it's just a small party.

To the party that my family participates in, I will go [Ah, it's like that, thanks yeah.]

That kind of response.

This is planned by Eris, and she doesn't have anyone the same age as her, and everything is done for the first time.

If I'm not happy she will be very disappointed. Looks like I need to train more in Water Magic to fake crying.

I'm also a guy who knows how to read the mood.

On that day, the mansion is busy.

After classes are over, Ghyslaine comes to my room. It is rare to see her to be so tense, her tail is standing up really, really high.

"Well, I have some questions that I want to ask in Magic."

She shifts her eyes away, looks like she's sent to keep me in the room, OK, OK, I'll follow along with this card.

"Hoh~ What's the question?"

"Can I see a saint-ranked magic?"

"I can do it, but the city will be in rubble if I do it."

"What? What type of magic is that?"

"The saint-ranked magic is violent winds with lightning storms, pouring too much power into it will drown this city."

"That's really too powerful, I need to see that the next time."

I rarely see such praise from her, this is probably a trick for preparing the battle.

Alright, I'll tease her a little.

"I understand. Since you already put it that way, alright. If we travel on horse for 2 hours, we will be able to go outside the range of the magic, let's set off now."

Ghyslaine's face vibrates like a string.

"N, no, wait. If we set off now it will be late when we come back, there are monsters in the wild, and it's very dangerous out in the plains."

"Is that so? But it should be fine with Ghyslaine, you said the beast race is very sensitive to sounds so it should be okay in the night."

"B, being overconfident is forbidden."

"That's true, using saint ranked magic also requires a lot of mana, we will go on the next rest day."

"A, ahh, that's good, we will do that the next time."

Things ended naturally.

It's quite interesting to tease Ghyslaine who doesn't normally react to things.

When she's panicking her tail will stand up with a swoosh, when I say something her tail will move, just looking at that alone makes me feel happy.

"Ah, come to think of it there are no drinks here, except hot water....."

"N, no, there's no need, don't move. I'm not thirsty."

"Is that so."

Well, I can create hot water, but if she doesn't discover that I won't say it.

Very good, with this rhythm, it seems like she's still not prepared to let me go out, I'll do some sexual harassment.

"You know what, I'm making figurines nowadays."

As I say that I take a 1/10 Ghyslaine figurine out. Compared to the earliest product, I'm confident I have improved a lot.

The outlines of the muscles can be said to be on a professional level.

"Hoh. Is this me? You did it quite well, compared to the figurine you made of Eris ojou-sama..... Eh, where's the tail?"

"I don't have enough knowledge on that area, and I always based it on my imagination to make it. This time this one came out well so I'm particular about it to make it life-like."

Ghyslaine seems to fall into deep thought as her tail wags.

Hah, I'm looking forward to what expression she will show.

"Can I look at it? The tail and the area where it's connected."

"That's easy."

With that, Ghyslaine stands up straight and let me see her butt, without any hesitation.

Amazing! As expected of my Ghyslaine!

You're so manly!

I can't win against her!

Wait, don't back off! It's not over yet, being able to do a little bit of erotic things to the usually alert Ghyslaine, this is a chance.

"C, can I touch it a little?"

"Ah, go ahead."

I almost grab it by slamming it down.

Hard!

Eh!?

Wait, this is the butt right? Butt?

What exaggerated muscles, you can say it feels almost as hard as an iron board.

But I feel like there's some softness to it, how should I put it, the ideal type?

But it's still quite hard to think this as erotic.

The muscles that one will yearn for.

This is the ultimate kind of muscles that any male would yearn.

The pink colored type muscles that has both types of red and white colored muscles!

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the manga Strongest Disciple Kenichi. Red muscles are big and release explosive power but have only little stamina. White muscles are slim and enduring but can't give off as much force at once. A mix of them (pink) has the best characteristics of both. They are slim, enduring and capable of explosive releases of power. }

This is a blessed existence of super-bro and ero-goddess!

Please grant me this kind of muscles.....

"Okay, I'm done."

With the feelings of utter defeat, I move my hands away from Ghyslaine's butt.

"I once saw Eris hiring an artist to do her portrait. I also want to leave behind an image of myself, I look forward to your complete works."

She smiles with delight.

I feel like I lost.

In being a man.

In being manly.

Dammmmn it, can't I win against Ghyslaine.....

"..... It's about time for dinner."

"H, hmm, I think it's still early?"

I still want to see her tail go up in shock, but the maid comes in to inform the food is ready.

The moment I enter the dining room, applause rings.

This is the first time time that everyone has gathered. This of course includes Sauros and Philip, and the rarely seen Hilda.

"T, this is....?"

I turn back and Ghyslaine is also clapping.

"Ehh? Ehh?"

The acting of being flustered.

"Rudeus! Congratulations on your birthday!"

Eris carries a large bouquet of flowers and says to me. She's wearing a fiery red dress.

I receive it, with the acting of being flustered.

"Ah, is that it. I'm, 10 years old, today....."

After saying the words that I prepared for today, my face darkens.

I bring my sleeve up to cover my eyes, and use water magic at the same time to create tears to overflow from them. Not long after, my nose is stuffed.

"S, sorry. I, I'm..... like this..... for the first time..... I come here..... always thinking I can't fail..... and I'm unpopular..... If I fail, I'll disgrace my father..... I, I never thought..... I'll be cong.....ratulated."

I move away my sleeve, and Eris looks dumbfounded.

Philip and Sauros and everyone else in the mansion stop clapping, and everyone blanks out.

Uhoh, my acting is too poor.....?

N, no, it's probably the opposite. The acting is too darn real, what an epic failure, I simply want to stop at a reasonable area.

Haaa. When I think about this, have I become a hateful adult.....

Well whatever.

I'll keep on carrying on acting.

Eris asks the butler in panic.

"What should we do, what should we do?"

Looks like it's a big thing for me to cry.

She's so cute that I hug her. I softly whisper a thanks in her ears with a stuffy nose.

"Eris, thank you....."

"I, it's totally good! Rudeus is, is family, that's a natural thing! G, Greyrat's family member right, Otou-sama, Ojii-sama!"

If it was the usual Eris, she would've said "You should be grateful!".

But it seems like she's trying to find a reason to get Philip's agreement. But I only see Sauros roaring.

"T, to battle! We're going into battle with Notus! We will kill Philemon and install Rudeus as the family's head! Philip! Alphon~~se! Ghys~~laine! Follow me now!! Gather all the troops!"

And just like that, the war between Boreas Greyrat and Notus Greyrat raises its curtains.

The blood feud drags the remaining two Greyrat family in as well, and pulls the Asura kingdom in a long chaotic civil war, recorded into the annals.

..... Something like that, of course didn't happen.

"F, father, restrain! Please restrain yourself!"

"Philip, are you trying to block me! Just look at it yourself! Compared to that shitty idiot, don't you think Rudeus is more suitable?"

"I think that too, but please calm down! Today is supposed to be a joyous day! Having a war is also bad, we will be enemies with Eurus and Zephyrus!"

"You fool! I'll win this on my own! Move away, move away!!!!!"

With that Sauros drags Philip out of the scene.

Everyone's dumbfounded.

"A, ahem."

Eris coughs.

"L, leaving Ojii-san things aside..... Today is specially prepared for Rudeus!"

Eris raises her chest, her face blushing.

Lately her chest has grown so she she started to wear a bra, and she's quite cute when she puffs her chest out.

Sennin once said that it's now very cute, but once she grows up it will become brazen.

Thank you, sennin.

{ C-Editor's note: Rudeus is refering to his perverted hermit inner-self. }

"About that, is there, a surprise?"

"What do you think it is?!"

The things that are a surprise.

What are they.

The things that I like.

Computer and Eroge. No, no.

Eris is thinking about my circumstances. I have left my family, been alone all these years, and must feel lonely. On this birthday, if it's Eris herself what sort of gifts will she be happy with?

Ghyslaine and her grandfather by her side, celebrating.

If it's me.....

"Could it be, Otou-sama is here as well.....?"

Eris' face darkens, and not only her, the butler, maids and everyone else's expressions change to a sympathetic look.

"P, Paul..... san, is, he said, the monsters in the forest have started becoming active recently so he couldn't come, b, but he said if it's Rudeus even if he's not here it will be fine..... Zenith-san also said that the children have a sudden fever and she couldn't come....."

Eris replies, perplexed.

Ahh———.

Well since they already notified, it's something that can't be helped. The village relies quite heavily on Paul, and if the sisters are sick, it can't be possible for Lilia to take care of everything.

"I, I say, about that, Rudeus, I....."

Eris can't seem to find the words and frets once again, the cat who's usually so confident is really cute when she encounters something troubling.

Don't worry. You might even say it's better if Paul isn't here.

"I see, Father and Mother didn't come....."

I pretend I didn't mind, but when I try to do that, I sound quite despondent because of the nasally voice and teary eyes.

At this time, there is someone amongst the maids who starts to sob, what a failure..... I didn't think I would make the atmosphere to be this terrible.

My apologies, I, really can't read the mood after all.....

Just when I'm thinking of that, suddenly Hilda runs over to me and hugs me tightly, and the flowers slip out of my hand accidentally.

"Uwaa."

I almost never speak to Hilda.

She has the same fiery red hair like Eris, and she's like a beautiful young woman that carries an air of [The Widow].

Like one who appears in the Eroge or a married woman who got widowed at a young age.

Of course, if Philip is alive she's not a widow.

But the important thing is..... That is, her chest is amazing!

Is it possible that Eris will grow up to this level.....!?

Aaan!

"Don't worry Rudeus, you can be at peace. You're my son too!"

Hilda hugs me tightly and uses a voice that's almost at the level of shouting.

Arara?

Doesn't this person hate me?

"No one will object to it! Adopted child..... No, marry Eris! That's it! A great idea! Let's do that!"

"O, Okaa-sama!?"

Hilda suddenly lost her cool.

As expected Eris is also shocked.

"Eris! Are you unsatisfied with our home's Rudeus!"

"Rudeus is only 10!"

"It has nothing to do with age! Stop finding excuses and polish up on being a proper girl!"

"I'm doing that!"

The rampaging Hilda.

The retorting Eris.

Even though she married into the family, this person is also a Greyrat's member, she is the same type like Sauros.

"Alright, we will talk about this later!"

"Kyaa! Dear! What are you doing! If I don't save the poor child!"

Philip who just came back, controls Hilda and exits the place with grace.

Even under a chaotic scene his heart is serene, calmly observing the situation.

That's so cool, he's definitely a great wizard. A reliable man, and he can be seen as a reference for all guys.

Well now, time to pull myself together.

"W, what is it? About that, surprise?"

Eris brings out her arms, puffs up her chest and raises her head, her chin protruding out a little.

I haven't seen that classic pose in quite some time.

"Hmph hmph! Alphonse, bring that!"

Eris snaps her finger, making a crisp noise.

Eris has her face red, but Alphonse doesn't pay attention to it, and brings out a wand from behind the statue's shadow where I couldn't see it.

This is similar to the wand that Roxy has.

The wand is made from a rough and bony wood, with the tip of it adorned with a large Magical stone that appears to be quite expensive.

I know from the first moment I see it, this rod is very expensive.

A wand's rank is determined by the wood and the Magic rock.

The properties of the wood will affect the affinity of each Magic system.

The Fire and Earth system is good with the Kurogaki,

The Wind and Water system is good with the Injyuga material.

But even if it's not compatible it shouldn't reduce the strength of the magic, so any material is fine.

The most important thing is the Magical stone, with Mana transforming into a Magical stone, it's not known why the power of the Magic is greatly increased even if the output of the Mana is the same.

Comparing the price, the wands that I gave to Ghyslaine and Eris, have a Magical stone that costs 1 silver each.

Even though there are cheaper ones, I remembered back then that Roxy gave me a wand with something about that size, so I chose the same.

It's about the size of the front tip of the last finger.

With this fist sized Magical stone, it's at least over 100 gold coins.

Furthermore, the Magical stone is slightly blue colored and it has water affinity. With this there will be a very strong enhancement of the magic used.

How much does this really cost.....

To add on, the crystals that you get from dungeons are also a type of Magical stones, but the difference is that it doesn't add the enhancement effect.

To that aspect, that Magical crystal is holding Mana in it, and it's not used for making a wand but creating magical items and Magic spells that use a lot of Mana.

Eris watches me who's looking at the wand, and nods her head with satisfaction.

"Alphonse, explain it."

"Yes, Ojou-sama. The material is from the Milis continent, in the eastern region of the large forest where a tree called the <<Elder Treant>> grows. The wand's body is made from that arm. I believe the well learned Rudeus-sama must know that it will become a subspecies after drinking from the fairies' spring. It will be capable of using water-ranked magic, an A rank monster. The magical rock is from a stray dragon located in the Begaritto continent, an A rank gem. The maker is from the Asura's kingdom palace's Magic team, a wand maker "Rod Director" called Chein Procyon."

Woah, that's amazing. It sounds like it specializes in Water Magic.

But it should be really expensive right?

No, now is not the time to think about this.

Even though I keep teaching Eris not to keep spending money, I'll let it go for today.

This is specially made for me, it will be embarrassing if I refuse this.

"The wand's name is called <<The Arrogant Water Dragon King>>."

When I prepare to receive it, I stop my actions in an instant.

Just then, did I hear something about Chuunibyou?

"Take it! This is the gift of the Greyrat family! I requested with Otou-sama and Ojii-sama to get this! Rudeus is actually an amazing Magician, if you don't carry a wand it will be too weird!"

After hearing Eris's voice, I accept the <<The Arrogant Water Dragon King>>.

It's different from the appearance, this is pretty light. I play around with it with both hands. Even though the Magical stone is very big but the overall balance is very good.

As expected of an expensive item.

But the name is a little.

"Thank you, not only did you hold a party for me, and you gave such an expensive....."

"Don't care about the money! Quick, let's continue with the party! It's a waste if the dishes are cold!"

Eris cheerfully leads me, and brings me to a giant cake that's sitting in front of the front seat.

"I helped out too!"

What did you say!?

After the party started, Eris keeps talking like a machine gun for a while.

I keep listening with a, mmhmm, about in the middle of it Eris starts feeling sleepy, and finally is in deep sleep.

Is she too tense? Or should I say it's because the taut strings have been cut off.....

Ghyslaine carries her in a princess hold and retires to her room, thanks for your hard work.

Sauros and Hilda also retired during the middle of the party.

Sauros wanted to let me drink wine, but Philip persuaded him not to do it, and I was a little disappointed. It was Hilda who actually drank quite a lot, and became terribly drunk, her face full of smiles and laughing boisterously and went back.

Before she went back, she gave me a goodnight kiss, and walked back to her room.

The food is basically all eaten up, and the maids remove the empty dishes with sleepy expressions, and the only people left behind are Philip and me.

Philip is drinking quietly by himself. Is that grape wine?

I got to know during Eris's birthday, that the wine drank in the Asura's kingdom are different in various regions.

The wine that are made from wheat here are quite plentiful, but the wine used in celebrations are made from grapes.

"I lost during the family battles."

Philip quietly says.

"Do you know why Eris doesn't have siblings? Have you noticed it before?"

I nod solemnly, I notice it before, but in the end I never asked.

"The truth is there are. Eris has an older and younger brother, and the younger one is as old as you are now."

"..... Are they dead?"

Philip looks at me, startled. I accidentally cut right to the point. That is rude of me.

"Not long after they were born, they were taken away by my brother who's living in the capital."

"Taken away? Why did this happen?"

"The superficial excuse is to let him become an adopted son and go to the capital to study, but in truth..... it's just a continuation of tradition."

And Philip begins to describe the Boreas's family tradition. Boreas's family tradition is a continuous battle to inherit the head title, as well as the other traditions.

Sauros has 10 sons, and amongst them are 3 people.

Roa's mayor, Philip.

The son-in-law, Gordon, who married into the Eurus Greyrat family.

Then James who's currently holding the Cabinet Minister position, and is considered to be too young to hold that position.

There's a name that is as long as a train.

Well, aside from that. Sauros decided to let them fight each other to decide the next head.

From the conclusion, the winner and the current head is James, with Philip and Gordon losing.

The first half of the power struggle.

First of all, James manipulated from behind the shadows to let Eurus' daughter and Gordon be involved.

With this plan without knowing each other's identities, the sparks of love burst into flames.

Gordon occupied himself with love and finally married into the Eurus's family unexpectedly with James's help.

The route to Boreas' head was over for him.

The latter half of the fight.

At that time Philip and James were about equal, fighting each other in the dark, using all their connections to continue the fight. There was nothing dramatic, Philip simply lost.

If there's something of a difference it'd probably be in the area of ability.

James is older than Philip and had ties in the capital, and was the right hand of an important minister.

He had connections and wealth, and holds considerable authority as well.

Even though Philip can be said as very good too, but it was hard to fill the 6 years age gap.

He arranged Philip to be the mayor of Roa, and chased him away from the capital.

Even if James becomes Fedoa's lord, he continues to plan to have Philip handle it.

He's a cabinet minister, and doesn't plan to leave the capital. Philip's in the rural areas, and for him to rise up again will be very difficult.

Later on, James made the request if Philip had male children, they had to be adopted and sent to the capital.

"Taking all the male children away, isn't that too barbaric?"

"That's fine, I don't really care, it's tradition anyway."

All the males born in the Boreas Greyrat family are raised to be the next head.

This is to ensure that the people who failed in the competition will not have their sons participate again.

Helping the sons attain the authority is a common thing, and this is to prevent such a problem.

Gordon has their own rules in the Eurus family, but Philip must obey the tradition and hand over the males to James.

Before the children have the ability to understand things, they will recognize James as their father.

"If I had won, the situation would be reversed."

Philip seems to have accepted this. It might be possible that he's not Sauros' real son.

But Hilda can't seem to accept it no matter what.

She's the daughter of an ordinary noble who's attached to Philip. Before Eris was born her emotions were unstable, but she calmed down temporarily after Eris' birth.

However she became unstable again after Eris's younger brother was taken away.

"She hates you. She said, her own son isn't here, so why is there another kid walking around in this mansion."

I always felt that she had ignored me, I see, so this is the reason.

"Plus, the Eris who's left behind is the exact opposite of a lady and is a hag. I thought it couldn't be helped."

"It couldn't be helped, refers to?"

"Using her to overthrow James will be difficult."

Ah, this person, he hasn't give up yet?

"But, recently, looking at you, I think there might be some hope."

"".....Haa."

"You even managed to cheat Father and Hilda with your acting skills."

Is it really necessary to use a word like "cheat".....

I only did some stuff so that the atmosphere wouldn't be so awkward.

"Not only do you know the importance of money, you also know flattery. To obtain someone's heart you will risk your life without balking."

Are you talking about that incident back then, or are you talking about the part where I got smacked continuously for the past few years.

"Compared to these, it's thanks to you that Eris grew up so well."

Paul said that this was not foreseen.

He has heard from Paul that I'm a excellent kid. But considering that Paul has only been flipping girls' skirts as his existence for life, his son would only be a brat who's slightly better.

If Eris interacted with a brat like him, there might be some interesting chemistry reactions. He only expected that much.

"That's really a nostalgic memory, the day that Paul cried to me."

With that, Philip starts to recite to himself.

When I ask about it, Paul needed money, a place to stay at and a stable job, but he didn't want to go back as an upper class noble, and cried to Philip.

He even kneeled and pleaded to Philip for my sake. Even during Lilia's incident he didn't do that.

Well whatever, that's something to be thought of later.

"But even if I'm not here, Eris will change somehow right?"

"Somehow? There is no way that's possible. I have considered Eris to be completely hopeless. I already thought it's impossible for her to be a noble, and would become an adventurer with Ghyslaine teaching her the sword."

Continuing, Philip tells me about the Episodes Of Eris. The Episodes that are not suitable for the ears. At the age of 9 years old, she had perfectly attained the status of a violent kid.

"How about it? Marry Eris and take on the Boreas name? If you agree, I'll tie her up right now and throw her into your bed."

That's quite attractive of a proposal.....

Tying Eris up and letting me have my way with her. Lately I have been feeling a fire in me that's causing an arousal, it's unthinkable that I cast away the best kind of situation.

No, no. Wait, wait.

Are you kidding me.

Read the previous line.

Take up the name of Boreas?

"What are you making a 10 years old kid do....."

"You're Paul's son right?"

"I'm not talking about that."

"The takeover will be done by me. You can just sit on the position. How about this, I'll send you other girls."

He's probably trying to seal the deal with chucking girls at me.

Paul's ill reputation is detestable.

"..... I'm going to pretend that's harmless chatter during drinking."

Philip laughs quietly upon hearing that.

"That's right. That will be good. But taking away the stuff about Boreas, you can go ahead and like Eris, and you don't need to hold any responsibilities. In any case, if she marries she will come back."

Philip laughs again after that.

Marrying off to someone, after a few days Eris beats her husband to death.

I can imagine that easily.

But if I lay my hands on her, I can imagine myself being manipulated on Philip's hands.

"It's about time for me to rest."

"Yes, good night."

And with that, Eris' sponsored birthday party closes its curtains.

"W, w, welcome back.....!"

When I return to my own room, the Eris who's supposed to be asleep is sitting on top of my bed.

She's wearing a red nightgown.

From the past till now she probably has never worn something like this.

What's going on? That's a little overreaching for her. Heck, didn't she go to sleep already?

"What's wrong, it's already at this time."

"R, Rudeus will be lonely by himself, so I'll sleep together with you today!"

With that, Eris turns her face away blushing. She seems to be mindful of the fact that she told me that my parents won't be coming.

Eris is still sticking to her family even at 12 years old, and once she thinks that I have not seen them for 3 years, she probably feels that I am unable to stay on.

No, maybe this is something Hilda planned, waking her up and sending her here in a nightgown.

With this, Eris is already 12 years old, even though she can't really be seen with a female's figure, but she barely makes it to my strike zone.

My body still hasn't undergone puberty, so the day I will become a man isn't here yet, but it will probably be time soon.

My first time of the first time with a tsundere Ojou-sama doing it for the first time.....

When that phrase crosses my mind, the 34 years old jobless me (with the slight atmosphere of a lolicon) controls me.

(De~gwehehehehofo ohhohodopffhohoho pffffhahahahou)

Looking at that illusion of an acne-scarred face with a disgusting smile attacking Eris brings me back to my sense.

No, no.

I can't lay my hands on her.

I will be manipulated by Philip.

I'll be sinking into the power struggle battles, that Philip lost in and Paul ran away from.

"T, today I'm really lonely, so I might do something ecchi okay?"

This is my polite way of hoping that she will leave.

Normally Eris hates sexual harassment the most, so I say something like that she will escape. That, is what I'm thinking of, but I receive an unexpected reply.

"J, just a little, i, it's okay!"

Are you serious!?

T, today Eris-san is really forcing herself.

T, telling something like that to this old mister, I, I will be unable to hold on.

I move beside Eris and sit down, and the bed answers with a small "kii" sound.

If it's the past me in my previous life, I would have surely make an amazing "gigigi" sound, completely spoiling the mood.

My mind has already turned blank, unable to think deep thoughts.

Being manipulated on someone's hands? What's so bad about it?

The Eris from 3 years has become so dere, of course it's a natural thing to have some risks involved.

"Your voice is shaking you know?"

"Y, you're imagining things."

"Really?"

I stroke Eris's head, feeling the sleek hair. Even though she's an upper class noble, but there's no bathtub in this mansion, so she can't wash her hair everyday.

The Eris who spends all her time to do nothing but train in the sword, who's usually so crude, has dressed herself up for my sake today.

"Eris is really cute."

"W, what are you, saying all of a sudden....."

Eris' blush extends to her ears and lowers her head down.

I lightly grab her shoulders, and kiss her on the cheek.

"Hau.....!"

"I'm going to feel, okay?"

I couldn't help but extend my hand to her chest. Even though it's very small, but that's definitely a chest right there.

I have been given the permission to have the forbidden fruit.

It's completely different from the usual time, where I always tried to timidly prepare myself to be smacked , because I tried to have the forbidden fruit.

Even though it's through the clothes, I'm definitely commanding the Lolita's ship.

"Mm-......."

Eris can't possibly be feeling anything from it.

She just feels that she's doing something embarrassing, I know that.

Suppressing her troubled and embarrassing feelings, shutting her mouth tightly with slight tears in her eyes to look at me.

Cute.

I feel her back, and because she constantly trains in the sword, there are really firm muscles there.

It's not to the extent of Ghyslaine, and it's more of flexible muscles belonging to a kid.

Eris shuts her eyes tightly, and grasps onto my shoulder as if to implore me.

Ah, is that a, that's an okay?

Okay right?

I can do it to the end?

I'm going to continue?

O, okay.

I, itadakimasu.

{ C-Editor's note: 'Itadakimasu' is a Japanese expression of gratitude stated before eating meals. However, Rudeus here is using Itadakimasu as a euphemism for sex. }

With that judgment, my hand reaches for her inner thigh. The first time that I touch a girl's thigh. It is filled with warmth, but it is not soft but filled with firm flesh.

"Noooo!"

Boom!

I am knocked away.

Baam!

My face is slapped.

Kabaam!

I'm kicked to the floor.

Blam! Blam!

2 extra hits got in.

The perplexed me is defenseless and received every single blow.

Eris is standing up with her with a crimson face and her eyes are glaring at me.

"I only said a little! Rudeus is an idiot!"

Just like that, the door is left open as if it has been smashed through and she leaves like the wind.

I stay like that, and stare at the ceiling in a daze.

The something that had seemed to possess my overheated brain, has cooled down completely.

"That is to say this virgin....."

Self-loathing.

I completely read it wrong.

I was too anxious, and forgot the person in front of me is still a kid, and I just made a terrible mistake.

"Ahh, damn it, what the hell am I thinking....."

Don't I know the feelings of heroines very well after playing so many Eroge?

It's true that when I look at the donkan protagonist types, and finish things quickly by pushing them down, that sort of irresponsible thing.

In the end the conclusion is that.

With the gamer's viewpoint, you can see the heroines' lines. But as the protagonist, you can't know that.

The world of donkan protagonist types.

I'm certain that I'm being liked, and from the things that are possible to occur, I'll pretend not to notice them and shorten the distance.

Am I doing things that are too superficial compared to the other real donkan protagonists?

Compared to them, am I too shallow?

Especially after a talk like that with Philip.

What happened to the nonsense about harmless chatter during drinking, huh? Didn't I do something that's completely the opposite of what I said?

If I really did do it with Eris, I know what's going to happen.

Boom, did it, got married. 3 strikes and I become Boreas's little partner.

During that time I'll say something that I don't want to join in a terrible shitty mess of political fights?

Trying to be irresponsible? Because that's a one night stand so I'll make an excuse?

Utterly stupid.

At that time I'll be like a damn monkey sticking to Eris night after damn night.

The past me was quite active in the previous life although it can't compare to Paul.

This cannot be satisfied with just one time. Today she initiated things, the next time will be me actively seeking her.

Both Philip and Hilda wish for me to do it, and no one will stop me. Just because of a moment of pleasure, I'll be dragged into the chaos of political struggles.

Sweeping my eyes around, I see the wand in the corner of the room.

"..... !"

That's right.

I have completely forgotten about Eris's feelings.

Even though it's Philip and Sauros who came up with the money, the person who wanted to give me the wand is probably Eris.

Planning a party to make me happy, concerned about the dialogue that we had, even coming to console me before I went to bed.

She has done everything for me today, but I am swallowed up by my own desires, intending to ravage her.

Having my way with a child whose head is filled with me.

Just think about the happy expressions that she had when she's talking to the maids.

The things that I'm doing are designed to trample on that.

"..... Haha."

I'm the worst.

I don't have any right to tell Paul off.

I don't have any right to teach anyone anything.

Trash that enters a different world is still trash.

I'll pack my things up tomorrow and leave. I should die like a trash halfway on the way back.

"Ah.....!"

When I become aware of it, Eris is standing at the room's door.

She's showing half her face. I quickly stand up in a hurry, up strai.....

..... No, I'll lie my whole body on the floor!

"I, I'm really sorry about that earlier."

I lie on the floor like a turtle.

"....."

She sneaks a glance at me and moves away, squirming in a small voice.

"T, today is a special case, so, I'll forgive you...!"

S, she forgives me.....!

"Rudeus is very perverted, I know that!"

Who's the one who told her that....!

No. I'm perverted. I'm sorry, it's me. I'm a perverted man. It's my fault. Oswari-man is right over here. Me.

{ C-Editor's note: Oswari-man is a hentai/pervert from a Japanese pun on the phrase "Policeman patrolling the area, come here please". }

"But, this kind of thing is too early..... 5 years! After 5 years, when Rudeus is all grown up, that time..... J-Just be patient!"

"Y, yes.....!"

I prostrate myself to the ground.

"T, then, I'll be going to sleep. Then, Rudeus, good night, I'll be troubling you tomorrow."

Eris finishes stuttering and goes back to her room, until I can't hear the footsteps that are further and further away, I close the door.

"Phew..."

I sit down behind the door with my back facing it.

"Oh, oh yeah..."

Today's birthday is really too amazing!

Today's special situation is really too amazing!

Nothing happening worse than that is really too amazing!

"Alrightttttttt!"

5 years later! The promise!

With that Eris! The promise!

Alright. I'll never do something like that again. 5 years later means I'll be 15 years old. Even though it's a long time, but I can hold it in. Since I can definitely receive the goods, I'll persevere.

Before that I'm a gentleman, not a pervert but a gentleman.

The usual sexual harassment will be refrained as well, the older the wine, the deeper the flavor will be.

If I keep drinking it bit by bit, maybe 5 years later it will be tasteless.

Charge shot that's pressed as long as possible will increase in power.

I'll become a strong man who won't bend to ero.

This time I must become a donkan protagonist.

The A button that I'll press for 5 years, will be released 5 years later.

I take an oath in my heart.

Yes lolita, do not touch.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the lolicon magazine LO's tagline. }

Hm?

Wait, 5 years later.....? Donkan type? My mind suddenly has Sylphy's pale face smiling appearing in it.

Hawawa.....

When I wake up, my underwear has turned into a terrible state. Looks like I released the A button.

I, I'll work hard tomorrow.

I tell the maid who comes in to collect the laundry not to tell Eris. She might giggle at me when she sees me.

That's a little embarrassing.

–Status–

Name: Eris Boreas Greyrat

Profession: Granddaughter of the lord of Fedoa

Personality: A little violent, obedient in certain places

Talking to her: She will listen with attention

Language: Almost perfect

Math: Knows division too

Magic: Can't use the voiceless incantation, finds intermediate ranked magic difficult

Sword: Advanced ranked in the Sword-God style

Etiquette: Learning the difficult rules in the palace

The people she likes: Grandfather, Ghyslaine

The person she loves: Rudeus

Shirone Royal Palace.

Roxy casually looks outside the window and knits her eyebrows.

The colors in the sky are very strange, grey, black, purple and yellow.

The usual blue color is gone.

But the colors have been seen somewhere before.

"What is that....."

Even though she has seen the colors before, but she has never seen the sky change before in that way.

But anyone will know just by looking at it, that it is an unnatural phenomenon.

Most likely it is due to some reason that caused the Mana to rampage.

That scale. From afar, it looks like like a Mana whirlpool.

Roxy finally remembers where she has seen this. That shining location was seen at the Magic university back then. It is similar to Summoning Magic.

"That location is from Asura..... Could it be Rudeus?"

Roxy gets reminded of the image of her student, a young boy that she has once taught.

That young boy had created a tempest without breaking a sweat at 5 years old.

At that time he already had complete control over his Mana.

He's now 10 years old. It might be possible for him to do that now. Even though he mentioned that he was unable to learn Summoning Magic in his letter. But he might have gotten teaching materials by chance.

"Your guard is down!"

When she's deep in thought, she gets hugged from the back, and her chest gets massaged, at the same time she feels something hard on her butt.

"Haaah....."

Roxy becomes weary. Pushing and massaging against such a thick robe obviously won't have any feeling to it.

Furthermore, even if the attacker feels anything, the victim will not be happy.

"Bursting flames cover my body, <<Burning Place>>!"

"Gyaaa!"

The barrier covered in flames sends the person behind flying.

Even though she can't do the same level of voiceless incantations, but she has managed to shorten the chants within these 5 years by a lot.

Rudeus has also let his students train in voiceless incantations, and after knowing that Roxy started training in Chanting Omission, but it's not something so simple to use.

That talented youth must be expecting quite a lot from his students. But it doesn't mean that everyone else has his talent.

"Your highness, you can't rub a female's chest from behind."

"Roxy, are you trying to kill me? I will throw you into prison!"

The current 7th prince who's 15 years old, Pax Shirone is a brat.

At first he was charming, but lately he seems to become more perverted, as he's bluntly showing off sexual desire in the daytime.

"Please excuse me for that, if you die at that level, it looks like Your highness is lower than a fly."

"Nggghh! The crime of disrespect! This is not forgivable! If you want to beg for mercy roll up your robe and let me see your pantsu!"

"I refuse."

Some of the maids have already been attacked by him and the king is tormented over that.

And lately he has been targeting the royal court tutor with his sexual harassment.

(What's so good about this unfashionable girl?)

Roxy doesn't understand.

But she doesn't need to obey any of the prince's orders no matter what requests he makes.

It's written clearly on the contract. Even if the prince demands something selfish, the tutor can use her own judgment.

In this castle, there are very few people who will listen to the prince's orders directly. Since he's the 7th prince, the possibility of him becoming king is very small, and he has almost no authority.

If it's about authority, Roxy, who is appointed as the royal court magician has more authority.

"Roxy, I know you have a lover."

The prince begins to use other methods.

"Dear me! When did such a exaggerated thing happen where I have a lover?"

Roxy tilts her head and asks, facing the prince who is suddenly talking in his sleep.

Lover, even though she considered finding one, but there wasn't anyone suitable that she met.

Even when she did meet someone, they didn't even take a look so she gave up because of the Migurd's racial trait.

{ C-Editor's note: The Migurds look like children due to slow aging. }

The prince is a little special and seems to want to try that kind of body, but Roxy doesn't intend to sell herself out so easily.

"Hehehe, I entered your room secretly and found a letter amongst the piled up stuff in the shelf! I don't know who it is, but I can use my authority to smash him up! If you don't want to see him be cruelly executed, become my woman!"

The other methods are something like that.

Using the target's lover as a hostage and threaten them with their bodies as ransom, violating them in front of their lovers, and experience the pleasure from dominating them.

The prince naturally has no authority. Nevertheless, he's still a prince, and he has his own troops, and in truth there were rumors where the maids' lovers were kidnapped as hostages.

(Bad taste. There's only feelings of revulsion, hmm.)

Roxy thinks that's it's good that she has no lover. The letters are all written from Rudeus, and he's only a respectable student and not a lover.

"Go ahead and do what you wish."

"Wh! What! I'll really do it! If you want to beg do it now! If you beg for mercy it will be paid with just your body!"

The prince isn't even thinking. Plus he doesn't even know where Rudeus is.

With that approach, he definitely has not read what's written in the letter.

"If you can do something to Rudeus, you can have my body if you want to."

"W, why are you so confident..... Don't you know my authority!?"

Roxy is very clear of it, the authority that he has as royalty is at a degree where one can laugh scornfully.

"Rudeus is under the high class noble, Boreas, in the Asura kingdom."

"Boreas....? As a prince why would I be scared of a mere high class noble?"

He doesn't even know the names of the high class nobles in the Asura kingdom. Roxy sighs at that fact.

(What are the other tutors teaching him.)

Asura's four feudal lords, Notus, Boreas, Eurus and Zephyrus are famous.

Once war happens to the Asura kingdom, these military officers are the ones in every generation who bear the full brunt of the attacks.

If there are any ceremonies in Shirone, it wouldn't be strange for the nobles carrying these names to visit.

They are nobles who must be remembered.

"Asura is a country that is ten times bigger than Shirone, if you want to send their members to the gallows under suspicions, you need extremely high political power and strategy. With your highness authority, it is impossible."

"A, assassin! I'll send my imperial guards...."

Hearing the words imperial guards, Roxy's heart sighs again. Truly, this prince doesn't think at all.

"The Imperial guards cannot leave the borders right? Even if they passed the borders, the Boreas family has hired Ghyslaine. To sneak into the mansion inside Fedoa's territory's fortress city, under the eyes of Sword king Ghyslaine, and kill a Master Magician? Do you think that's possible?"

"Grr, grrmumu....."

The prince grinds his teeth and stomps on the floor hard, and Roxy sighs again looking at him.

(Haaa. Really, he's already 15 years old and he still can't read a single word.)

The Eris Ojou-sama who's under Rudeus, was like an unrestrained beast. But it was heard just recently that she has turned quite demure.

In comparison to the prince right now that she is teaching.

He was quite cute and had the potential in the past. But after realizing he could use his authority, the will to improve himself quickly diminished.

Recently he's mostly sleeping in the class. Roxy deeply feels that she lacks the capability as a teacher.

"Also, soon I'll no longer be Your highness' home tutor, even if you send assassins you won't make it in time."

The prince raises his voice in surprise.

"Wh! Whaaat! I didn't hear anything about this!"

"You are to be blamed for not remembering."

The promise was to teach him until he becomes an adult. At first Roxy thought that she would continue to stay if she got invited to stay, even after the contract ended.

But there were many people who saw Roxy's existence as an eyesore.

Retreating from here would be a wise decision.

"This is a good chance, hmm."

"What good chance?"

"The western skies have some sudden changes, I want to take a look."

"W, what is this....."

"I want to see Rudeus whom I have not seen for a long time", that line is not said out loud.

If she did, he would become enraged.

"I, I still need Roxy! My lessons are still in the middle of teaching right!"

"What do you mean by middle of teaching, aren't you always sleeping?"

"It's Roxy's fault for not waking me up."

"Is that so, then this terrible teacher will be gone soon. Please hire a teacher who can wake you up, as for me I'll be declining."

Roxy feels that she is unable to teach him.

Teaching one thing to Rudeus will have him learning 10 to 20 things on his own. After meeting such a pupil by chance, she doesn't have the confidence to be a teacher ever again.

With that, Roxy set off from Shirone, in the middle of the journey she was attacked by the 7th prince's knights, but they were all driven back.

The 7th prince claimed that Roxy attacked him, and it's a violent act that couldn't be forgiven, and should immediately issue an arrest warrant for her.

But the Shirone king ignored him.

Rather, he scolded the prince for not being able to retain the [Water King Magician <<Roxy Migurdia>>], and severely punished him.

It wasn't only Roxy who noticed the changes in the skies, those abrupt and unusual changes, every powerful being in the world has noticed it.

— In the Crimson Dragon mountain range —

The 100th generation "Dragon God" Orsted looks up to the western skies.

"The mana is gathering there...? What, has something amiss happened?"

He shows a puzzled expression.

"Well, I'll know if I go there."

And he progresses directly to the west, stepping over a red dragon's corpse that he killed in a single strike.

Countless dragons are revolving around him, but none of them makes any move. They know what being is walking on the ground.

They know that even if they attacked together they would be killed by him. At the same time they know they won't be killed if they don't do anything.

That's a dragon god, an existence that's abnormal in the world's common sense.

An existence that no one should fight.

Another arrogant young dragon without any sense attacks Orsted, and is turned into a mass of flesh instantly.

The red dragons know, if they don't raise the ire of this existence, then flying in the skies is safe.

The red dragons are definitely the strongest in the central continent, but not because they have the combat ability, it's because they are intelligent and thus seen as powerful.

The red dragons know.

This is the strongest person in the world, even if they joined forces together they wouldn't beat him.

He slowly walks down the mountains, under the eyes of the red dragons..... No one knows his goals.

— In the sky fortress —

One of the 3 heroes, "Dragon King" Perugius looks down from the northern skies.

"What is it, that thing? It looks like the same light as when the Magic world's great demon emperor is about to be revived.]

Standing beside him, is a Heaven race female with black wings wearing a white bird mask.

"The quality of the Mana is too different."

She quietly says.

"Yes, it looks more like the light from a summoning."

"But the size of that summoning light..... I seem to have seen it somewhere."

"It's very similar to when this Sky Fortress was created."

Perugius moves.

Right now Perugius is sitting on the Sky Fortress' (Chaos Breaker) throne. He leads 12 servants and continues to observe the skies with only one goal in mind.

Revenge. Once the Demon God Laplace revives he will defeat him.

He's only waiting for the moment where the seal is removed, and he awaits in the sky.

"Could it be the seal for the Demon God is removed by the Magical world's Great Demon Emperor?"

"It's possible. The great demon emperor has been quiet to the point of ominous, after being revived for 300 years."

"Alright. Arumanfi!"

"I'm here."

The man dressed in white and wearing a yellow mask, kneels quietly in front of Perugius.

"Set off now, investigate..... No, since it's surely something evil being done. If there are any suspicious people, kill them."

"Understood."

"Armored Dragon King" Perugius takes action.

12 followers accompany him.

For the sake of revenge for his 4 dear friends.

This time for sure, to kill Laplace.

— At the Holy land of the swords —

"Sword God" Gull Farion looks at the southern skies.

"That sky is..... I say."

During the moment where he is concentrating on something else, his two cute students attack at the same time.

"When I'm watching don't attack."

In comparison to students feeble breathings, he is composed.

The Sword god feels that they have no sense as usual.

Even though they are called as Sword Emperors, they only reached to this extent.

Boring, boring.

You don't need to be famous for sword techniques.

You only need to become strong, that is all.

If you want fame it's only for money and authority.

Those things have no value at all, and these things that can be gotten so easily by anyone, I'll cut them into two with my sword.

If you become strong you can do anything you want.

You can consider yourself as living if you can do anything you want.

Ghyslaine knows this the best, but she's becoming soft gradually.

She doesn't advance after reaching the Sword King.

Even if a greedy person is weak, he doesn't need to swing a sword to become strong.

Once you attain power your greed wanes.

The Ghyslaine now is unable to make it, her greed isn't enough.

These two fellows aren't without talent, but with the drab desires they have will only bring them to reach only the Sword emperor rank.

To live on through do-or-die battles, you must have infinite desires.

"Oi, oi, quickly get up. Even if you defeat me and fight each other, don't think you can get the sword god's title! Money can be thrown around in buckets, women can be lined up from slaves to princesses with their butts lined up for you to poke in, names can be brought up to scare anyone witless, you can even split the sea of men into two equal parts with every single step you make, right!"

"I'm not learning the sword for these reasons!""Shishou! Don't look down on me!"

That's right.

Be more honest to yourself.

With that you can surpass and kill me easily, stealing the Sword god title.

The Sword god has already forgotten about the things in the southern skies.

— In the Magical continent's unknown area —

The great emperor Kishirika Kishirisu looks up to the sky.

[Hah! Even if I have my back faced to it I can still see it! How's that! Amazing right?"

But no one replies, because there's no one around her.

"You're ignoring me! Wahahaha! Fine, fine, I'll forgive all you humans! Come to think of it, it's all because of this peaceful era that no one is approaching me so there's no choice but to forgive the humans! Wahahaha, fuhahahaha, fuhah cough..... cough cough cough."

Kirishika is alone, how do you put it, because no one cares about her.

The moment she revived she yelled [The great demon emperor Kirishika is here! I made everyone wait! Fuawahahahaha!], but nobody was around her.

She ran to the streets shouting that, and someone cast a pitying eye on her. After that everyone ignored her.

She found her old friends, but she was told that it's now the era of peace and she needs to more reserved.

"What the heck are the human astrologers doing? In the past when I was revived, there would suddenly be a gatagata noise that's going to come from the window, a freedom fall performance that would be done.

Without that opening performance it won't fit the grandness of my revival.....

Haaa, sheesh. What are the young ones doing recently."

Kirishika kicks the pebble on the ground and looks up at the Mana whirlpool in the western skies. The great demon emperor is also named as the "Magical Eyed Demon Emperor", having over 10 magical eyes, and knows what's happening with a single glance.

No mater how far it is, she will see it clearly. She will see the powerful Mana energy, the familiar summoning light, and the person controlling it.

"What, I can't see through it, there's a barrier huh. Doing something so big like this without showing the face. That person must be shy....."

Kirishika's magical eyes aren't almighty. So she will only stop at Great Demon Emperor, and no matter long time passes, she will never be called Demon God. But she doesn't mind it.

"Calling the heroes over is pretty interesting, but recently everyone is following Laplace..... Huh, Kirishika? Who's that?

Isn't that how it is.....

They must have gone to find the heroes or gone over to the good looking Laplace dude..... Ahh, I'm so jealous, I really want to parade in the limelight again."

Kirishika travels on with a sigh.

Moving towards a casual direction that she sees fit.

— At the same time, Rudeus' point of view —

I walk up to a small hill outside the Fortress City Roa.

In order to fulfill the promise from my birthday, to show Ghyslaine Saint-ranked Water Magic.

Eris naturally comes along too.

The Magic stone on the wand and my hand that's holding onto the wand are both tied up.

Even though it looks ugly, compared to hiding the Magic stone, I'm thinking of covering up the Mana away.

Thieves will approach if they see something expensive like this.

Before I use the Saint ranked water magic, I test out the <<Arrogant Water Dragon King.>>

I use the same Mana output that I use normally and create a waterball that's a few times bigger than the usual size.

"Woah, that's really big."

When I try adjusting it, the waterball is too small and cannot be seen with the naked eye.

Looks like I have to change it bit by bit.

After 30 minutes of experiments, I begin to understand it's around 5 times the effects.

The Attack Magic becomes stronger, and to achieve the same strength as before, I can reduce the Mana output.

If you use numbers,

Without Staff: Output 10, Strength 5.

With Staff: Output 10, Strength 25.

With Staff: Output 2, Strength 5.

Which means it's like a telescope or microscope, it's a little difficult to do detailed adjustments, but it will probably be fine if I get used to it.

"W, what is it?"

"It's a little difficult to adjust it, but this thing is amazing."

Eris looks worriedly over me.

Don't worry. I'm in a trance with this new toy.

After that I did more experiments. I got to understand that Fire Magic is 2 times the effectiveness, Earth and Wind Magic is 3 times the effectiveness, and it seems to be difficult to use Melded Magic with this Magic wand.

No, I'll probably get used to that too?

"Alright, sorry for making everyone wait. Rudeus Greyrat will show you my strongest ultimate Ougi move!"

"Waaa—-!"

Eris happily claps.

Ghyslaine is also greatly interested.

I'm also stoked. Alright, I'll do it here.

"Fuhahaha! Gather now Mana! Oh great Water spirit ascend to the skies..... Ara?"

When I start to chant the words of the spell Cumulonimbus, raising both of my hands and raising the wand to the skies.

Everyone looks at that sky, and we see that.

"The color of the sky is starting to change..... What is that!"

The sky's colors are changing into uncomfortable colors. It seems to be mixed with grey and purple.....

Ghyslaine takes off her eye-patch, showing a deep green eye, what's that.

You mean to say your eyes are different?

"What's that?"

"I do not know. That Mana is extremely powerful.....!"

That eye can actually see mana.

I only know after 3 years, Ghyslaine's true strength.....

Ghyslaine immediately puts her eye-patch back.

"In any case, let's go back to the mansion first?"

"Even though I don't know what this unusual premonition means, we should find a place to hide before something happens."

"No, the Mana gathering near the city is even stronger, it's best to leave here."

"If that's the case, we should warn them!"

We should tell Philip to get the people in the city to avoid this situation.

"Then I'll go back..... Rudeus! Down!"

I get down with reflex. I hear something slice the air with a whoosh sound, something flew over me in high speed.

Cold sweat gathers on my back.

What, happened. What happened just now?

In front of me, Ghyslaine's hand that is on her sword swings out in an instant. After that I only see Ghyslaine keeping her pose after swinging.

The Sword god style ultimate technique "Light of the Long Sword", and named "Art of the Sword of Light".

I have seen that many times.

After swinging your sword to the limits, the tip of the sword reaches the speed of light, the the ultimate technique in the Sword God style.

Ghyslaine tells me because of this technique, the Sword God style is the strongest amongst the styles.

Ghyslaine knits her brows tightly, and I finally turn my head back over.

"W.....When....."

A man is standing over there, his hair golden, and wears something like a white colored student's uniform, buttoned shirt and long pants.

The yellow colored mask is probably masking an ikemen's face. The mask is probably based on a motif of a fox or related animal.

His right hand is holding on to a dagger. It is probably what flew over my head just now.

Then, the guy's face releases a tremendous amount of light that washes the view completely white in an instant.

"GAAA!"

I hear Ghyslaine roar.

The metallic sounds that collided together.

The sound of someone running.

2, 3 times of metallic clashes.

When I can see again, Ghyslaine is in front of me. Her eye patch has been taken down.

I see, during the instant of that blinding light, she took off her eye patch to use her other eye to look.

"You bastard. Who are you. Are you an enemy of the Greyrat's family!"

"Arumanfi of the Bright. That is my name."

"Arumanfi?"

"I have come for this unusual phenomenon. This is the order of Perugius-sama....."

I heard of the name Perugius, he seems to be one of the "Three heroes that vanquished the Demon god" (Didn't vanquish). He is a summoner who controls 12 familiars.

I also remembered the name Arumanfi. He's one of Perugius' 12 familiars, Arumanfi of the Bright.

"Ghyslaine, be careful. It's said in the books that he moves as fast as light."

"Rudeus, retreat with Ojou-sama."

I follow the orders and block Eris behind my back, and move away to somewhere that will not interfere with them. But it can't be too far either, in case there are any abrupt situations Ghyslaine can still aid us.

If that's really Arumanfi of the Bright, using a sword probably won't hurt him.

But where was this person hiding?

..... No, I remember that Arumanfi of the Bright is one who governs the light spirits. As long as he can see the place, he can move there instantly no matter how far the distance is.

When I read the book I thought to myself that's impossible, but he suddenly appeared behind us.

I believe Ghyslaine is not careless enough to make a mistake, and Arumanfi has no reason to hide here either. He flew over, exactly as the words described, at the speed of light.

"Woman. Step aside. If I kill this boy perhaps the phenomenon will stop."

Regarding that, what did you say? Phenomenon, did he mistake something?

"I'm the Sword king Ghyslaine Dedorudia. That has nothing to do with us, leave us!"

"Why should I believe that. Show me the proof."

"Look! This is one of the sword god's 7 swords Pillar of Peace 'Hiramune'!

The sword king and this sword is right here, do you still not believe me!"

Ghyslaine extends the sword in her hands, and shows Arumanfi it. That sword also has a name, hmm.

Hiramune. That weapon's name is completely unsuited for Ghyslaine.

{ C-Editor's note: There is a pun here. The kanji reads as Pillar (Hira) of Peace (Mune), but it can be read as Flat (Hira) Chest (Mune). }

"Swear upon your Shishou and tribe."

"I swear upon my teacher Gull Farion and my tribe's name Dedorudia!"

"Very well. If you are not innocent, Perugius-sama will sentence you in the future."

"Go ahead."

Arumanfi puts his dagger away. Even though I don't know what's going on, he seems to have agreed to things.

In my past world, saying something like that and swearing cannot be easily trusted, but it seems to be different in this world.

To think that he will completely trust Ghyslaine's oath. It's almost like the faith of the pope believing in God.

"If it's not you, then forget it."

"..... Are you not going to apologize for attacking us all of a sudden?"

"You are to be blamed for appearing in a place like this."

Arumanfi of the Bright prepares to leave.

Right at this moment.

"Ah."

My eyes capture this moment.

The sky has been painted white from the beam of light firing at the ground.

The moment the white light touches the ground, it devours everything like a tidal wave.

The mansion disappears.

The city disappears.

The walls disappear.

In this instant where every single flower and plant gets devoured, and the light approaches us.

Arumanfi turns his head and sees it. In the next moment he turns into a golden light and escapes.

Ghyslaine rushes to us after seeing it, but disappears amongst the white light rushing towards us.

Eris stays without moving in blank amazement after seeing this.

I want to at least protect Eris, and cover her.

That day, Fedoa disappeared.

Half a year after the territory Fedoa disappeared.

Roxy finally reaches Fedoa, she opens her eyes wide to look at the empty [Grasslands].

She is dumbfounded.

Roxy is now standing at the main road that the Asura kingdom had maintained with stone paving.

The stone-paved road extends from one end to the other.

It should have been like that.

But, the road in front has disappeared from sight, as if nothing existed there.

There are only grasslands here.

[.....]

There was something here. That point is understood.

What happened here. That point is not known.

What she knows is only the conclusion.

The conclusion that only the Fedoa territory disappeared and the village Buina disappeared.

That youth called Rudeus, and the warm family who easily accepted a Demon race like herself, have all disappeared.

That is the only conclusion that she knows.

She has heard this story many times on the way here. She thought that it was impossible and she was being lied to.

In any case, she had never believed in it.

Until she had seen the truth with her own eyes, she bet on the last sliver of hope.

Roxy crumbles down to her knees.

[Did you lose your family member too?]

Before she knows it, the driver who brought her here is standing behind her.

[An excellent student.]

[Student hmm, but if it's a magician's student, you should have already been prepared that he would lose his life anytime right?]

[He is only 10 years old.]

[That's really..... very young.....]

The driver pats her shoulders as if to comfort her, and sighs while saying.

[Actually there's a survivor camp for Fedoa. Do you want to go there? Well, it is difficult for a 10 years old to survive, but there's the possibility that he's there.]

Roxy raises her head.

[I'll go!]

Rudeus and the others are surely fine.

He definitely survived with his quick wit, and must be living happily in the camp.

Roxy once again hangs onto this sliver of hope.

The camp is made up of several wooden houses. Rather than say it's a survivor's camp, it looks more like a village.

But this place has a depressing atmosphere.

(To think I would experience such an atmosphere in the Asura Kingdom.)

The Asura kingdom that Roxy knows is a country that's very abundant.

It is a place where everybody's face is full of energy and smiles.

The food is plentiful and the Monsters are very few, it is a place that's like a paradise.

But right now, there are no smiles here.

Even though there are no hungry people here. This is a place of abundance, you can even pull up grass to eat and not starve.

These people who are not starving should be smiling. Even though there are things that make people unhappy, but it isn't like the atmosphere in the Magic continent full of killing intent.

It should be something like that.

But the scenery in front of Roxy only makes her frown.

The temp adventure's guild in the survivor camp.

In front of the notice boards for making requests there's an incredibly gloomy atmosphere.

The men who lost their family members and their homes have been crying and shouting for half a year on the way back, asking why this had happened.

A priest has thrown the Milis cross, which is the definition of his work, onto the ground.

He no longer believes in anything.

A merchant tries to slit his throat with a knife, but the surrounding people stop him.

He has lost something more important than life.

This is a living hell, and it's probably hopeless.

Roxy gets affected by the atmosphere, and starts gathering information in a mood as if she's about to break into tears.

In about an hour, Roxy has gathered enough information as to what happened.

After the sky's unusual phenomenon, a huge area Mana Calamity started.

With something that resembles a giant area-of-effect spell, but not a huge explosion, all the people in Fedoa were randomly teleported all over the world.

The buildings and forest simply vanished, only the people were hurled everywhere.

And the people who made it home after so much trouble found that nothing was left and despaired.

Roxy looks at the notice board. Right there is a list of dead people, and on the other side is a list of missing people. Another notice board has messages left for family members.

[If you see this person during your travels, please send them here], numerous requests similar to this message are lined up together.

The dead and the missing.

Perhaps people who journeyed here have seen them.

But because the contents of rumors about hurling people through the air are too ridiculous to believe, no one has paid attention to this.

Roxy starts looking at the list of dead people. They aren't too many, and she doesn't know any of them.

In comparison, the number of missing people is overwhelming to the the eyes.

They have been teleported to everywhere, and it is very likely that many have been killed by Monsters without leaving even a single bone behind.

There are many people who probably died immediately after they were teleported to the mountains, air or sea.

It is already considered to be good enough just to be able to gather information about the dead.

[I found them.....]

Roxy knits her eyebrows, and finds Rudeus and the others in the missing people list.

Rudeus Greyrat.Zenith Greyrat.Lilia Greyrat.Aisha Greyrat.

She knows about the incident where Lilia became Paul's wife. Rudeus's letter had mentioned it before.

This person called Aisha, probably should be the sister, and there should be one more sister.

After discovering that Paul and Norn are not on the name list, she ponders with sadness in her heart, and checks the list of dead people again.

They are not there after all.

They are probably alive. No, it's possible that some information could have been omitted, it's too early to be happy.

[In any case, I should be happy that they didn't die.....]

Roxy looks at the message board in a daze. From the contents she can imagine how much effort everyone has put into it.

She feels slightly envious of them, if she is the one missing, no one would come to find her with their utmost efforts.

She thinks about her parents. It has been a long time since they quarreled and she rushed out from the village.

To the Migurd's race, this isn't very long ago.

Time really flies. She thinks that it's better to write a letter.

[This is.....]

She finds a message, and the author is Paul Greyrat.

[To Rudeus

Zenith, Lilia and Aisha are missing, Norn is with me.

Though I don't know where you are, but I think you will find your way here. So I have pushed back the thought of finding you.

I'm going to Milis continent, that place is where Zenith was born.

I also left a message at Lilia's hometown, go ahead and search there. If you find them, go ahead and contact me with the method below.

If you're Zenith or Lilia, use the same method to contact me too.

Also, if you know me or my family members, or you're a former member of the [Fangs of the Black Wolf], please help me find them too.

The former members of the [Fangs of the Black Wolf] still remember me right?

I won't say something like "forgive and forget". It's fine if you scold me too.

I'll lick your shoes if you want me too, but all my properties are gone so I can't pay you.

Please, I beg of you, help me find my family.

Contact Details.

Milis continent, capital of the Milis holy kingdom, Milishion's Adventurer Guild.

Party Name [Buina's Search party]

Clan name [Fedoa's Search group]

From Paul Greyrat]

Paul is still alive.

Roxy feels a little more relieved to know that Paul is still alive.

Even though Rudeus has described him as worthless in his letters, he's still quite reliable under this situation.

She carries on thinking whether she should join a party.

That family had taken her in and she had lived with them for 2 years. Even now she still has fond memories of them.

On various levels, there's no need to hesitate on whether to help them.

(Alright, I'll join a party to find them.)

Roxy decides.

But how will she find them?

[Fangs of the black wolf] is probably Paul's old party . They probably haven't met with Rudeus before. They probably didn't meet with Lilia too.

She considers finding Rudeus first.

Paul seems to think that Rudeus is capable of coming back, and that boy is capable of adapting very well.

He might even have settled down somewhere else before the teleportation.

If that's the case, she needs to tell him what happened and bring him here.

Still, where will she look?

Paul has gone to the capital of the Milis Holy Kingdom. Which means that he would have left behind messages along the way.

Asura's borders, the dragon king's country's East Port, Milis Holy Kingdom's West Port. At least these 3 areas will probably have messages left behind.

Then, it will probably be best to search around there.

The northern area of the central continent, Begaritto's continent, the Magic continent. It should be around these few areas.

Even though she has never been to Begaritto's continent, she has heard that there are many Monsters and dungeons there.

She's a little familiar with the Magic continent, but it's dangerous to travel alone. To be safe she should go to the northern area.....

No, it's because it's dangerous she should go there.

The reason is because very few people will explore because it's dangerous.

(I'll slip into a party for those two places.)

Alright, since I have decided I won't stay very long here. I'll go to the Dragon king's country's East Port.

And from there, I'll find a party to travel to the Magic continent from Begaritto.

Roxy decides with that plan, and travels to the south.

Rudeus is alive.

She firmly believes that.

Mushoku Tensei: Isekai Ittara Honki Dasu - Volume 3

I dreamed.

In the dream I am carrying Eris and flying.

Even though my consciousness is hazy, why do I get the feeling that I'm flying?

The scenery in front of me is changing at a frightening speed.

It's like at the speed of sound or the speed of light, flying up and down irregularly.

I don't understand why things turned out this way.

I only believe that if I'm not careful, ah, no, even if I'm really careful I'll lose speed and fall.

I concentrate in this endlessly changing scene and find a safer place to land on.

Even if you ask why, I don't know either.

I only feel that I will die if I don't do this.

But I'm moving too quickly, the scenery in front of me changes faster than my eyes can keep up with, almost like a slot machine's spin.

I concentrate and pour mana into my body.

And then, just for an instant, I slow down.

This is bad, I'm falling.

Just when I think of that, I see the ground. It is a land that's flat.

Falling into the sea is bad, falling on a mountain is bad also, so is the forest, but if it's on a level land...

As my hopes rise, I descend.

In any case, I manage to successfully brake and land on the reddish-brown earth.

My consciousness gets interrupted.

The moment my eyes open, I find myself in a completely white world.

There's nothing in this world, I immediately realize this is a dream.

A lucid dream or something.

And my body is really heavy.

[..... Eh?]

I look down at my body and get a fright.

That's the 34 year old body that I got used to looking at it.

And at the same time, I remember my past.

Regret, discord, crude, and my naive thinking.

Once I think that those 10 years were like a dream, the despondency in my heart grows.

I've returned.

I intuitively realized that.

And I actually accepted that fact so easily.

It was indeed a dream.

Even though it has been such a long dream, I am happy.

Born in a warm and loving family, being together with adorable girls for 10 years.

Still, I want to enjoy it more.

I see.

Everything has ended.....

I can feel my memory of Rudeus getting dimmer.

This dream or whatever, it's something disappointing when I wake up.

What am I hoping for, really.....

It's unthinkable for a happy and favorable life to be given to me.

I suddenly realize there's a strange fellow over there.

A blank white face with a grin.

There are no special features.

When I realize that's a face, my thoughts immediately escape me.

I can't remember.

Perhaps because of this reason, this person gives off the impression that he's covered completely with mosaic.

But I feel like he's a warm person.

[Hey, it's our first meeting it seems. Hello, Rudeus-kun.]

Under my depressed status, I am chatted up by an obscene-like person covered in mosiac.

This person has a neutral voice, I can't tell whether if it's a male or female.

This person is wearing mosiac, it should be fine if I treat it as a female and think of the erotic side.

[You can hear me right?]

Ah, of course I can hear you.

Hello, hello.

[Good, good, it's a good thing you can greet.]

Even though I can't make a sound, I seem to be able to communicate with this person.

I'll continue talking like this.

[Not bad, you adjust quite well.]

That's not true at all.

[Mmfufu. You do have it.]

Well then, who might you be?

[I'm just as you can see.]

As you can see?

Even though you are covered with Mosiac.....

Are you the Matchless Warrior Spellman?

[Spellman? Who's that, is that person similar to me?]

Yes, it's very similar, he's even covered in mosaic too.

[I see, your world also has something like that.]

But there's no one like you.

[Is there no one like me..... Well never mind. I'm a God. I'm the Human God, Hitogami.]

Haa. Hitogami.....

[That's an indifferent response.]

No.....

Why is this God talking to me?

Also, isn't your appearance a little late hm?

Shouldn't you come out a little earlier huh?

[Come out a little earlier....? What does that mean?]

Nothing at all. Please continue.

[The things about you, I've watched them all. That's quite an interesting life.]

Peeping is a very interesting thing.

[Yes, it really is interesting. That is why I have always been protecting you.]

Protecting me.....

Thanks for that.

You're quite condescending hmm.

I feel really irritated that I'm being looked down upon huh.

[That's really cold. I thought you were troubled so I talked to you.]

The people who talk to someone when they are troubled are not good people.

[I'm your ally.]

Haa!

Ally!

You're making me laugh.

Back in my past life, there were people like these.

I'm your ally. Hey, I'll protect you, so try your best.

A bunch of people who don't have any responsibilities. Just think about what happened after those people chased me out.

Right now your words have this kind of vibe. I can't trust you.

[I'm a little stumped if you say this much.....

Well, in any case, I'll give a suggestion.]

I don't need any advice.....

[Whether you want to follow my advice or not is totally your freedom.]

Ahh. This type.

Yes, yes there's also a type like this.

About advice...Guiding my thoughts, not from the inside, but from the outside.

Really, I don't know the advice's true essence.

Even if I try earnestly to move then there's no meaning to it.

The era "if you have the heart to do something, you will be able to solve things" is already over!

Anything positive that you achieved will only be added on in despair and thrown back at you.

Just like this!

What sort of dream are you showing me, what kind damned parallel universe is this!

Doing something like reincarnating me, and making me feel good about life.

Is this your way of doing things? To bring me back to my past life when I'm living my life to the fullest!

[No no, please don't be mistaken. The things I want to tell you aren't about your past life, they are things related to your current life.]

... Hm? Then my body now is?

[That's your spiritual body. It's not the physical body.]

Spiritual body.

[Of course, your physical body is also fine.]

Then, this is just a dream?

When I wake up, I won't go back to that shitty body again..... right?

[Yup. This is a dream. When you wake up, your body will go back to how it looks like. Are you relieved now?]

I am relieved. I see, so this is a dream.

[Ah, but this isn't just a mere dream. I'm talking directly to your spiritual body. I'm surprised, you have such a difference between your spiritual body and physical body.]

You're really direct.

Well, what do you want me to do?

Because I'm a foreign thing in this world, so you want me to go back to where I am?

[What, how can that be possible? Even if it's me, outside the 6 surface worlds, I cannot send you back. Don't you even know such an obvious thing?]

Huh... what's obvious and what's not obvious, how should I know that?

[You are quite right.]

Wait. If you can't send me back then you're not the one who transferred me to this world?

[Well. In the first place, I won't do something like reincarnation. This sort of thing is what the evil dragon god would do.]

Hmm.

The evil dragon god hmm.....

[So, do you want to hear it? The advice.]

..... I don't want to hear it.

[Ehh! Why not?]

Even though the situation right now isn't anything good, you are too suspicious.

I should not even bother to listen to anything at all from someone like you.

[Suspicion.... hm?]

Ah, suspicious. You have the smell of a liar. You're like a liar that I've seen in a net game. If one listens to a liar, one will be manipulated.

[It's not a scam, really. If it's really a scam, I wouldn't say something like if you want to listen to my advice or stuff like that.]

Isn't that just a strategy.

[Just believeeee me.]

Even though you're a god, you're crying in such a shameful voice.

In the first place the God I believe in is not you. A real God is one who gives me a real miracle.

When another God from another religion says something strange, of course it's suspicious.

Also, people who keep bringing up things about trust are definitely liars.

A book that I liked to read had that written in it, so it's definitely not wrong.

[I won't say something like that, really. Just listen to what I have to say once.]

What?

What do you mean "just listen once", I know you're trying to deceive me.

In the first place I have prayed so many times to the Gods during my past life.

You didn't come to help me even with my death. Now you're giving advice?

[No, no, your God and I are two different beings. I did say I will help you from now onwards right?]

That's why I said I cannot trust you. It's not enough with just lip service. If you want me to believe you, show me a miracle and let me see it.

[I'm already doing it. I'm talking to you in a dream right, no one else can do it except me.]

You're just talking. Even if you don't use a dream to connect, you can use a letter or something.

[You're right. You already say you cannot trust me, but you will die if I leave things like that.]

... Die? Why?

[The Magic continent is a terrible place. There's almost nothing to eat, and in comparison there are many strong monsters there. Though you're capable of communicating, common knowledge is very different. Are you really able to continue from here? Do you have that confidence?]

Huh? Magic Continent? Wait a moment, what do you mean?

[You got sucked in by that huge area-of-effect Mana calamity, and you were teleported.]

Mana calamity. That light?

[Yes, it's that light.]

Teleportation. So that's a teleportation.....

It's not only me who got involved in this.

I wonder if Philip is alright.

Buina should be fine since it's quite far from there.

Sylphy must be worried.

... What has happened there?

[You're asking me, does that mean you're willing to trust me? You refused to believe me just then.]

You're right. I got deceived so easily.

[I can only say that everyone is praying for your safety. Praying for you to come back or something.]

That's .... Anyone will do that.

[Is that so? Somewhere in the corners of your heart, you have the thought that if you disappeared from this world, you would give others relief right?]

.....It's a lie if I said I didn't think that. I disappeared in my previous world where I wasn't needed. Even now I still have that thought.

[But you're not someone who isn't needed in this world. Please return safely.]

Ahh. You're right.

[But if you follow my advice, even though I won't say it's a definite thing, you have a very high chance of going back.]

Wait. Before that I want to ask about your goal. Why are you obsessed with me?

[You really talk a lot... It's because the way you're living is interesting. Isn't that enough?]

The people who act simply because things are interesting are certainly bad people.

[Is that how it works in your previous world?]

Because the people who act because things are interesting only enjoy manipulating others on the palms of their hands.

[Perhaps I have that part within me.]

Also, what is so interesting about me.

[Rather than say it's interesting, why not say it's meaningful. It's really rare to see a person from a foreign world. Giving you advice and letting you interact with all sorts of people. What kind of ending will it be...?]

I see. It's like giving a monkey a vague order and watching how it accomplishes the task. That's really an exaggerated pastime you have.

[Hah.... You. Have you forgotten my first question?]

Your first question?

[Then I'll ask again. Do you have the confidence? The confidence to live on in this completely unknown and dangerous place.]

..... No.

[Then isn't it better to listen to my advice? Even though I'll say this again, it's your freedom to choose whether you want to follow my advice.]

Fine, I understand. I understand. Advice or whatever, can you just say it already? In the end you've said so many things that are long and tedious. Just tell me one-sidedly and end it, isn't that good enough.

[..... Yes, yes. Rudeus, listen carefully. When you wake up, please rely on the guy beside you, and then help him.]

The mosaic god only leaves these lines behind, and disappeared while leaving an echo behind.

When I wake up it's already evening.

What comes into my view is a star-filled sky.

There are wooden branches burning and crackling.

The shadows made from the flames dance from side to side.

I seem to be sleeping beside a bonfire.

Of course, I do not have the memories of making a bonfire, and also do not have the memories of making a camp.

The last memory that I have..... Ah.

The sky's colors suddenly changed, and we were surrounded by a white light.

And then, it was that dream.

Damn it.

I saw an irritating dream.

[Hah.....!]

I look down at my body in a panic.

It is not that slow and fat body that was unable to do anything. The young and strong Rudeus has returned.

As I confirm that fact, the earlier memory that was like a dream starts to fade.

I exhale in relief.

[Tch.]

This damnable Human God really makes me feel unpleasant all over.

But this is really good. It seems that I'm still alive in this world.

There are many things that I have not done.... At least let me throw away the proof of being a Magician.

{ C-Editor's note: There is a saying in Japan among otakus that if you manage to stay a virgin until you become 30 years old, then you will transform into a mage. So Rudeus is saying that he does not want to die a virgin. }

I try to get up.

My back really hurts. Is it because I had been lying on the ground since the landing?

Underneath the evening sky, the cracked land stretched out.

There seems to be hardly any plants growing here. There is not even an insect here. Other than the bonfire's crackling I can't hear anything.

Where is this?

At least in my memories I didn't see a place like this.

The Asura Kingdom is full of forests and grasslands.

Did the white light change things to this scenery...?

Aah, no.

That's not it. It's not like that.

Hitogami said it before, I have been teleported.

To the Magic continent.

Then, this place should be the Magic continent.

It must certainly be due to that light.... Oh.

Ghyslaine and Eris...!

After I stand up I turn and look behind me. Eris is sleeping while grabbing onto my cuffs.

Why is there a mantle covering her body?

I didn't wear something like that....

Well, ladies first, I guess.

Behind her is the "The Arrogant Water Dragon King" Magic staff.

In any case, she doesn't look like she's hurt, and I feel relieved once again.

Perhaps Ghyslaine did something for her.

Even though I want to wake Eris up, I feel that she will find me annoying so I leave her alone.

Where's Ghyslaine?

I look around my surroundings once more, and there is someone at the bonfire that I didn't notice earlier.

[....!?]

I realize in an instant that this person is not Ghyslaine.

He's a male.

He sits there without moving a muscle, observing and staring at me.

But I don't feel he's being cautious of us.

Rather, hmmm, ah that's right.

Like an Onee-chan walking to a shy cat.

Because we are children, he must be worried that we are afraid of him.

So there are no signs of hostility.

The moment I relax, I notice his appearance.

Emerald green hair.

Porcelain-like white skin.

A ruby-like stone on his forehead that's like an eye.

Under his arm is a trident.

The Superd race.

His face is full of scars.

His eyes are sharp, his expression solemn, and there's a look of danger about him.

I think back to what Roxy taught me.

[Don't get close to the Superd race and do not talk to them.]

In a second I prepare to grab Eris and escape with everything I have, but I remember Hitogami's words, and stop.

[Rely on the man beside you, and help him.]

That self-termed God's words cannot be trusted.

After saying what he wanted to say, a strange man immediately appeared before us, so why should I trust him?

Also, it is the Superd race.

I heard from Roxy all sorts of frightening things about this race.

Even if that God said something about "Relying on him then help him out", why should I believe him?

Who should I trust?

A Human God whom I don't even know, or Roxy.

It goes without saying, the one that I will believe in is Roxy.

So I should run away right now.

No. It's precisely because of how this situation turned out, that it could be [Advice]. If I had no other information on this situation, I would definitely run away.

With that result, if I run away successfully... What will happen after that?

I take a look at the surroundings. This place is dark and it is somewhere that I have never seen before. The ground is full of cracks and covered with rocks.

[Teleported to Magic Continent.]

If I believe that line, then this is the Magic Continent.

Come to think of it, I forgot about the fact that I saw a strange dream because of that Human God's impact.

The dream where I flew everywhere around the world.

Mountains, seas, forests, valleys.... Places where we would immediately die.

If that dream is related to the current situation, then it might be possible that we have been teleported.

Right now I'm not even sure where we are in the Magic Continent. If we run away, it could mean that we are stranded in this vast place.

In the end, there is really no other choice to speak of.

Escaping from this man or winning against him, the end result is Eris and I roaming the Magic Continent alone, which is a bad one.

Or, should I bet on it? When the day breaks, I'll bet on the fact that there's a village nearby?

Stop joking.

Don't I clearly understand how difficult it would be when I don't know the way?

Calm down. Breathe in deeply.

I will not trust the Human God. But, how about this guy?

Look closely at him. Observe his face. What's that expression he has right now?

That's uneasiness. An expression that's mixed with uneasiness and resignation.

At the very least, he's not a monster without emotions.

Roxy says not to approach the Superd Race. But in truth she also said that she has never met with them.

I know the concepts of <Discrimination>, <Persecution> and <Witch hunt>. There's the possibility that the Superd Race has been misunderstood. Roxy shouldn't have the intention to tell me something false, but it's a possibility that they are misunderstood.

From my intuition, he's not dangerous. At least I don't feel any questionable vibes like that Human God from him. Even though, based on his appearance, one will still feel guarded towards him.

Then, I'll talk to him.

I make my decision.

[Hello.]

[... Aah.]

I got a reply from him after I greet him. What should I ask next?

[Are you the messenger of God-sama?]

That man tilts his head after hearing the question.

[Even though I don't understand the intention of what you asked, you fell from the sky. The children from the Human Race are very weak, so I made a bonfire to warm your bodies.]

The name <Hitogami> didn't appear. Is it possible that the Human God didn't speak to this man?

If I believe in the words [Because it's interesting.], then it's not just based on my actions.

It is also based on that Human God's interest in observing our interactions.

If that's the case, then this man can probably be trusted. I'll try talking a little more.

[We're saved by you. Thank you very much.]

[... Are your eyes unable to see?]

[Hah?]

I suddenly get a strange question.

[No, I can see very well with both of my eyes?]

[Then, you grew up without hearing stuff about the Superd's race from your parents?]

[Leaving my parents aside, my Shishou told me to be alert against the Superd's race. Something like, do not approach them.]

[... Is it fine for you not to observe your Shishou's guidance?]

He slowly asks, as if to ascertain something.

[You, even when you see me, are not afraid?]

I'm not afraid. I don't feel fear, but I am suspicious.

However, I don't need to say that out loud.

[It would be very rude if I were to be afraid of the person who saved me.]

[You're a really strange child.]

He shows a baffled expression.

Strange, hm.

Well, it's probably normal to avoid the Superd Race.

I read about the History on Laplace. After the war, the Superd Race was persecuted.

Even though the persecution towards the other Magic races has faded, the Superd Race is very different.

It's almost like how the American soldiers faced the Japanese soldiers, where every race here is prejudiced against the Superd race.

It is almost as if there is a statement like this: If there's absolute evil in this world, it's the Superd Race.

[....]

He throws the dry branches into the bonfire. It makes a splitting noise. I'm not sure if it is because of this noise, Eris utters a [Nuuu] and seems to wake up. Perhaps she's already awake.

Uh oh, that's a bad thing. If Eris wakes up she will definitely make a racket. Before everything turns to chaos, I'll at least introduce myself first.

[I am Rudeus Greyrat. May I please have your name?]

[Ruijerd Superdia.]

Specific Magic races will take the Race's name as their surname.

Using the family name or something is basically only what the Human race will do.

Sometimes other races will ask that out of curiosity.

Just to add on, Roxy's surname is Migurdia. It was written in Roxy's dictionary.

[Ruijerd-san. I think that the girl here is about to wake up soon. Because she's a girl who's a little noisy, I'll apologize in advance. I'm sorry.]

[It's fine, I have gotten used to it.]

If it's Eris, it will not be strange for her to hit Ruijerd's face once she sees it. In order not to fight against him, it's important to stop her early.

[Excuse me.]

I glance at Eris's face and I think it's still safe for now.

I look at Ruijerd again.

Under the dim light, I can see he's wearing something that greatly resembles tribal clothes.

The image is like an American Indian. Both his vest and trousers have embroidery on them.

[Mu.....]

It makes me feel bad.

He has a different feel from that Human God's forceful approach, I have a good impression of him.

[Where is this place?]

[This is the Northeastern area of the Magic Continent, Bigoya. It's near the Kishirisu city.]

[Magic Continent...]

If I remember correctly, the Kishirisu city is at the Northeastern area in the Magic continent. That is, if his words can be trusted.

[Why did we drop here?]

[If you don't know it yourselves, I won't know it either.]

[Hmm, that's true.]

Because it's a fantasy world, it isn't surprising if anything happens.....

Even someone as big as Perugius's follower making an entrance happened, this might not be the result of a coincidence. That is to say, the possibility that it has something to do with the Human God is very high.

But if this is just a coincidence when we got involved, then we are fortunate to simply survive.

[In any case, I am thankful for your help.]

[You don't need to thank me. Leaving that aside, where are you heading?]

[The Asura Kingdom in the Central continent, the city Roa in the Fedoa territory.]

[Asura..... It's very far away, hmm.]

[Indeed so.]

[But you don't need to worry, I'll send you home.]

The Northeastern Magic continent and Asura Kingdom. They are at the opposite ends of the world. It's as far as Las Vegas to Paris.

Furthermore, in this world, ships only set off at specific areas. That is why we need to travel by land until we reach a suitable location to take a ship.

[Do you have any clues as to what happened?]

[Clues.... When the sky started to glow, a person called Arumanfi of the Bright came before us, and said he was here to stop the phenomenon. As we talked to him, white light gushed forth suddenly... The next moment I find myself waking up here.]

[Arumanfi... Even Perugius is on the move? If that's the case, something must have happened. It's good that it ended with just teleportation.]

[You're completely right. If that was an explosion or something we would have died immediately.]

Even when Ruijerd heard the name "Perugius" he did not falter. Surprising. Perhaps Ruijerd is a person who is not affected by anything.

[By the way, have you heard of the existence of Hitogami?]

[Hitogami? No. Is that the name of a human?]

[Ah, no, it's fine if you have never heard of it.]

I don't think he's lying.

I can't think of a reason..... why he would hide the knowledge about the Human God.

[Nevertheless, Asura kingdom hmm.]

[It's very far right? It's okay. You can just send us to a nearby village.....]

[No, A Superd warrior will not change any decisions that he makes.]

His words are stubborn but steady.

Even without the Human God's advice, on just this point alone I might trust Ruijerd.

But I'm still suspicious.

[But it's the other end of the world, you do know that right?]

[A child shouldn't worry too much.]

He timidly places his hand and strokes my head.

He relaxes when he sees that I didn't refuse him.

This person, I wonder if he likes kids?

But it's not like the trip is 10 minutes. Even though he said that he will send us back, it is difficult to believe him.

[Are you able to speak the language? Do you have money? Do you know where to go?]

He asks, and I reflect on his words.

I have been using the Human Race language to speak to him, and yet this man from the Magic Race is able to reply fluently in the Human Race language.

[I can speak the Magic God's language. I know Magic so I can earn money. If you bring me to a place with people, I can find my own way.]

I try to steer the conversation into rejecting him. Even though this man can be trusted, I feel that things would advance how the Human God expects them to be, and I think it's better to avoid that.

But after thinking through my words laden with suspicion, Ruijerd's steady reply comes back.

[Is that so... Then let me be your guard. It will hurt the pride of the Superd Race if I leave children to fend for themselves.]

[You really are a proud race.]

[It's a pride that has been scarred.]

With this joke, I laughed with a haha.

Ruijerd also curls the corners of his lips and laugh.

It's different from the suspicious smile from the Human God, it's a warm smile.

[In any case, we should first go to a village that I am familiar with.]

[Yes.]

Even though I don't really trust the Human God, perhaps this man can be trusted.

At least until we reached the village, I'll trust him.

After a while, Eris's eyes snap open. She sits up in an instant and looks around everywhere. She soon begins to feel uneasy, but shows obvious relief after meeting with my eyes. And then she meets the gaze from Ruijerd's eyes.

[KYAAAAAAAAAAAAAAaaaaaaaaaaaa!!!]

A scream that is from the depths of her soul. She retreats backwards while lying down, and then she tries to stand up to flee, but falls down flat onto the ground.

She's frightened to the point of freezing altogether.

[NOOOOooooooOOOOOOo!]

Eris falls into panic.

But even if she doesn't struggle about, she is unable to crawl away.

She crouches there, trembling and shivering, and raises her voice to scream.

[No! Noooo! Scary! Soscaryscaryscary! Help me, Ghyslaine! Ghyslaine! Ghyslaineuu! Why aren't you coming! No, no! I don't want to die! I don't want to die! Sorry! Sorry! I'm so sorry Rudeus! Kicking you or something I'm so sorry! Because I'm such a coward I'm so sorry! I can't keep my promise So shorrrryyyyyy, wahhhh, wahhhhhhhhhh!]

Finally she curls up like a turtle hiding in its shell and cries.

I shudder after witnessing that scene.

(That, Eris, is so frightened.....)

Eris is a strong willed girl. Her motto is most likely [I'm the queen of the entire world].

She's really violent and selfish, and in any case she will hit you before thinking it through. She's pretty much that sort of child.

Is it possible that I made a seriously huge mistake?

Is it possible that the Superd Race is someone who absolutely cannot be approached?

I look at Ruijerd. He's still calm.

[That's the normal reaction.]

How's that possible?

[Is it because I'm abnormal?]

[You're abnormal. But...]

[But?]

[You're not bad.]

Ruijerd's face seen from the side looks terribly lonely.

I reflect on that for a moment while I stand up and walk towards Eris. Hearing the footsteps, Eris quivers in fright.

I slowly stroke her back. Thinking back, every time I cried whenever I was afraid of something, Grandmother would stroke me on the back just like this.

[Al—right, don't be afraid, don't be afraid.]

[Hicc, what do you mean don't be afraid! Th-that's a Superd!]

I don't know why she's so frightened. Because, it's that Eris. She's the Eris that will bare her fangs when she faces Ghyslaine. There should be nothing that will make her afraid.

[Is it so frightening?]

[B, because, the Su, Superd race will! E, eat children! They will eat children right? Hiccc.....]

[He won't eat you.]

He won't eat us right? I look at Ruijerd, and he shakes his head.

[I don't eat children.]

Right?

[Here now, he says he won't eat children!]

[B, b, because! Because he's a Superd! He's from a Magic Race!]

[Even though he's from a Magic Race, he knows how to speak the Human Race language.]

[It's not the language problem!]

Eris raises her head up and growled at me. She's back to normal. As expected, this expression belongs to the real Eris.

[Oh, are you fine with that? If you don't curl yourself up, you will get eaten right?]

[Don't treat me like an idiot!]

Eris glares at me after I speak to her with the tone of treating her like an idiot.

And then she maintains her expression and stares at Ruijerd sharply.

She shakes violently. Her eyes are also wet. If she stands up like her usual self, she will shake her knees, probably.

[P, p, p, pleased. To meee-et you. I-I'm, Eris, Bo, Bo, Boreas... Greyrat!]

Eris half cries while introducing herself.

Introducing herself while acting haughty is a little funny.

Ahh, no, if you put it that way I possibly taught her something like that. When meeting someone else, just introduce yourself to launch a preemptive strike.

[Eris Boboboreas Greyrat? The human race has started to use funny names that I don't know of.]

[No! It's Eris Boreas Greyrat! I just stuttered slightly! Compared to that, introduce yourself too!]

After shouting, Eris goes [Ah!] and shows an uneasy expression. She finally realizes who she is yelling at.

[Is that so? My apologies. I am Ruijerd Superdia.]

Eris relaxes her tense expression, and shows off triumphantly.

A "How about that, I'm not scared of him." expression.

[So, I said it will be okay right? As long as we can communicate, everyone can become friends.]

[Yeah! It's just like what Rudeus said! Okaa-sama lied to me!]

So it's Hilda who taught her? It's just a folklore to express how scary it is. Oh, wait, even if it's me, if I see a spirit without legs or some namahage, I'll be frightened too.

[What did Hilda say?]

[If I don't quickly go to sleep the Superd race will come and eat me.]

I see, to get a child to sleep she used superstition. Something like Shimacchau Ojisan.

{ C-Editor's note: Shimacchau Ojisan is a character from the Bonobono manga series. }

[But he won't eat children. Why not become friends with the Superd race, so you can brag to everyone.]

[I can brag e-even to Oji-sama and Ghyslaine...?]

[Of course.]

I look at Ruijerd, and he's showing signs of surprise. Good.

[Ruijerd-san seems to have very few friends, I think if Eris requests to be friends with him, he will be on good terms with you.]

[B, but..]

Did I say something too much like a child...

As I think back on what I said, Eris hesitates.

Contemplating further, Eris doesn't have any friends, and... I'm a little different.

Perhaps she's a little scared of the vocabulary word "Friend". Looks like she still needs a push.

[Hey, Ruijerd-san too!]

As I urge him, Ruijerd finally seems to understand the current situation.

[Eh? Ahh. Eris.... Please treat me favorably.]

[W, well it can't be helped! I, I'll become your friend!]

Seeing Ruijerd lower his head, something in Eris crumbles apart.

That's great.

But seeing this, Eris is really simple. I feel stupid for thinking about this and that.

But, if I don't mind the naive part about Eris, hmmm...

[Phew, in any case, let's rest for a little while today.]

[What, you're sleeping already?]

[Yes Eris, I'm very tired right now. I really feel sleepy.]

[Is that so? Then it can't be helped. Good night.]

I lie down and Eris stays beside me, laying a mantle-like thing (I believe it's probably Ruijerd's) over my body.

I'm really exhausted.

Before I lose my consciousness,

[Are you not scared anymore?]

[I'm fine if I'm with Rudeus.]

I hear some lines.

Hah, even if it's only Eris, I must send her back safely.

As I consider that, I fall asleep.

I saw a dream.

A dream where angels were descending from the sky.

It was different from yesterday, I was certain it was a good dream.

But as I thought of that, there was mosaic covering over their crotch, and they were giggling with their repulsive faces with a [Fufufu].

It seemed like a nightmare.

As I became aware of that fact, I woke up.

[It's a dream...]

Recently I have been having bad dreams...

In front of me is a world filled with rocks and earth, extending endlessly towards the horizon.

The Magic Continent.

A fragment of the Gigantic Continent that had been split apart due to the Human-Demon war. It had once been the domain where the Demon God Laplace gathered the Demon races.

The area of this continent is about half the size of the Central Continent.

But there are almost no plants here. The earth is covered with lots of cracks, the highs and lows of the land have a huge height difference. There are incredibly big boulders that hinder visibility, making this place a natural maze.

Also, the Mana concentration in the Magic Continent is very dense, and there are a lot of strong Monsters. It had been said that if you go across the Magic Continent, you will take 3 times longer than crossing the Central Continent.

It's going to be a long journey.

When I am thinking of explaining it to Eris, I find her to be very energetic. Her eyes seem to be filled with stars when she looks across the Magic Continent's land.

(Rudi) [Eris, concerning this place, it is the Magic Continent...]

(Eris) [Magic Continent! Then our journey is about to start!]

She's really happy.

Full of composure.

Anything I say now will not make her insecure.

Eris and Ruijerd became very close together. It seems that when I was asleep they were still chatting.

Well, it's better than quarreling.

Eris happily talks about the stories of her home, the stuff about Magic and sword lessons.

Even though Ruijerd talks very little, he always makes an agreeable reply when she's talking.

What happened to that frightened behavior at the beginning?

Eris has actually became unafraid of this frightening man.

Even though Eris occasionally says something dreadfully rude, which at times makes my back turn cold, Ruijerd doesn't particularly become angry.

No matter what she says, Ruijerd turns it aside without hesitation.

Who's the one who spread the rumors that the Superd race gets violent easily.

But even though I put it that way, the current Eris is more or less capable of reading the mood now.

Regarding this, I think Edona taught her properly not to mention things that might make people angry.

I hope that's the case.

But I don't know how much tolerance he has in regards to unfamiliar people, and I wish that Eris would be more prudent about it.

Of course, Eris's patience is also very low and I hope Ruijerd is careful too.

Just as I'm thinking about this, I can hear Eris's voice getting louder.

[Is Rudeus your brother?]

[No!]

[But, isn't Greyrat a family name?]

[Even though it's his name, he's not my brother!]

[Half-sibling from the mother's side? Half-sibling from the father side?]

[He doesn't belong to either side!]

[Even though I'm not very clear about the Human race, but you should treasure your family member.]

[I already said you're taking things the wrong way!]

[It's fine, just cherish him well.]

[Uuu..]

Eris falters and uses a strong tone.

[I, I'm cherishing him....]

Well, even though we're not real siblings.

Eris is older than me.

The Magic Continent is nothing but rocks, and the land elevation is very steep. The ground is also very hard.

If you dig at the soil, it will splatter everywhere.

There's no nutrients in it at all.

The land is one step short of becoming a desert. If you keep living in this land, even the Demon races will fight amongst themselves.

There is almost no vegetation and occasionally I see rocks that are like cacti.

[Hmm. Wait a while. Absolutely do not move from here.]

Ruijerd will do that every 10 minutes, and runs to the direction in front of us. He jumps lightly over the hills that are full of rocks, and disappears within moments.

What incredible physical ability he has.

Even though Ghyslaine is also amazing, if you were to convert their agility into numbers, then Ruijerd's agility points might be even higher than Ghyslaine.

Ruijerd comes back within less than five minutes.

[Sorry for the long wait, let's go.]

Even though he didn't say anything there's a faint scent of blood on the tip of the trident. I guess he went ahead to clear the monsters blocking us from moving forward.

Indeed, in Roxy's dictionary, the ruby-colored stone on the Superd's race has the use of a radar. With this ability, they are able to quickly find their enemies.

Ruijerd preemptively kills the Monsters in an instant before they notice us.

[Hey! What have you been doing since the beginning?]

Eris rudely asks.

[I cleared the Monsters in front of us.]

Ruijerd tersely replies.

[How do you know where they are when you obviously can't see them!]

[If it's me I can see them.]

Ruijerd says that and moves his hair out of his face. His forehead is revealed and we can see the ruby-colored stone.

Even though Eris retreats slightly for an instant, she carefully looks at the stone, finding it pretty. She then shows an interested expression.

[That's really convenient!]

[It might be convenient, but I have thought of countless times where it's better that I don't have this.]

[Then I'll help you wear it! Here, take it out!]

[That's impossible.]

Ruijerd laughs wryly. Eris has started to learn how to joke.....

It's a joke right?

They seem to be having a lot of fun, I'll participate too.

[On that subject, I have heard that the Monsters here are very powerful...]

[There aren't many powerful ones here. The numbers of the creatures here might be on the high side because it's far away from town.]

Indeed, there are a lot of them.

From the start, Ruijerd would clear the monsters every ten minutes. If it's in the Asura kingdom, you won't even meet a single Monster even if you ride in a horse carriage for hours.

For the Asura kingdom, the knights and adventurers will clear the Monsters at fixed intervals.

But even if it's here, the number of encounters for the Magic continent is just too high.

[From the beginning you have been fighting by yourself, are you really alright?]

[It's fine. I killed all of them with one strike.]

[I see... If you're tired please tell me. I can support you as I am able to use Healing Magic.]

[There is no need for children to worry too much.]

As he says that, Ruijerd places his hand on my head and strokes it timidly.

Perhaps this person really likes to stroke children's heads?

[You only need to stay beside your younger sister's side to protect her.]

[I already said! Who's his younger sister! I'm the older sister!]

[Hmm, is that so? My apologies.]

Ruijerd says that and strokes Eris's head, but the conclusion ends up in his hand being smacked away.

Poor Ruijerd.

It has been almost 3 hours.

Because of the road's elevation difference, we stopped countless times. To cross the snake-like roads, we also spent a lot of time.

If you calculate it in a straight line, we probably have not even reached 1 kilometer.

I'm exhausted. I was like that yesterday as well.

I don't know why my body feels so tired. Is it because of the teleportation? Or simply because I don't have the stamina?

Under Ghyslaine's guidance, I should have been properly trained to raise my physical abilities...

[It's a village!]

Eris looks as if she's not tired at all, and looks at the place with great interest. I'm jealous of her stamina.

Even though Eris says it's a village, but this place feels more like a hamlet. A dozen houses gathered together and surrounded by roughly made fences. Beside the fence is a small cultivated field.

Even though I'm not sure what it's growing, I think it's probably barren.

With a place like this where there is no river water or something similar, it's probably a futile attempt.

[Halt!]

The entrance is being blocked. As I look closely, there seems to be a youth around the age of a middle schooler. His hair is blue, and reminds me of Roxy.

[Ruijerd, what's with all these people!]

He's speaking in the Demon God language. Looks like my listening ability for Demon God language is okay. I'm able to properly understand it, OK.

[It's the aforementioned shooting star]

[They are suspicious, you can't let these people into the village!]

[Why. Where do they look suspicious?]

Ruijerd's face tightens, and closes on him to press for an answer.

What an earth-shattering bloodlust.

If I saw him for the first time displaying that bloodlust, I would immediately run away without second thoughts.

[T, they look suspicious no matter how you look at it!]

[They were merely dragged into Asura's Mana calamity and teleported here.]

[B, but-]

[You bastard, are you forsaking these children.....?]

Ruijerd's clenches his fist. I grab his hand by reflex.

[This is his job, please restrain yourself.]

[What.....?]

[I mean, for an underling like him, he won't be able to solve the problem. Isn't it better to find someone whose position is higher?]

The youth's eyebrows knit together when he hears the word underling.

[You're right. Robin, call the chief.]

Ruijerd glares at the youth with his eyes stating, <Cut the damn crap out>.

[Ahh, I'm also thinking of the same thing.]

The youth called Robin closes his eyes, and keeps this appearance for over 10 seconds...

[.....]

What's this guy doing? Start going already.

Closing your eyes or something, are you dozing off right here!

Or are you waiting for a kiss?

[Ruijerd-san, this is...?]

[The Migurd race can talk with one another even if they are not at the same location.]

[Ah, now that you mention it, I remember that my Shishou also taught me this.]

To be more accurate, it was written in Roxy's letter. The Migurd race can correspond with each other if they are close by.

Adding on to that, Roxy also wrote in order to get away from that ability, she left the village.

Poor Roxy....

That being said, this means this is the Migurd community.

It might be better if I said Roxy's name. Ah, no, I still don't know what's the relationship between Roxy and this village, it's a possibility that I'm bringing unneccessary trouble to myself.

[The chief should be coming soon.]

[It's okay if we can go ahead to find him too right?]

[How can I let you enter the village!]

[Is that so?]

Temporarily, the atmosphere turned uncomfortable. Eris softly pulls on my sleeves.

[Hey, what's happening?]

Eris doesn't understand the Demon God language.

[He says that we're very suspicious, so he's letting the chief check the situation.]

[What, where do we look suspicious...]

Eris frowns and looks at her own clothes. It's the same clothes as when she goes out to the town and attends sword lessons.

Even though it might seem to be a little light for dressing, but it's not strange at all.

At least I don't think she's very different from Ruijerd. If she was wearing a dress or something, that would actually be suspicious...

[It will be fine right?]

[What do you mean by fine?]

[If you ask me what it is, I also find it hard to explain clearly..... That is, you know....]

[It's fine.]

[Ye-s....?]

As expected, when we had the argument at the entrance, Eris seems to feel a little uneasy. But after I told her it will be fine she immediately turns meek.

[The chief seems to be coming now.]

There seems to be a boy-like adult walking with a cane coming out from the village. And there are two girls who look like they are from middle school holding on to him.

Everyone looks young.

Perhaps, even when a Migurd becomes an adult they still look like they are in middle school? Roxy's dictionary didn't mention something like that.

Oh wait, the drawings on the dictionary resembles middle schoolers.

I thought it's Roxy's self portrait, even her chest looks a bit fuller.... Perhaps that's actually the appearance of an adult Migurd Race?

As I keep thinking, the chief starts talking with Robin.

[These are the children right...?]

[Yes, it seems that one of them can speak the Demon God language, no matter how you look at it, it feels suspicious.]

[Language or whatever, anyone can speak it if they learn it right?]

[Why would a human at that age learn the Magic God language!]

Seriously.

The chief pats Robin's shoulders.

[Well, well. You should calm down a little.]

The chief walks slowly to my side. In any case, I lower my head.

Not the nobilities' etiquette, it's the Japanese ojigi.

{ C-Editor's note: Japanese style of bowing. }

[It is my pleasure to meet you for the first time. My name is Rudeus Greyrat.]

[Oh, you're very polite. I'm the chief of this community, Rocks.]

I make an eye signal at Eris. He looks like he's the same age as her, but the chief's mannerisms is completely different to her, and she doesn't know what to do.

She crosses her arms and then places it down, and she looks like she's unable to calm down.

She's hesitating whether to cross her arms and take on an imposing stance.

[Eris, go ahead and make your greeting.]

[B, but, I don't know the Demon God language?]

[Just do the same thing that you're taught in etiquette class. I'll translate for you.]

[Uu- I, I'm pleased to meet you, I am Eris Boreas Greyrat.]

Eris follows what she had learned in the etiquette class to make a greeting. Rocks smiles after seeing that.

[The young lady over there, is she making a greeting?]

[Yes, this is our way of greeting in our hometown.]

[Hoh~ But it is different from you?]

[It is different from males and females.]

Rocks nods in a [I see, I see] manner, and and imitates my example and lowers his head to Eris.

[I'm the chief of this community, Rocks.]

Eris looks at me in a loss when she sees the chief suddenly lowering his head.

[Rudeus, what is he saying?]

[He says, "I'm the chief of this community, Rocks."]

[Is, is that so. Hm, Hmph. It's just like what Rudeus said, we can communicate with each other.]

Eris says with a smile on her.

Alright, it's fine with this right?

[So, can you let us go into the village?]

[Hmmmm...]

Rocks looks all over my body as if he wants to lick me.

Please stop.

If you look at me with such passionate eyes, I'll feel like I need to strip...

Rocks's eyes stop in front of my chest.

[Where did you get this pendant?]

[Shishou gave it to me.]

[Who's your shishou?]

[Her name is Roxy.]

I honestly state her name. Thinking it over, this is my respected Shishou's name, why do I need to hide that fact?

[What!]

Robin yells loudly. He hurriedly grabs onto my shoulders.

Did I dig my own grave?

[Y, you, j-just said Roxy!?]

[Yes, she's my shishou...]

As I reply him, I see in the corners of my eyes that Ruijerd is raising his fist, and I immediately stop him.

Robin isn't showing anger but anxiety.

[W-where is Roxy now?!]

[I haven't seen her for a long time so I...]

[Tell me quickly! Roxy, Roxy is my daughter!!]

I'm sorry, what was that?

[My apologies, I didn't hear what you said just now.]

[Roxy is my daughter! Is she still alive?!]

Pardon? No, I heard it clearly.

Wait, I'm more concerned about this guy who looks like a middle schooler. Just looking at his appearance, you might say that he looks like Roxy's younger brother.

But, I see, hm—-.

[Quickly tell me, she left this village 20 years ago, and there has been no word ever since!]

It looks like Roxy has secretly left her home. I didn't hear this matter from her. Sheesh. My shishou's explanations aren't detailed enough.

Erm, he said 20 years.

Huh? How old is Roxy now?

[I beg you, please stop being silent, quickly tell me something.]

Oh, please excuse me.

[Roxy is now...]

I just realize that my shoulders are still grabbed by Robin. It feels almost like I'm being threatened. Although it's somehow different from being threatened.

It's almost as if you're making me yield to violence right!

If you want me to crack under violence, you need to at least use a baseball bat to destroy my PC, smack me with karate, and break my heart with profanities!

If I don't show this firm attitude, I'll make Eris uneasy right?

[Before that, please answer my question. How old is Roxy now?]

[Age? No, compared to this...]

[This is a very important thing! And please tell me the life span of the Migurd race!]

This is something that I absolutely must hear.

[Ah, ahh... If it's Roxy... She should be 44 years old. The life span for a Migurd is around 200 years. Even though there are those who die due to sickness, but if they grow old they should live till around this age.]

She's the same age as me. I'm slightly happy.

[I see... Ah, please stop grabbing me.]

Robin finally releases his hands. Very good, very good, we can finally talk.

[Half a year ago, Roxy should still be at Shirone. Even though I never meet with her face to face, but I communicated with her by exchanging letters.]

[Letters...? That child knows how to write the Human race language?]

[At least from 7 years ago, she was able to perfectly write in that language.]

[I, is that so... Then she's alright?]

[If she hasn't run into any accidents or gotten sick, she should still be very healthy.]

As I say that, Robin kneels shakily on the floor. He shows a relieved expression with tears in his eyes.

[Is that so... She's safe... She's safe.... Haha.... That's great.]

That's great, Father-in-law.

But looking at him reminds me of my father Paul. If Paul knows that I'm safe, he will probably cry out too.

I feel like sending the letter out to Buina as soon as possible..

[Well then, will you allow us to enter the village?]

I look at the crying Robin with the corners of my eyes, while talking to chief Rocks.

[Of course. How can we be cold to the people who informed us of Roxy's safety?]

The effect of Roxy's pendant is extraordinary. If I knew this would happen I would have shown it at the start.

Ah, no, based on the dialogue's progression, there's the possibility where they suspect me of killing Roxy and stealing the pendant.

The Demon race is really long lived, and there must be people whose appearances are different from their age.

If my real age of over 40 years old gets revealed, no matter how much I look like a 10 year old child, it will be suspicious right?

I need to check myself. Do more actions befitting of a child.

And with that, we enter the [Migurd race's hamlet.]

If you use a single term to describe the Migurd's hamlet, it will be "extreme poverty".

There are ten-odd houses. It is difficult to describe their appearances.

It feels like the earth had been dug up and then covered up with tortoise shells.

The architecture in the Asura Kingdom is much more advanced compared to here.

Still, even if you get the Asura kingdom's architects to come here, there would be no way to gather the lumber required to build and they would also give up hope on this land.

Even the neatly planted field outside the hamlet only contains shriveled vegetation.

I wonder if it is alright for the plants to look so withered.

There were no specific details in Roxy's dictionary at all in regards to agriculture. It was only written up till this part where she stated "The vegetables are bitter and not tasty at all."

Incidentally, at the side of the field, there are flowers with teeth which looked similar to pakkun flowers, planted there.

{ C-Editor's note: Pakkun flowers are the piranha plants in the Super Mario Bros. video games. }

I am uncertain whether this thing is a plant or animal, the uneven teeth are making a chattering sound. They are definitely used to deter harmful creatures that invade the field.

At the end of the hamlet, there are a few girls who look like they are in middle school surrounding a fire and grilling something.

It looks like an outdoor school or something similar.

The girls are preparing a meal and as they finish making it, they go to distribute it to everyone.

There are nearly no men and there are only very young children playing around.

Other than that, there's the gatekeeper Robin and the chief.

If I'm not mistaken it should be like this: The men will go out to hunt, and the women shall stay at home to keep watch.

The community's positions should be something like this.

So it probably means the men are out hunting now.

[Is there anything nearby that can be hunted?]

[Monsters.]

Even though that reply did answer my query, it falls a little short.

It is akin to asking a fisherman what he caught, and his reply is, I caught seafood.

Well, I'll continue asking questions.

[Hmm. Is the stuff covering the rooftops also from monsters?]

[That's from the Great King Land Tortoise (Grand Tortoise). The shell is very hard, and the flesh is delicious. You can even make bowstrings from their sinew.]

Is their meat delicious?

But I can't imagine the size of the tortoise. The biggest house in the hamlet is covered with a shell that looks like it's over 20 meters wide.

Ruijerd and Rocks enter that same house as I entertain that thought.

Biggest house = the chief's house, it seems that this world has the same rule too.

[Please excuse us.]

[T, thank you for inviting us in...]

In any case, Eris and I make a greeting as we enter the house.

The insides look wider compared to how it looked from the outside. The floor is lined with fur pelts, and there are colorful ornaments hung on the walls.

The center of the house has something that looks like a fireplace, and a fire is slowly burning in there, lighting the house.

The rooms are not separated, and one can simply cover up with the fur pelts at night and just sleep on the floor.

At one end of the house, a sword and a bow are placed there, and it appears that this is certainly a hunting tribe.

The two women who followed the chief earlier did not enter the house. Why did they follow the chief to the entrance just then?

Well, whatever.

[Then, let us hear your story.]

Rocks sits down near the fireplace with a plunking noise and says that.

Ruijerd sits in front of him, and I sit cross-legged at his side.

I look at Eris standing up idly who does not know where to sit.

[Are we going to sit on the floor even in the house too?]

[Didn't you sit on the floor properly too during sword lessons?]

[T, that's true.]

Eris isn't the type to hesitate over whether to sit on the floor.

But, it's probably because she's perplexed over this "gap" in the etiquette classes she had.

She observes the etiquette rules in front of others, but the situation currently is different from the things that were taught to her, so she is confused.

I really hope that these bad influences do not affect her when we go home...

Before I start to describe my future goals, I dictate my name, age, profession and the location of our home.

I also state the relationship between Eris and myself, Eris' social status, and how we mysteriously ended up in the Magic continent to the chief.

I did not say anything pertaining to the Human God. I am not sure what position this God has with the Demon race. If he is treated as an evil god, then we might be suspected of something.

[... And this is what happened to us.]

[Hm....]

Rocks holds a hand against his chin, contemplating as he listens to the things I said.

His expression looks like a middle schooler being troubled by a difficult question.

[..... I see.]

Eris has already started to fall asleep while waiting for Rocks' conclusion.

Even though it looks like she is still energetic, she has indeed expended a lot of energy because she is not used to the journey.

It was the same as yesterday's night, and it seems that she has been awake ever since she met Ruejird.

As I expected, she has nearly reached her limits.

[I'll properly listen to the discussion, you can go to sleep if you want to.]

[... What do you mean by going to sleep, how do you sleep here?]

[Probably by using the fur pelts to cover up and sleep.]

[But there's no pillow...]

[You can use my lap for sure.]

I said that like the Anpanman and smack my thigh, emitting a pa-pa noise.

[W, what do you mean by lap ...?]

[It means you can use my lap as a pillow.]

[..... Is that so? T, thank you.]

If it was the usual Eris, she would definitely say something about this and that.

But it seems that her sleeping status bar is at MAX, as she brings her head down and lies on my lap without hesitation.

She shows a tense expression and clenches her hands tightly, closing her eyes. It doesn't take more than a few seconds before she's sleeping like a log.

Just like I thought, she's really exhausted. I gently stroke Eris's red hair and she twists her body as if she is itchy.

Fuhaha.

Suddenly I feel someone gazing at me.

[... What is it?]

Rocks's grinning eyes pierces me and I feel a little embarrassed.

[Your relationship is really good.]

[That's true.]

But I'm banned from touching her.

Our Ojou-sama has a strong sense of virtue.

So I'll also respect her wishes.

[Then, how do you intend to go back?]

[We will earn the money and go back by foot.]

[You two children will be earning the money?]

[No, it will simply be me alone who's going to earn the money.]

I cannot possibly let Eris who is completely ignorant of the ways of the world earn money right?

Well, I am almost the same in regards of being ignorant of the ways of the world.

[Not these two alone, I'll be going as well.]

Ruijerd cuts into the conversation.

He's really a reassuring ally.

Even though I really want to trust him, due to the incident with the Human God, it is better for us to bid our farewells here, and rid ourselves of any future troubles.

Still, how should I go about refusing him?

[Ruijerd, why do you want to go with them?]

Rocks displays his disapproval with a troubled expression.

Ruijerd looks like he has been offended.

[There's no reason to it. I will protect them and simply bring them safely to their hometown.]

The conversation doesn't seem to mesh together in a subtle way.

Rocks sighs.

[You're going to enter a town right?]

[Hmm.....]

"Hmm"?

You're not going to enter a town?

[What's going to happen if you bring the children near a town? Didn't you get chased out by the soldiers 100 years ago, and even had a party formed to subjugate you?]

100 years ago?

[That... But.... if I wait outside the town.]

[Then you're not going to be responsible for the things that happen in the town?]

Rocks looks at him with an amazed expression.

Ruijerd firmly grinds his teeth.

The Superd race is hated by everyone. This fact is not changed even in the Magic Continent. But to form a party to subjugate or something is a little too much. Are they treating him like a Monster?

[If there's something that happens in the town...]

[What will you do if there's something that happened?]

[Even if I have to kill everyone in the town, I will rescue the two of them.]

His eyes are serious.

Frightening.

This is really too frightening.

This man will do anything and he has that resolution.

[You have no discrimination at all when it comes to children..... Come to think of it, the beginning where you're accepted at this village was because you saved the children from the Monsters' attacks.]

[Yes.]

[It already has been 5 years, time has really passed by quickly.]

The chief sighs in an exaggerated manner.

Even though I am sorry for the chief becoming our ally in that manner, that is a considerably irritating action that he is making.

He looks like a conceited middle schooler ridiculing an adult who committed a stupid mistake.

[But Ruijerd. If you do something like this, can you really reach your goal?]

[Mu.....]

Ruijerd knits his eyebrows together.

Goal.

This man seems to have some sort of goal on his mind.

[What's your goal?]

I interrupt the conversation.

[It's a simple goal. I want to remove the infamy that the Superd race has, simply that.]

I really want to say that it is impossible to achieve that goal.

The problem of racial discrimination cannot be solved with the efforts of one single person.

Even something small like a bullied victim in a class cannot be solved by one person.

Even more so, when the persecution has been deeply rooted all over the world.

Eris who met Ruijerd, is similar to how Vegeta met Broly.

{ C-Editor's note: Vegeta and Broly are characters from the Dragonball anime series. }

He was already assumed to be a bad person since she was young, how can he change to become a good person?

[But isn't it true that your race had launched attacks on both enemies and allies during the war?]

[That's!]

[No matter what sort of ill repute you have, it's the truth that the Superd race is frightening.....]

[No! That's not true!]

Ruijerd grabs me by the collar.

He glares at me with a incredibly terrifying look.

This is bad, I'm trembling.

Awawawa...

[That was Laplace's scheme! The Superd race isn't a terrible race!]

W, w, what?

Please stop you're scary.

My body can't stop trembling.

Eh, did he just say it's a scheme? This is a scheme?

Laplace is someone from 400 years ago right?

[W, what did you say about Laplace?]

[That bastard betrayed our loyalty!]

The strength used to grab me weakens. I tap repeatedly on Ruijerd's wrist and he finally releases me.

But his hands are still shaking.

[That bastard... That bastard...!]

Ruijerd says through his grinding teeth.

[Can you tell us that incident in detail?]

[It's a long story.]

[I don't mind.]

Ruijerd begins to describe what really happened back then in history.

Laplace.

He was the hero who won the authority back from the Human race, and unified the Demon races.

The Superd race had been Laplace's subordinates at a very early stage.

The Superd warrior group. They possessed high agility and a fiendish ability to detect unseen enemies.

This group that possessed extremely high combat prowess became Laplace's elite force.

Their specialties were surprise attacks and night raids.

The eye on their forehead is like a radar that sees through the surroundings. They will never be ambushed by others, and will definitely be able to execute surprise attacks and night attacks.

They were simply the elite force.

The Superd race's name in the past was treated with both fear and respect.

During the middle period of Laplace's war, just when they started to invade the Central continent, Laplace brought spears with him and visited the warrior group.

The Devil's spears.

Ruijerd did not say the formal name of the spears, and only called them the Devil's spears.

Laplace bestowed the spears to the warrior group. The spears looked like the Superd's tridents, but the body was painted with an ominous black, and one glance at it revealed that it was a Magical spear.

Of course, there were many who objected to accepting the spears, as the spear was the representation of the Superd's soul. They were unable to throw away their own spears.

But these were the things that Laplace prepared as the lord.

In the end, Ruijerd as the leader forced everyone in the warrior group to use the spear as a sign of loyalty to Laplace.

[Hmm? Leader?]

[Yes, I was the leader of the Superd race's warrior group back then.]

[... How old are you right now?]

[I stopped counting after I was 500 years old.]

[Ah, is that so...]

Did Roxy write about the Superd race's longevity?

Well, whatever.

The Superd warrior group threw their spears aside and continued to battle with the Devil's spears.

The Devil's spears possessed incredible power, strengthening the users' bodies several times, and were able to render the Human race's magic useless, and even make their senses keener.

They brought about an overwhelming sense of omnipotence.

Soon, the users' appearances gradually turned into evil devils. The more blood the users' Devil spears absorbed, the darker their souls would be.

No one suspected any problems, because everyone's soul was eaten away at the same rate.

And finally, tragedy happened.

The warrior group started to attack everyone indiscriminately, regardless of friend or foe.

It didn't matter whether they were men or women of any age, or even if they were children. There was no mercy shown. Without distinction, everyone of them was attacked.

Ruijerd states that he can still remember these memories vividly.

Before one knew it, the Demon races started saying [The Superd race had betrayed the Demon races], and the Human race also started saying [The Superd race are heartless devils].

At that time Ruijerd and the others listened to the reports with ecstatic expressions, viewing it as an honor.

In the midst of the battlefield where there were enemies everywhere, the Superd race carrying the Devil's spears was exceedingly powerful. There was no one who was capable of defeating the Superd warriors, where one of them could easily match a thousand.

They became the most feared army in the world.

But there is no such thing where an army is not exhausted in a persistent war.

Due to the situation where they fought both the Human and Demon races, battling day and night, the number of people in the warrior group started to dwindle.

They never suspected anything. To die in battle was the ultimate honor to them, and they reveled drunkenly in that thought.

Amongst the rumors they received, they heard a Superd race's settlement was attacked.

It was Ruijerd's hometown.

Even though it was an obvious trap to lure the Superd race, they no longer had anyone with judgment to see through it.

The Superd warrior group who hadn't gone back to the settlement in a long time, launched..... an attack.

They thought, since there were people still there, they must kill everyone.

Ruijerd killed his parents, his wife and his sisters.

Finally, he stabbed his own son to death.

Even though his son was still a child, but he had continuously trained to become a Superd warrior. Even though it didn't end up as a life and death fight for Ruijerd, his son managed to break his Devil's spear at the final moment.

At that single moment, the pleasant dreams ended, and at the same time the nightmares commenced.

There was still something that made a crisp sound in his mouth during that moment, and once Ruijerd realized that it was his son's finger he spat it out.

He immediately thought of suicide, but cancelled that thought instantly.

There was something that he had to do before dying.

For example, he needed to tear apart his enemies that were still living in this world.

At that time, the Superd race's settlement was surrounded by a punitive force.

There were only 10 people left in the warrior group.

Back then when they received the Devil's spears, there were 200 odd people, and only 10 of these courageous warriors were left remaining.

There were those who lost one of their eyes, and there were those who lost one of their hands, and there were those who lost their Magical stone on their forehead.

These were the warriors who battled unto this crumbling state.

And even when their bodies were completely scarred, they still glared at the punitive force that numbered nearly a thousand with belligerent expressions.

Ruijerd realized they would die in vain.

The first thing that Ruijerd did, was to break the Devil's spears that his comrades were carrying.

One by one they slowly returned, and they found themselves in a stupor.

There were those who groaned sorrowfully over the fact they had attacked their own family, and there were those who broke into anguished sobbing.

But not one of them said they still wished to continue having that pleasant dream.

There was no one there who was a weakling.

Everyone swore revenge on Laplace, and no one blamed Ruijerd for his mistake.

They were no longer devils, but they were no longer warriors with pride.

They were only sullied ghosts who desired revenge.

Ruijerd does not know what happened to the 10 people. He states that they are most likely dead.

After the Superd race laid down the Devil's spear, they were only warriors left who were just a little stronger than the average fighter.

They weren't even carrying their familiar spears. Using spears that belonged to others to fight, it should probably be impossible for them to survive.

But Ruijerd managed to break through and ran away, barely alive. After that he walked the fine line between life and death for three days and three nights.

The spear that Ruijerd carried belonged to his son.

His son broke the Devil's spear, and used his own soul to protect Ruijerd.

After that incident, Ruijerd finally got his revenge after several years of hiding.

He interfered in the battle between Laplace and the three heroes, and finally got his revenge.

But even if Laplace was defeated, there was no way to change the things that had already transpired.

The Superd race was persecuted, and their remaining settlements, beside the one that Ruijerd and his warriors destroyed, scattered everywhere due to that persecution.

In order to allow them to escape, Ruijerd continued to kill the Demon races' people.

Now Ruijerd doesn't even know if the Superd race has been completely annihilated or they lived on to build a new village.

He says that he hasn't seen another Superd for around 300 years in the Magic continent.

The persecution that the Superd race faced was terribly severe.

Ruijerd's counter offense was also like a raging fire.

The culprit to all this is Laplace.

[But I am also responsible for the Superd race's ill reputation. Even if I'm the only one left alive, I wish to erase this.]

And Ruijerd brings his story to an end.

The way he described things was inarticulate, and he did not use any words that conveyed or elicited his feelings.

But Ruijerd's regret, rage, disconsolation and all his other emotions have been relayed to us.

If all of these are made up, or his tone and speaking tone are all an act, I might respect Ruijerd in some other areas.

[This is really a terrible story.]

Simply put, it is a mistake to think the Superd race is an evil race.

It is unclear as to why Laplace would give the Devil's spears to the Superd race.

Considering the aftermath of the war, the Superd race might have been treated as a scapegoat.

If that is really true, Laplace is the lowest kind of creature. To the loyal Superd people, you should at least say something. Even if you treat them as a sacrificial pawn, you did not need to use a method like that to drag them down and abandon them.

[I understand. I'll help you as much as I can.]

Somewhere in my heart, the other me speaks up.

(Where are you going to find the time to help him?)

(Do you have the room to even care about someone else?)

(You didn't put in all your effort to do your own things right?)

(This journey is much harder than you imagine)

But I didn't stop speaking.

[Even though I don't have any good ideas, I think that as a child from the Human race I can help out and there might be some positive changes.]

But this is not just simply because of my kindness or sympathy, I also have plans in my mind. If the things that he said are true, this Ruijerd should be extremely powerful, possessing the same strength as a hero.

We are protected by someone strong like him. At the very least, the situation where we would be attacked and killed by Monsters shouldn't happen.

If Ruijerd accompanies us, we will have peace of mind during our journeys outside of town, but at the same time we will be at risk inside of town.

However, if we can eliminate this risk, then he will become our strongest fighting strength.

No matter what, he had bragged that he is a warrior who will never be taken by surprise attacks or night raids.

The possibility that we will be targeted by pickpockets or bandits will be greatly lowered as well.

Other than this, even though it's not something important and there's no proof to it. I believe that Ruijerd is one who doesn't know how to lie and can be trusted.

[I will make a promise with you, and I will do my best to help you.]

[A, ahh.]

Ruijerd shows a surprised expression, but it might be due to the suspicion disappearing from my eyes.

It doesn't really matter. I have decided to trust Ruijerd.

My trust has been cheated away so easily.

The past me would laugh through my nose even when I listened to a tear-jerking story, but I trust him easily.

A voice keeps resounding in my heart.

(It's fine even if I got deceived right?)

[But, the Superd race is really...]

[It's fine, Rocks-san. There will be a way.]

Ruijerd will protect us outside of town, and we will think of a way to protect Ruijerd inside of town.

It is a give and take situation.

[Ruijerd-san. I look forward to working with you from tomorrow onwards.]

Next Day.

"Good morning."

When we were leaving the village, Robin started a conversation with me.

It seems he will be standing near the gate again today.

"Good morning, are you guarding the gate again today?"

"Ah, at least until the guys who went out to hunt come back."

Come to think of it, even after last night the men never returned.

If that's the case, could it be he was standing out here all night long?

It reminds me of the guards in an RPG.

A simple job where you just stand there, whether it's morning, afternoon, or night.

Nevertheless, I wonder if he is the only guard that stands here until they come back.

Ah, the village chief is here as well.

Since it's this kind of village, the chief probably works quite a bit as well.

"Are you already going to leave?"

"Yes, we wrapped up everything in the conversation last night."

"Though, I still wanted to talk about my daughter?"

"I really want to do that, but we can't afford to take our time out here."

"Is that so?"

Unfortunately, that is the case.

I especially wanted to hear more about Roxy's childhood.

"After I'm back I'll try getting into contact again."

"I'll leave it to you."

After lowering my head, I wrote it in the memo of my heart to not forget the next time I meet Roxy.

"Ah, that's right, wait here just a moment."

It seemed like Robin just remembered something and ran back into the village.

After going into a certain house (most likely Roxy's house), several minutes later.

He returned with a girl who looks a lot like Roxy.

If you just wanted to call someone out, you could have just used telepathy is what I was thinking, but he seemed to be holding a sword.

I wonder if he's going to give it to me.

"This is my wife."

"I'm Rokari."

She seems to be Roxy's mother.

"I'm Rudeus Greyrat. You are quite young."

If it weren't for these people, I would never have been able to leave my house.

When I think that, my head seems to naturally lower into a bow before them.

"That can't be, young? This year I'm already 102 years old."

"That...that's still quite young."

Incidentally.

It seems the Migurd race stop growing at their adult height when they are around 10 years old and from there only start to grow older again around 150 years old.

"Roxy sensei looked after me quite a bit."

"Sensei? For that child to be teaching people, I wonder if something happened."

"She taught me about a lot of things I didn't know."

I laughed and said that, Rokari while blushing while saying "I see!"

I wonder if there's some sort of misunderstanding.

"However, it's great that you came right around the time I was the guard."

"That's right. It's really great we met. Roxy sensei really did take very good care of me. Since that is the case, would it be alright if I were to call you father-in-law?"

"Hawwa wa? Please stop that."

He rejected me with a serious look.

It was a bit of a shock.

However, his serious face look is a bit like Roxy and is quite nostalgic.

"Putting aside the jokes, please take this."

After saying that Robin handed me the sword he was holding.

"Even if Ruijerd is with you, if you're unarmed then it must make you feel uneasy."

"I'm not really unarmed though?"

While saying that I had already accepted it and drawn the sword from the scabbard.

A wide single sided blade.

The edge was 60 centimeters or so, on the small side.

It seemed to have a bit of a curved blade.

A machete? No, it's closer to a cutlass.

I can tell there are scratches all over showing it's long years in use, but the blade isn't damaged at all.

It appears to be well taken care of, the blade is beautiful, but I feel something like killing intent seeping out from it.

The entire thing appears to be dark grey, but when it reflects light it has a bit of an emerald green glow shining out.

"In the past, I received it from a blacksmith who stopped by in the village for a while. It's so sturdy that it hasn't rusted abit even after many years of use. If it's alright with you, please use it."

"I will gratefully accept it."

No need to hold myself back here.

This isn't a situation I can hold back in.

It's better to take whatever I am offered.

Putting myself aside, it's pitiful if Eris is unarmed.

She uses the Sword God style as well.

If she has at least one sword then it should help her feel a bit at ease.

"Then take this money as well. It's nothing great but it should get you two or three days stay at an inn."

Yay, an allowance.

After opening the bag I found a coin that was roughly carved out of stone and another coin made out of dark grey metal in it.

If I recall right, the currency used in the Magic Continent are small green coins, iron coins, scrap iron coins, and stone coins, these four types.

In terms of value they are the worlds lowest, even the most valuable small green coins are only about the same value as 1 of Asura Kingdoms large copper coins.

Iron coins are the same value as the common copper coins of Asura.

Incidentally, if you were to convert Asura Kingdom and Magic Continents currency into Japanese Yen it would give you an even lower impression.

The very cheapest stone coins are one yen.

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Asura Gold Coin – 100,000 Yen ($1,000 USD)

Asura Silver Coin – 10,000 Yen ($100 USD)

Asura Large Copper Coin – 1,000 Yen ($10 USD)

Asura Copper Coin – 100 Yen ($1 USD)

Small Green Coin – 1,000 Yen ($10 USD)

Iron Coin – 100 Yen ($1 USD)

Scrap Iron Coin – 10 Yen (10 Cents)

Stone Coin – 1 Yen (1 Cent)

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They are numbers that will tell you how great of a world power the Asura Kingdom is and how harsh of a place the Magic Continent is with a single look.

Although, the Magic Continent has its own market prices for goods.

Therefore, the magic races aren't really as poor as they may seem.

"Thank you very much."

"I really would have liked to take the time to have a good long talk about Roxy."

Rokari and Robin both said roughly the same thing.

After all, they're probably quite worried about their daughter.

She may be 44 years old, but if you convert her age to human values she's only about 20 years old.

If you call it worry, it's definitely concerning.

"If you want, we could probably stay for at least another day."

I made that suggestion, but Robin shook his head.

"It's fine. Now that I know she's safe. Right?"

"Yes. That child really couldn't handle living very well in this village."

She couldn't handle living very well here.

I guess that would be because of that one telepathy problem.

In the village you basically can't hear any conversation.

Everyone is silent.

I guess they are all talking with telepathy.

Roxy said she was unable to use or hear this telepathy.

If you can't talk to others and can't hear the conversations of those around you, that would certainly make you want to run away from home.

"I understand. Then, let us meet again someday."

"Ah, but, please excuse me from being your father-in-law?"

"A wa wa... of... of course."

He completely hammered the matter down.

I don't know if I'll ever see Roxy again, but eventually I'll return to pay back this money at the very least.

It will supposedly take at least three days of walking to reach the nearest town.

On the first day I immediately realized how much of a necessity Ruijerd was.

I'm glad he became our ally.

Since Ruijerd has spent a long time traveling alone, he knows all of the routes, and his preparation for camping outside is perfect.

Of course, he also has the living organism radar so keeping watch is his own forte.

This person is way too useful.

"If possible, could you please teach us a bit?"

"What will you do after learning?"

"We will make ourselves useful."

For that reason these next three days Eris and I set out on the path of camping mastery under the teachings of Ruijerd.

"First off is the campfire. However, there are no trees to be found for campfires on the Magic Continent."

Hmm.

Come to think of it, the first time we met Ruijerd there was a campfire.

"Then what do we do about it?"

"Hunt monsters."

On the magic Continent anything and everything leads up to hunting monsters to get by in the end.

"There's one nearby just in time. Hold on just a minute."

"Whoa, wait just a moment."

I grabbed onto Ruijerd's shoulder and stopped him.

"What is it?"

"Do you plan to fight alone?"

"Ah. Hunting is the job of a warrior. Children wait here."

I see.

It seems like Ruijerd was planning to keep going like this from here on out.

Well, for someone who is over 500 years old like Ruijerd, putting aside children we would be even younger than grandchildren.

Furthermore, Ruijerd is insanely strong.

Even if we just left it to him we would probably be fine.

However, if the worst case ever happens.

If for some reason or other Ruijerd is unable to move.

Otherwise in the case where if he were to die.

Eris and I with almost no actual combat experience would be left alone.

That could happen inside of a deep forest.

It could happen in front of a brutal monster.

In order to prepare for that time we should start gaining combat experience now.

Therefore, we need him to start teaching us how to fight the monsters.

No, that way of thinking about it isn't good.

Our relationship is Give and Take.

An equal relationship.

We aren't going to have him teach us how to fight, we're going to construct a method to coordinate our fights together.

"We aren't children."

"No, you're children."

"Listen here, Ruijerd."

I called out to him in a strong tone.

It seems he has misunderstood the situation a bit.

It won't be good if we don't state our standing clearly.

Neither side is above the either here.

"We will help you and you will help us. Even though our motives are different we will fight together as allies and as equal warriors."

Then I stare into Ruijerd's eyes.

With as stern of a face as possible.

Several tens of seconds passed.

Ruijerd came to a conclusion quickly.

"I understand. You're a warrior."

It was an "Oh my, what am I going to do with you" sort of feeling.

However, for now we've cut the guardian relationship and can take part in dangerous practice.

"Obviously, Eris will be fighting as well, right?"

"Of..Of course!"

Eris was staring with a bit of a blank face but she nodded as well.

Alright this is fine, good girl.

"Now then, Ruijerd-san. Please lead us to the monster."

The time for acting strong is over.

After all when it comes to negotiations you have to get your point across strongly.

The first opponent we came across was a monster called Stone Treant.

If you were to put it into a single word, Treants are a type of tree monster.

Trees that suck up magic power, turn into some sort of variation then attack people.

People bundle all beings of that nature into what they call Treants.

Even though it is known as a tree monster there a number of classifications and roughly two divergences.

First the type that has been confirmed all over the world, Lesser Treants.

This is when a sapling undergoes changes, continues to camouflage as a tree, and starts attacking people.

They are weak and slow, even a common young man wielding an axe could defeat it with no training at all.

Then there are the Elder Treants, trees that absorb magic power and nutrients from fairy springs in great forests then undergo changes.

Thanks to the overwhelmingly dense amount of magic power that is in a fairy spring, they gain the ability to use water magic.

In the case that a massive tree changes, Older Treant.

In the case that a dead tree changes, Zombie Treant.

On and on.

There are a lot of classifications but fundamentally they have the form of trees and attack whatever is nearby.

If you defeat the body and leave the seed, they will just keep multiplying on their own.

This behavior pattern doesn't change.

However, this Stone Treant is a bit of unique classification.

Of all things it mimics a rock.

I'm sure you're wondering how in the world a tree does that.

There's nothing strange about it at all.

Stone Treants turn into monsters from the time they are still seeds.

Normally they appear to be giant seeds, then when people get nearby they change into trees in an instant and attack.

Even though they are still seeds, it's not like they are as easy to discern as seeds from a Sunflower.

They appear just like rocks sitting around here and there, rough and round around the edges.

The thing they look the closest like would probably be a potato.

"Do you have any points that we need to be aware of when fighting?"

"Rudeus, you are a magician right?"

"Yes."

"If that's the case, then don't use fire."

"It doesn't work?"

"If you burn it then it won't work as fire wood."

"I understand now."

"Don't use water either."

"If it gets wet it will become difficult to use as fire wood?"

"That's right."

I see.

Ruijerd sees this monster as nothing but fire wood.

"Then we'll give fighting it a try with just Eris and I. If Eris gets into a dangerous situation please save her."

"Is there any purpose in not having me fight?"

"For the time being it's because you don't know how Eris and I fight. After that, Ruijerd-san will fight alone and we can use that asa reference."

"Understood."

Then for that reason.

Eris is the vanguard and I'm the rearguard is the shape we ended up fighting.

I need to be careful of Eris' skill with the sword from here on out.

I don't feel really good about sending the cute, cute Eris out as the vanguard.

However, she wouldn't be very useful protecting from the inside.

She can't really match up with other people very well after all.

Also, taking the chance to say it, we don't need Ruijerd as support either.

Therefore, Eris is free to fight as she wishes while Ruijerd and I support.

That sort of shape seems to be the most desired.

"Then Eris, I'll hit with a single attack from long range, then you go in while it's weakened and beat it down. For the most part I'll be saying out loud the name of the magic I'm going to use, when you hear that try to avoid getting in the way of it."

"I understand."

Eris took out the sword she just got and gave it a good swing to confirm the condition, then nodded ready to go.

Quite a bit of fighting spirit.

Alright I'm ready with my staff.

Fire and water are no good.

Going off the shape, wind doesn't seem like it would be very effective, so I'll go with earth.

I'm strong with earth.

After all, I've made a ton of figures with it.

However, this will be the first time I've ever faced a monster with it.

Let's go all out for the first time.

"Fuuu"

One deep breath.

Gathering the magic power in my hands.

An operation that I've done many tens of thousands of times.

In my current condition, even if my legs were to be cut off I could still use magic.

"Alright."

Creation. Rock Bullet model.

Hardness. As hard as possible.

Transformation. The tip of the shell with be flat with a small indentation in the center and the sides will have some notches.

Variation. High speed rotation.

Size. A little bit larger than a fist.

Speed. As fast as possible.

"Rock Bullet, Stone Cannon!"

There was a loud noise from the tip of the staff and the rock bullet went flying.

The rock bullet flew almost level with the ground at an amazing speed and impacted with the Stone Treant still in its camouflaged form.

[Bang]

A noise loud enough to make you cover your ears rang out and the Treant was blown into pieces.

Eris started running at the same time the bullet was fired off, but she stopped her feet at the same time it hit.

Then she started glaring at me.

"What was that about weakening! Do you want me to cut a corpse?!"

"So...Sorry, this is the first time so I don't know how to hold back."

"Jeez!"

After having water thrown on our very first battle together, Eris was raging mad.

However, I couldn't imagine that it would die in a single hit.

Normally I would arrange Rock Bullets with a Hollow Point.

As expected of something I took from the example of my previous world, the idea was quite dirty.

Then I felt Ruijerd staring in my direction.

"Is that staff a magic item?"

He was staring at my staff.

"No, it's just a normal staff. Though, the materials it's made of are rather expensive it seems."

"Even though you didn't use any Magic Circles or Incantations?"

"If I don't use it without incantations then I can't make variations to the bullets shape."

"I see."

Ruijerd went silent.

Even though he has lived for 500 years it seems voiceless incantations are rare even here.

"Then, is that your greatest magic?"

"No, I can make the bullet explode on impact as well."

"It seems like it would be better not to use your magic when your allies are nearby."

"That seems to be the case."

That was the first time I had ever hit something with it, but the destructive power exceeded my expectations.

Even if it just grazed it would probably be instant death.

It would be good if there was some kind of magic that I could use for support, but probably because I've always fought alone I can't think of anything.

I wonder how do the magicians in this world fight.

"Ruijerd-san, what kind of movements would be best to support when fighting with magic?"

"I don't know, I've never fought together with a magician."

Well, Ruijerd is a Superd race with a long history.

He probably has no need to try and copy other parties.

I'll just think about how to coordinate our movements from here on out.

For now let's just think about gaining some actual combat experience.

"I'm sorry for the trouble, but could you once more search for an enemy?"

"Ah, but, before that we have something to do."

"Something to do?"

Is he going to pray for the killed opponent or something?

"Gathering firewood. It's scattered around quite a bit after all."

I used wind magic to gather up all the fire wood.

After that, until the sun went down we got into four more battles while moving.

Stone Treant, Great Tortoise, Acid Wolf, Pack Coyotes.

Ruijerd finished off the Great Land King, Great Tortoise in a single attack.

It was a single attack directly on to the crown of its head.

A very smart and simple fighting style.

This is the skill of a man who has always fought monsters solo for 500 years.

I started to feel a bit embarrassed for feeling good about destroying a Stone Treant in a single hit.

Acid Wolf is a wolf that has acid coming out of its mouth.

There was only one so Eris defeated it.

She sent its head flying in a single cut while stepping in to attack at sharp speed.

If you were to compare it to Ruijerd it would be rough, but it's still a single hit.

Eris was covered directly in the blood that came out and made a bitter face.

I was thinking if it breathes acid then its blood might be dangerous as well, but it seems to be alright.

If this is how it is on the first combat experience then it's plenty.

Incidentally, the second Stone Treant was sent to an instant death by me as well.

I had intended to weaken the magic quite a bit when I used it, but the control is difficult.

Just enough to deal some damage but not enough power to kill it.

I wanted to get Eris some actual combat experience, but all my magic is too powerful so it ends too fast.

Until I can properly adjust the magic it seems like it's better if I don't aim any towards people.

Unless it's a situation where I have no choice but to kill I don't want to see something like a splatter movie.

Currently.

We are in battle with a herd of Pack Coyotes.

Pack Coyotes gather together into groups exceeding several tens of individuals.

It's not like they are always in a herd.

They sometimes split off individually.

Though it's not like they just keep increasing in number while fighting either.

They separate once every couple of months, increase individually, then one of them creates a pack and becomes the leader.

Just like that they keep increasing in number.

Even if you defeat them one after another, the leader will just keep switching as they are defeated and the battle will continue.

Numbers are power.

Just the fact that they can control such a herd so well makes them quite strong monsters.

Twenty Pack Coyotes.

It's such a number that an average adventurer would lose their life if they fought.

Eris is swinging her sword while learning all sorts of things from Ruijerd.

It seems she's having quite a bit of fun learning from him.

Even though today was Eris's first actual combat experience she doesn't seem to be bothered by it.

She continues to cut down one Pack Coyote after another with a confident expression as if to say it's only obvious with all the practice she does.

She has absolutely no hesitation to cut down living things it seems.

Well, I knew she wasn't such a sweet young girl since quite a while back.

I just continued to watch.

If it ever came down to it I thought about jumping in to support, but with Ruijerd supporting there was no place for me.

If I had done something it would have most likely just caused more problems than it fixed.

Nevertheless, I feel bored.

I feel so left out.

I need to quickly think up some sort of good formation.

However, Eris is quite strong after all.

In the end, she did make it to Advanced level of the Sword God style just before my birthday.

Recently I've felt that I can't win at all without magic.

If we're talking about Advanced then it's the same skill level as Paul.

Even though I say that Paul should still be stronger with Advanced level in Water God style and North God styles as well.

There's also the difference in actual combat experience.

Although Ghyslaine did say Eris has more talent than Paul.

I'm sure she'll eventually overtake him.

In your face Paul.

"Rudeus! Over here!"

Ruijerd called out to me.

Before I realized it the Pack Coyotes were annihilated.

"We can sell the fur from Pack Coyotes. We'll skin them. We have quite the good luck for there to be this many of them."

Ruijerd said that while taking out a knife.

In his mind the fact that there was a larger number just meant that the spoils were greater.

"Please hold on just a minute."

After saying that to Ruijerd I approached Eris.

"Hah.....hah..."

After skinning her third fur Eris' breathing was starting to become disturbed.

It wasn't even five minutes of battle in terms of time, but Ruijerd was only acting as support, almost all of them were defeated by Eris.

Obviously it would tire you out.

"Oh merciful mother of gods, please heal this one's wounds, and let her recover with a healthy body, Healing."

For the time being I healed her wounds.

"Thank you."

"Are you alright?"

"Hnnhn, too easy!"

While laughing proudly her face was covered in spilled blood so she wiped it off on her sleeve.

However, Eris was really calm even though it was her first battle.

I wonder if it's a natural disposition.

Just the smell of blood makes me feel like I'm going to vomit.

"Too easy, huh. Today is your first real combat experience, right?"

"There's no difference. It's all the same as Ghyslaine taught me."

Practice like it's the real thing.

The real thing is like it's practice. Or something like that.

Since Eris is honest, whether it's practice or the real thing she can put out 100% it seems.

Even if you do as you practiced and blood comes spraying out there's no real difference.

"Really now."

I returned to where Ruijerd was while wearing a bitter smile.

He had just been watching our exchange.

"What do you intend to do by making Eris fight?"

"It's not like she's always going to be protected by me. When the time comes she needs to be able to protect herself."

"I see."

"Speaking of which, Ruijerd-san. How was Eris' skill?"

I asked that while skinning the fur in the way I was taught.

Ruijerd nodded.

"If she trains with diligence she will become a first class warrior."

"Really?! Yay!"

Eris was jumping up and down. So ecstatic.

I guess it would make you feel pretty happy if you were praised by a historic hero.

That wasn't too bad for me as well.

If Ruijerd recognizes her talent.

From here on out it will be easy to come up with formations we can do.

"Ruijerd-san, from here on out what do you think about Eris taking the vanguard and I will be the rearguard, that sort of formation?"

"What would it be good for me to do?"

"Cover the middle ground. Please, freely move around as you see fit and cover our blind spots. Then, if anything dangerous happens, give out orders."

"Understood."

Just like this the formation was decided.

In several days of time Eris and I gradually built up our combat experience.

As well as camping.

Dinner was meat from the Great Land King Turtles.

There was too much to eat so more than half was turned into dried meat under Ruijerd's instruction.

Great Land King Turtle Meat.

Putting it quite frankly, it's not good at all.

It's quite raw tasting and hard.

Supposedly it's something that you cook for a long period.

However, Ruijerd grilled it in the fastest possible way.

Grilled by the campfire.

Speaking of campfire, when the Stone Treants die they gradually dry up.

For that reason they can be quite useful for drying clothes as well as making the campfire.

I think I understand now why Ruijerd doesn't see that monster as anything but fire wood.

"??"

In any case, this meat is terrible.

Who was it that said the meat from these turtles was good.

Ruijerd it was you.

This kind of meat is hard to eat unless you use spices or something to take away the smell.

Ah, I want to eat beef.

I want to eat rice and beef.

There were these lines in a manga I read in my previous life.

"Fried meat is great. Great because it's good."

The reality of those words reveal how there's nothing great at all about fried meat that doesn't taste good.

Remembering back to it, the meals in Asura Kingdom were good.

The meals were usually centered around bread, but meat, fish, vegetables, and dessert were all like a three star restaurant.

If someone like me born in the middle of nowhere is like this, Eris is probably feeling it pretty hard with her upbringing.

While I was thinking that she was eating them right and left with no problems at all.

"This works surprisingly well."

Lies..

No, this is that, isn't it.

A child who has only ever eaten the best of food one day finally gets to eat junk food and feels it's delicious.

"What is it?"

"No, nothing, is it good?"

"Yeah! I always wanted to try something like this."

It seems like after hearing stories from Ghyslaine she always longed to grill meat by a campfire and eat it.

She's admiring some really strange points.

"It can still be eaten if it's raw."

After hearing Ruijerd's words Eris's eyes were sparkling.

"Please stop."

I desperately tried to stop Eris who had put some into her mouth ready to try it out.

What are you going to do if there's a parasite in it, really?

Just before we were going to sleep Ruijerd taught Eris how to manage repairs on the sword.

For the most part I was listening to it as well.

Although, the spear that Ruijerd uses isn't even made of metal and the sword Eris is using is made of a special kind of metal that won't rust either way.

However, repairs are a necessity it seems.

If you just leave the blood on it as it is not only does it attract monsters, but the cutting ability goes down a bit.

Even more so, if you're a warrior you need to be able to take care of your weapon yourself.

Or so Ruijerd was telling us.

"Come to think of it, what is that spear made out of?"

Since I just thought of it I asked that question.

The Superd race's 3 pronged spears.

It's a pure white spear.

There were no ornaments, the blade and grip seemed to be one individual piece.

"It's me."

"Wha?"

"Superd make their spear from their soul."

It was a philosophical answer.

I see I see, I understand now.

That's the case I guess, life is in other words your soul.

The spear is your soul, life.

Life in other words Heart.

Heart in other words Love.

I guess it means that spear is filled with Ruijerd's love.

"Superd race have a spear from the time they are born."

While I was in the midst of confusion Ruijerd started to teach me about it.

It seems from the time the Superd race are born they have a three pronged tail.

Then as they grow taller it grows with them, around the age they start to walk it hardens and then separates from their body.

Even after it separates from their body they can use it as if it were a part of their whole, the more they use it the sharper it becomes.

Never breaking, able to crush anything, the ability to pierce through any number of things, the strongest spear.

Or supposedly that is how it is supposed to go, depending on the individual in question.

"Therefore, until we die we don't let go of our spears."

That was the face of a man remembering his mistake from 400 years ago.

Most likely his spear was far harder and sharper than any other of the Superd race.

How dependable.

However, that sort of thinking is not very good you know?

To be stubborn, is to be unwilling to accept others.

If you are unable to accept others then it means others will be unable to accept you.

That way of thinking is dangerous.

—

In no time at all three days had passed and we arrived at the town.

The Town of Rikaris.

One of the Magic Continents Three Great Towns.

The town that the Great Demon Emperor Kishirika Kishirisu used as a headquarters during the Great Human-Demon war.

Another name is Old Kishirisu Castle.

The first thing that those who see this town are surprised by is the location of it.

Of all things, it was built right in the center of a giant crater.

The crater acts a natural wall, no matter how many times enemies attack it will never fall.

Even now this naturally occurring barrier is still preventing monsters from invading.

In the center of the town is the partially destroyed Kishirisu Castle.

This castle was destroyed during the Laplace Campaign era.

It still proudly shows traces of the battle between the Kishirika Faction Demon King of that era and the Demon God Laplace.

Truly reliable outer walls, and a black gold castle with the shadow of its glorious past.

Those two icons tell tales of the past Great Demon Emperors' authority, and of the struggles of the Demon Races people.

The town of Rikaris is an honest town filled with history.

And finally, travelers should wait until night to behold the true beauty of this town.

– Excerpt from the book [Walking the World] by Adventurer Bloody Count

That is my knowledge of the place known as the Town of Rikarisu.

There are three entrances to the town.

A tear straight down the crater is one of them.

The crater is very high, unless you can fly through the sky it seems all other entrances are difficult to get in through.

Then, the second entrance has two guards.

In other words this town's security is strict.

I look at Ruijerd.

"What do we do?"

I remember the conversation from the Migurd race's village.

"Ruijerd-san. This town? They will let us in right?"

"I've never entered it. They always chase me away."

Leaving the human race aside, the Superd race is hated quite a bit.

That hatred is already at the genetic level at this point.

After seeing Eris' reaction I understood.

I thought things might be okay on the Magic Continent, but it seems that is not the case.

"Incidentally, with what kind of feeling do they usually chase you away?"

"First, when I approach the town the guards start yelling, a little while after a large number of Adventurers come running out."

The flow of events was playing out in my head following his words, starting with the guards yelling out "Stop!" and then a large number of muscular men running out in succession to attack.

"Then, it seems like using a disguise would be a good idea."

After saying that Ruijerd showed a sullen face and was glaring at me.

"A disguise you say?"

It seems there's something about that idea he doesn't like.

"Please calm down. First we need to enter the town."

"No, what is a disguise?"

"Eh?"

It seems he didn't know what a disguise was.

A difference in culture I wonder?

No, in the first place if he had known, they would have let him into the town.

"A disguise is where you change your outer appearance in order to hide your identity."

"Ho? How do you go about doing that?"

"Let's see? For now, let's hide your face."

For now I sat down placed my hand on the ground and started gathering magic power.

"Stop!"

There were soldiers positioned at the entrance of the town.

A shameless looking man with the face of a pig and a stern looking man with the head of a snake.

"Who are you! What did you come here for!"

The snake man was asking us our identity while holding the ken at his waist.

The pig man was looking at Eris with an indecent expression.

This pig is a lolicon bastard? Seems like we would get along.

"We are travelers."

Just as planned, I was standing in the front.

"Are you adventurers?"

"Huh? No, that's not the case. We're just travelers."

I almost immediately responded with a Yes, but we have nothing to prove it.

It wouldn't be strange to say we wish to join the Adventurers guild with Eris and my age.

"That man over there is? He appears suspicious."

Ruijerd was hiding his face with the full coverage helmet I just made from rock.

We wrapped his spear with cloth, so it looks quite similar to a staff.

Suspicious.

However, it's still better than the appearance of a Supard race.

"He's my older brother. He tried putting on the helmet of a strange adventurer, and he was unable to remove it again."

I think in the town there would be people who try to remove it for him, but?

"Hahha! That's the story of an idiot! If that's the case then it can't be helped. Try asking the old lady from the tool shop and I'm sure she'll lend you something to get it off."

The snake headed man took a step backwards while laughing.

They're not really all that cautious.

In Japan if a man wearing a full face helmet appeared, they would be pretty suspicious.

I wonder if it's because he's leading children.

Or else, the guy with a helmet on his head would be suspicious in his mind.

"By the way, is there a place to work in this town?"

"A place to work? What are you going to do after hearing about something like that?"

"It would be horrible if we couldn't get the helmet off my older brother and they demand money in return, we would have to work to pay for it."

The snake man then whispered to himself, "I see, that old lady might actually do that."

The tool shop must be quite the profitable business.

Well, not that it matters to us.

"Then, try the adventurers guild. If it's that place, even with no funds outsiders can earn daily wages."

"I understand."

"The adventurers guild is straight ahead in this town. It's a large building, so you'll quickly notice it."

"Thank you very much."

"If you register for the Adventurer's Guild, the inn cost will be a little bit cheaper. It would be a good idea just to register either way."

I made a suitable nod and pass through the gate.

Then, I come to a stop.

"Come to think of it, is this town always that strict with guarding?"

"No, recently, it seems [Dead End] has been spotted nearby. We've got to be cautious."

"What was that! That sounds frightening?!"

"Yeah, that's right, I'm praying it'll quickly go off somewhere."

"If you meet it you will certainly die, Dead End."

It's a scary name.

It must be quite the frightening monster without a doubt.

After entering the town.

A town with a bit less activity than Roa was spread out before our eyes.

However, I got the feeling that I had seen a similar organization to this town somewhere.

Near the entrance to the town were the merchant related inns, related stables, and stores all connected.

"Now then, adventurers huh?"

If I put together all the things I've heard about them so far, adventurers are similar to dispatched company employees.

A wide variety of people seeking jobs go to the Adventurers Guild and take on jobs to increase their status.

People call jobs given by the Adventurers Guild commissions.

Adventurers with confidence in their abilities are dispatched to take care of the job.

"I don't know if we'll be able to earn money, but would it be a good idea to register for now? It seems like they would ask for something to prove our identity, what do you think Eris?"

"Adventurers! I want to! I will!"

I noticed Eris' eyes sparkling.

Come to think of it, Eris has heard of countless stories from Ghyslaine's adventuring days.

Unexpectedly, it seems she longed to be one.

"Ruijerd-san, are you already an adventurer?"

"No, I've never been allowed in a town big enough to have an Adventurer's Guild."

I see.

I understand now, Adventurer's Guilds are only in larger towns.

"Well, if that's the case then it's better I guess?"

Plans are steadily being worked out in my head.

He can't be expected to always wear that heavy looking helmet after all.

If he always has to hide his face, then he'll never clear up the Superd races reputation.

If only we could do something great and then all of a sudden say it was a Superd all along!

It would be good if there was that sort of flow, but supposedly all the lowest rank adventurer jobs are in the town.

Rather, instead of trying to do something big, going around and doing a large number of these small tasks could be a better way to change the opinion of people.

If you do it well enough, his trust all around the town will go up.

There are no problems with Ruijerd's character.

If he could suddenly save the town from a strong monster, he might even be received well!

Speaking of which, saving a lost child, that sort of scenario could work as well.

That was proven in the Migurd village.

Rather than defeating monsters, it seems we should focus on saving people.

Come into contact with people with no prejudice.

If it was just Ruijerd's character, then that would be plenty.

However, for saving people this helmet is not very good.

Being unable to see his expressions is a minus.

Even I wouldn't be able to trust a guy whose face I can't see.

Should we go with a helmet that only hides the hair?

No, that would still be suspicious.

I don't know if there's culture in this world as well where people remove things they are wearing on their head or not, but I would find it quite rude.

However, doing small things here and there would take quite a bit of time.

It should be something that can spread the existence of Ruijerd throughout the entire town.

"Hmmm? What should be done."

First off is gaining a degree of popularity.

It doesn't matter how good of a thing is done, if it is done by a nameless young man, then there's no point.

As expected, in order for his name to be remembered, the first should be a large monster extermination.

In this world those with power are accepted is the tendency.

If we were to exterminate a monster with quite a bit of infamy, a good amount of popularity is likely to arise.

Although, in the case of the Superd race, it's already well known how strong they are, so it could have a reverse effect.

Wait a minute, but, in the case that there is a crisis approaching the town what would happen.

While everyone is hiding from the dilemma, singing songs of their fate, the one who appears before them is Magic Continent's Beautiful Young Man, Ruijerd, kind of feeling and then he defeats the enemy in one hit.

Oh, doesn't that sound kind of good?

The problem is, what that enemy would be, just before we heard a name that sounds relatively good.

"Ruijerd-san. Do you know what this being known as [Dead End] is about?"

If we could lure this monster known as [Dead End] into the town.

The town would then panic.

Then Ruijerd appears and defeats it.

A completed story of good defeating evil.

It's perfect.

However, the answer I heard was outside of my expectations.

"It's about me."

"What does that mean?"

What is that?

Wait, was that a philosophical answer?!

Is what I was thinking when...

"In this region that is how they call me."

Ruijerd = [Dead End].

Is what appears to be the case.

I see now.

I comprehend it now.

If you saw a Superd race walking around near the town, then you would definitely be quite cautious.

Ha??

Nevertheless, to be feared to the extent that he would have such a dangerous sounding second name.

Exactly how afraid of him are people?

Jeez, gate guard do your job a little bit more properly would you.

Surely, they don't even see the Superd race as people in the first place.

They're a Demon race that are out raging about, so there's no way they would possess enough intelligence to disguise themselves is what they must think.

"What is there that can be done?"

However, this second name, it seems to be quite well known.

We could be able to make use of it.

"There's not some sort of reward out for your head is there right?"

"Ah. That is alright."

Is that the truth?

That's the truth right?

I'll believe in you?

It would be bad if you were lying.

For now, a small change of plans.

First, we should check out the open air shops before we head to the Adventurers Guild.

The open air shops in the vicinity of the entrance are all the same no matter where you go.

Even though I say that, the market price was largely different.

Furthermore, the things that were being sold were largely different.

For example, a place that would be like a stable selling horses in Roa, is selling creatures similar to lizards.

I'm sure with all the rocks and hills in the Magic Continent, these sorts of creatures are more useful than horses.

Also, there are no large multi-person carts, but merchants all have their own individual carts.

For the long journey ahead, there are a number of things we want.

It's seems there's a necessity to buy things one at a time.

However, the things to buy this time are already decided.

After looking around at the market price and picking the cheapest place possible.

It's not like we're in a particular hurry, but we also don't have all that much time to spare.

The items I have my eyes on are dyes and a hood. Also, if possible something like a lemon would be good.

"Old man, aren't these dyes a bit expensive? This isn't a showcase?"

"Don't say stupid things, it's a reasonable price."

"Is that the truth?"

"Obviously!"

"Though, they're selling the same thing for half price over there?"

"What?!"

"The quality seems to be a bit lower over there though. Ah, this hood is good. If I buy this and that lemon looking thing over there together, will you give me a discount?"

"Boy, you're quite skilled in this business. I understand. Take it."

"Ah, that's right. Buy this from us. It's fur from Pack Coyotes and fangs from Acid Wolves?"

"There's quite a few there. Hold on a second. Two, three, four. How does 3 scrap iron coins sound for the lot?"

"That can't be the case. Shouldn't it at least be 6 coins?"

"There's no way that's the case. Then 4 coins."

"Okay, let's go with that."

After going through some browsing and negotiations, we can buy and sell all at the same time.

Since I don't know what the market price is, I have no idea how much money this really is.

Honestly speaking, just going by looks of things during negotiations, I got the feeling we just barely got a reasonable price.

Our remaining funds are 1 iron coin, 4 scrap iron coins, and 10 stone coins.

It's the money we received from Roxy's parents.

I need to make sure we use it carefully.

We entered an unpopular back alley.

It would be good if we didn't get involved with any weird guys.

No, if we get involved with them they could be willing to give Ruijerd all their money.

It could be a chance to increase our money.

"Ruijerd-san. If anyone tries to mess with us, let's go with half killing them."

"Half killing? All but dead, but not quite killed is what you're saying?"

"No, you can just normally dust them off."

However, unfortunately, no one came to mess with us.

No, honestly it was unfortunate.

Although, there were some pretty rough looking guys.

They most likely had no money though either way.

"Ruijerd-san. First let's dye your hair."

"Dye, my hair?"

"Yes. With this dye."

"I understand, you're going to change the color of my hair. You sure think up some interesting things."

I was admired.

It seems in this world there are no customs of dying hair a different color.

No, it could just be that Ruijerd doesn't know?

It doesn't seem like he's gone near very many human villages after all.

"However, wouldn't it have been better to go for a much different color than that?"

The color I selected was a blue color.

I chose the one as close as possible to the color of Migurd race as I could.

"No, there's a Migurd race village a three day walk from here. There should be quite a few people who know that. Since that's the case, from today forward Ruijerd-san is a Migurdo race."

"Then you guys are??"

"We are henchmen numbers one and two that you picked up somewhere around here."

"Henchmen? Not equal warriors?"

"It's that sort of setting. There's no need for you to remember it, but in order for others to think that is the case, I will be acting as such."

What we're going to do from here is an act.

I told Ruijerd of the setting.

From today on, Ruijerd is now the Migurd race young man Roisu pretending to be Superd races [Dead End].

The young man from the Migurd race known as Roisu has always wanted to be an existence feared by people.

Then one day he picked up two children.

Children who could use magic and swordsmanship.

They adored the Roisu who saved them.

"Do you adore me?"

"I don't particularly."

"I see."

These two were fairly strong.

Then watching them Roisu thought of something.

In the Migurd race I'm quite tall.

If I call myself Ruijerd the [Dead End], it would be easier to make everyone fear me.

Now feel free to go out and fight, the two of you go out and incite others well.

These two were children, but they were quite useful.

Using the two of them, he could quickly become quite famous.

"He's pretending to be me and using my name, an unforgivable man."

"That is true, certainly he cannot be forgiven. However, if the false Ruijerd does good things. What would people think about it?"

"What would they think about it?"

"He's very obviously a fake, but he's quite the good guy even so, is what they would think."

What is necessary is comedy and mismatch.

He's the type of that would deceive others, but he's actually a pretty good guy.

It's important to make others think that.

"Hmm?"

"The fake Ruijerd is a good guy. If those sorts of rumors float around then it's in the bag. Eventually the rumors will become vague and turn into a "Ruijerd is a good guy" sort of shape."

"That is certainly amazing, but will it really become the case?"

"It will."

I can assert that it will.

At the very least, the current Ruijerd here can't lower his current reputation any lower.

The current point is the lowest possible reputation after all.

"I see, is it alright if it's something as simple as that?"

"It's not simple at all. I'm not sure if we can make it succeed or not."

Plans are things that are always certain to fall apart at some point.

The more detailed and thorough you are, the easier it is to come up with further plans in the following half.

However, if all goes well, rumors will become rumors, gathering up, and Ruijerd's true nature will become clear to everyone.

"However, what if the lie gets out?"

"How could you say that? Ruijerd-san there's no lies at all about it."

"What do you mean?"

A Superd race calling himself as such while pretending to be a Migurd race.

If everything goes as planned, doing things that everyone likes is a good thing.

Even the name isn't false.

Roisu doesn't want it known that he's a real Superd race, so he calls himself Ruijerd in front of others.

Ruijerd of the Superd race.

The people looking at it from the outside will at their own convenience be mistaken that it's the Roisu of the Migurd race pretending to be Ruijerd.

That's why there's no lies about it.

The only one lying is me.

However, Ruijerd seems like he'll resist standing behind lies, so I'll stay quiet about that part.

"The other side will come to the mistaken conclusion that you're of the Migurd race at their own convenience."

"Hm? Ah, I see. I'm pretending to be myself, while Roisu is the fake? My head is getting all mixed up. What do I need to do?"

"Just continue as you do normally."

Ruijerd made a complicated face.

This guy certainly couldn't make it as an actor with his acting skill.

"However, please don't snap and kill anyone who comes at you with cheap provocations."

"Hmm? That is, are you telling me not to get into any fights?"

"It's fine if you do, but please act as if you are struggling. Let a few hits get in, slump your shoulders and make it appear like in the end you somehow or other won."

Even if I say that, I'm not sure if he could manage that sort of acting.

Is what I thought, but,

"Do you mean to go easy on them?"

It seems that will be alright.

"There's no way the real Ruijerd could be this weak, while at the same time, if it's the real thing he's pretty amazing, right? Is what we want to make them think."

"I don't really get it."

"It will make them think that this side is a fake and at the same time make the enemy feel better about themselves."

"After making them feel better about themselves then what."

"Rumors that the Superd race is weak will start to flow out."

Then, Ruijerd made a very grim face.

"The Superd race is not weak."

"I am aware of that. However, you are feared, because you are strong. If people feel you are a bit weaker, they could feel a bit more relieved like right now."

Even if I say that, we can't really let them think we're all that weak.

If there are still Superd race living in some unknown place.

They could start being persecuted again.

Balance is important.

"Is it that sort of thing?"

Well then, it's this sort of thing.

If we just keep wandering around aimlessly, we'll eventually give ourselves away.

"I'll be doing my best to support, so where we fall will depend on how much effort Ruijerd puts into it."

"Ah, I understand. I'm counting on you."

I used the fruit juice received from the lemon-like fruit to bleach Ruijerd's hair.

The original emerald green color was successfully bleached.

Then the dyes were applied for the coloring.

Hmm.

It's not really very pretty.

Rather, it's pretty dirty looking.

But, at the very least it's not a greenish color.

It doesn't really look like a Migurd race though? The difference in height is too big.

However, he doesn't really look like a Superd race either I guess.

Well, disguises are just right when they are pretty vague I guess.

A Migurd race like person naming themselves as a Superd race, but something that feels like neither or so.

"Also, I'll let you hold onto this."

I removed the necklace and put it around Ruijerd's neck.

"This is from the Migurd village, huh."

"Yes. It's something I received from my shishou as a graduation gift. Since then, I've always had it on me."

If he wears it then at the very least he will seem a bit more like someone with a relation to the Migurd race is what I think.

For those who are aware at least.

"It's a precious item. Make sure to return it. Absolutely, return it."

"Ah."

"If you lose it I'll seriously try to beat you up."

"I understand."

"In regards to what I will do specifically, I'll use earth magic to completely seal up the entrances to the town, then make magma flow into the town until the crater is completely full."

"Even if it involves other people? There's children among them as well."

"If you want to save the lives of the children, make sure you absolutely don't lose it."

"Hmm? If you're that worried about it, shouldn't you just keep holding onto it in the first place?"

"No, it was a joke of course."

"???"

Now then, I'll have Eris wear the hood.

Her red hair stands out quite a bit.

We need to try and focus the gazes on a single point.

"Eris, it's about this hood, but?"

After saying that and spreading the hood out, I noticed there were holes for ears.

How could this be.

It's like the kind of hood monks in Final Fantasy III would be wearing.

The color is not quite white, but it has a mantle like part flowing out the back.

It seems to be something for the Beast race.

This could have been a mistake to buy.

Eris isn't normally bothered by clothes very much.

However, if you see that Boreas style greeting you would understand.

She probably doesn't want to wear anything that associate her with the beast race.

"Um... Eris, it's about this, but..."

"Th! That! Wh, what are you going to do about it!"

"It...it's for Eris, could you somehow.... wear it?"

"Really?!"

Is what I thought, but it seems she was really happy about it.

That pose doesn't seem to be one of dislike.

"I'll treat it carefully."

After quickly putting on the hood, Eris had on a full face smile.

Well, it's that, right.

I don't really get it, but anyways, alright!

Now then, first off is the Adventurer's Guild.

What is necessary is comedy.

We can't go forgetting that.

I'll be praying it goes well.

The Adventurer's Guild.

A place where men of great strength and valor gather.

Those with confidence in their strength, those with confidence in their magic.

Those with swords, those with axes, those with staves, and those with fists.

Those who boast they are stronger than others, and those who laugh in the face of death.

Swordsmen clad in armor, lightly equipped magicians as well.

A man like a pig, a woman with the lower half of a snake, a woman with legs like a horse.

A place where a great number of races gather and congregate.

That is the Adventurer's Guild of the Magic Continent.

The Adventurer's Guild in the town of Rikarisu.

Its large door violently swung open, making a loud bang.

The Guild's gazes gathered towards the entrance, wondering what was going on.

There are very few who would open the Adventurer's Guild door so violently.

Did a party from somewhere return?

Are the guards here to request for backup for monsters attacking the town?

Otherwise is it just a trick of the wind?

Come to think of it, it was said that Dead End was seen nearby, but it can't be?

Thinking that, three people appeared in the eyes of the Adventurers.

The one in the front was a boy.

Still young. However, he had an expression full of confidence. A staff covered in cloth and clothes that appeared to be high class though covered in dirt.

Without flinching or wavering a bit he walked straight into this place filled with adults and those with frightening visages.

Several people thought to themselves what is going on here. His appearance was so different from his actions.

Or maybe it was a race that had an appearance different from their actual age.

The one hidden in the shadow of the boy, was most likely a young girl.

She had a hood covering her face so low that you can't even be sure.

However, in comparison to her age she was wearing a sharp and stubborn expression.

One could tell at a glance that she was used to the sword worn at her waist.

A number of men here recognized her as a skilled swordsman.

The final one was a tall man with a large build.

On his forehead was a red gem and on his face a cross shaped scar.

It matched perfectly with the physical traits of [Dead End]. There were those who were about to let out a cry.

However, that blue hair.

They quickly realized it was a mistake. It was a different person who looks very similar.

Bizarre.

Completely bizarre.

It was a group with not a single normal looking person.

It was eerie to even wonder why they would come here.

The boy yelled out with a loud voice.

"Heyhey, heyhey! Stop staring you bastards! Who do you think you're feasting your eyes on here?!"

No no, who is that, we have no idea, is what everyone was thinking.

"How could it be, that devil of the Superd race! Ruijerd-sama the Dead End! Be silent, be afraid, or run away!"

No no, there's no way that's the case, is what everyone was thinking.

The Superd race's hair is green enough to sober one on the spot.

It's not that dark and filthy blue color.

"Brother! It seems that they don't recognize the face of [Dead End] out here in the middle of nowhere. Jeez, if they just moved their legs a bit they could tell, but even after hearing the rumors no one can recognize you."

It seems that the boy is trying to assert that this young man is the [Dead End].

After thinking that, the boys loud performance starts to appear humorous.

In an instant the eerie atmosphere disappeared.

That young man who he called older brother.

Indeed, that face with the scar and red eyes certainly looks similar to [Dead End].

However, an important point is totally wrong.

"Pu..."

Who was it that let out the voice?

"What was that you bastard?! What are you laughing at?!"

The boy yelled loud enough to be heard in every direction with a face filled with anger.

That appearance was so entirely humorous that the entire guild was filled with stifled laughter and smiles.

Then someone said it.

"Puusuu..ckkhaha... But... you know... the Superd race... have green hair right?"

After those words the lobby of the Adventurer's Guild broke out into a huge fit of laughter.

After hearing all the laughing voices, I clenched my fist and thought "Okay" to myself.

The Adventurer's Guild.

I had a mental image of something like this, but it was quite a bit rougher than I expected.

Probably because there's a wide variety of races on the Magic Continent.

A man with the face of a horse, another man with sickles like those of a praying mantis, a woman with wings similar to a butterfly, and a woman with a lower body similar to a snake.

Many of them are similar to humans but somewhere there's a large difference.

Even more, those who don't have any parts similar to animals, aren't exactly human looking either.

There are those whose skin color is completely blue, as well as those with something like thorns coming out of their shoulders.

There are even those with two heads and those with four arms.

Quite similar to humans, yet something is quite different.

Thinking about it a bit, Migurd race and Superd race are quite similar to the Human race in comparison.

"D...Don't be making fun of brother! You know, brother saved us when we were being attacked by monsters in the wastelands!"

Without being overwhelmed, I started up the acting again at an appropriate moment.

"Did you hear that?! Dead End saving a person he says!"

"Hyahahahaha! Am...amazing?! He's a great guy!"

"Seriously! I want him to save me as well! Gyahahaha!!"

Normally I would be cowering with this number of people laughing and scorning around me, but because of the acting or otherwise because the people laughing are lacking so much reality, I was able to endure.

Or else, maybe, I've grown up a bit?

No, no.

Growing arrogant won't help.

In the first place, they aren't laughing at me right now, but they are aimed at Ruijerd.

There's no reason for my legs to tremble.

I'll be able to feel a bit more confident when the hostility is aimed directly at me and I can cope with it.

For now I'll check things out.

Taking a moment to check out if anyone in here thinks Ruijerd is the real thing.

Then, going with plan A that I prepared in advance.

"These guys can't be forgiven! Brother! We should do them all in!"

"Fuu...It's fine to let the guys who want to laugh do it."

By the way, plan B in the case no one started laughing was also prepared.

"Is it fine?? Really now!"

"Already, already pretending to be a big shot!"

"It..It's dangerous?! I feel like I might be apologetic!"

These guys, if they knew Ruijerd was the real thing would they apologize?

"Hnn! You bastards should be grateful for brother's leniency!"

I said that out loud and continued to check out the surroundings.

On the left there was a large notice board covered in an overflowing number of papers.

On the right there were four counters with staff members staring at us dumbfounded.

On the right then.

I lead the other two up to the counter.

After exchanging glances with Ruijerd, I raised my voice again.

"Hey staff! We want to register as Adventurers!"

I yelled it in a voice loud enough for the gallery to hear.

There was another burst of laughter from behind us.

"De..de..Dead End is going to be a completely fresh newbie he says?!"

"ge..ha..gggeho.??! My stomach hurts!"

"Amazing... I... I'm going to be the senior of that Dead End!"

"Th...That is certainly something to brag about!"

Alright, that's about enough I guess.

"Shut up you all. I can't hear the voice of the staff members!"

After yelling that all the Adventurers quieted down while grinning to themselves.

"Un...Understood. We get it."

"Th...The first explanation is important after all, right?! Pususu"

"kuku ku"

Alright, everyone is still busy laughing to themselves.

This is fine.

Now then.

It was a long 44 years.

Finally I have arrived at the homestead "Hello Work".

{ C-Editor's note: Hello Work is the Japanese government's agency for introducing jobs. }

Even though I have the qualifications of a Water Saint Class Magician, met allies on the way, and became known as "100 years of unemployment, Hundred NEET" finally?!

If it weren't for supporting the selfish young girl behind me...

Those who don't work, can't afford to eat!

Putting that aside.

"Then staff member-san. I'm sorry to make such a ruckus. Please treat me well."

A female staff member with orange hair grown out fangs.

A large chest with clearly visible cleavage in the clothes.

Although, there were three breasts lined up, so two cleavages were visible.

If you increase it by one, it's something that doubles, what's this.

"Eh? Ah, yes. Registering to be an Adventurer? Right?"

She hesitated for a moment after my attitude completely changed.

Well, if I keep acting like that then it will eventually blow our cover after all.

Just enough acting so they don't look down on us is, okay!

"Yes. Anyhow, we are newcomers after all."

"In that case, please fill out these forms."

We were handed three pieces of paper and a piece of charcoal.

All the papers were the same.

A section for writing your name and job, as well as things to be aware of and a code of conduct.

What are people who can't read supposed to do?

And, the moment I was thinking of that.

"If you can't read letters, would you like for me to read it to you?"

I see that's the case.

"No, that won't be necessary."

I read it out loud for Eris to hear.

Summarizing it out something like this.

==========

One. Use of the Adventurer's Guild

If one registers with the Adventurer's Guild, they will receive services available to Adventurers.

Two. Service Content

All Adventurer's Guilds throughout the world offer these services: job offerings, delivery of compensation and rewards, purchase of raw materials, and exchange of currency.

Three. Registration Information

Adventurers receive a card with their own information under their control upon registering for the Adventurer's Guild. It is possible to re-issue it if lost, but rank will be reset to F. Also, each area has it's own fine for it.

Four. Withdrawal from the Adventurer's Guild

If you request it, withdrawal from the guild is possible.

Re-registration is possible, but rank will restart at F.

Five. Prohibited Conduct

The below actions are considered prohibited.

1. Actions which go against a countries laws.

2. Actions which disgrace and cause the reliability of the guild to fall.

3. Actions which interfere or obstruct other Adventurers jobs.

4. Buying, selling, and trading of jobs.

If prohibited actions are discovered, a fine will be applied and Adventurers guild qualifications will be revoked.

Six. Breach of Contract Compensation

If you fail a job you have accepted you must pay compensation for the breach of contract, two times the amount of the job reward compensation. Repayment period is half a year. If compensation is not paid, Adventurers guild qualification will be revoked.

Seven. Rank

There are seven ranks from F to S based on Adventurers proven skills. As a general rule of thumb, you can only take jobs within one above or below your current rank.

Eight. Rank Promotions and Demotions

It is possible to raise your rank by succeeding a regulated number of jobs. However, if you feel that your ability isn't up to standard it is possible to remain at your current rank as well. Also, if you fail a certain number of jobs in succession, your rank will be demoted by one.

Nine. Obligation

In the case that a country is under attack by monsters and a request for assistance is made from the guild, you have an obligation to obey.

Also, if an emergency situation arises, Adventurers have an obligation to obey the guild staff members.

==========

Midway through Eris started to show a fed up face.

She's not good with stiff rules like these.

I'm not really all that great with them myself.

However, these sorts of things you need to properly read after all.

For now, it doesn't seem like there will be any problems.

But, before that.

"Staff Member-san, I have a question."

"What is it?"

"These words, do you have them prepared for any place?"

"Have them prepared for any place, for example?"

"Human language."

"Ah, if that's the case then it's alright."

"If that's the case."

I wonder if the language a minor race uses would be alright.

I'm sure, Japanese is probably impossible as well.

I wrote using Demon God Language.

It would be better if they believed me to be a Demon race who has the appearance of a youth, rather than a Human race.

"Eris please write your own as well."

I told Eris to write her own.

In the case of these contracts, it's better if you write them yourself.

Incidentally, all the conversations within the guild are in the Demon God Language.

She was wearing a quiet and sullen expression because she can't understand any of the words going on around us.

If she had heard and understood the scorn from earlier directly, she probably would have drawn her sword and attacked.

"We have no intentions of using one, but in the case that a false name is used, what would become of it?"

"There are no regulations. It's limited only to a registration name after all."

"Even in the case that a criminal were to write their name?"

"There is no set definition for criminal in the Magic Continent, so long as you do not cause any trouble with the Adventurers Guild there is no problem. However, if you were to have your Adventurers guild qualifications revoked, you will be unable to register anywhere within this continent."

"Is that alright?"

"There would be a problem if someone who never received a name from the time they were born in the Magic Continent. For that reason, it is not prohibited to use a false name when registering."

I understand now.

Each continent has a different jurisdiction and some differences between them it seems.

I considered the possibility that Superd race wouldn't be able to register and he should use the false name Roisu, but it doesn't seem like that will be a problem.

"In the case that we register on this continent, then go to another continent will there be a necessity to register again new?"

"No that won't be the case."

As expected right.

"After you have written, then please place your hand over here."

And what was prepared was a transparent board the size of an ero game box.

In the center of it a magic circle was carved.

Underneath it, metal looking cards were scattered.

Hmm. I wonder what this is.

"Like this?"

For now, starting with me.

Then I placed my hand down.

After the staff member confirmed that, they pressed the edge of the board with their finger.

"Name: Rudeus Greyrat" "Job: Magician" "Rank: F"

The staff member indifferently read out the contents of the paper prepared and then pressed the board again.

Then, the magic circle shined with a red light and quickly went out.

"Please kindly take this card, it's your Adventurer Card."

A completely normal iron plate.

Written there with shining letters was:

_ _ _ _ _ ——————————-

Name: Rudeus Greyrat

Gender: Male

Race: Human Race

Age: 10

Job: Magician

Rank: F

_ _ _ _ _ ——————————-

Is how it was written. In human language.

However, I understand now. It's that sort of Magic item.

Rather, if you were to use this, wouldn't it be simple to produce books with magic?

If they're using it in such a public place as the Adventurers Guild, shouldn't it be spread around in more places?

No, there might be some sort of mechanism to the plate here.

Name, job, rank were written on the paper provided by the staff member, but gender, race, and age can be read from the hand?

This is bad.

I thought to hide my race as human, however, not only age but race are exposed now.

Well, whatever. Something can be done about it.

_ _ _ _ _ ——————————-

Name: Ruijerd Superdia

Gender: Male

Race: Demon Race

Age: 566

Job: Warrior

Rank: F

_ _ _ _ _ ——————————-

Ah, could it be, this will show Superd race?

And the moment I thought that, Ruijerd card showed Demon Race in letters.

That's quite convenient, I feel a bit relieved.

Even though his age was known, the staff member doesn't seem to particularly mind it.

Is it not really all that strange for the Demon Races?

She didn't seem to mind the name Ruijerd Superdia as well.

I wonder if she thinks it's a false name or something.

That's rather rude, I even said we wouldn't be using false names just now.

Otherwise, could it be that it's not known Ruijerd Superdia is the real name of [Dead End].

For a while I've been hearing words related to dead end, but nothing related to Ruijerd.

Incidentally, his card was written in Demon God Language.

_ _ _ _ _ ——————————-

Name: Eris Boreas Greyrat

Gender: Female

Race: Human Race

Age: 12

Job: Swordsman

Rank: F

_ _ _ _ _ ——————————-

After Eris received her card, registration was completed.

Eris card was written in human language as well.

"My card and his are using different letters, but?"

"Yes, letters change based on the race."

I understand now, human language for the human is how it works.

"What about in the case of a half?"

"There are cases where races are mixed, but generally blood is stronger on one side and those letters are shown."

"In the case that a human were to get a card with Demon God Language and couldn't read it, wouldn't that be a problem?"

"In that case, place your finger on the center of the back of the card, then specify the language."

In order to test it, I pressed the center of the card, and said "Beast God Language".

Then, the letters changed.

I see. Interesting.

Demon God Language. Fighting God Language.

I kept changing it, then the staff member told me off.

"If you go too overboard, the Magic power in the card will disappear faster, so please be careful."

"In the case that it goes out what happens?"

"The guild will replenish it if necessary."

As expected there's some sort of mechanism within the card.

There's probably some sort of small Magic crystal embedded within it.

"If the Magic power disappears, is there no change to the information?"

"That is the case."

"If you keep using the same card for a long period, does the electricity decrease faster?"

"Electricity? If it's Magic power you're talking about then that isn't the case. The Magic power will normally last one year, when you complete a job it will replenish as well, so normally it will never disappear."

"How much does it cost to fill it up from empty again?"

"It doesn't cost any money?"

Then why were you telling me off about it a while ago, is what I was thinking, but there might be some guys out there who come in yelling that their card information has suddenly disappeared.

There will be "Claimers" in any world it seems.

"I understand, I will be careful."

Nevertheless, electrical charging mechanism, huh?

I don't know who came up with it, but it uses quite the interesting system.

If you were to make use of this, I think you could do quite a few other things here and there, but?

The Adventurer's Guild might have monopoly on such techniques.

Well, I won't think too much about it for now.

"nfufu"

Eris was grinning broadly while looking at her own card.

I know you're happy, but don't lose it?

"Would you like to register a party?"

"Party registration? Ah, we will."

I realized when the staff member said it.

It wasn't written on the paper, so I forgot about it.

We had planned to form a party from the start.

"Before that, I would like to inquire about the details of a party?"

"Yes."

And the staff member gave me an explanation.

.Party can have up to seven members.

.Only members within 1 rank above or below of the party leader can join the party.

.The party rank is decided by the accepted job.

.The party is averaged based on all party members.

.On completion of a job, all members of the party receive equal status.

.It is possible to take individual jobs while in a party.

.The party leader and a guild staff member are required to join a party.

.In order to withdraw only the guild staff member is required.

.The party leader has authority to forcefully withdraw members.

.In the event of the death of the leader, the party will automatically be dissolved.

.It is possible to create a clan with more than two parties.

.Clans in good standing with the guild will receive a number of privileges.

The clan portion doesn't really matter for now.

For the time being it's not really related to us.

"Then, what would like the party name to be?"

"[Dead End] please."

The staff members face stiffened up.

However, as expected of a pro. She quickly returned to a smile.

"I understand. Please allow me to see your Adventurers card."

We take out the cards we just put away and hand them over.

The staff member takes them for a bit and places them down then hands them back.

"Yes, please confirm it."

_ _ _ _ _ ——————————-

Name: Rudeus Greyrat

Gender: Male

Race: Human Race

Age: 10

Job: Magician

Rank: F

Party: Dead End (F)

_ _ _ _ _ ——————————-

Alright.

However, seeing the letters for Dead End is a bit embarrassing.

Even though it sounds that frightening when it comes from someones mouth?

The (F) attached to it would be the party rank I guess.

"That would be all for registration. Thank you very much."

"Yes, thank you very much."

"In the case that you would like to take on a job, please tear off the paper from that notice board, and return it to the reception counter please."

"Yes."

"The purchasing building is in the back so please be careful not to mistake them."

"In the back I see. Thank you very much."

Fu... Finally over.

Right away, we went over to check out the notice board.

The jobs we can accept are from F to E.

There aren't many jobs for that rank. Pretty much all of them are jobs within the town.

Storehouse organizing, food preparation assistance, registering forms, searching for a lost pet, extermination of harmful insects.

All of them appear simple and they all have low pay.

Incidentally, the jobs are written in this sort of form:

==========

F

.Job: Storehouse Organizing

.Reward: 5 stone coins

.Job Details: Transporting heavy objects.

.Place: Rikarisu town, house number 12, storehouse with a red door

.Period: half a day – full day

.Deadline: No deadline

.Job Owner Name: Dogamu of the Orute Race

.Notes: There are many things to move and not enough hands. Somebody help me. The more there are with power the better.

==========

==========

F

.Job: Cooking Preparation Assistant

.Reward: 6 stone coins

.Job Details: Washing dishes and transporting meals.

.Place: Rikarisu town, house number 4, bottom floor

.Period: full day

.Deadline: Until the next full moon

.Job Owner Name: Shinitora of the Kanade Race

.Notes: Setting appointments for customers when they enter. Help is needed. As a side note, taste testing would help out as well.

==========

==========

E

.Job: Searching for a lost pet

.Reward: 1 scrap iron coin

.Job Details: Searching for a pet that has disappeared. Capture.

.Place: Rikarisu town, house number 2, Kiribu House, room 3

.Period: Until it's found

.Deadline: No deadline

.Job Owner Name: Meiseru of the Houga Race

.Notes: Our pet has disappeared and hasn't returned. I saved up my allowance and made a job request. Somebody please help me search.

==========

None of them are jobs which you would party up to take on it seems.

Lower rank jobs are probably generally done solo.

Since the completion of jobs is shared equally, if you divide up labor of low rank jobs with a number of party members, you could rank up relatively fast I guess.

"For now, should we take on something simple?"

However, I wonder why searching for a lost pet is E.

Ah, probably because the town is large.

Also, the "until it is found" sounds pretty strict.

Since it's possible it could have died already.

However, she saved up her allowance, it's certainly a sweet little girl requesting.

If no one appears to help it's so pitiful right?

"There's none that let us fight a dragon or something?"

"There's an S rank. It's this."

"Really?! I can't read it."

"In the northern area a stray dragon has settled down is what is written."

"Can we win I wonder?"

"It would be best if we stop there. Dragons are strong."

"I see. However, subjugation type is good right?"

"Subjugation type are C rank."

"There's none lower than C rank?"

"It seems that is the case."

"I heard that in the start you usually fight goblins and stuff, but?"

"There are no monsters as weak as that on this continent."

Eris has Ruijerd read her the details of each of the jobs and said something rather dangerous.

It's good when Ruijerd takes care of things.

"Heyhey, pukuku, everybody of de...dead end...ha... That is... fufu, just a bit, kuku, high of a rank for you isn't it?"

And then the guy who has been grinning at us for a while approached the two of them while laughing.

A buff muscle macho man with the head of a horse.

In an instant I moved in front of the two and cut off the horse faced man.

"Shut up?! We'll properly take an F or E rank job!"

"Heyhey, you can't do that. Aren't I giving you advice here?"

"What was that?"

"Here, this job here. The lost pet search."

Rip, what was torn off was the job I was just looking at.

"This is a higher rank because the town is a huge area to cover."

"Heyhey heyhey hey. Your brother is that Superd race [Dead End] right?"

"So, what if that's the case!"

"Is the eye he has up here just for show? Even if the place is huge, with that eye it shouldn't even take a day to complete, right?"

Hm.

I see now.

Now that I think about it that certainly is the case.

If it's the type where we're looking for a living thing, with Ruijerd here it will be a simple matter.

For example if it's a cat, if it's him then.

Rather, what does he mean by advice?

Isn't he just trying to stir us up because he thinks we're fakes?

"Shut up! Leave us alone!"

Is what I said while rejecting him away, however with Ruijerd's ability the lost pet search will go well.

We should probably probably pull back for today.

"Brother! Let's go!"

"Hm? Is it alright if we don't take a job?"

"It's fine! If we were to take a job in this situation nothing good will come of it!"

Either way, all I had planned for today was to show our faces and register anyways.

Also, to check what kinds of jobs there are posted as well.

Activity will seriously start from tomorrow on.

"Let's go."

After we left the Adventurers Guild a huge roar of laughter started up.

"Heyhey, you're just going to leave without taking a job?!"

"As expected Dead End-san takes it easy!"

"Gyahahahahaha!"

Ruijerd was showing a bewildered expression.

Wondering if this was really okay.

This is okay.

For now we have succeeded.

Even after hearing the name Dead End, rather than feeling alert or nervous, they break out into laughter.

It might not be the ideal situation.

However, without a doubt we've taken one step forward.

At the very least, I am confident in that.

—

Thus, we became Adventurers.

After coming out from the Adventurers's Guild.

It has already become quite dark out.

Even though the sky is still a bit light, only the city is strangely dark.

I noticed that it was because the city is inside of a crater only a few seconds later.

There's a shadow cast over the city because of the high walls.

It will soon be pitch black.

"We should quickly find an inn."

Is what I suggested, but Eris was wearing a strange face.

"Wouldn't it be fine if we just camped outside of the city?"

"Well, don't say that. Don't you want to get a nice rest in the town?"

"Really?"

Ruijerd said that it didn't really matter either way.

More often than not we just leave it to Ruijerd to keep watch when camping out.

He can notice things approaching even when half-asleep.

I wake up hearing the sound of something exploding in the middle of the night and realize it's the sound of Ruijerd fighting monsters.

It's bad for my heart.

Well, the choice would be an inn.

I'm hungry as well.

I would like to buy something, but there's still some dried meat leftover from the other day.

In order to keep food expenses low, I guess we should restrain ourselves here?

Even though I say that, if our stomachs feel this unsatisfied, it makes me want to just eat until I'm full.

"Hey Rudeus, look!"

Eris said something sounding really excited.

What is it, where should I be looking?

The moment I thought that while raising my face, the inner wall of the crater was giving off light.

After the sun set, the light shows strongly.

"Amazing! This is amazing! This is the first time I've seen something like this!"

When the sun completely sets, the inner walls of the crater light up the entire city.

Almost like an amusement park when it lights up at night.

"Hmmm, this is certainly quite amazing."

Since I've always experienced living in places that are never completely dark out, I wasn't particularly moved by the sight.

However, I have to admit it was a rather luminous view.

Though, I wonder how it's shining.

"That is, magic light stone."

"Uh, you know about Raiden?!"

"Raiden? Who is that? I think some generation of Sword God had a name similar to that or something?"

Obviously the joke didn't get across.

{ C-Editor's note: His joke may be refering to Raiden the guardian deity of Earthrealm in the Mortal Kombat franchise. }

Knowing that in this world there's no one who would get those sorts of jokes is a bit lonely.

"Excuse me. Among my acquaintances there's a person with a name similar to that. He's a fairly knowledgeable person, I made a bit of a mistake."

"I see."

My head was stroked gently.

It's an expression almost like trying to appease a young child remembering his dead father.

It's not like Raiden is my fathers name.

My fathers name is Paul.

He's not bad as a father, but he's pretty bad as a person.

"So, magic light stone is?"

"It's a variety of magic stone."

"What kind of effect does it have?"

"During the day it gathers energy from the sun and when it becomes dark it shines like that.

However, it doesn't shine even half as long as the daytime."

I see, Solar Charging.

I didn't see anything like this in Asura Kingdom.

It seems useful so they should use it more often.

"Since it shines so well during the night, shouldn't it be more commonly spread around places?"

"No, it is a relatively rare stone."

"Eh? Then, what is over there?"

There appears to be more than enough to light up the entire town here, but...

"During the Great Demon Emperor's rule it was gathered here, supposedly. Look."

Looking where Ruijerd was pointing I noticed a partially destroyed castle.

"It was gathered just to make that castle look beautiful."

"They thought of something amazing, huh?"

The image of the Great Demon Emperor-san floated into my mind.

Eris dressed in bondage fashion yelling out, "Light is a necessity in order make me appear more beautiful!"

"No one tries to steal it?"

"Generally, it's considered a taboo, I don't know the specifics."

Well, supposedly it's the first time Ruijerd has been able to enter the town after all.

It's shining at a relatively high point, unless you can fly it probably wouldn't be very easy to take.

"It was supposedly quite the selfish request at the time it happened. Now, as you can see it's proven quite useful."

"Surprisingly, it might have been gathered for the sake of the people in the end."

"Impossible. The Great Demon Emperor is famous for being quite lazy and selfish."

I see, Lazy and Selfish.

If they are still alive, I'd love to meet them.

It's surely a Succubus-like bitch older sister type I'm sure.

"I guess this would be the case of, reality is stranger than fiction."

"Is that a saying from the human race?"

"Yes, it is. For example the Superd race are really a kind race after all, right?"

My head was stroked.

Having my head stroked at this age feels a bit odd.

Is what I was thinking, but after giving it more thought.

A mentally middle aged man in his 40s, having his head stroked by a man whose real age is 560 that sort of situation.

I don't really know?

Then, taking out a zero.

The situation would be a child with the age of 4 having their head stroked by a man with the age of 56.

Wouldn't that be a situation one could gently smile at?

"Hey! I want to see the castle!"

Eris pointed her finger at the partially destroyed Demon Castle of Darkness.

However, I reject that option.

"We can't today. Let's go find an inn."

"Why not?! Isn't it alright, just a bit?!"

Eris was swelling up her cheeks.

Seeing that I felt it might be fine for just a bit.

However, Ruijerd said it wouldn't be light for as long as the day.

It wouldn't be funny if by the time we arrived at the castle it stopped shining.

So...

"Recently, I've been feeling really tired. Let's go to an inn."

"Eh? Are you alright?"

Feeling tired.

That's right.

Travelling around to all these places I'm unfamiliar with is tiring, but my body also feels quite heavy lately.

It's not a problem to move around while fighting monsters, but it feels like I get tired faster than normal recently.

I wonder if it's anxiety?

"I'm alright. Just for a little bit."

"I see? Then, I'll be patient for a bit."

Patient.

Those words would have never come from the Eris of a little while ago.

Eris is properly growing up a bit.

Is what I was thinking while we were moving towards the inn.

The Wolf Claw Inn.

One room.

One night. 5 stone coins.

The building is pretty decrepit, but it's a fairly decent price aimed at beginning adventurers.

If you pay 1 more stone coin it also includes breakfast and dinner.

Also, if a party of more than 2 adventurers is staying in a single room, meals are free.

Since it's aimed at beginners, there are a number of beds and the price is meant to be split evenly.

The entrance is a lobby combined with a bar.

There aren't a large number, but there's both counter seats and table seats.

Just as expected from an inn aimed at beginners, there was a table with three young adventurers seated.

Even though they are young, they should still be older than me, and about the same age as Eris.

All are young men.

They were staring at us rudely.

"What should we do?"

Ruijerd was waiting for my response.

It was a look asking if we should keep up with the act even here.

"Let's not do it here."

I thought about it for a bit then stopped.

"I don't want to have to worry about it at the place where I'm going to sleep."

I don't know how many nights we're going to have to stay the night here.

However, they are still children.

If the place we stay is the same, then they should realize Ruijerd is a good person from seeing his actions.

"Our party has three people. For now, we'll go three nights worth."

"Alright. What are you going to do for meals?"

The innkeeper is rather unsociable.

"We'll count on you for meals."

For now we paid the cost of three nights at the inn.

It's good that the price of food is nothing.

Left over was, 1 iron coin, 3 scrap iron coins, and 2 stone coins.

Converting it to stone coins, it would be, 132 stone coins.

"Ar..Are you guys beginners as well?"

While I was listening to the rules from the innkeeper, the newbies nearby called out to Eris.

The guy in the back.

His hair was white, well, you couldn't really call him bad looking.

I'll give him an above average.

The other two were... well, bishounen types I guess?

{ C-Editor's note: Bishounen - beautiful boy. }

One was a rather strong built 4 armed boy, who looked like he was raised quite proudly. Another was a boy with a beak and feathers on his head.

Well, yeah.

I guess you couldn't really call them bishounen.

The type was quite different.

If the first guy was "normal", the remaining two would be "rough type" and "light type" I guess.

"W..We are as well. How about we have a meal together?"

Really, flirting?

These kids are getting in over their heads.

However, his voice is trembling a bit.

I can't say it's not humorous.

"We could discuss tricks when taking on jobs and such."

"Haaaa."

Eris sighed while looking away.

As expected of Eris-san!

Completely ignoring someone trying to flirt with you!

Well, I guess it would be because you can't understand the words as well.

"Hey, just a little bit is good. That little brother over there you can join as well."

"???"

I was about to go in to help her, when Eris started to move away from them.

I know that technique.

It's something Edona-san taught her in manners class.

[Methods to avoid nobles you don't want to interact with. Basics chapter!]

What are you going to do, boy?

A gentleman would fall back here.

"Don't ignore me."

The boy was not a gentleman.

Getting irritated he grabbed onto Eris hood and pulled it strongly.

Eris was getting pulled backwards, but she didn't move very far.

Her legs had been trained pretty well after all.

The boy didn't stop pulling as he was getting annoyed. (!)

Since he's an Adventurers he must be pretty proud of his strength.

[rippp]

The cheap hood made a bad sound and ripped.

"Eh?"

After hearing that sound, Eris looked at the ripped hood.

[crack]

I certainly heard that sound.

The sound of Eris snapping.

"What are you doing?!"

Eris yelled out with a voice loud enough to shake the inn.

Using Boreas Punch while turning around.

The punch taught by Sauros and trained by Ghyslaine accurately landed on the face of the boy.

I thought his neck would rip to the point his face twisted around in the direction of the punch.

His head hit the floor while falling and he lost consciousness in a single hit.

Even an amateur like me could tell it was a punch that had quite the destructive power.

If the "Strongest Executioner" was here right now he'd be saying "What a punch!" I'm sure.

I guess that's the fate that awaits one who tries to forcefully hit on someone.

Learning from this danger, I'm sure he'll remember not to try and hit on Eris again.

Lesson learned.

Now then, before the other two jump in to fight, I guess I should jump in to stop it.

"Who do you think I am? Learn your place!"

However, Eris didn't stop with only one attack.

Boreas Kickkkk~

The kick which she was taught by Sauros, trained and completed by Ghyslaine solidly landed in the solar plexus of the second victim.

"Guwaa?!"

The boy with four arms groaned in agony and fell to his knees.

There she finished him off with a knee kick.

The boy was blown away with his jaw sent flying upwards.

"Eh? Eh? Eh?"

The last bird boy couldn't understand the situation that was happening.

Even then, he was preparing for Eris's attack by going for the sword at his waist.

Going for his sword is a bit overboard.

I was going to use magic to seal their movements. (!)

However, the attacks Eris was making were several times more overboard.

Faster than the bird boy could draw his sword she solidly landed a hit on his jaw.

Even though the bird boy shouldn't even have had whites in his eyes, he showed them.

In an instant all three had become powerless.

Then Eris walked to the first boy and started kicking his head like it was a soccer ball.

After the first hit the boy regained consciousness, but he was unable to do anything so he just rolled up into a ball.

Eris just kept kicking the boy time and time and time again.

"This is! the very first! thing that Rudeus ever bought for me!"

Oh my! Eris-san!

She thinks that much about me! (!)

Even though it was just that cheap thing we bought because your red hair would stand out?!

This old man is feeling tight in the chest!

"I'll make you regret it forever! I'll crush them!"

What will you crush?

I don't know what is what, it's too scary to listen.

Eris kicked the boy over onto his back, grabbed one of his legs, and said something frightening with a frightening look.

The boy who had just woken up had no idea what she was saying in a different language, but most likely he knew what she was about to do.

He tried to apologize, begging for forgiveness, and run away.

However, Eris wasn't willing to listen.

Eris wouldn't let him get away.

She wasn't such a sweet woman.

Eris does it thoroughly.

That boys fate is the same as mine was three years prior, such a sad fate.

"Eris, wait!"

Here, I finally stepped in to stop it.

It all happened so fast I was a bit late to step in and stop it.

"Hold it back! Eris, you can't go any further than that! House!"

"What are you doing, Rudeus! Don't get in my way!"

I grabbed her from behind to stop her.

My hands were trembling as I grabbed her chest.

It was a soft sensation.

However, I didn't have the leisure time to enjoy that.

Eris was still struggling about to crush the boy.

The boy didn't understand.

He didn't know what was what and was just afraid.

"Sew it, it will be fine if we sew it! I'll sew it! So, let them go! Going that far I feel bad for him!"

"What?! Hnnnn!"

After desperately trying to stop her, Eris finally stopped struggling, but still was showing an angry expression.

After letting go of her, she shrugged her shoulders and walked towards Ruijerd.

Ruijerd was sitting in a seat at the bar watching us as if he had seen a laughable spectacle.

"Ruijerd-san as well! Please help me stop them next time!"

"Hm? It's a fight between children right?"

"It's a guardians job to stop a child's fight!"

The difference in ability was clearly too large in this case, wasn't it?(!)

"Are you alright?"

"Ah, ah... I'm alright."

I used healing on the defeated boys and woke them up.

Somehow, there was a feeling of comradery.

"I'm sorry about that. She can't speak in Demon God language."

"Th...that was scary... Wh... why did she get angry?"

"She hates being annoyed and her hood was important to her, I guess?"

"I... I see? Can you tell her I'm sorry about that?"

I looked at Eris and she was staring at her hood, glaring, and grinding her teeth.

She was making a face that said she will never forgive them.

It's been a while since I had seen that face.

Putting it into words, it's a face I hadn't seen since the first time I met her.

A face like she's on the verge of snapping at any moment, that sort of face.

"If I talk to her right now, I'll probably be beaten as well."

"I... I see. She's cute, but scary."

Recently I had been thinking she was more graceful but...

I guess she was just putting on that sort of face as a front.(!)

Even though I thought she had grown a bit, it's a bit of a shock.

"That's the case. She's cute. So, you shouldn't call out to her so leisurely."

"Yea..Yeah... That's right."

"Also, if you ever think you want to get revenge for this time, you should reconsider it. This time was an unavoidable accident so I stopped it, but next time you might lose your life."

I completely nailed in the matter of fact.

Shortly after the boy woke himself up, checked the back of his head for a bump, and calmly told me his name. (!)

"I'm Kuruto. You are?"

"I'm Rudeus Greyrat. The girl from before is Eris." (!)

After he named himself the other two boys came over.

The two who got beaten up because of Kuruto.

"Bachirou" the rough four armed type.

"Gaburin" the bird-like type.

The two said those names, walked over to Kuruto and all three took a pose.

"We three combined are thus called, "Tokurabu Village Gang!""

"???"

Ah? The three took a pose like Naekusukurameshon.

{ C-Editor's note: A superhero pose. }

I honestly thought it was lame.

What do you mean by gang? More like band of thugs.

Speaking of which, where is Tokurabu Village anyways?

"We will soon be rising to D rank, and we wanted a girl who is a magician so we called out to her."

"A girl who is a magician?"

Where is such a person here?

The only magicians here is me.

It's not like anyone is wearing anything similar to a magician as well.

Hmm? Something similar to a magician?

"Could it be, you thought Eris wearing the hood was a magician?"

"Yeah. After all, the ones who wear a hood are magicians, right?"

"She's wearing a sword right?"

"Eh? Ah, it's true."

It seems the sword on her waist didn't enter their sight.

Certainly, they are the types who only see things that are convenient for themselves.

"You're a magician right? If you can use healing magic that's amazing."

"Well, for the most part."

"How about both of you joining us?"

The gang?

Me?

Don't even joke about that.

Rather, after Eris beat them down that hard, these guys still haven't learned their lesson?

"If I were to join, that person over there would be joining as well."

I pointed my finger at Ruijerd.

The two of them were talking about something at the bar table.

It seems like Ruijerd was instructing Eris on something.

Eris was silently listening and nodding to that.

"Eh? That person is in your party as well?"

"Of course. His name is Ruijerd."

"Ruijerd?? What's the party name?"

"Dead End."

After hearing that, they made a face that said, "Huh?"

What kind of things are you calling yourself?

"That name, is it alright?"

"We have the real thing's permission after all."

"What does that mean?"

I meant that as a joke.

However, it's the truth.

"Well, isn't it alright. Since that's the case, we can't join together with you guys."

It seems pointless to join together with these guys anyways.

It's not like we want to do the "friendly Adventurers play games" thing, after all.

"I see, but, don't regret it. We're going to become famous in this city after all. We won't let you into our party after the fact, okay?"

Famous you say?

No, but, is it that sort of thing?

They've just made their Adventurer's debut in the city. Youngsters with a future full of hopes.

I'm sure they received a very joyful welcoming from the Adventurer's guild just now.

However...

"You can say that quite well, for all three of you not being able to do anything to Eris."

"Th...That was us letting our guards down.."

"Are you going to say the same thing on the plains of the Magic continent?"

"Gu..."

He's admitted defeat.

It's quite a good feeling.

As expected, the Pack Coyote Lions of the Magic Continent Savannah Plains, their power of persuasion is different.

I parted with the "Tokurabu Village Gang".

After finishing our meals we went to our room.

It was a room with three fur beds.

"Hah.."

I silently sat down on the bed.

I'm tired.

Today was tiring.

My condition isn't all that great right now, but with meeting, being laughed at, and made fun of by people, I'm feeling mentally worn out now.

Even if that was acting.

"??"

Eris was looking out the window.

There was the gradually darkening view of the city.

The partially destroyed castle is certainly a luminary view, but you have quite the leisure to enjoy that view in the background.

There are a lot of things that we need to think about right now.

Even so, you're going to throw it all onto me, huh.

How easygoing.

No, let's stop with the negative thoughts there.

The reason she's not thinking about it is because she trusts me.

As proof of that, she's not really being very selfish right now, right?

(She's not being selfish, but she is getting into fights though...)

I started to think after laying down and staring at the ceiling.

What are we going to do from now on.

The things we need are, that's right, first is money.

Three nights in this room costs 6 stone coins.

Thanks to the service towards Adventurers it's 5 stone coins.

For the three of us, that is 15 stone coins a day.

We have to earn at least that much at the very least, if not more.

However, from what we saw on the jobs board, the rewards from F rank jobs are roughly 5 stone coins.

E rank jobs are all roughly 1 scrap iron coin.

If it's just one person, taking one F rank job per day, it will pay for the cost of the inn, as your rank goes up the rewards for jobs increase, and you save up money.

F and E rank jobs are fundamentally all jobs around the town, however, D rank and above the number of harvesting jobs increases.

Save up money from E rank jobs, buy equipment for yourself then go off to do a D rank job.

It's that sort of system. It's well made.

[One day worth of lunch costs. Including consumption costs, it will be around 20 stone coins. We have to take at least one job per day, and earn 10-15 stone coins. The current amount of money we have converted to stone coins is 132 coins.]

It won't even last two weeks.

It will disappear in the blink of an eye.

We won't last unless we take two or three jobs per day.

If we were to divide up the labor we should be able to do at least 20 stone coins per day.

However, if we were to let Ruijerd work on his own, his identity could be exposed.

Eris can't understand the language so it would be a pain for her to take on a job as well.

It's the quick tempered Eris after all.

She could get into a fight at the work place.

Even more so, if we work in different places, the amount of publicity Ruijerd gets won't increase.

If we rank up the problem of money will be solved.

If it's combat based jobs, Ruijerd and Eris are made for them.

We could quickly get onto the tracks.

On the other hand, the subjugation jobs are fundamentally C rank.

If we could get to D rank within two weeks, we could probably manage it.

However, it would be impossible to do that with one job per day.

I missed the chance if there was some way to take on multiple jobs at once, but...

It seemed like there was no method to jump up multiple ranks based on ability.

The only way to progress is to follow the straightforward path ahead.

Also, my condition hasn't been very good lately.

I think we'll be alright, but it is possible Eris or I could catch some illness that can't be healed with detoxification magic.

Moreover, we don't know in what situations or for what purposes we might need money.

We need to keep buying dyes to color Ruijerd's hair as well.

We can't just keep wearing the same clothes as we have been as well.

Though our clothes were originally pretty durable and I can clean them pretty quickly with magic as well.

Forcing the moisture in clothes to evaporate is simple after all.

However...

Using magic to clean clothes is causing quite a bit of damage to the cloth.

They could tear in the future.

I'd like to find a change of clothes sooner rather than later.

I'd like some soap as well.

Lately Eris and I have only been wiping ourselves down with hot water after all.

Life necessities are going to keep on appearing from here on out.

Money is here.

Should we go into debt?

If we look we could probably find a loan shark even in this city.

No, we should avoid going into debt as much as possible.

At the very least while we have no method to pay it back.

Might as well sell, "Arrogant Water Dragon King, Akuahatia" now?

No, that would be a final resort.

It's something Eris gave me for my birthday, not something I can so easily let go.

[I can't believe I'm having to worry about household expenses?]

It reminds me of my previous life when I would cheat my parents into giving me money.

It was a painful scene.

I don't ever want to remember it again.

It also reminds me of several years ago, when I asked Paul to pay for two peoples worth school expenses.

It seems I was a bit naive about money.

[Rather than reflecting back on that, go out and earn money]

What can we do to efficiently earn money.

Take jobs everyday.

No, rather than doing jobs, it might be better to go out and hunt monsters on the plains.

However, we can't spread the name of "Dead End" if we do that.

In order to spread the name of "Dead End" we need to raise our Adventurers rank up.

Surely, it will help out in the future as well.

The guild pays well for materials from monsters as well.

However, do we have the free time to do something like that?

Putting aside the matter with Ruijerd, first we need to save up money and build a foundation for our survival, right?

[My thoughts are going around in circles?]

Save up money, raise Ruijerd's fame.

The hard part is that we need to do both of them at the same time.

[It would be good if there was some sort of method to do it]

Unable to think of anything, I quietly fell asleep.

Dreaming.

A white place.

A place with nothing.

And an obscene guy is standing there.

Simultaneously, I feel disgust rising up within me.

Again, I sigh.

What is it this time.

I ask the mosaic bastard while feeling irritated.

I'd prefer if you make this as short as possible.

"This time it's not complicated right? Since you were relying on Ruijerd, you made it to the town right?"

Certainly.

However, consider Ruijerd's personality.

Even if we had run away on the spot, he would have followed after and protected us.

"It seems you trust him quite a bit. Yet, why don't you trust me?"

You don't know why?

Even though you call yourself God?

"Well now, rather than that, it's the next advice."

Yes, Yes, I understand.

Let's end this as quickly as we can.

I don't like this sensation and I don't like hearing the mosaic bastards voice.

During Rudeus' dreams it had become thinner, this sensation of being a shitty NEET that was his previous life that is.

If I'm going to be forced to listen to it in the end, I'd prefer if you just tell me it from the start.

"That's mean."

Either way, I'll just end up dancing in the palm of your hand anyways, right?

"That's not the case. How you move depends on you."

No need for pointless talk, quickly tell me and get this over with.

"Yes Yes. Rudeus take the job to search for a missing pet. If you do that your worries will be resolved."

Resolved. Resolved. Resolved.

My consciousness sunk while hearing that echo.

Middle of the night.

I wake up.

I saw a bad dream.

Honestly, I wish I wouldn't see those visions.

He comes out with such a good timing.

There's no mistake he's an evil god.

A skilled evil god who is good at manipulating the weakness in people's hearts.

"Fuuu."

Sigh.

I look to the left.

Ruijerd is sleeping there.

Rather than on a bed, for some reason he's sleeping in a corner of the room holding his spear.

I look to the right.

Eris is awake.

Sitting on the bed while holding her knees, looking outside of the completely dark window.

I quietly get up and sit down next to her.

I look out the window.

There's only one moon in this world as well.

"Having trouble sleeping?"

"Yeah."

Eris nods while staring out the window.

"Hey, Rudeus."

"Yes?"

"Will we be able to return?"

A worried face.

"That is..."

I feel embarrassed about my own uncertainty.

I thought she wasn't thinking about it at all.

She is thinking about this situation as an Adventurers with no worries at all and just enjoying it is what I thought.

That's wrong.

She was worried as well.

However, she was acting so that I wouldn't find out about that.

She's got to be feeling stressed as well.

That's why she got into that fight.

I didn't realize it.

How can this be.

"We will be able to return."

I gently embrace her and she rests her head on my shoulder.

Eris hasn't taken a satisfactory bath in a few days.

It's a completely different scent than the one she used to give off.

However, it's not a bad scent.

Since it's not a bad scent, it seems like my kikanbou is going to go wild.

{ C-Editor's note: Kikanbou translates to demon's metal rod or demon with spike club. }

Patience!

Patience?!

Until we get home I'm the thickheaded type.

The situation is different from that time with Sylphy.

This time, I have a reason I have to be patient.

It's a flimsy reason, but I don't want to take advantage of her while she is feeling uneasy.

I don't want to do something so underhanded.

"Hey, Rudeus. Is it alright if I leave it to you?"

"It's okay to feel safe. I'll make sure we can return no matter what."

Ah, lady Eris is so cute when she is meek like this.

I understand old man Sauros' feelings.

This will make you want to spoil her.

Rather, what happened to the old man I wonder.

No.

Right now, it's better not to think about it.

"Let's give it our best. Eris you should go to sleep. It's going to get busy starting tomorrow."

I pat Eris on the head and return to my own bed.

I meet eyes with Ruijerd.

He overheard us it seems.

It's a bit embarrassing.

However, he closed his eyes soon after.

It seems he's going to pretend he didn't hear us.

Ah, he's a good person.

If it was Paul he would have gone straight into teasing us.

After all, it seems I can't just put off things about this person.

However, Paul, huh.

I wonder if everyone in Buina Village is doing well.

I wonder if Paul and Sylphy are worried.

I need to send a letter.

I don't know if it will make it there though?

[Even so, searching for a lost pet?]

I have no idea what that Hitogami is plotting, but this time only I'll just obey without thinking about it.

—

Thus, this is how our first day as Adventurers peacefully ended.

The city Rikaris, house address number 2 in Kiribu's Row.

The architecture of the first floor is constructed as a long building that has 4 entrances.

The people who live in there cannot be seen as rich, but they are not poor to the extent of struggling in the slums, and are the average populace of the Magic continent.

In that place, there are 3 shadows moving about; 2 small shadows and a big shadow. They slowly lumbered around, arrogantly as if there is no one around.

And they stopped in front one of the doors without incident.

[Hello. The people from the adventurer's guild have come–]

A young boy's voice rings out loudly while he knocks on the door.

It is strange.

There are no adventurers in this area who will use such a courteous tone. Where adventurers are concerned, they are basically people who belong to the rough type.

But the resident of this house is deceived by the gentle voice and opens the door with a clank. What emerges from the door is a young girl who's about 7-8 years old, with a long tail behind her like a lizard and she has a forked tongue, carrying the traits of the Houga race.

The young boy smiles at the young girl and speaks.

[My sincere greetings, is this Meisel-san's residence?]

[Yes, w, what is this regarding?]

[Ah, my sincere apologies for not saying this earlier. I am Rudeus from <Dead End>, indeed.]

[D, Dead End?]

The girl also knows the name of <Dead End>, the evil devil from the Superd race that killed indiscriminately, accomplishing many military exploits in the Laplace war.

He is the most brutal individual.

If anyone meets him, they will only have a dead end. Anyone who had encountered him would say [If I didn't run away with everything I had, I would have died long ago].

This name is the definition of fear, and even amongst the adventurers who claim they are capable of defeating any Monsters, will tremble violently when they hear the name <Dead End>.

Meisel also knows the special traits of <Dead End>, and he is definitely not this pipsqueak.

[We have accepted your request to find your pet. I would like to inquire about the details, may I know if you have the time?]

Dead End.

This is a frightening name, and the two people behind him are also strange, but after looking at the young boy who has used excessively polite words, her fear diminishes.

Furthermore, they are adventurers who seem to have accepted her request.

[Please help me find my Mii.]

[Yes, the name is Mii-chan right? It's a really adorable name.]

[It's a name that I picked.]

[Ah, your naming sense is really wonderful.]

Meisel becomes very pleased after hearing these words.

[Well then, what does Mii-chan look like?]

Meisel slowly describes the appearance of the pet, and how it disappeared three days ago without returning home. Usually when she calls for it, it will come running, and how it should be hungry now, and so forth.

She speaks in a way befitting of her age as she doesn't get to the point.

The average adult will find her speaking manner to be annoying, and most likely return without listening to what she has to say. But the young boy finishes listening to everything that she has to say with a smile, nodding earnestly in response to every sentence.

[I got it. Then we will set off to find it. Please leave it to <Dead End>!]

The young boy suddenly gives a thumbs up, and strangely, the two people behind him also give a thumbs up. Meisel imitates them by also giving a thumbs up even though she doesn't understand what's happening.

Confirming this, the young boy turns on his heels to go back. The hooded girl beside him also accompanies him. The biggest man squats down and place his hand on her head and speaks.

[We will definitely help you to find it, please wait without any worries.]

His face has a very long scar, and there's a gem on his forehead. His hair color is a speckled blue, and his face is very frightening. But the hand on her head is very warm, and she nods lightly.

[I, I leave it to you.]

[Aah, just leave it to us.]

To the three people who are leaving, Meisel looks at their backs and asks the biggest person.

[Excuse me, what is your name?]

[Ruijerd.]

He makes a short reply and turns his back to her. Meisel's face is dyed red, and she mutters the name Ruijerd.

–Rudeus's point of view–

After meeting with the client, I certainly grasped the crux of the request.

It seems that I had imitated the worker who does door-to-door sales in my past life pretty well.

It's fine if I get laughed at by other adventurers, but we must give the clients a good first impression.

We need to use a respectful attitude to speak with them.

[As expected of you, to have such acting skills.]

When I feel relieved over how things turned out, Ruijerd speaks to me.

[No, no, Ruijerd-san, the final thing that you did is just too amazing.]

[The final thing? What are you talking about?]

[Didn't you say something after you placed your hand on that child's head?]

That was completely ad lib.

It made me fear for a moment, but it seemed to have gotten unexpected results.

[Ahh, you're talking about that, what's so good about it?]

What do you mean by "what's so good about it"?

That young girl was looking at Ruijerd with her face completely bright red. If I am looked upon by that type of expression in her eyes, my reasoning would have flown away to the skies.

But if I say the following words with a straight face, the Ruijerd who likes kids will probably warn me with a sullen face.

[Haha, that girl is completely infatuated with Aniki, gwehehehe.]

So I pretend to use a joking tone and use my elbow to poke Ruijerd's leg, and he smiles wryly and says without confidence.

[That's not true.]

[Ohohoho, if Aniki gets serious, that lass..... Ouch!]

My head gets knocked with a bashing sound, and when I turn my head back I see Eris pouting.

[Stop that strange laugh! Isn't it just acting skills?]

It seems that she's not used to my sleazy behavior. She has started to hate low-life people ever since the kidnapping incident. Every time when she sees people who look like bandits in the city Roa, she will frown.

Even though it's just a joke, it seems that she is unable to stomach it.

[I'm sorry.]

[Sheesh! The Greyrats mustn't make vulgar smiles like that.]

I nearly snort in laughter when I listen to her words.

I have heard it, Madam.

Eris is talking about elegance.

That Eris who won't give up until the door is smashed down has become so graceful.

But even if you say that, you shouldn't do something like how you suddenly assaulted someone yesterday.

No, just look at Sauros and you should understand. Is it possible that violently beating someone all of a sudden is considered graceful?

No, that can't be possible, right?

..... I'm not sure how Asura nobles classify grace.

[By the way, are we capable of finding the pet?]

Since I'm not clear about it, I'll just change the topic. From what I gather, the pet seems to be a cat. Its color is black, and it has been with her since she was young. The size seems to be large as the young girl gestured by spreading her arms wide apart. Judging from that, it's about the size of a Shiba inu, which is big enough for a cat.

[Certainly. We already promised to find it.]

Ruijerd clearly asserts it. How reliable.

Just like that, Ruijerd walks in front without any hesitation in his footsteps.

However, I am a little uneasy. Even if Ruijerd has a radar, it will not be easy to find a small animal in the city.

[Do you have a plan?]

[The movements of animals are simple, take a look.]

Ruijerd points to an area, and even though it's not distinct there, it certainly has the sign of paw prints. That's too amazing, I didn't even notice that at all.

[We can find it using the paw prints?]

[No, this is another cat, it's smaller than what she described.]

I see, indeed the size of the paw print belongs to an average cat, well, even though I think the young girl has exaggerated with her gesturing.

[Hm–]

[There's something that entered the prey's territory.]

[Is that so?]

[Absolutely. The scent has gotten faint.]

The scent? Is this guy dividing the territory using his sense of smell?

[Over here.]

Ruijerd walks in the inner alley as if he understood something. I followed him silently, even though I don't really understand it, I have a hunch that things are looking up. The assistants of famous detectives probably have this sort of feeling.

Chasing and cornering the criminal, do a frightening interrogation and use magic to torture them into confession. In any case everything will be solved quickly, meet the infamous detective Ruijerd.

Just kidding.

[It has been found, I'm afraid it's this guy.]

Ruijerd points at a corner in the alley. You found what? What do you mean by "I'm afraid."?

I completely have no idea what's going on. At least I can't see any signs of paw prints.

[Here.]

Ruijerd smoothly advances in the alley without any hesitations in his footsteps. He continues deeper into the alley that keeps on getting narrower, until it is an area where only cats can pass through.

Even though I don't know how he is able to do what he's doing, perhaps he's tracking the prints successfully.

[Look here, there are signs of a battle.]

Ruijerd stops at the end of an alley and calls me to look at it. I am unable to see any signs, there is no blood there and the ground does not seem to have been affected whatsoever.

[Over here.]

Ruijerd continues to walk in front of us. What a wonderful job this is, since Eris and I only need follow him.

Going out of the alley, cutting across the road, entering and exiting repeatedly, and finally going back into the alley again.

We hurriedly advance forward at the areas where we feel we might get lost.

After exiting a certain alley, the surroundings have started to change. There are a few more signs of desolation everywhere, the houses are more dilapidated, the walls more exposed, the building materials cruder.

There are people who glare at us with frightened expressions and many dirty kids around.

This is the slum area, but I slowly start to think that this is maybe not the case.

It feels more like we have entered a secret path and gotten lost somewhere. In an instant, my alertness level rises up.

[Eris, please get ready to use your sword.]

[..... Why?]

[It's just a precaution. Also, if there is anyone who passes by, be wary of your back.]

[O, okay, I got it.....!]

I caution Eris in advance.

There is also Ruijerd around so I don't think there will be problems. But the results will be disastrous if there is a mistake made due to completely relying on someone else.

One's own safety has to be guarded by themselves.

When I think up to this point, I tightly hold on to the bag containing the money. Even though there is not a lot in it, I cannot allow it to be pickpocketed.

From time to time, a few of the ruffians would glare at Ruijerd, but they would immediately avert their eyes away when Ruijerd glares back at them.

The power behind his eyes is not just for show.

Never mind about the adventurers in the city, they are probably even more wary of the strong people.

[Is it really in this place?]

[I can't be certain.]

Ruijerd's reply is really unreliable. Did you not move around without any hesitation earlier?

No..... Even though he is a person with few words, Ruijerd must have discovered something, I will trust him. After walking a certain distance, Ruijerd stops in front of a house.

[This is the place.]

In front of us is a staircase going down, and at the end of the staircase is a door. It feels like a bar where the Visual-kei musicians would gather. Of course, there is no popular rock and roll music coming out from there, and there is no bald bouncer wearing a pair of sunglasses to welcome people.

Instead, what emits out from that place is the stench of animals.

It's like walking past a pet's store, and there's a certain animal stench wafting about.

And then, there's the stench of crime here.

[How many people are there?]

[There's no one inside, but there are a lot of animals.]

[Then let us go in.]

Since there is no one around, there's no special need to hesitate.

I walk down the staircase intending to push the door open. But the door is locked so I use Earth Magic to open it.

I first confirm the surroundings to ensure no one is inside and enter the room.

Just to be safe, I lock the door from the inside. It feels like we are thieves.

We continue down towards the dark corridor.

[Eris, protect our backs.]

[I got it.]

If anyone enters, Ruijerd will probably be aware of it immediately.

Under Ruijerd's lead, we enter the inner section of the house.

Deep into the corridor's area, there is a door which leads to a small room and another door. After passing through these two doors, I hear the chaotic cries of animals in my ears. In the innermost room, there are various cages placed close to each other. A large number of animals are trapped in these cages.

Dogs, cats, and animals that I have never seen before all packed densely in the same room, that's about the size of a classroom.

[..... T, this is.....]

Eris utters a trembling voice.

As for me, at the same time that I'm thinking on what had happened in this room, I consider the possibility of finding the pet to be high since there are so many animals here.

[Ruijerd-san, is the cat we want to find here?]

[Yes, it's that one.]

He immediately makes a reply and I follow his finger.

..... There seems to be a cat that looks like a black panther.

Huge, that's really huge, it's two times bigger than when the young girl spreads out her arms.

[I, it's really this guy?]

[Definitely, take a look at the collar.]

The black panther's collar does indeed have <Mii-chan> written on it.

[Looks like it's really Mii-chan.]

Alright, the request is indeed completed, we just need to get the panther out of the cage and finish it by bringing it to the young girl's home.

No, wait, what about the other animals?

Taking another look, there are many animals wearing collars and leg bands, and are written similarly like how <Mii-chan> is written. No matter how you look at it, they are pets.

At the corner of the room there are rope-like things placed there, and the word that I associate with ropes is "catch".

Catching someone's high grade pet, and selling it somewhere at a high price, there seems to be this form of business.

Although I don't think there's any law regulating this in this world, it's certainly not something good. If I have to define it, it's thievery.

[Hmm—-?]

Ruijerd turns his face to the entrance, and Eris also notices it.

[Someone has entered.]

I did not sense that since I am drowning in the animals' cries.

Leaving Ruijerd-san aside, Eris has also clearly understood someone entered.

Alright, what should we do, there isn't much time required to go to the entrance from here. Should we run away? No, there's nowhere to run, and there's only one single path.

[For the time being, let's catch them.]

We're illegal trespassers so the negotiation option is abandoned. This place is highly likely to be a crime scene, but it's also possible that this place is legitimate.

In any case we should tie them up, and if they are good people we will attempt to negotiate to seal their lips. If they are bad people, we will beat them up to seal their lips.

After a few minutes.

I look at the three people lying at the corner of the room. Two men and one woman. Ruijerd knocks them out cold in an instant, and I use Earth Magic to handcuff them, and rouse them up with water.

Due to one of the men shouting loudly, I use a cloth that is lying nearby to stuff his mouth. The other two are actually quiet, but I stuff their mouths as well to be fair.

[.....Hm.]

My heart suddenly has a query as to why things have turned out this way.

The request we accepted should be an E-grade job, finding a cat that has lost its way. We followed Ruijerd since he said to leave it to him, and we soon lost our way in the slums without knowing it. We entered a house, found many captured animals and when we finally come to our senses, for some reason we have tied people up.

Our request is obviously not to catch people.

The way how things have turned out is absolutely that Hitogami's fault, he must have predicted that things will end up this way.

The situation has become a little troublesome. If only we did not accept the request to find a missing pet.

I start to inspect the three people.

Man A, Demon race.

There are no eye whites in his eyes, and he has compound eyes and looks a little disgusting. It's that guy who made a racket earlier. He gives out the vibe of a crude person who's used to fighting. I seem to remember seeing the name of the race in Roxy's encyclopedia, but I am unable to recall it.

I only remember that there's poison in their saliva, and I had a question back then which was, what's going to happen if they had to kiss someone.

Man B, Demon race.

He has a face that looks like a lizard and his appearance is a little different compared to the guard. Since it's a lizard's face, I can't read his expression. But judging from his eyes, they show signs of reasoning and he is wary of us.

Woman A, Demon race.

She has eyes that are similar to compound eyes and her frightened expression looks really disgusting. But her body figure is quite good so it sort of cancels it out.

Well then, it's useless to just stare at them. If I'm to question them, who should I pick?

Who's the one that will be most likely to spill out the information we require, the males or the female?

Woman A looks like she's terrified, perhaps if we just threaten her a little and she might confess to everything.

No, women are prone to lying. In order to allow herself to survive she might weave up some lies that don't connect things together. Even though I don't think all the women in the world are like this. At least Ojou-sama is that kind of person.

But if I listen to these lies and get angry, I will not be able to differentiate the truth from the lies. So Woman A is eliminated.

Then, which guy should I pick?

How about Man A? He seems to be easily agitated and has the strongest body out of the three, as well as a scar on his face. I feel that he's best at fighting and has a simple mind, and even said [What the hell are you doing], and [Take this pair of handcuffs off.].

How about Man B? I don't quite understand his expression and he is closely observing us. He does not look stupid and if he's not an idiot, he might think up of some lies in this situation.

I pick Man A.

Since he easily lost his cool earlier, with a little provocation and leading, I feel that he will divulge the important things to us.

Well, if that does not work out, there are the other two people that we can interrogate.

I remove the cloth from Man A, but he only glares at me without saying anything.

[I have a few questions that I want to ask, and I want you to speak honestly, and I won't— wha!?]

I get kicked flying out easily all of a sudden, partly due to my unsteady balance because I am kneeling. I fly towards to the back and roll on the ground, knocking my head onto the wall, and I feel like I am seeing stars

Damn it, that really hurt.

This person really is a simple fool. At this situation he actually dares to kick the person who captured him, it seems like he probably did not consider at all what will happen if we get angry.

[Eh? Hey! Stop!]

Eris starts crying out and I immediately jump upwards. He removes his handcuffs during the moment that I started thinking in my mind.

Man A is probably doing something to Eris, trying to take Eris hostage under Ruijerd's watch.....

[Wha....!?]

No, what enters my eyes is the short spear stabbed into Man A's throat. Ruijerd has stabbed Man A to death, and Eris watches him in stark astonishment.

The short spear is twisted horizontally before being pulled out and the blood spatters everywhere, staining the walls with crimson red speckles. Man A rolls backwards, his face hitting on the ground, and his blood continuously gushing out from his throat. The blood slowly oozes out from his back and spreads out on the ground to become a red pool.

The scent that gets released to the air is the smell of blood.

That man's body had convulsed once in that single moment and didn't move again.

He died. He didn't even utter a sound and died, killed by Ruijerd.

[W... W..... Why did you kill him?]

My voice starts to tremble.

It's not the first time seeing a dead person. Ghyslaine had killed someone in order to save me, but this is a little different. Why is my body shivering and my heart filling with dread.

(What's wrong, what am I scared of?)

Afraid of someone dying? That's impossible, people dying in this world is a daily occurrence, and I know that clearly. But even if my mind understands that fact, perhaps it's different in reality when I see it for the first time? Then if that's the case, why didn't I feel anything when Ghyslaine killed the kidnapper?

[Because he kicked a child.]

Ruijerd uses a matter-of-fact tone, and says it indifferently.

Ah, so that's it. I understand now, I'm not afraid of someone dying.

It's a small matter to be kicked once, but I'm afraid of the Ruijerd who killed him as naturally as breathing.

Didn't Roxy once say it before?

[The Human race and Demon race differ a lot when it comes to common sense, and something might detonate because of what you shouldn't say.]

That's right. What if Ruijerd points his spear towards me? This man is incredibly powerful, even stronger than Ghyslaine, can I win with my Magic?

I should be able to resist. I have attempted many simulation battles against the people who are used to close combat. Paul, Ghyslaine and Eris. The people amongst me are close combat experts, and Ruijerd is probably the strongest amongst them. Therefore I have no confidence that I can say that I'm capable of a [Victory], but if he really wants to kill me, I have a number of ways to resist. But, what if he aims at Eris? Can I protect her at all?

Impossible.

[Y, you can't kill him!]

I say that in a panic.

[Why is that? He's a bad person?]

Ruijerd gets a huge shock after listening to me, completely unable to understand it from the bottom of his heart.

[Because.....]

How do I explain it properly?

What do I want Ruijerd to do?

But going back to the bottom line, why must he be killed? I don't have a good heart and I'll definitely snort in derision at the people who says something like [You can't kill people.].

When my parents died I was exactly like that, I thought to myself that how bleak my future will be, and also thought "what does the funeral have anything to do with me", and compared to that, fulfilling my carnal desires is more important than the funeral.

If I use an excuse like [You can't kill people!], the contents and meaning of that sentence will be distorted by my own personality.

[There are reasons as to why you can't kill him.]

I'm shaking. Get a hold of yourself.

Right now I'm at the ends of my wits, I need to get a hold of myself before thinking.

First of all, why am I trembling? Because I'm afraid. From the beginning I have thought Ruijerd is a gentle man, but he killed someone so easily. I had firmly believed that the Superd is a race that's just misunderstood.

I am wrong.

Even though I don't know what that race is like in reality, but Ruijerd isn't like that at the least. He has continued to kill the enemies since the Laplace war, and this is just another incident to him.

Also, there's the possibility that he will point his spear at me or Eris; there's no eliminating that possibility.

I'm not the pure person that Ruijerd thinks I am. Sooner or later I will anger him with my words. At that point of time I'll just leave the fact aside that he might get angry, as it's something that cannot be helped if our opinions differ. It's a type of quarrel that we might have, but I have never thought that we would fight to the death.

No matter under what circumstances there is, there's no need to kill someone. Right now, at this very stage, it's an absolute necessity to correct Ruijerd.

[Just do this, Ruijerd-san, please listen to me.]

But I have not formed my words, what can I say? What can I say to make him understand? Plead with him not to kill us?

Are you serious?

Didn't I say a few days ago we are warriors that will fight along with him and not be under his protection? We are equals, and thus pleading is useless.

I can't tell him, we have to give the other party a chance to explain himself, because Ruijerd himself doesn't recognize that logic.

Think.

Why are we with Ruijerd?

Because we want to get rid of the Superd's infamy. If Ruijerd kills someone, the image of the Superd race will turn for the worse, and that is without question.

So there is a need to persuade him not to fight with other adventurers. The image of the Superd race is absolutely horrible, and no matter how many good deeds that he does, they will not be recognized once he kills someone.

All that effort will come to naught and Ruijerd will be seen as a notorious individual.

That's right, therefore he must not kill. We must not let people associate the Superd race with the word fear.

[If Ruijerd kills someone, the Superd's infamy will spread.]

[..... That means I can't kill bad people too?]

[It doesn't matter what person is killed, it matters who the killer is.]

I carefully pick my choice of words.

[I don't understand.]

[If someone from the Superd race kills, the meaning is different, it's like a Monster has killed someone.]

Ruijerd turns a little sullen after hearing that, it might be possible that he considers that as an insult to his race.

[..... I don't understand why that is the case.]

[People consider the Superd race as a race that only kills, and they are evil devils that will immediately kill someone if they are slightly unhappy.]

I might have worded that a little too heavily, but the world does view it that way and I'm trying to change that point.

[It's easy to just claim that the Superd race are not evil devils. But if you use actions to demonstrate it, many people will change their views.]

[.....]

[But once you kill someone, everything will fail to come to fruition and people will certainly view the Superd race as evil devils.]

[That's absurd.]

[Don't you have any knowledge of it? That you saved someone and become good friends with them, only to have their attitudes changed quickly?]

[..... I do.]

I finish the conclusion in my heart and round things up.

[But if you don't kill anyone at all without exception.....]

[What will happen?]

[People will think that the Superd race have reason in them.]

Will it really be like that? Not killing someone in this world will be perceived as having reason?

No, now is not the time to think of this. I should not be wrong. Ruijerd has killed too many people, and they will naturally treat the Superd race as one who will kill people indiscriminately. If he doesn't kill anyone, this viewpoint should change, it's a coherent expectation.

[Please don't kill anymore, for the sake of the Superd race.]

To kill or not kill, must undergo judgment. But I do not know the standards of this world's evaluation criteria. Ruijerd's judgment is probably over the top. Amongst the two extremes, it's too difficult to see where this line lies, and if that's the case, it's better to completely forbid all future actions.

[Since no one can see what happened here, isn't it fine?]

Ruijerd's words nearly make me want to flip a table and cry in dismay.

"Since no one is watching me so I can commit atrocious deeds", may I inquire where did this elementary school student come from?

This fellow over here, have you really lived for more than 500 years?

[Even if you think that someone hasn't seen you, there will be people who have seen it right?]

[But there's no one around here?]

Oh shit, I have forgotten about the stone on his forehead.

[There are people who have seen it.]

[Where?]

Right here.

[Didn't Eris and I see that?]

[Hm.....]

[Please don't kill anyone anymore, we don't want to feel scared looking at Ruijerd-san.]

[..... Very well.]

At the final end of everything, I seem to have persuaded him with my tears forming up.

I really don't have confidence in my words.

But Ruijerd nods.

[Then I shall entreat you to do this.]

I lower my head to Ruijerd and state that. I look at my hand that keeps on shivering. Calm down. This thing is normal.

Alright, breath in.

[B-r-e-a-t-h.]

But I still cannot calm down, my heartbeats are still not slowing down. What about Eris, is she afraid?

I glance at her and she looks composed, even though she was surprised at what had happened, but she soon shows an expression that his death is justified.

No, I feel that she completely doesn't think that's it's a brutal affair.

But her crossed arms with parted feet, and a jutted chin is her most common posture. Even if her heart shakes, her actions are the same as usual.

Since she's already that composed, how can I be trembling?

My hands stop shivering.

[Then, let's continue with the interrogation.]

I forcibly smile in this room thick with the stench of blood.

Well, it's time for the interrogation to begin.

Who should I interrogate first, the man or the woman?

The bug-eyes woman looks quite frightened and she is desperately making muffled cries, wanting to escape from us. Looking at that frightened expression is truly stimulating..... but I will leave that aside.

If I remove her gag, she will start screaming and every word that comes out from her is going to be incoherent.

If she is to be interrogated, it is best to calm her down a little before doing so.

The lizard-face man over there has a face that is difficult to analyze, and I am unclear to what his expression means when his face changes.

I only feel that he is somehow turning pale.

He meticulously observes his surroundings and our various expressions in turn. I am certain he is contemplating deeply on how to survive this.

Ruijerd is repenting on how things had transpired where he ended up killing someone. It's easy to speak to a simplistic person.

Preferably, it should be better if I question both the man and woman after removing their gags right?

I'll move one of them to another room and separately cross-examine them, and then compile the information later on.

Alright, I'll do this.

[Eris, please watch over that woman.]

[I got it.]

Eris gives a strong nod.

I bring the man to the corridor, and I get Ruijerd to assist me since I am unable to carry him up by myself. I bring him to a place in the corridor where sound will not be able to transmit over, and I carefully remove the gag in order not to get bitten by him.

[Please answer my questions.]

[I, I'll talk, I'll tell you everything, please don't kill me.]

[Very good, I'll let you off if you tell me.]

[E, eek–!]

I smile in order to assure him but he becomes frightened. I thought that he is a calm person but it seems that it is not the case.

[Where did the animals in this house come from?]

[W, we picked them up.]

[Wo~~ah, that's amazing! Then..... where did you pick them up from?]

[No, that's.....]

His eyes wander everywhere, looking at me first, then at Ruijerd. Is he still trying to lie?

[I, it's around here.....]

His lying skills are terrible. I thought that he looked clever from his expression but it seems that he is not.

[I see! The animals are raining down everywhere in the city! ..... You bastard, are you treating me like an idiot because I look like a child?]

I threaten him a little.

[N, not at all.]

It is still not working. Using this body to threaten someone feels really foolish. I am only ten years old after all. Oh well, I will threaten him a little more.

[Explosion.]

A snapping sound emits from my finger, and at the same time a mini explosion happens in front of the man's eyes.

[Argh!]

The tip of the man's nose burns.

[Wh, what are you doing!?]

I ignore his complaints.

[Hey, think about your answers a little more thoroughly, you don't want to die, right?]

The man trembles all over, perhaps he has recalled the person that just died. I suddenly remembered the exchange between Ruijerd and me was done in the Demon God language. They were able to clearly hear about the Superd race and what not.

Well, that's fine. Since they already know about it, I'll use it as much as possible.

[I must say, you already know this right? That man, even though his hair is dyed blue, he's the real <Dead End>. As for me, my age doesn't match my appearance.]

[The real <Dead End>.....?]

[I'm the same type like you, just quickly tell me the truth, and perhaps I will help you out.]

The dialogue progresses into this direction.

[But..... Eek!]

The man casts a glance at Ruijerd but immediately moves his eyes away, he probably had been glared at.

[Please tell us. What are you, doing, here?]

[W, we kidnap the animals.....]

[Oh, kidnap the animals?]

[We then pretend to search for the animals if the request to search for the pet is up.]

[I see.]

This is probably true although I am unable to verify it. The things that have happened so far seem to fit the circumstances and it is believable. Though this particular request we received belongs to an innocent girl, there is also another request [The search for a rich madam's Christine-chan] that was up.

Even though there is a minimum and maximum reward limit for each request's rank, but it might be possible there is an additional reward from the person who made the request.

If there is enough luck, just searching for pets alone will be able to make someone strike it rich.

[Then, what do you do with the pets if there isn't any request to search for them?]

[We will release it after a while.....]

[Hoh, isn't it worth much more to sell it to a pet shop?]

[Hah! If we did that it would be traced back to us.]

Just as the man wanted to scorn me, Ruijerd smashes the butt of his spear onto the ground, making him shake.

As expected of Ruijerd, your timing to threaten him to make him remember his position when he is about to get conceited is completely perfect!

[You've certainly paid a lot of attentions to the details.]

[O, of course.]

[If it's me, I'd sell the animals that have been caught. I'd chop it up into pieces and sell to a butcher. That way things won't get divulged right?]

In this world that deems the Monsters' meat as a delicacy, even if it's not reared it can be sold. Ah, the lizard man is showing me an expression of "I can't believe this".

Why is he doing this?

Is the great king land tortoise meat different from the pet tortoise meat?!

[Rudeus, are you planning to sell these guys to a butcher?]

As I turn my head around, Ruijerd states this dangerous notion out. I see, so this lizard man is also thinking in this direction.

[That might possibly be a great idea.....]

I decide to threaten him, and the lizard man's face spasms.

Ahh, I know of this expression.

How nostalgic.

I have seen this expression very clear before in my past life.

[Rudeus.....]

Ruijerd-san, please don't glare at my back that way. Your glare is strong enough to burn a hole in me. I am just kidding, I will not do that again.

[Well, we're just looking for a cat and we're not the champions of justice, so we can pretend not to have seen anything and leave.]

[R, really?]

[But since you know Ruijerd is a real Superd, what should we do with you?]

[W, we won't tell anyone! Besides who will believe us if we say that <Dead End> is in this city?]

[No, they will believe it. Because as you know, bad news travel fast.]

Particularly the bad news that are unfavorable to us. If we maintain that mentality to avoid this there can be no harm done.

[To me, killing everyone here and burying you is the most convenient method.]

[P, please let me off..... I'll do anything, please let me off.....!]

Since I received such a plea, I can stop the threats. But what should I do? They are the culprits behind the pet kidnappings and are bad people. Even though that's the case, they are just small time villains who will not become a big threat. If we leave them alone, there should not be any trouble as well.

But they saw Ruijerd killing someone, and thus may possibly become an obstacle for Ruijerd to become a popular person. I really want to remove them to prevent any impediments in the future.

But killing them is not acceptable, as I just told Ruijerd that we cannot kill them.

Then how about sending them to the city guards? No, no matter how it is, they are simply just kidnapping pets. If we hand them off to the police, they will not receive harsh punishments. If they are just given a fine, they might remember this incident with hatred.

Even though if their attitude now is laudable, they might forget everything once the danger has passed.

If it's possible, I want to observe them from somewhere and threaten them from time to time, but at least they will feel that they are safe. Still, doing something like this has a certain risk to it. They might accumulate resentment to us if we continuously threaten them, and end up as a pure grudge against us.

After all, we were the ones who killed a person on their side.

It can be used as a material for threatening them right now, but sooner or later it will become fodder for resentment.

If they cannot be killed and cannot be handed to the police, then should we win them over? Perhaps we can have them by our side to earn money and raise our levels. We can gather information in the city and assign them to miscellaneous stuff.

If it's necessary we can take over the business of pet abduction.

But if I do this Ruijerd's attitude will probably turn for the worse. In his eyes, the people here are considered as evil, and it will be fine even if they are killed. He will most likely not work with them.

Hmmm—— I'll rearrange these various solutions' risks and return.

1. Kill them.

Risk: Ruijerd becomes confused + we will adopt a bad habit of killing everyone if there are any problems.

Return: There is no need to worry about the future + we are able to steal their money.

2. Sending them to the guards.

Risk: They might bear hatred for us.

Return: We might receive some fame.

3. Leave them alone.

Risk: They might bear hatred for us

Return: None at all.

4. Win them over.

Risk: My companion will be upset and be seen as a handler for doing bad deeds.

Return: Close surveillance of them + we will be able to receive help from them as henchmen.

I feel that "1" is not a good solution to our future plans. Even though I am not a champion of justice, to kill someone will mean that any other considerations have been cut off. I believe that sooner or later there will be retribution to this.

With "2" and "3", there are low risks and low returns. Even if we're hated by them, it's a simple thing for Ruijerd to catch them, but it will ultimately end with their deaths. This will end up as double effort.

Then I can only pick 4? Ruijerd's impression of me might turn for the worse, but we have the realistic issue of desperately requiring money. That's right, it is money. We need money now.

With these henchmen we can earn money and even have them kidnap pets. If they join our party, we can distribute the burden for Rank F jobs. It's important to raise our ranks, and we will only be stable if we can do jobs that are Rank C and above.

..... Hm?

[Earlier, you said that you returned the pets back, are you adventurers?]

[Y, yes.]

They are actually adventurers.

[Your ranks?]

[I, it's D rank.]

And their ranks are higher than ours.

[Why would a D rank receive an E rank job.]

[Ahh, we can go to C rank, but we can stabilize our income if we search for pets at E rank.]

If they reach C rank, they will not be able to receive E rank jobs, and so they keep staying at D rank. There are people like this who would do E rank jobs without any worries? Their actions are the definition of fraud.

If it is us, we will quickly raise our ranks to do C and B rank jobs.

But there are adventurers out there who are not good at fighting, right?

Hmm, perhaps we can just get them to receive C jobs and we will help finish it and share the rewards equally.

Wait, if that's the case we will not raise our ranks.

[Wait.....]

Suddenly a flash of lightning streaks across my mind.

Ah, I thought of a good idea.

[Hey..... Are you still able to do this job without that guy?]

[N, no, we won't do something like this anymore, we will do legitimate—]

[Just tell us the truth.]

[We can do it! That guy has been overseeing our work, threatening us to get his share!]

Are you serious? That is pretty good luck..... That means we can get the 1 out of 3 share.

That is Hitogami's intention.

[Alright, let's party up.]

Ruijerd roars behind me as I finish speaking.

[Party up!? What are you talking about!]

[Ruijerd-san, can you be silent just for a little while?]

[What!?]

[I won't do anything bad.]

[.....]

Looking back at him, Ruijerd's expression is indeed a terrible one. Even though I think this is a good idea, should I stop this plan? But this plan is perfect, we can earn money, raise our ranks and Ruijerd's reputation will improve. A plan that completely covers everything..... Supposedly.

I turn back to the lizard man.

[You just said earlier that you will do anything right?]

[I, if you spare my life, I, I'll give you money.]

[I don't want it. In replacement, get a higher rank.]

[Huh?]

I start to explain.

[Listen, we're all fighters, and even though we're not bad at finding pets, our efficiency will go up if we do jobs to suppress monsters.]

[I, I see..... but why do you want to do this job?]

[Because of certain events we became adventurers.]

[O, oh.....]

[Well, leaving this aside.]

The topic seems to be digressing, I should move it back to the original intention.

[We can accept job requests for fighting, but our levels are too low and we can't receive it. In reverse you can receive fighting requests but you won't accept them. Do you understand what I'm talking about so far?]

[Y, yes.]

[So we will exchange our jobs.]

The lizard's head tilts a little upon hearing these words.

[W, what do you mean?]

[You will receive the C or B rank jobs, and we need to raise our ranks by searching for missing pets. We will do the job requests that you receive, while you do the job requests we receive.]

[P, please wait a moment. If other party report on the jobs we receive.....]

[Fool! When we report we will switch and report on our own jobs!]

[Ah.]

Man B finally gets it.

We will: Receive E rank jobs, do B rank jobs. Then report E rank jobs to receive the rewards.

They will: Receive B rank jobs, and do E rank jobs. Then report B rank jobs to receive the rewards.

With this process, we will exchange our rewards at the end. This might present a problem in the rules, but I heard that higher ranks can help complete a lower rank request. We only reversed this rule a little, and we did not do anything illegal.

[We want the money and the rank, while you want a stable life. This is a win-win situation. How about this, we can take a portion out of the reward from B rank and give it to you.]

[A p-portion from the B rank.....]

The lizard man swallows. The reward from the B rank is very high. The carrot and the stick. If only the stick is used we will get betrayed, so it's necessary to give them the carrot. We must get them to join us on their own volition.

[But there's a condition.]

[C, condition?]

[Yes, spread the name of <Dead End>.]

[Spread..... but everyone knows the name already right?]

Indeed.

[Spread the name <Dead End> to be good. Spread the good deeds that we do even if you have to lie.]

[Why do you need to do that.....?]

Why, hmm. If I tell him Ruijerd's long history, will they believe it? No, that's impossible. This person had just watched his party member killed by Ruijerd. Even if they are not on good terms, but it is likely the fact of the Superd race being a terrifying race has taken root in this person's heart .

[It's good to not know certain things, you understand that right?]

[..... I, I got it.]

I find a random excuse, but he seems to have understood.

[It's enough to spread your name?]

[Yes, but don't spread any bad stuff about us alright? We have someone here that will pursue things until the end.]

The man looks at Ruijerd once and nods.

[Then help us raise our ranks as much as possible, let's have a nice partnership.]

[A, ahh.]

[We will meet at the adventurer's guild tomorrow morning, don't be absent, okay?]

I pat his back.

In any case, I questioned the female as well to gain additional information.

They are experts at finding pets. It seems that they have been doing something like this from the beginning. Sometimes they will protect pets that have obviously lost their way.

They thought they might save a lot of effort if they caught it. As they rose in rank they went in the direction of kidnapping them.

At first they did it carefully, but Man A found out when they were catching the pets one day. Man A forcefully entered their party and stated himself as a bodyguard. He became the leader and expanded the operations. By claiming that he's getting bodyguard fees and to entertain himself with women, he took a larger share of the money when it comes to splitting up the reward.

At least this woman doesn't mind if we killed him. Our luck is really too good.

Just to add on, the lizard man's name is Jalil, and the woman's name is Veskel.

After a short chat with them, I remove their handcuffs.

During the time when we bring the cat out of the house, Ruijerd glares at me.

[Hey, what was that supposed to mean!]

[Hmm, what do you mean by that?]

Ruijerd grabs me by the front of my shirt, and my legs are left dangling in the air.

[Don't feign ignorance! They are bad people! You actually partnered with them!?]

Ruijerd is really angry. Looking at that terrifying expression makes me recall the fact that he just killed someone.

[T, they are indeed bad people, but they are just a little bad. They didn't do something terrible.]

[There are no differences when they do bad things, bad people are bad people!]

I already knew things will end up this way, but why are my legs and voice trembling, and the corners of my eyes tearing up?

[I, I just want to say, this plan, kills two birds with one stone.....]

[..... So I'm asking you what do you mean by that!]

Ruijerd seems that he is unable to accept it.

Trouble. I'm so frightened that my thoughts are shut down. My mind is rattled and controlled by my chattering teeth.

[Bad people will not keep their words!]

Ruijerd glares and roars at me.

Betrayal.

I have already considered that possibility. But this incident is considered a good thing for them too, and they have been threatened after all, so things should be fine temporarily.

[What are you thinking, to actually party up with them!]

I hesitate upon hearing that.

Indeed, there is no real need to cooperate with them or anything like that. Just spend a bit of time to do jobs, and if there's no money we can simply hunt Monsters, accept requests one at a time and raise our ranks bit by bit. That will work just as well.

Even if we don't make use of them we can still accomplish things, so the road is just only a little further.

Should we give up on this? Should we go back and kill them all right now? Let us swim in a sea of blood?

I am hesitating.

Am I right or wrong?

[Ruijerd!]

A loud voice cuts my hesitation off.

That ear shattering voice and Ruijerd's shaking body.

[Take your hands off Rudeus!]

Eris kicks on Ruijerd's butt, kick after kick.

[What are you unsatisfied with!]

Eris's loud voice is numbing my eardrums, and the surrounding people look over at us wondering if something has happened.

[I don't like to work with bad people.]

[Because you don't like it you're grumbling!? He's doing it because of you and me!]

Ruijerd eyes open wide, and my feet touch the ground with a thump. Eris stops kicking, but her loud voice isn't stopping.

[In the first place it's just catching animals!]

[No, that fellow also kicked a child.]

[So what if he did, I have also kicked before!]

[..... But, a bad person is a bad person.]

[Didn't you do something bad in the past too?]

Eris-san.

I'm grateful that you helped me out, but cutting deeply into the heart of the matter is not too good, you know that right?

[Rudeus is amazing! If you let him do it, everything can be accomplished! So just be silent and do it!]

[.....]

[Don't complain because you're a little unhappy over something!]

[I don't mean that.]

[If you want to complain then go back! Rudeus and I can finish things on our own!]

Ruijerd is clearly faltering before Eris's frantic expression.

[..... I got it. I'm sorry.]

In the end Ruijerd apologizes to me. It feels that he is forced by Eris's spirit and absolutely not because he has come to an understanding about this.

[N, no, don't do this.....]

Even though things ended like this, it feels like the difficulty has gone up by a lot, and this atmosphere makes me hesitate.

It might have been too rash to cooperate with them, but since things have turned out this way, I am unable to change this outcome already. I feel like there are butterflies in my stomach but I can only proceed.

I can only trust in this plan that I considered a good one from the beginning.

Even if it is not because I don't trust myself.....

After sending the cat back, the owner of the request is ravished with delight. The moment she sees the cat she dashes over and hugs it tightly in tears. Looks like it is greatly cherished.

The cat is certainly docile.

Even though it's really a black panther.

[Thank you! Oh right! Here, have this!]

A card that I'm not sure if it's made of metal, is passed into Ruijerd's hands.

==========

D040023

Completed

==========

Words are written on it.

[What is this?]

[Adventurers actually don't know about this!?]

The young girl's face is full of disbelief.

I will not object you if you are willing to teach me.

[If it's possible, please tell me.]

[Well, if you bring this to the adventurer's guild, you can exchange it for money.]

Ah. I see. D040023 is the request's number, even though I don't know what rule is used to create this number.

In translation, [Putting a finger onto it and say a word of "Completed", the request's status will change to "Completed".]

Is this a measure for theft prevention?

No, if I do something like this wouldn't it be completed? Stealing this card and exchanging it for money..... No, it will definitely get revealed quickly. There should be some form of prevention.

[But isn't this card written as completed from the start?]

Isn't it normal to finish the card's completion only when the request is done?

[Yup! I believe Ruijerd will be able to find it, so I completed it first!]

Oh my, this child is really so adorable. A little girl that trusts someone else is really beautiful!

Ruijerd strokes the girl's head.

[Is that so..... Thanks for trusting me.]

[Yeah! I believe that Evil Devil-san can be a good person too!]

Ruijerd's expression seems to freeze upon listening to the words Evil Devil. I understand your feelings, but this is the reality amongst people's opinions.

[Then Ojou-san, please do not forget about <Dead End>'s Ruijerd.]

[Yup! If I lose my pet again, please help me!]

This young girl's words slightly hurt my chest.

When we return to the adventurer's guild the sky has already turned dark. We spent quite a bit of time, and we will go broke very soon if this happens every time.

[Woah, they have returned.]

[Oi, oi, did they find the missing pet!?]

Once we entered the guild, the fellow with a horse head starts stirring things up. He's like a minotaur but his head is a horse. I can remember him because his features are distinct. Come to think of it, does this person stay in the guild all the time?

[Oh? You're the person with a horse face from this morning..... You don't need to work today?]

I find this type hard to handle. He's similar to the people that bullied me in the past. How should I say this, if I bully him now, everyone will say no.

[W, what's with you? You're suddenly so courteous, it feels kind of strange.....]

Oops, damn it, I forgot about my acting skills. I'll manipulate him instead.

[Isn't it Senpai who requested me to be respectful?]

[O, oh, is that right?]

The horse-faced man turns embarrassed.

This person is really simple.

[Thanks to you, the request has been completed.]

[What?]

I wave the completed card in front of him, and he shows sincere admiration.

[Amazing. It's not easy to find a lost pet in this city you know?]

Isn't that right. The reason for missing pets is due to people.

[Well, to <Dead End>'s Ruijerd it isn't a problem.]

[Are you serious..... The fake is actually pretty amazing.]

[I already said it's the real deal!]

In the end after acting it out, I go over to the counter and pass the completed card and our adventurers' identity cards over. After a while, along with our adventurers' identity cards, a coin that is alike to an old 100 yen coin is passed over to us.

Hm, that's certainly cheap looking.

[Hey— How did you find the pet? Let me use it as reference too.]

[I merely used some hunting techniques.]

[Hunting! What's your tribe?]

[..... Superd race.]

[What, come on, I know the truth from looking at this necklace.]

The horse-faced man eyes are concentrated onto Ruijerd's chest where Roxy's necklace is hanging from.

[I'm Nokopara, Rank C.]

[I'm Ruijerd, Rank F.]

[I know you're Rank F. Well, if there's anything you don't know go ahead and ask, I'll teach you everything as a Senpai, gahahaha!]

Ruijerd is happily talking to the horse-faced man (Nokopara). It's a good thing for the feared Ruijerd to be talking to someone. But I'm a little worried, if someone says something that he shouldn't say, will Ruijerd suddenly attack him? I hope this doesn't concern things about children.

I'm also worried about Eris who is sitting beside me. I sneak a few glances at her, and at times there seem to be people coming up to talk to her, but since she is unable to understand them she ignores them.

[Hey, your sword is pretty good, where did you get it from?]

[.....]

[Hey, say something will you!]

I can see a female warrior looking a little agitated after being ignored by her.

[What is it?]

I immediately rush over to stop the fight, but the female warrior throws a [Tch, nothing at all] and leaves. In exchange Nokopara comes along to chat.

[Have you gotten the money?]

[Yes, a single scrap iron coin. It's our first work.]

[Haha, that's really cheap.]

[It's normal that a little girl won't have the money, you shouldn't say that.]

[Cheap is cheap.]

[Only on the money side.]

The young girl breaking her piggy bank to search for her cat. If this image appears in my mind, I can understand that this scrap iron coin is not a cheap thing.

[You won't understand the value of it. Please go away, shoo, shoo.]

[What, you're so cold. Well, work hard!]

Nokopara starts shaking his arms and loiters around in the guild. What does this guy really do here.....

In any case we ended our first job here.

On the second day when we were outside the guild, a lizard-faced man's voice reached out to us.

[Ah, hello. We have raised our rank.]

Who is this guy?

Just when I am thinking of that, the bug-eyed woman stands up and I finally remember they are the kidnappers from yesterday.

I think their names are Jaril and Veskel.

Recognizing faces is difficult because there are many lizard-faced people in this town.

One of the reasons why I did not recognize them is also because they are wearing different clothes from yesterday.

Yesterday, Person A wore clothes that were ordinary.

Today, Adventurer A is wearing leather armor that is ordinary.

Even though these two attires are ordinary looking, the impressions they give to others are very different.

[Ah, Jaril-san, thank you for your efforts.]

[W-what's with, the way you're talking, this is uncomfortable.....]

[It's keigo. Should I not use that?]

[N-never mind.]

He stares at me for a moment and moves his eyes away.

[Veskel-san, please give me your guidance from today onwards.]

[Ah..... Yes.]

Veskel is still afraid of Ruijerd.

Ruijerd is still glaring at them.

Well, that cannot be helped. Just to add on, she is also wearing an adventurer's outfit.

[Then let us go in.]

[Ah, sure.]

Jaril displays an uneasy expression and nods at my words.

When we are about to enter the guild, the sharp eyed Horse-faced man sees us and walks over.

[Hey!]

[..... Hi.]

This guy is also lurking at the guild today.....?

He's really not doing any work at all, right?

[Ara, today you're with 『P-Hunter』.]

[Y-yo, Nokopara, it's been a long time.]

It seems the horse-faced guy and lizard face know each other.

[It certainly has been a long time. I heard about it, Jaril. You raised your rank to C. Are you fine with that? If you are Rank C you won't be able to find pets anymore right?]

Nokopara says that and compares us together with his eyes. The horse-faced man neighs.

[I see. No wonder you did well with the job, your request was done with 『P-Hunter』's help right?]

P-Hunter seems to be Jaril's party name.

I see, this is good!

[Yes! We met each other yesterday when we were searching for the pet! They also taught us the technique to search for the pets!]

I randomly throw in a few lines of lies.

[Ha, ha, the cowardly Jaril finally has his own student! And it's the fake Superd, hahaha.....!]

This misunderstanding is really good for us.

This fellow is really simple.

The horse-faced man laughs for a while and suddenly looks behind Jaril.

[I say, where's Roman, what happened to him?]

[Ah, hm... Roman is... dead.]

[Is that so, that's really a pity.]

Roman should be the guy's name whom Ruijerd killed yesterday. Nokopara only reacted faintly after hearing about that guy's death.

Among the adventurers, it's probably not a big deal when someone dies. Could it be only me who is finding it to be a big deal?

When it comes down to it, Jaril and Veskel were not particularly concerned when Roman got killed as well.

[But since Roman is dead, why are you raising your rank up? Isn't he the strongest in your party?]

[T-that's...]

Jaril looks at me once.

Nokopara neighs, no, he snorts and nods.

[Ah—— Hoh——, I see, you don't need to say anymore. So it's like this—-. Since you have an apprentice, even if it's just a little it's still pride!]

Nokopara arbitrarily comes to an understanding on his own, noisily pats on Jaril's back and returns to the interior of the guild. Jaril sighs with relief.

But what's with that guy, sticking to us from day to night. Could it be possible that he likes me...?

No, maybe in his eyes there's only Ruijerd, meaning...

No, I am just kidding.

[Well, let's take a look at the requests.]

When we enter the guild, there are still people who cast curious glances at us.

I should just ignore them for now.

It is better to behave like we are apprentices. I ask Jaril as we both look at the requests from D to B ranks.

[What's the difference between gathering and harvesting?]

[Eh? Ah, hmm, harvesting is pointing to plants, gathering is most likely pointing to monsters...]

Jaril gives a vague reply, but it certainly seems to feel that way.

Gathering refers to living creatures, and non-living creatures is harvesting.

As examples, the request for gathering is written as,

==========

C

– Job: Gather fur pelts

– Reward: 6 Iron coins

– Job Contents: Pack coyote fur pelts * 20

– Location: Outside of town

– Duration: None

– Time limit: None

– Name of Requester: Adventurer's guild.

– Notes: The fur pelts are running low. Please assist us. Do not take down this request, just bring your gathered fur pelts to the counter.

==========

As I read I suddenly remember, the materials that were sold to the merchants are 4 iron coins. They really underpaid us...

No, perhaps this request's rewards are overly high, usually the transactions for such materials are not that high.

[Ruijerd-san.]

[What is it?]

[I must apologize, I think we should earn money and raise our levels at the same time.]

[... Why are you telling me this?]

[If we do this, we need to postpone that matter for a while.]

Even though I informed Veskel and Jaril to spread Ruijerd's name, I do not have high expectations for them.

I have considered it.

They have courteously received our mission, and so I will basically not interfere with their actions.

Without interfering, I will not be able to oversee their actions.

If someone sees them do any criminal acts and their claims are made that Ruijerd forced them to do those acts, they will be laughed at because their ranks are higher than him, as well as the fact that he is also seen as a fake by others.

[I see. I got it.]

After receiving Ruijerd's assent, Jaril and I discussed the requests that we received.

After greeting the gatekeeper, we walked outside of town.

Pack Coyotes, Acid Wolves, Grand Tortoise and Giant Rock Turtle.

These Monsters are our targets at the outskirts of the town.

We are to gather the fur pelts of the Pack Coyotes, Acid Wolfs fangs and tails, the Grand tortoise's meat, and the Magical stone from the Giant Rock turtle.

First of all, we will ignore the Grand Tortoise as the meat is too heavy.

The priority will be the Giant Rock Turtle, as the Magical stones from them are small and it can be sold.

Even though our priority is on the Giant Rock Turtle's Magical stone (which is a pretty good conversion for money), but there are just too few. They will also not appear near the town.

In the end, the Pack Coyotes were chosen as our focus, since a single battle allows us to hunt them in a group, thus it's easier to earn money from them.

Our request is gathering the Pack Coyotes fur pelts. The advantage in hunting them is to allow us to gather the materials quickly, and considering the time to search for the enemies and skin them, hunting them is like hunting the Acid Wolf.

Of course, once we see an Acid Wolf we will also hunt it. Even if we did not receive requests related to the Acid Wolf, it is better to gather the materials first before waiting for such a request. When we do receive a request, we can simply bring it to the counter and finish everything.

The largest group for Pack Coyotes is at most 10 of them together, and considering the time to search and skin them, we can't hunt very many in a day.

At first I thought that it would turn out that way.

After we killed the initial batch of Pack Coyotes and skinned them, Ruijerd collected their bodies and brought them to one spot.

When I was contemplating what he was doing,

[Can you use Wind Magic to carry the scent of blood?]

Ruijerd's query answered my question.

It is to use the scent of blood to lure them.

I follow his request and use Wind Magic to change the wind directions to blow everywhere.

[Even though we can't hunt the Giant Rock Turtles in this manner, the surrounding Pack Coyotes will gather together.]

It ended up how he just said.

On that day we ended up hunting over 100 Pack Coyotes, and it feels like we have hunted all of the surrounding Pack Coyotes.

Well, that possibility should be zero.

But this is hard labor.

Ruijerd and Eris kept killing the endlessly approaching Pack coyotes, while I skinned them for their fur.

After 30 of them, my hands felt like lead and my shoulders started to hurt, and I was a little nauseous from the smell of the blood.

It would be much easier if we killed them and they all turned to Magical stones....

Even though I kept complaining, I still continued to work.

But after 70 of them I reached my limit and exchanged with Eris.

Using Magic to kill the Pack Coyotes was much easier than skinning them.

In order to take them down and not do any damage to the fur, I made a minor adjustment to lower the strength of the magic, and killed them carefully one by one.

As expected I am more suited to use my mind to do such work.

After skinning around 30 of them, Eris started complaining.

She is indeed unsuited to do this type of laborious work.

I considered to have Ruijerd skin the rest of them, but there was enough at hand, and we needed to separate them into batches to carry to town.

[Wait, we need to burn the bodies first.]

Ruijerd says before we started moving them.

[Burn? Are we going to eat them?]

[No, Pack Coyote tastes terrible. We need to burn the bodies and bury them.]

If we leave the bodies, other Monsters will eat them and increase in population. But if we just simply burned them, they would still get eaten by other creatures.

Also, if we simply bury them deep down in the ground, they might become Zombie Coyotes.

In order to prevent such a thing, it is necessary to follow the procedure of burning first and then burying it.

Just cleanly take their fur pelts > Take the risk of letting them become Zombie Coyote > The guild does a request of suppressing them > Remove them.

I am thinking of this money linked process, but I am stopped by Ruijerd.

It seems that it is forbidden to intentionally increase the number of Monsters.

I wish that someone would write this local rule somewhere.

[But we didn't do this step along the way right?]

[If it's just a few there should be no problem.]

Even though I am uncertain of where to draw the line, the current amount of bodies here might be the start of a plague.

Since there is no special reason to refuse, I burn the bodies into charcoal.

The sun has already set when we finished transporting all the fur pelts. Today's hunt should end here.

I worked a lot today, and I really want to go back to the inn and rest.

But do we need to continue doing this endless gathering tomorrow?

Even though I really want to take a good rest tomorrow.

[We really earned a lot today! Let's keep at this pace tomorrow!]

Eris is full of energy.

I can't complain in front of this Eris.

Three days later, [Dead End] rose up to E rank. That was pretty fast.

[Good work.]

I say an appreciative line to Jaril, and handed 10% of today's earnings to him.

[T-thank you...]

I do not think it is a big figure, but this amount of money should be enough for them.

After I inquired about a few things from them, I got to know they are different from the other adventurers.

They seem to have a fixed job in this town.

[What kind of job?]

[It's a pet store.]

I see. To sell them and kidnap them later on.

They are really corrupted merchants.

[Don't do too many bad things.]

[I know.]

In the beginning, they captured the wild animals in the town and gave them a little training to become pets in their pet store.

His race, the Lugonia, seems to be quite good at training wild animals. Their training methods have been handed down from ancient times, and they are able to make everything from wild dogs to the most prideful beast submit.

Hmm, hmm. They are really an incredible race.

If Ruijerd and Eris are not here, I would not have stayed silent and would have certainly said [Please teach me this technique at any cost], nuzzle my head against him and become his apprentice.

Well, leaving that aside, the pet shop is certainly a good job that combines the job of removing harmful animals too.

The adventurer's guild should be their side job.

[You already have such a good job, why do you need to kidnap the pets...?]

[At first it was to protect them, but it ended up getting too tempting.]

They got tempted into this and became intoxicated with it, thus ended up like this?

[But it must be tiring to operate a pet shop and become adventurers right?]

[Not really, since there are a lot of pets.]

It seems they open the store until afternoon, then do requests until evening.

[Well, we won't say anything else as long as you accomplish the requests.]

[Just leave it to us. We're still low tiered adventurers after all. We're also spreading the Dead End's name properly.]

Is that really true?

Our current wealth —- 6 Iron coins, 8 Scrap Iron coins, 5 Stone coins.

We're slightly richer now, so we head off to buy some common defensive equipment.

To start with, we will go to the peddlers to buy some everyday clothes.

Eris buys things very quickly. She chooses attires that are durable and easy to move in as the rationale. She did not buy any dresses, and all of them are long pants.

Although they are suited for young people to wear them, it is not very fashionable. These clothes were chosen under a situation she has considered thoroughly, but she should buy at least one dress that's a little more feminine.

So I look around the store and find a pink frilly dress, and try recommending it to her, but the result is her showing an obvious expression of distaste.

[... You want me to wear something like that?]

[Is there anything bad about you buying one?]

[Then Rudeus should buy something more manly.]

Eris forcefully hands me a leather skin vest that looks like bandits attire.

For a moment, I think that it is a good exchange for me to wear this if Eris wears the frilly dress, but after imagining the two of us standing together wearing that, I gave up.

After buying the clothes, we walk to the armor store.

Right now, Ruijerd and Eris do not have any major injuries. Any small injuries can be immediately healed if I use Healing Magic.

So I asked if it is fine if we do not use armor.

Ruijerd replied with a [It's better if we have them.].

My Healing Magic is unable to heal life threatening injuries and any missing body parts. Since Eris does not have much experience in real battles, it is possible to sustain life threatening injuries due to a moment of carelessness.

So buying the armor seems to be necessary. It's better to listen to Ruijerd on this point.

The shop space for the armor store is quite big, but it is really different compared to the Asura's stores. This place has a more rustic feel to it.

Once we are in the store, I can see goods that are slightly more expensive than the peddlers. Even though the goods are cheaper at the peddlers, and might even have something that is a great buy, the store's goods are more diverse and the quality is assured.

Also, there are more varied sizes, since we're wearing children sized clothes.

Right now I am helping Eris pick out armor. There are many different types when it comes to the chest size.

[It's best to pick a better armor to protect the heart...]

[This will do.]

Eris wears an armor that is about the same size as her and asks, [Is this fine?].

I will not pass up any chance to look at her chest.

..... Hmm, it is definitely growing.

[You should buy a bigger sized one.]

[Why's that?]

You want to ask why?

[We're at the age where we're growing. If you buy something that just fits now, you won't be able to fit in it after a while.]

Saying this, I pick an armor that is bigger by one size.

[Isn't this loose?]

[It's okay, it's okay.]

Eris complains at the same time while she buys protective gear for other various parts.

After the recent battles, she is also clear about the areas where it is easy to get hurt.

Leaving the various joints and vitals aside, what about the head?

If it's too heavy the speed will decrease, but the head is also a vital area, what should she use?

[How about this helmet?]

I try recommending a helmet that looks like it belonged to an end-of-the-world tyrant king's younger brother.

Eris bluntly shows a repulsed expression.

[That looks horrible.]

I get refused.

The youths nowadays don't seem to have a taste for the finer things.

After trying a few more helmets, with the reasons of too heavy, too unfashionable, too smelly, the field of vision is too narrow, we ended up choosing something like a headband.

The headband seems to have an iron plate sewn into it, and it seems to be called a Hachikin.

Just to add on, the hood is just used to cover the red hair, and it's useless to use it as a defensive armor.

[And that's it. How is it, Rudeus! Do I look like an adventurer?]

Eris spins around quickly with the attire of an adventurer's light armor, along with a sword that looks like a cutlass received from Robin.

To be honest, it looks like cosplay, although the size of the chest armor doesn't fit at all.

[It looks very well-matched on you. Ojou-sama, no matter where I look at, you're like a veteran warrior.]

[Is that so? Ohoho.]

Eris places her hands onto her waist, looking at herself while smiling.

During the time when Eris is smiling, I bargain and lower the price to 1 metal coin.

As expected, a full set is expensive.

[Rudeus is next!]

[I don't really need it right?]

[No! You need to buy a robe! Robe! Like a magician!]

Becoming a swordsman, while adventuring with her childhood friend magician.

Eris seems to yearn for such a scenario to become adventurers like that.

Even though there are days where it seems she cannot sleep at night, the Eris in the daytime is actually quite bold.

Well that is fine. I'll go along with her.

[Oji-san, is there a robe that suits me?]

Hearing that, the old man in the armor store silently opens up a closet.

[These are for the Hobbit race.]

There are various colored robes, and every one of them has a subtle difference to them.

There are 5 colors —- Red, yellow, green, blue, gray. They are very lightly colored.

[Are there any differences in the colored robes?]

[The robes are made from Monsters' fur, and they have a little resistance in them.]

[Red is fire, yellow is earth..... how about the ash colored one?]

[That's just ordinary cloth.]

I see. No wonder the ash colored is at half price. There are some slight differences in pricing for the other colors as well, it probably has something to do with the difference in the materials.

[Rudeus is suited for blue!]

[Why's that.....]

If it's close combat I might get blown away by the explosion's shock wave, perhaps red or green is better.

Is it going to be the fox or the raccoon?

[Lad. What magic do you use?]

[I can use all types of attack magic.]

[Hoh. That's impressive. Even though you look so young... Well, even though you need to add a little money...]

The old man says this while taking out a relatively darker gray robe, almost like a rat's color.

[This is made from Mackey rat's hide.]

[Mickey mouse?]

[It's not mouse, it's rat.]

My mind has an image of a guy with red short pants and black color on him, and I quickly brush away that image.

That's really dangerous–

Even though it feels like a cloth to the touch, it is actually made from an animal's hide?

[Are there any effects on it?]

[Even though it's not magic resistant, it's very durable.]

I try wearing it.

[It's a little big, is there anything smaller?]

[This is the smallest.]

[There should be something for children right?]

[There's nothing like that.]

Why do I feel like the judo practitioner who tries wearing a Normal Suit for the first time.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Gundam anime. }

Well, since my body is still developing, this size might be fine.

The quality is quite good as well, and it's durable like he said, which might have some slashing resistance.

And the rat-color is pretty good, the name and the appearance match each other.

[Well, I'll buy this.]

[You like that? I'll sell it for 8 iron coins.]

[Well.....]

I try lowering the price and buy it for 6 iron coins.

I also bought a different colored headbands for Ruijerd and me. If it's necessary, the headband can be used to cover the Magic stone on Ruijerd's forehead.

Why did I buy my own headband?

Because I do not like to be out of place with my friends.

I let Ruijerd observe Veskel at the same time when we went to buy our things.

Even though I did not expect much from them, based on the work they do there is a possibility that our reputation drops.

Thus I let Ruijerd observe them.

He said, [If you're so worried, you shouldn't party up with them in the first place].

You are right.

But thanks to them, we have a surplus of money, and our position is at a neutral standpoint.

Based on the conclusions, they seem to be doing an earnest job. Even though it's F rank, but they did not show any signs of disliking it, and had placed their full efforts into it.

Veskel received a quest to eliminate bugs today. It's a request to eliminate these disgusting things in the kitchen.

She is from the Zumeba's race, and there is poison in her saliva.

That saliva has the capability of luring and killing bugs immediately, or paralyzing them to become the Zumeba's food.

To sum it up, getting rid of bugs is her forte.

The person who made the request is an old woman. She's an eccentric old woman whose lips are in a へ shape.

Ruijerd feels that one will be chased out if she's just a little displeased.

But Veskel did not have any conflicts with her, and quickly exterminated the bugs.

Ruijerd confirmed it as well, and there were no bugs left in the house.

After that she fills the gaps with a thread like thing, and blocks the areas where the bugs could enter.

[Thank you very much Veskel, those bugs had been bothering me for a long time.]

[There's no need to thank me, if you have any other requests, please leave it to 『Dead End's Ruijerd』.」

[『Dead End's Ruijerd』? That's your party name now?]

[Something like that.]

Veskel converses with the old woman.

[If the bugs come again, please use these.]

She finally gave a few vials of her saliva to the old woman and bid farewell.

The request was completed.

She met up with us in the adventurer's guild and collected the payment.

[So from how you described it, they are working hard.]

[... Ah.]

She did her job perfectly, far beyond my imagination. She became acquaintances with the old woman, and even did a service job. Compared to me who blindly imitates others to do things, she had done a better job of impressing others.

[It seems like they are not completely bad people.]

[So it seems.]

Well, even though I'm a little suspicious of them too.

But they should not have any burdens just bringing up the name Ruijerd.

They probably have the mentality of "earning money without any worries", and the probability of betraying us is lowered.

[But the truth that they did bad things cannot be erased.]

[But they are trying hard now like Ruijerd-san.]

[Hmm...]

Even criminals will not continue to do bad things. Just like them, like myself, like Ruijerd.

I did not specifically warn them about kidnapping pets, but they have already stopped doing that.

Well it has only been three days. It's still early for them to forget about the bad memories where they nearly died after their deeds got exposed.

[But the only praiseworthy thing might only be now. If there's another chance it's better to observe them.]

Ruijerd frowns when he hears me saying that.

[You... don't trust the people you work with?]

[Of course not. The only people I trust in this town are you and Eris.]

[... Is that so.]

Ruijerd seems to stretch out his hand to put it on my head, but he did not do so.

Even though I trust Ruijerd, I feel like I have lost his trust.

Well, even if it ends up that way it is fine.

My goal is to return to the Asura's kingdom with Eris, and repair the Superd race's reputation.

Gaining Ruijerd's trust is not my goal.

[Let's go.]

We slowly walk back to the inn under the Magic-illumination stones' light.

—

I think the start of our adventurers' lives is progressing smoothly.

After 3 weeks, we reached Rank D.

I feel that we went up really fast so I checked it out.

The conditions for raising ranks is as stated below.

==========

F > E

Clear 10 F rank jobs.

Clear 5 consecutive E rank jobs.

E > D

Clear 50 F rank jobs.

Clear 25 E rank jobs.

Clear 10 consecutive D rank jobs.

D > C

Clear 100 E rank jobs.

Clear 40 D rank jobs.

Clear 10 C rank jobs.

C > B

Clear 100 D rank jobs

Clear 50 C rank jobs

Clear 20 consecutive B rank jobs

B > A

Clear 300 C rank jobs

Clear 100 B rank jobs

Clear 20 A rank jobs

A > S

Clear 100 A rank jobs

Clear 20 S rank jobs.

There is also a rank demotion if one repeatedly fails to clear the jobs.

Failing 5 consecutive jobs of a lower rank will result in a demotion.

Failing 10 consecutive jobs of the rank will result in a demotion.

Failing 5 consecutive jobs of a higher rank will not result in a demotion, but you will not be able to receive higher rank jobs anymore.

==========

Because we relied on Veskel and Jaril to do the F and E rank jobs, we easily raised our ranks.

Now we are D rank, which also means we can receive C rank jobs.

C rank requests are easy enough, so we should be able to easily raise to C ranks. It is about time to stop our partnership with Jaril and Veskel.

Even though they won't do any more things like kidnapping, I don't know what sort of bad influences will happen from exchanging our requests.

We came to this town for the sake of earning money, and now might be a good opportunity to leave and bid our farewells.

But there are things that we can still make use of before Rank C. Even though there are no problems from the current situation, it is a little regrettable to put down our current status quo.

When it concerns money, it's better to have more of it.

Our current wealth consists of 1 Green Ore coin, 7 iron coins, 14 scrap iron coins, and 35 stone coins.

If you convert everything to stone coins, we have 1875 stone coins.

1875 yen.....

If I count everything that we have it's not even 2 Asura Big Copper coins.

No, I should stop thinking about the prices of another continent.

Once we reached Rank C we will part with Jaril and Veskel, then leave this town.

We should progress in this direction.

I find a particular request.

==========

B

Job: Search/Destroy the mysterious Monsters.

Reward: 5 scrap iron coins (2 iron coins if they are killed)

Job Contents: The search/destroy for Monsters.

Location: South forest (Forest of petrification)

Time duration: The end of next month.

Time Limit: As soon as possible.

Name of the requester: Roaming merchant Bellver

Notes: I saw squirming shadows deep in the forest, and I want to investigate the true identity of the shadows. If they are a dangerous entity, please eliminate them.

==========

Jaril and I are both holding our chins at the same time, troubled by it.

The mysterious creatures.

This request is really unclear.

In fact this Monster might not even exist.

Even if they do exist, how do you prove it's the creature that he saw?

But the rewards are quite good, even if you do not kill them we can still receive 5 scrap iron coins, so that is not bad at all.

[Is this request on your mind?]

[Even though the reward is quite good, it is a little suspicious.]

Jaril also nods.

[It is likely that even if you do this request you can't get anything out of it, it's better if you don't.]

Something like this also happened once, about 2 weeks ago.

A request of "Please help me gather the Acid Wolf".

We did the same things as usual, and gathered the fangs and tails of the Acid Wolf.

But we were told that they needed the entire body of the Acid Wolf.

Even though the contents of the contract were not detailed, we still paid the penalty for breaking off the contract.

If I think about it I feel humiliated.

In order to prevent something like that again, it's better to not accept this request..... But.

I am dazzled by the money.

[Hm, but this is 2 iron coins..... Even if we paid another [Studying fees] it might still be worth it.]

[Aren't you shy already of being bitten once?]

[In this situation, the penalty is still 5 scrap iron coins right?]

[Yes, because the brackets there would indicate it's a special reward.]

Just to add on, because I find it irritating to have Nokopara bothering Ruijerd, and the other adventurers bothering Eris, I let both of them wait outside.

Veskel is not at the guild as well.

So there is no one who can stop me.

[Well, if it's the forest of petrification, even if we can't complete this request, we can still get something that can be sold. If it's you guys, you can still break even from breaching the contract, isn't that good?]

[Alright, then we will work hard on our end.]

When I go back and think about it, no matter how I think about it I feel that I had a lapse in judgment.

Because I have gotten used to things, I have become complacent.

Due to things progressing smoothly, I have underestimated the risks.

I have gone too far in pursuing rewards.

It could have done better, but contrary to that thought, I merely did things till that extent.

I assessed myself that way.

The forest of petrification.

It is about a day's journey away from the town Rikaris.

The side of the road leading to the forest is filled with sharp bone-like trees growing everywhere, appearing as if the forest has been turned into stone.

There are also very dangerous B rank Monsters, called Almond Anaconda and Executioner, residing in the forest.

Even though it's a shortcut to reach the next town through this forest, only urgent roaming merchants will use this route, and they will hire many skilled guards.

In this world the forests are dangerous without exception, but the Magic continent's forest is exceedingly so.

At the entrance of the forest, there are three parties gathered there.

A rank B party [Super Blaze], a Rank D party [Trouble village hooligans], and a Rank D [Dead End].

The leaders of the team meet with each other.

It seems to be common sense amongst adventurers to meet with each other, if the parties run into each other at places like the forests.

Even though I want to ignore them, it will be troublesome if we run into each other in the forest.

In any case, we should show ourselves now.

[Hey, what are you bunch doing here.]

The first line that comes out from him.

The irritated face of [Super blaze]'s leader Blaze.

I still have an impression of his face, it should be the pig-head person who laughed at us on the first day.

Ah, I'm not insulting him.

It's because his face is really a pig.

He's the same race as the gatekeeper who looked at Eris with a lascivious expression.

What is his race name.....

Indeed, I classified it as pig-faced race "orc".

They seem to be comprised of many races in their 6 men party. There's a Lamia, a sprite like person, centaur, etc.

To level up to Rank C requires the skills of hunting the surrounding Monsters.

If one reaches Rank B, they are veterans with assured skills.

[We're here to do requests!]

[Trouble Village Hooligans]'s leader Kurt says with a sullen expression.

He's a charming handsome youth with 2 horns.

[We're here to do the same.]

[Dead End]'s leader nods just like the party on the right side.

Well, that's me.

Blaze scoffs with his tongue after listening to the 2 Rank D people.

[Are there people who reserved this? There's something bad about it.....]

Blaze irritatedly scratches the back of his neck.

[R, reserve what?]

[Huh!?]

Kurt asks timidly, and that pig suddenly snaps.

[Well, well, calm down, calm down, please teach us beginners.]

I rub my hands together and go closer, and Blaze spits onto the ground.

[It means that different people doing the same request at the same time, and the guild didn't manage it properly.]

I see.

Double booking.

There are 3 people who made a request. There are 3 people who are doing the requests. Even though the request looks different, but they are one and the same.

Something like this does indeed happen.

[May I know what everyone's request is?]

I ask.

Blaze's request: [To kill the White-Fang Cobra within the Forest of Petrification].

Kurt's request: [To collect the mysterious egg in the Forest of Petrification]

Rudeus's request: [To search for the mysterious Monster].

[Search? Ara? There's a request like this in the D rank?]

Kurt asks.

Of course, I have thought about ways to handle this.

[This is a C rank request which is posted after you have left the guild.]

[I see..... Your request is really good.....]

I cast a sidewards glance at the grumbling Kurt, and begin to think.

These requests seem to have an overlapping feel to it.

First of all, there is no White-fanged Cobra in this forest. Since a request has been made, that will mean one has been found.

That is to say, the mysterious creature may possibly be the white snake cobra.

The mysterious eggs.... may possibly be the white-fanged cobra's egg.

Of course, it's possible all these mysterious are unrelated to the white-fanged cobra. It's too early to conclude it as a double booking.

[Leaving this aside, why would something like this happen?]

[Who knows, there are times where things like this happen.]

Well it can't be helped, since they are not using a computer to manage things.

[And? How do we settle this?]

[Nothing to it, the fastest person wins.]

Blaze says that and Kurt yells with surprise.

[What! If you kill the Monsters, then what about our request!]

[Huh? You're gathering the eggs? If we see that we will destroy it. It's very troublesome if the White-fanged cobra breeds.]

Blaze laughingly mocks at Kurt.

[Hey, Rudeus, say something! If they defeat the Monsters our requests will....!]

Kurt passes the baton onto me.

Indeed, if they defeat the Monsters we will also fail.....

No, our mission is to search, if we report [The White-fanged cobra is in the forest], I think the mission will be completed.

If this is still not counted, we will hunt for Monsters in the forest, and pay the penalty for breaking the contract.

[It's still too early to decide our requests are repeated, it might not be a White-fanged cobra but some other Monster.]

Blaze shows a disgusted expression after hearing me say that.

[You mean you want us to look for it together? You want us to protect children?]

Huh? How did things turn out this way?

While I am in confusion, Kurt jumps up at the words "to protect children".

[Who said we need you to take care of us!]

[Even if you say that, isn't it better with our protection? It's very harsh for D ranks in this forest.]

Ah, so that's how it is, I see.

With two additional parties, Kurt and I, are like goldfish dung sticking to him. He probably does not want to complete the request easily by bringing us along.

This will only contribute to Blaze's party's burden.

Of course, I don't want to move with them either, because I don't wish anyone to see Ruijerd use a spear. He's really too strong, and may easily divulge the truth that he is a real Superd.

So we will have Kurt take the opportunity.

[Indeed, it will be unpleasant. We don't need any protection, 『Dead End』 will work independently.]

I say that and walk out of the circle formed by the leaders.

I go back to Ruijerd and Eris. Ruijerd is looking over the forest while Eris waits idly at his side.

[What happened?]

Eris asks, her appearance almost as if she is saying [I can't wait any longer].

[The contents of the request have been double booked.]

[Double booked?]

[It means our requests have overlapped each other.]

[Then what should we do? Give it to them?]

[How can that be possible? The one who is the fastest is the winner.]

[I see, it's about whose skills is better.]

Eris is full of spirit. It seems that she's sick of the hunting that does not feel like being an adventurer.

Rather than say it is hunting, it is more like [Homework].

At the same time right now, Blaze and Kurt seem to finish talking. Kurt says a few words to his two other allies and they walk into the forest.

『Super Blaze』 goes a different way and enters the forest.

[Hey, what should we do now?]

[Hm..... We should let Ruijerd search for the enemy like how we do it usually, and go into the direction of that mysterious Monster.]

But Ruijerd shakes his head as I say that.

[Wait.]

[What's wrong?]

[I'm worried about the three children.]

The 3 children probably refers to the Hooligans.

[With their abilities they cannot survive in this forest.]

[That is to say?]

[We should help them.]

[..... But if we stay too long together, you will reveal that you're a Superd.]

[That's fine.]

I dang say that it darn matters!

[But if you reveal that you're a Superd, things will become troublesome.]

[Do you mean that you want to let them die without helping them?]

[I didn't say that. We will follow them from behind, and if anything happens we will help them.]

There is no helping it, I'll change the strategy. I will forgo the 2 iron coins and demand gratitude later.

But is it fine to just help them out? The chances that his identity as a Superd will get revealed is very high.

Even though I considered they might not discriminate if we saved them, the existence of Dead End is special in this Magic Continent.

I do not know how things will progress.

If there is anything that happens, why not recruit them just like Jaril and Veskel.....

Just like that, we started following Kurt and the rest.

Kurt's party spiritedly enters the forest, and Ruijerd frowns after seeing that.

[What should we do?]

[Is this their first time entering the forest?]

[Haah, I'm not sure either.]

[They are too careless.]

Just like we have worried, Kurt failed to find the enemy, and encountered an Executioner.

Executioner is a humanoid enemy. They are adventurers that turned into zombies.

I do not know why this zombie is equipping a huge sword and very thick armor.

Even though it is not very fast, it is very determined and has sword techniques.

Based on the danger level, it is a Rank B.

It works on its own, and it's not overly big.

Even so, he's still Rank B.

A strong enemy.

Just to add on, the armor and sword will disappear once it dies. It's an annoying enemy that cannot be turned into money.

Kurt's party runs away with everything they have when they encounter this Monster.

[Go help them out!]

[No, the timing isn't right.]

I stop Ruijerd who's prepared to jump out.

[Why!]

[It's not that dangerous yet.]

Even though the Executioner's speed is faster than what it looks with the armor on, it is still not faster than Kurt's full retreat.

The distance is gradually lengthened, and if they keep running they can escape.

But Kurt's party's luck runs out here.

To the front of where they are escaping, are Almond Anacondas.

They are monsters that move in a group of 3-5, and they have almond tattoo shape on their bodies.

So they are classified as B rank.

They are strong foes.

They are the representatives of the Forest of Petrification, the top 2 monsters that no one wants to encounter.

They are actually surrounded by these two types of Monsters at the same time.

Kurt's party displays expressions of half-crying and half-smiling.

They probably think they can simply just run away if they encountered something.

In truth, I feel they can indeed outrun the Executioner.

How things turned out is their lack of consideration.

They can clearly not attempt things that do not suit their abilities.

But I can also understand why they want to do things beyond their capabilities.

Their thoughts are shallow.

[Go help them!]

[No, just wait a little longer.]

I stop Ruijerd who is immediately about to help them.

A play to create danger right in front of their noses.

The greater the danger, the more gratitude they'll have. When their bodies are full of injuries, I only need to use Healing Magic to treat them.

Kuhaha.

My plans are perfect.

[Ah!]

Eris yells.

The youth who looks like a bird has his body cut in two in the middle of the air.

Only a single strike.

He was unable to evade Executioner's attack, and got killed in a single strike.

My evil smile spasms.

I realize later that I am wrong, they are already at death's doorsteps.

The one who is superficial, is me.

[That's why I already said!]

Ruijerd's voice is mixed with irritation.

I immediately use a stone cannon, and at the same time Ruijerd rushes out.

After receiving my Magic attack, the Executioner is still alive. It is still standing after receiving my stone cannon that can take down a stone treant in a single hit.

This bastard is too strong, I think of that, but once I look closely his right hand has been blown off.

I missed the target.

It picks up the sword with his left hand, and runs towards here. Even though it feels slow when looking at it from afar, if it runs here at that speed, I feel that it is a speed that completely cannot be judged from its heavy appearance.

I calmly set up a soft marsh in front of its feet. It steps one leg into it, and falls downwards.

I then summon a huge boulder on top of it, and smash it forcefully.

At the same time, Ruijerd and the rest killed the Almond Anacondas.

[..... Haa, haa..... That's..... Haa, haa..... a really big help.]

Kurt trembles with a paled face, but he earnestly thanks us.

[Y, you're..... really strong.....]

Executioner has turned into a cushion for the boulder, and the Almond Anaconda's head is cut off beautifully.

Well, this is an easy victory.

Even though it was so easy to defeat them, we did not save him.

[No, not being able to rescue you in time..... I'm sorry.]

Kurt's eyes are full of respect.

My chest feels really hurt and I avert my eyes away.

The eyes that turned away face the youth whose body got cut into half.

A face with a bird's beak, and I think his name is Gablin. If I did not think of unnecessary stuff, he probably would not have died.

As I contemplate to myself, Ruijerd grabs the front of my shirt, juts his chin out to point at the body and says.

[This is your fault.]

Without any reservation, to gouge at my heart.

[Yes.....]

[The three of them could have be saved immediately!]

I know.

I know it.

I did not want things to turn out that way too!

I feel cheerless.

I really did not want to have this result.

I'm reflecting.

I'm regretting.

Why are you reproaching me even though I'm trying to repent.

[I'm trying my hardest too! I'm trying to get the best results from the best timing! Why are you trying to put the blame on me!]

[Because someone died!]

I unintentionally raise my voice, and Ruijerd's retort comes back perfectly at me.

[Urgh.....]

I am unable to refute.

It certainly feels like he was killed by me.

[.....]

Eris is still quiet till now.

She probably has her own thoughts, as she is staring ahead at Gablin's body.

She probably has nothing to say to me.

That's because I have indeed failed. Under the circumstance where it concerns lives, I only place my priority on my gains and failed to rescue someone in time.

[Hey, hey, don't fight amongst yourselves.]

In the end, the one who comes to stop us is Kurt.

[It has nothing to do with you, it's this guy's fault.]

Ruijerd did not pay attention to him, but Kurt did not stop.

[Even though it has nothing to do with me, I know that you are fighting over whether to abandon us or help us when you saw us fighting right!?]

No. Rather than say that we fought amongst each other, I arbitrarily made the judgment to abandon you on my own.

[You're indeed very strong and the circumstances were dire for us, but you didn't have the obligation to help us!]

Ruijerd's hair seems to stand up.

[What do you mean by obligation! Helping children is an adult's responsibility!]

Kurt immediately jumps up when he hears this line.

[We're not children! We're adventurers! Rudeus has made the right judgment as the leader!]

[Hmm.....]

Ruijerd stops talking.

However I did not feel that my judgment is right.

[But your comrade is dead?]

[Anyone who sees it understands that! Indeed, the three of us had hoped to continue doing this all the way! But we also have the resolution to accept death! An adventurer, regardless of being young or old, will have this resolution!]

My chest is burning in pain.

I do not have that resolution.

In my eyes, the job as an adventurer is merely a method of earning money.

[I'm very grateful that you helped us! But the things about our members are our own problems..... No, it's our responsibility that we did not think clearly on how difficult the request is.]

Kurt's words are full of naivety.

One can see it as the youth's sense of justice, or one can view it a brat who hasn't been polished by society.

But one can see the desperation in his efforts.

It's something that I clearly lack recently.

In my eyes there are only the money in my hand and our ranks in the guild. I treat the request like a game, and thus I did not put effort into it.

[You over there..... You're Kurt? I'm sorry for treating you like a kid. You're a warrior who has come of age.]

He seems to have understood something from Kurt.

[And, Rudeus, I'm sorry.]

Ruijerd puts me back onto the ground and apologizes.

This incident today. Ruijerd has no reason to apologize.

[Please don't apologize. It's the truth that I made a mistake.]

[No, it's not a mistake. You were protecting their pride as warriors. I had thoughtlessly wanted to go in and rescue them immediately.]

[No.....]

I have not thought about this point at all.

[It's the same thing when we encountered the group of the two small villains.....]

Ruijerd comes to an understanding on his own.

I have not understood it yet.

I need to reflect on this matter without fail.

My bad points are going to be immediately revealed, and in order to prevent this from happening again for the next time, I have to consolidate everything.

That should be what I am thinking, but.

I am so lucky that Ruijerd comes to a mistaken understanding of his own.

Since the conclusion of everything is OK, is it not fine?

I have this shallow thought arising in spite of myself.

I am starting to hate myself a little.

Kurt says he will carry the body back to town, and we guard him till we reached the forest's entrance.

Even though I think Ruijerd wanted to say [Let me send you back to town].

He did not say it.

That is probably because he has recognized Kurt's party as warriors.

[Even though we might not be able to return to town because we lost someone, we are prepared to die.]

Eris spontaneously runs up when he says that from his lonely back.

『Good luck!』

She says that to them in Human Language.

Even though they are unable to communicate with each other, Kurt seems to understand what she is trying to convey.

[Thank you..... Erm, how does that work?]

『Eh!』

He kissed the base of her thumb.

And he left smiling.

Eris is stunned.

I do not know what to do either.

Eris turns her back at me, and then wipes the part where she has been kissed on her armor's cuff with a shuffling sound.

『I, it's not like that!』

Eris does it with a frantic expression.

Even though she was kissed, the reality is that she was kissed on her glove.

Even though I do not feel the need to do it so desperately....

『T-this isn't needed anymore!』

Eris takes down her glove, and carelessly throws it into the forest's interiors.

Hey, hey, the glove is not free of charge.

『Don't throw your equipment away!』

『It's wasteful to buy a new one!』

Ruijerd and I rebuke Eris with overlapping voices.

Even though it's my mind's reflex, at this point in time I'm still thinking of money.

Haaa.....

『Shut up!』

Eris stomps on the ground with tears in her eyes.

I have not seen this Eris for a long time.

What is it.

The meaning of kissing the thumb.

『Rudeus! Here!』

She brings out her hand to me.

I lick it involuntarily.

『!』

Eris' face is painted crimson red, and she gives me a punch.

A serious punch that is designed to strip my consciousness away.

I feel like my bones are breaking.

If one has this punch, one can obtain the world.

I fall onto the ground in an unsightly manner.

What should I do?

At the same time I see Eris staring at the part I licked. She then licks it with her tongue.

After which the blush goes all the way to her ears, and she wipes her hand on the clothes.

『I, I'm sorry Rudeus, but you can't lick it!』

Her actions are too cute, so I completely forgive her.

That earlier failure which brought about my dispirited feelings has been cleared slightly.

I consider the things about Ruijerd when we walk in the forest.

– Likes children

– Has a sense of justice.

That is what I knew about Ruijerd in the past.

But today I have a new vocabulary word for him.

– Warrior.

[Ruijerd-san, what is a warrior to you?]

[A warrior is one who protects children and treasures his allies.]

He replies immediately.

But I finally understand the reason why Ruijerd is angry.

He has never once thought about having a sense of justice, but he has only pursued the goals of a warrior's pride.

A warrior must never hurt children.

A warrior must always protect children.

A warrior must never abandon his allies.

A warrior must always protect his allies.

He has only considered these things.

Therefore he must have decided that the kidnapper who kicked me must be a bad person.

The 2 people who did not fight their enemies but begged for their lives are bad people.

Kurt's party was most likely seen as children. To leave them alone, Ruijerd must have considered me as a bad person.

But after Kurt refutes him, he changed his views. He has now seen them as children who became warriors.

And thus, he has forgiven my actions.

Or perhaps he must be reflecting from before, that he did not treat them as warriors.

I really have no idea how he draws the line between warriors and children.

Even though Eris is considered a child, what am I considered?

Should I ask, or not?

[There's a battle going on.]

Ruijerd suddenly utters a sentence of caution when I am having an inner conflict.

[That is..... Blaze's party?]

[Yes.]

It seems to be Blaze.

I don't know how Ruijerd's third eye is able to see things. Even if it's covered with a hood, he's able to see.

Also, it's not just a radar, he can differentiate individuals.

That is really convenient, I also want one.

[Should we help them?]

[There's no need.]

As expected of a Rank B, Ruijerd seems to have regarded them as warriors.

In the front of the forest, a huge snake is coiled there. And then surrounding it are four bodies.

But they are dead.

Oh, so it is unnecessary to help them refers to this?

I am unable to find Blaze's body, perhaps he ran away.

[What about the other two?]

[They died.]

It appears they have been completely wiped out.

I place my palms together.

[But what is that Monster?]

The Monster that wiped out Blaze's party is incredibly huge.

[That's a Red-fang Cobra.]

The body of the red snake cannot be covered by both my arms and Eris arms, its body is about 10 meters long, and its neck is opened up as if to threaten us.

In the center of its body is a huge lump, I'm afraid it's that pig.

Come to think of it, isn't it a white snake?

[To think this forest actually has a Red-fang Cobra, and it's so big too.]

[You mean that it usually doesn't have one?]

[Usually. But there's a small chance that one might appear.]

A Red-fang Cobra is a higher ranking species.

It has a bigger body than the White-fang Cobra, and it's much more agile. Its body is fully covered with fire-resistent scales, and their sharp fangs also contain lethal venom.

I'm not sure what a White-fang Cobra eats to become a Red-fang Cobra, but there is a small chance one will appear amongst the White-fang Cobra.

Even though White-fang Cobra is a rank B, but a Red-fang Cobra is a strong enemy that's Rank A.

A B rank party will probably get killed immediately.

It is in the middle of enjoying its meal, and did not appear concerned about us. It seems that it is about to eat its third meal.

[We can do it?]

Eris confidently pulls out her sword.

[Should we do it?]

Ruijerd asks for my opinion.

[..... Are you sure you want to let me decide?]

[I'll leave the decision to you.]

[Who else can decide?]

I'm entrusted with the decision.

After a slight consideration, the request is to discover or eliminate the mysterious Monster.

Perhaps they have mistaken a Red-fang Cobra for a White-fang Cobra.

It seems there isn't a White-fang Cobra here.

Now that we've discovered something like this, even if we go back this request will be considered as a success.

But if we beat it we get 2 iron coins as the reward.

If we can defeat it, I still want to beat it.

But even though I want to do it, there are words to describe situations like this.

He that fights and runs away may live to fight another day.

Just then someone died in front of my eyes.

If we lose we will die.

We should not cross this dangerous bridge.

[If you want to do it, I can kill it on my own.]

Ruijerd suggests that when I'm in conflict.

[Ruijerd-san wants to defeat it alone?]

[I am sufficient to kill it.]

That's a sentence that is really reliable.

He feels a little like Dash-san.

He is capable of dealing with Rank A creatures.

Well, since Ruijerd already says this, it should be fine.

Alright.

[Then let's do it.]

I make a decision.

The two of them fight in close combat, while I fight in ranged combat with Magic.

It's the usual combination, so I use the Stone Cannon like normal.

This time since the opponent is a Rank A Monster, so I increased the power and make the ammunition into a wedge shape, in order to make an explosive effect after it hits, as well as adding Fire Magic in it.

Discharge.

The bullet shoots out at super speed, aiming towards to the Red snake, and ends in a huge explosion.

That is how I visioned it in my mind.

[Wha!?]

The Red-fang Cobra twists its body, and evaded the bullet.

It evaded the attack.

This is not a coincidence. It has clearly seen the attack and avoided it.

The bullet flies off to a distant place and explodes.

[That's a lie right.....]

The preemptive strike has failed.

But our special force will not stop. Ruijerd leads the vanguard, while Eris trails behind.

It's a little different from the usual formation, usually it is Eris who is in front.

[Saaa!]

[.....Hmph!!]

Ruijerd fiercely aims for the head, using the short spear as always to stab at it. The Red-fang Cobra twists itself to avoid his attack, and then makes use of the recoil to bite at Ruijerd.

Ruijerd easily knocks the attack away with his spear, and the ground is torn asunder with a big hole from the fangs.

At the same time, Eris goes around the snake and swings her sword to chop its tail, but it did not get cut off.

That is because either the scales, the flesh or both of them are very hard.

[Saaaa!]

The snake brings its attention onto Eris, and at the same time, Eris and Ruijerd move away from the snake body.

Using the opening in this instant, my Magic flies at the Red-fang Cobra.

1. Me

2. Eris

3. Ruijerd

Even though 2 and 3 are reversed, this signalling still follows the earlier combination that we set up before hand.

[I missed again!?]

But the Red-fang Cobra avoids the attack again.

This time the front of the bullet has a sharp tip so the speed is increased, but it streaks past the side of the Red-fang Cobra and snaps several trees behind its back.

It did it again, evading the attack after seeing it.

Even though things turn out this way, it doesn't really matter if it does not hit.

Ruijerd and Eris attacks are like a wave. Ruijerd resolutely aims for its brain and heart, while Eris keeps cutting on the tail to distract it.

The magic that occasionally grazes it only inflicts a little damage.

Although this formation is simple, it's not something that can be easily handled.

Even though there might be an opening for it if it aims at Eris carefully, Ruijerd's control has been perfect, making it unable to ignore us.

Ruijerd's attacks are unable to hit it, but the Red-fang cobra gradually starts to get tired and its movements slowly dull.

And then, the Stone Cannon finally hits the Snake's body.

When the Red-fang Cobra has finally been cut up, the sun has already set.

On that day our evening meal is the Red-food Cobra's meat.

Even though I do not know where it can be sold, we pulled out the fangs and rolled up its skin like a carpet.

The eggs that Kurt wanted to find has also been found, but they are really too big to be transported. After thinking for a long time we decided to destroy them.

That's because it is forbidden to increase the population of Monsters.

After relieving Blaze's party of anything that can be sold, we burned and buried them.

If we will leave them alone they might become Executioners.

I really do not understand how they revive as zombies.

(But I must say the Red-fang Cobra is really amazing.)

I think about the fight we had earlier. I remember how it kept evading my magic attacks.

It evaded.

It evaded countless times.

Until the last moment, there were almost no attacks that struck it.

Thinking it through, the Executioner did the same thing.

I thought that it should have hit, but it only lost a single hand.

So Monsters that reach Rank B and above can evade magic attacks?

Red-fang Cobra.

It can even avoid Ruijerd's spear.....

But that should be Ruijerd not being serious. If he is serious, he probably can finish it in one blow.

It didn't avoid Eris' sword because the threat was too low, so it didn't need to evade it.

But this world's creatures are all crazy monsters.

Even a human can avoid magic attacks, so Monsters can also evade them.

It could be possible that S ranked Monsters might not even be hurt from the Stone Cannon.

That's awfully frightening.

It's best that I do not approach such dangerous places.

—

With that, we accomplished the request.

And then, this request became our final request in this town.

After we slayed the Red-fang Cobra, we returned to the guild. As usual we met up with Jaril outside the guild. We exchange our cards, then pass the Red-fang Cobra's fangs and skin over to him and collaborate our stories.

Because there are too many items this time, we enter the guild with Jaril and everyone else. As expected, Nokopara comes over to us. This person really does reside in the guild all the time, and he will always come over.

[Woah, you hunted something interesting didn't you. Hey, isn't this the Red-fang Cobra's scales? Ah?]

I make an eye-signal to Jaril, and let him talk about what we had discussed earlier.

[Ah, indeed. We were lucky as we met it when it was weak.]

[Hah~ Just you few only ~]

He smiles as if he saw something interesting. Nokopara condescendingly looks at Jaril.

What's wrong? This feels different from the norm.

[A, all the Super Blaze's members died. They were the ones who injured it.]

[What? Blaze..... died?]

[Yes.]

[Well, it can't be helped if they met the Red-fang Cobra.....]

Nokopara sighs with a bored expression.

[But, no matter how weak it is the two of you cannot possibly kill a Red-fang Cobra.....]

[About it being weak, it was actually close to death. No, it won't be wrong to say it's already dead. Even if it is still breathing, it is no different from it being dead.]

Jaril hurriedly runs off after talking at a high speed. Nokopara's face is full of disbelief and changes his target to us.

[You went to search for pets today again?]

[Yes, Jaril-sensei's technique for searching pets is too good, and we earned a few coins today.]

[Hoh~]

I want to leave as soon as possible. I feel that there is something wrong.

However, Nokopara brings his arm around my shoulders with a broad smile and whispers.

[Then, how did you search for the pet outside the town?]

I subconsciously stop my movements for a moment, but I think I managed to keep a poker face. This development is within my expectation, he just saw us going out of the town.

[We just went outside by coincidence.]

[Hoh~, what did you do outside?]

The conversation is heading off in a terrible direction. Nokopara grabs Jaril's shoulders.

[Is the Red-fang Cobra in the city too?]

I see, he saw Jaril moving about in the city, which is to say the cat has been let out of the bag.

[Ara, this is really such an incredible incident, don't you say?]

Progressing to this stage is within expectations. There are several methods to escape from this situation.

In example, we can sell out Jaril and solve this problem. We can state that we were forcefully given this request and we were having a huge headache over this.

But I am unable to use this solution. If I do I might get stabbed by Ruijerd because this is not what a warrior should do.

[Hey, hey, you should stop pretending if I already state things to this point.]

[What do you mean by pretending? What exactly, did we do?]

[Huh?]

[P-Hunters helped us with our request, and we helped P-Hunters with their request. That's it.]

I continue to act ignorant, and turn the conversation to a serious direction. I had to check the rules again, and I shouldn't be wrong about this. But things are not exactly what the rules state. This world is not one where you can do as you please if you just follow the rules. But to be exact, I do not know how to differentiate the lines, so I drag the conversation in a logical direction.

[Are you being serious, what happens if idiots follow what you just did?]

[Then what will happen?]

[If you are able to use money to buy requests, then there's no meaning to the adventurer's guild.]

Hm, we did not do a money exchange..... This line of forced argument isn't going to work. But, certainly, classifying the requests and doing transactions on it.

I see. This guy's clever.

Indeed, if what we do is going to be widespread, there will be people who will use money to do transactions with these requests. For example, receiving all the rank D requests, and then selling them to the D rank teams, and the people who sell them can use money to raise their ranks, even when they did nothing.

But using this method will cause the requests to fail if they cannot sell them.

[Nokopara, why are you taking notice of this? We're not bothering you right?]

[Hoho, be careful of what you're talking about. The only roads you have now are two. Oi, Jaril, listen up.]

He grabs the front of my shirt and lifts me up. Behind me Ruijerd's and Eris' faces are wrought with anger. In any case, hold it in, the conversation is not over yet.

[Hehehe.....]

I am unable to read Nokopara's expressions because he has a horse face. But since his smile is a tasteless one, I should be able to understand it.

[If you want to keep your adventurer's qualifications, give me 2 iron coins every month.]

How troubling.

This is the first time I've met someone like this after coming to this world.

Recently there are people who are neither good nor bad. It is easy to handle people who are bad because there is no need for further considerations.

But this Nokopara, no wonder he's always in the guild. He is constantly watching out for people who do illegal things. Once he finds out he will proceed to threaten them, and that is a pretty sweet deal.

If this fellow reports us we will be finished. No, if he does that, the person who reports it will also be found out to be doing illegal actions.

[You lot must have earned a lot of money right? Hehe, you can spend it freely right?]

[M, may I ask a few questions?]

I pretend to lose my composure, while calmly progressing in the conversation.

[Ah?]

[This is indeed classified as buying and selling requests right?]

[Yes, if you're discovered you will be fined and lose your qualifications to be adventurers, you don't want that right?]

[I don't, I don't.]

Calm down, there's no need to panic yet, I have also considered this situation.

No problem, there's no problem yet.

[N, no matter what I have no money, can Jaril and I report our requests?]

[No problem. But don't think of escaping, yeah?]

[Certainly, my lord~]

This fellow is stupid after all.

I walk to the encounter as I think about it.(!)

[H, hey..... what should we do, what should we do!]

[Calm down, please relax.]

I handle the panicking Jaril and beckon Veskel to come over.

After we finish collecting the rewards we will disband P hunters and bring Jaril and Veskel into Dead End. This is a meaningless solution, and I don't know how detailed the Adventurer guild's logbook is.

As I turn back to look, Ruijerd's anger status bar is at MAX, while Nokopara is standing right in front of him. Even though we broke the rules, this underhanded method of threatening us seems to be forbidden for a warrior.

In any case, I send a signal to stop Ruijerd.

Eris does not seem to understand what is going on, if she does, I am afraid the one who will hit Nokopara first will be her, and she will not use her fist but her sword.

[Oi, give today's money to me.]

After walking back, Nokopara wraps his arm around my shoulders with a broad grin, and just as Jaril is about to hand the 2 Iron coins with a strained smile, I grab that hand.

[Before that I have a question.]

[What is it. Ask quickly, I'm busy.]

I breathe deeply in my heart and pray everything is successful.

[Do you have evidence of us doing illegal things?]

Nokopara smacks his lips with anger, and the sound echoes throughout the building.

Dead End's finished request was selected from the guild's logbook. The staff at the guild did not ask for the reason. Looks something like this is not Nokopara's first time.

We head back to the person's place who originally made the request.

[I suggest you not kill me in the alleys, alright?]

Nokopara says that while looking at Ruijerd and Jaril.

Ruijerd is releasing copious amount of killing intent, is he unafraid of him?

Or perhaps he is already used to that kind of killing intent.

[If I die, my partners will report to the guild, and I'm different from you C rankers. I'm one who can rise up to B rank.]

That last line is an obvious bluff. Nokopara also does not believe he is capable of winning against 5 people alone. No matter how much he tries to corner us, he also does not wish to die.

Even so, his thinking is too shallow. If it is me, I would at least bring in one guard.

[We're here, we're here.]

The first house.

It is a dwelling that I have not seen before. After knocking on the door, a seemingly obstinate-looking old Oba-san walks out from the house. She has an eagle-like nose, and she wears a black robe. There seems to be a sweet smell emitting from the interiors of the house, and most likely she's making a Neruneruneru candy.

{ C-Editor's note: Neruneruneru is a type of Japanese candy. }

She shows a suspicious expression upon looking at Nokopara, but displays a smile when she sees Veskel.

[Ara, isn't this Veskel? Why did you bring so many people here? Ah, are these the members of "Dead End's Ruijerd"?]

Ruijerd looks at us in shock. He sees the Oba-san's glances are looking towards Veskel.

[Hah!]

He laughs.

[Oba-san, you have been deceived. These aren't the people of Dead End.]

[Ah–?]

Oba-san shoots Nokopara's an eye, and scoffs through her nose.

[How did they deceive us?]

[How, huh.]

[Veskel has killed all the bugs in my home. As expected of one from the Zumeba race, after that I have not seen a single bug.]

Looks like this Oba-san is a home that Veskel had serviced. Come to think of it, Ruijerd has mentioned this when he was spying on them.

[As long as you do things thoroughly, I don't mind if you're the real "Dead End".]

Nokopara is not the only one who is surprised, the real deal himself also shows a surprised expression.

[B, but.]

[I am not going to live for much longer, if I can meet him before I depart, I really want to do so.]

You already have.

Nokopara's eyes open wide in shock and turns around in annoyance to face Veskel.

[Veskel! You bastards, bring out your Adventurer's identifications!]

Veskel looks a little taken aback, but grins broadly. In her hands is a card that has "Dead End" written on it.

[What! Y, you damn bastards, are you f*cking with me.....!]

Too late, "P hunters" does not exist anymore.

If you check it out, it might still be in the guild's logbook, and you take a further step in checking things out, there might be some rule violation somewhere. But Nokopara doesn't seem to have thought of that.

[Shit! To the next house!]

We did not return to the guild.

I smile with conceit and follow Nokopara.

After finding dozens of people who made requests, Nokopara's face turns from red to green.

[Fuck, what the hell is going on.]

Everyone who made a request views Jaril and Veskel as members of "Dead End". And the Adventurer's card is also reflected as "Dead End".

On top of all that, we head towards the little girl who made the first request that we did. She hugs Ruijerd's leg with delight, and has a happy reunion with him.

[Nokopara-san, I'm sorry, if you don't have any proof I can't give you money.]

[Fuck!]

Now the tables have been turned, and we can report him for interfering with our requests or something.

[He, he, he.]

I subconsciously laugh in an evil manner.

At the time when I am laughing, we reach the place of the final person. That is to say, the "Wolf's paw pavilion". Jaril and Veskel seem to have worked there before, and it might be difficult to cover up if someone recognized us.

But I don't remember what that owner said. Well, just like before, there should be a way to handle things.

[These are the final people.]

The two people are coming out of the "Wolf's paw pavilion". I freeze instantly when I see this sight.

Shit.

My mind is blaring siren alarms up.

This is an emergency.

This is an air strike.

The enemy planes have invaded us.

An unexpected situation.

This has distinctly shown off where my thoughts are lacking, and how badly my mind adapts.

[Ah, Rudeus, you're back..... Thanks for your hard work work. I say, what's wrong, you brought so many people.]

Kurt welcomes us with an exhausted expression.

Nokopara has probably discovered my anxiety.

Or perhaps he has planned this from the start.

[Hey, the people who saved you are "Dead End" right?]

Ah. Damn it. The current "Dead End" is rank D, while P hunters accepted request is rank B. This means that we cannot accept this, and if one investigates it everything will fall apart.

Damn it, this is trouble.

Kurt looks at Ruijerd and me, while I shake my head hard to stop him.

(Brag about it, that you don't need help. You retreated from a bad place all by yourself, right.)

I think of that in my mind. At least, I am praying that Kurt will brag and say [I don't know about that, no one helped us] and refute him.

Kurt looks at me and nods forcefully.

[Of course, I have never seen someone so strong.]

Oh my dearest mother of..... this person is so honest~!

Kurt describes how strong we are, stating we buried the Executioner and Almond Anaconda, and edits the plot with voice-over and visual colored explanations.

Rudeus-san is so amazing.

Even though the Executioner is strong enough to frighten people, it should not clash with Dead End.

Do you know what happened when it picked a duel with Rudeus?

Instant K-O!

It's true, it was crushed with a single blow.

Ruijerd-san is also strong to the level of being absurd.

He dances across here and there, and that anaconda dies!

Even though he did something so unbelievable he does not break a sweat!

Just thinking about it gives me goosebumps!

Nokopara listens to that while saying, hoh, hoh, is that so, hmm hmm, that's really amazing, while grinning. And then.

[Strange~~ Oi, the people who received the request in the town, why did you go to the Forest of Petrification to save people?]

[No, that, is, we are with Jaril.....]

[Jaril and Veskel have been staying in the town all along right?]

This cannot be hidden any longer, Nokopara must have a way to checkmate us.

Calm down! There should be some way, quickly think of it, first of all I have 3 choices. Very good, I have thought of them.

1) Kill Nokopara.

If I believe he has a companion, then this option will head into a bad direction. But perhaps it might head into a good direction too. This is completely based on luck.

This is a poor plan.

2) Blame it all on Jaril and Veskel.

We're new. They are veterans.

Insist that we have been deceived and treated as prey, perhaps that might work.

But we will lose Ruijerd's trust. We cannot betray our allies.

This is a poor plan.

3) Hand over the money obediently and think of something later.

This is all based on luck, and even if we can quickly find a solution later, Nokopara got to know our fighting strength.

In order not to let us go, he might set down a double layered, or even triple layered trap so we cannot escape from the city or him.

This is a poor plan.

No good. Every plan is a poor plan.

These bad ideas might as well be from a sleeping person.

What should I do?

The easiest is option 2, but this is probably the worst move. If we use this there will not be any next move. Betraying them means cutting off Ruijerd's trust, and Ruijerd will never believe in me again. Option 2 is not possible, it absolutely must not be used.

Option 1 is not possible. There is no meaning to it, and we will destroy all our efforts that we have done so far. Even if this is the merciful Magical continent where killing someone is not a big deal, killing someone this once, will end up history repeating itself in the future for similar incidents.

I do not want to walk down this bloody road.

I do not have that determination.

Option 3 is even worse off. Giving that bastard money will mean that we have acknowledged our misdeeds. This is something that absolutely cannot be done. And during the time where we are blackmailed might end up with two or three additional crimes added on. And we will be forced with even more unreasonable requests.

If it's me, I will demand Eris's body.

If that happens, it will ultimately end with killing Nokopara.

That's not right, the only option left is 3? No, no, if I pick option 3 I might as well pick option 1.

I can only kill Nokopara and his gang?

Can I do it.....

Is that the only option.....?

I, am going to kill someone?

What about the others who are lurking somewhere? Let Ruijerd search for them? How? Even if it's Ruijerd, if we do not know who to search for, we probably cannot find them.

Perhaps we should stop being adventurers? Even if there's no qualification we can still survive. I still know how to save money on this continent.

No, if I decide on this, what about Jaril and Veskel? If they investigate it, the pet kidnappings might possibly be divulged. We have earned enough to leave the city, but they are different. They are residing in this city, and if people know they kidnapped pets, they will be chased out of the city right? They are not capable of living in the plains, so in the end it will end up as betraying them right?

How about helping them out if they are chased out of the city?

Impossible. We are already driven to edge ourselves. We are unable to do that

No, now that things have ended this way, I need to have the determination to walk down this bloody road.

Quickly think back on your goal. It's to send Eris back. For her sake, even if it's Ruijerd or Jaril or Veskel, everyone must be betrayed. Even if Eris despises me that is fine, even if I am unable to face Paul or Roxy that is fine!

I will use Water Saint Magic to flood this city. During the chaos I will take Eris and escape from here, give up on being Adventurers. Even if I have do all sorts of bad things I will fulfill my goals.

I will do it.

After setting my heart down, I gather Mana into my hand, when I suddenly notice Nokopara's expression change.

[Hey..... Ah.....]

The horse-face instantly becomes pale, and his legs shiver.

He is not looking at me but behind me. I turn back and discover Ruijerd's figure. He is drenched, and the vase that's placed in the inn's window has fallen on its side.

[R, Ruijerd-san?]

My eyes are presented with glittering emerald-like colors.

The blue dye has been washed off by the water, and the wet emerald-like hair is glittering.

He has released the hook from the hood covering his forehead.

The red Magic stone on his forehead is exposed.

Standing there with a raging expression, the Devil warrior exists.

[Su, su, su, Superd.....]

Nokopara falls on his butt.

[I am Dead End's Ruijerd Superdia. Since my identity has been revealed it can't be helped. I'll kill everyone.]

His terrible acting is done in a monotone voice.

But, the killing intent is the real thing.

[Kyaaaaaa!]

Someone screams.

Girls, boys and old people,everyone drops whatever they're doing, then screams and scatters.

In the chaos, Jaril is the first to betray us, yelling, [I was threatened! It has nothing to do with me! We're not allies!], and runs off with Veskel.

In the chaos, Kurt is unable to move because of the fear. He recalls the memories where he spoke sharply at Ruijerd, then pales and pees on the ground.

I am unable to understand at all why these people are so frightened, just because his hair colored changed.

Also, were you guys not fine earlier? Kurt too, you just praised Ruijerd, and wanted to become like him. Were you not looking at him with respect just then?

And yet, why is everyone frightened from looking at his hair color?

Looking at Eris, she clearly does not know what happened. She is the same as usual carrying her signature pose, and completely calm. She's quietly looking with her eyes opened wide.

She's completely calm.

Some of the people around us run away, some collapse onto the floor, some pull out their swords with their legs trembling.

There are all kinds of people, and everyone is frightened.

The figure of the [Dead End]. That is merely it.

His mere change in hair color has frightened everyone to this degree. This situation where fear has been struck into everyone's heart.

Hah. I feel like laughing. What have I been doing up to this point? Just looking at his hair ended with things becoming like this. What is the use of my own efforts?

My thinking is just stupid. Just because Eris is fine with it, the Migurd's race is also fine with it, and thus everyone will be fine with it?

Futile.

The Superd's bad reputation is not about reputation.

They are a symbol of fear.

How is one going to change this?

Useless. Hopeless.

It cannot be done.

[.....]

Ruijerd walks to Nokopara amongst the screaming voices.

[You cur..... Your name is Nokopara right?]

He grabs the front of his shirt and easily lifts Nokopara who appears relatively heavy.

[Ruijerd-san! You mustn't kill him!]

I am still calling him out even though things have turned out this way.

You must not kill him. If you kill someone under this situation, you will inflict a wound on the Dead End's name that will never be healed for the rest of your life.

But have things finally reached the boiling point?

To persuade him now is already too late.

That's enough.

Kill him, Ber-ser-Ker!

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Berserker character in the visual novel Fate/stay night. }

[S..... Sorry..... I..... I didn't think you're the real deal! S.... Spare me! Please spare my life! I beg you!]

[.....]

The furious Ruijerd.

The trembling Nokopara.

『Hey, what happened?』

Eris suddenly asks me and I calmly reply.

『The worst situation has happened.』

『Do something!』

『My apologies, I am unable to do anything.』

『If you are unable to do anything, then it means we can't do anything else!』

Eris easily gives up. I too have given up. There is nothing else that can be done.

This is all my fault. I thought I could settle this even if I got found out. With this superficial thinking, I thought it would turn out fine no matter what happens.

In the end, everything crumbled into pieces.

Now that things have turned out this way, I can only act on my original plan, treat everything as if nothing has ever happened, use Water Saint Rank Magic and wash everything away.

{ C-Editor's note: A double meaning of wiping the slate clean while hinting that Rudeus wants to wash the town away. }

Just kidding. Ha ha ha.

[P... Please help me.... I.... I still have 7 starving kids who are 3 years old!]

Nokopara has turned incoherent. No matter how you look at it, it's a bunch of hogwash. If it is me who's doing it, I would have done it better.

[..... I will leave this city. So you should forget all of these things.]

But Ruijerd forgives him. As expected talking about kids is very effective.

[T... T.... Th, thank you.]

Nokopara's face has "I'm saved." written all over it, but convulses when he hears the following words.

[But, try stripping us of our Adventurers' qualifications, when we get to the next town.]

Ruijerd uses the tip of the spear to cut across Nokopara's face.

Nokopara's pants instantly become wet and the area behind his butt quickly grows in size.

[Don't think that I'm unable to enter this city..... Understand?]

Nokopara nods with his life on the line, and Ruijerd lets go of his hands.

Nokopara falls onto the ground with a disgusting squelch.

In the end Ruijerd got chased out of the town, carrying all the blame with him.

That's too harsh.

Ruijerd left us behind. The guards came over to ask what happened, and I argued that this was not Ruijerd's fault, but they made their own conclusion that because we are children we were coerced.

Ruijerd had made evil plans, and we were used by him. They were uncertain about the contents of those plans, but in any case they made the conclusion they had avoided the worst case scenario.

The people surrounding us cast sympathetic looks, gazes that treated us as children who did not know anything and got used.

This made me furious. What did Ruijerd do wrong? Everything was my doing right? All of these outcomes were created with my own hands right?

We went back to the inn and immediately packed our things, then left with what little luggage we had.

If we did not hurry, perhaps Ruijerd would leave. In any case, we were unable to stay in this town.

Nokopara was still alive, and he said he had allies. We were still people who did illegal things. If things cooled down, Ruijerd would be unable to help us the next time.

[I say, Rudeus.....]

Kurt addresses me when we walk out of the inn. He carries a perplexed expression, as though he has no idea what to talk about.

[Why are you together with that?]

[What do you mean by "that", think about who saved you. You even wet your pants because you're afraid, how are you going to become famous?]

[No..... that..... Sorry.....]

No, I cannot be angry at him. This guy did talk good things about us.

[My apologies, Kurt. I went overboard.]

[No, that's fine. I did wet my pants.]

Kurt is really a good person.

Eris hides her hands behind her back and glares at him.

[Kurt, I have a request, and I'll treat it as payment for saving you.]

[Go ahead.]

Kurt nods earnestly.

[Ruijerd is not a bad person. Something happened in the past that caused him to be feared, but he's a good person. After we leave this town, advertise that.]

[Ah, alright. I understand, he's the one who saved my life.]

Arriving at the Adventurer's guild, we remove Jaril and Veskel from 『Dead End』, and at the same time requested the staff to give them a message.

[Since things have turned out this way, thanks for helping us. 『He』 also thanks you. Please tell them this.]

They betrayed us at the final moment, but that is something that cannot be helped. With how things turned out, the only way for them to be safe is this. At the end of the day, we have indeed been helped out by them.

On the way to the entrance of the town, I buy a reptile that looks like a lizard used specifically for transport.

This is a charming lizard that has 6 legs and a pair of sharp eyes. It is used in the Magic continent with the purpose of pulling carriages. It easily allows two grown adults to ride on it and costs 10 Iron coins, which is about half the wealth we possess now.

But we had already decided to buy it before leaving town. (!)

We had heard before the difference of using it and not using it when moving around the Magic Continent. After hearing from the owner on how to control it, we pack our luggage onto it and ride it out of town.

There are many soldiers gathered at the entrance. Perhaps they are planning to venture outside the walls to eliminate Ruijerd.

Amongst them are the familiar Lizard-faced and Pig-faced guards. Their faces are pale and at the same time show signs of excitement.

After greeting them, we receive the warning "『Dead End』 had just exited town", and we needed to be careful.

After that, they said Dead End is the devil, and is planning something in town.

They clearly have not seen Ruijerd, but declared him as evil with the ambiguous talk about him.

[That man has walked freely in this town for 2 months, and nothing happened.]

I am unable to stop myself and say that.

The guards' faces are written with [Huh?].

I glare at the two of them, scoff and walk out of town.

My heart feels like it has been stabbed.

We need to meet up with Ruijerd again. He should be nearby, no, he is definitely nearby.

If his pride as a warrior is real, he should not abandon us..... No, he should not abandon Eris.

[Here will be good enough.]

We walk a distance far enough till we are unable to see the town, and I release a firework Magic into the sky.

The sound roars through the air, the heat scattering in waves, and the light shines everywhere.

After a while, Ruijerd still has not appeared.

[Eris, please call for Ruijerd.]

Eris calls out for Ruijerd with her loud voice.

After a while the Pack Coyotes appear. The frustrated me vents my frustration on them. The surrounding boulders disintegrate into dust and become a pretty flat land.

The Pack Coyotes turn into scraps of meat, and they will probably turn into zombies.

Hmph, who cares.

Those people are in the town after all.

[Look, it's Ruijerd.]

After the battle we see Ruijerd's figure.

He shows an uncomfortable expression.

Please do not show that kind of face.

[Why didn't you appear when we called you? Are you planning to leave us without a word?]

But what comes out from my lips is an accusatory tone.

Even though I have not planned to do that.

[Sorry.]

His first word is an apology, and I feel there is no place for me to retreat to.

No matter how I think about it, everything is my fault. I had conceitedly coerced Jaril and Veskel into becoming our allies, and believed that I was able to progress with a simple method.

In the end when our misdeeds were revealed, I still believed that we were able to somehow get out of it. We were driven into a corner and at the very end of it all, Ruijerd covered things up for me.

If Ruijerd did not take the blame, we might still continue to be bound in that town doing requests.

No, Nokopara is an expert. Even without Kurt and the rest, we would still probably be cornered.

[Why are you apologizing? The one who should apologize is me.]

I am unable to endure any longer.

[No, you have done everything that you should do.]

[But-]

[Plans are always accompanied with failures. You spend effort day and night on thinking things through. I know of this.]

Ruijerd smiles and place his hand on my head.

[Well, I don't know what you're thinking about. Until now I have always thought that you're thinking about planning something bad, so there are many times I am unable to control myself.]

Ruijerd glances at Eris, nods and continues.

[You have something to protect which you would do so desperately. Earlier, you let me see your determination when you were about to kill that bastard.]

Earlier, ah, the moment where I wanted to flood the town.

[The you who has something to protect, is a warrior.]

He said I am a warrior.

My tears are about to spill from me when I heard that.

I am not so splendid. I am shamelessly planning on how to earn money, single-mindedly thinking about gains and losses, and even considered abandoning Ruijerd.

To abandon a reliable ally at the final moment.

[Ruijerd-san, I..... no, I am.....]

{ C-Editor's note: In the Japanese translation, Rudeus here is switching from using the more formal pronoun 'I' to using the informal pronoun 'I' used by men with people they are close with. }

My sincere words. My own words.

I cast off the armor of Keigo, and to use my own words —

{ C-Editor's note: Keigo - polite/respectful language. }

But I have no idea what to say.

[Enough.]

Ruijerd interrupts me.

[You do not need to mind me.]

[Eh?]

[Don't worry. Even if I can't restore my reputation, I will protect you. Trust me. No, please give me your trust.]

I trust you.

I believe you.

It's fine even if I don't do it.

I see, restoring Ruijerd's reputation is indeed difficult. Currently if there are two goals, our actions will become unclear and illogical.

Recently I have been stressed a lot, and there are things that I did not consider. They are plans that I could have thought about, but the resulting conclusion is today's failure.

Therefore there is no need for me to do this.

But this is something that I cannot agree upon.

I have witnessed that scene. If they were not so afraid, it would have been a scene where they picked up stones and hurled them at us.

But I am unable to say something like, oh is that so, then please wait outside the next town.

[No, I must clear Ruijerd-san's infamy.]

Instead of this, I should renew my determination.

At least let me repay this debt of gratitude.

[You're really obstinate. Do you really have this little faith in me.]

[I believe you. That is why I'm repaying you.]

Concerning me, I had been bullied in the past. I had suffered the pain of being stuck with a hateful tag, leaving me alone in a world where I had nobody else for decades.

If Roxy did not bring me out, I would not have met Sylphy and Eris.

Ruijerd's case is different from mine. The scale is completely different. I understand that.

But that cannot be the reason I forsake him.

I am unable to do something like Roxy by accomplishing it unconsciously; the only thing that I can do is to crawl ahead through this mud of failures.

Perhaps Ruijerd might feel troubled over this, and result in today's failure again, or perhaps it may aid Ruijerd.

But doing something is always better than doing nothing.

[..... You're really stubborn.]

[I cannot be compared to Ruijerd-san.]

[Hah. Then, please treat me favorably.]

Ruijerd smiles wryly, and quietly nods.

I don't know why, I feel that now I have truly established mutual trust with Ruijerd.

The next morning.

I find Ruijerd has turned into a baldie after waking up.

I'm dumbfounded.

Or should I say scared?

Coupled with the scars on his face makes him look like a Yakuza.

[After this incident, I understand that people are afraid of my hair.]

It seems like he has set forth a great deal of resolution.

To my own common sense, shaving one's head represents reflection and determination.

In this world, this common sense does not exist.

But even though there isn't.....

I feel like I need to shave my own hair off, to reflect upon my actions.

Since Ruijerd has done so, should I make myself bald too?

No, yet, but.....

[Hey, Eris. Should I do something like that?]

[You can't, I like Rudeus' hair after all.]

I use Eris as a refuge.

I laugh at the useless me.

The Magic continent.

If it was me in my previous life I would've thought that it was slang for Demon world.

{ C-Editor's note: Demon and Magic are written the same way in Japanese. }

Where the demon king rules,

small villages where demons live,

a small shrine of a forgotten tribe,

where powerful demons with confidence are everywhere.

That's the demon world I know.

However, it's different in this world.

First off, there is no demon king who rules the continent.

That doesn't mean that they don't exist.

Right now there are about 30 demon kings.

Also each one of them has their own territory.

They're demon kings in name only though, who just act bossy.

There are also demon kings who have a special unit.

But actually they're just warriors with special powers and cool names.

The Special Guard in the town of Rikaris was also one of them.

The people in special units are actually pretty similar to adventurers.

They exterminate monsters like them,

they catch criminals in town,

and they also guard the town they live in.

Rather than a soldier they're more like vigilantes.

I do not know about the relationship between the vigilantes and devils in this continent.

Whether the demon king named them,

or whether the vigilantes just call themselves that without the permission of the demon king.

If a demon king is determined to start a war, they would become the demon king's army.

I wonder if they have some sort of agreement on this.

Right now, there aren't any demon kings trying to start a war, so it's peaceful.

But that's only in the areas governed by the demon kings.

Most of the magic continent is a lawless area.

In other words, the areas around the Southern Cross and Holy Emperor's Cross Mausoleum are at peace, but the roads between them are rampant with self-ruled mohawks...

{ C-Editor's note: This is a reference to the Fist of the North Star manga series. }

By the way, the demon king who rules the town of Rikaris is called 'Badigadi'.

Possessing six arms, black skin and a bulging body of muscles, that's the kind of demon king he is.

Well he's currently missing since he's on a journey where he's just wandering around.

The true definition of freedom.

The Magic continent is infested with powerful Monsters.

In the Adventurer's Guild, elimination requests for these kinds of Monsters are for C rank and higher.

In other words, it's like this:

In this continent, there are only enemies of C rank and higher.

The Stone Treant was barely D rank though.

That said, the Demon Race is fundamentally stronger than the Human Race.

Moreover, because of the characteristics of each race, they're abnormally good with wars between races.

There is a wall between C and B rank,

therefore the prowess of different continents' B ranks are different.

Those who don't try to raise their rank are simply guys like Nokopara or Jaril.

If you think about it like that, Ruijerd is abnormal.

He boasts that he can beat an A rank magical beast on his own.

Well the ability between him and 6 to 7 B rank adventurers is fundamentally different.

His nickname "Dead End" isn't just for show.

Having obtained the trust of such a person, I feel truly happy.

Since we have left the town Rikaris three days have passed.

Perhaps because I was relieved at having earned Ruijerd's trust, my appetite has grown recently.

Even if I say that the food isn't that good.

Since our only food is the Great rock turtles' meat.

It isn't delicious at all.

It tastes bad.

So, I decided to cook it.

It's not smart to grill it.

So I should just change the recipe.

Earth ware pot that was created with magic,

delicious water produced by a Greyrat's magic.

steam powered stove that was created with magic (manpower).

Using these three I decided to cook the meat.

Water is precious, but I can infinitely create more.

Actually I wanted to use the stove to cook the meat,

but I decided to stop after it exploded.

Although it takes time, the water bill and gas bill is free after you learn enough magic.

I should just take my time and shower it with my affection to cook it carefully.

The cookware made from earth magic was easily disposable, how handy.

I should also try smoking some meat.

A chip of the Stone Treant.... It didn´t seem tasty at all.

Anyway, the meat of the Great Rock turtle tasted better after that.

Tough meat always tastes bad,

but the soft meat also tasted bad.

Yeah, it tastes bad.

Even after it was boiled, the scent didn't change, well it's not like I could suddenly make it tasty.

It's a funny story.

It was more delicious that time I ate it at the Migurds' village.

Just what does it miss...?

And, then I remembered.

The plants and vegetables the Migurd-tribe was growing.

What I thought when I saw it at first, was that the crops were dying.

However, it wasn't like that.

That was probably a kind of herb.

It was their knowledge of herbs that removed the bad smell and made the meat tastier.

I had been completely fooled by Roxy's words "It's bitter and tastes bad."

That's a vegetable, but it's not something you eat just like that.

Honestly my Shisho is such an airhead, I'm troubled about her.

When we arrive at the next town I should buy a stock of herbs.

Also if there are different spices I'd like to test some things out.

[But... Will it be worth the effort?]

Basically in the Magic continent, spices are expensive.

Perhaps because the land isn't that fertile, the vegetables even more so.

Because they are used for the spices they're expensive.

For example something like a little ginseng would be bartered for 5kg of meat.

Great Rock Turtle is really cheap.

It can be said it's common food here.

That turtle who has a body bigger than a 5 ton truck, can feed a household for a few days even if it's only one of them.

Even I must say that it couldn't possibly feed every single household inside a town though.

Sometimes eating Pack Coyotes,

sometimes eating bugs who live in treants.

Even Eris had refused to eat the bugs when she saw them.

Even I don't want to eat something like bugs.

The food culture in this continent doesn't fit me.

I can still eat the meat of the Great Rock Turtle if it's cooked.

Among the low level of food culture here, well, it'd be classified as delicious though.

Saying it's tasty if you just cook it, I was barely able to nod to these words from Ruijerd.

Even so I still need spices.

Those two don't find it necessary, however for me it's necessary.

In other words, I arbitrarily chose to buy it.

However, being arbitrary isn't good.

Because we're a team.

Let's put the talk about spices aside for now,

I should find the right time to consult the right person about this.

[Everybody gather up!]

Eris who was trying to use a lump of cloth as a pillow,

Ruijerd who was searching for enemies with his eyes closed.

I called for them to group up.

[I would like to hold meetings from now on.]

[.....Meetings?]

Eris was puzzled.

[Yes, if we're going to keep on traveling like this I think that some problems will occur.

If a problem were to arise, then at that time I think the three of us should discuss what we should do about it, this should be done so we can prevent fights occurring because of different opinions.]

[That's...]

Eris made a puzzled face.

As I thought, she probably doesn't like participating in something specific like this.

Better yet I could just discuss everything with just Ruijerd,

but to leave someone out isn't good.

She isn't some deadweight who slows us down.

So I have to let her join in the discussions like this.

[It's that right?

What Rudeus and the others did once a month right?]

Hmm?

Once a month?

Oh, she's talking about the staff meeting.

Come to think of it, I did do something like that.

[Yes it's the adventurers' version of that.]

Eris suddenly closed her mouth and began sitting in front of me like a stone.

When I thought she was making a serious face, she had a big grin across her face.

I wonder why.

There shouldn't have been anything funny about it...

Well it's better than having her hate it.

[Do I also participate in that?]

Ruijerd's question.

Rather, what would you do if you weren't participating, Is the tsukkomi I made to myself.

[Of course.

Didn't you hold meetings like this when you were in your warrior group?]

[We didn't. It was just me giving orders, something like that.]

So it was a 'The leaders words are the law' kind of thing.

But I live in a democracy.

[Starting today, we discuss it with the three of us and make decisions with the three of us.]

[Understood.]

Ruijerd nodded obediently and sat down.

Beside the campfire the three of us sat in a circle.

All right.

[Now, we'll start the first "Dead-End strategy meeting." Applause]

Clap, clap, clap, clap, the three of us began applauding.

[Rudeus, why do we do something like applauding?]

[That's the kind of thing you have to do.]

[Even though you didn't do it that time with Ghyslaine, well not that I mind it.]

[Because it's our memorable first meeting we have to applaud like this.]

Well I didn't do this at the staff meeting.

But now we're adventurers, we have to make it a little more exciting like this.

[Ahem.

Well last time, I failed big time.]

[No, that wasn't your fault but-]

[Shut up! Ruijerd-san when you make a remark wait until the person talking is done,

after that please raise your hand.]

Hysterically with triangular glasses, that's how I would've said it.

[I understand.]

[Good.]

Ruijerd looked as if he didn't understand any of it, well I just went on with what I wanted to say.

[Let's think about the reasons we failed.]

Failing to gather information,

Only thinking about making money,

Failing to get two birds with one stone,

Etc.

Well, we have to be careful of them all respectively.

[As a precaution I would like us to follow the next three points; 'reporting', 'communication' and 'consultation', these are the most important.]

[Consultation.... I see.]

This is of great importance,

With this even if there's an enemy in front of us we'll be able to send him flying.

[Yes consultation, before you do something you should consult the others!]

[Hmmm, what do we do specifically?]

[If you ever have something that bothers you, please tell each another about it.]

In reality I don't know how society has people consulting others...

Well let's leave the difficult stuff aside for now.

We should do whatever we can.

[I shall also ask you two for consultation.

The one who was asked for consult, please think about what has been said, even if you don't agree.

If you do it like that you might find a great plan the others may not have thought about.]

When I think, I decided things without consulting Ruijerd about it first.

Even though I said I trust him,

in the depths of my heart it may've been different.

[And contact.

If you notice something in the area, please say something immediately.

Please tell one another things like that.]

Eris just kept nodding yes with a difficult face. (!)

I wonder if she understands.

[As for last, reporting.

Progress may be important,

however if a plan fails or succeeds please tell me its result.]

Well it's because I'm still the leader.

Let's have some awareness about that.

[Any questions for now?]

[I don't have any, go on.]

[Yes!]

Ruijerd shook his head, while Eris raised her hand.

[Yes, Eris.]

[The three of us will consult, but in the end Rudeus will decide right?]

[In the end it'll probably end up like that.]

[Then isn't it fine if Rudeus decides everything?]

[There is a limit to how much I can think about.]

[Like I'd be able to think of something Rudeus couldn't think of!]

I'm thankful you're saying that,

but let me say it clearly, even I want some peace of mind.

I want you guys to say, it's all right or you'll be fine, something like that.

[Even if you can't think of anything, something Eris might say may give me a hint.]

[I wonder...]

Eris had a face that looked like she didn't understand.

Well in the beginning it can't be helped,

since it's important to use your head.

[For the time being there is something I want to decide on for the future.]

At this moment,

even though we couldn't make enough preparations, our journey began.

It'll be a journey from one place to another, but we don't have another choice apart from doing our best.

[First is the destination... of course,

the final destination will be the Asura kingdom.

In the west of the central continent.

This is okay right?]

The two of them nod.

However it isn't possible to cross over to the central continent from the magic continent.

Because there is no route.

In this world, the sea tribe dominates the sea.

Except for the planned route it's not possible to travel through it.

[Ruijerd-san how can we cross over to the Milis continent?]

[In the southernmost town of the magic continent 'Windport' there's a boat that leaves from there.]

Therefore if you want to go to the central continent, you need to take the following route;

southern tip of the magic continent to center of the Milis continent.

From the center of the Milis continent to the Southeast end of the Milis continent.

From the southeast end of the Milis continent to the western part of Central continent.

This is the route we need to take.

However, there is also a route from the opposite direction.

It's a route that goes from the Northwestern part of the Magic continent to the Heaven's continent.

This way we'll be able to go to the Central continent without going through the Milis continent.

If you just want to go to the Central continent then this is logically a few months shorter.

However, it's not as easy as it sounds.

The Heaven continent is a continent at the top of a mountain range of cliffs.

Without wings there are no means to get up.

I also think it isn't possible to reach it by climbing.

There isn't a foothold and it's infested with magical beasts.

It's a harsh route with a fatality rate of 95 percent.

Moreover even if we passed that, what would be waiting for us there is the most dangerous place of the Central continent, its northern part.

It's a place infested with criminals running from bounty hunters.

However, that's just a theoretical plan.

In reality it would probably take the most time.

Looking at the result both of them are very time consuming,

though there's no need to purposely endanger ourselves.

In other words the route which we'll take will be the south one.

[Do you know how much the boat fare costs?]

[I do not know.]

[How long would it take for us to get there?]

[It'd take pretty long..... if we walked without rest wouldn't it take about half a year?]

Even if we walked without rest it'd take half a year..... That's far.

[Isn't there a way to move instantly, like a magic teleportation circle.]

[Teleportation magic circles were forbidden after the Second Great Magic War.

If we looked around we could probably find one;

however, using it is difficult.]

I just tried asking it but to think it really exists.

[In the end, we can only travel on foot, right?]

[That's right.]

There doesn't seem to be a way to move at high speed.

Ugh..... to keep walking for half a year.

No, it's wrong to think of moving for half a year.

We'll travel bit by bit.

From town to town.

I should think like that.

It's going on a journey at your own pace, like that.

[For the time being we should aim for the southernmost port town "Windport".

How long will it take before we reach the next town?]

[In 15 days we should be able to reach the next town.]

Two weeks.

I wonder if it's something like that.

The distance from town to town.

[I wonder if they have an Adventurers Guild.]

[I assume they do.]

Ruijerd tells me,

different tribes came together in a town in the old days,

and the place where they exchanged information and more, a town should be there.

Something like that.

Therefore, even if a small town does not exist,

the warriors of an Adventurers' guild of various tribes get together there as an everyday thing.

Apparently an Adventurers Guild didn't exist in the past.

The one who protected the town were warriors from the different tribes who were chosen as representatives.

In addition, for the sake of the tribes who didn't fight much,

the tribes that were skilled in fighting went to these tribes to help them out.

The relationship between the Superd tribe and the Migurd tribe was also like that.

In order to strengthen the relationship between these tribes,

there were also those from different tribes who married each other.

No wonder the Magic continent has so many different tribes.

There were mixed tribes with different kinds too.

Wait, we're not talking about the main point anymore.

[Now then I think we should move through towns with Adventurer Guilds in them.]

We'll stay there for about 1 or 2 weeks.

As long our Adventurers qualification hasn't been revoked,

we can keep receiving requests.

While also selling the "Dead End" name.

Basically, nothing bad.

And, when our travel expenses are covered we'll leave the town.

[That's the kind of flow we should go with,

does anyone have any questions or opinions maybe?]

Ruijerd raises his hand.

[You don't have to sell my name,

for that reason I also cut my hair. The me now is no longer of the Superd tribe.]

[Well, selling your name is just an extra while doing requests, just an extra.]

I discovered that from working with Veskel and Jalil.

There isn't any need to do anything special.

Just trying your hardest completes the job.

If it goes well, we'll say "Ruijerd of Dead End" name.

If it doesn't go well I'll just say my own name.

I'll be troubled if they heard the name "Dead End" and begin to panic.

However that will be a secret from Ruijerd.

Huh?

Deciding something like this on my own right after deciding we'd consult each other?

It'll be fiiine.

[Now that we've decided that,

any other questions?]

[Here!]

[Yes, Eris-kun.]

This situation takes me back,

It's like being in class again.

[Aren't we going to check the prices of things, like you did long ago?]

[You mean market research?]

Hmm.

Come to think of it, I did not bother with this in the town of Rikaris.

That town was a place where we really got ripped off.

Even the lizard used for travelling could've probably been found somewhere in the wild.

[Let's do that, because knowing the price of things is the first step to handle money better.

Does anyone have an idea about how we're going to do this?]

[.....]

There don't seem to be any ideas...

I guess it'll be like this for the time being.

Problems will probably appear on our journey from now on.

At that time, it'll be great if we can calmly discuss things without fighting.

[Well then I look forward to working together with you guys from now on.]

While saying that I bowed my head to the other two.

—

Thus our journey began!

Inside the town:

There's nobody who was able to recognize that Ruijerd was from the Superd tribe.

I wonder if it might´ve been because he has even shaved his eyebrows,

it seems the Magic continent doesn´t have a culture of firmly affixing a hairstyle.

It might´ve been important to recognize the different tribes, but I guess it isn't.

The gatekeeper greeted us politely and lets us pass through the gate.

Ruijerd´s appearance was like a monk or rather,

no matter how you look at it, he looks like mafia or Yakuza.

Probably because there are other dangerous looking guys in town.

[Greetings, town!]

Like I thought it really does feel different being dressed like an adventurer.

I'm truly happy that we're wearing these clothes now.

Before this, I was wearing nobleman clothing.

It was truly suspicious.

Even Ruijerd was happy since it was the first time he was happily greeted like this.

When I told the guild our party name was "Dead End",

they just asked:

[Is that really okay?]

When I tell them that we're the real thing so it's alright, they began to laugh.

This method seems to be effective as ever.

Accepted easily even at unknown places.

It makes me want to bow down to the value of the "Dead End" name.

When we got to the inn we began our war council.

The one who brought up the topic was Eris.

[Rudeus, I want you to stop sniffing my panties while you're doing the laundry.]

I was told that with a straight face.

I was banned from touching Eris's panties from then on.

However, if it becomes like that the only one who can do the laundry is Ruijerd.

How can I let a lolicon bastard like him who always tries to pat a child's head wash the panties of the cute Eris.

Thus,

I taught Eris how to do the laundry.

From today onward the laundry was under Eris' supervision.

But she secretly sniffed the scent of my underwear.

But, under no circumstances did I want her to stop.

Isn't that the magnanimity of a man?

Information gathering was not so difficult.

By using the Adventurer's Guild, we got to gather a lot of information.

Pretending to be a child, I just listened to other adventurers.

It was seriously too easy.

Thinking because a child was with them, I had them tell me everything I wanted to know.

Getting carried away I tried asking a female adventurer her three sizes,

Eris mounted me after hearing that.

In this world, the concept of tapping out didn't exist.

I thought I'd die.

—

While traveling from town to town,

we steadily headed southward.

In the middle of our journey,

There were those who came to challenge Ruijerd to a duel.

[For I am Rodriguez, the third disciple of North god style Kalman's personal disciple, "Peacock Blade Auber"!]

At first I thought they were bounty hunters.

I thought some random person put a reward on Ruijerd's head.

[That demeanor, you must be a famous swordsman no doubt about it!

I wish for us to cross blades with each other thus I challenge you to a duel!]

However, it seems to be somehow different.

He must've traveled to the Magic continent to continue his warrior training.

[What are you going to do Ruijerd-san?]

[It's been a while since I've done this kind of thing.]

Ruijerd explains that there seems to be a lot of people with the warrior job in the Magic continent.

Monsters are strong in the magic continent,

and the adventurers who eliminate them are also strong.

It's seems like most of these fellow's think it's a great place to advance their training.

Most of them probably think they can get stronger this way.

[I could just accept it, but what should I do?]

[I could tell you what I want, but what do you want to do?]

[I'm a warrior. If someone challenges me I'll accept it.]

If you're going to accept it, say so from the beginning.

Is how it turned out.

We decided to agree on some rules.

1. Not killing each other, or severely injuring each other.

2. This side (Ruijerd) names himself after the duel ends.

3. Whether you win or lose no tough feelings.

And, Ruijerd won.

With movements that reflected the opponent who went in at full power, he won.

Well it didn't feel as if he held back.

However, with low risk movements he won while completely sealing his opponent's movements.

[It's my complete loss, to think there was still someone this strong; this means the world's really wide!

And what's your name?]

[It's Ruijerd Superdia, I'm also called "Dead End".]

[What do you mean? That "Dead End?!

In the magic continent I have heard rumors of a fearsome male from the Superd tribe walking around!]

After the fight ended, he was shocked.

Surprisingly, those of the human race don't know much about the characteristics of the Superd tribe.

That the Superd tribe uses spears,

or that they have a red gem on their foreheads.

There seem to be many of them that don't know of it.

For the human race the only characteristics they have to look out for is the Superd's emerald green hair.

Emerald green hair.

Even after 400 years have passed, that was the only reason for their persecution.

Bullying him only because his hair color is green, this is something that goes beyond my reasoning.

[However he doesn't seem to have any hair?]

[I shaved my hair off.]

[It seems like it'd be better if I don't ask the reason for it...]

The opponent is clearly strong,

in the face of a symbol of fear like the Superd tribe,

who were known for their heinous actions.

It's such an opponent, where being afraid of him is totally natural.

But, still, between warriors.

Apparently there is something that connects them.

For people that use their strength in order to survive,

someone like Ruijerd should be a symbol of respect and admiration.

[No way, I got to have a match with a historical legend....!

I'm going to brag about it in my home town!]

Most of the opponents were happy about it.

It's like when you meet someone for the first time on the street,

they look like they'd be unfriendly.

But surprisingly he's a nice guy you could talk to.

It was a joy like that.

[That's why we—]

Starting with this guy, Ruijerd continued to be challenged.

And the farther we got south the more challengers came forth.

Within the warriors that challenged him there was a guy who knew his history.

Four hundred years ago the time when Ruijerd was in the Superd tribe's warrior group.

There was someone who had the same name as him.

When we said that it was the same person, he was very surprised.

About that person, Ruijerd, filled a whole night of stories of that person's past.

Gramps Ruijerd's story was long, but it seems like a story like this without any exaggeration was exciting for a warrior.

In particular, the siege against a thousand men, it was a long battle, but they were able to deal a serious blow to Laplace, as unmanly as it was I shed some tears after hearing this warrior's story.

If I turned this story into a book it might be able to change people's view on the Superd tribe.

[True Story! Battle on the magic continent without justice first chapter!]

Or something like,

[The truth about the Superd tribe nobody knows!]

Something like that.

I wonder if I can print them with some earth magic.

In addition I can write in the languages of 4 different continents.

However I could get caught for breaking the law of the continent....

I'll leave it as a thought for now.

[See you, thank you, I learned a lot.]

These warriors all left happily in the end.

There wasn't even one guy who ran for his life even once.

That's also thanks to Ruijerd shaving his head.

Actually, wouldn't it be alright if every one of the Superd tribe became a skin head?

—

Onward to the South,

And even farther to the South.

Thus our journey continued.

—

Of course, it wasn't just a smooth journey.

There were problems that happened many times.

Also Eris who came to understand the language became seriously pissed off and started a fight.

There were also some cases where Ruijerd's identity as someone of the Superd tribe was found out.

In addition to that there was a time I tried to peek at Eris bathing, however Ruijerd grabbed me by my neck and pulled me away.

Similar problems happened many times over.

First time around, I became worried over every little problem.

I thought I had to make sure it didn't happen again.

But, if you think about it.

Whenever Eris started a fight she never drew her sword.

Also whenever Ruijerd was found out it didn't turn into a mayhem like the first time.

And we were very friendly towards the guards saying [Sorry but since there are also a lot of scary guys in the Superd tribe we need be cautious.]

Something like that.

In the end I couldn't peek at Eris taking a bath even once.

All of these were small problems.

They never developed into bigger problems.

That's why I stopped caring after a while.

Eris is violent,

Ruijerd is from the Superd tribe,

And I'm a pervert.

It was something decided from birth.

Now I believe it more than ever, it isn't something that can be changed.

Well, I'm doing whatever I can.

But even if I fail I should just deal with situations.

Let's go at a relaxed pace, a relaxed pace.

Partway through I began to think like that.

But I certainly won't treat failure lightly.

However we should loosen our shoulders,

I just became able to put the things I wanted to try into practice.

—

A year has passed since we started travelling.

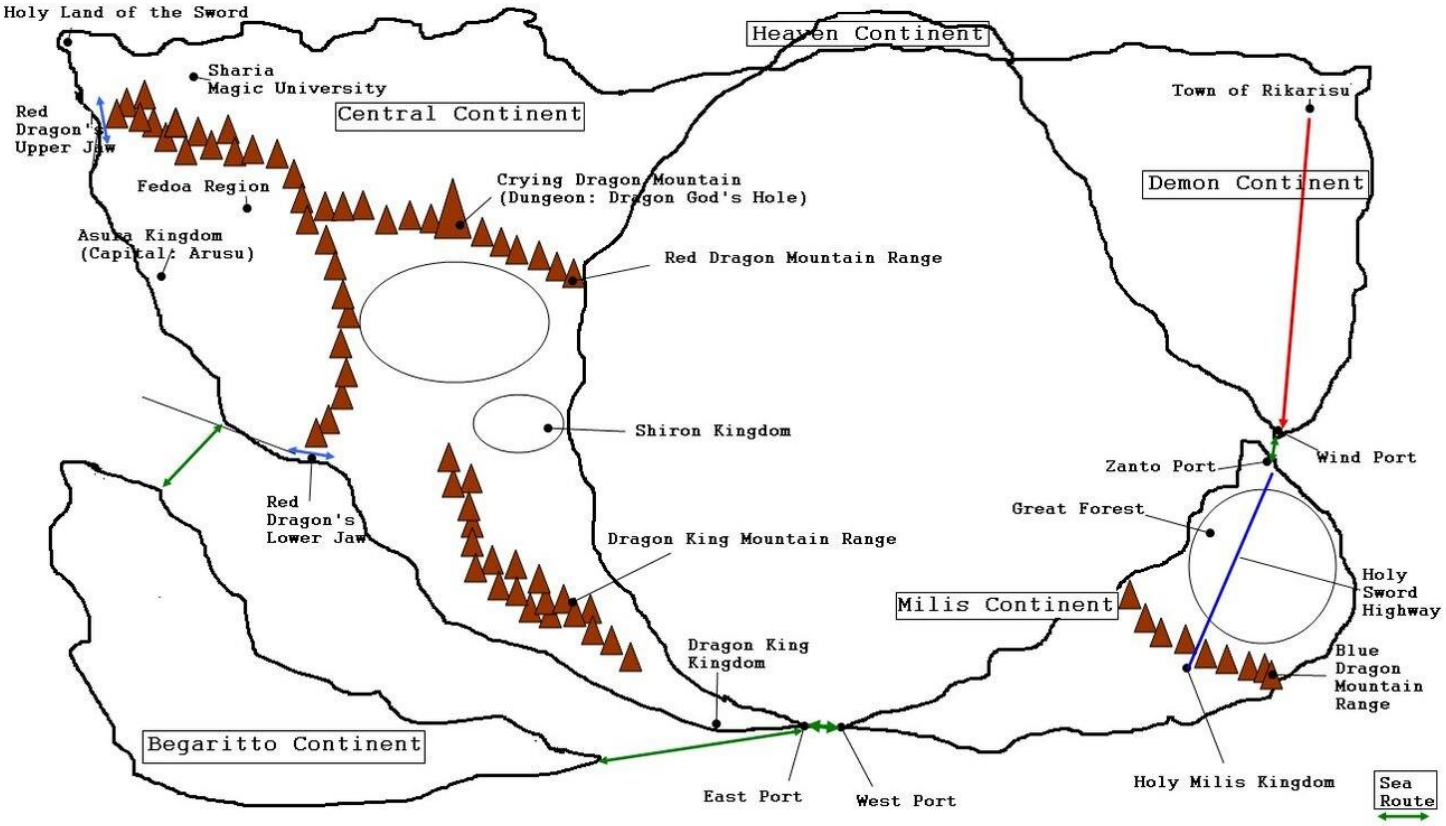
And before we noticed we had already become A rank adventurers

And thus we arrived at the southern end of the Magic continent.

We reached the port town Windport.

Author's Note:

After attempting to give various explanations and hearing back "it's hard to understand the shape", or "it's hard to imagine the routes", since that's the case I thought of making an image as reference, I thought of the world map in my head and attempted drawing it. A rough shape of the world and a rough showing of the major landmarks and cities.



End Simple Explanation.

Central Continent

It's split into three parts by the Red Dragon Mountain Range.

The poor and needy Northern areas with many wars, Asura Kingdom in the West one of the world's most abundant and rich regions, a number of large countries are always struggling for power and rioting in the Southern area.

Human race makes up the majority of the population.

Demon Continent

A poor place with strong monsters.

There are Demon Kings ruling over various places.

Demon (Magic) Race make up the largest portion of the population.

Milis Continent

In the north there's the Great Forest, in the south there's the Holy Milis Kingdom.

Splitting those two regions is the Blue Dragon Mountain Range, with the Holy Sword Highway going straight through them from top to bottom with not a single monster on the Highway.

Population is roughly 50/50 of Human Race and Beast Race.

Begaritto Continent

A large number of labyrinths, a place of many strange occurrences in terms of magical power.

The strength of the monsters is equal to those of Demon Continent.

A variety of races live here. The majority of them are Adventurers or ex-Adventurers.

Heaven Continent

A level ground 3000 meters above sea level.

The place where the Heavenly Race live.

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Wind Port.

The only port city in the Magic Continent.

It,s a town with a lot of hills and slopes. You can see the entire city from the entrance.

The majority of the houses are made from the usual earth and stone commonly found in the Magic Continent, but there are a few wooden structures mixed in as well.

They must be importing wood from the Milis Continent.

There,s a shipyard at the end of the town.

It might be because it,s a port city, but there are very few stalls near the entrance of the city. In contrast, there,s a lively atmosphere closer to the harbor.

It,s a town with a bit of a different color from the usual.

Then beyond the port...

Then outside of town spread an enormous ocean.

When was the last time I saw the ocean?

Probably around middle school when I went on a field trip.

It seems the ocean is the same no matter which world it is.

The blue sea, the sound of the waves, the seagull-like birds, and the boats raising their sails.

This is the first time I,ve seen a sailboat with my own eyes.

They occasionally appear in movies, but you can feel one,s age and excitement when you actually see a wooden sailboat with its sails.

As expected, in this world they must have advanced techniques to ride against headwinds.

No, it,s this world after all. They can probably just make their own tailwinds with magic or some other sort of method.

The moment we arrived in the city, Eris jumped off the lizard and started running.

"Rudeus! It,s the ocean!"

The words that came from Eris, mouth were spoken in fluent Demon God Language.

She has remembered to speak in the Demon God language on a daily basis now.

Ruijerd and I were trying to use Demon God language as much as we could to talk.

The plan was a success. Recently, Eris, Demon God language has improved quite a bit.

After all, it seems that the fastest way to learn a language is to live in a place where it,s commonly used.

Still, she can,t read or write with it.

Incidentally, since we came to the Magic Continent I haven,t taught her magic even once.

Putting aside voiceless incantations, I,m sure she,s already forgotten all the incantation magic.

"Wait Eris, where are you going before we even decide on an inn!?"

After hearing my statement, Eris, legs abruptly stopped.

Incidentally, this is the third time we,ve had this back and forth exchange.

The first time, we got lost, the second time we got into a fight on a street corner.

There won,t be a third chance.

"That,s right! If we don,t decide the inn first, we,ll get lost right?"

Eris returned to being cheery while looking at the ocean.

Come to think of it, this should be her first time seeing the ocean.

There,s a river near the Fedoa region and she would occasionally go play in the water with Sauros on holidays.

Unfortunately, without me.

"Can you swim?"

"Eh? You can swim in the harbor?"

"I want to swim!"

I want to see Eris, enchanting 13 year old body as well, but...

"We have no swimsuits right?"

"Swimsuit? What is that? We don,t need it!"

I couldn,t hide my confusion with that shocking statement.

Swimsuit? What is that? We don,t need it!

We don,t need swimsuits.

I wonder if that meant that we would go nude.

No, there,s no way that,s the case.

Even in this world, there,s the culture of feeling embarrassed over nudity.

That,s why, yes, most likely in underwear.

We,ll play in the water with underwear on top.

The underwear that sticks to the skin as you get wet, transparent flesh showing through, pocchi rising to the surface.

{ C-Editor's note: Pocchi is a common dog name similar to Spot, but Rudeus is clearly referring to a different type of dog here. }

That,s strange, why wasn,t I involved in the river play in Fedoa region? Exactly where was I?

I guess it was because I was busy.

In those days, I was living a fulfilling lifestyle everyday.

However, just once, just once I wish they had told me they were going.

No, there,s no point in thinking about that now.

Focus on what is before my eyes right now.

Live in the now.

Yes, I,m going to live right now!

Alright!

It,s the ocean!

"No, it,s probably better if you don,t try to swim in this ocean."

Then Ruijerd comes in to throw water on the mood.

"Eh?! Why?!"

"There,s a lot of monsters."

That seems to be the case.

It would be fine if Ruijerd and I just annihilated all the monsters.

Is what I was thinking, but surprisingly that living organism radar might not be all-purpose.

It probably can,t detect very well in the water.

No, but couldn,t we manage to bathe in the sea for at least an hour or so?

Swimming in the harbor as expected would be dangerous, but I could make something similar to a fish preserve in the nearby shore with earth magic.

Though, in the 1 in 10,000 chance that something happens.

There might be some kind of monster in the water with some kind of strange special ability.

They might just jump straight over the fish preserve.

If it was an octopus we could have an ero event start up, though if it was a shark it would be Jaws.

Cannot be helped.

It seems like it,ll be best if we give up on playing in the ocean here.

Really, it cannot be helped.

"We,ll go without swimming this time. After we decide on the inn we,ll head for the Adventurers Guild."

"Yeah..."

Eris was downhearted.

Hmmm.

However, even I have a healthy interest in Eris, body.

I haven,t been able to confirm exactly how much her body has grown up over this past year.

It,s hard to tell with clothes on top, since that,s the case I thought it would be good liberating near a shore, you never know what might happen.

"Even if we can,t swim we can still play on the shore."

"Shore?"

"The ocean has a sandy beach sort of thing. The sand pit continues on all the way along the beach."

"What,s fun about that?"

Even if you ask me what.

"Ummm... you can get some water from the beach and pour on it?"

"Rudeus, you,re making a strange face again."

"Uh?"

"Though it sounds interesting! Let,s go later!"

Eris said that happily and kicked off the ground, jumping back onto the lizard.

It was a wonderful jumping ability.

It was a jump purely with the power from her ankles.

In terms of sound effects it would be a "guon" feeling.

Eris,s legs have been trained rather well.

Though this matter is fine as it is .

I wonder if in the future she will end up looking like Ghyslaine with bulging muscles.

I,m a bit worried.

For starters, we decided on an inn, left the lizards in a stable, and then started walking to the Adventurers Guild.

The meeting will be held before we sleep.

Windport,s Adventurers Guild.

There were a large number and variety of adventurers crowding around and making noise.

It was a familiar scene, but it felt like there were quite a few human races.

If we cross over into the Milis Continent, then it will probably increase even more.

First off, let,s go with our usual routine. I moved in front of the notice board.

"Are we not planning to quickly cross the ocean?" Ruijerd asked.

"I,m just taking a look. It seems like earning money in the Milis Continent would be better after all."

Earning money is easier in the Milis Continent.

That,s because the currency is different.

The currency in the Milis Continent can be divided into six types: Royal Notes, General Notes, Gold Coins, Silver Coins, Large Copper Coins, and Copper Coins.

If we use the fact that one stone coin is equal to a single yen as the basis and look at it then:

Royal Notes – 50,000 ($500 USD)
General Notes – 10,000 ($100 USD)
Milis Gold Coins – 5,000 ($50 USD)
Milis Silver Coins – 1,000 Yen ($10 USD)
Milis Large Copper Coins – 100 Yen ($1 USD)
Milis Copper Coins – 10 Yen (10 Cents)
That sort of reasoning.

The B rank jobs on the Magic Continent generally have rewards between 15-20 Scrap Iron Coins in total.

If we convert that into stone coins, it would be 150-200 stone coins.

If we make the assumption that a B rank job on Milis Continent gives the same amount as the second tier of their currency, it would be 15 Large Copper Coins.

After conversion, it would be 1500 stone coins.

That,s 10 times more. It would be better to earn it in Milis.

However, if it seems like there will be quite a bit of time before the ship leaves, then we will end up taking some jobs here.

Fundamentally B rank jobs.

A rank and S rank jobs aren,t just dangerous, but most of them take over a week or at minimum a number of days.

If we want to constantly do a number of jobs in a period of a few days, then B rank are the best.

That,s why we have no intention of rising up to S rank where you can,t accept B rank jobs anymore.

After you reach A rank, you can accept S rank jobs as well.

Since that,s the case, I first questioned why anyone would bother rising up to S rank.

I asked the staff member and supposedly you receive special privileges if you rise up to S rank.

I wouldn,t know unless I specifically investigate it more, but the inn cost rates will be cheaper, and the guild will distribute more profitable jobs to you and such things.

Also, they,ll close their eyes to a majority of things that violate a contract.

Those kinds of things it seems.

If we focus our efforts around A rank jobs, staying at A rank is more efficient for earning money than rising up to S rank.

Although, it seems such privileges are a huge benefit when it comes to exploring labyrinths for adventurers.(!)

We haven,t tried exploring any labyrinths.

They,re dangerous and they take too long.

We have been focusing our efforts around B rank jobs.

For those reasons we have no plans to rise up to S rank for the time being.

Eris seems to want to try it though.

Rather, the conversation has gone off topic a bit.

In any case, we joined the Adventurers Guild with the intention of earning money.

Since that,s the case, it,s better if we take the ship as soon as we can and earn money in Milis instead.

"Come to think of it, I wonder where the ship takes off from?"

"The port."

"I mean where in the port?"

"Let,s ask and see."

I moved up to the counter.

Standing there was a female, probably from the human race.

Why are there almost always females standing at the counters?

And why is the ratio of large chested ones so high.

"We want to go to the Milis Continent, but do you know where we can go to get there?"

"Ask those sorts of questions at the checking station."

"Checking station?"

"Since you,ll be crossing national borders when you board the ship."

It,s a problem between countries outside of the guilds, jurisdiction.

Since that,s the case, the guild staff has no obligation to offer an explanation about it, it seems.

Hmmm, since that is the case, we should head to the checking station.

Maybe we can hear a detailed explanation there?

"Hey you!"

Just as I was thinking that.

I heard a loud yell within the guild.

After turning around, Eris was punching a human race male.

Our nuclear warhead is energetic today as well.

"Where and who do you think you,re touching?!"

"It... it was an accident! Who would want to touch a brat like you?!"

"It doesn,t matter if it was an accident! I don,t hear any sincerity in your apology!"

Eris has become quite fluent in Demon God language.

And then, as she improved in fluency, the number of fights increased.

"Gyahahaha! What,s this what,s this, a fight?!"

"Oh my, oh my!"

"Hey hey, don,t go getting beaten up by a child!"

Incidentally, fights between adventurers are actually a pretty common everyday occurrence so the guild doesn,t really interfere.

Rather, there are staff members who start up progressive gambling and take bets.

"I,ll crush you!"

"So... Sorry, it,s my loss, let me go, please stop and let go of my leg?!!"

Just as I was thinking about that, Eris had rolled the guy over in no time at all.

Eris, ability to drive people into a corner especially recently has been strong.

They start to become afraid before she even touches them and not only that she accurately drives them into a corner.

What are you snapping over? Just as you,re thinking that they,re rolling on the floor and being stomped on the crotch.

The C rank adventurers here and there can,t do anything to stop it.

Then after a certain amount of damage has been done Ruijerd steps in to stop it.

"Stop."

"Why, did you stop me?!"

"The fight is already decided, let him go with this much."

This time as well, Ruijerd stops her by carrying her like a cat.

The man ran away while holding a certain part of his body.

"Damn it, you,re insane!"

It,s the usual spectacle.

I can,t really stop it.

If I grab her from behind to stop it, I can,t stop my hands from moving on their own.

When I start moving my hands will grab weird places, then it,s my turn to be beaten half to death.

"A baldy and a red haired violent little girl?! Could it be you bastards are [Dead End]?"

The moment someone yelled that, the guild hall became quiet.

"[Dead End] you mean the Superd race?"

"Idiot! It,s the party name. It,s been rumored to be fake recently!"

"I,ve heard rumors that they,re the real thing as well."

Oh?

"They,re violent, but they really aren,t bad guys at all?"

"Violent but good guys, isn,t that contradictory?"

"No, it means they,re not all violent?"

Zawa Zawa.

Murmurs started to spread around inside the guild.

This is the first time we,ve been in this situation.

It seems, we,ve become quite a bit famous.

I wonder if it,s fine if we don,t sell Ruijerd,s name in this town?

"Just a three person party made it to A rank after all?"

"Ah, that is amazing, but regardless of whether it,s a fake or the real thing, I can believe it if it,s those two."

"[Mad Dog Eris] and [Watch Dog Ruijerd] right?"

Eris and Ruijerd have nicknames!

Nevertheless [Mad Dog] and [Watch Dog], huh?

I wonder why they,re both dogs?

I wonder what kind of dog I am?

I guess I,ll listen for a bit and see.

[Fight Dog] is unlikely.

It,s most likely not something cool like that.

I can,t imagine it giving a brave feeling either.

If I had to pick for myself it would be [Butter Dog] but...

This past year I feel that I,ve been working as a sort of operations tower though.

After all it should be some kind of intellectual name.

[Patient Dog] maybe?

"Then, that midget in the back would be [The Owner Ruijerd]!"

"I heard that the [The Owner] was the one with the worst personality among them."

"Yeah, everything I heard about him was bad."

And there it is...

My name... name... hasn,t been remembered.

No, certainly I often name myself as Ruijerd, though...

Every time something good happened on our travels I would say "We name ourselves Ruijerd of the Dead End, please take care of us." as such.

And then, whenever something bad happened I would announce with a loud laugh "I am Rudeus, guahahahaha" and such while laughing.

Since that,s the case, why did they end up mixing them?

Hnnn.

Even though we,ve been quite active for this past year, I,m a bit shocked by the fact that only my name hasn,t been remembered.

Well, I guess it doesn,t matter.

It was selling my name with a bad meaning anyways, it,s not too bad since it,s not my real name.

Also, The Owner isn,t too bad as well.

I,d certainly like to put a collar on Eris and lead her around.

"In any case, he,s small."

"I,m certain that,s small as well. He,s a child after all!"

"Hey hey, if you say it,s small you,ll incite the dog!"

"Gyahahahaha!"

Just as I realized it, they,re laughing at something totally unrelated.

However, I,m sorry to disappoint you.

Recently, I,ve been growing favorably.

Oh, I can,t.

If I let them continue to laugh like this Eris will snap again.

Just as I was thinking about that, she was sneaking looks in my direction with a red face.

Oh, that seems cute.

"Eris, what,s the matter?"

"No... nothing!"

Dyufufu.

If you,re interested feel free to come peek at me while bathing tonight.

What? I,ll give Ruijerd detailed instructions to allow it to pass.

Since that,s the case how about we bathe together.

If that becomes the case, I might just slip a little bit, something like with my hand, or my foot, or my body, or my tongue.

Putting jokes aside.

For the time being we should move to the checking station.

Just like The Owner, I headed out of this place full of dignity.

"Eris-san! Ruijerdoduria-san! Let,s go!"

"Why do you sometimes get my name wrong..."

"Hmph!"

The surrounding stares were gathered on us as we left the Adventurers Guild.

We came up to the checking station.

This town is in the Magic Continent, but after you get on the ship it will take you into the territory of the Holy Milis Kingdom.

There,s a tax on anything you bring in and there,s an inspection upon entry to the country.

Whether it,s in order to prevent crime or otherwise just to earn money.

Well, the reason doesn,t really matter at all.

If they ask us to pay we just have to do it.

Just as I was thinking lightly of it.

"Two human race and one magic race, but how much will it cost?"

"Humans are 5 scrap iron coins each. What species of magic race?"

"Superd race."

The staff member of the check point looked at Ruijerd with his mouth hanging open.

Then after looking at his bald head he let out a sigh.

It was a face without any motivation.

"Superd race are 200 small green coins."

"2... 200 coins?"

This time it was my turn to be surprised.

"Wh... why is it that expensive?!"

"Even if I don,t say it you should understand right?"

A reason why it would be expensive to bring Superd race on the boat.

I get it!

I understand now since I,ve seen how things went during the travels up until now.

However, it,s way too expensive.

"Why is it that absurd amount of money?"

"I wouldn,t know. Ask the one who decided on it."

"Old man, you can,t guess?"

"Ah? Well, probably a counter-measure against terrorism. Having one transported in as a slave and then having it go wild in Milis Continent and such."

That seems to be the case.

I already understood that the Superd race are treated like a bomb.

"You guys are that famed [Dead End] right? When you go to board the boat they will properly investigate your race. I don,t think there,s any point in showing your vanity and paying the 200 small green coins here?"

Thankfully the official gave us that sort of warning.

In other words, even if we were to try to falsify him as a Migurd race, it would be revealed.

"If you try to lie about your race is there some sort of fine?"

"Yeah, you,ll have to pay a pretty expensive fine."

According to the staff member it seems as long as you pay money just about anything is okay.

What a money-based doctrine.

The sun was starting to set as we returned from the check point.

We returned to the inn and decided to eat.

The food they brought out in the inn was a port city seafood specialty.

A shellfish about the size of a fist was the main dish for tonight.

It tasted like it was covered in butter and steamed with alcohol for flavoring.

It,s good.

Out of all the food I,ve eaten on the Magic Continent this would be the best one.

"This is delicious!"

Eris was eating it all happily while making a mess.

During this past year, she seems to have completely forgotten Asura Kingdom style table manners.

Using the knife in your right hand to slice the food, and then stabbing it with a fork and bringing it to your mouth.

At the very least she wasn,t just picking up the food with her hands and putting it into her mouth, but there were no manners about it.

If Edona saw this, she would probably cry.

Is it my responsibility?

"Eris. Your manners are bad!"

"Mogumogu? Who cares about something like manners."

Even Ruijerd has better manners.

Although this one is also lacking some elegance.

He doesn,t use the knife at all and cuts the food up with just the fork.

Just sliding the fork across them and the food gets cut through as if it were butter.

I can feel the skills of a master.

"Now then, in that case, even though we,re in the middle of eating, let,s start today,s operations meeting."

"Rudeus. Talking in the middle of a meal is bad manners."

Eris said that with a sour face.

After we finished eating and our stomachs were full, we started the operations meeting.

"The voyage expense is 200 small green coins. It,s way beyond reason."

"Sorry about that, it,s my fault."

Ruijerd frowned.

I didn,t think it would cost this much myself.

Honestly, I wasn,t thinking too much about the toll cost.

As long as we work a bit we would quickly be able to ride it.

In reality, the human race are only 5 scrap iron coins a person.

Even other magic races are at best only one or two small green coins.

Only Superd race are such an absurdly expensive amount.

"Father, that,s going too far."

"I,m not your father."

"I know. It,s a joke."

In any event, 200 small green coins, huh.

It,s not a normal amount of money.

Even if we focused on doing A rank and S rank jobs in this city to earn money, it would take a number of years.

It seems like the Milis Continent really don,t want to accept any Superd race.

"However, it,s rather troubling. It,s not like we can just leave Ruijerd behind here."

Leave Ruijerd behind.

That would be the fastest way.

We,re already pretty experienced as adventurers at this point.

I,m sure we could keep going with our journey even without Ruijerd.

Even though I say that, obviously I have no intention of doing that.

Ruijerd will be with us until the end of our journey.

Our friendship is eternal and indestructible, that kind of thing.

"Of course we won,t leave you behind."

"Then, what do we do?"

"In terms of methods? There are three."

After saying that I held up three fingers.

Everything starts with the number three.

No matter what time it is, there,s always the three options of, continuing ahead, returning, or stopping.

"Oh?"

"That,s amazing, there,s three ways?"

"Fufun."

I,ll wait a bit on the explanation, I haven,t thought of them yet.

Umm...

"First off. There is the legitimate way of doing jobs to earn money and then setting off to Milis."

"Though that way..."

"Yeah, it will take far too much time."

If we just gave it our all at earning money, it would still take us at least a year to earn it.

There,s a guarantee that some sort of incident will occur during that period.

Carelessly dropping our wallet for example.

"The second. Enter a labyrinth and find a magic crystal or magic items. It,s quite a bit of trouble, but in just a single trip we can earn a considerable amount of money."

Magic crystals sell for a high price.

I can,t say in specific how much that would be, but if we gave it to the official at the check point, I,m sure it would be enough to allow the Superd race to travel.

"Labyrinth! That sounds good! Let,s go!"

"No way."

Ruijerd rejected the labyrinth option.

"Why?!"

"Labyrinths are dangerous. I can,t see through traps with my eye as well."

Even though Ruijerd,s eye will react to living things, it won,t work at all for traps made in a labyrinth it seems.

"Even though we won,t know unless we try?"

"I was the one who suggested it, but I don,t want to go either."

If we proceed carefully, we could probably manage it somehow or other, but since it,s me who doesn,t pay enough attention to his feet, somewhere I would most likely make a fatal mistake.

This is where we need to listen to Ruijerd,s advice.

"Third option. We look around this city for a smuggler."

"Smuggler? What,s that?"

"In places like this where people cross a border, they transport things across in return for a fee. In such examples like in our case where we,re forced to pay absurd prices. Most likely, if it were a merchant, they could transport it for a lower price."

"Is that the case?"

"That,s the case."

If that weren,t the case, then each species wouldn,t have a different price.

"Among them, there are certain articles which cost an amazing amount. For people who can,t afford to have things transported publicly, there are people who will transport it for a cheaper price."

Well, it,s also possible there aren,t any.

However, if we try talking to some merchants around here, I,m sure we could find someone who would take a much lower price than 200 small green coins either way.

The price set at the checkpoint is clearly strange.

If we violate the rules just a bit, it shouldn,t be too much retribution.

No no, I can,t think like that.

If we try to take the easy route out, there will be a pitfall.

I,ve already learned that through experience.

For the most part I,ve included it as an option, but we should try to avoid doing anything bad as much as possible.

For the time being, those three are all that I can think of.

Legit method of collecting money
Get rich quick from a labyrinth
Ask an underground merchant
None of the options are very good.

Ah, that,s right.

There was one more method.

I could sell my staff, [Arrogant Water Dragon King, Akuahatia].

Putting loss and gain aside I really don,t want to consider the option of selling this.

It was something I received on my birthday from Eris.

I,ve used it preciously until today.

I,m sure Ruijerd and Eris won,t agree with me letting this go.

However, this could be the best method.

That night I had a vision.

Hitogami said.

"Buy some food from a stall and then search alone in the back alleyways."

And.

Since I have no other means, I,ll give it a try.

"Is it a matter of having no other means?"

No, well, buying food, and going into a back alleyway, I already understood it was that sort of event.

"You understand it?"

It,s that right, there will be some lost child that is hungry and wandering around, right?

Then they will somehow or other get involved with a strange man right?

"That,s exactly right, amazing!"

Then, after I save that child, it will become the case that it,s actually the grandchild of the shipbuilding guild head or something along those lines right?

"Fufufu, that is something to look forward to for to...mor...row."

What is there to enjoy myself about it.

There wasn,t even a single one of those enjoyable developments up until now.

Rather, hey you! It,s been a year since we last talked you know!

Look, I was just starting to feel relieved that you would never show your face before me again.

"Well~ , didn,t you get into a bit of a troublesome incident because of my advice last time? It was just a bit difficult to show my face after that."

Ha!

So, even God has times like that.

However, don,t be mistaken.

That was my own personal mistake.

Though, incidentally, I would like you to tell me what kind of thing would have been the correct answer.

"Even if you say correct answer, if you had just normally interacted with the guards, they would have gotten along with Ruijerd as well."

Eh? Was it that sort of simple event?

"That,s right. If you had just become allies with them, then Nokopara wouldn,t have had his eyes on you. Really it was outside of my expectations. Though in my own opinion, it was pretty fun to watch."

In my case it wasn,t entertaining one bit at all.

"However, thanks to that, you made it this far in just about a year, right?"

So you,re trying to say the results are okay?

"The results are everything."

Cheh.

I don,t like that.

"Is that so? Well, it,s fine. Now then, it seems like you,re in a bad mood so I,ll disappear here."

Wait just a moment.

I would like to confirm something with you.

"What is it?"

Could it be that with your advice, it will turn out better, if I didn,t really think about it too much?

"In my opinion, it,s more interesting if you gave it more thought though..."

Ah, I see now!

It,s that sort of thing, huh.

I get it now.

I,ll go with what you said.

Next time won,t be interesting at all.

"Fufufu, that,s something to look forward to then."

Then. Then. Then.

My consciousness sunk as I heard the echo flow.

The next day after I received advice from the Hitogami.

I bought some skewered food similar to yakitori from a stall and started wandering around back alleyways.

The only thing I have on me are just these skewers.

The skewers had something like scallops, mussels, and seasoned fish.

Also, a number of marine products which I couldn,t really figure out.

Buy food from a stall, even if you say that, he didn,t really specify what kind.

Therefore, I went with the easiest thing to carry.

Last time I put too much thought into matters.

If an amateur tries to arrange and cook something it will just end in failure.

If I try to think about it too much, I,ll get stuck not knowing what to do.

This time conversely, I,ll just honestly obey and see what happens.

Just as I was told, I bought some food and now I,m just wandering around the back alleys, looking for an event.

Mindlessly.

This is role playing.

What is about to happen is nothing but a coincidental happening.

No need to think about it deeply, just obediently follow through with it.

That guy prefers interesting events.

The fact that I,m over thinking things is exactly what he,s aiming for.

If I just obediently obey then he won,t find it interesting.

Just as I was thinking that and wandered around for a number of minutes, I suddenly realized.

"Wait? Isn,t this going exactly as he predicted though?"

I thought I had been tricked.

Through his skillful art of conversation, I,m perfectly moving along with his predictions.

If I think about it I realize, it,s really an irritating way of speaking.

It feels like you,re dancing on the palms of his hands.

Remember the original intention.

My feelings during our first meeting.

I know for a fact that I should absolutely not trust him.

Alright, this will be the last time I move along with his plans.

This time I,ll just wait and see what happens as I go along with his advice, but next time I will absolutely not obey.

I already don,t want to go along with his wishes anymore, so this is it.

Walking around in a back alley.

Alone.

I wondered why it needed to be alone.

That should be where the truth behind this advice comes up.

A development that wouldn,t happen if Ruijerd and Eris were here.

No need to think about it too deeply.

I would be happy if it was an erotic development, I,ll go while hoping for something along those lines.

I told Ruijerd and Eris that we,re acting separately for a day.

Since it,s Eris, it would be dangerous to go out alone so I asked Ruijerd to guard her as well.

About this time, those two could be having a good time on the beach.

"Wait? Wouldn,t that be a date?"

Following along with my flow of thoughts, I imagined the shadow of two people on a sandy beach.

Nono.

That can,t be.

Ca...ca..ca..calm down.

It,s that Eris and that Ruijerd.

There,s no way it,s that sort of sexy story.

It,s babysitting, babysitting.

Ah!

Though Ruijerd is strong!

Eris seems to respect Ruijerd as well!

Recently I,ve been treated as just The Owner too!

No way.

Why am I getting worried.

Fuuuu.

It,s alright, right Ruijerd-san.

This won,t become netorare, right?

{ C-Editor's note: Netorare is a genre of anime, manga, or video game focused on infidelity. }

It,s alright, right?

After I return you two won,t become strangely close, right?

I...I,m trusting in you!

For the time being, I start to simulate fighting against Ruijerd for the first time.

I don,t stand a chance in close combat.

In order to get rid of him, the first thing I would need to do is move two times the distance out of his search ability with the gem on his head.

Then in order to defeat him, use water.

The flow of water is a hindrance to him.

In order to pay out that punishment, I need to cut him off with water.

I,ll create a large amount of water and then just like that push him down into the ocean, the end.

I,ll have him drift until he dies.

Kukuku.

Please don,t be mistaken.

I believe in Ruijerd.

However, how do I put it.

Look, it,s like that.

Don,t they say love is a war?

The back alleys were peaceful.

Normally when you think of a back alley, you get the image of a gathering place for all sorts of bad people.

In reality, if a child like me who is pure, helpless and sincere were to walk through one it would immediately catch the eyes of kidnappers.

In this world kidnapping is one of the most popular and profitable crimes after all.

If anyone comes to abduct me, I,ll crush their arms and legs then interrogate them for information, take everything of value they have on them, then turn them over to the authorities.

"Hehehe, little girl, if you come with me I,ll let you eat until your stomach is full."

I heard that voice coming from the back alley.

I suddenly peeked through to look.

A man with a scary looking face was pulling on the arm of a young girl sitting down against the wall.

It,s certainly a very easy to understand composition.

First move wins.

I prepared my staff and did modifications to my Stone Cannon that would put it at about the level of a jab from a pro boxer.

Then fired off a rock bullet at the man,s back.

During this past year I,ve gotten quite good at going easy like this.

"Ouch?!"

After he turned around I fired one more shot.

This time it was just a bit stronger.

"Ga?!?"

Bagan! A good sound came out and the rock hit the man directly in the face making a cracking sound.

The man started to stagger about unsteadily dragging his body and then he fell over.

He shouldn,t be dead.

It seems like I did a good job at holding back.

"Are you alright, young lady?"

I put on as much of a refreshing face as I could, and held out a hand to the girl who was about to be kidnapped.

"O...oh??"

It was a little girl dressed in a risque, black leather styled outfit.

Boots that come up to her knees. Leather short-shorts. A leather tube-top.

Her collarbone, curveless waist, navel and thighs – all of her skin is pale.

And finally her most noticeable features; voluminous and wavy violet hair, and horns like a goat.

I understood the moment I saw her.

It,s a succubus.

Not only that but a little girl.

Without a doubt she should be younger than me.

Could this possibly be a reward the Hitogami is giving me for giving it my best.

That guy can occasionally do some good things it seems.

No, it shouldn,t be a succubus.

In this world the succubus related species are considered a type of monster.

If I remember correctly it,s a monster that inhabits the Begaritto Continent.

I remember back to when Paul said in an unusually serious face, "Our family cannot win against them."

I,m sure if I were to actually meet a succubus I would lose to its technique and be exhausted by it.

Succubus are the Greyrat family,s natural enemy.

Well, putting that aside.

There,s no monsters in the middle of the town.

In other words, she is not a succubus.

She should just be a child from a normal demon race wearing erotic clothing.

"O..ohhh! Yo... you bastard, what have you doneeeee??! Look at what you have done!"

The little girl was trembling all over.

"Th...this man was... this man you know...?!"

She made an unbelievable face.

What have you done? What are you going to do about this? Sort of face.

"Ah, sorry about that, was he an acquaintance?"

Is what I asked while tilting my head.

It wasn,t the sort of feeling and face a normal middle aged man would speak with to an acquainted child.

How do I put it, it was more like the exact feeling of an aroused middle aged lolicon.

Look at this bright red face, even after he,s lost consciousness he still has that loose smile.

He may have been about to take the little girl home and feed her an extravagant meal and offer a warm bed, but in return he would have requested a hot night, that sort of feeling.

"This man was going to feed this one with an empty stomach fo... food!!"

I heard a loud gurgling noise from somewhere.

It was a sound like the ground was rumbling.

Just as that sound was about to end the little girls knees gave out and she fell to the ground.

"Are...are you alright?"

Without thinking about it I crouched down and picked her up.

I wouldn,t let a justified reason to touch a little girl pass me by.

However, don,t be mistaken.

I came to save her on the orders of the Hitogami.

Different from that middle aged man just now.

"Gu?? Ugh? It,s been 300 years since this one revived. To think this one would fall in this sort of place? This one cannot let Laplace know about this matter!"

Somehow a strange self play started up.

Could it be that this outfit is some sort of cosplay?

"Fo...for the time being, eat this and get a hold of yourself."

I shoved three of the skewers I had prepared into the mouth of the little girl.

"Mogyumogyumogyu"

The moment they were shoved into the little girls mouth her eyes flew wide open, with her eyes open just like that she kept chewing away eating the skewered food.

Then she even plundered the skewers I had in my hand as well.

I still had 12 pieces left on my skewer, but 10 pieces suddenly disappeared.

"U..u..o..oh! It,s good! The first meal in a year is good!"

The little girl regained her energy.

She suddenly lifted her back from the ground energetically with a spring and jumped up, and then stood on the ground after a single rotation.

Her physical ability must be surprisingly high it seems.

"This one has been saved, saved! You! With this, this one should be able to last another year!"

Then at that point the little girl,s eyes finally met with mine.

It was an odd set of eyes that had a mix of purple and black.

I wonder if this is some sort of cosplay as well.

No, there shouldn,t be any contacts in existence in this world.

Her eyes should have originally been like this.

"Oh?"

The little girls right eye spun around in a circle.

In that moment, the color changed to blue.

Tha....that,s creepy!!

"Uwaaa! Uwaa! What,s with you? Amazing! That,s disgusting! What,s this, what,s this?! Fuhahaha! It,s the first time this one has seen something like this!"

After seeing my face the little girl started to say that while jumping around energetically.

Yeah, it,s a shock of course.

It,s the first time in a while since anyone has looked at my face and called me disgusting.

However, I also thought that she was creepy.

I,ll just call it even here.

"Is it that? During the time it was in the stomach it was a twin, then when it was born one half died, is that it?"

What?

What is she saying?

"No, I don,t think that is the case."

"Really?"

"Yeah."

"Still your magic power quantity!! It,s above Laplace you know."

What is higher than who?

"Well, it,s fine! Name yourself!"

"I,m Rudeus Greyrat."

"Alright! This one is called Kishirika Kishirisu! A.K.A. THE GREAT EMPRESS OF THE DEMON REALM!"

With her hands on her hips, and her pelvis thrust forward, she threw out her chest with pride.

Suddenly seeing thighs in front of my eyes, I reflexively licked her.

It smells but it,s sweet.

"Uhyaa! What are you doing!? That,s dirty!"

The little girl started to glare at me as she clamped her legs together and started rubbing them.

However, I see now.

Great Empress of the Demon Realm, Kishirika Kishirisu.

Even I,ve heard that name before.

In the Human-Demon Great War, the one who lead the magic race, fought, and was easily crushed, the immortal Demon Empress.

I wonder if it,s the real thing.

I came here following the advice of that Hitogami.

There is the possibility that she is the real Great Demon Empress.

However, would the real Demon Empress be in this sort of place in the middle of nowhere on the Magic Continent, furthermore collapsing from starvation.

No matter how you look at it, that can,t be the case.

That,s right.

This must be like where the children of the Magic Continent go around playing, pretending to be great people of the past.

And the especially popular one is the Demon God Laplace.

For someone like me who knows the truth, he,s a disgusting and evil bastard but that guy is popular.

Even though he did lose the war, he subjugated the Magic Continent, gathered together the demon races and brought them status, then brought about peace.

The demon races greatest man in history, is how it,s been told.

What the children usually go around imitating is the story of Laplace.

Especially, the episode where he fights the immortal demon king, until we came here to Wind Port it was something I saw a number of times.

Great Demon Empress Kishirika as well, is a great being if you can call it a great being.

However, probably because it,s from a much older era I,ve almost never seen make believe play of her.

This child is certainly a passionate fan of the Great Demon Empress and she has no friends to play together with, so she was playing alone in this back alley.

Thinking of it that way is smart.

Hmm.

Being alone is lonely right.

It can,t be helped I,ll play along as well.

"Wa, wa ha! Please excuse me! Your majesty!"

I started acting out in exaggeration and bowed over on one knee similar to a retainer.

"O? O.. oh! That,s good, that,s good! This one has always waited for that sort of response! The young ones these days don,t have any manners after all!"

Yes, yes, Kishirika started to nod happily.

Yes, yes.

That,s right, I,m sure you wanted someone to play along with you.

"Please forgive my rudeness for I did not know you had revived and acted in an impolite manner!"

"It,s fine. You have saved this ones life. It,s fine if you ask for any one desire."

Saved your life... I just gave you some food when you were hungry, right?

"Ummm? Then, I want great riches."

"Idiot! This one is totally broke just as it looks!"

Even though you said anything?

No, I guess it,s that sort of setting.

If you were to ask for money, then there would be an episode later where you,re forced to pay it back.

"Then, please give me half of the world."

"Wha! Half of the world you say! That,s huge! However, half-assed. Why only half?"

"Well, since I don,t really need the men."

Oh that,s bad, I let out a bit of my true intentions.

It,s not something to tell a little girl about.

"I see, this one understands it now? Even though you,re still young, you,re a lustful one. However, sorry. To tell you the truth, this one hasn,t acquired the world either you know?"

Well, all of the wars Kishirika lead the demon races in were lost after all.

"Then, your body is fine. Pay me back with your body."

"Oh? With this body? Even at that age you,re that lustful, I,m worried for your future."

"Haha, of course that was a jo-..."

A joke, I was about to say, when Kishirika started to put her hands on her hot pants.

"Really, it can,t be helped. It,s the first time since this one has revived, be gentle, okay?"

Kishirika,s cheeks started to change color and she started to unfasten the button on her hot pants.

Eh? Seriously?

I just meant it as a joke though...

No, but, this isn,t the sort of atmosphere where you can say it,s a joke.

This is where I should just carefully appreciate it as the little girl strips, then after enjoying the sensation of holding on to her majesty, gently reject her, is the correct way of doing things.

"Oh, wait, this one can,t do that."

However, Kishirika stopped.

Don,t stop, just a bit more and it could have been seen.

"This time this one,s fiance is here as well. Sorry, but this one cannot offer you this body."

The pants that had been pulled down were pulled back up again.

I feel like a man who has just had his pure heart played around with.

Money is no good, the world is no good, the body is no good.

"Then what can you offer?"

"Fool, when it comes to things the Great Demon Empress Kishirika can grant one, then it,s obviously demon eyes!"

Demon eyes.

Demon eyes, huh.

Is it that sort of thing.

Somehow it,s kind of a different image from this world,s heroes after all.

Come to think of it, one of Ghyslaine,s eyes was a demon eye wasn,t it?

However, demon eyes, huh.

"When you say demon eyes, do you mean, ,Has the ability to see the opponent,s Lines of Death, and cutting along those to deliver them certain death, – those kind of demon eyes?"

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Tsukihime Japanese adult visual novel. }

"Scary!! What is that! This one doesn,t have anything scary like that!"

That doesn,t seem to be the case.

After that the only other demon eyes I know of are the kind that turn the opponent into stone when you look at them.

Or the kind where beams come out of your eyes, [Eye Beam Gun], or the kind where lasers come out, [Laser Eyes], those are probably not included as demon eyes.

"Do you really want something as dangerous as that? Do you have some sort of grudge against someone?"

"No, not particularly."

"Nothing can be born from revenge. This one has already been killed twice, but now this one doesn,t hold any grudges against the opponent that killed this one at all. When people resent, that resentment becomes a chain. Then things like the Human-Demon great war happen."

I was being preached to by the little girl.

Well, it,s not like I,m particularly planning on cutting any vampires apart, so she doesn,t really have to lecture me.

{ C-Editor's note: Another reference to Tsukihime. }

"Or rather, I don,t really know much about the demon eyes. What kinds are there?"

"Humu. This one has only just revived so this one doesn,t have any significant ones, but Magic Power eyes, Identification eyes, X-ray eyes, Clairvoyance, Foresight, and Absorption eyes, would be ones that are famous around here."

Even if you just tell me the names.

"Can you please explain each of them to me?"

"Umu? You don,t know? Really now, the young ones these days don,t study enough?"

After saying that Kishirika took the time to explain each of them to me in detail.

Magic Power Eyes

They are eyes that allow you to see magic power directly.

The most popular ones. 1 in 10,000 possess them.

Identification Eyes

When you look at something it will show you the details of that object.

However, only within things that this one knows of. Anything that this one doesn,t know will be shown as something unknown to this one.

X-ray Eyes

If you look you will be able to see through things like walls.

Though you can,t see through living beings or dense magic fields.

You,ll be able to see all the females naked that you want. It,s just right for a lustful master.

Clairvoyance

It allows you to see far away. It,s difficult to control the focus point.

Since you can only see and not interfere, it,s not really suggested.

Foresight

It,s an eye that allows you to see a short distance into the future.

This one is hard to adjust the focus point as well.

However, it,s suggested.

Absorption Eyes

Eyes that absorb magic power. Since they also absorb your own magic they aren,t really suggested.

Kishirika was knowledgeable about demon eyes.

I wonder where she learned about these sorts of things.

Maybe her parents are knowledgeable about it.

Otherwise maybe there,s some kind of book called Demon Eyes Encyclopedia.

"Then, let,s go with two and make both eyes demon eyes."

"Suddenly going with both, you, are surprisingly greedy aren,t you?"

"Here, I,ll give you the last bit of meat."

I passed her the last two pieces on the skewer and Kishirika received it with a full face smile.

"Yay.. mogumogu. However, it,s fine to give you both, but this one wouldn,t really suggest it."

"Why?"

"It,ll trouble you if you can,t see through them normally, generally you keep your field of vision sealed with an eye-patch. If you have to cover both eyes you won,t be able to see."

"Ah, come to think of it I,ve seen something like that from an acquaintance of mine."

Ghyslaine used one as well.

After all what Ghyslaine had should have been a demon eye.

"If you,ve been alive for several hundred years you might be able to control it, but if this one suddenly gives both eyes to a child like you then it,ll drive you mad."

I,ll go mad, huh?

After all, I guess it would put some kind of burden on your brain.

How frightening.

"Then, I,ll give up on both eyes."

"That,s for the best. Then what will you do? This one suggested foresight."

Demon eyes, huh, if I could get my hands on one, which would be good.

The magic power eyes seem like a bit of waste.

It seems like quite a few people already have them after all.

Unexpectedly, though they could be quite useful.

I don,t really need the identification eyes.

I,ve never been troubled over not knowing about things.

Moreover, it doesn,t know about things that the Great Demon Empress doesn,t know it seems.

I can imagine it not being useful at the times when you need it the most.

I don,t particularly need the X-ray vision either.

Until I can learn to control it, it seems like I would end up seeing Ruijerd nude as well.

The clairvoyance seems like it could be useful.

Though for the time being I don,t really feel like I need it.

If I was given it right now, I could see what is going on with Eris and Ruijerd, but I,m sure the usual scene of Eris getting into a fight with someone and Ruijerd going to stop it would enter my vision.

Foresight is... I see, certainly that one seems to be a good suggestion.

Currently, I can,t win against Ruijerd or Eris in close combat.

The living things in this world are fast after all.

If I could see a moment into the future, that sort of thing would be a huge advantage to me.

The absorption eyes are out of the question.

They would kill my advantage as a magician.

Though I,m glad I was able to learn about the demon eyes like this.

If all of a sudden all of my abilities were being cancelled out I could have gone into panic and been in danger.

If I think about it seriously, then all of them are dependent on how they are used.

Well, anything works really.

It,s just make believe play after all.

"Then, I,ll go with the suggestion."

"Is it fine? The majority of people have gone with different ones than the ones this one has suggested. Saying ,what can be done if you can only see just a little bit into the future?, like that."

"If you can see one second into the future, you can control the world."

Even though I say that, the swordsmen in this world are fast.

Even if you could see one second into the future, it,s possible you won,t win.

There,s that [Sword of Light] thing as well.

"Is it fine not to get the X-ray vision? You could look at all the females naked you want."

She doesn,t get it, this little girl.

Certainly, just walking down the road you could see beauties and young women naked all you want and it would be exciting.

However, that,s exactly it.

It would quickly become boring.

In regards to that, the process of taking off the clothes and imagining what they,ll look like when they,re off is part of the enjoyment.

The pocchi who rises up to the top of clothes, won,t be able to enjoy it without being able to see the clothes you know?

"I see I see, then I,ll just borrow your face really quick."

"Yes."

"Here, ready?"

Kishirika suddenly stuck her fingers into my right eye.

I experienced an intense pain.

"Gu gia????Aaa!!!"

Without thinking about it I tried to run away.

However, I was caught by Kishirika,s hair and unable to run away.

Surprisingly strong.

Ouch ouch ouch ouch!

"Ga? Aaa?! Wh..what are you doing you brat?!"

"Shut up will you, you,re a boy right? Endure it for a bit."

She was tampering away in my eye socket with her fingers with a grinding sensation.

After a little while passed, she completely pulled it out.

I,ve certainly lost the sight in that eye now.

"The color of the foresight eye is a bit different from your own though you won,t be able to tell from a distance."

"You idiot! There are things you can and cannot do even when just playing around!"

"This one is the Great Demon Empress, this one wouldn,t give demon eyes while just playing around."

Damn it, my eye, my eye is???

Ah??? Oh?

I can see.

Things have become doubled, but I can see.

What,s this, it feels disgusting.

"It depends on how you control the flow of magic power in it, but you should be able to make the flow as thin as possible. Well, give it your best and train in using it."

"Ah? Eh? What do you mean?"

"It means it depends on you."

In front of the confused me, Kishirika looked totally satisfied.

There was an afterimage remaining in place of the nod.

However, rather than an afterimage the silhouette was deeper.

What,s with this, it feels disgusting.

"Alright this is good, you can properly see it seems. Now then, it,s about time this one heads off. This one must search for Badigadi. In regards to the meal, it was a great justice."

After saying that Kishirika jumped up onto the roof.

"Well then, see you Rudeus! It,s fine if you rely on this one if you,re in trouble again sometime! Fahahahahahaha! Fahahahah! Fahahahahafuagahogeho??!"

Leaving behind a Doppler effect, she disappeared into the distance while laughing out loud.

I just kept staring blankly.

Eh?

The real thing?

Just like this I obtained a [Foresight] eye.

Middle Aged Man,s Point of View

"Ugh, my head hurts."

I drank too much yesterday.

I finished the first stage of a long job and went partying with my colleagues.

We drank until morning.

We drank so much that we thought the shop would run out.

Then, I have no memory.

All the memories after I left the shop seem to be a bit vague.

If I remember correctly, I went down one of the back roads in order to take a shortcut.

That,s right.

Then there was a little girl sitting down there.

After talking to her she said she was hungry.

Since I was in a good mood I invited her to my house.

My wife should have prepared some breakfast.

Unfortunately, my intoxication still remains so I wouldn,t have been able to eat it.

If I leave the food my wife prepares then she,ll get angry.

If I were to let this girl eat it, my wife shouldn,t get angry.

In my head while drunk it seemed like a great idea.

Yeah, from that point on I don,t have any memory.

It seems like I drank until I passed out.

My wallet is? Still here.

I haven,t been stripped of my possessions.

After looking at the sky, the sun is still high in the sky.

Well, I am a pretty well known person in this town after all.

There shouldn,t be anyone in the town who sees this scary face and doesn,t realize who I am.

Moreover, yesterday, we finally finished a new ship, all the people around town should know about it.

Of course, they should know about the first launch celebration as well.

Surely, they decided to just leave me be as I was sleeping here so peacefully.

"Wait, isn,t it already midday? Ah? This will put my wife in a bad mood!"

The Shipbuilding Guild chief Bakkasu Randasu hurried down the road home with his head aching from a hangover.

Demon eyes.

Normally you,d be pretty surprised if you suddenly received something like this.

Why was the Demon Emperor in that sort of place and why was I given something like this?

It was such an opportunistic development that my mind didn,t have time to catch up.

However, I was moving according to a vision from God.

It should mean that this sort of development went just as he planned.

When I think that, I want to gouge it out right now and crush it.

It seems like it would hurt and I,m scared so I won,t do it.

For the time being on my way back I cursed my own naivety.

I see all the people in the town, walking down the road in doubles.

I,ve bumped into a number of people after making mistakes of not being able to tell which one was real.

Seeing doubles both when being blamed and when earnestly apologizing.

As well as seeing doubles in fights.

I won the fights, but they are meaningless conflict.

I want to avoid as many such fights to the best of my ability.

I have no option but to urgently try and master the use of this as soon as possible.

In other words, if I don,t learn to use it, we can,t continue with our journey.

I returned to the inn.

I met the Great Demon Emperor!

After talking about that to the other two they were quite surprised.

"The Great Demon Emperor, huh, to think she had revived."

I think the point that Ruijerd was surprised about was a bit unusual.

"I can,t imagine that I was suddenly given demon eyes."

"Granting demon eyes is the Great Demon Emperor,s ability."

Great Demon Emperor, Kishirika Kishirisu.

The Demon Emperor of Resurrection.

Another name is Demon Emperor of Demon Eyes.

Her combat capability isn,t all that great, but she carries 12 types of demon eyes within her body, and can see through all manners of things.

Among them, the most frightening part, is that she has the ability to change other people,s eyes into demon eyes.

Thanks to that, all of Kishirika,s subordinates possessed demon eyes, and she had the power to control the demon races.

There were a number of demon races who became followers of Kishirika just to become stronger.

"I wonder why she was in this town."

"Well then. I wouldn,t be able to understand how a demon king or demon emperor thinks.

{ C-Editor's note: A quick explanation of Demon titles: Demon God is limited to just Laplace, Great/Demon Emperor is limited to Kishirika Kishirisu. All other strong/ruling Demon Race beings are considered Demon kings. }

Ruijerd shrugged while saying that.

That,s right isn,t it, you didn,t even understand the true intentions of the Demon God you worked for a long time either.

If I were to say that he would probably get seriously depressed, so I didn,t say it out loud.

Eris, eyes were sparkling after hearing the words Great Demon Emperor.

"That,s amazing. I want to meet her too!"

"Do you want to meet her?"

Eris and Kishirika.

I wonder what kind of conversation they would have together.

I,m a bit interested.

Unexpectedly they might get along well together.

"I wonder if she,s still in the town?"

"I wonder?"

Unexpectedly, she might be in another back alley, starving again.

There was that sort of tempura joke atmosphere at the time.

No, that most likely shouldn,t be the case.

It felt kind of like she was searching for someone.

Surely, she has already left on a journey.

Being guided by the mechanism of some sort of bracelet or something.

"As expected, she shouldn,t be in this town anymore."

"I see, that,s too bad."

While saying that Eris will still probably go wander down some back alleyway tomorrow.

"Since it,s that sort of feeling, I,m going to seclude myself. The two of you can feel free to act as you please for the time being."

The two of them nodded respectively.

Learning to control the demon eyes took a week.

Starting from the conclusion, it really wasn,t all that difficult.

Controlling the demon eyes using magic power.

It,s really similar to using magic with voiceless incantations.

It,s something I,ve practiced and refined a number of times until now.

Creating a path for the magic power.

I was a bit perplexed at first, but after I realized that there were two main points it became easier.

First is the strength.

It has a feeling similar to an ero game window.

In the start the strength was at MAX and all manners of things could be seen in doubles.

I thinned this out as much as I possibly could.

If I narrow down the amount of magic power in my eye the future becomes thinner and I can see the now.

Since it seems more convenient if it doesn,t appear that I have it, I thinned it as much as I could so it doesn,t bother me, then stopped it there.

Then I just have to maintain this condition.

If I let my focus go even just a bit the strength starts to change.

It took three days until it was stable.

The other one was length or otherwise distance.

The distance into the future that I could see.

After packing magic power into my eye I could adjust it.

The result was the farthest I could see was roughly one second.

Of course, if I pack more magic power into it I can see the future beyond two seconds as well.

I can see it, but it blurs.

I can see two or three blurs.

It means that the future is always undergoing changes.

Three seconds, four seconds, I can see that far into the future, but when you get to five seconds there are several tens of future possibilities blurring together.

It just means that there,s that many future possibilities.

And then if I try to focus on a point too far into the future, the burden on my brain increases it seems.

Kishirika did say that if you had two demon eyes you would become an invalid after all.

It could be that the reason why she gives off that sort of feeling, is also an effect of the demon eyes.

In any case, if I want to use them safely it,s just one second.

It took me another three days to understand that.

Then it took me one more day in order to adjust both strength and distance at the same time.

In other words one week total.

I succeeded in mastering the foresight eye.

Now then, while I was spending my time putting power into my eye and yelling "Subside, my Divination Eye!", Eris and Ruijerd were going out somewhere together every day.

Eris was dripping with sweat and Ruijerd was always refreshed but just a little bit sweaty as they returned every day.

The two of them are doing something together that makes them sweat.

As well as it being every day!

"Umm, I,d like to ask for reference, but what have you two been up to recently?"

Then Eris said while wiping her sweat with a towel,

"Hn, hnn, it,s a secret!"

That,s how she responded.

With a truly happy face.

I wonder if they,re doing something secret in secret.

I wonder if it,s a nice shot, hole in one.

I wonder if I have no choice but to sniff Eris, sweat stained cloth.

No, it,s not like I,m really worried or anything.

In any case, I,m sure the two of them are just off training somewhere.

Yeah, I see it, Eris is a child that puts in effort in the shadows.

Even when we were in the Fedoa region, on her days off she would frequently just end up training with Ghyslaine.

When I would ask her what she was doing back then, just like this time she would respond with a "Secret!"

In that case, this time as well should be the same.

That night, a 34 year old NEET looking guy was slapping my cheeks while whispering in my ear, "From today onward your second name is [Defeated Dog]" in my dreams.

I think it,s probably that Hitogami,s doing.

Nothing good comes from that guy.

One week later, I reported that I had finished controlling the demon eyes.

Then Ruijerd suggested, "In that case, have a spar with Eris and let,s see."

I guess we,ll be confirming exactly how useful it is in close combat.

Or else we,re going to see the results of her special training.

Seeing both at once is twice as good.

I accepted immediately.

We moved to the beach.

In front of Ruijerd we faced each other with wooden sticks we picked up around here.

"I wonder if you,ll be able to beat me even if you,ve gotten your hands on something like demon eyes!"

Today,s Eris is brimming with confidence as always.

Surely, she,s grasped something during this past week.

I want to protect that winning face.

"I,m fine with losing. I just want to try and find out how well I can see in close combat."

We,ll go without magic for today.

I,ll try fighting with just the demon eyes, seeing one second into the future setting.

"Hmmmn, they,re Rudeus-like words, but?"

In the middle of Eris,s lines I could see a vision.

<Suddenly Eris comes to strike me from the left side>

If I hadn,t had the foresight, I most likely wouldn,t have been able to react in time.

She has a natural disposition when it comes to talent with preemptive attacks.

"Ha?!!"

"Hoi"

I can clearly see through it, so I landed a counter strike on the side of Eris, face.

The next vision.

<Without flinching, Eris came in to attack consecutively with the stick in her right hand>

This is where Eris,s strength lies.

It doesn,t matter what kind of attack she takes, she doesn,t flinch at all and prepares to go in for the next attack.

Since her legs are very steady, most attacks won,t even shake her, rather the more damage you do, her voltmeter of anger increases and the attack strength goes up.

"Ta?!!"

"Here"

I hit her forearm with a strong attack.

Eris dropped her wooden stick.

If it was the usual me then I think this would be around where the match is decided.

At the very least, when we trained together with Ghyslaine, it would be at the point where you lost if you dropped your sword.

However, that,s not what happened in the visions.

<Eris is already preparing for her next action>

In other words, this is a kind of feint.

Dropping her sword and luring me into lowering my guard.

<She goes in for a punch at the tip of my jaw on the left side.>

Eris specialty, Boreas Punch.

Intentionally dropping her sword, waiting for an opening, it,s the usual human bullet combination.

"??? !!"

"Your feet are unguarded."

I swiped at her legs and caused her to fall.

The fist cut the sky and Eris started to fall to the ground.

However, it doesn,t seem she has given up yet.

<While falling to the ground she pushed off with her hands and uses the centrifugal force to turn around and come at my right leg for a bite>

"Oh?"

I moved my leg back and at the same time fell to my knees, then moved on top of Eris and sealed off her movements.

Since she came to bite at me from an impossible posture, Eris, body was twisted.

One of her arms was underneath her and one of her legs was folded up against her butt.

What else can she do from this position?

Just as I was thinking that she started moving about just trying to struggle.

"That,s far enough."

The referee raised his voice.

Eris completely relaxed her strength.

I won...

I won.

I won against Eris in close combat for the first time.

Without magic.

"Complete loss right?"

Eris looked up at me with an unusually refreshing face.

I moved my leg away.

Eris slowly stood up and started to brush off the dust.

<Then came in to strike me>

Pasht, I caught her fist.

Then Eris, face very quickly turned to a bad mood.

"I,m going back!"

Eris said that in a loud voice, just like that with her shoulders trembling she returned to the inn.

I made her angry, huh?

No, that,s wrong.

I might have dealt a blow to her self-confidence.

Until now I was an opponent she always easily won against.

Then all of a sudden I got stronger.

Even I would feel jealous.

"Eris is still a child."

Ruijerd saw Eris off and then said that.

"Suitable for her age."

After saying that Ruijerd turned around.

He looked into my eyes and nodded.

"It was a good combination."

"If they had demon eyes, anyone could do that much."

It is also because I trained a bit, but in this world there are many people who have my level of physical ability.

If they were to get their hands on demon eyes, they should be able to do that much as well.

"Demon eyes aren,t something you can master soon after you,re given them."

"Is that the case?"

"Once before, there was a Superd warrior who had demon eyes, he always wore an eye patch. He couldn,t control it until he died. Learning to control it in a week, you,re the one that,s abnormal."

I see.

Right, I see.

I see, I see.

Well, in regards to controlling my magic power I,ve put quite a bit of effort into it.

I did master it in a week though.

I see, I see, so there was no one who managed to control it as fast as me.

Nfufu.

"Could it be, now I could even win against Ruijerd-san?"

"Perhaps if you use magic."

"What about in close combat?"

"Want to give it a try?"

I bought into that invitation.

I,ll say it clearly.

I was getting ahead of myself.

"Please take care of me."

Ruijerd placed his spear to the side and prepared himself bare handed.

I wonder if that means he doesn,t need to use tools if the opponent is a stray dog.

"If you want, it,s fine if you use magic as well."

"No! Since this is the case with bare hands."

Before I finished speaking I saw a vision.

<The palm of Ruijerd,s hands is flying towards my face before my eyes>

I can see it.

I can see Ruijerd,s movement.

I can deal with it.

"Oh!"

I started to extend my hand to catch that fist.

<My hand was caught>

After seeing the vision I withdrew my hand on reflex.

In that instant the vision started to blur.

<Ruijerd,s fist catches me in the face>

The vision came out.

Two futures.

Ruijerd grabbing my arm and Ruijerd driving his fist into my face.

Almost entirely overlapping futures, but just a little bit different.

Why?

It,s not supposed to blur at one second.

The amount of time I spent thinking was one second.

"Uoohh!"

I turned my body away and somehow or other managed to avoid it.

<Ruijerd,s fist is flying foward and hits my face>

I saw the movement of that fist.

Seeing it very clearly.

Even if I could see Ruijerd,s next action, I didn,t manage to take any action and avoid it.

"Bu ge!!"

Ruijerd,s fist caught the tip of my nose, I,m down.

The back of my head fell into the sand and just like that I rolled a single revolution. A depressing fall.

I thought my face had caved-in.

I touched my face to confirm.

It seems to be alright.

I wonder if my beautiful face is now a mess.

I wonder if I,m like a five year old on school lunch duty now.

"Is that the end?"

After hearing that, I understood my defeat.

"Yes, I admit defeat."

I thought I could win after seeing the first vision, but it doesn,t seem like it will go very well.

"However, with this you should understand, right?"

Ruijerd held out his hand to me.

I grabbed onto that and was helped up.

"I don,t understand. The future suddenly blurred. What did you do?"

"I don,t know what you saw but If you defend with your hand I grab it and if you don,t I hit. That,s all I was thinking about."

Hmmu.

In other words it,s like this.

If my movements are predicted then methods to cope with it are made.

Since there,s a difference in ability, even if I can see one second ahead there,s no meaning.

If I were to put it in terms of shogi, even if you could see your opponents next move, there,s no way an amateur could defeat a master, or something like that.

The inhabitants of this world have abnormally high abilities.

There are probably numerous people who have a similar level of movement to Ruijerd.

"Although, I,ve fought against opponents before who have the same demon eyes. Since that time I,ve always fought while taking that into consideration. It,s a difference in experience."

"I wonder if that,s the case."

Ruijerd has experience in dealing with demon eyes.

It could be that the swordsmen in this world have methods and techniques to deal with demon eyes.

For example, the Sword God style [Sword of Light], even if you can see it I have a feeling you can,t avoid it.

"It seems like I was letting it get to my head a bit."

Moreover, since ancient times the weak points of demon eyes had already been discovered.

For example, if you block their eyes, or use a shield as a mirror, or attack from behind, or fight in the darkness.

However, if you take those away, then after all the power of demon eyes is still attractive.

I did win against that Eris after all.

My heart is dancing while thinking about how I can use the demon eyes from here on out.

I completely saw through all of Eris, movements.

I saw the movements that I couldn,t see until now.

In other words, if I can apply it better, I should be able to see through Ruijerd's movements.

Then at that point, the bald sage with sunglasses appeared within me, with a pon sound effect.

"Now you can finally check on her growth without being hit!"

I see.

Thank you, oppai-sage.

{ C-Editor's note: Oppai = breasts. }

Humu.

My chest is dancing while thinking about how I can use my demon eyes from here on out!

I returned to the inn with my nose flaring and found Eris holding her knees on top of the bed.

That,s right, I forgot.

She was depressed.

For the time being, the sage within me became a turtle and disappeared off to somewhere.

"Ummm, Eris-san?"

"What?"

Eris, tone of voice was the same as usual.

After that I heard from Ruijerd what happened between these two during the past week.

It seems it was special training after all.

Obviously, not ecchi special training.

In order to become stronger she would spend all day everyday training with the sword.

Then it seems Eris managed to succeed in landing a single hit on Ruijerd.

A single hit on Ruijerd.

That,s not ordinary.

It seems like I,ll never be able to take one.

According to Ruijerd it seems like she was becoming a bit too arrogant after that so he used me to help her cool her head down.

How can this be.

That lolicon bastard pretending to be a warrior used me to clean up for his own mistake.

However, it seems like the result was perfect.

The nose that had grown long after landing a single hit on Ruijerd who she normally loses to, was mercilessly broken by me who normally suffers complete defeat to her.

However.

However, even though that,s the case.

This isn,t very good.

"Can I hold you for a bit?"

By the time I thought about it I was already doing it... I know that feeling well.

It feels like everything you,ve worked towards up until now is being denied, it,s a feeling of helplessness.

Certainly she should cool her head.

It could be she won,t make many big mistakes.

However, now is probably Eris, growth period.

I don,t think it,s a good idea to hold her head down like that.

She should be allowed to continue and steadily build up her confidence and grow stronger.

Then finally, when she extends too far and realizes her own mistakes, she can work towards correcting them.

"Eris has definitely become stronger."

"It,s fine either way. Even if you don,t try to comfort me. The fact that I can,t win against Rudeus, I understood that from the start."

Eris was pouting with a sour expression on her face.

Hmmn, what kind of things would be good to say.

I have no stock of lines to say for times like these.

Ruijerd isn,t returning to the room.

It,s a nose that he grew out, so I think he should be the one doing something about it.

Even though it,s a nose that I broke.

However, if you do a good job of comforting her here, there,s no mistake it will raise her good opinion up.

Eris will become completely devoted to me, then we,ll have adult cheek time and head over heels dance.

Ruijerd most likely assumed something like that would happen and left the two of us alone.

"Please don,t lose your self-confidence. I heard you managed to land a hit on Ruijerd. That,s amazing isn,t it?"

While saying that I sat down next to her.

Then Eris let her body weight fall onto me.

I could lightly smell the scent of her sweat.

It,s a good smell.

However, remain patient. Like a gentleman here...

"Rudeus is unfair. Getting your hands on demon eyes yourself, even though I gave it my best..."

I stiffened up.

In an instant my head cooled down.

The wolf inside me ran away with its tail rolled up.

I couldn,t think of anything to respond with.

"....."

What was I so happy about I wonder.

That,s right.

Unfair.

It,s unfair.

Demon eyes are by no means a power I worked hard to get my hands on.

It,s something that just happened to fall into my hands.

All I did was just buy some food and start wandering around some back alleyways.

Certainly, after that, it took a week of adjustment.

However, that,s it, it wasn,t any sort of trouble at all.

Then like that, with that sort of power, in a single week, I won against Eris who put in effort until she was covered in sweat, what was I getting so happy about.

"I,m sorry."

"Don,t apologize..."

"....."

After that Eris just stayed quiet.

Although she never tried to separate from me.

The normal me would usually have my heart beating over Eris, smell and body temperature.

However, it didn,t become those sorts of feelings.

I just continued to feel the punishment for my crime.

I felt that Eris, high body temperature and the smell of her sweat continued to blame me.

Inside of that heavy mood, it,s better not to use the demon eyes outside of times it,s needed.

I decided that.

These sort of convenient tools will hinder my growth.

That,s right.

Didn,t I understand it from the fight with Ruijerd.

What,s important isn,t to think of methods to make use of the demon eyes.

It,s to raise my own personal combat power.

If I use the demon eyes, I will certainly be strong.

However, one day I will certainly reach my limit.

If you go with the method of depending on tools, one day you will have to return the favor.

Dangerous.

I almost fell into the trap of that evil Human God, that Hitogami.

Without a doubt that guy wants me to live a life of depravity.

Demon eyes, these are a trump card.

Yes, I,ll start thinking of them like that.

That night I thought to myself.

In the end I never got my hands on a method to cross the ocean.

I wonder if I made some sort of mistake somewhere.

I thought this time it would go smoothly though.

The only thing I got my hands on was just the demon eyes.

I wonder if I,m supposed to do something with this.

For example, gambling.

Even though I say that, no such amusement as gambling exists on the Magic Continent.

At best it,s betting on who would win in a fight between two people.

Earning money like this isn,t very good.

We could have Ruijerd participate as a champion fighter and charge an attempt fee of 1 iron coin, then the reward for winning would be 5 small green coins.

Doing that might be good but either way he,ll run out of opponents sooner or later.

Humu. I don,t know even after thinking about it.

All that I know is that I,ve returned to the situation before I received the human gods advice.

In some ways you could say we wasted a week pointlessly.

We,ve already pointlessly wasted one week.

"Alright! I,ll sell it."

After saying it with my mouth, I easily made my decision.

Just at a good time, Ruijerd is not around tonight.

Eris is sleeping on the edge of the bed with her bellybutton showing.

Since it would be troubling if she caught a cold I,ll cover her with a blanket.

There,s nothing to stop me.

There,s most likely a pawnshop down some back alley that,s open even at this time.

Shops that deal with suspicious items are ones that open at night.

I left the inn with my staff in one hand.

Three steps after I left the inn.

"Where are you going this late at night?"

Ruijerd stood in my way.

I was wondering where he was since he wasn,t in the inn, but that doesn,t seem to be the case.

This is bad, this guy was planning to peep.

I need to quickly make something up?

"Umm, I,m going to go play with fire for a bit at an ecchi store."

"Is your staff necessary in order to hold a woman?"

"Ummm? It,s going to be used for magician play."

Silence.

I guess that was overdoing it after all.

"Do you intend to sell it?"

"Yes."

He perfectly managed to guess it so I quickly confessed.

"I,ll ask one more time. Do you plan to sell your staff?"

"Yes. The materials in this staff are good, so I could sell it for a high price."

"I,m not asking about something like that. Isn,t that staff something important to you? Similar to this pendant."

Ruijerd took out Roxy,s pendant from his chest.

"Yes, it,s just as important."

"In that case, if the same thing happens again, would you sell this pendant as well?"

"If it,s necessary."

Ruijerd took a deep breath.

I wonder if he,s going to yell.

I didn,t think he was the type of man to raise his voice over anything other than children but.

"Even if for example I was forced into a corner, I wouldn,t let go of my spear."

The yell didn,t come.

He just let out something like a sigh.

"That is because it,s a memento of your son, right?"

"You,re wrong. It,s because it,s my warrior,s soul."

Warrior,s soul, huh.

What he says is splendid, but you can,t cross the ocean with it.

There was sadness in Ruijerd,s eyes.

"Before, you mentioned there were three options."

"I did mention that."

"There shouldn,t have been an option to sell your staff among them."

"It wasn,t, was it."

I wonder if he,s trying to figure out if I,m lying.

No, I didn,t intend to lie.

Selling my staff is one of the legitimate methods.

"Do I still have yet to obtain your trust?"

"Trust? You have it."

"In that case, why didn,t you discuss it with me?"

I turned my eyes away in response to that question.

It,s because I knew he would be against it.

Therefore, I didn,t discuss it.

In other words you could say that is proof that I didn,t trust him.

"In my opinion, I,ve understood from seeing the current world this past year. Taking on jobs, even diving into labyrinths, a huge amount of money like 200 small green coins isn,t an amount you can save up."

Ruijerd is speaking in an unusually realistic manner today.

I wonder if he ate anything weird.

"You should know that. Which is why you thought of the option of finding a smuggler. I would have never considered it. However, there are no other options in order for me to travel to Milis than that. That is the correct answer. Why are you going to sell your staff?"

The thing I,m always thinking of is just the better option.

The best option is too difficult and will fail if you try to do everything perfectly.

Therefore, I never know what the correct answer is.

I don,t think that smuggling is the correct answer.

"Even if it,s the correct answer, if it puts a crack in the party then there,s no meaning in it."

"In other words you think a crack will appear in the party if we rely on the smugglers, right?"

"Yeah. Smugglers are what Ruijerd-san would consider villains with his sense of values after all."

Smuggling.

On the list of things they transport, slaves are included as well.

And then, if you were to ask what the most popular crime in this world is, it would be kidnapping.

Children are easy to abduct.

In other words, it means becoming an accomplice with smugglers who abduct and sell children.

"Rudeus."

"Yes."

"This time it became like this because of me. If it was just you two, you wouldn,t need to be worried over the absurd amount of 200 small green coins."

In exchange, there might have been some kind of happening on the way here though.

There was a lot of times where we were saved by Ruijerd after all.

"My pride won,t forgive me for allowing you to sell your staff in order to solve the issue."

Even if you say your pride won,t allow you to forgive it.

"Sell my staff and means will enter our hands. Pay the regulated fee and cross the ocean. No one will regret it. No one will have to endure anything, it,s the number one smart method, isn,t it?"

"My feelings of worthlessness will remain if you sell your staff. Eris will be bothered by it as well. Isn,t that what you mean by putting a crack in the party?"

I kept silent.

Ruijerd met eyes with me.

They were eyes looking straight forward.

"Look for a smuggler. I,ll close my eyes to all their crimes."

It was a serious face.

Most likely he,s deciding on the resolve to overlook children who are captured on the way right now.

In order for me to not have to sell my staff.

For my sake.

He,s bending his own principles for my sake.

I can,t say anything if he has that strong of a resolve.

"If it happens that you come across a disgusting bastard on the way and you can,t endure it, just say it. We have enough leeway to save children."

If Ruijerd has that sort of resolution then we,ll have to stop them intelligently.

We,ll rely on smugglers and cross the ocean.

However, we can,t go along with what happens.

If Ruijerd can,t endure it, we,ll mercilessly betray them and save him.

Villains exist only to be made use of.

"Then, let,s go in the direction of looking for smugglers."

"Yeah, that is fine."

"I think you,ll experience a number of unpleasant things throughout it, but please take good care of me."

"That goes for both of us."

I exchanged a strong handshake with Ruijerd.

Just like this, I stole the first move and won the war of love.

No, I,m just joking.

Of course, I explained it to Eris the next day.

She was quite surprised.

"Eh? But, didn,t you go into the back alleyways in order to find a person to talk to for that sort of reason?"

It seems she already thought the option was to look for a smuggler.

Or rather, in regards to that, it seems she was trying to convince Ruijerd during the special training.

I can,t win against her.

Now then, since that,s the case.

Now that the party has become one, we,ll look for some smugglers.

After the boat trip had reached its destination, Roxy Migurudia arrived in the port city of the Magic Continent, Wind Port.

At that moment Roxy stopped her feet.

Wind Port, a townscape that looked a lot like Milis northern port city, Saint Port.

Even people who visited for the first time will feel the faint sensation that they have already been here.

However, the reason why Roxy stopped her feet was not because she felt she had seen this town before.

There was an obviously different mood from the Milis Continent.

She was feeling that.

(How nostalgic)

The feeling rising within her chest was nostalgia.

How many years ago was it that Roxy last visited this place.

Was it about 15 years ago?

If I think about it, a lot of time has passed since I longed for the human race villages and ran away from my village.

When I took the ship from here I thought about it, when would I return.

However, after I traveled to the Milis Continent, ate some of the strange food the human race made in Milishion, I never realized that such delicious food existed in this world, it was something you could never have eaten in the Magic Continent so I swore to never return again.

(I,m rather simple huh?)

In reality, since the time that Roxy passed over from Milis Continent into Central Continent she had never returned until today.

She never thought about returning.

There was a variety of things in the Central Continent.

All the things she saw were fresh and interesting.

Then at some point in the Central Continent, she had already passed the same amount of time she had lived in the Magic Continent.

Thoughts about the Magic Continent never entered her head.

She had even dived into labyrinths and had memories of fearing for her life, but she never remembered her parents that were left in the Magic Continent.

Just like that, until she returned now

Roxy thought to herself earnestly you never know what will happen in life.

"Roxy! We,re going!"

While Roxy was standing still, a single woman called out to her.

With extravagant golden hair that is similar to French bread and long ears peeking through.

A tall and slender height, a tight, thin waist, and then a large butt.

Every time Roxy had seen her during this journey, it filled her heart with jealousy.

I know it,s something that can,t be helped in regards to racial traits, but at least I wish I had that sort of figure.

The size of our chests is about the same, but she has a balance that is filled with beauty while I,m just thin.

"Ha, I,m coming now."

She let out a sigh.

The name of that extravagant woman is Elinalise.

Elinalise Dragonroad.

She,s an elf warrior, who serves as the vanguard while wielding a thorn-like estoc and buckler with her swordsmanship.

She,s a warrior who uses elegant techniques that match up with her extravagant appearance.

Normally an Estoc is not a weapon an adventurer would carry.

It,s something that is used in duels between nobles in Asura Kingdom and something fighters use along with armor in the sword city in the far north.

The one Elinalise uses is an item that was endowed with magic power, a Magic Item that was found deep within a maze.

It,s far sturdier than the swords you could find around here and there and with just a single swing, you can fire off a vacuum that will cut down a tree several meters ahead.

Also, the buckler is an item endowed with magic power, a Magic Item as well, it holds the ability to soften the impact of blows it receives.

"O...oh? Land, it,s land!!"

An older dwarf man came down from the ship behind Roxy while staggering.

He was wearing heavy looking armor, with his stern beard swaying, and a blue face while holding his staff.

His name is Talhand.

His formal name is "Talhand of the Great Rigid Peak."

His height is about the same as Roxy, but his width is over two times more.

His body covered in heavy armor, with a stern beard, this person is a magician.

Roxy first questioned why a magician would be wearing armor.

His feet are slow and his agility is close to nothing.

He would never be able to avoid attacks from monsters.

Since that,s the case in reverse, by wearing sturdy armor like this, it seems he acts a vanguard and uses magic.

"Are you alright, Talhand-san? Would you like me to cast healing magic?"

"No, there,s no need!"

While waving with his head swaying back and forth, he dragged along his slow body.

Normally he would be more casual, but he had been weakened quite a bit by sea sickness.

"Really now, you,re quite shameful to not be able to handle something like a ship."

"What did you say? You!"

Elinalise put her hands on her hips and laughed out loud.

Talhand,s face turned completely red as he got angry.

It was Roxy,s current job to stop these two who quickly start fighting.

"Please fight later. Elinalise-san as well, it,s fine if you don,t say things like that all the time. Sea sickness depends on your constitution after all."

Roxy met them in the port city of Dragon King Kingdom, East Port.

Roxy was ignoring the two of them at first as they were fighting in the Adventurers Guild.

However, the contents of that fight were about searching for the missing individuals from the Fedoa region in the Magic Continent, so she cut into it.

It seems like they had a difference of opinion because neither of the two knew the geography of the Magic Continent.

Talhand who wanted to search in Begaritto Continent or the northern areas of the Central Continent.

Elinalise who felt it would be fine to just hire a local if you didn,t know the path while you,re looking for someone.

Then Roxy who felt uneasy about being alone and whose origins are from the Magic Continent.

You could say that they met because they were intended to meet.

Moreover after listening to their conversation further, of all things, these two were once party members of that Paul and Zenith.

"Fang of the Black Wolf".

Roxy had heard of it.

One of the most famous parties in the Central Continent.

It was an unusual party making quite a name for itself for being a gathering of unique personalities.

Within a few years of forming, they rose up to S rank then soon after, they dissolved was something Roxy remembered well.

In any case, I couldn,t have imagined that Paul and Zenith were members of that "Fang of the Black Wolf".

Roxy couldn,t hide her surprise.

Then, these two were equally also surprised.

If you were to speak of Roxy Migurudia, then it,s of a publicly famous "Water King Class Magician".

A blue haired young girl who traveled here from the Magic Continent.

An alumni who graduated from the magic university and a few years later achieved the title of "Water Saint Class Magician", then conquered a labyrinth in the outskirts of Shirone Kingdom that had 25 floors.

After that, she took the position of Royal Magician for the Shirone Kingdom.

Stories from the times when she was adventuring are relatively famous as they were spread by the troubadours.

The meeting between three beginner adventurers after she left her village as a single magician, traveling across the Magic Continent towards Milis, that sort of story.

The name Roxy doesn,t come up in that story.

However, it was a famous story back in the days that Roxy was the name of that lone young female magician.

The three hit it off.

Not quite going that far, but the two who accepted Paul,s request to search for his family and Roxy heading towards the Magic Continent to look for Rudeus had combined objectives.

They formed a party together and headed off towards Magic Continent.

First boarding a ship and then heading towards Milis Continent.

Then in Milis Continent they arrived at the port city West Port and they paid a high price for a variety of horse called Sleipnir and a carriage.

It was a high price, but all three of them had a considerable amount of money so it was no problem.

The two of them are on bad terms with Paul so they decided not to stop in the capital of the Holy Milis Kingdom, Milishion.

The two of them were also known for their bad reputations in their home towns, the village of the dwarves in the Blue Dragon Mountain Range and the village of the long eared race in the Great Forest, so they decided to skip visiting there as well and moved straight forward to Saint Port.

The two used the excuse that it would soon be the rainy season, so the faster they travel through the Great Forest the better.

The rainy season is long and during that time you cannot move through the Great Forest.

However, taking into consideration the quarrels between the two and the fact that they didn,t seem to want to stay in Milis Continent even a second longer, they took off in the carriage as Roxy came to the conclusion that they simply didn,t want to return home.

Of course, in terms of results, it meant that they would get to the Magic Continent in an overwhelming speed so Roxy had no complaints.

"For starters let,s go to the Adventurers Guild."

Roxy made that suggestion and the three of them set foot in the Adventurers Guild.

Starting with the adventurers guild, that,s a standard for adventurers.

"It would be good if there were some good men!"

Roxy frowned with a sullen face after hearing Elinalise,s words.

This elf known as Elinalise, unlike her chaste appearance, likes men.

Something you would never be able to imagine from her slender figure but she,s already given birth to a number of children.

According to the person herself, she,s suffering from that sort of curse, though she,s not some sort of tragic heroine offering her body to unknown men, she looks at it as something she does because she likes it.

It,s something Roxy couldn,t believe.

"Elinalise-san. What we came here to search for aren,t men!"

"I understand that."

Roxy made a frown that said you don,t understand it at all.

It might be fine for strangers, but please think a little about the allies you,re traveling together with.

It,s fine if you do it on your own time, but right now it,s an urgent situation.

Besides, if she were to get pregnant the journey would be delayed by that much.

I wish she would restrain herself a bit, Roxy thought.

"Roxy should have something like one or two men as well?"

"I do not."

Maybe if I had as much beauty as Elinalise is what Roxy was thinking.

However, unfortunate as it is, all the people Roxy had felt "this person is nice" did never consider Roxy as a woman.

Roxy is really popular with children, but she,s not popular with men.

The Adventurers Guild on Magic Continent.

Compared to the Central Continent the feeling is completely different as a wide variety of races combined to form a party.

After Roxy entered the guild, her eyes met with some obviously new adventurers.

Three young boys dressed in warrior looking clothing.

They came to visit Roxy with a nervous feeling.

"U...umm, if it,s okay with you, would you like to form a party?"

After hearing the boys determined statement.

Roxy smiled bitterly.

"No, as you can see, I,m already in a party."

After being rejected like that the three smiled bitterly and left.

This is not the first time she,s received invitations to join a party such as this.

Until now she,s been invited many times.

All of them were three young boys.

Once upon a time troubadours told of this story, but I didn,t think it had gotten this famous.

"Oh my, oh my, doesn,t Roxy get some invitations from good men as well!"

Elinalise teased Roxy like that while patting her on the head.

It,s the same as always.

Roxy won,t argue back every time. She,s not a child.

"In any case, you can,t party with someone with that different a rank."

Currently Roxy,s rank as an adventurer is A.

The average rank of the young boys who are lead astray by stories from troubadours is D.

At the very least I,ve never seen any of them above B rank.

The first time she received such an invitation, she stated full of confidence that the main protagonist of that story was herself then turned red with embarrassment after being unable to sell the name Roxy.

{ C-Editor's note: Meaning that there is a famous story about Roxy and she thought she was being invited because of her name, only to realize the story never mentions her name as Roxy. }

It was a memory Roxy didn,t want to remember.

She couldn,t have imagined that the troubadour didn,t know about the race known as Migurd, they misunderstood and thought Roxy started her journey at around 12 years old, then made it to A rank within two years.

That,s not all, the current stories are rather dramatized, something like conquering the Magic Continent in a single year and rising to A rank.

Don,t joke around, Roxy thought.

In reality it took around five years to rise up to rank A.

Building a foundation in the Magic Continent, then rising up to B rank took two or three years.

Then from there on out intruded on a variety of parties for two years.

Even with that, if you compare it to the norm it would have been considerably fast.

These days, if you,re lucky you might be able to rise up one rank from F within a year, there,s no way a party with nothing but children could make it to A rank within a year.

"That,s unfortunate, they seemed like they could be raised just to suit my tastes."

If you raised them, after hearing that Roxy remembered back to the old days.

She remembered back in the past when she was once called out by three new adventurers.

The three who once called themselves, "Rikarisu Gang".

The three young boys who saved me when I left my village and didn,t know left from right.

One was sarcastic and always lying on the spot, but he was good at paying attention.

One was always telling off people and bad mouthing others using abusive language but he would always go back on his words.

One was an extremely wise person who brought together the party, but he died on the way during the journey.

They dissolved after they made it together to Wind Port, but..

Roxy was thinking.

I wonder if the remaining two are still alive.

It,s something she understood after being active in the Central Continent, but being an adventurer in the Magic Continent is harsh.

The probability of dying is high.

(It would be nice if you guys are still doing well, Nokopara and Blaze)

After thinking that far Roxy laughed a bit.

It,s been twenty years since then.

Those two who weren,t particularly part of a race with longevity would have long since retired from being adventurers.

The only one who never changes is just me.

(I,ll go with the nostalgia another time.)

Roxy changed the direction her feelings.

The reason I came back to the Magic Continent was absolutely not to visit home.

Rudeus, it was for the sake of finding that family.

"Now then, let,s gather information."

After making that suggestion to the two, Roxy took a look around the adventurers guild.

After gathering information she came to an understanding that the existence known as "Dead End" is currently in this town.

It seems like it,s some sort of newcomer group that has recently been spreading its name.

If you speak of "Dead End", then it would be the name of a demon that everyone knows about.

A monster even among the Superd race that is especially dangerous and is always targeting children.

Roxy was always being threatened with that name by her mother when she was younger.

Bad children will be kidnapped by "Dead End", like that.

Roxy,s face turned into a frown after they returned to the inn and summarized all the information in relation to "Dead End".

"It,s an unbelievable story."

"What is?"

"Trying to sell the name "Dead End", I can,t imagine they,re sane."

What is dreadful about Dead End.

Is the fact that it,s a person that actually exists.

It,s not really well known in the Central Continent, but Dead End certainly does exist.

Naturally Roxy has never actually seen him, but all of the rumors she,s heard are dreadful.

In regards to the Magic Continent it could be considered the most terrible monster.

The Adventurers Guild is afraid of retribution and hasn,t specifically placed a bounty on his head, but if a subjugation job were to come up, without a doubt it would be S rank.

Furthermore, if you were to succeed, it would probably count as a double rewards for an S rank job.

"I don,t understand it myself."

After comparing the information Elinalise had gathered, the man calling himself "Dead End" is a tall, fair skinned baldy wielding a spear.

And then it,s been said that he,s a handsome man as well.

"From the stories, it sounds like he,s a good man, should I try inviting him to join me in my bed?"

Talhand spit in a displeased way.

"It,s information that doesn,t matter at all."

The information Talhand had gathered, was that "Dead End" is a three man group.

Each known by the names, [Mad Dog Eris], [Watch Dog Ruijerd], [The Owner Ruijerd], it seems.

The latter two are siblings or at least that,s whats been said.

The Mad Dog is red haired, the Watch Dog is a bean pole, and The Owner is a shorty.

The Mad Dog uses a sword, the Watch Dog uses a spear, and The Owner uses a staff that seems to be an item endowed with magic, [Magic Item].

The reputation of the three aren,t very good.

"The Mad Dog is quick to pick a fight, The Owner says and does nothing but bad things. It seems only the Watch Dog is a pretty good guy. The rumors seem to say he likes children, and he never overlooks wrongdoings."

That,s quite an odd evaluation was what Roxy was thinking.

It seems like the information started to distort at some point.

If a villain does something even just a bit good, then they,ll over exaggerate and change their opinion of them.

Surely, the fact that Watch Dog is a good guy as well, is this sort of case.

Otherwise, maybe they,re intentionally letting such information flow out in order to deceive someone.

It seems they have not only violence but also intelligence.

"They seem like a dangerous group. Let,s go without trying to get involved with them."

"That,s right. It wouldn,t be good to have villains set their eyes on us when we,re about to go searching for people."

"Now then, let,s get onto the main topic."

Roxy changed the topic.

The reason they went to the Adventurers Guild wasn,t to gather information on Dead End in the first place.

"Was there any rumors about people from the Fedoa region?"

"None."

"There wasn,t any at all."

Roxy thought they might have been too late.

The Magic Continent wasn,t a comfortable place where you could survive after suddenly being teleported there without any sort of decent equipment.

In order for someone to survive for a whole year without anything.

It would be almost impossible in that land.

They might have ended up like one of the people who had died after the teleport incident in the Fedoa region this past year.

"Of course, what we came here to search for was Paul-san,s family."

"Zenith, Lilia, Aisha, and Rudeus."

Roxy had already told all the characteristics that she knew of to the two here.

Since she only knows about Aisha from what she has read from Rudeus,s letters, it,s kind of vague.

"Well, if it,s Zenith then she,s probably alright."

"That,s true."

These two are acquaintances of Zenith.

Therefore, they aren,t very worried.

Roxy doesn,t know exactly how "useful" Zenith was, but she knows exactly how strong these two members of the "Fang of the Black Wolf" are.

Since these two are saying it,s alright, then it,s probably alright.

"Rudeus stands out a lot, so I think we should find him soon."

Roxy remembers her disciple who showed his overwhelming talent at five years old.

If it,s that child, no matter where he goes he,ll stand out and become a popular topic.

Zenith and Rudeus.

The three thought that they would quickly find information about those two after entering the town.

Then if they were close to a village, they would have enough strength to survive on the Magic Continent.

Therefore, the ones they need to search for are Lilia and Aisha.

They decided from the very start to look for information relating to these two.

"Let,s decide on a deadline. We,ll gather as much information on Lilia and Aisha as we can over two days, then on the third day we,ll get ready and circle around the surrounding villages, how does that sound?"

"Isn,t two or three days too short?"

Roxy waved her head at Elinalise,s words.

"The Magic Continent is large and the probability that they are dead is high. First we should go around to each of the main towns in the Magic Continent and setup search jobs at each of the Adventurers Guild branches."

Asura Kingdom offered financial aid for assistance in searching for the Fedoa region,s population.

If you ask the guild in each town to setup jobs for it, then if the job succeeds, Asura Kingdom will pay for it and the Adventurers Guild will search on their own. For the most part, if you don,t have proof of signature from the job offered, then they won,t post the job even if you ask.

If you were to put it in reverse, if that,s not done then Asura Kingdom won,t pay the guild.

Roxy felt irritated over how bad the Asura Kingdom responded to the great disaster.

Since it,s a major power, normally you,d think they could organize an even larger scale search.

The ones who are actually out searching for people are just Paul and them. Just the ones who were involved directly in the disaster themselves.

(The fact that Asura Kingdom has started to rot internally doesn,t seem to be just a rumor.)

It,s the country with the longest history, I wonder if it,s started to rot from political authority and tradition.

"Now then, let,s work hard at gathering information tomorrow as well."

"Understood."

"Roger."

Roxy isn,t the type to spend a lot of time on every little thing.

She doesn,t want to waste time on something that might end up pointless, finishing things as fast as possible, then departing.

That personality came out when she instructed her disciple Rudeus on her ultimate spell and then departed soon after.

That prompt and snappy decision making is one of her strengths, but as Rudeus had noted, she also had a clumsy side to her.

Of course, there,s no one who would point that out, and the person herself thinks that is her strong point.

Even though that,s the case, making a request to the guild on the first day, searching around on their own on the second day, then setting off on the third day.

You could call it scheduling that wastes no time.

Although if they had stayed for at least one week, maybe a different result would have come about?

The second day.

Roxy decided to go take a look at "Dead End" out of curiosity.

Since they stand out, she quickly learned about their location.

There,s a female and male pair on the beach working hard at training.

Just as the information said, a lanky bald guy and red haired young girl.

The young girl who was wielding a real sword with both hands, attacked the baldy with a frightening speed, then the baldy easily parried it.

If I remember correctly "Dead End" is a three man group with one big person and two small people.

(The shorty known as The Owner isn,t here?)

Mad dog and Watch Dog were repeating an exceedingly high level of offense and defense.

Even if you say it,s offense and defense, it,s just a matter of Mad Dog attacking and Watch Dog parrying, but it was a technique which Roxy couldn,t follow.

Roxy continued to watch that situation from the shadow of a distant rock.

It was just like an older sister making use of a magic pitch as a weapon to fight in the pro baseball world.

These two are strong.

Even in the eyes of Roxy who has traveled the world for many years as an adventurer.

At the very least, she didn,t think it was the level of strength of someone going around making crafty moves.

(Making contact with them as well might be a good idea, right?)

Yes, the moment Roxy thought of that Watch Dog turned around.

(...!)

She felt like their eyes clearly met.

An intense stare.

Roxy felt an intense fear.

She received an illusion as if she had become a prey to be hunted.

She quickly left that place.

Ruijerd had felt the girl,s presence from the start.

Was there something she wanted or was she just watching.

After taking a look in that direction, he saw the face of the girl who was peeking from behind the rock.

(No... it,s not a young girl.)

That is an adult female Migurd.

It,s hard to tell at a glance, but you can,t fool Ruijerd,s "eye".

However, it,s not a presence I know about.

It,s not like there,s only one Migurd race village.

Is she just looking because it,s unusual, Ruijerd looked over and the young girl averted her eyes and ran off somewhere.

(Mu... did I scare her?)

"An opening!"

The moment he let down his guard, Eris went in for an attack.

It was an attack full of fighting spirit.

"Ku!!"

That day, Ruijerd suffered his first mistake in regards to Eris.

"Yay! It went in?! It went in right?! Yay!!?"

Eris raised both of her hands and was delighted.

Recently Eris, techniques have started to get better.

In the future, she should certainly grow into a good swordsman.

However, she,s still young.

If she becomes arrogant here, it will eventually bring about a bad result.

Ruijerd had seen such a thing a number of times as a warrior.

Therefore, he hadn,t intended to let her land a hit for the time being, but he let his guard down a bit due to that Migurd female.

Ruijerd silently sighed a bit so that Eris couldn,t hear it.

Roxy quickly returned back to her inn while looking behind her a number of times.

No one is following me, no attacks have come.

She returned to the inn full of anxiety.

If it,s that level of fighting, there,s a need to prepare a magic crystal.

There could also be a need to draw a magic circle and prepare some scrolls.

Roxy was thinking they shouldn,t attack her just for looking at them, but they are the kind of crazy people who called themselves "Dead End", it,s better to remain prepared.

"Ah, ah!! Good! It,s good! More, more!"

Roxy was exhausted of her strength after hearing a loud voice coming from Elinalise,s room.

Didn,t that woman not go out to look for information? Bringing a man to the inn just to enjoy herself...

"Really now..."

She had already heard that Elinalise was quick to bring in men from Talhand.

No matter what the situation is, if she sees men she,ll soon charm them, it,s the first relationship she holds.

It was the same in Saint Port, and according to Talhand it seems it was the same even deep in a labyrinth.

She has too little integrity.

However, it also made Roxy feel a bit relieved.

She would have felt helpless if she was alone right now.

Since Elinalise is over in the next room, I,ll prepare for a fight, then I,ll wait for the liaison to end.

Then, when the voices end, I,ll pull on Elinalise,s ear, and we,ll resume collecting information with the two of us.

Killing two birds with one stone while keeping an observation on Elinalise.

(Well, I don,t think they would even come as far as the inn but...)

After thinking that, Roxy started to prepare for a fight in her own room.

It,s not like the walls in the room are thin, but Elinalise,s loud voice could be heard.

After listening to that even Roxy started to get into a weird mood.

(.....Oh.)

She grabbed her right hand that was reaching down towards her abdomen with her left hand.

I don,t have the leisure time to do that kind of thing right now.

(Nevertheless, it,s surprisingly long...)

Three hours.

Roxy just continued to silently wait.

It doesn,t seem like Elinalise,s liaison is giving any sign of ending.

And then, there was no sign that "Dead End" was coming to attack either.

Roxy started to feel stupid.

At the same time she who was doing what needed to be done and started to feel irritated at Elinalise who was just doing what she wanted to do.

Right now we don,t have the time to be doing something like that and even though I,m enduring it myself.

After Roxy,s anger reached her limit she kicked her way into Elinalise,s room.

"How long are you going to keep doing that? What about information gathering..."

"Oh my? Roxy? Did you return?"

"Eh, huh?"

There were five men in the room.

"Would you like to join in as well?"

The scent of men drifting around in the air, the vulgar smiles floating on the men,s faces, then, Elinalise making an expression of ecstasy on top of such a man.

Things like that...with a number of people, not only that but with mutual consent, it was way beyond Roxy,s common sense.

"Ahh, waa..."

Roxy very easily went beyond the limit her head could process at this spectacle of deep karma.

"Uwaaahaa!!!!!

Roxy let out an unsightly scream and ran from the place.

She dived into her own room, prepared her staff while breathing in and out deeply.

"Magnificent spirits of the water, oh imperial thunder prince in heaven!

Strike down them with your majestic sword of ice!

[Icicle Break!]"

The inn was partially destroyed.

Then the third day.

Departure from the town.

Since that sort of thing happened, a number of things ended up becoming vague.

The information gathering was incomplete and they forgot to make a job request at the guild.

They destroyed the inn and paid a considerable fine to repair it.

"It,s all Elinalise-san,s fault."

"It can,t be helped. When I was gathering information in a back alley, I received a passionate invitation."

"Even then, that kind of... Five people, it was five people!!"

"Roxy will eventually understand one day as well. A strong and beautiful adventurer like me, being treated like a toy by five hoodlums like that, it feels like I,ll have a child just by thinking about it."

"I don,t want to understand it."

During her time in the magic university Roxy was still a child, she didn,t really understand things like lovers or spouses.

The first time she seriously wanted a partner was the time when she saw how affectionate Paul and Zenith were.

I want a partner like that for myself.

However, just as she was thinking about that, she remembers back to a story from an acquaintance of her during her magic university days.

She met her current husband in the depths of a labyrinth, then they overcame many troubles together and finally got married.

Roxy thought that was it.

If I dive into a labyrinth as well, I might be able to get my hands on one.

Her delusions became inflated in her head.

In order to be saved by a manly, straight laced, good height, but still childish, human race young man then by coincidence they combine their strengths in order to escape and in the process fall in love with each other, then by the time they get out of the labyrinth the young man who learns of his allies death will be comforted by Roxy. Then have their first time that night.

After, she actually tried diving into a labyrinth that illusion was easily crushed.

Labyrinths are a harsh place, the adventurers are all grim, the only one who was childish was her.

The solo adventurers stopped around the fifth floor.

By that point she gave up on the idea of a meeting.

After she made it to the tenth floor she started to feel it was pretty rough and looked for a party, but everyone thought she was childish and laughed at her.

Just like that, she continued to solo while making adjustments and in the end she managed to conquer it.

A result of youth.

She felt like she was going to die a number of times, but she had good luck. She doesn,t want to try it ever again.

"Well, for starters Roxy just needs to find the first one. How about it, next time together?"

"Absolutely not."

Her illusions have all been crushed.

However, her ideals still remain.

Getting a handsome man in the depths of a labyrinth is probably impossible, but just normally falling in love, and normally getting married should be possible.

She has no intention at all of giving her body to one of those men from around here that Elinalise always pulls along.

And then...

"We don,t have the free time to say things like that right now."

At the very least, Roxy decided that she,s fine being unmarried, while they travel in the Magic Continent.

And so, like that, while messing up the first step, Roxy began her journey around the Magic Continent.

It took one month to finish our negotiations with the smugglers.

It wasn,t all that difficult to find the smugglers.

First offer money to an information broker, and get introduced to a middle man.

Then, contact the smugglers through the middle man.

And finally, wait for a response from the middle man.

It then becomes a process of repeating these steps over and over again.

Hand over money to the information broker, hand over money to the middle man, and hand over money to the smuggler.

In no time, more than half of the money we had on hand had disappeared.

My wallet is light.

I want to believe that we will have enough money to at least pay for an inn on the other side of the ocean.

Honestly, I feel like we could,ve gotten a cheaper deal if we had approached the smugglers directly.

However, it seems like the smugglers move together as an organization. If you don,t go through the middle man then you can,t make contact.

It seems to be an intelligent way to avoid being exposed.

I don,t completely understand their structure, but it seems they do get around well.

Finishing all the preparations took one month.

Which made the month feel both long and short.

But either way it,s fine.

On the specified day.

Late at night.

When the moon wasn,t out.

The specified place is a certain pier near the end of the port.

The surroundings are eerily quiet, and only the sound of the waves can be heard.

There was a person there with a suspicious hood covering their face and a small boat.

Just as we had arranged, we will hand over the person we want smuggled in over to him.

We handed Ruijerd to the smuggler.

Just as it was specified, Ruijerd was handcuffed behind his back.

These handcuffs were purchased at the specified tool shop as well.

"....."

In the case of the smugglers, all the people they transport are literally treated as slaves.

The amount of money it costs to transport a slave is 5 small green coins. A uniform price.

This money had already been paid.

But according to the middle man there are also some guys who request payment during the exchange.

No good misers.

"Well then, please take good care of things."

"....."

The smuggler didn,t say a single thing.

Just nodded silently, placed Ruijerd on the small boat, and put a sack over his head.

The small boat had just a single boatman.

But on board, there were a number of heads with sacks covering them.

However, judging from their size, none of them should be children.

After confirming that Ruijerd had boarded the boat, the smuggler gave a signal.

The man sitting in the front of the boat started a magic incantation.

Then the small boat took off into the ocean in the pitch black night without making any sounds.

I couldn,t hear the incantation very well, but it seemed like it was water magic that controled the currents and moved the boat forward.

If that,s the case then I should be able to do it as well.

The small ship stopped in the open sea for a bit and then moved to a larger merchant ship.

There, they handed over the slaves but it seems like they will depart in the morning.

Ruijerd continued to face in my direction while on the small boat.

Even if you put a sack on his head he will still know my location.

I,m seeing him off.

Donna Donna is floating away.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the song Dona Dona about a calf being led to slaughter. }

No, he,s not floating away.

It,s not like I sold him.

It,s just a short separation.

The next day.

We sold the lizard we had been depending on for the past year.

It costs a tax to bring the lizard on board the ship and people use horses in Milis Continent.

The horses in this world are fast.

There,s no longer any reason to ride on a lizard.

Eris hugged the neck of the lizard and patted its body.

There were no words, but it was lonely.

The lizard was attached to Eris.

During the journey it would often lick her head, covering it in saliva.

Covering Eris in viscous liquid, what an... what an erotic lizard indeed.

Even I want to lick Eris from end to end.

Just like that I discovered a new sense of jealousy.

That,s right.

That lizard was already our ally wasn,t it.

It was an ally of "Dead End".

It,s not good to just keep calling him a lizard.

Let,s at least give it a name.

Alright, from today on your name is Guella Ha.

A man of the sea who wants to make lots of human friends.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the character Guella Ha from the Romancing SaGa role-playing video game. }

"It,s surprisingly obedient. Did you properly train it during the journey?"

The merchant dealing with the lizard showed admiration.

"Well yeah."

The one who trained it was Ruijerd.

There wasn,t anything specific to do, but there was certainly a master-servant relationship between Ruijerd and Ge?ha.

Surely, that lizard knew who was the strongest in our party.

Incidentally, it wasn,t particularly attached to me and tried to bite me a number of times.

Yeah, I,m a bit irritated after remembering it.

"Haha, as expected of The Owner of "Dead End". Since it,s like this, it won,t take much time to change the master. Recently many people treat them pretty roughly so retraining them is difficult."

That merchant is of the Lugonia race.

He,s got a lizard head.

On the Magic Continent lizards train lizards.

"It,s only obvious to treat the ally who has traveled together with us preciously."

Following that exchange, Geraha (lizard) was seriously treated like Donna Donna.

In my hand was the money received from selling my ally.

After thinking that, the money looked extremely dirty. How mysterious.

After all maybe I should have stopped with the name. It will transfer my feelings.

Goodbye, oh nameless lizard.

I won,t forget your back.

"Gusu..."

I heard sniffling sounds from Eris.

We went to board the ship after selling the lizard.

"Rudeus! It,s a ship! It,s really big! Wa!! It,s swaying! What,s this?"

Soon after boarding the ship, Eris started energetically running back and forth.

She,s already forgotten about parting with the lizard.

The fact that her feelings change directions so quickly is one of her good points.

The ship is a sail boat made out of wood.

It seems like it was the newest model completed just a month earlier.

I heard that this trip to Saint Port will be its first test as well as its maiden voyage.

"However, its shape is a bit different to the one I saw before."

"Have you seen a boat before Eris?"

Even though it was her first time seeing the ocean.

"What are you talking about, there was one in Rudeus, room wasn,t there!?"

Come to think of it, I do remember making something like that.

How nostalgic.

The thing that I started making to practice my earth magic. Then the thought ,I could make a figurine, came up and I started making the 1/10 scale sized Roxy.

It,s been quite a while since I last made a figurine.

Since I didn,t know when and how much magic power I would need, I avoided doing any training that consumed magic power.

I only worked on my body with Ruijerd and Eris during their training sessions.

Recently, I,ve slacked off quite a bit.

There might be a need to train myself again after things calm down.

"I did make it from my imagination after all, it can,t be helped that it was a bit different."

Besides, this ship is supposedly the newest model.

Though I don,t know what was new about it.

"It,s amazing isn,t it. Crossing the ocean in something big like this."

Eris was showing strong interest in it.

Three days after our departure.

While on board the ship, I began thinking.

Ship.

If you,re speaking of ships, then they,re a treasure trove of events.

There,s no way you can ride a ship without events happening.

I can say that.

I can declare it.

For example, a dolphin jumping outside the ship.

The heroine sees that and says, "Look! It,s amazing!" and I look and say, "My technique at night is amazing." then the heroine says "Amazing! Hold me!" then I say, "Hey hey, in this sort of place, what a bad little kitten you are." then...

Yeah. Something is a bit different.

Also, if you think of ships, then you also think of attacks.

Octopus, Squids, Serpents, Pirates, or Ghost Ships.

Getting attacked by something along those lines and sinking, drifting away, and being stranded.

The place you finally arrive at is a solitary island, where you start your shared lives together with the heroine.

The heroine who starts off hating me but gradually softens up after overcoming a number of events.

Then, the one main thing that they can do when they are alone, as just man and woman.

The intersecting gaze. Burning passion. Young blood.

Paradise for just two.

Also, if you talk about being attacked by an octopus, the heroine,s fate is already sealed.

The eight legs which you can,t see very well attack and hang the heroine in mid air.

The body in agony. Chest rising to the surface. Tentacle crawling underneath.

A great spectacle that makes your hands sweaty. For the time being you can,t take your eyes away.

However, reality is cruel.

Eris is currently in the cabin, in front of a bucket with a pale face.

Just as I was thinking about how excited she was for riding on a ship for the first time, she started to throw up on the way.

Even though she was fine on a lizard, I wonder what was so bad about riding on the ship.

For me who knows nothing about motion sickness; I don,t understand it.

The one thing I can say is that even if the swaying is small, there is no difference for people who are experiencing sea sickness.

Just that.

On the fourth day.

The octopus came out.

Probably an octopus. When I opened my eyes I saw a light blue colored octopus and it was super huge.

However, it was effortlessly repelled by the S ranking party that guarded the ship.

However, were there such jobs as guarding a ship?

After thinking that, I asked a merchant nearby and it seems like they are people who specialize in guarding ships.

The party,s name is [Aqua Road].

It seems they have an exclusive contract with shipbuilding guilds.

But since it,s them, even on this sea route, all the monsters that appear seem to be their specialty .

There were no heart thumping or exciting tentacle events.

How disappointing.

However, there was an upside to this.

In case of a worst case scenario, I was watching those battles from the sidelines.

At the beginning I just laughed at them for holding their noses so high.

The swordsman who fought as the vanguard was strong, but not as much as Ghyslaine.

The warrior who received the enemies attack and kept it preoccupied was strong, but not as much as Ruijerd.

The magician who stopped the octopus as a rear guard was below me.

In the beginning I was pretty disappointed.

Even if you say S rank, it was only something of this level.

I thought there were a lot of strong people in this world, but unexpectedly they might not be that great.

However, I suddenly changed my mind.

They,re an S rank party.

What I should be looking at is not their individual abilities, but their teamwork.

Even if their individual ability is low, they were able to defeat that great octopus.

Even if their individual ability is low, they were able to rise up to S rank.

That,s what,s important.

Each individual performs their role and provides a great power to the group.

That is teamwork.

It,s what we, Dead End, are lacking.

The individual ability in [Dead End] is high.

However, how would we do when we work as a team? I wonder.

Ruijerd,s team work is outstanding.

I wonder if it,s because he has experience from the army, but he matches well with the group.

Even if Eris or I make some kind of mistake he,s able to follow through.

He,s also outstanding at crowd control. Monsters are nailed on the spot from just a look at him.

However, he,s too strong.

In reality they,re all opponents he could defeat alone, but we force him to fight together with us under the guise of a team.

I won,t say it,s bad, but there,s no mistake that it,s distorted.

I, for the most part, try to keep things in mind during team matches.

Even though I say that, it doesn,t mean that our movements will mesh well together.

I get too focused on methods that deal with enemies that get close to me.

We rely heavily on Ruijerd when there are a large number of enemies.

Eris is no good.

She will honestly listen to instructions.

However, she can,t match her breathing together with her surroundings during battle.

When the enemy is in front of her, she becomes desperate and overextends herself.

It sounds good if you call it easy going fighting, but she has never once followed after Ruijerd or me.

Although, Ruijerd has no need for me to follow through with him.

If we end up separated from Ruijerd for some reason or another.

I have no confidence in my skill to back up Eris.

I have gotten my hands on demon eyes, but I only have two hands.

One hand to protect myself and the other hand to protect Eris.

And the extent to what I can protect with one hand is limited.

I,m worried.

As soon as we arrive on the other side, we have to meet up with Ruijerd.

"Rudeuswu...."

Eris came up to the deck with a pale face.

Her feet were staggering when she came out onto the deck of the ship, but then she started retching.

It appears that she has nothing left in her stomach to throw up.

"Wh...when people are suffering, why... are you in this kind of place..."

"Sorry about that. Since the ocean was beautiful."

"You,re cruel... uppu..."

Tears appeared in one of her eyes as she embraced me.

Her sea sickness was severe.

The fifth day, Eris is in the cabin feeling down as usual.

And I was there, giving her my undivided attention.

"Uu, uuu... my head hurts... heal me..."

"Yes, yes."

It was something I had heard from a sailor, but it seems that seasickness can be alleviated just a little with healing magic.

After I gave it a try, we confirmed that Eris started feeling a little bit better.

Seasickness results from contradictions in the autonomic nervous system.

If you use healing magic on their head, it subsides for a while.

In other words, this is what I,m doing.

Even though I say that, it,s not a continuous measure, nor does it make you feel all better.

"Hey... am I... going to die...?"

"It,d be pretty laughable if you died from seasickness, huh?"

"I can,t laugh about it..."

There,s no one else in the cabin.

Though there,s also the fact that the cabins are large, it seems there aren,t many people travelling from the Magic Continent to the Milis continent.

I wonder if it,s because the voyage fees for magic races are more expensive than the human race. Or is it because it,s easier to live on the Magic Continent.

I wouldn,t know about those kinds of things.

Eris and I are alone together.

In the dark and quiet room, with Eris who no longer had the strength to resist.

And during the five days, the only one who looked after the weakened Eris was me.

At the beginning, I felt that this was okay.

However, just healing is no good.

Healing requires me to touch Eris, head.

So that I can heal her periodically, I,ve been giving her a lap pillow, and while supporting her head, I use it continuously.

In doing so, I start to feel a little strange.

Well, using the word ,strange, would be misleading, huh?

I,ll say it frankly.

I start to get into an erotic mood.

Please think about it for a little.

In the cabin, the normally strong Eris was now,

with moist eyes, whilst wildly breathing, and in a frail and weak voice

"Please. I,m begging you, so please do it. (Healing)",

pleading to me.

Inside of my head, I,ve turned down the volume of the ,healing, part to be as low as possible.

I can,t see it as anything but Eris inviting me.

Naturally, that wasn,t the case.

She was just ill.

I,ve never experienced seasickness before, but I understand that it,s painful.

I was touching her.

It wasn,t anything erotic.

However.

Stroking the head of a girl about your age, and feeling her body heat.

That was something stimulating.

Though the place I was touching wasn,t somewhere erotic, it was stimulating.

Though it was only mildly stimulating, doing so over a long period of time would have been dangerous.

Being touched meant touching.

Touching meant being close.

Being close meant that in other words...

Eris, face wet with a cold sweat, and the nape of her neck, and her chest...

All of it was in my field of vision.

Moreover, it was the exhausted and weakened Eris.

Eris who would always hit me even if I accidentally touched her.

Right now she was, in other words, a sitting duck.

Isn,t she already mine by this point?

Isn,t it fine to just do whatever I want to her?

Those sorts of feelings were starting to sprout.

Almost certainly, even if I tore off her clothes and subjected her to my lust, Eris wouldn,t resist.

No, she couldn,t resist.

With a feeble expression, with a resigned expression, and with tears trickling down her face, she,d probably have no choice but to accept it.

Just imagining that sort of scene, places the Excalibur that is between my legs, right in front of Arthur.

The Arthur in my mind is shouting and pleading to me.

It,s shouting that right now Eris can,t resist.

It,s shouting that this chance won,t ever come again.

It,s shouting that right now is a chance to throw ,that, away.

However, the Merlin inside of me is telling me to endure it.

,You,ve already decided, haven,t you?, he says.

,You,ve already decided to protect the promise of waiting until you,re 15, haven,t you?, he says.

,You,ve already decided to endure it until the journey ends, haven,t you?, he says.

I support Merlin.

However, my endurance is close to its limit.

For example, I test things a bit by touching her chest.

There,s no mistake that it,s soft.

But it isn,t just soft.

That,s right. When it comes to breasts they aren,t just soft.

In the middle of the soft parts is a firm part.

The Holy Grail.

It,s what my Arthur is searching for.

If my Gawain (hand) found the Holy Grail, what would happen?

It,d be the Battle of Camlann.

Ahh, of course it,s not just the Holy Grail.

Eris, body is growing by the day.

She,s in her growth period after all.

Probably due to her genes, she,s quickly approaching her mother in one particular part.

At this rate she,ll surely grow up to be a voluptuous and eye-catching beauty.

The gazes of the surrounding men would be nailed to her.

There,d be a guy who,d say "Heh. It,d be just perfect if they were just a bit smaller."

Peoples have varied tastes after all.

But I,d say to that guy,

,I knew her during the time when they were ,just right, you know.,

Do you understand?

It means that I, right now, in this very instant,

can make ,past Eris, mine.

"Huu... Huu..."

My breathing is getting rough.

"Ru-, Rudeus...?"

Eris is looking at me with a worried face.

"A-, are you okay?"

Her voice hits me.

The voice that,s usually shrill, needlessly loud, and a little unpleasant.

That voice, at just the right volume, numbs my mind.

"Hahh... Hahh... I,m alright. Please don,t worry. We,ve made a promise after all..."

"...If it,s painful, then it,s fine to not force yourself you know?"

"!"

By "it,s fine to not force yourself", does she mean,

,It,s fine to not hold yourself back,?

That it,s okay to do whatever?

...

Just kidding.

I get it.

She,s wondering if I,m running out of magic power due to using Healing.

I get it.

She trusts in me.

That by no means would I lay my hands on her in this moment.

And I won,t betray that trust.

Rudeus Greyrat won,t betray it.

This is what you,d call ,living up to trust,.

Alright, I,ll become a machine.

I,ll become a machine that applies healing.

I,ll become an emotionless robot.

I won,t look at anything.

If I see Eris, face, I,ll rampage.

After thinking about that I close my eyes.

I cannot hear anything.

If I listen to Eris, voice, I,ll rampage.

After thinking about that I plug up my ears.

I,m an unsociable person.

I don,t have any desires, therefore I won,t rampage.

While thinking about that, I close off my heart.

However, the warmth of Eris, head and her scent...

Because of these two, in an instant my determination fades.

I feel like my mind is about to go blank.

Yeah, I can,t hold on any longer.

I,ve endured up to my limits.

"Eris, I,m going to the toilet for a bit."

"...Ahh. So you needed to go to the toilet, huh?... Take your time..."

Glancing back at Eris who easily believed me, I leave the cabin.

I move quickly.

A place with no one around. I immediately spot one.

And then, a moment of bliss.

"Phew..."

Just like that I became a sage.

However I don,t stop there, I close my sage eyes and transform stronger.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Kamen Rider Stronger television series. }

"I,m back."

"Yeah, welcome back."

I returned to the cabin with a facial expression like a Bodhisattva and became a healing machine.

"...Hm? Rudeus, did you eat something?"

"Eh?"

"-sniff sniff-... You smell funny..."

I forgot to wash my hands.

Tehepero.

{ C-Editor's note: Tehepero refers to an expression where you cheekily stick out your tongue (and usually wink). Literally comes from 'tehe' (tee hee) and 'pero' (sticking tongue out).

After we got off the ship Eris quickly regained her energy.

"I never want to ride another ship!"

"No, we still have to ride one more to get from Milis Continent to Central Continent."

Eris clearly became dejected after hearing that.

But then she remembered what had happened on the boat, and said in a worried expression.

"Hey, hey. When that time comes, could you use healing on me again?"

"It,s fine, but next time I might end up doing something ecchi."

I said it seriously.

Really seriously.

Trying to cope with that half-dead state of hers is close to torture.

"Uu... Why would you say such a mean thing?"

It,s not mean.

This is the painful truth.

Understand the feelings of a dog who has had a meal put in front of him but is forced to wait.

It feels like your stomach is empty and the meal says ,eat me and make yourself full.,

You can drink lots of water to stave off hunger but by no means will it satisfy your empty stomach.

The meal won,t disappear and your stomach will soon become empty again.

"I,m desperately trying to endure because Eris is cute."

"It...it can,t be helped then. Next time it,s fine if you touch, just a little bit, ok?"

Eris, face was bright red.

It,s truly cute.

However, the difference between her "little bit" and my desire is too great.

"Unfortunately, it,s not something that will end with just a little bit of touching. Please be resolved because it will turn into a mess."

Eris was at a loss for words.

I would prefer that you didn,t hold too many expectations of me.

Please allow me to protect our promise.

If I end up breaking our promise, then we,ll both end up harboring bad feelings.

"For the time being, let,s go."

"Yea...yeah. I get it."

Eris changed her mood quickly and we started to walk towards town with high spirits.

In front of our eyes was a townscape that resembled Wind Port.

This is Saint Port.

The northern most town in Milis Continent.

It,s Milis Continent.

We,ve finally made it this far.

But then, the path ahead is still long.

"Rudeus, what,s wrong?"

"No, it,s nothing."

Let,s forget how far the path ahead of us is.

What,s important now is to aim towards the next town.

"Now then."

The time to pick up the smuggled goods is tonight.

We,ve already finished exchanging our money on the Magic Continent.

So there,s no need to go to the Adventurer,s Guild.

For starters we need to find an inn.

Then we need to rid the fatigue that accumulated during the boat trip

After that, we,ll casually head off and meet up with Ruijerd.

—

Like that, we arrived on the Milis Continent.

Port city Saint Port.

It is a town that is known to look very similar to Wind Port.

A town with many hills and slopes, the energy is focused more around the harbor than anywhere else.

It,s just the same in that the Adventurer,s Guild is closer to the port than the center of the town as well.

However, there are several points in which it differs.

First is that there are far more wooden buildings than in Wind Port.

Maybe it,s a counter against the sea breeze, but they are covered in colorful paint.

The town has a number of streets lined up throughout and, if you look outside the town, you can see a large forest spreading into the distance.

There,s a lot of green.

Compared to the large amounts of white, gray, and brown in the Magic Continent, it,s almost enough to blind you.

With just a small difference of ocean between them, it,s almost like a different world.

In any case, as expected of Milis Continent.

The appearances of the people walking by are quite varied, but not mixed with demon races, instead there,s beast races, elves, dwarves, haflings, all different races that are closer to the human race in looks.

Now then, in regards to looking for an inn, first we should confirm how much money we have on hand.

In terms of Magic Continent,s currency, it would be 2 small green coins, 18 iron coins, 5 scrap iron coins, 3 stone coins.

We,re carrying just that much.

If we exchange that, it,s 3 Milis Gold Coins, 7 Milis Large Copper Coins, and 2 Milis Copper Coins.

Is how it becomes.

It,s a bit less than I imagined, but it seems there,s a handling charge.

Otherwise if we weren,t involved with the guild and tried to exchange currency, more would probably have been taken.

Since that,s the case, this much is still within an acceptable range.

"It would be good if we can get an inn closer to the Adventurers Guild."

That,s right, it wouldn,t be good if we can,t get any jobs."

Starting tomorrow, we,ll be staying here for another week and raising Dead End,s reputation some more as we complete jobs.

After listening to some stories, it seems the name "Dead End" isn,t very well known around Milis Continent.

It seems the day when we can,t make use of our established reputation is close.

While thinking that, we start to look for an inn in the vicinity of the guild.

However, as mysterious as it was, all of the inns with a reasonable price had no vacancies.

This is the first time it,s happened.

There have been a number of full inns, but never before have the majority of the inns had no rooms.

It can,t be that there,s some sort of festival or something going on.

After thinking that I asked the innkeeper about it.

"The rainy season is going to come soon. All of the main inns are most likely already full."

That was the case.

The rainy season is a special kind of weather that happens in the Great Forest on Milis Continent, for about three months a great rain will continue to fall.

The great forest will be massively flooded, and of course you won,t be able to take the highway.

Since that,s the case, there,s a large number of customers who reserve the inns for a long period.

Normally, you would avoid coming around this area during the rainy season.

Is what I was thinking, but it seems a variety of monsters specific to the rainy season will flow down to the town frequently.

And then the materials from those sell for a high price.

Since that,s the case, a large number of adventurers come to stay in this town during this season it seems.

It,s a story that is of benefit to us as well.

If we work hard here for three months to save up money, we could earn enough to cover all that we need from here on out.

Also, we can sell Ruijerd,s name while were at it.

And then if we have this, starting the journey through Milis Continent will be that much easier.

But that,s counting the chickens before they hatch.

We don,t really have all that much flexibility with our current budget and we can,t find an inn.

The only places that seem like they have rooms available are inns which are far more expensive or far cheaper than we normally use.

We can,t spend money we don,t have, so the former is no good.

In terms of results, it seems we,ll have to live in a place with not very good guys.

To be blunt, we,re forced to stay in an inn in the slum district.

One night, 3 large copper coins.

Meals are separate, there are no complementary services.

It,s cheap, but it,s not bad for a place just to sleep.

On the Magic Continent, we stayed at a number of inns far worse than this.

Even though I say that, if we think about the lifestyle from the following three months, then it depends on our funds, it might be better to move somewhere else.

"Hnnn, it,s a decent inn!"

For the most part Eris is a young lady of noble birth, but it seems she,s not bothered by the age or bad service.

Rather, it,s almost to the point where I have complaints.

"In my opinion, I,d like to have stayed in a bit of a better place."

"Rudeus is selfish."

I don,t want to hear that from Eris.

Though I can,t talk back.

If I remember really, really far back then this young lady would be covered in louses and fall into a deep sleep in a pile of straw in a stable that smelt of horse dung.

She remained deep asleep even after having her chest groped.

She,s different from me who still wants to sleep in a warm and soft bed even after reincarnating.

Since that,s the case, I can,t really speak about selfishness.

The only thing I can do is send a hot wind through the bed in order to kill any insects that might be living in it.

After that, we finished cleaning up the room as well.

It,s not that I like things to be pretty.

Honestly, I prefer them to be a bit messy.

Although, in an inn like this, sometimes there,re things left behind by the previous customer who stayed in it.

Like finding a single coin lost in the cracks between the bed.

Or a small ring that fell somewhere.

It,s not a problem if you just find money like that right? But in regards to rings sometimes you,ll find jobs in the Adventurers Guild to return them.

If you find it then they,ll pay money, those sorts of jobs unrelated to rank can be completed.

Generally they are just loose change, but it seems sometimes you,ll get a high price.

That,s why, I will properly clean from the start.

Where are the lost items? Where are the hard to find things?

Just joking.

During that time, Eris borrowed a bucket and does some simple washing.

Furthermore, we quickly finish the maintenance on our equipment.

By the time everything ends the sun is starting to set.

"Eris it,s about time we head off to meet up with Ruijerd."

Let,s go then.

Just as I was saying that I suddenly remembered the location of this inn.

It,s close to the slums.

The public order is bad.

We once stayed in an inn in the vicinity of the slums on Magic Continent.

Just as we went outside to do a job, a thief easily snuck into our room.

Ruijerd discovered traces at that time and then took charge of pursuit and dealt a severe punishment, but since the stolen objects were already handed over to someone else, they were never returned.

The things stolen at that time weren,t anything important.

Also, we have no intention of leaving behind anything valuable this time as well.

However, it,s still a good idea to take measures in crime prevention.

"I,ll go out and do it myself, so please take care of watching the house."

"House-sitting? Is it not okay for me to come along?"

"That,s not the case, but since the area around here has bad public order."

"It doesn,t really matter does it, we don,t really have anything important."

How could this be.

Eris, crime prevention awareness is way too low.

We,ll be in trouble even if they just steal daily items.

We don,t really have all that much leeway with money.

This is where I have no choice but to definitely impose crime prevention awareness onto her.

"Listen well now. You don,t know if your freshly washed panties could be stolen."

"The only one who would steal something like that is Rudeus!"

I didn,t let out a "Guu" sound.

However, Eris.

I,ve never once stolen panties after they,ve been washed, not even once you know?

I was walking alone around the town at night.

It took me two hours of preaching to talk Eris down.

Crime prevention is really important after all.

Now then, even though the time to receive him was at night, there was no specific time mentioned.

It seemed like anytime would be fine after sunset and it seems like they would have continued to look after him for up to a few days as well.

Although, Ruijerd is currently being treated as a slave.

They should be looking after him at a minimum, but this past week Ruijerd might have received some cruel treatment.

He,s most likely not eaten anything good as well.

Since that,s the case he,s most likely hungry.

When people are hungry they get angry as well.

If I don,t hurry and go meet him then...

I moved to the wharf while holding Ruijerd,s spear in one hand.

The place to receive smuggled goods, it seems the place to store them is skillfully hidden.

The end of the wharf.

There were four large warehouses made of wood lined up.

I entered in one that had "Warehouse #3" written on it.

Inside there was a single man minding his time as he cleaned the warehouse.

He had the most common hairstyle at the end of the century, Mohican.

I said to him, "Yo, Steve. Is Jen of the shore healthy?".

I said it just as the middle man told me to.

After looking at me the Mohican made a suspicious face.

"What,s up boy, is there something you need?"

Well now, I wonder if I made a mistake with the password.

No that,s not it, since I,m a child, he doesn,t believe it.

"Under the orders of my master I,ve come to receive the cargo."

After saying that it seems the Mohican understood it.

He quietly nodded and said, "Follow me." as he walked further into the warehouse.

I silently followed after him into the warehouse.

Deep in the warehouse there was a large wooden box that could fit five people or so.

The Mohican took a torch out from in there and then started to move the box.

A stairway appeared from underneath the box.

After descending from the stairs there was a damp and humid cave.

The Mohican continued to move forward after setting fire to the torch.

I continued to follow him while being careful not to slip.

The cave continued for an hour.

After we left the cave we were in a forest.

It seems like we,re outside of the town.

After walking a little bit further from there, there was a large building surrounded by a large number of different trees.

It had an appearance different from a warehouse, it felt more like the villa of a rich person.

That should be the safekeeping place then.

I wonder if it gets attacked by monsters having this building built in the middle of the forest like this.

"I think you understand this, but don,t say a word about this. If you speak of it then..."

"I understand."

I strongly nodded.

If I were to tell anyone about this place, they would certainly seek me out and kill me.

I already received that sort of explanation from the middle man over in Magic Continent.

If you,re going to go to the extent of making verbal promises, then you might as well just have it written in a blood contract or something is what I was thinking.

I wonder why they don,t do it.

Maybe there are races that don,t have blood?

Well, both sides probably don,t want to leave behind any sort of written traces of it.

Limiting the amount of evidence that is created.

Mohican knocked on the entrance.

Knockknockknockknock, knockknockknock.

There,s most likely some sort of rule to this knocking method as well.

After a short wait, a man with grey hair wearing butler-like clothes appeared.

After looking at the Mohican and my face he shortly said, "Enter."

I went inside.

Right in front are stairs to the second floor. On the sides are two halls. There are doors on both the left and right.

If you were to directly describe it, it would be similar to the lobby of a mansion.

At the end of the lobby there was a round table, there were a number of not very nice looking guys sitting there resting their elbows on it.

Somehow or other they look tense.

Then the grey haired butler looked down at me with a suspicious stare.

"Whose referral?"

"Ditts."

Ditts is the name of the middle man.

"Ditts, huh. In any case, to send such a young child, they must be a wary person."

"The goods being dealt with are what they are after all."

"That,s right, quickly take it away. I,m afraid of the danger it poses."

After saying that the grey haired butler, took out a key-ring from his chest pocket, one of which he handed to the Mohican.

"It,s room number 202."

Mohican silently nodded and started walking.

I followed along with that.

The creaking sound coming from the floor and something that sounded like moans coming from somewhere.

The smell of a beast occasionally wafted out from somewhere.

Suddenly there was a room that had iron bars, so I took a peek inside.

Inside there was a shining magic circle, in the center of it was a large beast sprawled out and chained to it.

It was dark so I couldn,t tell really tell, but I,ve never seen such a beast even on the Magic Continent.

I wonder if it,s some sort of animal from Milis Continent.

"Do you keep goods that you transfer from Milis Continent into Magic Continent here as well?"

"Yeah."

After suddenly asking that the Mohican responded.

I wonder if there,s no need to keep it hidden.

The Mohican started to descend down some stairs.

Since it,s 202 I thought it would be on the second floor, but it seems to be a cellar.

"A cellar, huh."

"Upstairs is a dummy."

It seems they kept things that wouldn,t be trouble if they were found above ground.

And then, in the cellar they kept things that would have a heavy customs tax or that would be a crime to possess or transport.

"This is it."

Mohican stopped in front of a door with a plate saying 202.

Sitting in there was Ruijerd with a bit of green hair starting to grow out on his head with his hands tied up behind him.

As expected after a full week, he's starting to get a bit of a Marimo head.

{ C-Editor's note: Marimo is a species of green algae. }

"Sorry for the trouble."

The Mohican nodded to my words and stood at the entrance of the room.

For the time being I guess working as a lookout.

"Don,t take off the handcuffs here. We don,t want a Superd race going wild here after all."

The Mohican,s face was a bit pale while saying that.

It seems even when in a buzz cut, the effect of the emerald green hair works.

If I were to simply take off the handcuffs and then listen to what Ruijerd has to say he would get even more afraid.

No-no, I won,t behave like a small man that acts arrogantly through borrowed authority.

Now then, come to think of it where was it that I left the key.

After looking around in my pockets I couldn,t find it anywhere.

I might have forgotten it at the inn.

It,s too much of a pain so I,ll just use magic to unlock them.

After I approached Ruijerd he was wearing a grim expression.

After all I wonder if it,s because people get angry when they are hungry.

Wait just a bit, I,ll quickly fill your stomach until it,s full.

"Rudeus, lend me your ear."

Ruijerd quietly whispered.

"What is it?"

After I brought my face really close the Mohican started to panic.

"He..hey, stop it. He,ll eat you alive."

It,s fine.

If it,s Ruijerd then he would chew gently.

Then while making an appropriate comment in my heart I brought my ear closer to Ruijerd.

"There are children captured."

I see.

"Children of the beast race. It seems like they were forcefully abducted. I could hear their crying voices from here."

"...I see."

Children. Slaves most likely.

Frankly speaking I don,t really get how the slave system works in this world.

What is good and what is bad, there,s no distinction between them.

Is it really in the slaves, best interests to save them here?

If it,s a child who was troubled in their life and was sold by their parents, it would just be a bother to return them to their parents.

"I want to save them."

Even though I say that.

In regards to Ruijerd, children are important.

The circumstances have no relation to our traveling together.

That,s unfortunate for you, smugglers.

To think you would abduct some children during the time Ruijerd is here.

"There,s quite a few bodyguards within the building."

"I already know."

"Smugglers move as an organization."

"Are you against it?"

Ruijerd made a face as if he couldn,t believe it.

A face as if I had betrayed him.

However, right now the ones doing the betraying is us.

"They properly did their job. Wouldn,t this be considered betrayal?"

"I don,t mind. If it,s in order to save children, I will take on the dishonor of a traitor."

"The one taking on that dishonor is not just Ruijerd-san, but the Superd race."

"Mu... but... but you know?"

Don,t make that sort of face.

I didn,t say we wouldn,t save them?

I did say it after all.

If you can,t endure then just say it.

That we have the leeway to save some children.

I wouldn,t go back on those words.

"If you want to quickly save them, it won,t be good unless we can prevent information from leaking outside."

"Rudeus...!"

After hearing my words Ruijerd made a face filled with pride.

This time we,ll let Ruijerd do as he likes.

He was held locked up for a week after all.

He must have quite the grudge built up.

Even though I say that, if even one manages to escape, a Superd race is raging, if that sort of information makes it to the smuggling organization.

Our names who were smuggling the Superd race, will be properly remembered by the smuggling organization.

For customers who betray a smuggling organization they,ll hire well known assassins to send after them.

A cruel death awaits those who betray.

Is what the middle man said.

Something of the level of assassins aren,t much as long as Ruijerd is here.

However, it,s not comfortable knowing you can,t sleep soundly.

There,s no guarantee Ruijerd will always be with us as well.

Now then, how can we go about preventing information from leaking?

"If it,s about that then you don,t need to worry."

"Do you have some sort of plan?"

"Among all the people in this building I won,t let even a single one go. It,s a massacre."

Whew, as expected of Ruijerd.

Those are reliable words.

Certainly if you wipe them all out it solves the problem.

Although I wonder if it,s just a bit hasty.

"Are they enemies you absolutely cannot forgive?"

"Yeah, to the point where my insides will boil at any moment."

Ruijerd is extremely angry.

What the, what in the world have you done smugglers.

"Do you mind if I ask what happened?"

"If you see the children you,ll understand."

Even if you say I,ll know if I see them.

"There is the option of coming back to save just the children after but..."

"According to the story I heard from them. They plan to put the children on a boat and move them to the Magic Continent tomorrow."

Then tomorrow is no good, huh.

However, to massacre them.

Massacring is just a bit.

There should be another method.

A smarter method we can use without killing.

"Rest easy, it,s fine if you don,t dirty your hands."

I stopped my movements after hearing those words.

"No..."

Ruijerd,s words became a small thorn and stabbed my heart.

"I will...do it as well?"

Certainly.

I have avoided murder this past year.

I,ve killed many number of monsters.

I,ve even killed human looking monsters.

However, I,ve never murdered.

It,s also partially because I had no reason to do it.

And that there were more reasons not to do it.

However, it,s also true that I,ve never even thought about killing anyone.

This world is severe.

It,s a world where people kill each other on a daily basis.

One day I will also most likely have to kill someone.

That sort of situation should happen one day.

I,m prepared for it.

I,m ready for it.

I had those sort of intentions.

Although, if you ask what I have to do, it,s just adjusting the power on a rock bullet.

In order to make sure it,s not strong enough to kill a person I lower it to a level that won,t kill.

In the end, it seems I have some resistance to killing people.

I can say whatever I want, but I don,t want to break the taboo of murder.

I haven,t made the resolve at all.

And then, Ruijerd managed to guess this fact.

That,s why he especially went to the point of saying that.

He,s trying to save my peace of mind.

"Don,t make that sort of face. Your two hands exist for the purpose of protecting Eris."

Well, I guess it,s fine.

I won,t overdo it and force myself to kill anyone.

For today I,ll just go with borrowing his help.

If Ruijerd can manage things by himself, then I,ll leave it to him.

I,m fine being incompetent.

I,ll do the things I can do.

"I understand. Then, I,ll go to release the children. Do you know where they are?"

"The second room away from here. There,s seven."

"Understood. Please gather the corpses together somewhere. Afterwards I,ll burn them all at once."

"Understood."

I silently removed the handcuffs on Ruijerd.

Ruijerd slowly stood up while cracking his shoulders.

"Wh...you! How did you remove the handcuffs?"

Panicking Mohican.

"It,s fine. Since he will properly listen to what I say."

"Re...really?"

After hearing my words the Mohican made a bit of a relieved expression.

I handed Ruijerd his spear.

"Although, that doesn,t mean that he isn,t going to rampage."

"Eh?"

The Mohican became the first victim.

Ruijerd finished off the Mohican silently and ran towards to the stairs without making a sound.

I walked in the opposite direction.

I headed towards the room where the children were captive.

"Gyaaaa!"

"Su..Superd race! He,s got no handcuffs on!"

"Shit! He,s even carrying a spear!"

"It,s a demon! Aaah, demonnnn!"

I started to hear voices from the first floor as I arrived at the door.

Tonight,s Ruijerd is thirsting for blood.

Just joking.

Or rather.

The one who abducted them should have been a different person, so it,s not like the smugglers are in the wrong here, right?

What,s bad is just their luck.

The room was dark.

In the darkness, nude young boys and girls with worried faces were twisting their bodies.

Each of them had different beast ears.

Seven of them, all children.

Four young girls, three young boys.

Their age is about the same as me.

All nude + handcuffs + gags + animal ears or elf ears.

All of them have handcuffs behind their back while curling their body up.

Young girls nude with handcuffs.

Impossible, I couldn,t have possibly imagined that the day would come where I really get to see this.

It,s nowhere near a sight for sore eyes, Kannon-sama of the young days isn,t it.

{ C-Editor's note: In Japan, Kannon is the Goddess of Mercy. }

This is Shangri-la.

No, it,s heaven.

I,ve finally arrived at heaven.

Even though I haven,t found something like a green baby!

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Green Baby character in the JoJo's Bizarre Adventure manga series. }

Then while feeling delight I realized.

Excluding one, all of them have traces of tears and a number of them have bluish black bruises on their faces.

My head cooled down.

They whined and cried and were probably hit for being loud.

The time when Eris was abducted was something like that as well.

In this world, in regards to abducted children, they really don,t hold back.

And then that unrestrained torture, Ruijerd heard it all from two rooms away.

That would be the reason he can,t wait.

For the time being, judging from a glance, it doesn,t look like there are any traces of sexual abuse.

Maybe because they are still young or because it lowers the value of the product.

Either way is fine, it,s a blessing within misfortune.

Normally, after seeing nude young girls, I would think I,d be forgiven if I grope them once or so.

However, the current me is just a bit low on lust.

Just before on the boat I did change jobs to Sage after all.

Although, my wisdom hasn,t risen at all.

The destitute young boys and girls.

Among the girls, three were shedding tears even now they,re still making crying sounds.

Among the boys, two of them are trembling in fear while looking at me and one of them has fainted on the verge of death.

For the time being, I cast healing on the fainted boy.

Then I release his handcuffs.

The gag is tied on tight.

I can,t get it off.

There,s no helping it I,ll burn it off.

I might burn him a bit, but it can,t be helped.

He,s a boy after all, he,ll have to endure it.

I used healing on the remaining two boys and released their handcuffs.

"U...umm? You are?"

It was Beast God language.

I hesitated for a bit after suddenly being spoken to in a different language.

However, I had already properly learned Beast God language.

While remembering my conversations with Ghyslaine I started to talk.

"I,ve come to save you. The three of you please keep a look out at the entrance of the room. If any one comes please quickly tell me."

The three of them wore worried faces.

"If you,re boys you should be able to do that much."

After saying that the three,s faces tightened up, they nodded and went to the door.

There was no ulterior motive in those words.

There wasn,t any sort of intention to do something to the girls after they,re out of view.

Ruijerd is raging upstairs.

Since that,s the case no one should come.

However, there,s that 1 in 10,000 chance.

I,ve been using my demon eyes to check the situation in the room.

It,s set to see one second ahead.

But, I can,t see behind me with it.

It,s a counter plan for surprise attacks.

I move to remove the girls, handcuffs.

There,s big ones and little ones, there was no ranking there.

I appreciated them all equally and then removed the handcuffs.

By no means did I meaninglessly touch them.

I would like to think tonight,s Rudeus is a gentleman.

And then I used healing on bruises from being beaten.

Oh, time for some fun? [Cough]

It,s time for treatment.

I can,t cast healing without touching with my hand.

Therefore, there,s no ulterior motives.

There,s bruises around their chest, but I really have no ulterior motives.

It,s bad this child has had her ribs broken.

And then this child has had her thigh bone broken, hasn,t she.

Really, they do some horrible things.

"....."

The girls used their hands to hide their bodies as they stood up.

I told them to remove the gags themselves.

I have the feeling that the strong willed cat ear girl was glaring at me heartlessly.

"You,ve come to save us? Hikku. Thank you."

The dog ear girl gave her thanks while hiding her body embarrassed.

Of course it was in Beast God language.

"I,ll ask for now, but you can understand my words, right?"

Let,s see if they can understand my Beast God words.

I felt relieved after all of them nodded.

It seems we,ll be able to properly talk to them.

Now then, it doesn,t seem like Ruijerd is done yet.

I can,t really go bringing them into a scene of massacre now.

I wouldn,t want to end up leaving them with some sort of weird trauma.

Since that,s the case, I,ll stay here for just a bit longer and watch this scene.

Or not... listen to their story.

"Is it fine if I ask how you ended up being brought here?"

"Nya?"

I asked the cat ear girl who seemed to have the strongest will power among them.

Among the seven of them she was the only one who didn,t have traces of crying.

In exchange, her entire body was covered in bruises.

Her entire body was covered in blows and bone fractures.

It,s not much better from Eris some time ago, but she was in the worst condition here.

Number two was the boy I saved at the start.

Just, unlike the boy, the girl hadn,t lost the strength from her eyes.

Her will might be stronger than Eris.

No, she,s probably older than the Eris of that time.

If they were the same age, our Eris shouldn,t lose.

Yeah, exactly what am I comparing here.

Incidentally, this child,s OP power is the second highest among all of them here.

{ C-Editor's note: OP meaning overpowered in online gaming. Rudeus is referring to breast power. }

I can imagine she,s been raised quite cheeky.

Incidentally, the number one OP power is the dog ear girl from just now.

If she,s already at that level at this age, then in her future she should be considerably lax.

"We were playing in the forest when all of a sudden strange men captured us nya!"

I received a shock.

Nya!

She used nya!

A real nya!

It,s different from Eris, fake nya.

This child has a real beast race nya.

It,s not like I,m hearing it just because it,s in Beast God language.

She certainly just added nya to the end of her words.

Very good. I want to grope her breasts.

Or not.

"In other words, that means all of you were forcefully abducted right?"

After restraining my excitement and listening they all nodded.

That is good.

If their lives were horrible and they were sold by their parents.

Or they couldn,t live and they sold themselves.

If that was the case and they were in those sorts of circumstances then this would be an unwelcome favor from us.

That,s good.

This is an act of mercy.

That,s really good.

I,m really glad that our work in betraying the smugglers is going to end with only that betrayal.

"I,m done."

Ruijerd came back.

At some point the Marimo on his head had disappeared and he had returned to a bowl head.

His clothes were quite clean.

It seems he didn,t get hit by any blood splatter at all.

As expected.

"Thank you for your work. We should look for their clothes. They,ll catch a cold like this."

"Understood."

"Everyone please wait for just a bit."

We split up and went looking for their clothes.

However, we couldn,t find any sort of children clothes.

I wonder if they threw away the clothes after they stripped them at the time of abduction.

For what reason?

I don,t really get it.

The reason they would strip children nude is a mystery as well.

For the time being, we found some suitable clothes among the smuggled goods.

The size is too big, but they,ll have to make use of this.

No, these sorts of clothes might trip up their feet.

We shouldn,t use these.

There,s no clothes.

How serious.

If you don,t have any clothes you can,t go into a clothes shop after all.

Suddenly I looked out the window and I noticed a heap of corpses.

All of them had a single stab to the throat or heart.

In the past when I saw Ruijerd do something like this I thought it was frightening, but now I feel it,s reliable.

However, the number is surprisingly large.

The smell of blood is amazing.

It seems like monsters might come.

I guess I should burn them soon.

After thinking that I went outside of the building.

I created a fire ball before the corpses.

Fire ball.

The size should be fine around 5 meter radius.

When it comes to fire magic when you raise the power of the heat for some reason the size increases as well.

I don,t want to smell the scent of burning flesh.

I,ll go with burning them into ashes in a single blow.

Then because the power was just a bit too strong, a bit of the fire spread to the building.

I quickly extinguished it with a water technique.

How dangerous, I almost became an arsonist.

"Rudeus. It,s done."

After I finished burning the corpses, Ruijerd came out from the building.

Along with the children.

After taking a good look at the children they were properly wearing clothes.

Rather than calling them clothes it felt more like robes.

"Those clothes, where did you find them?"

"I cut the curtains."

I see. Smart.

It,s an old man,s bag of wisdom I guess.

We lit some torches and left through the entrance of the building, then gave one to each of the children.

As for the route to town, we decided to take a different one than the one from just now.

It would be a problem if another smuggler found us, that path is most likely used so they won,t be attacked by monsters.

It,s got no relation to us.

"Nya!"

Then the cat ear girl suddenly raised her voice.

Nya? Nya? Nya? the voice echoed in the darkness.

"What,s wrong?"

They didn,t really make too much noises, after thinking that I listened.

"Nyaa! Wasn,t there a dog in that building just now nya?!"

The cat girl was clinging onto Ruijerd,s leg.

Her desperation could be understood from her expression.

"There was."

"Why didn,t you save it nya!"

Come to think of it, it was there.

That was a dog, huh.

It was considerably restrained.

"You guys are first."

Eyes of blame gathered on Ruijerd.

Hey-hey.

Even though we just saved you guys, there,s no reason for those eyes.

"I,ll just say this, but the one who wanted to save you was him."

"We...we,re thankful for that nya. However.."

"If you,re grateful then please give a word of gratitude."

After I said that each of them lowered their head.

That,s good.

They should be more grateful.

"I,ll go back now and save it. Ruijerd you continue to lead them towards the town."

"Understood, where would it be good to lead them to?"

"Please wait just before you enter the town."

After saying that I returned down the path.

Where should we take them to, huh.

Hmm.

It,s a difficult question.

We have to keep it from being revealed that Ruijerd was smuggled in, as well as prevent the smuggling organization from knowing Ruijerd is alive, as well as finding a method to return the children to their parents.

For example, how about making a job with the Adventurer,s guild, "We are looking after some children,s well being, we,re looking for their parents."

It would be fine if we could just leave the children with the Adventurers,s Guild.

No, that,s no good.

If we make that grand of a job then the smuggling organization will notice it.

If you place a job, the name of the job offerer is always left after all.

If they manage to arrive there they,ll eventually realize we used the smuggling organization.

How about if we just leave the children with some guards and then we quickly leave town.

No, while listening to our circumstances they would find out about Ruijerd and I.

The smuggling organization would find out.

Also, there,s the talk that the rainy season is coming soon.

Even if we leave town we have nowhere to go.

Might as well just eat the plate along with the poison.

We could finish annihilating the smuggling organization.

No, we don,t know the scale of the opposing organization.

In the first place, before that, there,s the possibility that they could mistake us as the kidnappers.

Hmumu.

This is just a bit...

It might have been a bit rash.

Might as well just blame someone.

Yeah.

That seems like the best option.

If I write something like "Great Demon Emperor Kishirika Has Arrived!" on the wall or something like that, they might surprisingly believe it.

Kishirika did say to rely on her if anything happens after all.

"Oh..."

I arrived at the building.

In the end I couldn,t resolve my thoughts.

What should we do about it?

I moved to the room where I saw that magic circle.

After I entered the room, that dog looked at me with suspicious eyes.

Without waving its tail or howling at all.

It was completely exhausted.

"It,s certainly a dog."

What was chained in the center of the magic circle was a puppy.

I recognized it as a puppy at a glance, but the size is considerably large.

It,s at least two meters.

I wonder why all the cats and dogs of this world are so large.

The first time I saw it I thought it was white, but it seems it was silver.

Probably because of the light, it looks like it,s sparkling in the light.

A silver mameshiba, on the large large size.

{ C-Editor's note: Mameshiba is a Japanese merchandise franchise whose Mameshiba characters resemble a variety of beans and nuts that have dog-like faces. }

It,s quite refined with a pretty clever face.

"I,m about to save you now.. Ow?!"

Then the magic circle in the prison shined a bit.

It wasn,t a ching sort of feeling.

How do I put it, it was as if my sense of pain directly received the stimulus itself.

It seems that this magic circle is some sort of barrier.

If we speak about barriers then it,s a variety of healing magic.

I don,t understand the principle at all.

"Hmm..."

For the time being, I,ll circle around the surroundings of the magic circle and observe it.

The magic circle is slightly lighting the room as it gives off a pale blue light.

The fact that it,s shining should mean that there,s magic power flowing into it.

If I remove the source of that magic power then the magic circle should disappear.

That,s something I learned from Roxy.

The typical pattern for a magic like trap release method.

If we,re speaking of sources for magic power supply then it would be a magic crystal.

However, I can,t see anything that looks like a magic crystal.

No, it,s probably just that it can,t be found.

It,s probably hidden somewhere.

Probably, underground.

Removing the magic crystal from under the ground with earth magic, huh.

If I forcefully remove the magic circle I don,t know what might happen.

I wonder if there,s some way to cleanly remove it?

Hnn, wait a second.

Wait-wait...

Let,s think more simply.

In the first place, how would they remove the dog from this magic circle?

Judging from the corpses it didn,t seem like there were any magicians among them.

It should have a simple release method that even an amateur can do.

Think about that.

First, the location of the magic crystal.

I would have put it underground.

However, if it was underground then they wouldn,t be able to retrieve it.

A place they can retrieve it?

Also a place that you can supply magic power from?

"Hmm, if not below then above I guess?"

I went upstairs to the second floor of the building.

The room just above the magic circle.

There was a small magic circle and something like a torch made out of a tree sitting there.

In the center of the torch was something I suspect to be a magic crystal.

Very well.

Finding it in one try is good luck.

I carefully tried picking up the torch.

Then, the magic circle on the ground disappeared.

Then I went down to the first floor.

The magic circle had disappeared.

Alright good.

"Wu...!"

After I got near the dog, he groaned at me and made a threatening face.

Since the past animals have never seemed to like me.

It,s the same as usual.

After carefully observing the situation of the puppy.

It was a growl with power behind it, but it seems like there,s no power in its body.

It gives off a dead tired impression.

I wonder if it,s from hunger.

No, those chains are suspicious.

After approaching to look there,s some sort of pattern carved into them.

For the time being should I try removing them.

No, maybe it,s dangerous?

If these chains are restraining the power of the dog then the moment I remove them it might suddenly attack me.

It,s fine if it,s just being bitten enough that I can still heal but..

"How can I do this without being bitten I wonder?"

Of all things I tried speaking to it.

And then after I asked if it understood my words and the puppy tilted its head with a "Wu?".

Hmm.

"If you don,t bite me I don,t mind removing that collar and returning you to your owner, what will you do?"

After saying that in Beast God language, the dog stopped groaning and laid down on the ground obediently.

It seems it understands words.

Being in another world sure is convenient.

For the time being, I,ll cut the chains with magic.

Then, I felt power returned to the dogs body.

It seemed like it was going to quickly stand up and start running, but I stopped it.

"Wait wait, the collar is still left."

And then the dog looked at me and laid down obediently again.

I,ll have to try my best to remove the collar.

I can,t find a key hole.

Without a key hole, how do I unlock it.

Strange, exactly how do they remove this?

Was it never intended to be removed?

Then against all odds.

I somehow managed to find a connecting part.

It seems like it,s the type you have to do very carefully otherwise it fails.

"I,m about to remove it for you, don,t move."

I carefully used earth magic to fill in the gap and force it open, then released the lock.

There was a bing sound and the collar came undone.

"Alright."

The puppy shook its neck.

"Won!"

"Uou."

And then it put its forelegs on my shoulders and with that heavy body weight pushed me over.

I who fell over unsightly,

had my face licked all over.

"Won!"

Ahn~, you can,t do that doggy, I have a wife and husband...!

I could just try pushing aside the big ball of silver fur, but it,s surprisingly heavy as well as soft and fluffy.

It,s soft and fluffy.

That,s fine.

Heavy.

My chest is being crushed.

It seems like it will be difficult to remove it.

I can,t help being licked so I gave up, I decided to enjoy the sensation of the fur until the dog gave up.

Yeah. It,s fluffy.

If I were to put it into the "now" and "young" terms it would be, mofumofu.

{ C-Editor's note: Mofumofu = fluffy. }

It,s soft....

Are you using some softening agent?

Ehhhh? ~~ I,m not using one~~ ?

"You bastard, what are you doing to Holy Beast-sama!"

"Eh?"

Just as I was enjoying myself I suddenly heard a yell call out.

I thought it was survivors from the smugglers, so I looked up while laying down.

Chocolate skin, beast-like ears, and a tiger-like tail.

Ghyslaine...?

No, that,s wrong.

It looks a lot like her but it,s different.

The muscles and the hairy parts are the same, but slightly different.

The number one big part is different.

The chest.

There are no breasts.

It,s a man.

The man hit his mouth with his hand.

Urara pose.

Ah, that,s bad.

He,s going to do something.

If I don,t run.

However, I can,t move.

"Doggy move away, I can,t run away like this!"

The dog moved.

I stood up in a panic.

I started my foresight.

I could see the vision.

<The man hit his mouth with his hand>

He,s not going to do anything.

Just at the moment I thought that, the man let out a howl.

"Uooooooon!"

An overwhelming volume.

It,s a volume that,s several times greater than Eris, scream.

I felt that it had a mass as well.

My eardrums are making a bing sound and vibrating.

My brain is shaking.

Just as I realize it, I fall to the ground.

I can,t stand.

This is bad.

I need to use healing.

I can,t move my hands.

What is this, some kind of magic?

Danger.

Danger danger danger.

I,m going to be killed.

I can,t use magic.

I need to focus on the magic power but I can,t.

I was picked up by the man and raised to his chest.

After seeing my face the man raised his eyebrows and was offended.

"Hnnn? Still a child. It,s not very tolerant to kill him."

Ah, it seems I,m saved.

I feel relieved.

Thank god I have the appearance of a child.

"Gyes, what,s going on?"

Then another man appeared.

As I thought, they look quite similar to Ghyslaine, but with grey hair.

It,s an old man.

"Father. I,ve incapacitated one of the smugglers."

"Smuggler? Isn,t it a child."

"However, he was attacking Holy Beast-sama."

"Hmmm."

"He was stroking and hugging Holy Beast-sama while wearing an indecent smile. It could be possible that his age doesn,t match how he looks."

Tha...that,s wrong. I am 11 years old.

I am absolutely not a mental age 45 year old man!

"Won!"

The dog let out a howl.

Then the man called Gyes knelt in front of the dog.

"Please accept my apologies Holy Beast-sama. Normally we would have run straight to your aid, but a bit of a small problem caused us to be late."

"Wan!"

"It can,t be that Holy Beast-sama,s body by this mans hands... ku..."

"Wan!"

"Eh? You don,t mind? How tolerant..."

I wonder if the conversation is being understood.

It just sounds like wan wan.

"Gyes, there,s the smell of Tona and others from downstairs. There should be no mistake that they were being held here."

Then the old man said it.

I wonder who Tona is.

Going by their conversation one of the beast race children I guess.

"Take this boy and return to the village. We,ll listen to his story."

"We don,t have that kind of spare time. Tomorrow the last ship will leave."

Gyes made a "Gu" sound while grinding his teeth.

"We have no option other than to give up. It,s good fortune that we at least managed to save Holy Beast-sama."

"What should we do with this guy?"

"Take him and return to the village. He might know something."

Gyes nodded and took a rope off his waist and then tied my hands behind my back.

Then he started carrying me on his shoulder.

From behind Gyes I could see the dog toddling along.

Looking up in a worried way.

It,s alright.

Don,t worry.

It seems these guys aren,t the smugglers.

They,ve come to save the children from just now.

Therefore, as long as I talk they,ll understand.

I just need to wait until they,re willing to listen.

"Mu..."

After we got outside the old man started to sniff around.

"There,s a scent."

"Can you smell? The scent of blood is thick so I can,t..."

"It,s faintly there. It,s Tona and the others scent. And then one more person, that magic race,s scent."

After hearing about that scent, Gyes,s expression turned grim.

"That magic race came here and abducted Tona and the others?"

"Well then. He might have unexpectedly saved them."

"There,s no way that could be the case."

It seems like somehow or other they knew Ruijerd,s scent.

"Gyes. I,ll follow the scent. Take that kid and Holy Beast-sama and return to the village at once."

"No, I,m going as well."

"You have too quick of a temper. In regards to that kid, it could be possible that he isn,t a smuggler."

As expected of someone who is elderly, the way he thinks about things is different.

That,s right.

I,m not a smuggler.

Please listen to my defense.

"Even if that is the case, the fact that he was touching Holy Beast-sama with his dirty hands is no mistake. I could smell the scent of a human race,s sexual arousal coming from this boy. It,s unbelievable for him to be sexually aroused towards Holy Beast-sama."

Pigya!

That,s wrong.

I wasn,t feeling any lust towards a dog!

Just the nude and helpless young girls..?

No, that,s dangerous as well!

"In that case, throw him into the prison. However, don,t lay your hands on him until I return."

"Yes!!"

The old man nodded once and started to run off into the dark forest.

After Gyes saw him off he said a single line to me.

"Hnnn, you barely escaped from death."

Yes, really.

"Now then Holy Beast-sama. We,ll be running for a bit, I,m sure you,re a bit tired, but..."

"Wan!"

"Right!"

And then I was carried deep into the forest on Gyes,s shoulder.

Ruijerd Point of View

We made it close to the town, but Rudeus hasn,t come back yet.

It can,t be that he,s lost, could it?

No, if that was the case then he would have launched magic into the sky.

Then, what if there was some sort of trouble.

I eliminated all of the humans in that building.

However, if more troops came from a different location they might have run into each other.

I wonder if I should return and confirm right now.

No, Rudeus isn,t a child.

Even in the case that enemies appear, he should be able to deal with them somehow or other.

Since he,s still young he still has some parts that are naive, but he,s not such a naive sort of man that he would let his guard down on enemy ground.

Right now Eris isn,t around the surroundings.

If Rudeus seriously uses magic, then he shouldn,t lose to anyone.

The problem is that he has some resistance against killing people.

If he does a bad job of going easy, the probability that he could be killed in return is high.

I shouldn,t need to worry about Rudeus...

However, I,m in trouble.

If I take the children like this and bring them into town, I have a premonition that only bad things will happen.

Similar things have happened a number of times.

Save a child from a slave dealer, then bring them to a town, then they come to the misunderstanding that I was the one who abducted them.

Right now my hair is shaved and I,m hiding my 3rd eye.

However, I,m a poor speaker.

If the guards were to call out to me, I don,t have the confidence I could explain it well.

If I just leave them behind in the town like usual, someone from the town should usually do something.

No, if I do that then I don,t know what Rudeus will say.

"Nya, older brother, sorry about before nya."

While I was worrying one of the young girls came up and tapped on my thigh.

The other children as well look quite apologetic.

Just by seeing that I feel like I,m being saved.

"Don,t mind it."

In any case, it,s been quite a while since I last used Beast God language.

I wonder when exactly it was that I last used it.

I learned it during the Laplace campaign, though I don,t remember using it very much.

"The Holy Beast-sama is our family,s symbol nya after all. We can,t just afford to leave it in that place nya."

"I see. Even though it was something I didn,t know, I,m sorry about that."

After saying that the girl laughed a bit and smiled.

After all, it,s nice when children aren,t afraid.

"Mu..."

Then at that moment, my "eye" captured the presence of something approaching rapidly.

It,s a pretty strong and fast presence.

It,s coming from the direction of the building.

One of their allies?

He,s quite skilled.

It can,t be, was Rudeus defeated?

"Stand back."

I had the children stand back, prepared my spear and moved in front.

First move is certain victory.

I,ll finish him off in a single blow.

Is what I was thinking, but he stopped his feet before he entered my reach.

A beast race man.

He was using a sword that was heavy with death.

After I saw that my vigilance increased and I silently prepared myself.

He might be elderly, but I feel a strong and composed dignity from his presence.

A warrior.

However, if he,s an ally of one of those lot from just now, I,ll kill him.

Someone who would allow those sorts of things to happen to their own race,s children, I can,t allow for such a thing to be considered a warrior.

"Ah, grandfather nya!"

The cat girl raised her voice and rushed over to the old warrior.

"Tona! You were alright!"

The old warrior caught the girl who jumped at him and made a relieved expression.

After seeing that I lowered my spear.

It seems this warrior had come to save the abducted children.

I,m sorry for suspecting he was someone who can,t hold a wind towards warriors.

He,s a man with great pride.

The dog ear seemed to be an acquaintance as well, so she too rushed over.

"Terusena is alright as well, huh. That,s great."

"That person over there saved us."

The old warrior lowered his sword and bowed his head in my direction.

However, it seems he,s still alert.

Naturally.

"It seems like you saved my granddaughter."

"Yeah."

"What,s your name?"

"Ruijerd..."

Superdia. I hesitated a bit to answer that part.

If they know I,m of the Superd race they will be vigilant.

"Ruijerd, huh. I am Gustav Dedorudia. I will surely repay this gratitude. For starters we must return the children to their parents."

"That,s right."

"However, it,s dangerous to have the children move at night. I,d like to hear more details about the story."

After the old warrior said that, we soon started walking towards the town.

"Wait."

"What,s wrong?"

"Did you go into the building?"

"Hmumu. I started to feel depressed because it was filled with nothing but blood."

"Was there no one there?"

"There was one remaining. It seemed like a man who was pretending to be a child. I heard he was stroking Holy Beast-sama with an indecent smile."

It,s Rudeus, is what I understood intuitively.

Those sorts of smiles occasionally appear on that guy.

"That is one of my allies."

"How could that be!"

"It can,t be that you killed him?"

Even if it was a misunderstanding.

If they killed Rudeus then I would carry out revenge.

Though before that I would see that the children are returned to their parents.

Eris as well.

That,s right. Then Eris would be alone.

I,m worried.

"I had him taken prisoner in order to tell us the location of his other allies. I,ll quickly have him released."

Rudeus, you let your guard down, huh.

That guy is always too naive.

His preparedness is first rate, but...

No, there,s no need to say it.

There,s no point in me saying it.

In regards to that preparedness I,m 3rd rate.

This time, I even intended to close my eyes to all their crimes, but I couldn,t endure it.

I couldn,t resist it anymore after the children were tortured.

The reason Rudeus was captured was because of my selfishness.

Should we quickly go off to save him?

No.

"Rudeus is a warrior. It,s fine not to hurry as long as he isn,t dead. First of all we should put priority on the children."

The beast race don,t use torture like the human race.

At most they would strip him naked and throw him into prison.

Rudeus is a man who would not care about being seen naked.

Just the other day he said, "It,s fine if you don,t stop Eris from coming to peek on me when I,m bathing." Some things I don,t really understand.

I,m sure he can endure it.

Besides there,s the matter of Eris.

Rudeus often asks me to guard Eris.

Rather than himself, he,s more worried about Eris.

In that case, I should make sure to protect Eris as well.

I,ll have to burden Rudeus for just a while longer.

"I can,t make my identity known due to some circumstances. I,d like you to take over charge of returning these children to their parents."

"Hmumu... I understand."

Gustav nodded, and we started to head towards the town.

Hello everybody. This is ex-hiki NEET Rudeus.

{ C-Editor's note: Hikikomori - social withdrawal/reclusive lifestyle. NEET - Not in Education, Employment, or Training. }

Today I,m covering the recently popular No Cost Apartment.

Deposit Zero.

Rent Zero.

One room that includes two meals and an afternoon nap.

Constructed from a very warm timber material.

The exposure from the sun is just a little bit bad and the bed (straw product) has a small insect problem, but even so this price is just far too cheap!

It is zero rent after all.

The toilet is the latest pot model.

It,s the popular new self-service type, after the excretions build up in the pot, you then throw it out through the hole in the corner of the room.

Since there,s no running water there might a little bit of a sanitation problem, but with magic there is no problem at all!

Especially if you,re a magician such as myself who can create boiling water, you could consider the problem all but solved.

Two meals a day.

Modern age people may feel this is a little bit unsatisfying.

Nevertheless, these meals are quite good.

Fruits and vegetables fresh from nature as well as meat.

Meals that make use of the ingredients natural flavors with very little seasoning, it,s cooking that would make anyone in the Magic Continent lick their lips.

Now, the hottest feature of this apartment.

If I had to put it, it,s the absolutely safe security structure.

Just take a look at these completely sturdy iron bars.

No matter if you bang or attempt to pull them out they won,t budge an inch!

Though using magic to open the lock is a bit of a blind spot.

There will surely be no thieves out there who would be willing to enter after seeing these reliable iron bars.

However, criminals will still come in.

It,s a prison after all.

I was gradually carried into through the dark forest.

Unable to move at all on Gyes,s back, just carried.

In the darkness the trees flowed by at a frightening speed.

In my field of vision I could tell a ball of silver fur was keeping up with us.

It,s still just a puppy but it seems to have quite a bit of strength.

We had already been traveling for two or three hours.

The beast race warrior Gyes had been running for quite a long time.

Then he stopped when we had arrived somewhere.

[Please return to your house, Holy Beast-sama.]

[Wan!]

The silver ball of fur let out a single reply and then disappeared off into the darkness.

Only able to move my eyes, I scanned the surroundings.

In a dense area of trees it seemed like there were very few people around.

However, above the trees I saw lights all over the place.

After walking a bit more Gyes approached a single tree.

He started to climb a ladder somewhere with me still on his shoulder.

It seems I,m being carried up the tree.

We entered a building.

A small desolate hut made of wood.

There Gyes stripped me of all my clothes.

What in the world is he going to do to me while I can,t move?

Then the moment I thought of that I was grabbed by my neck and thrown somewhere.

A little bit later I heard the sound of a metal gate creaking and then closing shut.

Then Gyes was gone.

With no explanation at all.

No interrogation either.

A short while later I was finally able to move my body and created a small fire with my fingers to confirm my surroundings.

After seeing the solid iron bars I understood that this was a prison.

I was thrown into a prison.

That is fine.

I understood that from the flow of the conversation.

I was mistaken as one of the smugglers.

Therefore, there is no need to panic.

This misunderstanding will be solved soon.

However, why was I stripped of all my clothes?

Come to think of it, all the children in that prison were nude as well.

I wonder if it,s that sort of culture.

If beast race people are forced naked it is probably humiliation.

No, it,s not specifically limited to the beast race that would be ashamed of being forced naked.

Since ancient times it,s been common to break the hearts of prisoners by stripping them nude.

This is a fantasy world, but in my reading preferences female knights are always stripped when they are imprisoned.

There,s common points in all worlds it seems.

In the darkness I began to think.

For the time being, I,ll have to talk to them tomorrow.

There,s no real problem even in the case that they aren,t willing to accept it.

After I was captured it seemed like that older warrior went after Ruijerd.

Since that,s the case, he should have been able to meet up with the children again.

Ruijerd is easy to misunderstand, but there should be no hostility towards a warrior who has come to save the children.

After the children are shown to have been saved, the misunderstanding that I was a smuggler will be resolved.

In any case, I,m safe for now.

The older warrior specifically said not to do any torture or interrogations until he returned.

Therefore, I,m safe.

There probably won,t be any random tentacles coming out to attack me....right?

While I was thinking about that a full day had already passed.

Time passes by quickly.

On the morning of the first day I was thrown into the prison, a guard showed up.

It was a female.

She was wearing clothes that looked to be of a warrior, but she was more slender than Ghyslaine.

However, her chest was huge.

I tried to tell her, [This is a false charge, I didn,t do anything.]

I tried to explain that I was unrelated to the smuggling organization and by coincidence learned that the children were being held in that building and went to save them.

However, the guard wasn,t willing to listen to a thing I was saying.

She filled a bucket with water and then threw it all over me.

It was cold water.

She was looking down on me as if I were trash as I was standing in front of her like a wet rat.

[Pervert!]

I experienced a shiver running down my back.

I thought it was some amazing torture.

That they would strip me naked, have this beautiful, beast ear Onee-san watch over me and even throw cold water at and insult me.

My heart might really break.

These guys have no intention of listening to what the old warrior said.

I wonder what is going to happen to me?

Ku... God Roxy, please grant me your holy protection.

No, Hitogami it,s fine if you stay out of this.

[*Sneeze*]

Putting aside the jokes.

I would really like something to wear.

There,s too much freedom in this form and it feels like I,m forgetting the common sense of people.

For the time being I,ll use the fire magic [Burning Place] to warm my body up before I catch a cold.

The second day.

Ruijerd hasn,t come to save me.

After spending my second day nude I,m starting to feel a bit worried.

I wonder if something happened with Ruijerd.

Maybe there was a battle with that old warrior.

Otherwise, maybe things got even more complicated with the smugglers.

Another possibility could be that something happened to Eris and he ran off to deal with it.

I,m worried.

Very worried.

Since that,s the case it,s time to look into methods of escaping.

After the meal in the early afternoon, I silently used magic.

If you mix fire and wind you can create a comfortable breeze.

Now the entire room was warm and comfortable.

Gradually the guard started to doze off and finally fell asleep.

Too easy.

I undid the lock on the iron bars and headed outside to check things out.

After confirming that there was no one around I left the building.

There an illusionary scenery spread out before me.

There was a town built on the tops of the trees.

All of the buildings were at the tops of trees and they were connected with a number of bridges.

There were bridges from each and every tree so you could get anywhere in the village without having to descend from the trees.

There was nothing in specific on the ground below.

It seemed like there were traces of a simple building and fields, but no signs they were in use.

The ground is not a necessity in their life it seems.

There weren,t all that many people.

I could see beast race looking people walking all around across the bridges and between trees.

If I were to cross the bridge on the top of the tree I would be able to see everything, but I would also be fully seen from below.

And in my case, in all sorts of meanings, I would be fully seen.

It seems like it would be difficult to escape without being found.

Although, even if I,m found I could still run away.

If I don,t bother trying to think of what comes after and just set fire to some trees I could make use of the chaos to escape into some trees somewhere.

However, it,s a forest.

I don,t know the way.

Gyes was running at quite a high speed.

There should be a fair amount of distance to the town.

If I ran with everything I have in a straight line, it would probably take around six hours.

Even worse if I got lost.

There,s also the possibility of creating a high tower from earth with magic and then confirming from place to place.

However, if I did something that stands out as much as that then my pursuers, lead by Gyes, would quickly catch up.

I still don,t know the true identity of the magic he used to capture me.

If I can,t think of any sort of counter measures for it then it,s possible I could lose if we fight again.

Then, he might cut my legs off or something so I can,t run away next time.

It,s probably a good idea to wait a bit longer for the situation to change.

It,s still only the second day.

It seems like the old warrior still hasn,t returned yet.

They could still be returning the children to their parents along with Ruijerd.

There,s no reason to be hasty.

After coming to that conclusion I returned to the prison.

The third day.

The meals I get from the guard are delicious.

As expected, a place with lots of natural ingredients is different.

It,s in a different league from the Magic Continent.

It,s generally some kind of grass based soup and preserved meat that has been fried, but both are quite good.

I wonder if it,s because I had gotten used to the meals on the Magic Continent.

Since this is what they,re offering someone they,d throw into prison, the people here must surely be eating something really good.

For the time being I tried praising the guard for the food and ended up being brought seconds.

Judging by the response it seems that it could have been made by this person.

Nevertheless, she still wouldn,t listen to what I,m saying.

The fourth day.

I,m bored.

There,s nothing to do.

It would be fine if I could just use magic to do something, but if I stand out too much they might try to gag or handcuff me.

They haven,t done anything like that so far, but there,s no reason to risk putting myself into an even more inconvenient situation.

The fifth day.

I got a roommate.

Just when I was thinking it was pretty noisy outside a man that looked like an adventurer ended up being thrown into the prison with me.

With two brawny beast race men holding onto each of his arms he was carried in and kicked into the cell.

[Damn it! Treat me with a bit more care here!]

The beast race men ignored the shouting man and left outside.

The man slowly turned around saying [owowow] while rubbing where he was kicked on the ass.

I greeted him in a pose similar to Buddha in Nirvana.

[Welcome, to the highest point in your life.]

Obviously while completely nude.

The man stood there watching me with his mouth hanging open.

It was an adventurer-like man.

His entire body was covered with black garments and around the joints were protectors made of some kind of fur.

Naturally, because of this flow of events he wasn,t holding any sort of weapon.

After staring for a long time I noticed his face was something like a monkey.

Although, saying it,s a monkey-like face isn,t some sort of metaphor.

He was from a Demon Race after all.

[What,s up newbie? Is there something strange?]

[N...No, how do I put this...]

The man was looking at me with a face full of confusion.

Don,t stare at me so much, it,s embarrassing isn,t it?

[Even though you,re naked, it seems you,re quite full of yourself?]

[Hey newbie, be careful with your words. I,ve been in here longer than you. In other words I,m your prison senpai. Show some respect.]

[O...Okay..]

[Respond with a Yes.]

[Yes.]

Why am I talking to a man I,ve met for the first time in such an arrogant way?

It,s because I,m bored.

[Unfortunately, there are no cushions, just take a seat somewhere around there.]

[Uh, yes.]

[Then, newbie. How did you end up getting locked away?]

I was using a rude tone to talk to him.

Even though I was clearly younger, calling him newbie, I thought he would get angry.

Instead he started to answer my question with a dumbfounded face.

[How do I put it, my cheating was exposed...]

[I see, gambling, huh. Rock, paper, scissors? Steel frame wouldn,t pass?]

[What the hell is that? It was the dice.]

[Dice, huh.]

I,m sure without a doubt he was using dice that only come up with 4-5-6.

[What a boring crime to be held on.]

[What was your crime?]

[Can,t you tell by looking? Obscenity charges.]

[What the hell is that?]

[I was hugging a nude silver furred puppy and they ended up throwing me in here is what it means.]

[Ah, it was becoming a rumor. The Holy Beast of Dorudia was attacked by a sex beast.]

It seems like there,s a guy who can put things together well.

Although, that was a false charge.

Well, seems like there,s no choice but to make a request of this guy.

[It,s the natural action to take when faced with such a charming creature. If you,re a man as well you should understand what I,m talking about right newbie?]

[I don,t understand a bit.]

The eyes the man was looking at me with changed into eyes looking at some unknown creature.

No, they didn,t really change, it was like that from the very start.

[Then, newbie, your name is?]

[It,s Gisu.]

[Are you a colonel?]

[Colonel? No, an adventurer, for the most part.]

{ C-Editor's note: Gisu is a Japanese way of pronouncing Guise and Colonel Charles de Guise is a character from the Fist of the Blue Sky manga series. }

Gisu.

Now then, I have the feeling I,ve heard something like that somewhere.

Where was it?

I can,t remember.

Well, there are names similar to it all over the place.

[I,m Rudeus. Younger than you, but I,m your prison senpai.]

[Yeah yeah.]

After shrugging his shoulders Gisu fell to the ground in place, laid back and faced upwards.

[Hm? Rudeus. Sounds like something I,ve heard somewhere.]

[It,s a name you could hear all over the place.]

[Ha, no doubt about that.]

We were now both lined up similar to Buddha in Nirvana.

Although one of us was completely nude.

It,s a strange situation.

The most important person in this prison, me, is nude, while some newbie is wearing clothes.

Isn,t that strange?

[Hey, newbie.]

[What,s up senpai?]

[That vest, it looks warm. Hand it over.]

[Ha?]

Gisu made a frankly reluctant face, but still took off the fur vest and threw it to me.

He,s surprisingly an easy person to get along with.

[Ah. Thank you very much.]

[So, you can give thanks I see.]

[Of course. I,ve been in freedom-style for a number of days after all. It feels like I,ve been revived as a human for the first time in a while.]

[Stop with the respectful talk, senpai.]

Thus, I ended up with an appearance similar to a nose running brat from the edo period.

The guard made a bit of an irritated face, but didn,t say anything in specific.

[I can feel the newbie,s warmth coming from this vest.]

[Hey, you aren,t going to tell me that you go for men as well or something are you?]

[There,s no way that,s the case. If it,s a girl and the minimum age is 12, up to the maximum of 40, I can do it. It,s impossible unless it,s a boy who has the face and appearance of a girl.]

[It,s fine as long as they have the face of a woman?]

Gisu was making an unbelievable face.

However, I,m sure in this guy,s case, if a girl who matched his tastes perfectly suddenly turned into Arthur pulling out Excalibur he would be fine with becoming Merlin.

In a sexual meaning.

[By the way newbie. I have a bit of something I want to ask.]

[What is it?]

[Where is this?]

[The Great Forest, a prison in the Dedorudia race village.]

[Who am I?]

[A nude pervert who would put his hands on a puppy, Rudeus.]

Though, I,m not nude anymore.

Also, it was a false charge.

I,m not a pervert.

[Then, for what reason would a Demon Race person like you have been gambling in Dorudia village?]

[Ah um. One of my old acquaintances is of the Dedorudia race, so I thought they might be here and came for a visit.]

[Were they here?]

[They weren,t here.]

[They weren,t here, but you still gambled? Still cheated?]

[I didn,t think it would be exposed though...]

There,s no hope for this guy.

However, he could be useful.

[Newbie, can you do anything other than cheat?]

[I can do anything.]

[Oh, for example, beating down a Dragon with your bare fists?]

[No, that kind of thing is impossible. I,m weak in fights.]

[For example, taking on 100 women at the same time?]

[I,m fine with just one woman, at most two at the same time.]

Finally I lowered my voice so the guard couldn,t hear it and said it clearly.

[For example, escaping from here and running until we reach town?]

After saying that Gisu lifted up his face, looked at the guard and started scratching his head.

Then he brought his face close.

Whispering.

[Do you intend to make a run for it?]

[If my allies don,t come.]

[Ah? Sorry? How do I put it, that,s too bad.]

Hey, stop.

If you put it like that it,s almost as if I,ve been thrown away.

Ruijerd wouldn,t throw me away.

I,m sure right now there,s some sort of crazy situation going on.

They are waiting for me to save them.

[Run away alone. I,m unrelated.]

[I would get lost, I don,t know the way to the town.]

[How did you manage to get here?]

[I was saving some children from smugglers.]

[Saving?]

[While doing that I went to remove the collar from a puppy, when all of a sudden a beast race man appeared and yelled, then I was unable to move and captured.]

Gisu made a face like he didn,t really get it while scratching his head.

Maybe it was a bit of an unsatisfactory explanation.

[Ah, then? It,s that? False charges?]

[It,s false charges.]

[I see. That would make you want to run.]

[Indeed that is the case, please lend me your power.]

[Not happening. Why do I have to lend you my power. I,ll be able to get out of here soon, unlike you.]

Even if you ask me why.

Didn,t I just say it.

I don,t know the way back.

I would prefer to be pardoned from the fate of wandering a forest until I die.

I,m almost completely nude as well.

[Well, if it,s false charges then it,s probably fine. They,ll understand eventually.]

[It would be good if that,s the case.]

If you were to ask me, that Gyes person seemed like the type that doesn,t listen.

However, it is a fact that I saved the children.

After the children return, naturally I,ll be cleared of the false charges.

[Then, I,ll wait for a bit longer.]

[Do just that. Nothing good would come from making a run for it.]

After saying that Gisu fell down to lay on the ground again.

If this guy is going to say that I,ll wait for a bit longer.

Fortunately, I still have some room left for leisure.

It,s not as if I couldn,t just turn this entire area into a sea of fire and make a run for it, if it comes down to that in the end.

I feel bad for those of the Dedorudia race, but they were the ones who caught me on false charges, it,s mutual responsibility.

I think it could just be a case of them taking a rather long time to find the parents of the children.

The sixth day.

This apartment is really quite comfortable to live in.

The food is good, the air conditioning is good (though it,s self produced), I was thinking there,s not enough to do, but now I even have a conversation partner.

The bed was originally full of insects but now it,s quite comfortable after using magic to wipe them all out.

The toilet is still like that, but when I think about the fact that a beast ear Onee-san is taking care of my excretions it,s a bit arousing.

However, I,m still worried.

The fact that there,s no information coming is quite worrying.

It,s almost been a full week since I was captured.

It,s starting to feel like they,re a bit too slow.

It would be normal to start thinking some kind of trouble had occurred.

Some kind of trouble Ruijerd couldn,t solve.

He might need my assistance.

It could already be too late.

However, I can,t get somewhere I can,t go.

Tomorrow.

No, the day after tomorrow.

The day after tomorrow this village will become a sea of fire.

Is what I would like to say, but I feel a bit bad about going that far so I,ll just take the guard as a hostage and run away.

The seventh day.

Today is the last day of prison life.

I was making all sorts of plans in my heart while appearing on the surface, to be just laying around doing nothing.

[Come to think of it newbie.]

I started to talk to Gisu in my usual bandit-style.

[What,s up?]

[Is this the only prison in this village?]

[Why are you asking something like that?]

[No, normally would you throw two people into the same cell without reason?]

[They don,t normally use this prison. Normal criminals are taken to Saint Port.]

Criminals are taken to Saint Port.

I guess that would mean they only throw criminals who break special laws of the Dedorudia race in this prison.

I was mistaken as a smuggler and charged with attacking the Holy Beast.

They go to the point of calling it the Holy Beast, so it,s certainly some kind of special existence in this village.

However, wait a minute.

[Then, why are you in this prison? They only caught you for cheating, right?]

[No clue. Probably because it,s just a small event within the village?]

[Is it that sort of thing?]

[It,s that sort of thing.]

I felt something was a bit out of place.

I kept scratching my arms.

Then scratching my stomach.

Even more so scratching my back.

Somehow really itchy.

After thinking that I looked at the ground.

A single flea started jumping.

[Uoh?! Aren,t there bugs in this vest!]

[Hm? Ah, I haven,t washed it in quite a while after all.]

[Wash it!]

I took the vest off.

I waved it around and bugs started falling everywhere.

I quickly used a burning wind to kill them all off.

All you bastard bugs.

[Oh? I was thinking since I saw it before, but that,s amazing. How do you do it?]

[Using voiceless incantations.]

[I see. Voiceless incantations. That,s pretty amazing.]

Ah, just when I was thinking that I had gotten rid of all the bugs, I started to feel itchy all over my body.

For now I started using healing around all the places I was bitten.

However, my back.

Maybe because I had been laying on it, but it feels like I had been bitten like crazy on my back.

My hands can,t reach.

Ahhhh.

[Hey newbie.]

[What,s up?]

[Come over and scratch my back, it,s killing me.]

[Yeah yeah.]

I sat and crossed my legs and Gisu came up from behind.

He started scratching my back.

[Ah, that,s the spot, right there. You,re good, you,ve got talent.]

[Didn,t I say it? I can do anything. Since that,s the case I can massage your shoulders while I,m at it as well.]

When Gisu started doing that to my shoulders I was thinking, it,s dangerous this guy is way too good with his hands.

Involuntarily, the muscles on my back were contracting.

[Ohhh, you,re so good, it feels so gooooood, ah, next do a bit further down. Mmmm, there, right there. Mmmhnn?]

Then.

Then, I felt some stares.

After taking a good look.

On the other side of the bars there were roughly seven people standing there.

First was an old man who looked a bit like Ghyslaine.

An older brother who looked even more like Ghyslaine.

The guard older sister who had always been looking after me.

A cat eared young girl who was pointing and laughing at me.

A dog eared young girl who was covering her face with her hands and looking at me through the cracks.

Then finally a Superd race older brother with a shining bald head and young woman from the Boreas family holding my clothes, robe, and staff.

[Rudeus? What are you doing together with another man??]

Eris was staring at me with an extremely cold look in her eyes.

In my current appearance.

With Gisu behind me holding onto my shoulders and my back as the focus.

That,s right, it would appear as if I was projecting my ass out behind me.

Then at the point where my back ends, Gisu,s nether regions are connected.

[It,s a misunderstanding.]

With the testimony of the two girls, I was released.

The misunderstanding and false charges were quickly resolved after that.

Incidentally, Gisu still had to remain in the prison for a bit longer it seems.

After getting out of the prison it was raining heavily outside.

The rainy season had come.

Supposedly it will be raining heavily non-stop for the next three months.

The ground will be completely flooded and you won,t be able to walk.

Which is why those who live in the Great Forest live on top of the trees.

It seems like the kidnapping incident this time was a rather special case.

It was a large scale abduction plan orchestrated by a smuggling organization.

They came up with a plan to abduct the Holy Beast, Guardian of Dorudia.

I don,t know why they would want to abduct something like that.

However, the Holy Beast is supposedly a special kind of animal so there are a number of those who want to get their hands on it.

Well, it,s difficult to just abduct the Holy Beast under normal circumstances.

Even in the chance that you succeeded in abducting it, the warriors have good noses so they would quickly come to take it back.

Therefore the smuggling organization aimed for the start of the rainy season.

The rainy season will continue for three months straight.

Since that,s the case all of the villagers will be busy in preparation.

All of the village warriors will have their hands full.

Also, it,s not possible to go out on a ship during the rainy season.

In other words, if you abduct the Holy Beast right before the rainy season then transport it to the Magic Continent, the warriors will not be able to catch up in time and you can perfectly escape.

Of course the Beast Race were being vigilant for that.

The adults all warned the children not to go outside while preparing for the rainy season.

Needless to say, they also told it to the Holy Beast that was being protected.

That,s why the smuggling organization went a step further with their plan.

First they hired all of the local kidnappers and waited for the right timing.

Then at a specific time, attacked all the locations at once and abducted children right and left at the same time.

The warriors were in a panic.

Just when they were starting to ease up because the abductions seemed low this year, children from villages all over the place were abducted at once.

Even more so the smuggling organization had hired armed forces beforehand to attack the villages at the same time.

There was no damage to the Dorudia village at this time.

The warriors of the Dorudia village received requests for aid, split up and went out to defend the surrounding villages.

Then when the guards for the Dorudia village were thinned out, the smuggling organization launched an attack on the Dorudia village with elite forces.

They succeeded in abducting not only the village chief,s granddaughter but also the Holy Beast.

Cause incidents all over the place, then attack the primary target, a lightning fast plan.

The armed forces attack.

The abduction of the children.

As well as the abduction of the Holy Beast.

Since it was like that no matter how skilled the Beast Race warriors were they wouldn,t have enough forces to cover it.

Gyes and Gustav first gave up on the children.

They gathered together the warriors and went to setup the defense lines of the village, then they went off to search for the Holy Beast themselves.

It just means that the Holy Beast is that much of a special existence to the village it seems.

The time between kidnapping the Holy Beast and transporting it on the ship wasn,t even supposed to be two days.

The fact that they were able to locate the safekeeping place for smuggling goods was supposedly good luck.

The smell of blood and the sight of rising fire.

Supposedly, those two factors became the key that allowed them to locate the building.

It was thanks to us.

However, I wonder why the Holy Beast was at the same place where Ruijerd was transported.

Well, it was a large scale operation so there were probably some mistakes here and there.

Otherwise they might have planned for Ruijerd,s handcuffs being undone and rampaging.

Now then, from here on is unrelated to me.

What were they doing after neglecting me for a week?

According to the story Ruijerd was furious at the smugglers.

He suggested attacking the ship that was prepared to depart.

They didn,t know which ship had children on board it because the smugglers also knew of a way to conceal themselves from the beast race,s noses.

The way Gustav put it, after understanding their intentions, they responded to it accordingly.

Speaking of Eris, she was also taking part in this plan, supposedly as the escort for the children.

With a full faced smile of course.

This must be the Greyrat,s blood as well.

Well then, the attack of Ruijerd and the others succeeded.

Tragically the smuggling organization,s ship was discovered and all of their members were half-killed and captured.

From within the ship, abducted children just kept coming out one after another.

There were supposedly around 50 of them.

Well then, the children were saved, Happy Ending.

That,s not quite what happened.

Since they had just attacked the last ship departing before the rainy season the Saint Port officials came out.

Obviously Gustav and Gyes protested against them.

The beast race abductions. Slavery was taboo between the Great Forest patriarchs and the Holy Milis Kingdom.

They only tried to prevent that, so it would be strange for them to take the blame.

The Saint Port officials were taken back with this.

They would have been fine with at least a bit of a notice before hand.

However, the attack was just barely in time to catch the departure of the ship.

There was no leisure time to explain.

As well as the fact there were 50 people.

50 children.

It wasn,t just five or ten.

There were one or two children abducted from villages all over the place.

Saint Port hadn,t caught onto this at all.

Even more so, the officials were taking bribes and looking the other way.

This was a violation of the treaty.

If they left things as they were, a large crack would have been made between the Beast Race and the Holy Milis Kingdom.

In the worst case it could have been war.

The talk even made it up to that level.

In the end the Saint Port side withdrew.

In regards to the Beast Race, a considerable amount of compensation was paid.

Those negotiations and returning the abducted children back to their parents took roughly a full week.

That was why I was put off and left neglected for a full week.

Well, I guess it couldn,t be helped.

Rather, I,m glad they managed to finish such an important matter within a week.

Though, you know...

The Beast Race people are full of gratitude and enraptured with Ruijerd.

Eris is surrounded by the children of the Beast Race and full of smiles.

I was in a prison together with a monkey faced man experiencing a life of freedom.

It,s not something I can accept.

Rather, they could have just let me out of the prison midway through and it would have been fine.

I was clearly displeased and Gyes apologized.

"I,m really very sorry."

It was the Beast Races version of prostrating oneself.

Gyes was facing up to me as he showed his stomach.

I thought I was being made fun of at first.

Even though his stomach was seen, but Gyes,s tone was desperate.

He couldn,t imagine that his daughter was just saved, nor that the seals on the Holy Beast-sama had been removed and that he just stripped that savior naked and threw cold water on him.

And then halfway through that he forgot about it and focused on other matters, no matter what he does it,s not something that could be forgiven.

There was no option left but to offer his neck.

Is what I was told.

However, he wanted me to forgive the watch guard.

She was just doing her own job as she was told.

Since she is going to get married after the rainy season is over, while it,s fine to seek punishment, he doesn,t want me to do anything in retribution that would humiliate her.

If that becomes the case then there would be remaining evil intent.

Is what I was told.

To put it frankly, I was totally put off.

If you go that far with the reverse prostration in front of everyone it will just cause me problems.

Also, if you show me that tightly chiseled six pack it will just make me jealous as well.

Rather than that what about the Onee-san guard... no. Never mind.

"Everything started from a misunderstanding. Well, I,m not really bothered about it."

Here,s the time to be forgiving. DE. It,s Rudeus.

I,m an adult after all.

I,ll show my dignity.

That,s right.

The one in the wrong is the smuggling organization.

And that smuggling organization has been wiped out.

It,s a happy end.

I suffered and you all suffered as well.

It,s fine like that.

I have nothing to say beyond that.

My life in the prison was somewhat fun.

The food was good and Gisu was there.

The Onee-san left in charge of me was beautiful as well.

"I, the village leader, am also grateful for your great tolerance and heart."

After seeing my response the old warrior called Gustav said that arrogantly.

Gyes is fine, but wouldn,t it be fine for you to apologize as well?

For the most part it was you who was there at the time and giving out orders right?

Well, it,s fine.

I don,t want to see some old man prostrating himself.

Rather than that I,d prefer to see the Onee-san guard...

Ruijerd as well brought his face close.

"Would it be good for me to apologize as well?"

"No, it,s fine Ruijerd-san."

"Is it fine? Though it,s my fault?"

"Ruijerd-san also gave it his best for a week, didn,t he."

The Beast Race approved of Ruijerd as well.

It seems both Gustav and Gyes have already heard about the fact that Ruijerd is of the Superd race.

In regards to the Superd race, I don,t know what kind of feelings they hold towards them.

Though at the very least, right now Ruijerd is the hero who saved their children.

I was being patient and Ruijerd was raising his fame.

In that case, then the outcome is all right.

Putting aside the process as long as the outcome is achieved I have no complaints about it.

"Hmph!!"

"Gof!

Just as I was thinking that, Eris came forward and kicked Gyes in the stomach.

Then "Bestow the protection of water to the place where thou demands, let the crystal clear flow appear towards here, Water Ball."

Struck the unguarded Gyes mercilessly with the Water Bullet.

The surroundings were dumbfounded.

Eris took her usual pose and said in a loud voice.

"With this we,re even!"

As expected of Eris, I thought.

Now then, our current location is in Gustav,s house.

It,s a house on top of a tree and the largest house in this village.

It,s a three story building constructed from wood on top of a tree.

I was wondering if it would be alright if something like an earthquake hit, but it doesn,t even shake a bit when the adults are running around inside.

They are the Dedorudia race.

The Dedorudia race patriarch Gustav.

And his son, warrior leader Gyes.

The one I saved from the smugglers was Gyes,s second daughter Minitona.

It seems the eldest daughter Rinia is studying in another country.

And then there was also a daughter of the Adorudia race mixed in with those we saved.

The Adorudia race patriarch,s second daughter Terusena.

A dog girl with big breasts.

There were plans to return to the Adorudia village, but the rainy season started up on the way so she,ll be staying here for three months it seems.

Incidentally, even among the beast race it seems those with the blood of the Dedorudia can be sold for a high price to a certain country,s nobles.

Especially, children who can be trained easily are aimed at often.

A certain country,s nobles.

It sounds like a story I,ve heard somewhere!

"The nobles of Asura can,t afford to be lax with stuff like this going on!"

The Eris-kun over there!

Why are you saying like it is unrelated to you!

Most likely, there are people with a mouse-like family name related to this from the start!

I,ve never heard anything along those lines from the butlers and maids at Eris, house, but it,s quite possible they were people that were abducted like this as well.

Sauros is a good person, but his viewpoint is just a bit different.

Yeah, for the time being I,ll keep quiet about this.

Even if I don,t say anything, it,s better to say nothing.

Just as I was thinking that, Eris just happened to remember something, and showed the ring she was wearing.

"Come to think of it, do you know of Ghyslaine? This ring is Ghyslaine,s."

She can,t speak in Beast God language.

Therefore it was in human language.

The only ones here who can use human language outside of Ruijerd and myself are Gustav and Gyes.

"Ghyslaine...?"

Then Gyes made a grim face.

"Is she still alive?"

"Eh?"

That voice was filled with disgust.

A voice as if he was going to throw up.

Then a single word.

"She was the disgrace of the family."

Those words were just the start of Gyes bashing Ghyslaine.

In the human language, which Eris could understand.

Then he started to tell us about how much of a failure, how inappropriate she was as a younger sister and such. Gyes had a voice filled with indifferent emotion.

Since Ghyslaine has saved my life before, it was a subject which I couldn,t listen to anymore.

It seems she did some rather mean things when she was living in this village.

However, that is just talk from when she was a child.

The Ghyslaine I know of is a clumsy person who gives it her all.

Someone who does everything carefully and puts her heart into it.

She,s not a person who deserves to be talked about like this.

A sword teacher that I respect and a magic student that I can brag about.

That,s why, somehow or other...

Please stop it.

"That ring as well, is something she got from our mother after recklessly acting out, there really was no meaning to it. She was an idiot who only knows how to break things."

"You–"

"Shut up! What do you know about Ghyslaine!"

Interrupting my words, Eris started screaming at them in a loud voice.

In a voice loud enough that I thought the house would break, the Dedorudia family faces were frowning.

The only ones who understand human language are Gustav and Gyes.

The other few who heard Eris suddenly start yelling were dumbfounded.

I thought Eris would start acting out violently.

However, Eris just made a mortifying face, and tears started welling up in her eyes, her fists were shaking with anger but she didn,t move to strike.

"Ghyslaine is my teacher! She,s the number one person I respect!"

I know.

Just how well Ghyslaine and Eris get along together.

She is the one that Eris trusts the most.

Far more than me.

"Ghyslaine is amazing! Extremely amazing! If I need help, she will quickly come to save me! Extremely fast! And extremely strong!"

Eris started yelling out all sorts of words which she didn,t know herself.

With that bitter voice even if you couldn,t understand why, the meaning was understood.

At the very least, she said everything I wanted to say as well.

"Ghyslaine is.... hikku.. egu... To say something... like that... hikku..."

Eris continued to give her best not to strike them while her tears started to flow.

That,s right, you shouldn,t hit Gyes here.

Ghyslaine was hated for her violence in this village.

She would always act violent as she pleased.

If Eris were to strike him it would just be proving Gyes,s words.

That you and her are the same.

Gyes started to panic as he watched that.

"No, but... It can,t be that Ghyslaine has... Respect? How could that be?"

After I saw that I calmed my own anger.

"We should probably stop talking about this topic."

I proposed that while embracing Eris.

Eris looked at me like she couldn,t believe it, when I proposed that.

"Why? Rudeus? Did you hate Ghyslaine?"

"I like Ghyslaine as well."

But...

"The Ghyslaine we know and the Ghyslaine they know are different people with the same name."

Then I look at the confused Gyes while saying that.

Even he would probably change his way of thinking if he met the current Ghyslaine.

People change as time passes.

Since I,m the one saying it, there,s no mistake.

Eris couldn,t accept it.

However, she for the most part let go of it.

"No, has that Ghyslaine really became such a respectable person?"

"At the very least, she is someone I respect."

After saying that Gyes made a face lost in thought.

Well, after hearing that story just now, it seems like all sorts of things happened between him and Ghyslaine.

Those must have been things that he felt could never be forgiven.

A relationship of blood is relatively severe.

Especially since it,s a blood relative.

There are some things that you cannot forgive no matter how many years pass.

"Since that is the case, will you apologize?"

"I,m sorry about that."

What a delicate atmosphere it,s become.

In any case, Ghyslaine, huh.

I had totally forgotten about it this past year, but she should have gotten dragged into that teleport as well.

I wonder where in the world she is and what she,s doing.

Since it,s her, I would imagine she,s off searching for Eris and me...

I regret being unable to gather information in Saint Port.

One week passed.

The rain continues to fall.

We occupied one of the vacant houses in the village and are living there.

For the most part we are heroes of the Great Forest, so even if we don,t do anything we still get food.

This isn,t a good lifestyle. It,s far too deprived.

There,s a huge flood happening below the village and it was terrible, at one point a child from the village fell in.

I used magic to save them and they were quite surprised and grateful.

Since that,s the case I considered using magic to just blow the clouds away, but I decided not to do it.

Roxy said it as well, but it,s not a good idea to manipulate the weather too much.

If I were to forcefully stop this rain, something bad could happen to the Great Forest.

Quite frankly, I just want it to end already and hurry on to the next place but...

Well, it will stop in three months or so, it,s just a matter of enduring until then.

I started to wander around the village in the rain.

It was a village after all, so there were no weapons, equipments, or those sorts of shops or inn.

Fundamentally it was all private houses, warehouses, and guard stations.

All of that was built on the top of the trees.

The design of the village was three dimensional and quite interesting.

Even just walking around gets your heart beating.

In one part there was a place where I wasn,t allowed to enter beyond a certain point.

That pathway is supposedly an important place for this village it seems.

Of course, I don,t have any intention of walking into such a place with my shoes on.

Then at that time I found a place where the lower and upper levels are intersected.

Just then as I was thinking about if a woman would pass over above me, Gisu appeared.

"Yo newbie, they already let you out?"

After I called out to him, Gisu made a happy face and waved towards me.

"Yeah. They told me to never do it again. They,re idiots right. It,s already decided that I,m going to keep doing it."

"Police officer dog?! This guy over here hasn,t learned his lesson!!"

"Hey, wait just a minute there. Wait. Stop it. I can,t run away right now because it,s the rainy season."

Since it,s the rainy season right now.

Since that,s the case, this guy will do it again.

Really, he,s a guy who can,t be helped.

"Ah, I,ll return the vest."

"Didn,t I say to stop with that respectful way of speaking. Keep the vest."

"Is that fine?"

"During this season it,s still cold."

However, he,s not a bad person it seems.

This whatever convenient and warm feeling reminds me of Paul.

Paul.

I wonder if he,s doing well.

Two weeks have passed.

The rain still won,t stop.

I learned that the Dedorudia race have a secret magic.

Letting out a howl in order to search for the location of the enemy and letting out a special kind of sound in order to screw up the opponent,s balance, that sort of magic it seems.

It seems the magic that Gyes used to paralyze me was one type of that magic.

From what I heard, it seems to be magic that makes use of "sound".

Since that,s the case, I asked Gustav to by all means teach me how to use it.

Pleasantly he agreed to it.

He performed it live for me a number of times as I tried to imitate it.

But... It didn,t go very well.

It seems to be something you can,t use unless you have a special kind of vocal chords from the Dedorudia race.

I was thinking it might be something like that.

Most likely, it wouldn,t be an exaggeration to say I can,t use most magics specific to certain races.

Even though the beast races can use the magic of the human race, it,s unfair.

I understood the basics, that it was done by combining your voice with magic power and tried it several times, but the effects weren,t really all that powerful.

About the only thing that I could do was make my opponents surprised for an instant.

It seems it won,t be very useful.

Incidentally, after showing my voiceless incantations to Gustav he was quite surprised.

"Do the magic schools teach those sorts of things these days?"

"It,s because my teacher,s instructions were good."

Then for no reason I start pushing Roxy,s name up.

"Ho, where did that teacher originate from?"

"She,s a Migurd race from the Biegoya region of the Magic Continent. In terms of magic... I guess she would have learned it from the magic university."

After saying I planned to eventually go to the magic university myself, Gustav said, "Ho, you can already do that much and you still strive for more" and admired me.

It was a bit of a good feeling.

One month passed.

Monsters appeared in this village.

An insect like monster similar to a water spider appeared on top of the water and suddenly jumped off the water and attacked, something similar to a sea snake climbed up the tree as well.

The materials from both of them seemed profitable.

Incidentally, the village,s warriors protected us.

However, it seems like the beast race,s proud sense of smell and sonar-like voice aren,t very useful in this rain.

The monsters kept avoiding the guards on watch and appeared in the middle of the town.

I was on a walk in the village with Eris when a beast race child suddenly got caught by something like a chameleon right in front of our eyes.

Instantly I sent the chameleon flying with an earth bullet.

That was dangerous.

The child cutely waved its tail and thanked me.

After seeing that Eris started breathing roughly from her nose.

In a fluster, I stroked Eris, butt, and she stopped.

The child watched that with a smile.

That was dangerous.

And then right now, my life is in danger as well.

I told Ruijerd about it, and his face turned into a frown.

He can,t let a situation pass by where children might be in danger.

Even though that,s the case, the village,s guards were against us helping out.

"The warriors of this village have their own pride in protecting our people."

Supposedly there,s something like that.

It,s the duty of the village,s warriors to protect the village.

They won,t ask outside warriors for help, and they won,t allow you to intrude on them.

That,s supposedly Ruijerd,s common sense.

I didn,t understand it at all.

"Isn,t the safety of the children more important than something like that?"

After saying that, Ruijerd thought about it for a few seconds and then went to talk about it with Gyes.

"Oh, Ruijerd-dono would like to offer help?"

Gyes welcomed him greatly.

His impression in regards to Ruijerd was extremely high.

Come to think of it, it seems Gyes was participating in the event of the attack on the ship.

He offered a reward for the help as the representative of the village,s warriors.

It became where we would help exterminate monsters that appear around the village.

Ruijerd finds them, and I use magic to defeat them.

Then we recover the corpse and strip them of the materials.

Then Gyes will buy those from us.

Quite a good cycle.

In the beginning, just as Ruijerd had said, the warriors of the village didn,t make very good faces.

However, after seeing us exterminate every monster without mercy, it seemed like there would be no victims this rainy season, and they gradually opened up to us.

"I thought the beast race were a prouder race, but... To leave the defense of their village to another race, really..."

For some reason only Ruijerd was bothered by it.

It seems that several hundred years earlier the beast race was different.

One and a half months had passed.

I have the feeling that the rain has started to weaken a little bit.

It,s probably just my imagination.

Eris, Tona, and Terusena are all getting along together.

Even if they can,t communicate with words, at that age they can still get along well.

Even while it,s raining outside, they were wandering around here and there and somehow or other having quite a bit of fun.

I was wondering about what it was they were doing and it seems Eris was teaching them human language.

That Eris, was, teaching someone, a language!

This isn,t where I, with the experience of a teacher, cut in and crush Eris,s image.

I,m a man who can read the mood after all.

I,m just hiding somewhere nearby and observing the situation.

Eris never had any friends of the same age up until now.

Since that,s the case, I felt quite proud that Eris finally was getting along with someone of the same age like this.

Red hair, cat ears and dog ears.

I,m fine with just being able to watch them get along happily.

Though you know, Eris.

I don,t think it,s a good idea if you cling onto someone so recklessly.

Someone like me could misunderstand.

See, just look over there.

Isn,t Gyes-san watching?

What do you think a parent would think while watching someone cling to their daughter while their nose is flaring like that?

"Hmm, Eris-dono, thank you very much for getting along so well with my daughter."

Uh... what?

Isn,t your response different from the time with me?

She,s, without a doubt, excited over that daughter of yours.

I wonder if women and men are different after all.

I see, I guess that would be the case. It should be obvious, huh.

"By the way, I,m sorry about the situation with Ghyslaine. We haven,t met in quite a long time, so there was some misunderstanding. It seems that little sister has grown up quite a bit by walking around in the outside world."

Gyes bowed his head.

During this past month he must have done all sorts of apologies here and there.

It,s a good thing.

"That,s the case. It,s Sword King Ghyslaine after all! The current Ghyslaine can even use magic, you know."

"Hahaha. Ghyslaine can use magic? Lady Eris your jokes are too good."

"It,s true! Rudeus taught Ghyslaine letters, math, and magic after all."

"Rudeus-dono did?"

After that Ghyslaine and I were pushed forward in reputation by Eris.

Talking about my classes and things that happened in Fedoa region.

About how, no matter how bad she and Ghyslaine were at learning at first, both of them still managed to be taught properly by Rudeus and how much she respects me, that sort of talk.

After listening to it, I started to feel a bit embarrassed.

After three years, the teleport incident happened so I couldn,t teach until the end though...

Gyes was quite interested in the topic.

Then after he separated from the three he came over to where I was hidden in the wooden box.

"Then, what is that respectable teacher doing in this kind of place?"

"My... my hobby is observing people."

"Ho, that is quite the noble hobby to have. Incidentally, how in the world did you manage to teach Ghyslaine letters?"

"There,s nothing special about it, just normally."

"Normally? I can,t even imagine it."

"It seems like she was troubled here and there by her lack of knowledge during her adventurer days. It,s probably natural for you to be unable to imagine it."

"I see. Even though that younger sister used to be the type of person who wouldn,t stop beating people up whenever something she didn,t like happened..."

After listening to him, it seems Ghyslaine used to be the same kind of girl as Eris.

If you were to ask how, it would be getting into fights, not to mention she was strong and couldn,t be stopped.

It seems like Gyes was forced to drink boiling water a number of times.

He was a weak older brother who couldn,t match his younger sister in strength.

Speaking of older brothers, I,m also an older brother.

I wonder if Norn and Aisha are doing well.

That,s right.

I wanted to write a letter, but I keep forgetting about it.

After this rain ends I,ll go to the Holy Milis Kingdoms capital and send a letter to Buina village.

The chances of it arriving from the Magic Continent are pretty low, but it will most likely reach from Milis.

"By the way, Rudeus-dono."

"Yes?"

"How long are you intending to remain inside of that wooden box?"

Of course, until they start to change clothes.

It,s almost night after all.

They,ll start taking a bath and getting changed into pajamas soon.

"Sunsun... I smell the scent of arousal."

"Eeh! No, that can,t be. Could it be that some beast loving girl is making a happy face somewhere?"

I was playing dumb and Gyes raised his eyebrows.

"Rudeus-dono. I,m grateful for that time. I,m still quite sorry about the misunderstanding led to that situation."

After setting that preface Gyes changed his expression.

"However, if you put your hands on my daughter, the situation is different. If you don,t move away right now, I,ll throw the box with you in it into the water."

He was serious.

I didn,t hesitate.

I left the box in a second.

In an amazing speed even.

"I,m one who protects this village. I don,t really want to say this, but go easy on it."

"Okay."

Yeah.

Well, maybe I went a bit overboard.

I,ll reflect on it.

Two months have passed.

Ruijerd and Gustav get along well together it seems.

He often goes over to visit the Dedorudia house, and they exchange drinks while sharing stories of their past.

They are quite bloody stories, but that in itself makes them relatively interesting.

As a self proclaimed rampaging race, even though he regrets how bad he was in the past, he still has some amount of pride in it.

However, these are most likely things that actually happened.

After listening to it for a bit, there,s something I understood about the beast race.

The Beast Race is a general term for those races who live in the Great Forest.

Among them there are a number of races who travel over to the Magic Continent and call themselves Demon Races.

The only real physical trait is that one part of their body has a non-human-mammal-like animal characteristic.

Also, the various races have unique extra sensory abilities.

In a broader sense, the likes of Nokopara and Blaze would be considered of the beast race is what it would mean.

Even among the beast race, the Dedorudia race are a special existence.

They are a family that watched over the Holy Beast and look over the entire forest,s harmony. That is the Dedorudia.

Cat-like Dedorudia.

Dog-like Adorudia.

Those two are the main branches and then several tens of other kinds of branch tribes are spread around.

So to speak, they are the royalty of the Great Forest.

Although they aren,t really doing anything like royalty right now, when the time comes to it, they will become the leader and lead their people.

Also, the long eared race and the halfling race are also living in the Great Forest.

They are mostly distributed in the southern areas of the Great Forest and don,t really have all that much interaction with the beast races, but once every year all the races gather around the Great Sage Tree and participate in a festival and clan meeting.

According to Gustav, the races are different but they are all allies that live in the Great Forest.

Incidentally, the Dwarf race doesn,t live in the Great Forest, but even further south, at the base of the Blue Dragon Mountain Range.

The blue dragons fly all around the world, but they always return to the Blue Dragon Mountain Range for nesting and raising children.

Kind of like migratory birds.

Although they are different from migrating birds in that they only return once in every ten years or so.

Now then, the beast race has always gotten into wars and made peace with the human race and repeated this process over and over it seems.

As far as skirmish level wars go, the most recent one was around 50 years ago.

Gustav participated in that war and was a part of a brawny warrior group that mowed down some human race people who got lost in the forest.

At least according to the story I was being told.

Well, it sounds like it was dramatized quite a bit, but to be able to hear about it from the beast race,s viewpoint was rather entertaining.

In order to compete with that Ruijerd pulled out his heirloom spear.

A story about the Superd race from the time of Laplace,s war.

"Recently the warriors aren,t very reliable at all."

"I understand as well, Ruijerd-dono. The number of weaklings has increased."

"That,s right. During the time I was young, there wasn,t a single man who wasn,t splendid."

Completely hitting it off.

I guess it,s the same no matter what world it is, things like this.

"That,s absolutely right. Gyes has even made it to head of the warriors, but he,s still lacking in judgement. He,s good at gathering together people, but if he was a bit better at looking at the situation, that sort of thing wouldn,t have happened to Rudeus-dono."

"No, Rudeus is a warrior. If he lets down his guard in enemy grounds and gets caught, he should have known he would have been taken prisoner. Even so, he ended up letting his guard down. If he had gotten serious, something of Gyes,s level should have been easily suppressed by him. That was Rudeus,s own fault."

Ah, it hurts to listen.

Ruijerd believed in me and let me go alone.

Yet, I ended up easily being caught.

In some ways, it,s like I betrayed his trust.

"However, Ruijerd-dono isn,t that a bit heartless? Even though your ally was treated cruelly?"

"If you,re a warrior you take responsibility for the consequences of your own battles. In the first place, Rudeus should have been able to easily escape with his own power! I,m glad he was trusting in his allies, but he,s not a child! If you,re a warrior you shouldn,t wait and expect your allies to come save you!"

Ruijerd, you seem to be quite drunk.

Well, if you were caught I,m sure you,d find some way to escape on your own though.

I wish you wouldn,t place such high expectations on me.

The number of things I,m capable of are limited you know?

It was painful to listen while being together with Ruijerd.

If I go near Eris and the others then Gyes glares at me.

Therefore, I ended up spending the early afternoon to evening in solitude.

I couldn,t think of anything I needed to do, so I decided to start practicing my magic.

I controlled the water current flowing on the ground outside and tried freezing it.

Then at that point, I suddenly thought of the idea of using wind magic to try and fly and decided to give it a try.

This time, the reason I was caught and unable to run away was because I didn,t know the way back.

If I could fly through the sky I could have easily made my escape by the second day.

Gyes wouldn,t have had to prostrate himself, no one would have had any bad memories over it, it would have been a happy end.

After thinking that I left the village.

I continued to create a foothold by freezing the flowing water into ice as I walked, then when I found an open area I cut down a tree nearby.

Then using earth magic I created a 10 meter stone platform in every direction.

Then that practice area similar to one in a se○ game was finished.It,s a bit slippery, so you can,t run around, but this much should be fine.

"Now then."

For starters with light feelings I raised a tornado and watched what happens.

In order to make a person fly about this much should be fine.

If I remember correctly, 100 meters per second should be about good.

I wonder what kind of thing 100 meters per second is.

For the time being, I,ll give it a shot and see.

"Alakazam! Just... kidding!"

I was blown up into the air like a leaf.

Then I started to get afraid.

Suddenly I realized I was up near the clouds.

I didn,t realize a person,s body was this light.

Then I started to feel fear.

I started to instinctively fear the ground as I was approaching it at an insane speed.

I started using my foresight on reflex.

After looking one second into the future, I made an upward current with my right hand, and fired off a number of shock waves with my left lowering my falling speed.

However, I was too late.

I heard the sound of a number of branches breaking as I fell into a tree and finally a splash as I hit the water.

By that time my entire body was battered plus bone fractures.

My nose was bleeding all over the place, after swallowing some water I started to control the currents.

With my entire body in pain and feeling dizzy I somehow or other managed to cast the healing incantation.

Soon after monsters started appearing following the scent of my blood.

It seems the place I fell was the nest of the rain lizard group [Rain Forest Lizard].

I could clearly hear the sound of my heart beating as I continued to defeat the monsters that came out, one after another.

With my right hand I just kept freezing the surrounding water stopping their movements, then firing off earth bullets to destroy their heads.

Rain Forest Lizards are a C rank monster.

Their speed in water is pretty fast, but they aren,t difficult if I freeze it.

After I defeated them all I started piling up the bodies, but before I realized it was already dark out, and I didn,t know the way back.

I don,t know my current location.

Just that fact made me feel uneasy.

I have to do something somehow.

The village shouldn,t be all that far away.

I continued to tell myself to be cool.

If my head gets heated up my judgement will be dulled.

I must remain COOL, no matter how you look at it KOOL.

First off, I froze all the water nearby in as wide of a range as I could.

I just kept lowering the temperature, while shivering, centering on me I just kept extending the ice endlessly.

At the same time, I created a fire ball in the air above me.

Using a fire ball to warm things up while at the same time freezing the water.

Monsters that see the light will most likely come over.

No, monsters in the rainy season swim.

They most likely won,t come running on top of the ice.

It wasn,t even an hour later when Ruijerd and others came along.

He came walking along the ice along with the Dedorudia race warriors.

I felt relieved.

After all, I still feel a bit tense about being left neglected in some place I don,t know about.

"Rudeus, what happened?"

"Jus- just a bit of training."

I didn,t say anything about almost dying.

A show of vanity.

"I see... It,s the first time I,ve seen you get serious, but it,s really intense. When the entire village froze over and was covered in ice I was wondering what was going on."

"Ye-yeah.."

"All of the monsters were frozen."

"Eh, yeah, I wanted help transporting them. I gave it my all to freeze the surroundings."

"That,s an easy request. Though, next time make sure you let me know."

"If Ruijerd-san is here then it,s not secret training."

After saying that Ruijerd laughed a bit.

The beast race warriors went around looking at the rain forest lizards frozen in the surroundings with just their heads crushed and shivered in fear.

Hmm... How,s that?

The meat from rain forest lizards is quite close to chicken meat.

After that, I learned from experience and started to practice using wind magic to fly in the sky a number of times.

It was extremely difficult to make my body float in the air with wind magic.

What I was able to manage, if you can call it that, was use a blunted [Earth Lance] at my own feet and send my body flying into the air.

After flying, use wind magic to accelerate. When it,s time to land, decelerate and prepare a landing spot.

Using wind magic to lower the velocity of the fall, while at the same time using a water technique to create a pool at the landing point, and landing there in the water.

Something along those lines.

What an unsightly magic.

I feel bitter about my own lack of talent.

I want to fly through the sky freely.

However I was satisfied with this result.

I wasn,t able to fly through the sky, but I was able to create a method of high speed travel through the air.

I wasn,t able to achieve the initial goal, but I did gain at least one thing.

I decided to think of that as alright.

Two and a half months have passed.

One day, Holy Beast-sama sluggishly came and entered my room.

"Well well then, if it isn,t Holy Beast-sama. Did you have something you needed from this sex beast?"

"Wan."

"Two."

"Wan."

It seems it,s just going to ignore me.

I don,t know if it,s a male or female, but Holy Beast-sama came over and laid down next to me.

Currently, in my hands is a figure I,m in the process of making.

Since there,s still lots of time left before the rain stops, I decided to make these.

The model is Ruijerd.

Why him?

Is what one might think.

However, think about it for a second.

Superd race are a monster with an unknown identity.

People shudder in fear after seeing that green hair.

However, the figures I make have no color.

A stone doll in a solid grey color.

If I can make this doll look cool, I might be able to get more people to accept it.

First off is the silhouette.

The hair is the last part.

"Won!"

Holy Beast-sama brought it,s body close to my thighs and placed it,s head on my lap.

I was a bit perplexed since no animal has ever gotten this close to me before.

"Uon?"

Holy Beast-sama was looking at my hands with a "What is that?" sort of feeling.

It,s a puppy-sama whose age is proportionate to it,s demeanor.

For the time being I started to stroke the area around its neck.

"There,s nothing to do, so I decided to produce some works."

"Wan."

My hand was licked.

It,s tail was flapping and moving around.

It seems I,m not hated.

Since the rain is still continuing, Holy Beast-sama must be bored as well.

I don,t know where it has been these past two months, but it specifically decided to come over to where I am after all.

It must be looking for some kind of stimulus.

"Shall we play?"

"Wan!!"

After that my crossed legs fell apart and started to play around with Holy Beast-sama.

I was completely enjoying myself rolling around, getting a moderate amount of exercise together with Holy Beast-sama.

Certainly a win-win relationship.

Knock knock.

While I was playing around with Holy Beast-sama there was a knock on the door to my room.

"Hm? Come in."

"Please excuse me. I could smell Holy Beast-sama coming from here... Ah."

Then the one who came in was a woman dressed in the outfit of one of the villages warriors.

It was the Onee-san guard.

"Ah, greetings, it,s been a while."

For the time being, I said that while bowing my head.

After seeing me her face quickly turned ghastly pale.

"Ah, yes, greetings, it has been a while."

It,s the person who threw cold water on me and told me off with a cruel word.

Come to think of it, I haven,t seen her at all for these last two months.

I wonder where she was.

"I,m sorry about that time, please forgive my rudeness."

She deeply bowed her head.

"No it,s fine. That matter has already been resolved."

"However, even though it was a misunderstanding that I would subject you to that kind of treatment..."

"That kind of treatment, it was just being stripped and having cold water thrown at me."

Then the female warriors face became even more pale.

Almost to the point where it seemed like she would fall over any minute.

"I,m very... sorry... please.. forgive me."

This is something I heard from Gyes but when it comes to the beast race, it seems that being stripped naked and having cold water thrown at you is an extremely humiliating thing.

"I had heard at that time that you were a person that had done something sexually cruel to Holy Beast-sama..."

"Of course, that was a false charge, you,ve heard right?"

"Ah, yes, of course."

Then she was looking back and forth at Holy Beast-sama.

Currently I,m being used as a pillow by Holy Beast-sama and my hand is being licked.

It seems like she has something to say about it.

"The things from that time couldn,t be helped. I,m not angry about it. Although, I would have liked at least one apology."

"That is, umm, I,m really sorry. I was told to try my best to avoid meeting with Rudeus-dono from Gyes-sama."

Ah, so that was the case after all, huh.

As I thought if the actual perpetrator is in front of your eyes, you would want to get revenge I guess.

Gyes,s judgement was correct.

"Then, you were told not to encounter me, why are you here?"

"Umm, that is, Holy Beast-sama went missing, so I followed the smell and it led here."

"Won!!"

The female warrior had a cold sweat going.

I think it,s fine if you aren,t that afraid.

Gyes apologized plenty and I,m already satisfied with that.

After the rainy season ends he already offered to give us a cart and pay compensation money.

I only had to spend a week in a prison for it, it feels more lucky than anything.

When it comes to me, I,m not really bothered at all.

Having cold water thrown at me and being abused as a pervert, those are good memories.

I,m sure, in the future if something wakes up inside of me I,ll be able to accept that arousal.

"Come to think of it, after the rainy season ends you were going to get married weren,t you. Congratulations."

After I said that, the female warrior started to tremble in fear.

It seems like she only heard it as sarcasm.

There was no ill intent I just meant it as a simple blessing though..

"Umm, what would I have to do to be forgiven by you."

Hmm.

It seems she has misunderstood something.

This is somehow nice.

An amazing feeling of superiority.

Is this that NTR sort of thing?

Nfufu.

After all, maybe I should have her get naked and crawl on all fours?

No, that kind of thing isn,t good.

Gyes asked me to let it go and I don,t know when Eris and Ruijerd will return.

I wonder what kind of punishment would be good.

Something similar to the beast race, like being stripped is no good.

Throwing cold water is also surely no good.

Then, how about wearing only a white t-shirt, then I hit you with water technique, water gun, and cover you in lukewarm water.

Wah, I,m a genius.

"Wan!!"

Then Holy Beast-sama moved over to cover the female warrior.

Glaring at me.

What,s up with that.

It,s a joke, don,t be mad.

"I,ve already received a proper apology. Since that,s the case I don,t need anything more than that."

After saying that, the female warrior made a relieved face and let out a sigh.

"Thank you very much."

Then, just after that talk finished, she started glaring at me.

"More than that, Rudeus-dono, I would prefer if you didn,t just take Holy Beast-sama out at your own convenience."

"What,s that? I never took it out of anywhere."

Oh, more false charges, huh.

You really aren,t reflecting on it at all are you?

If you aren,t careful with your words, next time you,ll be the one in the prison naked and I,ll be the one throwing the water.

"If that,s the case then who took it out? Holy Beast-sama cannot leave the Holy Tree on its own."

"Ho. Then please explain it to me clearly."

It seems that Holy Beast-sama is a magic beast that is only born once every several hundred years.

It has no formal name.

Since ancient times the appearance of the Holy Beast-sama has meant that the world would be approaching a crisis.

After Holy Beast-sama becomes an adult it will set out on a journey together with a hero and save the world from that mighty power.

That,s how it,s told.

Since that,s the case, in the interior of the Dorudia village within a barrier in the roots of the Holy Tree, it,s carefully and preciously raised.

That is really a completely sheltered daughter kind of feeling.

They won,t let the Holy Beast-sama that doesn,t know anything out into the cold outside world.

Incidentally, it will supposedly take another 100 years or so until Holy Beast-sama becomes an adult.

If the stories are true, 100 years later a great crisis will befall the world.

Currently it seems that this female warrior is primarily protecting that Holy Beast-sama.

In the inner part of that dead end pathway.

I get it now, that would be why we never met when I was walking around the town.

"Wafun!"

Then Holy Beast-sama barked out loud there.

The female warrior made a surprised face.

"Eh! What did you say?"

Eh?

What?

"Won!"

"I see, but..."

"Wan!!"

"I understand."

Why are you normally having a conversation with a dog?

Holy Beast-sama isn,t speaking in Beast God language right?

How do you understand the differences in it?

Are you using BowLingual or something?

{ C-Editor's note: BowLingual is a computer-based dog language-to-human language translation device developed by Japanese toy company Takara. }

"Holy Beast-sama has said that you were unrelated."

"Right?"

I,d like you to say more than that.

"Holy Beast-sama is grateful to you Rudeus-dono."

"Ho, I could have sworn I had been completely forgotten after being abandoned in a prison."

"Wan!!"

"Holy Beast-sama says [That,s rude, I properly told them to send you good tasting food. I had heard that Rudeus-dono was enjoying the food quite a bit as well?]"

That,s right.

The food at least was good.

Also, I received seconds.

I did think it was pretty strange for a prison.

That was Holy Beast-sama,s order, huh.

However, for the first thing to be thought of in terms of gratitude to be food, in the end it,s still a dog.

"However, I would have preferred being let out of the prison if that,s the case."

"Wan?! (What do you mean by prison? Is what it seems to be)"

"It,s a place where you lock up bad guys."

"Wan! (I also get locked up, is what is being said)"

After that, I had a conversation for a bit with Holy Beast-sama using the female warrior as a translator.

After which I realized that Holy Beast-sama had no clue about the details of the events from this time it seems.

It didn,t understand that I was letting off a smell of arousal and didn,t understand the reason why I was captured by Gyes either.

The fact that I was captured, and anything beyond the fact that something scary happened, it couldn,t seem to comprehend.

In other words, it,s still a child.

Making all sorts of demands from a child is not good.

No helping it.

"Thanks to Holy Beast-sama I was able to experience a pleasant lifestyle. Thank you very much."

After thanking it, it,s tail started waving and it licked my face.

Nfufu, what a cute fellow.

I was having fun stroking its neck.

Then I was pushed down.

Ahn, you can,t, people are watching?

"Rudeus-dono, Holy Beast-sama is sacred. Could you refrain yourself from being that familiar and attached?"

"That,s wrong. The smell of this arousal is aimed at you."

"Huh!?"

"Excuse me, it,s nothing at all."

That,s bad, I let out a bit of my true intention.

"*Cough* Now then Holy Beast-sama. Let,s return home to the Holy Tree."

"Wan!!"

Holy Beast-sama honestly nodded to the words of the female warrior and returned.

After that, it became a problem for the beast race that Holy Beast-sama was able to escape.

In the end, it seems like they couldn,t figure out who the criminal that let it out was.

Since that,s the case it would be fine if they just left it to an escort, but just the other day that abduction incident happened.

The escorts were becoming tense.

After that, Holy Beast-sama appeared by my side a number of times.

That,s right, for some reason by my side.

Of course, after the second time they started to doubt me.

However, luckily on that day I was participating in the drinking bout of Ruijerd and Gustav.

I wasn,t drinking any alcohol, but I was enjoying something similar to walnuts.

In other words I had an alibi.

Since I,m a magician capable of freezing the entire village with magic, I might have some method of doing it even from a separate place, but Gustav cleared the doubts.

It wouldn,t be interesting at all if there were any more false charges added to the list.

Since that,s the case, I decided to stick to Ruijerd, Gustav and Eris as much as I could but gave up.

I decided to stay near Gyes.

He,s the warrior chief. The highest person responsible in charge of security.

He,s busy everyday, but having him as an alibi is the most efficient method I think.

"I was under the impression that I was hated by Rudeus-dono?"

After sticking to him for a full day he made a bitter face.

"You don,t really need to pay it any mind, the next time you give birth to a daughter just give her to me."

"That is, do you really want to pledge marriage vows to a daughter of mine?"

"No, it was just a simple joke. Oh, excuse me, did I let out the smell of arousal?"

"Sunsun? There,s no such smell."

"I see, then this amount is alright."

After all, unless there,s a female nearby my tom boy won,t become a tom cat it seems.

Unless they enter my field of vision there,s nothing to be done is what it means.

"This is something I,ve understood over the last month. Rudeus-dono is rather mature. Even though you,re still young, Ruijerd-dono recognizes you as a warrior as well."

"What,s up with that, suddenly praising me."

That,s kind of disgusting.

Suddenly flipping ones hand.

"In the beginning I just thought you were some shitty brat depending on Ruijerd-dono and doing whatever you like."

Ho.

He puts that well.

Well, it,s not necessarily mistaken.

"In terms of magic skill it went way beyond what I imagined. In order to freeze the entire forest during the rainy season is something I could only imagine in a fairy tale."

"Fuuu, my teacher is even more amazing though."

Then another push here for Roxy for no reason at all.

No matter how much I praise Roxy it will never be enough praise.

"And more than anything, you hold that much power, and yet you didn,t seek revenge against our Dedorudia race even after being treated like that."

If you put it like that then that is the case.

Though look, Ruijerd said it as well, I was letting my guard down.

Isn,t it fine if both sides are reflecting on it.

Besides...

"This place is Ghyslaine,s home town as well."

"What did Ghyslaine say about this village?"

"No, she didn,t really say anything in specific."

It didn,t seem like Ghyslaine liked the Great Forest very much.

When she was teaching me Beast God language she would often make a bitter face as well.

"Who wouldn,t want to get along well with the family of a respected teacher."

"Is it fine if I apologize once again?"

"I don,t really need that prostrating at all. Rather than that, please give me the right to lay my hands on Minitona-chan."

"If Rudeus-dono plans to properly and seriously consider my daughter as a partner then I wouldn,t particularly mind though."

"Eh?!"

Seriously?

Does that mean he,ll give me permission to play nyannyan with the cat eared girl!

Nono.

Right now, were having a good conversation, you shitty NEET stay down.

"Of course I,m joking. Probably, Eris would get angry as well."

"Just now, a bit of the smell of arousal appeared though."

"That can,t be helped. That would be because of Gyes-san,s careless statement. Let it go."

"I see... I,m sorry about that."

Really.

I have a proper promise with Eris you know.

15 years old.

Another four more years.

If I wait four years then paradise.

Speaking of promises, I had one with Sylphy as well, but...

I wonder how Sylphy is doing now.

Probably doing well.

It would be good if she wasn,t being bullied over her hair anymore...

"And it seems like it,s come today as well."

Just as I was lost in thought, Holy Beast-sama suddenly appeared.

"Ku... what in the world are the escorts doing?!"

After seeing that Gyes started grinding his teeth.

Today as well, Holy Beast-sama said "Wan" to me in a happy voice.

In response to that I stroke its head.

"Could it be that it,s getting out with its own power?"

Is what I asked but...

"No, there,s no mistake that it,s through someone,s help."

Is what Gyes said while looking at Holy Beast-sama with troubled eyes.

Through someone,s help.

It,s without a doubt something within their own members, but everyone has an alibi.

It,s creepy.

"Should Ruijerd and I investigate? I think we could figure it out pretty quick with Ruijerd,s eye."

After saying that...

"No, the protection of Holy Beast-sama is a matter of pride for the Dedorudia race. We can,t allow outsiders to interfere."

Is how he turned us down.

"Even though defending the village is fine?"

"This and that are different matters."

Defending the village is okay, but investigating the Holy Beast,s escape is not.

I couldn,t really understand the line of thought, but this could be a difference in common sense I guess.

Well, that,s fine if they,re alright with it.

"If it,s managed to escape this many times, it would certainly be worrying. It,s fine right now because it,s the rainy season, but what if after the rainy season ends, it could be abducted again. Besides, even in the village it could be attacked by monsters, if the worst case happens."

"That,s probably right..."

Gyes started to worry with a difficult face.

"Since it seems like Holy Beast-sama is escaping with the purpose of coming to meet me, what if instead I go to visit it everyday, won,t that solve the problem?"

"That... However... Hmmm..."

He,s troubled.

After all it doesn,t seem like he wants outsiders to get near the Holy Tree.

I,ll draw him in.

"Well then, how about meeting near the Holy Tree and taking it out before it has a chance to be taken, then have the escort person follow along as well. If we do that then there would be no need to worry about someone taking it out."

"Wouldn,t that be getting our priorities backwards?"

"I think it seems better than having even a moment where you don,t know the location of the Holy Beast-sama though?"

"...."

Gyes was troubled.

Since he was troubled that became the case.

—

After that, for a little less than two weeks.

I lived together and played with Holy Beast-sama.

In the end we never figured out who the criminal was, though Holy Beast-sama has stopped disappearing as well.

Incidentally, the escort person got insanely angry at me when I trained it to offer its paw, though that,s a secret.

—

After various things happen three months have passed.

The rain has stopped.

.

The day before we left the Dorudia village.

Eris and Minitona were fighting.

I don,t think I even need to say the result but it was Eris,s complete victory.

I think it,s as expected.

Eris is at the level where she can keep up with Ruijerd,s training.

If a younger girl who hasn,t specifically received any kind of training ends up as the opponent, they can,t even be called an opponent in the first place.

It,s bullying the weak.

This is where it would be good if I put in a word of warning.

I already knew that Eris was that kind of child, but she,s soon to be 14 years old.

If you say 14 years old, it,s still a child, but it,s not an age where you indiscriminately beat up your opponents.

However, how then should I put it.

Up until now I,ve never stopped Eris, fights.

Even when it came to the fights in the adventurer,s guild, I just left the majority of them to Ruijerd.

I wonder what I could say after all that.

Maybe I should put it as, "Adventurers and village girls are different."

"Tha..that,s wrong, Minitona is the bad one."

The one who made such a claim is Terusena.

According to her story, it seems Minitona tried to stop Eris who said she was planning to leave after the rainy season ends.

Eris seemed to be happy that she wanted to stop her but explained why she has to continue her journey.

With Minitona who was being selfish, it was a development where Eris gives an explanation.

It,s opposite from how it is normally.

After a little while the discussion continued.

At the start both of them were calm, but eventually disputes started up.

Minitona started making thoughtless remarks.

Those thoughtless remarks included Ghyslaine and myself.

After hearing that it seems Eris tried to endure it with an angry face.

It seems like she wanted to respond with a calm feeling.

In the end it seems the one who first laid their hands on the other was Minitona.

She sold the fight to Eris.

It,s an act of courage. Almost worthy of respect.

It,s something I can,t imitate at all.

Even though I say that, Eris ended up buying into that fight.

Without mercy, as usual, she beat her to a pulp.

"Eris."

"What!"

Then here I took a good look at the circumstances.

First off Minitona.

Even though she lost it seems she,s considerably excited with heavy breathing.

Even after Eris beat her down, it seems her will has not been broken.

Eris can break the will of full grown adults.

She,s not a woman who goes easy.

In other words that means...

"It seems you properly went easy."

"Obviously."

Eris looked the other way while saying that.

With the old Eris, even if it was an opponent who was younger, any opponent that comes at her would be beaten without mercy.

Since I,m the one saying it, there,s no mistake.

"Normally, you would do something worse right?"

"She,s my friend after all."

After taking a look at Eris,s face, her lips curled up with a sour look, it was a face of one that was repenting their crimes.

Hmm.

It seems she does at least regret hitting her a bit.

It,s something that the Eris until now would never have done.

It seems Eris may have become a bit more of an adult these past three months.

In the places where I,m not watching she,s properly growing up.

In that case there,s only one thing I have to say.

"It would be best if you reconcile with her before we leave tomorrow."

"No way."

Still a child, huh.

The last day, we were busy preparing for the journey, so I didn,t meet with Holy Beast-sama.

I thought the criminal would let him out again, but for some reason Holy Beast-sama never appeared.

In exchange, in the middle of the night there were two intruders.

"Ah!!"

A small scream and a loud sound of something bumping.

With those two sounds – as one would expect – even I was awakened.

Recently, it feels like I,ve been slacking a bit too much, so I raised my body and grabbed my staff that was left at my side.

It,s a bit too crude of a presence for it to be a thief.

Ruijerd should have long since realized it.

Humu.

"Terusena, move more quietly nya."

I let go of my staff.

That would be the reason why Ruijerd was silent.

"Sorry Tona, but it,s dark."

"If you focus your eyes well you can see nya... Ah!"

Again, there was a sound of something banging.

"Tona, you alright?"

"Ouch nya."

However, they seem to think they,re whispering but the volume is so loud I can almost hear everything.

I wonder what their objective is.

Money, or maybe fame.

Otherwise maybe they are after my body I wonder.

Not really though...

It,s most likely Eris after all.

"Ah, was it here nya?"

"Sniff sniff? It seems a bit different."

"Don,t mind it nya. In any case they,re sleeping nya."

They stopped in front of my door, then I heard the sound of it opening and them coming inside.

They started to timidly look over the room, and then our eyes clearly met as I was sitting on my bed.

"Nya...!"

"What,s wrong Tona... Ah."

Minitona and Terusena were there.

Wearing a one-piece made of thin fur.

There was a hole where the butt is and their tail was showing its face from the back.

It was the beast races, characteristic pajama appearance.

Truly lovely.

"What,s going on this late at night? Eris, room is next door."

I said it in as low a voice as possible.

"So- sorry nya..."

As they were saying that they moved to close the door then suddenly stopped.

"Come to think of it, we never gave our thanks to you nya."

"Ah, To- Tona?"

Tona said it as if she remembered it, they returned back into the room.

Terusena was following behind her.

"Thank you for saving us nya. I heard that I might have died if you hadn,t used healing magic on me nya."

That,s right.

Those injuries were pretty dangerous.

They were injuries which would have long since broken my will.

I think it was pretty amazing how she managed to continue with that sort of resolve in that situation.

"It was an easy matter to resolve."

"Thanks to that there,s no scars remaining nya."

While saying that Tona grabbed the edge of her one-piece and flipped it upwards showing me her beautiful natural legs.

However, because the room was dark I couldn,t see any deeper.

It seems like you could see, but you cannot.

Kishirika-sama, why did you not have a demon eye that allows one to see in the dark??

"Tona, that,s disgraceful?"

"It,s fine since he,s already seen it once anyways."

"However, old man Gyes said it, human race males are in heat all year around, so if you get close to them carelessly they,ll attack you."

In heat all year.

He says such rude things.

Though it,s not wrong.

"Besides, if he gets excited over seeing my body then isn,t that favorable to repay the favor? Nya?! It,s chilly!"

"How long do you intend to keep the hem of your skirt raised?"

I wasn,t looking at Tona,s legs at that time.

While wiping a cold sweat away I grabbed my staff that was sitting at my side tightly.

From the room next door, I could sense something like sharp killing intent leaking out bit by bit.

"*Co...cough* I have received your gratitude. Eris is in the room next door, so if you will please."

They may be children, but they shouldn,t be carelessly showing that there are no scars.

It would be trouble if they were attacked by a dangerous old man who has a hobby of playing doctor.

"I see, but really, thank you nya."

"Thank you very much."

The two bowed their heads and then left the room.

After a short period I slowly moved over and put my ear against the wall.

In the next room I could hear Eris in a displeased voice saying "What do you want?"

The usual pose with her arms crossed entered my mind.

Tona and Terusena,s voices were a bit hard to hear.

No, Eris, voice is just too loud.

While listening in excitement, Eris, voice gradually became calm.

It seems things will be alright.

I felt relieved and returned to my bed.

It seems like they continued to talk all night long.

I don,t know what they talked about.

Tona and Terusena are both still nowhere near good at human language.

Eris as well has learned a little bit of Beast God language, but it,s not enough to have a conversation.

I wonder if they are able to properly talk.

I felt anxious about it, but the next day, while seeing us off Eris was holding Minitona,s hand while crying.

It seems they were able to reconcile.

Excellent, excellent.

Holy Sword Highway.

That is a highway that cuts in a straight path through the Great Forest.

Once upon a time, the Saint Milis created this Highway which is overflowing with magic power.

Even though the surroundings are flooded with water, only the highway is dry; also, it seems not a single monster will approach this highway.

We are going to move along it in a carriage we received from the Dedorudia race.

They prepared anything and everything we would need for the journey.

Carriage + horse.

Travel expenses (5 Milis Gold Coins + 5 Milis Silver Coins).

Consumable goods.

Since this is the case, even without returning to Saint Port, we should be able to make it to the capital of Milis.

Alright, let,s depart.

Just as that development was happening, for some reason a monkey faced man came along.

"Weell~, I was just thinking it was about time I return to Milis. It was just in time. Take me along as well."

Newbie Gisu, while saying that, shamelessly jumped on and joined us.

"Oh, if it isn,t Gisu?"

"You are following along as well?"

There were no complaints from the other two with me.

I wondered if they were acquaintances and asked.

It seems when I wasn,t looking Gisu was properly laying the groundwork with those two.

He joined along with Eris, Tona, and Terusena to tell them about interesting stories and also joined in with Ruijerd and Gustav telling stories of the good old days.

It seems he used his usual wiles of working to someone,s nature and the two want to make up for that.

In a place where I can,t see.

Which is why those two were willing to accept him so easily.

"Alright, then let,s depart!"

Along with Ruijerd,s shout, the carriage started to move forward.

While looking back at the beast races that came to see us off, Eris was still shedding tears while looking at Minitona and the others, it,s a bit of a moving feeling.

However, in my heart, there,s something still a bit unsettling remaining.

It,s Gisu,s fault.

If he wanted to come along, it would have been fine if he had just said so from the start.

Even if he didn,t move around so suspiciously in the background like that.

If he had just normally asked, I had no reason to turn him down.

"Hey-hey, senpai. Don,t glare at me like that."

Inside of a carriage moving at quite a speed, I was making a face filled with discontent.

While laughing with a broad grin, Gisu came close to my ears.

"The one who gave a hand towards senpai,s love was me, you know?"

Then for some reason he started to talk about something odd.

Helper in love.

Now then, in the end, these past three months, whether it be dog ear girls or cat ear girls it ended with me being unable to lay my hands on any of them.

There was no development with Eris as well.

I did end up getting along better with Gyes more than at the start, but just that.

Is that love?

Don,t say stupid things.

I don,t have those sorts of interests.

"Helper in love, what do you mean?"

"I helped you meet with Holy Beast-sama, didn,t I?"

"Holy beast??"

Think about the meaning.

Understood.

"Ah."

It..it was this guy!

This guy was the criminal!

What do you mean helper in love!

I said it was a false charge from the start.

No, rather than something like that.

"Ho- how did you manage to lead Holy Beast-sama out!"

"That,s a trade secret. Well, they are idiots after all. If you cause a bit of a distraction, then something like bringing him out can be done."

Carelessly and confidently he said that.

No, that is...

Dangerous, isn,t it.

After all the beast race people were extremely angry.

It felt like if they found you they would tear you limb from limb or something.

"Wh- why did you do something as dangerous as that?"

"After all, you like dogs, right?"

"I told you that was a false charge."

"Was that the case? Well, isn,t it fine."

Just like that with a light tone Gisu said it while laughing frivolously.

Just then, I was filled with anxiety.

This guy, could it be, that he,s a considerably dangerous guy?

I wonder if it would be bad to let him go together with us on the journey.

"Ruijerd-san. Turn around the carriage."

"Why?"

"We have to turn over the criminal who let out Holy Beast-sama."

"Wha? Wait-wait!"

Gisu started to panic and tried to seal up my mouth.

However, because of this guy I was doubted so much.

There,s a need to turn my heart into a demon and make sure punishment is received here.

"It,s alright newbie, I,ll properly explain things for you. They might end up throwing you into prison nude and hurl cold water at you, but you can endure that much."

"Hey, wait a second! Are you serious! Listen well, the one who prepared the carriage was me, you know. Those guys don,t have the kind of culture that apologizes for things with objects. That,s why, forgive me!"

The monkey face was desperate.

A face filled with charm.

This guy isn,t a bad person.

That is something I understood well when we were in the prison together.

It,s not like he lead out Holy Beast-sama with some evil intent.

However, hmumu..

"Rudeus."

"What, Ruijerd-san?"

"Forgive him."

"Danna! As expected of danna! Weell~, I,ve always thought since before that danna is quite the handsome man!"

Really, this guy...

In any case,

"Ruijerd-san. Is it fine? This guy is one of those villains you really hate?"

"He probably did it because he thought he was doing it for your sake."

I don,t really understand what Ruijerd uses as the basis for his judgement.

That is fine and this is bad.

No, it could be that this is the result of Gisu laying the ground work.

It seems like he sure did it well, that monkey bastard.

"That,s right, it was like that danna! I did it for senpai,s sake! I couldn,t have imagined that it would become a serious issue. Then I went a bit overboard with it, but I absolutely didn,t do it to try and cause problems for anyone!"

Honestly speaking I have a debt towards this guy.

In a cold place, naked, the debt of receiving a vest.

In terms of a debt it,s a small matter; but compared to the beast race who, even knowing that the charges were false, continued to doubt me, it,s a much better impression.

Well, it,s fine.

In the end, it,s not like anyone is bothered by it.

Even the beast race,s guards, thanks to this they,ve learned a lesson.

And just like that I was forced to accept it.

"It,s fine if you come along, but newbie, aren,t you afraid of the Superd race?"

Just like that I said it in a voice that Ruijerd could hear.

I wonder if this guy knows Ruijerd is a Superd or not.

If he was involved in the drinking when they were in then it wouldn,t be strange for him to have heard it, right?

It wouldn,t be funny if he suddenly said "Superd race, seriously?" afterwards.

"That can,t be, of course I,m scared, since I,m a demon race as well. The fear of Superd race starts from the time you,re a child, they say they,ll eat you."

"I see. Incidentally, even though Ruijerd looks that way, he,s a Superd race."

As I said it like that Gisu narrowed his eyes.

"Danna is different. Since he,s my life,s savior after all."

I wonder if something happened, so I sent to Ruijerd a signal with my eyes, and he waved his head that he has no idea.

At the very least it doesn,t seem like he saved him over these past three months.

"As expected you don,t remember, it was 30 years prior after all."

While saying that Gisu began to tell the tale.

The meeting, the parting, the turning point, the love scene, it was an excellent story.

While speaking of the hard-boiled excellent story, a handsome man goes on a journey, he hears "Please don,t go!" from 100 women, he feels something pulling at him from behind and starts traveling towards his hometown, then when he arrives with a mysterious beauty...

It,s long so I,ll sum it up into one line, when he was still a beginner adventurer at a time when he was attacked by a monster and about to die it seems Ruijerd has saved him.

"Well, it was something that happened 30 years ago, there,s no reason to especially feel a debt."

The Superd race are scary, but danna is different.

The monkey face newbie said it like that while laughing.

Ruijerd loosened his blank expression.

I felt like I understood the meaning of the words karma.

Isn,t that great. Ruijerd.

"Well, I,m asking to at least join you for a bit? As previous comrades?"

Just like this, the monkey faced newbie joined "Dead End"...

It,s not like he entered.

He simply forced himself on us until the next town at least.

According to his jinx, forming a party with four people, nothing good will come of it or something.

After avoiding those superstitions, it doesn,t seem like they,re helping you since you got thrown into a prison yourself.

Well, if he,s not planning to join the party, then it,s fine if he doesn,t join.

Just like this on our journey, the number accompanying us increased by one.

We just entrusted the carriage to our steed and solely kept moving past the Great Forest.

It,s truly a straight forward path.

The road goes right over the horizon, it continues straight into the capital of Saint Milis Kingdom.

I wonder why there,s this sort of path.

There,s no monsters at all.

The water drainage is also surprisingly good.

Just as my doubts were coming up Gisu started to explain it.

The one who created this road was the founder of the Milis Church, the world,s largest religious organization.

Saint Milis.

This is the result of a single swing of Saint Milis, sword.

It sliced straight through the mountains and forest, and cut down a Demon King on the Magic Continent or something.

Since that story started to spread around, this road was called "Holy Sword Highway".

There,s no way that can be the case, is what I wanted to think, but even now there,s still magic power from Saint Milis remaining.

As proof of that, even now we,ve had absolutely no encounters with monsters.

The carriage has never gotten stuck in mud as well.

Full sails, favorable wind.

It,s truly a miracle.

I can understand why the Milis Church has so much power.

However I,m pretty afraid of the bad influence it may have on the body.

What is known as magic power is convenient.

However, it causes animals to transform into monsters, causes two children to be teleported from Central Continent to Magic Continent, it causes various bad things.

The fact that there is a lot of magic power is also something to be afraid of...

Well, it,s fine since we can take it easy knowing no monsters will attack.

Along the side of the highway there are points at specified distances which are made for camping.

There we make preparations to camp.

Ruijerd went into the forest and just caught whatever was convenient, there,s no real problems there.

Occasionally, a beast race from a nearby village will come out to sell things, but there,s nothing we really need to buy.

I don,t think it even needs to be said of the Great Forest, but there,s an abundance of vegetation.

On the sides of the highway there is a large number of plants that can be used as spices.

I started to gather those using the Plant Encyclopedia I once read as a reference.

Even though that is the case, my cooking skill isn,t all that high.

Even if I were to say that my skill has improved considerably over this past year, "bad" has just changed into "slightly bad".

The quality of the ingredients in the Great Forest are much better than those of the Magic Continent.

And there,s not just monsters, there are regular animals as well.

Rabbits and boars for example, they,re just normal animals.

And then after you cook the meat from the animals that alone is plenty delicious, but since that,s the case I want to eat even better tasting meat.

The quest to eat good food should always be done with greed.

There Gisu entered the field.

He was a master of camping cooking.

He managed to use the grasses and berries I found and, almost as if by magic, turned them into spices to magnificently flavor the meat.

"I said it right? I can do anything."

It wasn,t just bragging, that meat was seriously good.

Amazing, hold me!

It was almost to the point that I suddenly embraced him.

Acting almost to a disgusting extent.

I felt bad about my feelings as well.

That goes for the both of us.

"It,s boring."

Eris muttered that just as we were preparing for today,s meals once again.

Ingredients: Ruijerd

Fire and Water: Me

Cooking: Gisu

In front of this perfect distribution of roles there was nothing for Eris to do.

At best it would be something like collecting fire wood, but this is in the middle of a forest. It,s over quickly.

Therefore she is quite bored.

Around the start she was just swinging her sword on her own.

Since Ghyslaine and I forced her to keep doing things with repetition training, she can swing the sword for any number of hours.

Even though that,s the case, if you were to ask if that is interesting to do then it seems that wouldn,t be the case.

Currently, Ruijerd is hunting, Gisu is cooking the soup, and I,m working on making a figure.

There,s still quite a bit of time left until I complete this 1/10 Ruijerd.

However, it should sell.

It has additional value.

If you have this then you will never be attacked by the Superd race, rather you will be able to get along with them. Or something like that is what I,m saying.

Putting that aside.

Eris is at her limit with being bored.

"Hey! Gisu!"

"What,s up young lady, it,s not ready yet?"

Gisu turned around while confirming the taste of the soup.

There was Eris using her usual imposing pose.

"Teach me cooking!"

"No way."

It was an instant reply.

Gisu just kept with his cooking like nothing happened at all.

Eris just kept staring into space dumbfounded.

However, she quickly regained herself and yelled out.

"Why?!"

"Because I don,t want to teach you."

"Like I said, why?!"

Gisu let out a deep sigh.

"Umm, you know, young lady. Swordsmen are best off thinking of nothing but fighting. Trying to cook is pointless. It,s fine as long as you can eat."

Incidentally this man.

It,s fine as long as you can eat it, is completely not the level of his food.

It,s the level where you could open a shop.

It,s not something where the Emperor of Japan would fire off light out of his mouth the moment he puts it in, but it,s at the level where his cooking shop would be well known in the neighborhood.

"But, if I can cook... umm... you know?"

Eris was saying that while stealing glances in my direction.

What is it Eris.

What do you want to say.

Please feel free to say it straight out.

"I don,t get it at all."

Gisu is being cold to Eris.

I don,t really get why, but he,s saying it in a pretty severe way.

In regards to Ruijerd and me it,s not really the case, but only to Eris he seems to say things while pushing her away.

"Doesn,t the young lady have talent with the sword? Something like cooking you don,t need."

"But..."

"Being able to fight is something to be happy about, you know? In order to live in this world, there,s nothing more than that which you need. It will just make your well polished talent lose its focus."

Eris made a bit of an unpleasant face, but she didn,t start to hit Gisu.

For some reason Gisu,s words have an odd power of persuasion to them.

"Though that,s just my front excuse."

Gisu nodded with an alright and stopped stirring the soup.

And then he started to serve it with the stone bowls.

Incidentally, the bowls were something I made.

"You know, I decided to never teach anyone cooking again."

It seems Gisu was at one point a member of a party that cleared Labyrinths.

It was a party with six members, everyone aside from him could only do a single thing, it seems they were all clumsy people.

The Gisu of that time had a pet phrase of, "You guys really can,t do anything besides that."

It seems that party still managed to do quite well even though it was pretty distorted.

However, one day, it seems one of the women from the party told Gisu she wanted to learn cooking.

If you want to catch a man start by catching his stomach, it seems that it,s effective in this world as well.

Gisu said it couldn,t be helped and taught the woman cooking.

Whether it be because of the cooking or whatever.

That is unknown, but as a result the woman stuck to the man and just like that got married.

The two left the party and went off to somewhere.

After everything, if two important individuals suddenly drop out, the party interior became rough.

The party was filled with a spiral of fights and disinterest, they were unable to properly complete any jobs, and quickly disbanded.

Even though that,s the case, Gisu is a man who can do anything.

He has no talent with the sword or magic, but everything other than that he can do.

Therefore, he thought he would quickly find another party.

The result was a crushing defeat.

Gisu of that time, was an adventurer with a bit of a name for himself.

Even though that was the case, there were no parties that would take him in.

Gisu can do anything.

If it,s something that adventurers can do, then pretty much anything.

In other words it,s that everything that Gisu can do, is something that anyone else can do as well.

If it,s a high rank party, all members will generally split up the miscellaneous jobs.

Gisu realized it.

That he had no place other than in that party.

Since it was filled with clumsy guys, he could be there.

After that, Gisu left the business of an adventurer halfway.

It seems he decided to live his life a player (gambler).

"That,s why you know. Women are no good for cooking."

It,s a jinx.

Is what he added on.

If you were to ask me, Gisu,s jinx doesn,t matter at all.

I think it would be fine if you were to teach something like cooking.

This soup is good.

Just a single sip of this soup is enough to make the inside of my mouth have a "shubidubadahhan" kind of feeling.

It,s to the point where I want to be taught as well.

Since that,s the case, I decided to throw out a life boat.

"I understand that newbie ended up with misfortune, but the woman who was taught cooking ended up happy right?"

Since that,s the case teach us, is what I was thinking.

Then Gisu waved his head.

"I don,t know if the woman ended up being happy or not. I haven,t met her since."

But, Gisu was laughing to himself.

"As for the man, he was happy, or maybe not..."

Therefore, it,s a jinx I guess.

After seeing him with a depressed expression, I felt like I couldn,t say anything more.

The soup that should have been good, lost a bit of its flavor.

Ruijerd, won,t you hurry and come back...

A certain day.

By the side of the road at one of the specified points, we found a strange stone monument.

It reached about knee-high and there was a strange emblem carved into its face.

A single letter was surrounded by seven emblems.

If I remember correctly, the letter in the center in Fighting God language would be "seven".

The other emblems I feel that I might,ve seen somewhere or not...

I decided to ask Gisu and see.

"Hey newbie, what is this stone monument?"

Gisu looked at the stone monument and nodded with an Ah.

"That is the, [Seven World Powers]."

I see, the Seven World Powers.

"[Seven World Powers], what is that?"

"It means the seven warriors who are known to be the strongest of all in this world."

It seems that around the time the second great human-demon war ended, a person known as the Technique God decided to make this.

The Technique God was said to be the strongest being of that time.

The ones that person decided, in regards to this world, the strongest seven names.

This stone monument is something for the sake of confirming that supposedly.

"If I remember correctly, if we,re talking about that then danna should know more about it. Danna!"

After Gisu called out to him, Ruijerd who was nearby looking over Eris, training walked up to us.

Eris fell to the ground there she lay with her arms and legs stretched out, and was breathing deeply trying to catch her breath.

"The [Seven World Powers], huh, that,s nostalgic."

Ruijerd narrowed his eyes while looking at the stone monument.

"Do you know about it Ruijerd?"

"When I was young I was one of the countless that trained and aspired to be included as one of the [Seven World Powers]."

While saying that Ruijerd was looking far into the distance.

Considerably far into the distance.

Far, far away...

Exactly how far back was this??

"What exactly is that emblem?"

"Those are each of the individual,s crests. It still reveals the current seven names."

Ruijerd pointed to each of them one by one and taught us the current seven names.

The current seven names are:

Position One "Technique God",

Position Two "Dragon God",

Position Three "Fighting God",

Position Four "Demon God",

Position Five "Death God",

Position Six "Sword God",

Position Seven "North God",

it seems that,s how they,re lined up.

"Ohhh. But, [Seven World Powers] is something I,ve never heard about before?"

"The [Seven World Powers] were well-known up until around the time of the Laplace Campaign after all."

"Why did they stop using it?"

"It was because during the Laplace Campaign there were some large changes and half of them went missing."

It seems, excluding the Technique God, all of the [Seven World Powers] of the time were participating in the Laplace Campaign.

However, among them three died.

One of them went missing.

And one of them ended up being sealed, was the outcome.

It seems the only one who survived with all limbs intact was the Dragon God of the time.

For the time being, those known to be the strongest started rising and entering the ranks and several hundred years after that, those who stole the seats of [Lower World Powers] were quite far from the word "strongest".

Even more so, currently, the whereabouts of Four of the higher ranks are unknown.

Technique God. Missing.

Dragon God. Missing.

Fighting God. Missing.

Demon God. (Laplace) Sealed Away.

Those who were certainly known to be the strongest of the higher ranks, weren,t around in regards to the rankings.

Since that,s the case, [Seven World Powers] were gradually abandoned and forgotten from the memories of the people.

Or something along those lines.

Incidentally, the reason why the Demon God Laplace was never removed from the ranking was because he didn,t die, but was just sealed away.

"Exactly how many people are there that lived during those times?"

"Well now. Even 400 years ago it was becoming suspicious whether the Technique God even existed."

"In the first place, why did the Technique God even create this sort of ranking?"

"It seems that. [In order to find someone who can defeat me], there was that sort of story, but I don,t know the details."

As if it,s a profound ranking I guess.

"This stone monument is considerably old; since that,s the case, it could be that the rankings have already changed by now, couldn,t it."

After I muttered that, Gisu shook his head.

"No, it seems that it will automatically change with magic."

"Eh? Is that the case? How?"

"How would I know."

It seems that is the case.

The letters on the stone monument automatically change.

I wonder exactly how it works.

There are still a lot of things I don,t know about the magic of this world.

If I go to the magic university, I wonder if I,ll be able to learn about things like that.

In any case, [Seven World Powers], huh.

Just as I was thinking there were a large number of people who stink of cheats in this world, I don,t feel like I can keep up at all.

Well, it,s not like I,m aiming to be the strongest in the world either way.

I,d rather not get very involved with the strongest.

It took one month until we passed the Great Forest.

However, it was only a month.

In just a single month, we managed to pass through the entire Great Forest.

The path was nothing but a straight line, without a single monster.

Therefore, we were able to devote ourselves to moving, that is one of the reasons, but the performance of the horse was also good.

The horses in this world don,t know what it means to get tired.

They can run for 10 hours a day straight without a break; moreover, the next day they won,t feel a thing.

I wonder if they,re using some sort of magic power or something.

We really passed through the forest in a smooth way.

If you were to speak of accidents, it would only be that I got hemorrhoids on the way.

Naturally, without telling anyone, I secretly healed it with healing magic.

In the name of training, Eris just kept standing on top of the carriage the entire time.

I said "it,s dangerous" and to "stop it", but it was a balance sensation which had the feeling of "what,s dangerous" about it.

I tried to imitate it, then the next day my legs were trembling.

Eris is amazing.

There is a valley to pass the Blue Dragon Mountain Range.

The entrance of that was an inn town.

The Dwarf race are managers of the inn district here.

There,s no Adventurer,s guild.

However it,s famous as a blacksmith town, weapon shops and armor shops were all connected to each other.

The swords sold here are not only cheap but of high quality, is what Gisu was teaching us.

Eris was making a face as if she wanted everything, but it,s not like we have surplus with our money.

After all, in order to cross from Milis to Central Continent, it,s going to cost another fortune for a Superd race again.

We can,t afford to spend wastefully.

The sword Eris is using now is not bad as well.

Although, I,m still a man.

Seeing all these grim swords and armor lined up, regardless of one,s age, you,ll feel excited.

Even though I say that, after all it,s a problem of garments that look one,s age.

The dwarf who was tending to the store said, "I don,t think that suits you boy?" while laughing.

After I said even though I look like this I,m still intermediate level of the Sword God style, he was a bit surprised.

Well, we have no money, so it ended with just being made fun of a bit.

According to Gisu,s story, it seems that this is where the highway forks into multiple paths.

If you continue East along the mountain, you,ll supposedly arrive at a large town of dwarves.

If you head Northeast then you,ll arrive at the elves, territory, and Northwest the halfling regions are spread out.

The reason this town doesn,t have an adventurers guild is probably a problem with the location.

Also, if you head in the direction of the mountain, it seems there are hot springs.

Hot springs.

It,s a topic that I hold great interest in.

"What,s a hot spring?"

"Hot water from the mountain gathers up. If you bathe there, it feels really good."

"Ohhh... Sounds interesting. However, isn,t this the first time Rudeus has been here? How do you know about it?"

"I- I read about it in a book."

I wonder if hot springs were mentioned in [Walking the World] the tour guide book.

If I remember correctly, I feel like they weren,t mentioned in it...

However, hot springs, huh.

Sounds nice.

There,s probably no yukata in this world but...

Wet hair, skin dyed in the color of cherry blossoms, Eris spacing out in the hot water...

The places known as hot springs are there.

No, I guess it,s not really mixed bathing.

It would be different right?

Although, in the 1 in 10,000 chance that there is mixed bathing, I wonder what would happen.

It,s something I have to make absolutely sure to check up on.

"Since it,s just after the rainy season ended, the mountain side is probably in a terrible state right now?"

Just as I was hesitating, Gisu objected.

It seems if people who aren,t used to walking in the mountains go, it will take quite a bit of time.

Since that,s the case, we have to give up on the hot springs.

How unfortunate.

The Holy Sword Highway entered into the Blue Dragon Mountain Range.

It was a path with a width that only about two carriages could pass through at once.

It was cutting the mountain in half.

The bottom of the valley.

However, maybe thanks to the divine protection of Milis, it seems that rock slides almost never happen.

If this path didn,t exist, you,d have no choice but to take a huge detour in order to get North.

Even though there,s almost never any Blue Dragons in these mountains, there are many monsters, so if you tried to pass through them it would be quite dangerous.

In such a place, there,s a shortcut created where not a single monster will appear.

I understand the reason why Saint Milis is worshiped very well.

After three days we passed through the valley.

—

Just like that we left the Great Forest and entered the territory of the human race.

Mushoku Tensei: Isekai Ittara Honki Dasu - Volume 5

Holy Milis Kingdom.

Capital Milishion.

It is possible to get a full view of the city just from looking at it from the Holy Sword Road.

First, the [Nikolaus River] that flows out from the [Blue Dragon Mountain Range].

This flows down into the sparkling blue [Grand Lake].

Floating in the center of the [Grand Lake] is a great white castle, [White Palace].

Going even further down along the [Nikolaus River] from there.

Along the way you will find the shining golden [Great Church] and the shining silver [Adventurer's Guild Headquarters].

If you pay attention to your surroundings from there you will notice a systematic townscape spread out in front of you.

Finally, surrounding the city you will notice seven great towers and a region of meadows just outside.

Majesty and Harmony.

Possessing both of these qualities it could be called the world's most beautiful city.

Excerpt from the book [Walking the World] by Adventurer Bloody Count.

It's certainly beautiful.

A harmony between blue and green you could only find in a fantasy world.

Adding to that the townscape has a well-regulated structure similar to Edo or Sapporo.

Eris went silent and just kept staring with her mouth open.

Ruijerd was just narrowing his eyes as he watched.

I thought it was "hana yori dango" for these two but it seems they clearly remember how to appreciate beautiful things.

{ C-Editor's note: "Hana yori dango" means "Dumplings over flowers" which is a well known Japanese idiom. It means that someone should value needs over wants; substance over appearance. }

"It's amazing isn't it?"

Then for some reason Gisu started boasting about it.

Why would you feel so proud about this?

Is what I was thinking, but certainly just having seen this makes you feel proud to know of it.

Even though I say that I don't really want to let this guy get too overconfident.

"It's amazing, but wouldn't there be problems with that huge lake during the rainy season?"

I started making negative remarks about it.

Although this is a genuine question.

The city is almost entirely in the center of the giant lake.

There were three straight months of continuous rain in the Great Forest just to the north of here.

Normally there would be some sort of effect over here as well.

"It seems it certainly was quite a problem in the past, but now those seven magic towers perfectly control the water. Therefore, they could rest easy and build the castle in the center of the lake. There are no walls right? That's because those towers are always projecting a barrier around it."

"I see, in other words in order to attack the Holy Milis Kingdom you would first need to destroy those seven towers somehow or other."

"Don't say anything too dangerous, or else if those Saint Knights overhear it they'll still capture you even if it's a joke you know?"

"...I'll be careful."

If I were to believe what Gisu was telling me, as long as those seven towers remain, the city will never be hit by any disaster or plague.

I don't really understand the theory behind it, but it sounds quite convenient.

"Hurry up, let's go!"

Eris shouted out excitedly and we continued moving forward on our cart.

The City of Milishion is divided into four districts.

In the north, there is the [Residential District].

It's a section of private houses and blocks.

A place where the family of nobles and knights live, there are some differences from average citizens, but fundamentally they are all private houses in the residential district.

In the east, there is the [Commerce District].

It's a district where all sorts of merchants gather.

There are a large number of shops, but the structures are small.

It's a place where many companies meet and widen their trade contacts together, this world's business district.

Things like Blacksmiths and Auction houses are here as well.

In the south, there is the [Adventurers District].

It's a place where the Adventurers gather.

Centering around the Adventurers Guild Headquarters, there are all sorts of shops and inns aimed towards Adventurers.

There's also an area with a slum for ruined Adventurers with things like a gambling place, so it's a good idea to be careful.

For the most part, the slave market is in this district rather than the commerce district as well.

In the west, there is the [Holy District].

There are a number of places for those related to the Holy Milis Church to live.

The enormous Great Church is also here.

Also, the Holy Milis Knight group has their headquarters in this district.

Is what Gisu took the time to thoroughly teach us about one by one.

We turned around and entered the city through the Adventurer's District.

According to Gisu, if Adventurers try to enter through districts other than the Adventurers District they'll be put through a certain amount of questioning and it can take quite a bit of time.

What a troublesome city.

The instant we entered the city, the air changed into quite a mixed one.

If you look at it from outside Milishion is beautiful, but after you enter it's no different from any other city.

Near the entrance to the city there were inns and stables.

Stall people were all lined up loudly calling out for customers to come in their direction.

A little ways down the main road I saw an Arms Shop.

There's probably a slightly cheaper inn down one of those thin alleyways.

Incidentally, the supposedly silver glowing Adventurer's Guild Headquarters was visible from the entrance of the city.

For the time being we left our cart at a stable.

After listening to them there's a service to take luggage to your inn for you.

It's a service that wasn't in other towns.

After all in a large city like this they've probably got to offer a perfect service otherwise they might go out of business.

"Now then, I've got some places to visit, so please excuse me here!"

After we left the horse in the stable Gisu abruptly said that.

"Eh? We're already disbanding?"

I thought it was surprising.

I thought we would stay in the same inn together.

"What's this? Does that make you lonely senpai?"

"Yeah, that makes me feel lonely."

I answered honestly to those words intended to tease me.

We've only known Gisu for a short period, but he's not a bad guy.

Finding partners who are on the same wavelength as you is a precious thing during travels.

Thanks to Gisu just how much stress do you think I've been relieved of?

Also, I feel depressed when I think about how the meals are going to be terrible again if he's gone.

"No need to feel lonely senpai. We'll meet again as long as we are in the same city."

Gisu shrugged his shoulders and patted my head.

Then just like that he started waving his hands around and walked away.

Then Eris stood in his way.

"Gisu!"

With her arms crossed and her jaw turned upwards, the usual imposing pose.

"Next time we meet teach me how to cook!"

"That's why I've said no way. You're persistent."

Gisu walked away to the side while scratching his head.

While doing that he also patted Ruijerd's shoulder.

"Then, you take care as well danna."

{ C-Editor's note: Danna - a Japanese honorific; how a servant address his master or a merchant addressing a patron. }

"You take care as well. Don't do too many bad things."

"I know that."

This time Gisu finally disappeared into the crowd while waving his hands.

It just happened in an instant.

So much that you wouldn't think we've spent two months together.

Really just parted in an instant.

Then just when that monkey face started to disappear.

Suddenly he turned around.

"Ah, that's right senpai. Make absolutely sure you show your face at the Adventurer's guild!"

"Hn? Ah, sure!"

We have to go to the Adventurer's Guild anyways, we have no choice but to earn some money.

However, I wonder why he's saying that now.

I don't really know, but after hearing my reply Gisu disappeared into the crowd again.

First off is searching for an inn.

Finding an inn is a basic action when we first arrive in a new town.

In Milishion there are a large number of inns spread all around the main street.

If you go down an alley and walk a little bit you'll arrive at something like an inn district.

After taking a look at each one we decided on an inn finally.

[Inn of Dawn's Light]

This inn was just a bit far off from the main street.

However, it was far from the slum district, and the public order wasn't bad.

Including some of the hidden services it offered, it was an inn that caters to around C~B rank Adventurers.

The fact that it doesn't get very much sunlight is a flaw, if you can call it a flaw.

Find an inn and organize things from the travels, if time permits visit the Adventurer's Guild and check the goods around the town, if even more time is still left take the time to relax and enjoy freely taking a look around, then return to the inn and have a future plans meeting.

That is the usual flow of events.

"Wouldn't it have been fine if we stayed in a cheaper place?"

Eris said that with an amazed face.

What she says is perfectly right.

We must be cautious with our money.

It's something I'm always saying.

Though right now we have just a little bit of flexibility to spare.

The money we earned while helping defend the Dorudia Village.

Then the money we received from Gyes.

Adding them together it is just a bit over 7 Milis Gold Coins.

It's certainly true we have no choice but to save up money, but we aren't in such a dire situation right now.

Therefore, this amount of luxury is fine.

Even I want to sleep on a soft bed from time to time.

"Well, isn't it fine from time to time."

After giving Eris a glance I walked to the room.

It's a pretty neat and good room.

The fact that there's a table and chairs prepared in the room is nice.

The room has a key to lock the door and the windows even have shutters.

It's not comparable to the business hotels from my previous world, but it's an above average quality for this world.

Now then, our actions after arriving at the inn were already decided.

Repairing our equipment and preparing a memo with consumable goods we need to restock.

Drying out the bed, washing the sheets, and sweeping while we're at it.

This pattern has become such a routine that I didn't even need to say anything; everyone started working in silence.

By the time everything had finished the sun was setting and it was getting dark outside.

Since we arrived sometime around early afternoon.

The time to visit the guild has disappeared.

Well, even if we wait one or two days to visit the guild there's no real difference.

We ate some meals in the bar next door to the inn and then returned to our rooms.

Then we all sat in a circle facing each other.

It's time for our future plans meeting.

"Well then, it's time to start Team [Dead End]'s operations meeting. It's our first meeting in the capital city of Milis so let's make things exciting."

I struck the sides of my face and started clapping my hands and the others barely returned the clapping.

They're so bad at going with the flow. Well, it doesn't matter.

"Now then, we've finally made it this far."

I stated that to start things off.

It was a long journey after all.

A little over a year in the Magic Continent and then four months in the Great Forest.

One and a half years.

After a year and half has passed and finally.

Finally, we have arrived in a place where the human race lives again.

We've gone beyond the dangerous places.

From here on out the roads are properly taken care of and flat.

If I were to compare it to everything until now, then you could even call it safe.

Although in terms of distance we still have quite a long ways to go.

From Milis to Asura.

It's a distance of traveling halfway across the world.

No matter how easy of a ride it is, it won't shorten the distance we still have left to cover.

It seems like it will take another year or so.

In that case the number one problem would be...

Money.

"For the time being I would like to start earning some money while in this city."

"Why?"

I politely responded to Eris's question.

"I've understood it after visiting the Magic Continent and the Great Forest, but prices in the human race regions are quite expensive."

Then I remembered back to all the market prices I've seen until now.

I was unable to check the market prices in Saint Port, though I still remember the general market prices throughout Magic Continent and the prices from the inn town.

In comparison to those the prices in Holy Milis Kingdom and Asura Kingdom are expensive.

Even the cost of this inn, if you were to compare it to an inn in the Magic Continent, it's high enough your eyes would jump out from their sockets.

The human race places more importance on currency than other races as well.

I won't say anything about being greedy.

"The value of currency in Milis is high. It's the next most valuable after Asura Kingdom, in other words second in the world. The market prices are expensive but that also means the job rewards will also be high. Unlike how we did it in the Magic Continent staying in each town for roughly a week to gather money, it would probably be more efficient to stay in this city for a month and gather money."

The value of Milis currency is high.

In other words if we earn enough money in Milis then we don't even need to worry anymore, there will be no problems when we have to pay tolls to pass through to the Central Continent.

"We still don't know how much money it will cost to allow a Superd race to board the ship there as well."

When I mentioned the word ship Eris made an obviously displeased face.

She must be remembering her sea sickness.

It was probably a bad memory for her but it was a good memory for me.

I'll be there to assist you any time.

"We'll collect money here and then travel to Asura all in one go. Though if that's the case we most likely won't be able to give more publicity for the Superd race Ruijerd-san. Is that alright?"

Ruijerd silently nodded.

Well, spreading the publicity of the Superd race is mostly something I'm doing because I enjoy it now.

If it were up to me I'd prefer to calm down and take my time a bit more to go around fixing the infamy of the Superd race.

Half a year or a full year.

If it's in a large city it just means there would be that much more of an effect.

However, just to make it up to here we've already surpassed one and a half years.

One and a half years.

It's not a short period.

I don't want to take more than this amount of time.

If you think about it, then it's like being missing for a year and a half.

My family should be quite worried.

I wonder what they are doing right now.

Just when I was thinking that I realized I hadn't sent a letter.

I kept thinking "send one, send one", but so many things ended up happening that I forgot along the way.

A letter, huh.

Alright.

"Let's make tomorrow into a free day."

We've used the concept of vacation days every so often up until now.

It was originally something to give Eris some room to breathe, but somewhere along the way it became something for my own sake.

Eris never shows her fatigue and Ruijerd is a [Tough Guy].

The only pathetic and weak one is me.

Of course, even I have gained an amount of strength that can't even compare to my previous life.

I may be no match for these two, but I should have enough strength to match the average Adventurer in this world.

Therefore, it's not a matter of physical fatigue.

It's mental fatigue.

My heart is weak.

Every monster I kill while traveling adds to my accumulated stress.

Although I'm not really exhausted this time.

Information gathering, confirmation of guild jobs, and various other things.

If I were to put priority on those things then I'm sure I would end up forgetting the letter again.Since that's how it has been until now.

Therefore, I will spend the entire day tomorrow ensuring that I send the letter so I don't forget this time.

"Rudeus, is your body condition bad again?"

"No, this time is a different matter. I was thinking about sending a letter."

"Letter?"

In response to Eris's question I nodded.

"Yes, a letter to notify that we are safe."

"Hmmm... Well, it should be alright if I just leave it to Rudeus."

"Yeah."

Tomorrow I'll write a letter.

After I've started to remember about Buina Village, I'll write Paul and Sylphy a letter.

He told me not to send any letters, but well, in this situation he really can't say no.

The chances that the letter will make it there aren't all that high though...

When I was exchanging letters with Roxy from Asura Kingdom to Shirone Kingdom, one in seven letters never made it.

Therefore, we would send a number of letters with the same content.

I'll do that this time as well.

"What are you two going to do?"

"I'm going to do a Goblin Subjugation job!"

In response to my question, Eris gave that response.

"Goblin?"

If you were to say Goblin, then it would be that Goblin I guess.

About half the size of a person and wielding a club and equipment, yellow-green skin color, a high virility, and they would almost always come out in fantasy-type ero games, working until they fulfil their role of attacking the characters.

"I just heard in the city that Goblins appear around this area. If I'm an adventurer I have to make sure I see some Goblins!"

Eris said that full of energy.

Goblins are almost a rat-like existence in this world.

Strong ability to breed and always causing trouble for people.

For the most part they are capable of speech so you could consider them one class of magical beast, even though they can speak they still just move based on instinct increasing in numbers until someone exterminates them. (!)

"I understand. Ruijerd, will you be guarding?"

"I'll be fine on my own against Goblins!"

In response to my words Eris raised her voice.

It was a face that took offense to what I said.

I thought about it.

Eris is strong.

In terms of rank Goblins are on the level of an E-rank monster.

There were none on the Magic Continent so I've never actually seen them, but the danger should be low.

It's an opponent a child with just a bit of sword experience should be able to defeat.

In comparison, Eris can fight equally with B-rank monsters.

I guess forcing Ruijerd to follow along in this situation is being a bit too overprotective?

No, but... if a female adventurer is defeated by Goblins it's a straight path to a slave of the flesh.

I don't know much about the Goblins in this world, but the Goblins in my world were almost all something along those lines.

If I was a Goblin and somehow or other managed to knock Eris unconscious...

I would definitely start living a very fulfilling Goblin lifestyle from there on out.

Anyone would.

I would.

I think for the most part it will be alright.

However...

Although...

If the moment I take my eyes off Eris something like that were to happen, I wouldn't have it in me to face Ghyslaine and Philip.

"Rudeus. It's alright. Let her try it."

While I was thinking about it Ruijerd came with the lifeboat.

How rare.

During this past year and a half, Ruijerd has lectured Eris on fighting all sorts of monsters.

I had a hard time understanding the teaching method, but Eris properly learned it.

If that's the case, then it's alright, I guess.

"I understand then. Eris, even if the opponent is weak make sure you don't let your guard down."

"Of course!"

"Make sure you do your preparations properly as well."

"I know that!"

"If it seems dangerous, run like the wind."

"I said I know!"

"In the worst case scenario, grab your opponents hands and yell in a loud voice 'This person is a molester!'".

"You're being annoying! Even I can manage a Goblin Subjugation!"

I made her angry.

I'm still quite worried, but let's believe in the experienced warrior Ruijerd here.

"In that case I won't say anything more. Give it your best."

"Yeah, I'll give it my all!"

Eris nodded with a satisfied expression.

"Then, Ruijerd what are you going to do?"

"I'm going to visit an acquaintance."

That's the first time I've heard the words acquaintance from Ruijerd.

"Oh, an acquaintance? Even Ruijerd has acquaintances?"

"Of course."

I thought he was always alone though...

Well I guess if you were to live for 500 years you'd have at least one or two acquaintances.

Why here in this city of Milishion is what I was thinking, but conversely in a city this large, it's very possible Ruijerd would have an acquaintance here.

"What kind of acquaintance?"

"A warrior."

Another warrior, huh.

Since that's the case then it would be another person he saved along the way on the Magic Continent I guess.

Well, I won't pry too much.

It's not like I'm his parent, it would be unrefined to ask all about who he's meeting on a day off after all.

Next day, Eris and Ruijerd left separately.

I as well went out to buy paper, a pen, and ink in the city.

While I'm at it I also planned to investigate the market prices of Holy Milis Kingdom.

In terms of food, it's quite a bit cheaper than the Magic Continent.

The quality was so high as well the Magic Continent was not even worthy of comparison.

There was all sorts of fresh meat and fish lined up, happily even raw vegetables were being sold.

The thing that surprised me the most were the eggs.

Chicken eggs were being sold at an extremely cheap price.

Fresh eggs, they were eggs that were literally just laid today.

On the Magic Continent you could find eggs being sold every so often.

However, they weren't eggs from chickens, but magical beasts.

They were made use of in combination with imprinting, and then the magic beasts were trained.

Obviously, they weren't intended for food purposes.

They weren't at such a cheap price that you could fry them on a whim.

Incidentally, there are poultry in this world.

Even in Buina Village there was a person who had chickens.

To be more accurate, it's a bird that looks very similar to chickens.

It seems raising poultry is quite common in Milis.

It's been a while since I've been overcome with the desire to eat raw eggs mixed with rice.

TKG.

Tamago kake gohan.

It's a perfect and complete food.

However, there's no soy sauce to go with the rice.

I tried searching the market just to check, but it seems like there's nothing similar.

Just like Asura Kingdom, it seems the staple food of Holy Milis Kingdom is bread as well.

Although I've already confirmed that rice exists in this world.

The places where rice is a staple are the Northern and Eastern parts of the Central Continent.

It was written in one of Roxy's letters that rice could be found in Shirone Kingdom as well.

Mixing meat, vegetables, and a variety of fish with rice into something like a paella is the mainstream method supposedly.

However... but...

There's supposedly no poultry industry in that area.

Whether it be because of the climate or they just don't have any chickens, in any case, eggs are almost never found there.

Even more so there's nothing that's similar to soy sauce.

In the plant dictionary there is something that looks a lot like the soy bean, but it seems there's been no experiments in trying to let that ferment and turn into a sauce.

Although if you search there could be some somewhere.

Eggs and rice exist after all.

I will make sure I will one day obtain it with these hands.

Then I will eat it, tamago kake gohan.

I'm not really paying much mind to the sanitation of the eggs.

Even if you were to get sick you could just cure it using healing magic after all.

After investigating the market prices I returned to the inn while thinking about what I'm going to write for the contents of the letters.

If I think about it, this will be the first time I've sent a letter to Paul and Sylphy.

I wonder if I should start writing from the time at the Boreas House.

No, more than that reporting that we're still alive is the most important.

It would be fine as long as we tell them we were teleported to the Magic Continent.

If I think about it a lot of stuff has happened.

Traveling together with a Superd race, meeting the Great Demon Emperor, spending three months or so at the Beast race village.... I wonder if they'll believe it.

At the very least, the fact that I met the Great Demon Emperor and was given Demon Eyes would be something pretty unbelievable normally.

Whether they believe it or not, it's a matter of fact that it happened.

Speaking of the Beast race village, I wonder if Ghyslaine is alright.

Since she's that strong, unless she ends up being teleported to some strange place, she's most likely okay.

I'm sure everyone in the Boreas family is worried as well.

Philip, Sauros, Hilda.

As well as the butler Alphonse, and all the maids.

No matter where old man Sauros gets thrown I'm sure he would be energetically letting out a loud voice.

While I'm thinking about this I enter a short alley.

In Milishion there are a number of these short alleyways.

If you were to draw a map when it was new it would probably look like a pretty Go board, but after a long period of destroying and re-building houses of all sizes, it slowly started to shift, and that's how these short and tight alleyways were created.

Although, maybe it's because they were lined up like a Go board, there's no real worry about getting lost.

Therefore, I went through a different route to return to the inn.

Maybe I can find some good date spots around here.

The red-haired one from our place is just a little bit violent, though as long as she puts on something proper she actually looks quite pretty, if we're to stay here for a month then we might have a chance for a date.

If it comes down to that then I'll have to make a plan and make sure to take her to a great place and give her a good impression.

Just as I was thinking that, I saw five men coming in my direction in a hurry through a small alley.

They weren't adventurer types.

If I were to say it, they would be hoodlums from the city.

They were wearing clothes intending to intimidate.

If you were to put it into a single word it would be, young.

However, I can't think well of them when several adult males enter this kind of small alley.Roads are made for compromise.

Even if I am a child and on the small side, if you enter this alley as well as side by side we'll eventually run into each other.

This is a time to be like the heinous delinquent leader (Emi), and glare at them one by one to signal a mutual compromise?

"Move!"

I meekly stuck to the wall.

No, please don't misunderstand.

I just like to avoid unnecessary conflict.

It seems like they're in a hurry as well, and I'm not in a hurry.

It's not particularly like I avoided them because I'm DQN-ish.

{ C-Editor's note: DQN or Dokun is a derogatory internet slang term that means dumbass or idiot. }

For the most part?

It's not a lie.

Also, you know, you can't make decisions based on people's appearance.

They looked like hoodlums, but one of them could be a well-known swordsman.

If I was not being careful of my opponents and just started using violence, then if all of a sudden they were actually Young Noble of Madness, [Dead End]. (!)

Something like that could happen.

Considering this is a world where you could find a Great Demon Emperor little girl starving in an alley in the middle of nowhere after all.

Yeah.

It's better to avoid unnecessary conflict.

Is what I was thinking but...

The moment I was about to pass by them I noticed the two in the center had a large bag.

Two of them both carrying it side by side.

Then I noticed a small hand sticking out of the bag.

More than likely there is a child within that bag.

[Another human kidnapping, huh.]

There really are a lot of kidnappings in this world.

The moment criminals see an opening they just up and kidnap children.

In Asura Kingdom, in Magic Continent, in Great Forest, in Holy Milis Kingdom, they'll really just start kidnapping just about anywhere.

According to Gisu, kidnapping and abduction is rather profitable.

Currently, there is a bit of strife here and there, but it is largely peaceful, the number of slaves that make it to the central and north areas of Central Continent are rather small.

However, the number of people who want slaves is large.

Especially in rich countries like Asura Kingdom and Holy Milis Kingdom.

In other words it's a matter of supply and demand.

If you kidnap someone you'll be able to sell them for a high price.

Which is why kidnappings never end.

It's the truth.

About the only way to wipe out kidnappings would be for a large scale war to break out.

Then.... but... it's a child, huh.

If they've got five people together to transport her then it should be something they planned ahead to do.

That would mean the one inside the bag is most likely the daughter or son of some noble or rich merchant.

Honestly, I don't really want to get involved.

If I try to save the child, I might end up being mistaken as one of the culprits and thrown into a jail.

That kind of bitter experience just happened only a few months prior.

Then, guess I should just ignore them?

No, I can't do that.

The fact that kidnapping will never end in this world and the fact that I experienced something bitter previously are all a different story.

[Dead End] Rule number one.

Never abandon children.

[Dead End] Rule number two.

Absolutely never abandon children.

[Dead End] are allies of justice.

Defeating all bad guys without a doubt.

Rescuing all the children.

Just like that bit by bit we can spread the name of the Superd race.

I followed after the five people.

My spying skill seems to have leveled up.

I wonder if it's because I trained in order to spy on Eris and the other girls in the Dorudia Village.

The five men never noticed me trailing them and entered a single warehouse.

What careless guys.

Well, if you want to find me you better train your nose.

If you learn to smell the scent of arousal, you'll find me in an instant.

The location of the warehouse was in a shady part of the Adventurers District.

It was even further back than the inn we were staying in.

There was no main road attached to it, the only way to enter is going down one of the small alleys.

Obviously a cart wouldn't be able to get to it and since the road is small you wouldn't be able to carry any large baggage either.

It almost makes me want to call those responsible and ask why they would build a warehouse in a place like this.

It's sitting in the middle of that kind of Dead Space.

Most likely the warehouse was built first, then the surrounding buildings were built afterwards.

I confirmed that the men went inside and then went around the back.

Using earth magic I elevated myself off the ground.

Then I entered through a window intending to observe the warehouse.

I went into the center, hid myself in a wooden box, then started to confirm the situation.

The five were talking about this and that.

It seems that most of their allies are in the bar next door.

I heard them say something like the job is done and to go call someone.

I guess I should take care of things before they call their allies, or maybe confirm the face of their allies first from above, then just save the child.

Naturally I would choose the latter.

Since that is the case, I'll be on standby in this wooden box for a bit.

However, since it was dark I couldn't confirm, but what in the world is being stored in this wooden box?

It seems to be some kind of cloth.

I understand that much but it's a bit small to be clothing.

Though, when I'm surrounded by it like this, for some odd reason I feel quite relaxed.

I'll try holding one in my hand.

This sensation and shape is one I have experienced before.

A solidly sewn cloth that has three holes in it.

One piece of cloth became twenty two and then I started to feel an amazing unknown something.

"These are panties!"

"Who's there?"

Cr...Crap!

I've been found.

Damn it. For them to prepare this kind of trap. What foul play.

"Inside of the wooden box?"

"Come out!"

"Hey, call the leader and others."

This is bad.

If I wait around any longer they'll call for their allies.

Change of plans.

I'll just quickly save the child and then quickly run away. Yes, let's go with that.

However, my face will be seen.

No, there's no problem there. There's a mask in my hand.

Fuoooo!

I'm feeling ecstasy!

Not really though.

I thought about wrapping my face in my robe to hide my identity but, after giving it some thought I left it to do some shopping, I'm not even wearing my robe, and I don't have my staff as well.

"Uooo!"

"He....He's wearing panties on his head..."

"A pervert..."

While the two men were taken back I went with an entrance performance.

"Within the intervals of power vs power, you who attempt to satisfy your unsightly desires, feel ashamed of your actions!! People, call that, the fiendish way!"

"Wh-who are you bastard!"

"Ruijerd of Dead End!"

"What? Dead End?"

Ah, oh no, damn it.

I just named myself out of habit.

This was where I was supposed to say "I have no name to give to people like you".

Sorry about that, Ruijerd-san.

From today on you are now a pervert who wears panties on his face while saving people!

However, I will properly save the child!

"Kidnapping bastards! It's your fault that a single man is currently undergoing false accusations! I definitely cannot forgive you!"

"Hey kid, if you want to play allies of justice go do it elsewhere. We are you know..."

"No forgiveness! Sunrise Attack~!"

"Guge!"

For the time being I fired off a rock bullet.

After all the first to strike wins.

If I think back to it, I took out the pervert lolicon old man in a single hit from behind like this when he was about to attack the Great Demon Emperor as well.

"Here, here!"

"Ge!"

"Ugo!"

In no time at all four of them were knocked unconscious.

I rushed over to the child.

"Are you alright boy! Is what I was thinking, but you're unconscious..."

It seems like a young boy I've seen somewhere before.

Really, I have some memory of him.

Huh?

Where was it again.

I can't remember.

Well it's fine. I don't have the time to spare on things like this.

If I don't hurry the enemies' reinforcements will come.

Just as I was thinking that men just kept appearing one after another.

"Uo! Everyone was knocked out!"

"He's a kid but don't go easy, quickly call the leader and others over!"

"The leader is out drinking today!"

"He's strong even when he's drunk!"

Two of them left and hurried outside.

There's already ten of them, but it seems like even more reinforcements will come.

This is bad.

Very bad.

After all maybe abandoning him would have been the better choice.

Otherwise, consulting with Ruijerd tomorrow.

I've screwed up.

There's already no option other than to defeat them all and break through.

"What a guy, he's wearing panties on his face."

"Could it be he came here to steal the panties!"

"That would mean he's the enemy of all women!?"

If I look carefully there's several women mixed in with them.

Sorry, Ruijerd.

Really, sorry.

I started the battle while apologizing earnestly in my heart.

Fortunately they were not very strong.

If they attempted to run or get close I would counter attack with a rock bullet.

They couldn't avoid it at all and more or less fainted with a single shot.

They weren't wielding any weapons and none of them were using magic either.

It's an easy victory.

"Do-don't get close to him."

"What is that, is he using some sort of magic item!?"

"Is the leader still not here!?"

After about half of them passed out the remaining ones started to get restless.

If it's like this then I can do it, or just as I was thinking that.

"Ah, sorry for the wait."

The reinforcements appeared.

It really was a pretty quick arrival.

Though I guess that's obvious since they were supposedly in the bar next door.

Five people with a sharp demeanor came out.

They were standing with leisure in front of the warehouse entrance.

The leader seems like a man I think I've seen before.

His face gives off a nostalgic feeling.

However, once again I can't remember.

Rather than that, the older sister behind him is more important.

Bikini bitch.

They aren't really all that rare in this world, but the amount of exposure this one has going is exceedingly high.

In the Magic Continent there weren't any women with this much exposure around.

The other woman was wearing her robe tightly and for some reason only her expression was a bit different.

"Cheh, you've really been doing whatever you like here. Hicku... you guys don't lay your hands on him. No need to surround a single kid with large numbers, I'll do it myself."

The man seemed to have confidence in his skills but he was staggering all over the place.

Even from far I could tell his face was red from drinking alcohol.

However, it really is a face I've seen somewhere before...

Brown hair, foolish looking, looks a little bit like Paul.

The voice is exactly like Paul's as well.

Though it looks similar, it doesn't look like Paul at all at the same time.

If Paul were totally worn out and all of his usual flexibility gone, I wonder if it would end up like that.

Somehow it's a face which makes it really hard to attack him.

"You bastard, you've really been doing as you please to my group members, you better have prepared yourself!"

The man went into battle mode while talking big and pulled out two swords.

Nitoryu, huh.

{ C-Editor's note: Nitoryu or Nito-ryu is a method of fighting with two swords at once. }

He's most likely an advanced-level swordsman.

I wonder if I will be able to manage with rock bullet?

No, but, I don't really want to kill him...

The man came charging at me as I was hesitating.

I fell one move behind.

I fired off a rock bullet on reflex.

The man's reaction was faster.

He repelled the rock bullet with the sword in his right hand.

"Water God Style!"

"That's not all!"

The man stepped in.

I reflexively fired off a shock wave and flew backwards.

"Hee!!"

"Oh!"

Using my foresight I was able to see ahead and avoid it.

The speed of the mans sword was fast.

Though his legs were still pretty unsteady.

Probably because he's drunk.

If it's like this I can probably manage somehow.

"Cheh, that guy is moving as if he can see it...! Vera! Shera! Lend me a hand!"

The bikini bitch and magician-like women stepped forward.

The bikini bitch came up from my side, then started an incantation.

This is bad.

The man's attacks were severe.

I was giving my best just to avoid them.

Though I still have some options left.

"Wa!!"

"Ugh!!"

I used voice magic and stopped the man's movements for an instant.

Simultaneously I created a shock wave and sent the man flying and fired a rock bullet as well.

Furthermore, when the bikini bitch came in to attack me, I used foresight to hit her with a counter.

I hit the magician with a rock bullet when she was focused on the incantation and knocked her unconscious.

I hit the bikini and she fell backwards, it seems she's still fine, her eyes were sparkling as she was glaring at me.

Then the man came to attack.

"Shera! You bastard!"

When the man stepped in to attack I created a bog to interfere with his movement.

The man's leg completely got caught in the bog and he fell in an unsightly way.

"Leader!"

You shouldn't look away.

Is something I didn't put into words, I just silently fired off a rock bullet.

The bikini fainted.

"Vera! Damn it!"

The man put one of his swords back into its scabbard then he put the other sword into his mouth.

Foresight.

[He's running on his arms and legs]

Is this guy a dog.

I start to move backwards while firing off a rock bullet to counter attack.

However, this is a small warehouse.

There's nothing I can use to keep him from getting closer.

"Uooohra!"

He jumped up from all fours while twisting his body.

While in the middle of a movement similar to that of a beast, he pulled the sword on his hip.

His movements are sharp.

Even from such an odd stance, he can make his body appear smaller or larger as he pulls his sword.

[Simultaneously, he dropped the sword he was holding in his mouth into his left hand and switched directions, a surprise attack.]

An original attack.

He's going beyond my predictions.

If I didn't have this foresight, I most likely wouldn't have been able to avoid this.

His attack just barely grazed the tip of my nose.

There was a slightly tingling pain in my nose.

"..."

My heart started beating really fast.

I wasn't thinking about trying to kill the man.

However, he is trying to kill me.

I just realized that obvious fact.

If I don't get serious I'll be killed.

After thinking that I lowered my hips.

I remember back to my training with Ruijerd and Eris.

The man's beast like movements, if I were to compare them, they are movements that are similar to Ruijerd when he gets serious.

However, this man doesn't carry his body as well as Ruijerd does.

It's just an eccentric movement.

I should be able to do it.

The next time he comes with a counter...

Just as I was thinking that, I realized the man's movements had stopped.

After taking a look around I realized the panties I had been using to hide my face had fallen to the ground.

This is bad my face was seen?

"Are you Rudi...?"

Rudi.

There is only one man who would call me by that name.

Then that dumbfounded voice, mixed with anger, wasn't a drunk voice, but something I was used to hearing.

"...Father?"

—

The first meeting with Paul Greyrat in a while, his cheeks had sunken in quite a bit, there were bags under his eyes, his face was unshaven, hair unkempt, his breath smelled of alcohol, and his entire body was slumped over.

It looked nothing like the Paul in my memories.

–Paul's Perspective–

When I woke up, I had realized I was in the middle of a meadow in a grassland.

It was a grassland.

There were no other words to describe it other than 'grassland'.

It was nothing more than a completely ordinary piece of grassland with nothing particular about it, but strangely, it had about a sense of familiarity.

I spent a few minutes trying to figure out where this was.

I remembered.

This was the southern part of Asura Kingdom.

It's near the town I once stayed in.

During that time, I was learning the Water God Style swordsmanship in the town.

In other words, it was close to Lilia's home.

I thought this was a dream. It was only natural to think so.

Even so, it was quite the nostalgic place.

How many years did I live here? One year, or was it two?

I only remembered that it was not a very long time.

My memories mostly only included those of the dojo. I remembered the senior disciple.

He was a despicable guy.

A person who only knew how to run off his mouth.

He was a bastard who fiercely drummed the threat into my head that it was not my right to go beyond him once he saw my talent.

I hate those type of senior-junior and superior-inferior relationships.

I had run away from home because I had to hold my head down to my father as well.

Still, my father was better compared to him. How do I explain this, it was because he possessed power.

However, that senior of mine did not possess any power at all.

He was merely a small fry that had developed immense narcissism by running off his mouth.

When I had trained to reach the intermediate level, that guy was still hanging around at the end of the elementary level.

That was a guy of low caliber.

Even within the main dojo, that was their best of the senior Water God Style swordsmen.

They just kept coming up with different excuses with how their lack of competence was caused by this or that.

I had thought that someday I would show the true strength of my power to those guys.

Although, at the very end, I wasn't able to show that guy my own strength at all.

There were many things I wasn't able to put up with. Like the crime I had committed against Lilia, so I ran away.

I had more or less aimed at this from the beginning, the fact that I had wanted to trample on what was considered precious to them.

Those guys started to look for me in a frenzy ever since I fled.

I left the country in order to ridicule them.

When I think back on it, I realized I was a kid back then.

How that senior disciple acted did not matter, the fact was that I did a bad thing to Lilia.

".....nn"

The wind blew.

Dust entered my eyes and I frowned.

Then, the side of the hem of my clothing was pulled.

"Dad...where, is this...?"

"Un?"

Looking closely, Norn was clinging tightly to my chest.

She was looking at me with an anxious face.

So finally, I let go of my house coat, and noticed I was standing on the prairie.

The soles of my feet were feeling the texture of the ground clearly.

The warmth of Norn.

This was not a dream.

"...What's with this?"

I do not understand why I was here.

If I was alone then I would have thought it was a dream to the end.

However, there was Norn clinging to my chest.

Norn born three years ago.

Tiny Norn.

My cute daughter.

I rarely come into contact with my daughters.

Since I was hoping to become a strict father, I usually avoid physical contact with them.

So why would I be embracing Norn...?

...Oh right.

I remember.

Just until awhile ago, I was talking to Zenith at home.

It was just a talk about nothing special.

"As our daughters grow bigger, they'll start to resist contact with their father, so it's alright for you to stop holding back, just for now."

"No, no, I am aiming to become a dignified father. Unlike Rudeus, Norn seems to be more mundane, so I'll have to be more aware of how I act as a father now."

"So it's not like you dislike her after all then."

"...Yeah, then I'll hug her after all... "

It was such a conversation.

Nearby, Lilia was teaching Aisha something.

Lilia was going to let Aisha go through specialized education.

I opposed her saying that we should let them grow more freely but I was strongly overpowered by Lilia.

Aisha was growing quickly.

Anything taught was memorized immediately, just as how she also learned how to walk quite fast.

So.

It was at that time that, abruptly, I was wrapped in a bright light.

Oh, I remembered.

The memory continued.

.....That something seems to have happened, I instantaneously realized it.

"......Dad?"

Norn raised her anxious voice as she looks at my face.

"It's all right."

I gently stroked Norn's head.

Then I looked over my surroundings.

There were no signs of Lilia or Zenith.

Whether they were nearby, or if I was the only one blown away, Norn was together with me.

Why I wonder?

...I remember.

In the labyrinths, there was one time where I was caught in some atrocious trap.

It seems to have been some sort of teleportation magic that we had triggered.

It was lucky of me that I had been transported to somewhere close at that time.

Elinalise at that time had grabbed onto the hem of my clothes and was fuming.

It was the sort of trap that spells instant death if you were unlucky.

The monkey scout that had been caught up in the trap was never found... Such a story doesn't matter.

In summary, only the person that was in contact with you during that instant would get teleported with you.

This was why Norn was with me.

However, why?

Why has such a thing happened?

It's way too abrupt.

Whose handiwork was this?

There were many enemies around me.

It wouldn't be strange for whoever it was to do it.

However, this was teleportation.

Teleportation is another story.

There was no casting used for the teleportation magic.

Therefore, items imbued with magic or magic products were used.

Teleportation-imbued magic items were considered to be illegal no matter where in the world.

The magic for teleportation was designated as a forbidden technique and has become long lost.

In order to take revenge on me, a single person, why was there a need to go through such lengths, through such a dangerous path?

Also, how come the place I was transported to was such a barren field?

No way.

A disciple of the dojo was one of the culprits involved?

A thought suddenly surfaced in my mind.

In order to get to Lilia, they had me moved.

This place I was at was supposed to be a hint.

By the time I return home, Lilia and Zenith might have already been sullied by a vulgar man.

Damn it, it seems to be an idea they would come up with.

"Hey, father."

"Norn, it's alright. We'll return home immediately."

As I kept murmuring that to myself, we headed towards the town.

Fortunately, in case where something were to happen, Asura gold coins were concealed inside the sheathe of the sword.

The sword was to always be worn at all times, which was a habit formed from my time as an adventurer.

It was not to be removed even when sleeping.

The only time it could be allowed to be removed was when feeling up a woman.

The adventurers' card was also placed within the sheathe.

It was for times like these.

I went to the Adventurers Guild in order to exchange the money.

Eight large copper coins and nine pieces of silver.

The commission fee was raised before I knew it.

Although this amount was plenty enough.

A quick check around the Adventurers Guild request board was made, and since there was a request for an urgent delivery, I immediately accepted it.

The lady at the reception desk updated the magical power to the adventurer card along with the accepted request.

After realizing the rank written on the card was S, she showed a surprised face.

The reason as to why she was shocked was not because S rank adventurers were rare but rather the fact that I had accepted such a quest.

Usually, such delivery quests can be accepted regardless of rank because of the urgency but it's still commonly considered as an E rank request.

Usually, I would not bother hiding the reason behind it but explaining it was troublesome so I didn't.

I readily held out one silver coin.

How many years had it been since I prepared for traveling?

It's been a long time but I still remembered clearly what was needed.

The preparations were finished in no time.

I had also rented out a horse from the Adventurers Guild.

I'm glad that there was a request for urgent delivery.

Of the many benefits of the S rank, renting out a free horse on such a request was one of them.

Of course, that didn't necessarily mean that I was going to return it immediately once the request was finished.

This time, I headed out in a different direction from the delivery.

I feel bad for the client, but I'm also in an emergency.

These horses that have been bought were definitely good ones for sure.

My luck was good.

This just goes to show how much of an emergency it was.

There could possibly be a chance of having my adventurer's status revoked for taking advantage of its benefits, but so be it.

I had not intended to continue living on as an adventurer in the first place.

Norn was placed on top of the horse and I jumped onto its back.

Immediately, we set off from the town.

Norn became sick on the way.

I was in too much of a hurry.

Norn had absolutely no experience riding, even more so to have to continue moving throughout the day and night, even when she's still just a child.

Extra time was taken to nurse Norn, and so by the time we reached the Fedoa region, two months had already passed.

This was the number of days that it would've taken it if I had used the horse-drawn carriage in the first place.

Therefore, the delivery request had already been failed long ago.

The fine was not a big deal though.

Though, I was in despair.

Before we reached the village of Buina, I had already realized the gravity of the situation.

The entire Fedoa region had disappeared.

I had sunk in to the polar regions of confusion.

What had happened?

Where's the Buina village that I had known?

Zenith?

Lilia?

The walled city of Roa was not there anymore either.

Then, wouldn't that mean that Rudeus was gone as well?

Stupid...

Unknowingly, I had my knees fall onto the ground.

"Annihilation from the Teleportation trap."

Such words swirled inside my head.

The adventurer era.

I had heard many times about labyrinths, that the number one trap to be wary of was teleportation traps.

The party will fall apart without even knowing the location of their comrades.

It is one of the absolute worst traps that we shouldn't get caught up in.

I have heard many stories of parties that had been caught up in such a trap and most would end up wiped out.

If any parties were to be caught in such a trap, they should all find their way back to the entrance to rendezvous.

Otherwise, those that were unable to come out would most likely be dead.

Any men who would hear of such a story would end up with a stunned look on their faces.

But, surely.

In such a place like this.

I...

"Dad...we're still not home yet?"

With those words, I returned to reality.

My daughter of a mere three years old, had grabbed onto the hem of my clothes.

I silently hugged Norn.

"Dad? What is it?"

Yes.

I am a dad.

A father.

My daughter still doesn't know what had happened yet.

But, because of me, she can have peace of mind.

I am a dad.

A father.

Do not show any weaknesses.

I must retain a resolute attitude.

It is so.

Teleportation's a terrible trap indeed.

I do not know why we had ended up in such a situation.

But, I am alive.

Zenith was even a former adventurer as well.

Even Lilia, although not as strong as she used to be, could still use a sword.

Aisha...

I remember, at that time, at that moment, Lilia was in contact with Aisha right?

...I can't remember clearly.

No, do not give up.

At that time, Lilia was holding Aisha's hand.

Let us think that is true for now.

While returning the borrowed horse to the nearest town, I tried to collect some information.

It seems that the disaster took place throughout the entire Fedoa region.

Sauros and Phillip are both missing, and his brother is the lord now.

But, it doesn't seem that Phillip's brother is going to take responsibility and intervene in the downfall of this disaster at any moment.

They're too concerned about themselves to bother lending a helping hand.

It seems, rather than to protect the people under one's own dominion, he would rather care about himself.

The Asura nobles are absolutely repugnant because of this.

While I was gathering information, an old man named Alphonse made contact with me.

He was the butler that had been serving under Phillip.

He had sworn allegiance towards the Greyrat house.

Even under such a situation, he did not harbor any other selfish thoughts of his own.

He had even used his own property in order to start the construction of refugee camps.

Alphonse had said that he wanted my help. When he heard me ask him [Why me?], he responded saying that he had heard about me from Phillip.

Phillip had said,

"He is a person who puts in effort in the case of an emergency, but since he doesn't have the power to see ahead, he's an unreliable person that gets himself in trouble because of his own mistakes."

The story goes like that. That's none of your business.

Alphonse seemed to have been hesitant whether to attempt to contact me, but considering that I was Rudeus' father, he took up the chance to offer cooperation.

I was just following the conversation but became delighted that Rudeus has been evaluated so highly even by the house butler.

I willingly accepted and followed Alphonse's instructions.

Then one month passed.

Alphonse continuously borrows and collects volunteers as well as funds from various kinds of places while using them to expand the refugee camp.

What superb ability.

I, on the other hand, find and gather the lost people to the refugee camps while establishing and organizing the "Fedoa region's Search Group".

The network had spread to all places, trying to save those that had turned into refugees.

However, my purpose was not to save strangers, but to help to find my family.

By that time, the power attained over the place was large enough to be compared to a king and Alphonse was gaining steady funds for the reconstruction of the camps.

I left a note in the refugee camps, saying I was aiming for and heading to the Holy Milis Kingdom's headquarters, the Adventurers Guild.

Milis and Asura, if I was able to successfully connect these two then information could easily be obtained between them.

This was the judgment I had made.

Anyone and everyone would easily be found.

That was what I had thought at that time.

I was too naive.

Half of a year's time has passed while I was active in Milis.

A considerable number of people had been transported to the Milis Continent.

All of them were rescued, one after another.

Some within the group were sold as slaves.

I had decided to save them all.

It's said that if you were to free slaves by force, you would end up going against the Milis Kingdom's law.

But, Zenith and Lilia could have possibly ended up as slaves as well.

If that were to be the case, then there's no need for any hesitation even if it were to be a crime.

I will save them all.

I kept that sort of attitude.

That way, in any sort of situation, I will remember what am I doing is for a just cause.

I do not allow any sort of precedent or reason to sway my decision.

Thinking about that, I realized that I could rely on Zenith's house.

Zenith's family is a house of powerful nobles in the Milis Kingdom.

Prestigious and known to have bore many excellent knights.

I made a commitment to rely on them.

The refugee rescue was advancing nicely as well.

Thanks to the early start of the movement, many of the people in need of help were found immediately.

Many of those from the Fedoa region had indeed been teleported over to the Milis Continent.

Those that had to go back by foot were given travel expenses in order to assist them.

The elderly and children that the Fedoa Region Search Group had found were provided with a place to rest.

Those that had become slaves also needed gold to purchase back their freedom, along with the power of the Zenith family.

If all else were to fail, then we would resort to looking for a chance to kidnap them back.

Of course, a problem surfaced.

The Milis Kingdom's nobles became aware of the fact that I was the one in charge of the recent disappearance and theft of slaves, and so many sent their own private armies to attack me.

Many members ended up dead because of that, but I did not stop.

What we were doing were justified.

We were right in saving people, and so the search group continued to follow me.

I used the status of a senior noble of the Asura Kingdom's Greyrat family, the house of Zenith and the fact that I was a former Adventurer in order to solve our problems.

However, not even one single piece of information of Lilia or Zenith came to me.

Not to mention, the same went for Rudeus as well.

That son of mine, wherever he would be, he would still stand out with overflowing information and rumors, but unfortunately, it did not enter my network at all.

One year had passed.

It became a year in no time at all.

At this point in time the reports of discoveries become quite varied and confusing, as well as more infrequent than before.

There are those that were found to be roughly in the middle of the Milis continent and the central southern continent.

There are still some villagers who have still not yet been found, and others are still trapped as slaves.

To this degree, the liberation of the slaves was proceeding according to plan.

The first priority is to secure custody of them, even if it required using brute force.

I also realized that this is an abomination to many of the nobles, so much so that they can't turn a blind eye towards us.

The situation worsened due to the fact that many of our members were attacked and either killed or seriously injured.

There are even some members who blamed me for it.

We could have done better, not to mention I didn't expect us to be in such a situation.

Even so, my attitude did not change.

It's too late to afford a change.

Recently, more reports of discovery of refugees' deaths have come up.

They weren't that recent or ambiguous.

There have been many death reports since the beginning.

To be frank, the reports of death were more overwhelming than those of survivors.

Eto, Chloe, Rawls, Bonnie, Lane, Marion, Montie...

Every single time I hear the death report of an acquaintance, my spine goes cold.

There were some who broke down from the reports.

There were also those who we were one step behind from preventing their suicide.

There were others who ended up blaming me, asking why didn't I look into that place sooner.

Each and every time, I grew into an even more desolate mood.

Then, as time flows by, even the death reports became ambiguous.

The person might be dead.

A corpse of that looked like that person might have been found.

In the depths of the forest, someone could have seen someone who looks like that person.

When I thought about it more clearly, the actions we have taken have ended up as vain effort for way too many.

Information about my family still did not come up.

I thought that I might have failed.

We should have looked into the magic continent and the northern part of the central continent.

If they had become slaves in those places, then they might still be alive.

What could have been put off should have been put off.

The first choice should have been to search within those dangerous places.

No, impossible.

Most members of the search team were not suited to fighting.

The majority of them were the original town's farmers.

Some of them were adventurers but they were too few in number and of those that I had known, I had sent them to suitable places.

For the rest of the members of the Fedoa Region's Search Group, if they were to be sent to the northern part of the Magic continent, the Central Continent, and the Begaritto Continent, they wouldn't be able to stand in the midst of battle.

Those sent to rescue would need rescuing.

Therefore, my choice was not wrong.

Thanks to the decisions I had made, I was able to save thousands of refugees.

Or perhaps, if I was able to make contact with those of "Fangs of the Black Wolf", I would have been able to search the Begaritto Continent and the Magic Continent as well.

Unfortunately, I was only able to get in touch with a single person.

Also, that one person whom after I had made contact with once, I no longer knew where he was or what he was doing.

I do not think that they were cold-hearted guys.

The relationship between us was bad originally, and I also had a big fight with them during our parting.

It was the worst farewell ever.

It would not be strange even if they were to still have a grudge against me.

Why in the past did I make that kind of farewell?

I know, it was because I was a kid.

That being said, I cannot begin to regret now.

A year and a half has passed.

These days, the amount I'm drinking has increased.

It has become a fact that I am unable to do anything unless I resort to alcohol.

I'm drinking from morning till night.

There's no time when I'm sober.

Even while I think I should not be like this when I wake up in the middle of the night, whatever I do becomes completely useless.

I would have thoughts that my family has died.

What was their death like, what became of their corpses?

All I would end up thinking of were such things.

After all, even with that excellent son of mine, I still had not heard of even one thing of him ever since the disaster.

I do not want to think.

I do not want to think, and even possibly consider their deaths.

Surely everyone during this one and a half years was waiting for my help and then ended up dying in tears.

When I think about that, I almost become mad.

Why am I in such a place?

Out of all the possible choices, it would have been best if I had started looking in the most dangerous places.

Even at worst, I alone could have somehow worked it out.

Any mistake in my decisions contributes directly to those who had died, those that could have been saved but weren't.

Those that we hold dear to us, those who were the most important to us, were mercilessly taken away.

Rather than wanting to believe it, I drink away my sorrows.

Only when I was drunk was I happy.

I was unable to do any work at all.

Six months later, the plan to return all of those found in the Milis Continent back to the Fedoa region begins.

I just can't move those who were ill, the women, the children, and the elderly recklessly like that.

There are people that cannot withstand the long trip even if there was a gold coin each for their travel expenses.

But we have hope with us as well as the will to return home.

Those of us within the Fedoa Region's Search Group escorted them back to Fedoa.

While the plan was progressing, even though I was responsible for them, I did not participate at all in the meetings, and instead I just drank all day.

All of the key members, including me, remained in Milis.

But in the end, the searching activities were reduced.

Two years.

The search movement will stop after two years.

While I think that it is still too early, there were others who thought that this was it.

Even if we were to search more, we would just be wasting money in vain.

In the end, I wasn't able to find even one family member.

Such a useless man.

Why in the world was I so useless?

Always a mere kid, not fit to be an adult even to the ends of time.

The teams members all started to take a step's distance away from me who was now always drunk and filled with the smell of booze.

This was natural.

No one would want to be acquainted with such a fool of a man who only drinks all day.

However there were some exceptions, one of which was Norn.

"Dad! Just a moment ago, a huge man was there."

Even when I was this drunk, Norn would still talk to me so joyfully.

Norn.

For me, Norn is my only family now.

She's my most important person in the entire world.

To me, there is only Norn.

Right.

I didn't even go to the Begaritto Continent or Magic Continent.

This was because of the presence of Norn.

My daughter who's only four years old right now, how could I abandon her?

Why should I leave her behind and go to such a dangerous place where I might die?

"Oh? What is it Norn? Have you encountered anything fun?"

"Yeah! When I almost fell into the ditch awhile ago, a bald person helped me! So, this! I got this!"

While saying that, Norn held up what was in her hands happily.

It was an apple. A red apple. A most appetizing color indeed.

"I see, that's good. Did you thank him properly?"

"Yes, I said 'Thank you'. The bald uncle then stroked my head!"

"I see, I see. A good person. But, you shouldn't go calling him bald since it might bother him."

Conversations with my daughter were always fun.

Norn's my treasure.

If there was anyone who would dare lay a hand on her, I would be ready to go against the entire Milis Kingdom.

It was at that time when I was thinking about that...

"Leader, it's very bad!"

One of my team members jumped into my room.

Interrupting a conversation with my precious daughter, I was feeling a little cranky.

If it was like always, I would just reply back at him while yelling my lungs off.

However, with my daughter besides me, my pride held me back.

"What's the matter?"

"I was doing the work you assigned to me when we were attacked!"

"Attacked?"

They were attacked.

By whom?

It must be those damn nobles.

We told to them that those under the Asura Kingdom's dominion were wrongfully forced into slavery after the disaster.

Even so, they did not budge nor hand them over, those greedy bastards.

That was the story today, they sent people over to take their slaves back.

"All right, everyone, quickly get equipped. Let's go!"

For now, we called out for everyone to gather together.

They weren't a bunch of powerful fighters but it wasn't like their opponents were strong adventurers that have fought through labyrinths.

They should be able to at least fight neck to neck with them.

While they gather, I headed off to where the problem had occurred.

The place should be close by, where I can immediately jump in.

The Search Team's secret headquarters were a bunch of old warehouses where clothing and other sorts of items were stored.

It was a place someone was bound to discover.

This is bad. It may be necessary to change the base.

"Mr. Paul, the enemy is only one but he is strong, be careful."

"...he uses a sword?"

"No, it's a magician. Probably a kid, but he has his face covered."

A magician brat...

Possibly an amateur, though with that said, how would he defeat us with so many adults as his opponents?

It would probably be someone from the Dwarf race.

With a small stature like a child, he can easily fool us into thinking he's a mere kid.

An opponent of the dwarf race.

Even drunk, I should still be able to win.

I am confident that I wouldn't be defeated by these mere thugs, but...

Nope, there's no problem.

I have more than enough options in terms of fighting abilities.

Thinking so, I continued on to the warehouse.

The inn Paul was staying at was the 『Dawn of the Door Inn』. Next door is a slightly larger than usual inn.

Inside is a circular wooden table with ten seats. I sit on one of them. Paul is sitting in front of me.

Though it's still the daytime, all the seats are filled up. The guys I knocked out were healed by some healing magician allies of Paul, and they were sitting around as well. It goes without saying, but the looks they were giving me weren't particularly good. It seems that everyone here is Paul's companion.

The one I notice in particular is the person behind Paul. Sitting there is a female warrior. Her hair is short and chest-nut colored, curling outwards. Her lips are a bit pouty and she gives a charming impression. Worthy of special mention is her figure.Large breasts, a slim waist, and a full butt, covered up by the so-called bikini armor. She's a girl in her late teens.

Indeed, it's the female warrior that Paul called Vera.

Even with one look, I can tell that she's got the kind of figure that Paul is fond of.

That bikini armor isn't very unusual in this world. It's a world where a small wound can easily be fixed with healing magic. Assuming that they'd just block attacks, they'd prefer light weight armors. Things like chainmail would get in the way. There are a lot of swordsmen who think this way. It's likely that she's one of them.

Still, it's the first time I've seen someone so lightly dressed. Normally above some thin clothing they'd wear armor on their joints, like their shoulders and elbows. Even if she isn't dressed that way because we're in a bar, she could have worn an overcoat or something. At the very least, the young women I've seen up until now on the Demon Continent were like that. Isn't she cold in a get-up like that?

I've heard that because of the 7 towers in Milis, the climate is always stable here. I wonder if that's why she's fine? Well, let's just assume so for now. It's eye-pleasing.

While I'm looking at her, our eyes suddenly meet.

I was winked at.

I returned the wink.

"Oi, Rudi... Rudi?"

When Paul speaks to me, the female warrior and I break off our gazes.

"Father, it's been a while."

"What, Rudi... you survived, huh?"

Paul spoke with a tired voice. How do I say this... he's really changed.

He hasn't shaved properly, his hair is a mess, his breath reeks of alcohol, and his whole body gives off a peevish impression.

He doesn't look at all like the Paul in my memories.

"Well... yeah..."

At any rate, my mind can't keep up.

Why is Paul here?

This is Milishion.

It's as far from Asura as Africa is from Mongolia.

Is he here to search for me?

No, he shouldn't have known that I was teleported to the Magic Continent.

In that case, for a different matter, huh?

What about his job protecting the Buina village?

"And so, why are you here, Tou-sama?"

Thinking that I should ask this first, in response Paul looked surprised.

"[Why?] you ask, you saw the message didn't you?"

"Message... you say?"

Message.

What message?

I don't recall seeing anything like that.

Seeing me obviously confused, Paul frowned.

Could it be that I said something that upset him?

"Oi, Rudeus. What have you been doing up until now?"

"Even if you ask that, it was pretty rough, you know."

I'm the one who wants to know what's going on.

While thinking this, I recounted my journey up until now.

About how I had been transported to the Magic Continent, I had been saved by a certain Demon race person, how I became an adventurer, and about the year I had spent with Eris on the Magic Continent.

Thinking about it, it had been a pretty fun trip. From the troubles we had at the start, as well as the half year we had lived as adventurers; we had experienced quite a lot.

It might have been because of that, but I gradually became more talkative, and started to talk more passionately about the events that had occurred while I was journeying. Everything that I had said was completely non-fiction; a great big spectacle.

I had separated my journey into three parts:

The first was meeting Ruijerd and becoming friends with him, and then the chaos at Rikarisu town.

The second was about the Great Magician Rudeus helping Ruijerd, and his journeying to reform the world.

The third was about how some cowardly Beast People had captured me, and my desperate struggles in captivity.

Though I had dramatized a few parts, I began to speak more smoothly, and gradually my gestures became more joyful and I started to tell the story while making exaggerated sound effects.

By the way, I had left out the stuff about the Hitogami.

"And so when we got to Wind Port, what we saw was..."

"..."

Around the time when I had finished telling the second part, the 『The Journey of 3 Black-listed People Through the Magic Continent – Empathy Arc』, I suddenly stopped talking.

Paul had become sullen.

His face had distorted into an irritated expression, and he was tapping his finger on the table.

I might have upset him somehow.

Without understanding, I was about to continue my story.

"After that, we headed to the Great Forest."

"That's enough."

In an irritated voice, Paul cut me off.

"That you spent the last year gallivanting about, I understand quite well now."

I became just a little irritated at Paul's words.

"I had quite a tough time as well you know."

"Just what was tough about it?"

"Eh?"

When he had asked that in return, I let out a strange voice.

"From your tone, I didn't feel like you had even an ounce of hardship."

That's because I told it like that.

Though, certainly I may have gotten a bit carried away.

"Hey, Rudi. There's one thing I'd like to ask."

"What is it?"

"You, why didn't you gather information about the other people who had been teleported while you were on the Magic Continent?"

I stayed silent.

I had no choice but to stay silent.

Even if he asked me [Why?] I had no way to answer.

There was only one way to reply.

There was only one reason.

It was because I had forgotten.

At first we had struggled with all our strength, however even when we had room to breathe again, I hadn't even once thought that there might've been people besides us on the Demon Continent.

"I-, I had forgotten... We didn't have the time to, and..."

"Didn't have the time? Even though you had the time to help out some demon you didn't know, you didn't have the time to concern yourself about the other people who had been teleported?"

I stay silent.

I had gotten my priorities wrong.

Now that he mentions it, certainly that may have been the case.

Still, don't ask me this after it's already happened.

I had really forgotten at that time.

I can't be helped, right?

"Hah! Without searching for others, without writing a single letter, together with that cute, cute ojou-san like you were on a picnic, living as an adventurer. Not only that, you had a strong guard to escort you. And then, hah, when you first came to Milishion you saw a kidnapping, and put panties on your head and played hero?"

Paul sighs at me in ridicule, and reaches for the jug of alcohol on the neighboring table. He drank half of it in a gulp, then spat as if to make fun of me.

Because that gesture was unabashedly making fun of me, I became irritated. Though I won't tell him to stop drinking, aren't we in the middle of an important discussion?

"Even I've had to deal with one thing after another. I had decided that in a situation where I couldn't tell left from right, I would protect only Eris... Various things had happened, so it couldn't be helped, right?"

"It's not like I'm blaming you or anything."

He had spoken in a tone that ridiculed me. Finally, I began to raise my voice.

"In that case, why are you picking a fight with me!?"

I reached the limits of what I could endure. I don't understand why Paul is saying things like this.

"Why, you ask?"

Once again, Paul spits.

"I should be asking you that."

"What about me?"

I can't comprehend it. What is he trying to say?

"Was that Eris you mentioned, Phillip's daughter?"

"Eh? Ah, of course she is."

"I've never seen her, but she's definitely quite the cute ojou-san huh? Was not sending letters because you thought the number of guards around her would increase, and it'd get in the way of your flirting?"

"Didn't I just say that I had forgotten?"

I hadn't thought of anything but that.

Certainly, Eris really does have good standing.

The Greyrat family is huge.

Possibly, had we spoken to the lord of Saint Port, we might have gained one or two guards.

But I had explained that at that time I had been caught by the Beast People and so... oh, I hadn't explained, huh? I hadn't gotten up to that part yet.

Even so.

I aimed to do the things that I could, in my own way.

Though I didn't manage to do everything in the best way possible, that doesn't give him the right to blame me like this.

"Leader. How about leaving it there? He's still young so even if he had said a little too much, it can't be helped, right?"

When I became silent, the bikini warrior from before had come from behind and placed her hands on Paul's shoulders. Seeing this, I laugh in scorn.

In the end, it's this sort of thing.

Though this man speaks high and mightily, he's a man who won't discriminate when it comes to women.

He's that sort of man.

He isn't in a position to say anything to me.

I haven't laid my hands on Eris once.

Certainly there were close calls.

There were times when I was ruled by my desires as well.

But I never did lay my hands on her.

"When it comes to women, I don't want to be told this by you, Tou-sama."

"...Huh?"

Paul's eyes glaze over in irritation. I don't notice.

"What's the deal with the woman over there?"

"What about Vera?"

"Do Mother<–Esteemed mother (Kaa-sama)–> and Lilia know that you have such a beautiful woman nearby?"

"...They don't. There's no way that they would."

Paul's expression warps into one of regret but I don't see it. I was deluded into thinking that I was winning the argument.

"So you're cheating as much as you like, then? You've had her put on quite the erotic outfit. It seems that the day when I get a new brother or sister is close at hand, huh?"

Before I realize.

Before I realize, I had been hit, and was on the ground.

Paul is making a vicious expression and is looking down at me.

"Don't fuck around, Rudi."

I had been hit.

Why?

Shit.

"Oi, Rudi. Since you're here, it means that you passed by Saint Port, didn't you?"

"And what about it?"

"Then you should know, right!?"

I don't know what's going on anymore.

Just that Paul is hiding something, and that though I don't know about it, he's blaming me because he thinks it's natural that I do.

Don't fuck around with me.

Even I have things that I don't know.

There's heaps of things that I'd like to know about.

"I don't know!"

I raised my fist and struck at Paul.

It's avoided.

At the same time, I activate my demon eye.

<My leg gets caught, and I'm toppled>

I stamp on Paul's leg with all my might.

I then spin around and aim for Paul's chin.

<He avoids it and strikes back at the counter>

He moves really well for a drunk person.

I gather mana into my right arm.

I still can't match Paul in close quarters combat.

However, if I use magic it isn't a problem.

I create a tornado with my right hand, and Paul is sent flying.

"Whoa!?"

Paul flies spinning through the air, and is thrown behind the counter.

With a crash, he sends the jug of alcohol flying, and falls onto the bed.

"Shit! You've fucking done it now!"

He immediately gets up but his legs are tired.

This idiot drank too much.

In the past, Paul was stronger than this.

It's likely that even in that position, he would have evaded my tornado.

"Rudi, you bastard..."

Another woman rushes over to the stumbling Paul. Even though he surrounds himself with women, he really dared to says all those things to me.

"Don't touch me!"

Paul shakes her off and walks in front of me.

"Paul, just how many women did you cheat with while I was gone?"

"Shut the hell up!"

<He swings his right fist towards me>

It's a really unsightly, telegraphed punch.

Is this really the same Paul?

This is an attack that I can avoid even without my demon eye.

I grip that arm and perform a one-arm shoulder throw.

Of course I can't do anything like Judo.

I had used wind magic to kick us off and like that, I forcefully threw him.

"Guhah...!"

It seems that he didn't even perform an ukemi properly.

{ C-Editor's note: Ukemi is a martial arts term that refers to rolls and other break falls. }

I don't actually know if the technique exists in this world, though.

I mount Paul who had clumsily fallen to the floor.

The same way that Eris usually does, I check both his arms with my knees, and neutralize any resistance.

"I've been trying my best, too!"

I hit him.

I hit him.

I hit him.

Paul endures it and looks at me in hatred.

Shit.

What's with those eyes.

Why do I have to be looked at like that.

"There was no helping it, right!? I was at a place I knew nothing about! There wasn't anyone I knew! Even then I somehow managed to make it here! Why do I have to be reproached like this!?"

"...Since it was you, you should have done things better!"

"I couldn't!"

After that, I wordlessly hit Paul again and again.

Paul didn't say a word, and while bleeding from his mouth, just continued to look at me.

In an irritated way.

Like he was looking at someone who couldn't be reasoned with.

Why?

He shouldn't have been a person who would look at me like this.

Shitt...

Shit.

"Stop itttttttt!"

At that time, something had flown at me from the side and bumped into me.

Because of the impact I had staggered, and in that instant Paul thrust me away and stood up.

I prepare myself for an attack.

However, Paul didn't move.

In the space between us stood a single little girl.

"Stop it already!"

She has a nose a lot like Paul's, and golden hair a lot like Zenith's.

I understand with just a glance.

It's Norn.

My younger sister.

She's gotten quite big.

If I remember correctly, she's five now, right?

No, has she already turned six?

Why is she facing me with her arms spread apart like that?

"Don't bully father!"

I receive those words, stunned.

Bully?

No, I mean...

Eh?

Norn is glaring at me with eyes that are about to cry.

I suddenly look around, and for some reason...

Looks of criticism are gathered on me.

"...What's with this?"

My heart suddenly runs cold.

I recall that incident from decades ago.

It was the time when I was bullied.

At that time as well, I had slightly misspoken and was looked at with criticism from everyone in the classroom.

Ahh, that's right.

I've said something wrong.

I give up.

My heart is broken.

I don't care anymore.

I'm going home.

I didn't see anything.

I don't know anything.

I'll head back to the inn and wait for Eris and Ruijerd.

Then I'll depart immediately.

Tomorrow, or the day after tomorrow.

Even if it's not the capital, we can still make money, so who cares.

There should be an adventurers guild in Westport as well.

"Rudi. It wasn't just you that was teleported. Everyone in Buina village was wrapped up in the teleportation disaster too."

Paul says something and I dimly hear it.

...

Eh?

What, just now, what?

"We had left messages at Saint Port, and Westport as well. At the adventurer's guild. You became an adventurer, didn't you? Why didn't you see them...?"

Even if you say that, there wasn't anything at...

No, that's right.

I never went to the adventurer's guild in Saint Port.

Since after I went to pick up Ruijerd, I ended up at the Dorudia Clan's village.

"While you were happily travelling, countless people died."

Countless people.

That scale.

A magical disaster.

A teleportation disaster.

Why didn't I realize it?

That Hitogami said 『Large Scale Magical Disaster』.

Why did I think that Buina village would be fine?

I see.

Everyone is missing...

"In other words... Sylphy as well?"

When I say that, Paul once again makes an irritated expression.

"Rudi. You're more concerned about a woman than your own mother?"

I gulp.

"K-, Kaa-sama is still missing!?"

"Yeah. I couldn't find her at all! Lilia as well!"

Paul's bitter words hit me like a slap.

I stagger like I'd been hit.

My legs are unsteady.

I feel like I'm going to collapse.

In front of me is a chair.

I somehow manage to lean on it.

"To search for the missing people, we formed into a search party organization."

A search party.

I see.

In other words, the people here are the search party?

"B-, but why would a search party kidnap people?"

"There are those who became slaves as well."

Slaves.

Having been teleported, without knowing where they are, they're deceived, and then made into slaves...

And apparently there are a great number of people like this.

Paul and his group seem to compare slaves one by one against the missing person list, and earnestly ask the owner for their freedom. However, among them are many who don't want to part with the slaves that they've obtained. According to Milisian law, no matter the circumstances, once a person is made a slave they are the property of their master.

That's why Paul decided to forcefully abduct the slaves.

Stealing slaves is of course a crime.

But there's a loophole in this law.

Using this, Paul freed countless slaves.

Of course, if it was according to their wishes, then it would have been fine to leave the slaves.

However, the majority of the slaves begged in tears to be allowed to return to their hometown.

The boy they rescued this time was one of them.

I thought I had seen his face somewhere, that boy was one of those who had bullied Sylphy in the past, Somal.

During this past year, he had been made to live as a prostitute.

Hearing the bitter cries of those who were made into slaves, but among them were those who couldn't be saved.

In other words, there were also those who were neglected by some of the nobles, but couldn't understand the search party's high-handed way of doing things.

From above, from below, they were criticized from all sides.

Though Paul's nerves were worn down each day, he never gave up and continued to give his best.

All for the sake of saving those who were teleported due to the magical calamity.

"Rudi. I thought that you had already noticed the situation long ago, and had already taken action."

At Paul's words, I hang my head without power.

Don't say something so unreasonable...

How exactly was I supposed to realize?

Ahh, but, I see.

I see.

It's possible that during my journey on the Magic Continent, there were people from Fedoa region in one of the towns I passed through.

Had I asked one of them for their stories, I might have realized the severity of the situation.

I was negligent in confirming the situation.

I should have prioritized finding out about the disaster over Ruijerd's situation.

I've failed.

"So for you to have been having a carefree adventure is..."

Thoughtlessness.

Ahh, that's right.

That's right, isn't it?

While I was being aroused by Eris' panties.

While I was being aroused by the bodies of the young women at the adventurers guild.

While I was licking the thighs of the Demon Realm's Great Empress.

While I was groping the bodies of the beast-eared girls...

Paul had been risking his life to find our family.

Of course he's angry.

"..."

Only, I can't apologize.

Because it couldn't be helped, right?

How should I say this?

It's because I thought that I had been trying my best at that time.

"..."

Paul doesn't say a thing.

Norn is silent too.

However, I can feel from her gaze a strong sense of rejection.

That feeling gouges at me.

It gouges at my heart.

It gouges at my soul.

When I look around, I find that all of Paul's companions had been looking at me with looks of reproach.

Thoughts of my past cross my mind.

It was the day after, when the pictures of me, shown to be naked and inferior, were pasted around the school.

The looks of everyone when I entered the classroom...

The inside of my mind turned pure white.

Before I noticed, I had returned to our inn.

I was collapsed on the bed.

I have no idea.

I have no idea about anything at all.

I don't think about anything.

There was a rustling from inside my clothing.

When I had taken a look, I found writing paper.

I crushed it and threw it away.

I didn't want to do anything.

Thinking about it, it was the first time I was treated coldly by my parents.

Both in my previous life, and my current life.

Something this or that, my parents had spoiled me.

Just now Paul completely rejected me.

That attitude was... that's right.

It was the attitude that my siblings had shown when they had thrown me out of the house.

What did I do wrong?

I don't understand.

I had planned to do things right.

Even when I think back, I hadn't made any fatal errors in judgement.

If I were to venture a guess, it'd be relying on Ruijerd at the beginning.

Even while doubting that God, I had followed his advice and saved Ruijerd.

I tried my best to speak happily about my journey too.

Though there's also the fact I had gotten carried away, I hadn't wanted to worry Paul, and there was also my ego.

'I managed to do all this', I had wanted to say.

To Paul, it's possible that it wasn't funny.

To Paul's companions as well, as expected it wasn't funny.

I really slipped up.

I didn't intend to prioritize Sylphy over my mother.

I mean, Paul and Norn were there.

I had thought that Zenith was alright as well, right?

No, that's an excuse, isn't it?

At that moment, I hadn't thought of Zenith at all.

It was Paul that had brought up the topic of women.

I haven't laid my hands on Eris at all.

I was told off by Paul who had a history of cheating.

That's why I had the right to...

Ahh, so that's how it is?

Could it be that Paul hasn't laid his hands on them?

I see.

If that's the case then of course he'd be mad.

Okay. I feel like I'm a little more collected now.

Alright.

Tomorrow, I'll talk to him one more time.

At any rate, even Paul just got a bit emotional.

Wasn't there a case like this before, as well?

If we talk, he'll understand.

Right, it'll be okay.

Even I worry about my family. It's not like I don't.

That I didn't investigate was because I missed out on the information a little.

Certainly, it's painful that in this year and a half that I could have searched the Magic Continent, I didn't do anything.

Still, I'm still alive.

I'll work things out somehow.

Exactly.

It'll be fine if I properly search for them.

Paul should understand as well.

That in this wide world, just because you didn't find them immediately, doesn't mean that they won't ever be found.

That's why I'll calm Paul down, and we'll work out this time's plan.

We'll focus on places that they haven't searched yet.

I'll lend a hand as well.

If I deliver Eris to Asura, I can continue north to search the northern regions.

Right. First I'll meet Paul...

I'll return to that bar, and meet with Paul...

"...Oopp."

Suddenly I had felt nauseous, and ran to the bathroom.

Like that, I throw everything up.

Even if I understand in theory, my heart isn't cleared up at all.

Because it had been a long time since I had faced rejection from my family, my heart completely broke.

Ruijerd had returned a little after noon.

He had an expression more cheerful than usual, and it seemed like he had obtained something that had been made to look like an envelope. But when he saw me sitting on the bed, he frowned.

"Did something happen?" I was asked.

"My father was in this town."

When I replied as such, Ruijerd's expression grew even more severe.

"...Was something unpleasant said to you?"

"Yeah."

"It's been a while since you've met him, right?"

"Yeah."

"Tell me the details."

Without concealing anything, I told him what happened.

Ruijerd briefly said "Is that so?".

The conversation was paused there.

He left for a while.

In the evening, Eris returned.

Something might have happened because she looks quite excited.

Leaves are stuck to her chest, and there's dirt on her cheeks. However, she looks quite happy.

Considering that appearance, it seems she had a good time goblin hunting.

I'm glad.

"Welcome back."

"I'm back, Rudeus. You know! Ah..."

When I smiled at her, she made a startled expression.

Then like that, she ran over to me.

"Who was it!? Who did this to you!?"

With a frantic expression, she started shaking me by the shoulders.

"It's nothing, you know."

"There's no way that's the case!"

She continued to ask me questions like that several times.

She was persistent, and so without hiding anything, and indifferently, I told her about my conversation with Paul.

I told her about what I had said to him, about what kind of reaction he had, and about what happened.

"What's up with that? That's!"

Hearing my story, Eris became extremely angry.

"To say something so one-sided like that, it's unforgivable! Just how hard does he think you've been working!? For him to say that was playing...! Absolutely unforgiveable! He's disqualified as a father! I'll beat him to death!"

Saying something dangerous, she rushed out of the room with sword in hand.

I didn't have the energy to stop her, and so I saw her off like that.

A few minutes later, Eris returned.

She had been caught by Ruijerd by the scruff of the neck, and was carried in like a cat.

"Let me go!"

"Don't get involved in parent and child fights."

Ruijerd declared as such, and lowered Eris onto the bed.

Eris immediately turned her head to glare at him.

"Even if it's a fight between parent and child, there are still things that you can say and things that you can't!"

"Yeah. But I can understand the feelings of Rudeus' father."

"Then what about Rudeus' feelings!? It's Rudeus! Rudeus who's always easy going, and who'll stay calm even when he's kicked and punched, Rudeus! He's become this depressed!"

"If he's depressed, then console him. If you're a woman, you can do that much, right?"

"Wha-!"

Eris was lost for words, and Ruijerd went downstairs.

Eris who was left in the room looks like she can't calm down, and wanders about, here and there.

Sneaking glances towards me, she sometimes folds her arms in an imposing stance. Like that, she'll open her mouth to say something, but stop, and again she'll wander back and forth.

She can't calm down.

She's like a bear in a zoo.

In the end, Eris sat down next to me.

Meekly.

Without saying a word.

She sits.

She delicately increases the distance.

I wonder what kind of face Eris is making?

I couldn't really see.

I didn't have the composure to look at another's face.

A little time passed by.

I suddenly realized that Eris wasn't by my side.

When I began to wonder where she had gone to, I was embraced tightly from behind.

"It'll be alright. I'm on your side..."

Saying that, Eris held my head.

Soft, hot, and smells a little of sweat.

All of it was something that I had experienced over this past year; it was Eris' scent.

I felt a sense of security.

The feeling of anxiety I had from being rejected by my family, my fear...

I felt like all of it was being swept away.

Eris might already be part of my family.

Had Eris been there in my past life, I might have been saved at an even earlier point.

It was an embrace that let me think that.

"Thank you, Eris."

"I'm sorry, Rudeus. I'm, not really good at this kind of thing after all."

I had turned around and clasped her hand.

They were callused from her sword, strong, and not hands that you could believe belonged to the daughter of an aristocratic family.

They were hands that showed great effort.

"No, you really helped me."

"...Mmmn."

The pieces of my heart had connected, and just a little, my composure returned to me.

While thinking this, and feeling relieved, I entrusted my body weight to Eris.

I'll lean on her for just a little while.

—Paul's Point of View—

I was drinking in a bar.

Since it's almost night the number of customers started to increase.

In reverse the number of group members have decreased.

In the middle of the bar I was sitting at one table, intent on continuing to drink endlessly.

I'm sure my displeasure is hanging in the atmosphere

No one is approaching me.

"Yo, I was looking for you?"

And just as I was thinking a voice called out to me.

After I raised my face a monkey faced man was there with the ends of his mouth raised.

This is the first time in a year since I last saw this face.

"Gisu? You bastard... Where do you think you've been."

"Ohhh, what's this what's this, you're just as displeased as always."

"Obviously."

I clicked my lips together with a bit of a cheh, and then touched the side of my face.

The pain still remains.

The place where I was hit by Rudeus.

I was putting up a strong front, but it probably would have been a good idea to get healing cast after all.

Shit, Rudeus you bastard.

What do you mean [If you have my magic then the Magic Continent is no problem.]

If you have that much room for leisure, then you should have enough to search for people.

On the contrary, you just kept on intending to tell me about eating the meat from Great Land Turtles.

What do you mean by [If I hadn't thought of the idea of creating a pot with earth magic, then there's no way I could have continued eating that crappy tasting meat for another year.]

If you have the time to search for ingredients then there's something else you should have been doing, right.

Shit.

In the end you even suspected me of cheating?

Stop screwing around with me.

Since the teleport incident happened I haven't even once thought about a woman.

I haven't done anything about myself and put it on the shelf, and then you're the one blaming me?

Don't screw with me.

What do you mean you didn't know.

If you had properly investigated while on the Magic Continent, by this time you could have met with either Zenith or Lilia.

Don't screw around with me...

"Hehe.. since you're like that it seems you haven't met yet."

What's so funny Gisu.

While laughing so frivolously it seems he ordered something.

In any case it's probably just alcohol.

This man is a bigger drinker than that dwarf Talhand.

"Paul. Show your face at the Adventurer's Guild tomorrow."

"Why should I?"

"You'll be able to meet with an interesting person."

An interesting person.

Someone who would cure my displeased mood.

The reason why Gisu showed his face today.

And then the person I just met today.

After putting those three together, I realized the answer.

"Rudi, huh?"

After hearing that the monkey face turned sour, and started scratching the side of his head.

"What's this? Did you already know?"

"I met him."

"If that's the case, it doesn't seem like you're very happy. Did you get into a fight?"

A fight.

Well, fight, huh.

It didn't even grow into a fight though?

Shit, after remembering it my face started to ache again.

"What happened Paul, tell me about it."

With that friendly face Gisu moved to the chair next to me.

Since the old days this guy has always been good at listening to other people's worries.

This time as well, it seems even if I say he's meddling, he'll specifically go out of his way to listen.

"Ah, listen to this..."

Then I started to tell Gisu about what just happened a while ago.

The fact that I was happy about the meeting.

Although something made the story awkward and I asked Rudeus to tell me about what he had been doing up until now.

And then Rudeus started to tell me about his journey in an excessively fun tone.

He started to sing about a worthless story of bragging.

Rather than that boasting, there should have been something else you should have done is what I pointed out.

And the fact that he snapped back at me.

And the fact that he pointed out women and I snapped.

And the fact that we fought and I was beaten down.

Gisu just kept listening nodding to himself at specific points.

[Yeah], it seems he's in agreement [I see now], it seems he's understood as he listened.

He was listening with that kind of feeling but at the end he said this.

"You know, aren't you holding your expectations for your son a bit too high?"

"Huh?"

I realized that I had raised my voice in a foolish way.

Over expectation?

What's that?

Towards who?

"I do? Towards Rudi?"

"I mean, think about it a bit more."

While I was perplexed Gisu kept pressing me for an answer while connecting his words.

"That guy is certainly amazing. I've never seen a guy who can use voiceless incantations before. When I heard that he had exterminated dozens of monsters during the past year, shivers ran down my spine. I'm sure that guy Rudeus is in fact a genius that only appears once every hundred years."

That's right. Rudi is a genius.

He's a genius.

A true genius.

He's a guy who could do anything since he was small.

There was a point where I thought he was bad in some places, but he even managed to get that Philip to offer his daughter.

The Philip who always used to denounce me that much.

"Yeah, that's right. He's amazing. After all since he was five years old–"

"However, he's still a brat."

After he cut straight into the conversation I stayed quiet.

"Rudeus is still an 11 year old brat."

Gisu said it once again while reflecting upon it.

"Even you, the time when you left your house was when you were 12 right?"

"Yeah"

"Didn't you use to say anyone younger than 12 is still a brat?"

"What's that mean, what are you trying to say with that."

Rudi is stronger than me.

Certainly I was drinking alcohol today, but even if you took away that fact he had become strong.

Even though I was drunk I was serious.

I seriously used the North God style [Four-legged Form] that I didn't want to use and even went as far as using Sword God style's [Silent Sword].

Even with that, my sword only cut the string of the panties he was wearing on his head.

Rudi wasn't serious at all.

As proof of that, all of the group members were taken down with just minor injuries.

He was fighting while going easy on them, I lost to someone going easy.

I don't know how much stronger he's gotten in the time we hadn't met.

Just, Rudi was already way more clever than I when he was seven years old.

His physical strength should be stronger than mine.

And his head is better than mine.

In that case, it's not surprising that he can do everything better than me.

What does age have to do with it.

"Paul, what were you doing when you were 11 years old?"

"What?"

If I remember correctly, I was learning swordsmanship at my house.

It was an everyday life of being scolded by my father.

Even when I put in a bit of work, he would complain about everything and hit me.

"Do you think the you of that time could have survived on the Magic Continent?"

"Hah, Gisu, that entire premise is strange. Rudi you know, had a strong Demon Race as an escort with him. He knows human language, Demon God language, and Beast God language, he even beat an A rank monster in a single hit! He was together with a guy like a monster escorting him. Even if it wasn't me anyone could fly through the Magic Continent."

"It couldn't be done. You wouldn't be able to do it, absolutely not. Even if you went to Magic Continent right now, you wouldn't be able to return by yourself."

He asserted it while intimidating me.

Gisu is just the same as usual, laughing frivolously.

This guy's smile is just as irritating as always.

"Ha!! Then isn't that all the more reason! He did something I can't do. He's a genius. Rudi is a genius! My son is a genius. He's already a fine adult. There's nothing for me to say. What mistake is there with placing expectations on a guy with the ability to meet them? Right Gisu, am I mistaken?"

"It's mistaken. You're always mistaken."

While continuing to laugh frivolously he started to chug the beer that was brought out.

"Puha... That's good. After all you can't drink something like this in the Great Forest."

"Gisu!"

"I get it, you're loud."

Gisu placed the wooden cup down with a bam sound.

And then he suddenly started talking seriously.

"Paul. You've never been to the Magic Continent before right?"

"What about it?"

I've never been to the Magic Continent.

Though of course I've heard plenty about it from people.

Rumors that it's a dangerous land.

Just by walking down the road monsters start appearing and if you don't eat the monsters you can't live.

However, what's going to happen just from there being a lot of monsters.

"Just as you know, I was born on the Magic Continent. Then ask me, how is the Magic Continent dangerous."

"Come to think of it, I don't remember you ever talking about that. How is it dangerous?"

"First, there are no roads. There's a path, but it's nothing like the ones in Milis Continent and Central Continent, paths with few monsters that are safe don't exist anywhere. No matter where you walk around, C rank or above monsters just come out to attack you."

Certainly I've heard there are a lot of monsters, but C rank?

They're opponents that only come out deep in the forests of the Central Continent.

Either they come in swarms or most of them have some sort of special ability.

"Isn't that exaggerating a bit?"

"No, it's the truth. I'm not saying a single lie right now. Magic Continent is that sort of Continent. In any case, there's a lot of monsters."

Gisu's eyes were serious.

However, even if this guy makes eyes like these, unexpectedly he can lie.

I won't be deceived.

"On such a Continent, even if you call him excellent, a child with no combat experience was suddenly thrown."

"Yeah..."

If he means no combat experience, it must be about Rudi.

Now that he has said it, I've never heard talk of him fighting anyone.

Just, it seemed like he skillfully repelled some kidnappers, and that he couldn't even win against Ghyslaine unless he can open some distance.

I don't know of a swordsman better than Ghyslaine.

If it's getting close to that guy, then Rudi with an appropriate distance, there shouldn't even be 1000 guys in the world who can win.

That's why, having combat experience or not is unrelated talk.

Even that North God, Alex R. Karuman, I've heard without any combat experience, in his first actual combat he cut down and killed a Sword Emperor.

"Then, an adult appeared there who was going to save them. A Demon Race, certainly he was a strong guy. Superd Race. You know right. That Superd race."

"Yeah."

Superd race.

In regards to that matter, honestly I was half in doubt about it.

I heard there were almost none left in the Superd races even on the Magic Continent.

"In a state where he didn't know left from right, there was one existence who appeared he could reach out for. The existence who saved him in a weakened state. However, Superd race are scary. Since you don't know what they'll do if you turn them down after all. That is, he had to grab onto that hand."

"Well, I guess so."

"Then after being saved, the clever Rudeus thought up this idea. [What is this guy's objective?] just like that."

Certainly.

If it's Rudeus he would think that.

I wouldn't realize it, but he's a smart guy in those matters.

Even at that time when he saved Lilia, he showed a discerning eye that you wouldn't think belonged to a child.

"However, there's no way he could figure out the other side's objective."

I'm sure.

Since you don't know what the other side's aim is, it's how people like Gisu live.

"Right now he's saving me, but he might eventually cut us off. Then and there Rudeus thought [In order to not be cut off, I'll sell him a favor.]"

"What's that? Favor? Would it go well?"

"Don't poke fun at it. Even describing it as a favor, it stabs someone in the feelings, and causes a camaraderie to sprout, that kind of thing is good."

Awareness of comrades starts to sprout, huh.

I see now.

If he does that, then I can agree with Rudi's actions.

He did a favor in return for the Superd's protection, and then polished his skills in the case the time he was alone ever came.

It's rational.

You could say Rudeus chose the safest route.

Hnnn, as expected, he can do it well.

"Cheh... if he's thought that far, why can't he do anything beyond that."

After I let those words out, Gisu held up his fingers.

Then he started to go over it one by one.

"In a place for the first time, a first time adventure, now matter how intelligent he is, it was full of things he didn't know about. In order to not be deceived he had no choice other than learning. On top of that he had to deal with a Demon Race who he never knew when he would be betrayed by, and right behind him was something like a little sister who he has no choice but to protect."

While saying it indifferently Gisu folded his fingers, and then finally he brought two together.

"If he had even managed to search for other people who were teleported on top of that he'd be a superman. A superman. It wouldn't be strange for him to be included in the [Seven World Powers] if that were the case."

The [Seven World Powers] huh.

That's a nostalgic name to hear.

In the old days I wanted to become as famous as that as well.

Even if we put aside a parent's overestimation, I think Rudi has enough potential to make it that far though...

"It's clearly overworking. Even if Rudeus is a genius, humans, you know, have limits."

"Why would a person who is pushing right along the borders of his limits, talk about his adventures in such an enjoyable way? No matter how you look at it, that was like a noble who was superficially entering a labyrinth and playing around only to return?"

If it really was that hard for Rudi, then he wouldn't have said it in that way of speaking.

Places where the journey was painful, or difficult.

He would have told me about times like those.

However, Rudeus never spoke of those even once.

"That is because he didn't want to worry you."

"...huh?"

I let out another foolish sound.

"Why would that guy worry about me? Since I'm a bad old man?"

"That's right. It's because you're a bad old man."

"Cheh... I see. That's right, I'm a weak man who runs away into alcohol over something worthless, I'm sure in the eyes of a genius-sama I would be quite pitiful."

"Even if he wasn't a genius, the current you really looks pathetic, Paul."

Gisu let out a sigh.

"I'm going to say it because you can't see your own face, but right now your face is pretty terrible, you know?"

"A face enough to make my son pity me?"

"Yeah. If it's the current you, it's plenty enough to get in a fight and separate over."

It's so pathetic that you really wouldn't be able to say anything to it, is what Gisu added on.

I touched my own face.

I heard the sound of my beard from not shaving in any number of days crunching.

"Hey Paul, I'll say it once more."

Gisu said it while pushing his final thought.

"You're pushing too many expectations on your son."

I wonder what is wrong with holding your hopes too high.

Rudi has done everything well since the time he was born.

Enough to tear away at my face as a father.

I was never needed by Rudi.

"Hey, Paul you know. Why weren't you just honestly happy over meeting again? Isn't it fine. No matter what kind of journey Rudeus had. Even if it was a carefree and thoughtless journey. Even if it was a journey filled with playing around with women. Since you guys met again energetically. For starters you should be delighted over that fact."

"..."

That's right.

Even I was glad at first.

"Or else, were you afraid of meeting your son who had lost some part of his body? The chance of reuniting with a corpse was pretty high you know? No, on the Magic Continent there wouldn't even have been a corpse remaining."

Rudi, dead?

After seeing that energetic Rudi, it's a talk that has no sense of reality.

However, just a few days prior.

Wasn't I lost in melancholy over that image?

"Ahh-ah, how pitiable. After an amazingly difficult journey. Even though he finally managed to reunite with his father. That father had become an alcoholic piece of trash. If it were me, I would cut off ties with him right there."

Cheh... he's really saying whatever he wants while putting on a play.

"I get it Gisu. What you say is certainly correct. However, there is one thing I don't understand."

"What is it?"

"Why did Rudi not know any of the information about Buina village? There should have definitely been messages left at Saint Port."

Gisu made a bitter face while saying [That would be...]

This is the face he makes when he's trying to hide something.

"I'm sure that means he missed it unluckily."

"Gisu, where did you run into Rudi? Didn't you find him in Saint Port?"

I don't know where Gisu has been this past year.

However, Rudeus came from the north.

If we're speaking about large towns in the north where Gisu would be active, it would be Saint Port.

In Saint Port there's definitely a message left behind.

Besides, there should be group members staying in that place as well.

During the time when anyone crosses over from Magic Continent, in order to get information from that person.

If it's an adventurer, then there shouldn't be any reason for them to not visit the Adventurer's Guild.

"The place I met with Rudeus was in a Dorudia race village. I was surprised, after all, he was being held under suspicions of attacking the Holy Beast and thrown into a prison naked."

"Naked in a prison by the beast race... Seriously?"

I've heard about it from Ghyslaine.

In regards to the Dedorudia race being stripped naked, thrown into a cage, put into chains, and having cold water thrown at them are considered the greatest of humiliations.

It's something they would almost never to do outsiders, if they do it then they would make sure it's remembered until you die.

As a joke I once threw some water at Ghyslaine, she seriously glared at me.

"I see, and then what happened?"

"What's this, you didn't hear from Rudeus?"

"I only heard that he traveled from the Magic Continent."

That's right, why didn't he see the message left in Saint Port.

The most important part was missing.

Why?

Ah, I wasn't listening.

Damn it.

Why am I always like this, with a quick temper.

Calm down.

Rudi is superior.

Even though he's superior, he didn't come across the information.

I need to think about that more calmly.

If he had made it to Saint Port, even if he didn't want to, it would have entered his ears.

In other words, some sort of incident happened in Saint Port that he got dragged into.

An incident that got him captured by the Dedorudia race.

Wouldn't it be some sort of large incident.

In the past two or three days it should be something that the group members brought back information about, was there some sort of incident that happened?

"No, I don't really know all the details myself, but when I was in the Great Forest Mirudetto race's place, I heard rumors about a human race brat that was captured in the Dedorudia village."

"Hn? Wait just a second, right now, where are you talking about?"

Mirudetto race?

If I remember correctly, it's a species of beast race.

A race that has ears like rabbits.

"A Mirudetto race village. It was a place with a patriarch so it's pretty big, but?"

Gisu's explanation was long and a bit annoying.

Honestly partway through I almost said [It's fine] with how long it was.

However, today we're talking about Rudi so I'll listen to the end, I wouldn't want it to end without hearing the important parts.

Even though I just made the same mistake, as expected, I don't want to repeat the same mistake twice in one day.

The talk ended.

After compiling everything...

"Gisu, in other words, you were going around the races in the Great Forest, and spread information that if lost humans are found they should be sent to Milishion?"

"Yeah. Hehe, it's fine if you give me your thanks."

"Even if I did it wouldn't end there?"

Occasionally, I did think there were refugees coming from the direction of the Great Forest to depend on me, but I see, it was this sort of trick?

"Well, that talk is fine for now."

"Yeah."

I'll listen to it in more detail later, but for now let's put it aside.

"After I heard it was a human race child, it suddenly came to me, I quickly left for the Dorudia village. I'm not bragging, but my connections are wide. I have a number of acquaintances even in the Dorudia village. One of those acquaintances, I asked a warrior out of friendship, and plotted to be thrown into the same prison."

"Just a second, why was there a need for you to enter it?"

"In case we needed to escape if it came down to it. The beast race's prison are easier to escape from inside than the outside after all."

I know very well how skilled Gisu is at escaping from prison.

He's a man who can nonchalantly leave after being caught for cheating.

"Then you know. I thought I would go in to find a captured human race child, crying out in pity and despair... Kukukuha."

"What is it? What happened?"

"He was laying there nude, full of composure and says, [Welcome, to the highest point in your life.] just like that? I really had no idea what to say in response after that!"

Gisu was laughing out loud.

"It's not something to laugh about right."

"It's something to laugh at. I knew the moment I saw him. That this guy is Paul's son."

What is so interesting about that?

Or rather, what part about that would lead him to the conclusion that he's my son.

"He was exactly like the old you. The way he was so impudent on the first meeting, the way he was pointlessly arrogant, even the way he was making advances on the beast race woman, [I smell the scent of sexual excitement.], they totally saw through him, but even knowing that they saw through, he continued to look at her with perverted eyes just the same!"

It seems Gisu thought of something again, he was laughing out loud.

Hearing him dig up things from the past like this makes my back itch.

"Well, it was a bit longer until I knew for sure."

Gisu said that while chugging away at his beer.

"Well, since it was like that. It can't really be helped if he didn't know about the information. It seems like he never stopped by in Saint Port."

"Hmn? Wait a second Gisu, you entered the same cell right? Then..."

If this guy had just explained it.

"I didn't want to be lurking in the background between parent and child, this is where I just step back and leave it to you two to reconcile."

Gisu said it quickly and stood up from his seat.

"Hey, wait a second, the talk hasn't ended?"

"Ah, that's right. I forgot to say it, but it seems like Elinalise and the others have headed off towards the Magic Continent. I heard rumors of various men being eaten by an elf in Saint Port, so there shouldn't be any mistake."

"Elinalise is?"

Even though I thought she hated me the most?

"Hehe... despite everything, those guys didn't really hate you all that much after all."

After leaving those final words, Gisu left the bar.

Of course, without paying any money.

He's that kind of guy.

Well, it's fine for today.

I'll treat you.

After drinking this much, I'll go sleep for today.

And then, I'll try to talk with Rudi tomorrow.

"Don't drink anymore. Tomorrow once you're sober, go to the [House of Dawn's Light], alright?"

Just like that Gisu returned and said that.

"I get it!"

He came back to hammer it down.

I sighed and put down the cup.

After thinking about it, I've been drinking too much recently.

Why was I running away into something like this.

The things that I need to do, there are still many more remaining.

"Ummm... Leader Paul, has your talk ended?"

Just as I was thinking that, a single woman came up with an apologetic expression.

I thought who are you.

After looking seriously at her face while drunk.

Then I realized she was one of the group members, I understood her to be Vera.

"Ohh...despite everything, today you're wearing a surprisingly docile outfit aren't you."

"Yeah, well..."

Vera nodded vaguely and took a seat in the chair Gisu was sitting in until just now.

Today she's not wearing her usual offensive-like and stimulative outfit.

Just like you can see anywhere, it's the outfit of a normal and plain town girl.

"That fight at noon, I was wondering if that could be my fault."

"Your fault? Why?"

"No, umm, since I'm like this? So, your son, might have misunderstood is what I was thinking..."

"It's unrelated. After all that guy, probably would have been suspicious just seeing your chest size."

There's a reason why Vera normally wears such light clothes.

She used to be a normal adventurer, but she was thrown to Milis Continent without any equipment in the teleport incident, she was captured by thieves and used for amusement.

Normally you would close off your heart after experiencing something like that, but she has a tremendous willpower and overcame it.

However, there were women who couldn't overcome it.

Vera's younger sister Shera was one such case.

That child, whenever she meets eyes with a man she can't stop from trembling.

Even with the exception of the group members. There's several.

In order to protect those girls from the stares, she tries to focus all the stares of the men on herself with her usual outfit.

Also, she's excellent at giving care to other women who have sunken eyes from similar experiences.

In my regards, I can't understand the feelings of a woman who has been raped, she's a subordinate who I wouldn't be able to go on without.

Obviously, there's no physical relationship.

There's no way that could be the case.

"I get it, you can go."

"Yes."

While feeling depressed Vera returned to the seats where the women were gathered.

"Jeez..."

If I look around properly, there are eyes looking at me with worry all over the place.

"Stop looking at me with such weird faces you all! I'll go reconcile with him tomorrow!"

After saying that at the end I stood up from my seat.

After returning to my room, Norn was there sleeping alone.

I poured a glass of water from the jug on the table.

And took a big sip.

The lukewarm water fell straight into my dry stomach.

I slowly started to wake up from my intoxication.

In the old days, I used have a constitution that was bad with intoxication.

If I drank in large amounts I would be dead drunk, but it wouldn't remain for long periods.

After I started to regain self-awareness as my head slowly started to wake up, I started to caress Norn's head gently as she was sleeping and clinging to the blanket.

I thought Norn was a pitiable child.

Even though she has to stay near this kind of father, she should have plenty she wants to say, but without saying a single word of complaint she remains well-behaved.

If Norn were to die I wouldn't be able to go on living.

"Nmmu... Father..."

Norn let out those words.

She's not awake. It must be sleep talk.

She's an ordinary child.

Different from Rudi.

If I don't protect her...

"..."

If Rudi was ordinary.

Rudi would be sleeping here like this as well.

He would have never become a home teacher and continued to stay at home, then when the teleport incident happened, he could have clung onto me along with Norn, that could have been the case.

An ordinary Rudi.

An ordinary 11 year old Rudi.

In order to protect someone that I should be protecting, how could I...

My legs were trembling.

I finally understood the meaning behind the words "11 year old brat" that Gisu was saying.

That's right.

Whether he's ordinary or a genius.

What's different?

Isn't it the same.

Even if Norn were a genius, would I have said the same thing?

To a Norn who didn't know anything, and simply optimistically continued her journey, to such a Norn.

Would I have said something like that?

Would I have held such high expectations towards you as well and said it?

After imagining it I couldn't fall asleep.

I didn't feel like laying down.

I went outside the inn, I poured a jug of water intended for putting out fires over my head.

I remembered Rudi's face as he was leaving the bar and threw up.

Who was the person who made Rudi make that face?

The water gathered up in the bucket.

Inside of it the face of an idiotic man was being reflected.

It was the face of the number one most unsuitable father in the world, that sort of man's face.

"Hah... this is, this might be no good..."

If it was me, I would cut off all ties with this kind of man.

—Rudeus' Point of View—

The next morning.

I was having breakfast while feeling a bit refreshed.

The place was a bar next to our inn.

The food of Milishion is pretty good.

From the Great Forest over to here, it seems like the further we move the better tasting the food gets.

Today's breakfast is freshly baked bread and fresh tasting transparent seasoned soup.

Raw vegetable salad.

As well as thick pieces of bacon.

Last night I didn't stick around, but it seems of all things, evening meals included dessert.

It seems to be popular recently among young magician adventurers.

The dessert that comes out there and the sweet jelly that is popular with young adventurers.

I'm looking forward to it.

Eating food.

That's a happy thing to do.

If you're hungry, you'll get irritated after all.

If you get irritated your appetite disappears, and if your appetite disappears then you get hungry.

It's a splendidly vicious circle.

Even an android would become displeased.

"Welcome."

Just as I was thinking about that and drinking something like coffee after a meal, the shopkeeper of the bar looked towards the entrance.

There was a worn out man standing there with a pale face.

The instant I saw that face, I was clearly surprised.

The man gradually looked over the interior and found me.

I started to remember the feelings from yesterday again, even though nothing was said, I spontaneously avoided making eye contact.

"..."

After seeing how I look, the two who were sitting with me, it seems they quickly guessed who this person was.

Ruijerd raised his eyebrows; Eris stood up while kicking her chair.

"Who are you?"

The man who walked over here...

Eris stood before his eyes.

With both arms crossed and her legs in line with her shoulders spread out, while raising her chin up.

An authoritative attitude, glaring down at the mans face as if it were from a high position.

"Paul Greyrat. I'm his father."

"I know that!"

After I looked at Eris' back, I heard a voice fly over my head.

It was a sarcastic voice.

"What's this Rudi, hiding behind a woman, you've become quite the lady-killer haven't you?"

That tone and that expression.

I felt a little bit relieved.

That's right...

The old Paul would always tease me with that sort of feeling.

How nostalgic.

In regards to this behavior, I thought it was Paul's own way of making compromise.

First thing in the morning coming especially to this bar.

Even I have the margin to talk.

"Rudeus isn't hiding behind me! I'm hiding Rudeus! From a worthless father!"

Eris was trembling while grasping her fist tightly, it seems like at any moment now she wants to send her fists flying into Paul's jaw.

I sent a signal to Ruijerd with my eyes.

He saw me, and then grabbed Eris by the collar and lifted her up.

"Wha!! Ruijerd! Let me go!"

"Let's leave these two alone."

"Didn't you see how Rudeus looked yesterday! That isn't a father!"

"Don't say it like that. A father is something like that."

While saying such things, he started to take his leave from here.

Then Ruijerd said it while passing by Paul and looking at him.

"I'm sure you have your own complaints, but those complaints can only be said while your son is alive."

"Ye-yeah..."

Ruijerd's words were heavy.

He seems to think of himself as the world's worst father after all.

In regards to another terrible father, it seems he could be feeling worried in his own way.

"Rudi, don't order older people around like that."

"It's different. It's not orders. It's the eye contact of trust."

"It's basically the same thing."

While Paul was saying that he sat down in front of me.

"Is that the Demon Race you were talking about yesterday?"

"Yes, Ruijerd-san the Superd race."

"Superd Race, huh. He seems to be a guy who gives off quite a good feeling. I guess that would mean rumors and the real thing are different, huh."

"You won't be afraid of him?"

"Don't say stupid things, he's the savior of my son."

His opinion seems to be quite different from yesterday, but...

I won't say anything unnecessary.

Now then.

"And then, what did you come for?"

An even stiffer voice than I thought came out.

And then Paul started to tremble a bit in surprise.

"No... Ummm, I thought to, apologize."

"For what?"

"What happened yesterday."

"There's no need for apologies."

Receiving an apology is convenient, but I even got to use Eris' chest as a pillow and slept well, I've properly reflected on it.

"I'll put it bluntly, until now I've felt like I've been playing around."

Putting aside the start, in general the journey proceeded favorably and I had enough leisure to be distracted by erotic things.

The fact that I didn't collect information in regards to Fedoa region was without a doubt a mistake on my part.

It was impossible in Saint Port, but we were in contact with an information seller in Wind Port.

If I had just asked them, I may have been able to gain some sort of information.

After listening and investigating, but obviously I didn't investigate it.

It was my mistake.

"Since that's the case, it can't be helped that father was angry. During this troubling period, please excuse me instead."

The fact that Fedoa region vanished and the household was split up all over.

When I think of Paul's mental state during such a time, I can't blame him.

I was only able to remain thoughtless because I had no idea.

Not knowing the scale of the disaster, it was a happy fact.

"No, there's no way that's the case. Rudi gave it his best as well I'm sure."

"No-no, not at all. There was plenty of room for leisure."

Since Ruijerd was there for us.

After we left the Town of Rikarisu it was relatively easy.

There was no chance of being ambushed by monsters, even if I didn't say anything at all he would have caught food, and he also stopped Eris' fights.

In regards to me, it was a comfortable journey.

Truly an easy operation.

"I see, it was leisurely..."

I don't know what Paul is thinking about.

The one thing I can say is that voice is trembling a bit.

"I do feel really sorry that I wasn't able to find the messages or whatever you left. What was written on them?"

"Things about me being fine and to search in the northern parts of Central Continent."

"I see. Then after I finish escorting Eris to the Fedoa region, I'll go search in the northern areas."

I responded as if I were a machine.

No matter how I think about it I feel like my words are stiff.

I wonder why...

I wonder if I'm tense.

Why?

I've already forgiven Paul, even Paul has forgiven me as well.

We might not be able to return to how we used to be, but right now is an emergency situation.

Since it's an emergency situation I'm tense.

It's obvious.

"That is that, but in regards to Fedoa region's current state, please tell me once more in detail."

"...Yeah."

Paul's tone was stiff as well and continued while trembling.

I'm sure he's tense as well.

No, rather than that, my own confidence after all is what's strange.

We can't act how we used to...

How did I use to interact with Paul before, again?

It was while striking up conversations with a light mouth, is what I was thinking, but...

"Where should I begin?"

In a stiff voice Paul started to tell me about what happened in the Fedoa region.

All of the buildings disappeared.

The fact that all the people living there were teleported.

A large number of deaths have already been confirmed.

Though there's still a large number of missing as well.

Paul started collecting contributions as a volunteer and created a search party organization.

For that reason he is here where the Adventurer's Guild Headquarters is, gathering information in Milishion as a central point.

Incidentally, there's another base in the Asura Kingdom Capital, it seems that place is being managed by the butler Alphonse-san.

It seems even now they're giving aid to refugees from Fedoa region.

And then, Paul left messages at various places.

The message to me was to divide our efforts and search for our family in various places.

The responsibility of the eldest son, who has become an independent adult.

In terms of age I'm still a child, but I already consider myself an adult spiritually.

If I had seen that message I would have understood the mood.

Zenith, Lilia, and Aisha still haven't been found.

It could be that they ended up somewhere on the Magic Continent, and then we passed by each other.

When I think that I lament my own actions.

Since I was hurrying so much with the journey, we only stayed in each town for a short period.

"Norn was alright, right?"

"Yeah, luckily she was in contact with me."

According to Paul, the thing known as teleportation, if you're making contact with some part of the body, then it seems you'll be sent flying along with them.

"Is Norn healthy and energetic?"

"Yeah, it seems she was a bit bewildered appearing in an unknown place at first, but now she's something like the idol of the group members."

"I see, that's great."

I see, Norn is healthy, huh.

Yeah, that's truly something good.

Certainly the blessing within unhappiness.

You could even call it something joyous.

However, why, is my heart not clearing up?

"..."

"....."

The conversation paused.

The atmosphere is unusual.

Paul and my relationship, it shouldn't have been something like this.

It was more like... a relationship with a light feeling...

This is strange.

A little while after that.

Paul said something, but I couldn't think of anything good to respond to it.

Stiff responses with no thought just continued to be repeated.

Before anyone noticed, the only customers left were us.

Any time now, it wouldn't be strange for them to come and ask us to leave so they can start closing.

It seems Paul realized those signs as well.

"Rudi, what are you going to do from here on out?"

In the end that's what he asked.

"For the time being, I'll escort Eris to the Fedoa region."

"However, there's nothing left in the Fedoa region?"

"But, we'll still return."

We have no choice other than to return.

Phillip, Sauros, Ghyslaine as well, it seems no one has been found.

Even if we return there will be no one around.

However, we have no choice other than to return.

Why?

It's because that was the objective of the journey.

Realization of original intention.

First off we'll arrive in the Fedoa region, then look at the current state of affairs and confirm it with our own eyes.

After that, it would be alright if I head to the northern regions to search in Central Continent.

If we ask Ruijerd he could return to Magic Continent, and he could look in various places.

For the time being, it might be good to go to Begarrito Continent as well if I can understand the language.

"After that, we'll look in other places."

"I see."

Just like this the conversation quickly paused.

I don't know what to say.

"Here."

Just at that time the master of the bar left some cups in front of us.

There was steam coming out of the wooden cups left before us.

"It's service."

"Thank you very much."

Just as I realized, my throat was completely dry.

My hands were clenched tightly, and my palms were covered in sweat.

At the same time I realized my back and sides were awfully chilly.

My bangs were clinging to my forehead.

"Hey boy. I don't know the details, but.."

"...?"

"Please look at his face."

After hearing him say it I realized it for the first time.

I haven't looked at Paul's face even once.

Ever since the first time I avoided his eyes, not even once, I wasn't able to look at Paul's face.

I swallowed deeply and looked up at my father's face.

It was a face filled with worries.

It looked like it was going to cry at any moment.

It was a terrible face.

"What's with that face?"

"What do you mean what?"

Paul's face making a bitter smile was lacking energy.

Coupled with that expression, the cheeks that are sunken in, it looks like a different person.

However, I feel like I've seen a similar face somewhere before...

Where was it?

It was in the past.

The past.

I remembered.

I was looking in the mirror at home.

One or two years after I started secluding myself from being bullied.

While thinking I can still make it, but a time when I still couldn't allow myself to go along with my surroundings, and was too self-conscious.

I was too afraid to go outside, overcome with nothing but worry and impatience, it was my first unstable period I believe.

I get it now.

It's that kind of thing.

Paul is feeling insecure right now.

The people who he's looking for are still missing, no matter how long he waits no news will come, worrying, and worrying, maybe they were injured or something. Maybe they came down with some kind of illness. Or else, maybe they're already... Thinking that...

Worrying and worrying...

The one who finally showed up was me, since I was so different and easygoing from what he was imagining, he unintentionally got irritated.

Even I have such recollections.

That was soon after the time I started to seclude myself.

An acquaintance from the time I was in middle school came by to visit, he talked about various things from school.

Even though I'm this depressed, even though I'm this upset, he continued to tell me thoughtlessly about his life in school, I couldn't stand it and suddenly started to spit out severe words, venting my anger on him.

The next day, if he appeared again, I thought I would apologize to him.

However, he never came again.

I never went to him myself.

I had a strange pride.

I remembered.

This face is the face from that time.

"I have a proposition."

"Rudi?"

"It's this situation, we have no choice but to become adults."

"Yeah, well, certainly I don't think I'm greatly popular right now... What do you want to say?"

The inside of my heart suddenly cleared up.

I finally understood Paul's feelings.

After thinking that, it was simple.

Remember the past.

The time when Paul scolded me and I talked back to him with a strong tone.

In those days I thought he was a guy who couldn't be helped.

Twenty-four years old, he was still young as a father, so I thought it couldn't be helped.

It's been six years since then.

Paul is 30 years old.

Compared to me in my previous life he's still younger.

And then if you were to compare him to me in my previous life, he's still a splendid person.

I never did the things that I was supposed to do, only ever thinking about things to blame the other side.

I'm different from that time.

I swore that to myself.

Recently I feel like I've forgotten about it, but I don't want to repeat the same mistakes again and...

I swore that I would live seriously in this world.

The scale this time is much greater, but it's the same thing.

It's the same thing as six years ago.

We're repeating the same mistakes.

Even though we should have grown up, even though we should have advanced from before, we were just standing around in the same place this entire time.

In regards to that I will honestly reflect on.

And then above reflecting upon it,

"Let's start again, as if nothing happened yesterday."

I proposed that.

This time, I was hurt.

It felt like my heart was about to break.

I'm sure, in those days, my friend who was worried about me as well, felt like this.

And then, just like that with these feelings, he never appeared again.

I need to make sure that isn't the case this time.

My relationship with Paul, by no means should I let it be cut off.

"Yesterday, we never fought. Now, this moment, we are a father and child that have just been reunited for the first time in years. Let's go with that."

"Rudi? What are you saying?"

"It's fine, look, spread out your arms, now~"

"Ye-yeah?"

Paul just spread out his arms like he was told.

Then I jumped into that chest.

"Father! I wanted to see you!"

The smell of alcohol was floating in the air.

Right now he's sober, but he might be experiencing a hangover.

Or rather, I don't think he ever used to drink even a drop of alcohol...

"Ru-Rudi?"

Paul was bewildered.

I placed my jaw on Paul's shoulder and slowly said it.

"Look, it's your first time seeing your son in a long while, there's something you should be saying right."

While thinking it was quite the farce, I once again embraced Paul with all my strength.

His face had thinned, even his body I got the feeling that it had shrunk a full size.

My own body should have gotten bigger, but Paul had gone through some hardship, far more than me.

While continuing to be bewildered Paul let out the words...

"I-I wanted to meet you too..."

After I told him to say something, it seems like some kind of wall was torn down.

"I've missed you too... I've really missed you, Rudi... Always, no one was found, I thought everyone might have died... You are, after seeing your appearance..."

After looking up, Paul was shedding tears.

His face was distorting and crumpled.

A fully grown man shamefully broke down in tears and cried.

"Sorry, I'm sorry, Rudi..."

Somehow I ended up crying as well.

I patted Paul's back and after a little while we both were crying.

Just like this, after roughly five years I was finally able to be reunited with my father.

That day, I talked to Paul throughout the whole day.

It's not like we were talking about anything important.

They were just trifling conversations.

We started with what had been happening at Buina village during the few years since I had gone to Stronghold City Roa.

It seems that though he had two wives, there wasn't any debauchery. Zenith and Lilia had discussed things several times, and basically he would have no sexual relations with Lilia.

However, it seems that Lilia was asking for permission in the case that Zenith became pregnant a third time, and Paul couldn't endure no matter what... or so the discussions seemed to have gone.

Though it seems that Zenith had been conflicted about this, to Paul it was a convenient conclusion.

How envious, huh?

"And so, does it seem like I'll have another little sister?"

"Nah, it was fairly... Even though in your case it was just one shot..."

"To have given birth to such an excellent son in one shot, you were pretty lucky too, Tou-sama."

"Keep on saying that."

This isn't really the conversation a father and his 11 year old son would have, huh? Or so I was thinking, but the mood was quite comfortable.

We didn't touch on Zenith or Lilia's life and death.

We intentionally avoided it.

We both understand.

Even if we discussed that topic, nothing happy would ever come of it, and we'd just be left with miserable feelings.

"Was Sylphy doing well?"

"Yeah. That kid is amazing. I could feel your talent as a teacher."

It seems that Sylphy had been doing well.

In the mornings were jogging and mana training, and in the afternoons she'd learn healing magic with Zenith.

It seems that after Aisha had grown to a certain extent, she'd learn etiquette from Lilia.

"I guess you'd call her 'earnest', huh? She'd come over to our house a lot and would do something in your room, Rudi."

"...Did Sylphy ever find anything there or anything like that?"

"What? Did you hide something that would get you in trouble if seen?"

"No, of course not. There's no way that would be the case, right?"

Oh geez.

"Well, it seems that everything disappeared, though."

According to what Paul said, it seems that most of the objects in the Fedoa region disappeared.

It seems that from small things like quill pens and ink jars, to architectural structures like houses and bridges, everything had disappeared.

The only exception were things that had been in contact with the people who were teleported, he said.

"Is that so?"

That's a shame.

Though I couldn't recall at all what was supposed to be a shame, but in the depths of my heart there was a profound sense of loneliness.

"What were you doing at the time?"

"You mean in Roa?"

I was asked, and so I answer.

About how on the first day I had been beaten by Eris, and it felt like my heart was going to break.

About how by chance (・・) we had been kidnapped, and how we had escaped somehow.

About how using that, I became a little closer to Eris.

About how despite this, she'd never listen in my classes.

About how I had begged Ghyslaine in tears.

About how thanks to her, Eris had begun to listen in class.

About how after this, we slowly became closer.

About how we learned to dance together.

And after that, about my 10th birthday.

"Your birthday, huh? Sorry about that..."

"What about it?"

"I didn't even show my face."

To the citizens of the Kingdom of Asura, being 10 years old was a critical point in their lives, and so turning 10 was a milestone of great importance. Though I still don't know why it's so important, it's probably something like a lucky charm. A great celebration would be held, and even presents would be given.

"That doesn't matter. Eris' family had properly congratulated me, after all."

"I see. What did they give you?"

"An expensive staff. It's called the 『Aqua Heartia Arrogant Water Dragon King』, though it's a bit of an embarrassing name."

"Really? Isn't it cool?"

Cool?

What kind of stupid things are you saying? Isn't it a name that sends shivers of embarrassment down your back?

Though in this world, it could be that the higher the performance of the item, the more extravagant the name it's given.

"And Rudi. I've heard from Alphonse, you know? You received just one other nice present, didn't you?"

"A nice present?"

Let's see... What did I receive, anyway?

Was it wisdom, bravery and infinite power?

I don't think I have enough of any of them, though.

"Come on, it's the Ojou-sama from Phillip's place. I saw her just a while ago, but isn't she quite the gallant and lovable girl? She'd tried to desperately protect you, you know..."

...Received.

I feel that it's a little off to say that.

No, I mean, certainly Phillip had said "Alright" and approved, but it hadn't gotten to a stage where I could say "Itadakimasu".

I want to cherish her.

There's the incident yesterday, too. It was the first time anyone had gently hugged me when I was down, and even stroked my head until I had fallen asleep.

I'll definitely never betray Eris.

There's also the promise about when I turn 15, but even if I turn 15 and she changes her mind, I can endure it. Though even saying that, I'll probably still run wild. In 4 years from now, when my sexual desires will probably be even stronger, I'm not really sure if I'll be able to hold it in though.

At the very least though, that's what I've decided for now.

"Eris is someone important to me. Though, still, to say that she was something I 'received' doesn't really sit well with me, you see."

"Well, you'd be marrying into her family after all. Rather than 'receiving', it's more like you'd be 'received', huh?"

"Heh?"

I let out a strange sound.

Marry?

"Well, with Phillip as a backer you're going to become a noble, right?"

"What kind of talk is that? When did you hear this?"

"When, you ask? Well, about a year before the teleportation, you know. That you and Eris were getting along, and that your feelings were firm, so a letter came about wanting to take you in as a husband, you know. Though I think that Asuran nobles are basically pieces of shit, but since it was something you decided, I'd replied in a letter that I'd let you do as you like, but..."

I see.

In other words, by the time I was 10, Phillip had already finished all the arrangements with Paul.

Had we not parted soon after that, there's no mistaking that over the next few years using this or that method, he'd have tried to pair Eris and I together.

Just what about this is something you'd talk about in a bar?

In other words, I can understand how Paul had come up with that kind of idea about Eris and I.

Two people who'd promised to get married. Two people who in their anxiety were unable to bear it.

Had we been lovers, then it couldn't be helped that it'd seem like we'd spent the journey flirting and making out.

"Going by the sound of things, it seems that Phillip had pulled a blind one over us."

"That seems to be the case, huh?"

The two of us sigh together.

Right now the same man's face is probably floating through our minds.

Phillip. A high ranked noble of the Kingdom of Asura.

A man with enough power to survive in the sordid place that is high society.

"And so your relationship with the Ojou-sama is pretty good. As for Sylphy... Ah, nah, it's nothing. Forget I said anything."

As if to say that his previous words were a slip of the tongue, Paul's words became ambiguous.

Sylphy still hasn't been found yet.

At least, according to the extent of Paul's knowledge.

Though he said that it was nothing, I think about it.

I like Sylphy.

However, it's a feeling that's a little different than those I have for Eris.

If I had to say it, she feels a lot like a little sister, or a daughter.

'She's been bullied, and she's pitiful, so I'd better take care of her'

It's a feeling like that.

There's also the fact that I stop any further feelings from taking root.

Though there's a similar kind of feeling with Eris, I've also been saved by her a number of times.

If I were asked which of them would take the victory, I'd give the victory to Eris.

However, it's not like this is a conclusion I've come to by judging them both fairly.

There's the issue of the time we've spent together.

As expected, the effect of spending a long time together is really strong.

Though there are a lot of things you can bring up about your childhood friend, it's basically because of the long time you've spent together with them.

I've spent twice the amount of time with Eris than I have with Sylphy.

What we did during that time was deeper as well.

Nevertheless...

It's a different story if you're asking whether or not I'm worried that Sylphy is missing.

"It'd be good if Sylphy was alive..."

"Though it wasn't to your extent, that kid really did her best. I mean, she can even use chantless healing magic. She's sure to be alive somewhere. Healing magicians are quite valuable outside of the Milis Continent."

"Is that so...?"

...Mn?

Just now I just heard something outrageous.

"Please wait a moment. Sylphy can use chantless healing magic?"

"Mn? Yeah, Zenith was surprised. But, you can use it too, can't you Rudi?"

"I can't do it with healing magic, you know."

I can't use healing magic without chanting.

I can't understand the principal after all.

No matter how much I use it, I can't understand the mechanism behind healing a wound with mana.

"Is that so?"

"Yeah. I can use it if I chant but..."

"Well, though I don't really know about magic in detail, they do say that there's such things as affinities after all. Perhaps Sylphy has talent in that area?"

Perhaps in the time that I haven't seen her, Sylphy has become much stronger than someone like me.

It'll be a bit scary to meet her again, huh?

If she says something like,

'Rudi, you haven't grown at all, huh?'

what should I do?

While we were talking about various things, the distance between Paul and I completely disappeared.

Around evening, someone greeted Paul.

It was the Onee-san in the bikini armor, and the healing magician Onee-san. Today she wasn't wearing a bikini; she was dressed like a normal town girl. Just what was that yesterday?

Well, it was also one of the causes of the argument, so she may have been showing prudence.

"Tou-sama."

"What is it?"

"Of course I believe in you, Tou-sama, and there's also the matter from yesterday, so I'll just be asking to make sure. You haven't been cheating, right?"

"Course I haven't."

I see.

Then I'm relieved.

The fight I had with Paul yesterday was one of clashing suspicions.

It was the result of prodding at each other's weakness with women, without any facts.

Oop, bringing up something that 'never happened'. No good, no good.

Well, it seems that Paul hasn't had the free time to care about women.

The collapse of his family hasn't triggered anything either.

I should follow his example and hold back my perversion for a while.

At the end, to confirm my intentions, Paul asked,

"Rudi. You said you were going to guard Eris, and escort her to the Fedoa region, right?"

"Yes."

While nodding strongly at those words, I reply.

"Or would it be better if I participated in the search as well?"

"No, there's no need for that. Whatever road you take, it'd be better to escort a member of Boreas back to the Kingdom of Asura, you see."

"...It sounds like it's quite important. Is it really okay to leave it to me?"

"There shouldn't be anyone better suited for it than you. There's also the fact that she trusts you, right?"

It seems like she trusts me. I suddenly think this, but I wonder if Paul isn't overestimating me.

No, however he evaluates me, I want to live up to his expectations.

"Even so, it's not like you'd remain in Milishion no matter how many people guarded her instead, right?"

While grinning, Paul said something easy-going.

Considering only loss and gain, that would be an acceptable option too.

Of course, I wouldn't be staying in Milishion; I'd be parting with Eris and searching independently.

Returning to the Magic Continent and searching there from now on is also an option.

However, in the end, this isn't something I can consider just as loss and gain.

There's no way I'd prioritize anything that involved leaving Eris behind.

I have to protect her.

Moreover, I don't have any good memories about leaving something halfway done to start on something else.

In my previous life, I had left everything half done.

There's no mistake that both would be left halfway done.

In this case, it'd be heading to the Magic Continent without escorting Eris to the end, and leaving things without having succeeded in anything.

In that case, I'll do them one at a time.

There's also Ruijerd's matter.

It doesn't seem that someone straight-laced like him would get along well with the search party, and he might have a falling out halfway, saying something about how these actions were not suitable for a warrior, and then getting mad.

"No, I think it'd be best after all if I escort her."

"Well, there's no one stronger than you in our group, and you wouldn't be able to leave things to someone else, either."

While saying that, Paul makes a complicated expression.

It might be that he's bothered about losing to me in a fight.

I had thought that it didn't count because he had been drinking though, and I'm not really in a position to console him.

I'll just leave this alone.

"How long until you depart from Milishion?"

"Let's see. Since I want to save up travel expenses, it might be about a month."

"If it's travel expenses, then I have some."

Paul turns his head towards one of the two women. It's the robe wearing healing magician Onee-chan. She's freckled, and seems like quite a meek girl. Paul calls out to her.

"I did, right?"

"There's money entrusted from Alphonse-sama for the sake of searching for the Boreas family."

It seems that Alphonse had said that it was for when anyone was found in Milis, so that they could travel comfortably, he'd leave some money with Paul.

"And that's how it is."

"I see. It's great that the money didn't disappear as alcohol expenses."

"Shera's been looking after the funds, after all."

It's pathetic that my father is saying this boastfully.

I won't say it.

"And so, how much is it?"

"It's the equivalent of 20 Royal Notes."

When I ask Shera, I receive an immediate reply.

Royal notes are Milis' largest currency denomination.

Using ￥1 = 1 stone coin as a reference, it'd be ￥50,000 per note.

There are 20 notes.

In other words...

"ONE MILLION YEN!"

"...What kind of reaction is that?"

Paul looks confused.

I'm dizzy from the money.

Anyhow, this half year...

I, who have been thinking about nothing but money issues, like a miser.

Such a person has suddenly been given ￥1,000,000.

"That much money... Isn't that enough to play around your whole life!?"

"Well, though I think it'd be enough to build a house in the south, it's not enough to play around for a lifetime, you know."

Ehhh, but it's ￥1,000,000, you know. ONE MILLION, YOU KNOW.

It'd be 1,000 Green Mineral Coins!

It'd be enough for a Superd to ride a ship!

Oh. While I'm being happy, one more question comes to mind.

"Ah, I have one more question."

"You still have more?"

"Yes. Though we had wanted to put a Superd on a boat at Windport, the voyage expense was huge. Though I don't know how much it'd be at Westport, it certainly seems like it'd be a lot. Would 20 Royal Notes be enough, or...?"

"So it's about that, huh...?"

Paul had crossed his arms over his chest.

He's not going to say something like 'Leave Ruijerd behind' is he?

"Shera. How much money is needed for a Superd to cross the sea?"

Paul had suddenly asked her. Shera nodded in acknowledgement.

"It would take 100 Royal Notes." she replied.

Could it be that she's memorized it all?

It was like that before as well, so she seems quite exceptional.

From her appearance she seems quite like a secretary.

"...!"

Though when our eyes met, she let's out a small scream and looked downward. The former-bikini person casually positioned herself between Shera and my line of sight. I'm a little shocked.

"Sorry. This girl is a bit bad with gazes. Please don't look at her too much."

"Right..."

The former-bikini person explains as such, and I have a vague response.

Though things are normal with Paul now, am I still hated by the other group members?

Well, it's fine.

Still, 100 Royal Notes.

That's about ￥5,000,000.

It's not an amount that you can easily save up.

I let out a sigh.

"Why is it only the Superd race that has such a high fee?"

"That's because the law was formed when the persecution of the Superd race was most severe."

From behind former-bikini, Shera replied naturally.

She replied readily, even without knowing about the person at the Windport checking station.

Though her boobs are small, she's got quite the brain, huh?

"Moreover, the noble presiding over that customs house is famous for hating the Demon Races. Even if you save up a stack of money, you might be stopped one way or another."

"Is that so... Um, could nothing be done with the power of Kaa-sama's family?"

"Sorry, but we're already treading a fine line with them. It wouldn't be good to trouble them any further than this."

In other words, smuggling again?

We have some bad memories with smuggling, so if possible I don't want to rely on it.

It's something that happened on the same continent.

It's possible that due to the links between the smugglers, we've already been blacklisted.

The more I think about the Superd voyage fee, the bigger the headache I get.

"I understand. Regarding the voyage expense, I'll do something about it myself."

"Sorry."

Saying that, Paul had grinned widely.

He then turned his head with a proud look, towards the two women waiting behind him.

"How about him? My little man. He's quite reliable, huh?"

"Hahhh"

"Umm..."

The two women exchange a wry smile.

Even if you ask that, just who was it that had been in a disgraceful argument with that son?

"Tou-sama. Please stop doing vulgar things like asking a lady about how your 'little man' is. People will suspect the Greyrat family of being vulgar."

"The way you're saying things is even more vulgar, you know."

Saying that, the two of us laughed together.

Though the two women drew away from us, we didn't care.

"Now then. Rudi, it's about time that I go."

"Yes."

Paul stands up and taps me on the shoulders.

It seems that we'd been talking for quite a while.

When I look towards the counter, I saw that the bar-owner was smiling wryly.

We'd stayed here through lunchtime as well, after all.

I'd better tip him a little.

"When you've decided on the plan for your journey, get in touch with me. Let's eat together with Norn before you leave."

"Yeah, I understand."

Saying that, I saw Paul off.

I was looking at Paul's back as he left the bar with the two women.

Seeing this I thought that he really was a womanizing, useless father.

A while after Paul left, Eris and Ruijerd returned.

Eris had a large bruise near her eye, and Ruijerd was making a complicated face.

"What happened, you two?"

"Nothing. So, what happened with that man?"

As if to say she was extremely displeased, Eris folded her arms and snorted.

"We made up."

When I said this, Eris' eyes immediately narrowed.

"Why!?"

She smacks her clenched fists on the table.

The table broke with a huge noise.

Mn, well, it was quite powerful...

"I see. So you made up, huh?"

In response, Ruijerd looked glad.

"Rudeus!"

Eris had grabbed me by the shoulders.

She's tightening her grip.

Her strength is absurd.

"Why!?"

"What do you mean by 'why'?"

I ask, a little confused.

"Yesterday, weren't you completely depressed!?"

"Yeah. You really helped me yesterday. Thanks to your hug, I managed to calm down quite a bit."

That I could look at Paul's face today was also unmistakably thanks to Eris.

Had it not been for that hug, I might have secluded myself in my room for a while.

"That's not it! That man didn't show up to your 10th birthday either, Rudeus! Not only that, the journey through the Magic Continent was really tough! You were even thrown into jail in the Great Forest! And then, finally, even though you finally managed to meet him, he did something like that! You said that he rejected you, right!? Why are you forgiving him!?"

Eris had spoken in one breath.

I understand her point as well.

Certainly.

If you say it like that, Paul was the worst.

Had he declared that he hated me, I would have believed it.

Had I been a normal child, I'd probably have never forgiven Paul.

However, it can't be helped that Paul had failed in regards to me. I've inherited my memories from my previous life, and have always done things well. Towards such an irregular son, it'd be unreasonable to expect him to interact normally. Paul has trouble grasping the distance between us, and is troubled over how to treat me.

Moreover, despite the things I say, there are still various things I don't know about how a proper father should be.

I don't think that this is anything bad.

To me, from the standpoint of a son, a father is just someone who watches over and protects you from above.

To me, it doesn't matter how many times Paul fails.

My heart isn't broken anymore.

Though, there's still the fact that we parted ways immediately.

"Eris."

"What...?"

I'm troubled over what I should say.

Eris is angry for my sake.

However, it's something that is already settled to me.

"Tou-sama is just one person. He'll make mistakes too."

I said this, and then used Healing on the bruise near her eye.

Though Eris had obediently allowed me to heal her, looking at her expression, I understood that she hadn't accepted this.

When I had finished treating her, she sulkily returned to her room in the inn.

While watching her go, I asked Ruijerd a question.

"So, Ruijerd-san."

"What is it?"

"What's with that bruise?"

The bruise near Eris' eye.

She didn't have that yesterday.

"I had difficulties in stopping her."

He spoke calmly.

Normally he'd fly into a rage about people hitting children, but it seems that his mind had changed.

Eris had probably been violently struggling because she couldn't forgive Paul no matter what, but she and Ruijerd have a student and teacher relationship. Because of their training, this isn't the first time Eris has been injured.

No, look carefully.

Ruijerd's expression.

It's not actually calm.

He's not a man who makes a lot of facial expressions, but right now it's a little bitter.

It seems he was reluctant.

I guess there's no helping it, huh?

Whether it's what happened, or what kind of conversation they had, or what kind of circumstances there were, I don't know any of it.

However, there's only one thing I can say.

That Ruijerd and Eris were at odds with each other was my fault.

I was able to reconcile with Paul.

In that case, what I'll say is my thanks.

"Thank you very much. Thanks to you, I was able to reconcile with Tou-sama."

"No reason for thanks."

However, right now Ruijerd can't stop Eris without hitting her.

Without me knowing, she's gotten steadily stronger, huh?

A while after that, we had our strategy meeting.

"Well then, let's begin the second strategy meeting since arriving in Milishion."

The location is the bar.

Thinking about it, today I haven't moved one step from the bar.

This bar is comfortable. There aren't many guests, as well.

"Didn't we have one just the day before?"

Eris isn't angry anymore.

I had thought that she'd be shutting herself up in her room, sulking, but she came back after about 10 minutes.

The speed at which she's able to switch moods is something that I'd want to learn.

"The situation has changed. Specifically, we no longer need to earn money. As a result, I think we should leave Milishion in the near future."

Receiving 20 Royal Notes means that we don't need to work for money anymore.

As for information gathering, I've heard what I needed to from Paul.

Regarding the Superd race's reputation, for the moment we'll be putting it on hold.

What this means is that the number of things that we can do in this town have decreased to almost nothing.

I summarize this to them.

Regarding the situation in the Fedoa region, I had been hesitant in discussing it with Eris.

However, I braved it and told her.

Rather than getting to the scene of the incident, and then tasting despair, it'd be better to prepare ourselves, starting now.

"Eris, it seems that our home town doesn't exist anymore."

"Right."

"It seems that Philip-sama and Sauros-sama still haven't been found either."

"It can't be helped, huh?"

"We basically don't know Ghyslaine's whereabouts either, and it's possible that..."

"You know, Rudeus..."

Eris crossed her arms, raised her chin and looked at me.

"I've already prepared myself for that much."

There was no hesitation in Eris' eyes.

They were eyes that as usual, held great strength, arrogance, and not a single doubt about her future.

It's not that she had forgotten, but that she had prepared herself.

That's what she had said.

"Though I think Ghyslaine is alive somewhere, it wouldn't be strange if Otou-sama and Ojii-sama are dead, huh?"

She said with a snort.

In other words, because it was tough for her when she had been teleported to the Magic Continent, she had already anticipated that others might have died. The situation should be something like that, huh?

No, she might be putting on a tough front.

It's hard to tell apart the times when she's putting up a front, and the times when she really does have confidence.

"After all, even though you'd been hiding it from me, Rudeus, I already knew it all along."

I have no idea what she had supposedly known, but I don't feel like she's putting on a front at all.

Eris has been in her own way, considering various things.

In other words, the person who had completely forgotten about Fedoa, was just me, myself.

It's kind of shameful, huh?

"Is that so? I understand."

As you'd expect of Eris.

While thinking this, I continue the conversation.

"At any rate, I was thinking that we'd leave town in about a week, but..."

"Are you fine with that?"

The one who asked that was Ruijerd.

"What's wrong?"

"Once we begin our journey, there's the possibility that you'll never see your father again."

"We've ended up talking about something pretty unlucky again..."

Because Ruijerd says it, the significance is a little different than usual.

Still, it's not like we're in a war at the moment.

On the contrary...

"Because there are family members who we might never see again if we don't search for them, I'd like to prioritize them instead."

"Is that so? That's right, huh?"

With Ruijerd assenting to this, we finally start on our main topic.

"For the rest of our journey, let's focus our activities on information gathering."

As expected, I think the amount of time we should stay in each town is roughly a week.

However, during that time we won't be earning money, but instead focusing on gathering information.

What we'll be looking for is primarily the teleported people.

The journey between Milis and Asura.

In this world, this is the journey with the largest number of travelers, and the largest number of merchants; it's this world's Silk Road.

Naturally, there are probably members of the search party investigating along it.

However, there's the possibility that perhaps we might be able to find something that our predecessors hadn't.

Redeeming the Superd name we can do someway or another, whilst carrying out this search operation.

However, the name 『Dead End』 isn't well known on the Milis and Central Continents.

We'd better have another thought about just how we're going to sell the Superd name.

"The problem is the voyage fee, huh?"

In this world, the act of crossing the seas itself has a special meaning.

Though there are countless ways of dealing with entry into another country when it's a land route, it's only the seas that are difficult to cross.

Especially for a Superd.

"Regarding that, Rudeus, have a look at this."

What Ruijerd produced was a single piece of paper.

It was the envelope from yesterday, that I had given up on trying to see.

I take it and have a look.

The words 『To Duke Baqciel』 are scrawled across the front.

On the back is a seal of red wax.

The design on it might be a family crest.

It gives a truly unrefined feeling.

"This is?"

"It's something that an acquaintance of mine wrote for me, yesterday."

An acquaintance.

Now that it's mentioned, Ruijerd did say that he'd be going to meet with an acquaintance.

"What kind of person is your acquaintance?"

"A man named Gouache Brush."

"What's his occupation?"

"I don't know. He seems pretty important."

I'm told that he met Gouache over 40 years ago.

It was on the Magic Continent.

Ruijerd had saved a group that was being attacked by monsters, and Gouache was among them.

At the time, Gouache was still a child and so looked on Ruijerd with fear and hostility, but it seems that by the time they had parted, they'd become relatively friendlier.

When he had finished escorting them to town, he was told that if he ever came to Milishion, he should visit, but because there was never the chance to, he had forgotten. However, it seems when we were circling the town to get to the Adventurers District's Entrance, he had suddenly seen with his 『eye』 and had remembered.★

As a result, he had felt that he may as well visit, but there was the chance that perhaps Gouache had forgotten. It seems that while carrying that anxiety in his chest, Ruijerd had approached him, but upon doing so, Gouache had remembered him as if a matter of course, and had greatly welcomed him.

Though he had planned to leave things with just a greeting, the two of them hit it off.

After talking about the journey up until now, it seems that he had said,

'Well then, when you get to Westport, show them this.'

Hitting it off with Ruijerd.

I wonder if he's someone a bit like Gustav?

Someone who'll immediately write a letter, and seems to be of important standing...

Hm, I want to try sneaking a peek inside, but it does certainly seem that breaking this seal will invalidate the contents of the letter, huh?

"This Gouache person is probably a noble, right?"

"He did have a lot of subordinates."

Subordinates.

It's quite a Ruijerd-ish way of putting things.

They're probably servants or something.

'A lot' is also quite vague.

Be that as it may, at any rate, he's Ruijerd's acquaintance.

It wouldn't be strange even if he turned out to be a Devil King candidate, aiming at the king.

"Did you go to his house?"

"Yeah."

"Was it big?"

"Pretty big, I guess."

"How big was it?"

"Not as big as the Kishirisu castle, I guess."

Kishirisu Castle.

For it to be smaller than this means that it isn't the White Palace in the middle of the lake.

It seems that as expected, they aren't royalty.

But it's something whose size is comparable, huh?

Hmmmm.

It's Ruijerd's acquaintance.

I don't think he'd be a bad person, but...

According to Paul, the noble in charge of the customs house hates the Demon Races.

If this acquaintance's standing is something half-assed, then there's the possibility that handing over the letter will cause problems.

It might be better to find out who this Gouache person is.

No, but there's the happy expression that Ruijerd made when he produced the letter.

I'd hate for us to end up discussing trust again, after having come up with stupid ideas about Gouache.

Well, whatever.

At any rate, I can't think of any other way of doing things.

I'll just let Ruijerd save face here.

Then I'll secretly ask Paul about the name Gouache later.

"I wouldn't mind even if we left tomorrow though, you know!"

I smiled wryly at Eris' comment, and ended the strategy meeting.

Because we had decided on our plans, I visited the inn Paul was staying in.

However, it seems like he's out.

The person there told me where the search party's headquarters were, and so I moved there.

It's just an average 2 story building.

In a place not unlike a conference room, Paul had been working quite seriously.

Together with 10 odd other men, he's discussing something or another.

When I try and listen in, I find that they seem to be working on some large project.

Since arriving in Milishion, I had only ever seen him drunk or hungover, but seeing him in the middle of work like this, that father of mine looks considerably reliable and cool.

We'd just met with bad timing, and it's not like he was spending everyday drinking and complaining.

Or so I had thought, but upon hearing the contents of their conversation, it seems that he had spent the last month binge drinking and never showed up at work at all.

In fact, it was only starting yesterday that he had suddenly become motivated again, and showed up to work like he did in the past.

There's probably no doubt that he wanted to show me his good side.

In other words, it's because of me that this guy is working.

Hahhh, dear me. Goodness, I'm such a sinful man.

{ C-Editor's note: A joke sometimes heard in Japan is a woman calling herself a 'sinful woman', when random men start falling in love with her and do her favors even though she didn't intend on leading them on or seducing them. Rudeus is joking that he is a 'sinful man' suggesting that Paul is now back to work because of him. }

For now, I'm just waiting until Paul has spare time.

Since just sitting there staring wouldn't get me anywhere, I look around the inside of the building.

In a certain room, I happen to spot Norn playing.

In her surroundings are other children of about Norn's age.

They had been happily playing with something similar to building blocks.

It's likely that this is a nursery or something.

"Hey."

Because our eyes had met, I casually raise my voice and call out to her.

When I did, she had made a startled expression, and then immediately glared at me and threw a block at me.

I catch it.

"Go away!"

It's a flat-out rejection.

Well then.

It seems that I've done something to make her hate me.

If it's just the things that I'm aware of, the incident where I hit Paul is about it.

Yep. There's no doubt it's that.

"Um, I've made up properly with Tou-sama, you know?"

I tried excusing myself, but...

"Liar!"

Norn said that in a loud voice, and then ran away without pause.

It seems that I'm really quite hated.

It's a bit of a shock.

I return to the defacto waiting room, and wait there a while for Paul.

When I take a seat in the corner of the room, glances came my way.

Among them are the kidnappers from the other day.

As expected, I really am hated, huh?

While I'm feeling uncomfortable there, an excessively flesh-colored and conspicuous person entered.

While I was wondering 'Just what happened to the plainness from yesterday?', donning a bikini armor she drew the surrounding gazes, and suddenly noticed me.

Now she's walking towards me.

"Good morning."

"Good morning. What are you here for today?"

With a smile, Bikini-san tilts her head questioningly.

"I've come to meet my father. Umm..."

Umm, what was this person's name again?

I haven't heard it yet, right?

"I haven't introduced myself yet, have I? Excuse me. My name is Rudeus Greyrat."

Standing up with an arm across my chest, I bow in the manner of a noble.

When I did, Vera became confused and moved her arms in a fluster and replied,

"Ahm, uhm... I-, I'm Vera. I'm one of Paul-danchou's subordinates."

{ C-Editor's note: Danchou = leader. }

When I raise my head, I inevitably get a glimpse of the depths of her ravine.

It's poison for the eyes. And poison is sometimes used as medicine, and medicine is something that heals you.

It was just before I had decided to be reserved, and I didn't really want to see it, but it entered my line of sight no matter what.

No matter what I had decided in my mind, as though my sight was being urged on by a fox, it would be pulled towards a certain point.

How unfair.

"I apologize for the other day. My father is somewhat of a skirt-chaser, and so I had somewhat misunderstood."

"N-, no, no. It's fine. Because I'm dressed like this, it couldn't be helped."

Replying while keeping up appearances, Vera quickly shook her head.

And as she did, a certain part of her jiggled and shook.

Though it may be a bikini armor and technically does fix things in place, it can't stop the vibrations from being transmitted.

They're big, after all.

No, no...

...I somehow manage to tear my gaze away.

"I think it might be better if you didn't appear in front of men with that kind of appearance. It might be alluring to others. Would it not be better to at least put on an overcoat?"

"...There's a reason for this, so..."

Vera smiled bitterly, and said that.

It might be my imagination, but it feels like the gazes of the other group members are gathered on me.

Did I perhaps say something bad...?

I don't understand. I'll ask Paul about it later.

"Around what time does Tou-sama finish?"

When I change the subject, Vera tilts her head in thought.

"Umm, because the work from this past month has been piling up, I think he'll be busy for a while."

"Is that so...? For now, the plan is to leave Milishion in 7 days, so could you please relay this to him?"

"Seven days? That's quite hasty, isn't it?"

"It's normal for us."

"Is that so..? I understand. I'll bring Shera here. Please wait a little."

Saying that, she ran further into the building.

After a short time, she returns with the robed healing magician.

When she received my gaze, she let out a sound and hid behind Vera.

"The leader's schedule is packed, but he has time four nights from now. If you're planning to eat, please come at that time."

"I'm not really asking you to force a window though..."

"When the leader speaks to you, he's lively. That's why even if we have to force it, please do come."

While hiding behind Vera, Shera replies in an uninterested tone.

She sure hates me, huh? No, it could be that she's afraid of me.

Though I'm a bit reluctant... well, whatever.

"Four nights from now, correct? I understand. Would it be better to head to the inn?"

"We've got reservations at the restaurant the group regularly uses, so please head there directly. The location is..."

And like that, Shera indifferently told me about the location and time.

It seems to be a restaurant called 『Rage Milis』, in the Commerce District.

I had asked just in case, but there doesn't seem to be a dress code.

Still, somehow the setting feels a bit like dining together with the president of an important company.

It feels like Paul's gotten quite important, having his schedule managed by a secretary.

"Will you be bringing a companion?"

At the end I was asked that, and though I suddenly thought of Eris, at the same time I recalled the line "I'll beat him to death".

"No, I'll be coming alone."

With that, I had finished making an appointment, and I left the building.

Now then. One week is short. I have to use it meaningfully.

While thinking that, I went to the Milishion Adventurers Guild.

As expected from a place called the headquarters, it was a fairly large building.

It was a 2 story building, and was the largest of all the Adventurers Guilds I'd ever seen.

Though I say that, I've seen plenty of large buildings before, so I'm not really that moved.

First is information gathering.

For now, the main topic is the issue of the Fedoa region. Nevertheless, I didn't find any information that I hadn't heard from Paul already. In other words, the one most informed about this in these parts is as expected, Paul's search party.

What I searched for next was information on the monsters in the Milishion area. There was a large difference in the threat level when compared to the Magic Continent.

The 'Giant Locust' is a big locust, the 'Meat Cut Rabbit' is a carnivorous rabbit, and the 'Rock Worm' is a large earthworm etc. etc.

The number of extremely weak monsters is high.

Compared to the Magic Continent, the size of the monsters are small as well.

In the lands that we had braved, it was common to find monsters whose size were many times that of a human's.

Even the Pack Coyotes that we had hunted to extinction (exaggeration) were more than 2 metres long.

Things like the Acid Wolf were greater than 3 metres in size.

Even the Great Tortoise was on average 8 metres from front to back, and the largest ones were over 20 metres.

The monsters I'd seen in the Great Forest during the rainy season as well, were monsters that were about the size of a human.

Compared to that, the size of the monsters in the surroundings of Milishion were only about as tall as a person's knee.

Though it's not to say that the greater the size, the stronger they are, but their size is basically their only weapon.

In conclusion, the monsters in the Milishion area are weak. This area is safe.

Next I think about how to redeem the reputation of the Superd race.

However, it's difficult.

This is because there's a faction in Milishion that is trying to expel the Demon Race. The ones guiding this are one of the holy knight orders of Milis; the Order of the Temple. They loudly call for the Demon Race to be expelled from the Milis Continent.

Though I say this, the one who holds the most influence in Milishion isn't that faction.

The head of the faction that advocates coexistence with the Demon Race is the Pope incumbent, and so the Order of the Temple isn't openly trying to expel the Demon Race.

However, should a Demon Person cause a problem in town, these knights will immediately come flying in to blame them.

Even if their position is weak, as long as they have a just cause, they'll come down strongly on the Demon Race.

If we assert that Ruijerd is a 『Superd』 and do things on a large scale, it's probable that the Order of the Temple will immediately have their eye on us.

The city is always under the watch of the Order of the Temple.

In that case, how about outside the city then?

While thinking this, I accepted a certain quest.

The requests posted were mostly B rank, and this was one of those.

It seems that in the neighboring town, a monster was running wild.

It's in a place that is close enough for me to make a day trip.

The target for subjugation is an emerald green tiger; the Leaf Tiger.

Normally it's a monster that inhabits the southern parts of the Great Forest.

For some reason it's moved south and settled down close to the town.

Because it's fur is an erratic green pattern, with parts that are a brown pattern as well, when inside a forest it completely blends in with the scenery.

Because of the difficulty in detecting it, coupled with the fact that it moves in groups, it gained a B rank designation.

However, right now the target is a single leaf tiger, and moreover is on a plain field, you could say it's even less dangerous than an acid wolf.

Using the ranking system to describe it, at best it would be a D rank.

Finding a request like this during the time I was on the Magic Continent would have been cause for delight.

When I quickly make my way there, the timing was just right because the tiger was holding a chicken in its mouth, and was leisurely leaving the village.

Noticing me, it dropped its prey and growled at me, but Eris had just said 'Leave it to me' as she began running, and in the blink of an eye it was cut perfectly in two.

The request really was completed too quickly.

The villagers were very thankful towards us.

Lately, the tiger had been acting violently in the area, and a number of villagers and livestock were injured.

It seems that usually one of the holy knight orders would come to defend the town.

However, it seems that just a few days ago, there was an incident where a shrine maiden had been attacked nearby.

It seems that with the exception of the commanding officer, all the members of the Order of the Temple that had composed the guard unit had been killed, and the shrine maiden had just barely been saved, but the responsibility for the defeat of the unit lay with the commanding officer, and so he had been dismissed.

In the first place, lately there had been a lot of suspicious kidnapping incidents, and because the knight orders were becoming tense, this kind of incident had occurred. Because of that, both the religious order and the knight orders had their hands full.

Thus, the knights had left the dangerous B ranked monster problems to sort themselves out, and with no other choice, requests were sent out at the Adventurers Guild.

Well, the problems of the knight orders or whatever are none of our business.

Now then, with the information I've obtained, I'll begin my experiment.

I'll publicize the Superd race here.

Ruijerd is actually a Superd, and so that the Superd can get along with people all around the world, we're travelling around and piling good deeds.

The Superd tribe is a race that's daunting upon first glance.

Thus, I create a stone statue.

If you look at this, Ruijerd's name is mentioned, and no matter how scary the Superd look, in the blink of an eye their attitude towards the Superd will soften, and like a stubborn grandfather looking at their grandchild, their expressions will relax.

After a few minutes they'll probably end up as soul brothers of a hundred years.

Even if I say so myself, it's a perfect sales pitch.

However, the village head had a complicated expression on.

Though he was grateful to Ruijerd as an individual, something of this level wouldn't remove the prejudice against the Demon Race, and as a follower of Milis, he was reluctant to have a statue depicting a Demon Person.

I was told this, and the statue was rejected.

My experiment hadn't gone well.

As expected, it seemed that things couldn't be solved in one go like that.

Or perhaps as expected, it wouldn't do unless it was a bishoujo figurine?

Should I start making gender-bent Ruijerd figures from now on?

No, there'd be no point then, huh?

"You made this kind of thing, huh...?"

On the way back to Milishion, Ruijerd had taken a long look at the figurine and strongly praised it.

"That's right! Rudeus is great at this sort of thing, after all!"

Then, seeing the figure, for some reason Eris said that in a boasting manner.

Though it was rejected this time, my figurines sell for quite a high price.

My figurines of the Beast Race Sword King had caught the eye of some country's princess after all.

{ C-Editor's note: The author made a mistake here. He must have meant Roxy's figurine because Rudeus hasn't made Ghyslaine's figurine yet. }

It wouldn't even be exaggerating to say I was a royal purveyor.

While thinking about things like this, I was feeling proud but...

"However, this stance is full of openings, huh?" said Ruijerd.

"That's true. The stance is no good, huh? It has to be lower..." said Eris.

In the end, the figurine was no good.

Nyoron.

{ C-Editor's note: Nyoron is a catchphrase of the character Churuya-san from the anime 'The Melancholy of Haruhi-chan Suzumiya & Nyoron!' Churuya-san says 'Nyoron' whenever she is disappointed. So Rudeus is disappointed that the figurine was no good. }

Three days later, the day before the dinner appointment.

Although I'll be having dinner with my family, I don't have any clothes to wear.

There's no real dress code, but the clothing I'd bought on the Magic Continent are seen as quite shabby in these parts.

Thus, I'm browsing clothing shops with Eris.

It's a date, so to speak.

Though I say this, it's nothing that romantic.

Eris is looking for clothes to buy, she isn't that active about it, and it feels like she's fine with buying whatever.

Because she's like that, I'll be choosing clothing for her as well.

From now on is the domain of the Human Race.

We'll be judged according to their tastes, after all.

At the very least, I want to be presentable enough that we aren't ridiculed at first sight.

If there was at least one person here who knew the latest fashion trends, we could ask them for advice but...

Among my acquaintances, there's basically only the monkey-faced newbie or Vera, but I don't know where the monkey-faced newbie is, and I don't know Vera well enough to ask her for a favour.

We could probably ask the shop clerks at the more expensive stores for advice, but the clothing in those kind of stores probably don't cater to adventurers.

It'd be awkward to go in and ask for advice, and then leave without buying anything.

If we owned a set of those kind of clothes, it might possibly come in handy, but we might also never use it. Thinking this, I can't help but feel awkward.

Because of Paul's assistance, we have money, but I don't want to squander it away either.

Thus, we started watching the people walking down the road, and decided to decide on what to buy based on that.

Although my hobby is observing humans, Eris and I are sitting on the side of the road and people watching.

It's just to a certain extent, but it seems like a lot of people are wearing blue clothing.

Additionally, there are both those who don outerwear, and those that don't.

Because the climate is good, the outerwear is thin as well.

"It seems the fad these days it to wear blue, huh?"

"Blue wouldn't suit you, Rudeus."

Eris immediately rejected the idea.

Well, I'm not exactly eager to follow the latest fashion trends, but...

"Then, what would you say suits me?"

"Didn't Gisu give you something? That one was good, you know."

That fur vest, huh?

However, the size is a little big.

Because it's longer than necessary, it ends up looking like a coat.

That said, though it's not uncomfortable, and I'd wear it on cooler days, still...

"Though that vest isn't bad, it's a little too long, huh?"

"Right. It really is a bit long, huh? What if you cut it?"

"That'd be a waste. I'm growing after all."

While having such a conversation, I decided on what to buy.

As expected, Eris and I don't care much about fashion, and the fact that we didn't take long to shop is an indication of that.

Or so I thought, but near the end Eris bought a black dress.

It's made from a black material with a white rose embroidery, and is quite the stylish dress.

"Eris, did you buy that?"

"...What? Do you have a problem with it?"

"No. I think it suits you."

"Hmph. It's not like I need compliments."

With that conversation, we finished that day's shopping.

The day of the dinner appointment.

When I had mentioned that tonight I'd be having dinner with Paul and my family, Eris began saying that she wanted to come too.

Had it not been for the incident the other day, I would be saying 'by all means', but Eris is still holding animosity towards Paul. Enough that you could call it 'killing intent', it's quite a strong hostility. It's not that I can't understand her feelings, but I've already decided to get along with Paul.

If that was it, then I'd be trying this or that to reconcile them, but as far as things go, tonight is the first time in years that it's just been our family. My relationship with Norn hasn't improved either. That's why I have Eris sit this one out.

Wearing new clothing, the new me – 'Newdeus', heads to the restaurant.

I try my best to avoid passing through alleyways. There are a lot of kidnappers in alleyways, and in certain places, there's also a lot of bloodshed. It'd be terrible to dirty my clothing with blood.

There's plenty of danger on the main streets as well. Because it's dinner time, there are a lot of people who have bought things like yakitori walking around. If they bumped into me, it'd splatter all over. That much is obvious. Thus, I had unsealed my demon eye. While seeing things a second ahead in time, I magnificently avoid the crowds of people.

I arrive.

Because there had been something like 'reservations', I had been on guard, but it was actually an extremely normal shop. It was a bar unaffiliated with an inn. There seemed to be a lot of townsmen in it, and it didn't give off a dangerous atmosphere to the customers.

I enter the shop, give the waiter my name, and they guide me to a seat. Sitting there is a bitterly smiling Paul, and a frowning Norn.

"Sorry. Was I late at all?"

"No... Sorry about this; Shera had been kind of enthusiastic about this for some reason. I had told her that the normal bar would be fine, but..."

"Isn't this fine on occasion?"

While saying this, I took a seat.

Norn is ignoring me.

"Come on, Norn. It's your Onii-chan, you know. Greet him."

"Don't wanna. I don't want to eat dinner with the person who beat up Otou-san."

"Come now, you shouldn't be saying something like that, right? I did something bad, so I was hit."

"Otou-san didn't do anything wrong."

Norn's cheeks were puffed in anger, and was sulking in a truly adorable way.

"Your Onii-chan and I have already made up. Right, Rudi?"

"Of course. If you wanted, I could even kiss you."

"Eh?"

"Eh?"

'Are you saying you'd hate to be kissed by your son?'

Though I had thought that, I'd hate to be kissed by my old man as well.

It was a slip of the tongue.

"Come on, we've made up. You should get along with your Onii-chan too, Norn. Okay?"

"Don't wanna."

Paul is patting Norn on the head.

Her hair is a beautiful blonde.

Looking at this hair brings Zenith to mind.

When there was something she didn't like, Zenith would also pout like this and trouble Paul.

This might be something that Norn had inherited.

Though for a while Norn was obediently being patted by Paul, she's definitely still glaring at me.

Her eyes are a bit upturned.

It might be that she's trying to threaten me, but all she manages to do is look cute.

"Otou-san has been trying really hard, you know."

"Yeah. I'm aware of that."

"He hasn't been playing around with women at all, you know."

"I have heard. I'm truly sorry for doubting him."

"He's also really nice to me, you know."

Tears are gradually forming at Norn's eyes.

Crap.

Did I say something mean, perhaps?

Crying is a bit...

"Otou-san always looks like he's going to cry, you know!"

"...Is that so?"

"Nah, I mean, recently, you know...?"

Because Norn is about to cry, Paul and I converse confusedly.

"Otou-san is really pitiful, you know!"

"..." "..."

"Hitting him like that, you're horrible, you know!"

Seeing this, I had let out a deep sigh inside.

Paul and Norn were teleported together.

I'd heard about what had happened.

While traveling, Norn had gotten sick, and it seems that they'd been attacked by monsters.

The one who had been protecting her was Paul.

Separated from her mother, separated from her maid, separated from her little sister, with anxiety wrenching at her heart, only Paul was there for her, and he was the only family she could rely on.

And then suddenly a man appeared, and in a mounted position, had been beating up Paul.

It's something that could leave quite a trauma.

"Norn, that was, I(otou-san) was..."

"It can't be helped, Tou-sama."

At least if she were a bit older, we might have been able to reach some understanding through discussion.

However, at this age things would be quite difficult.

That both of us had done something wrong, and that both of us had accepted and understood this... she's still too young for us to make her understand.

"Norn is still young, and moreover, if I were in her position, I wouldn't forgive the guy who beat up my father either."

It can't be helped that I'm hated by Norn.

We can just wait a few years, and discuss things with her then.

When the time comes, Norn will surely understand.

Though time is limited, it also has the power to settle things down.

However, it doesn't seem like Paul feels the same way.

"No. It's possible that it's only you two siblings left. You have to get along with each other."

'It's possible that it's only you two siblings left.'

When I realize what he means, I knit my eyebrows together.

"Tou-sama. Please don't say such ominous things."

"...You're right. Sorry."

Oop, no good.

The atmosphere has become heavy.

Okay. Time to change the subject.

"By the way, Tou-sama. What's the specialty of this shop? I skipped lunch today, and so I'm already starving."

Though I had plainly changed the subject, Paul seemed to understand.

While making an awkward smile, he answered.

"Mn, let's see. The stew made from the seafood caught in the ocean to the south is delicious. There's also beef. There are a lot of beef farmers in this area. There's quite a difference in taste to the beef in Asura, and there are a lot of stews but..."

"I'm looking forward to it. The meat on the Magic Continent was plain bad."

"Great Tortoise, was it? Monster meat is, you know, generally a crappy taste."

Like that, we begin to converse back and forth, but Norn is still ignoring me.

It can't be helped. Though it can't be helped, it's a bit disheartening.

It's because I'd recently made Paul an enemy.

My chest hurts.

I've done something bad to Paul.

"Come to think of it, Tou-sama, there's something I'd like to inquire about."

"What?"

"Do you know of a person called Gouache Brush?"

"...Nah, I've never heard of them. Where'd you hear the name?"

And with that, I had asked about the letter Ruijerd had brought back.

Because I had made a copy of the crest on the letter just in case, I show that as well.

"A sheep, a falcon, and a sword, huh? It should be one of the paladin families. But I don't recall having heard the name Gouache Brush. I don't know that much about the Milis nobles either, after all..."

"I see... Do you think Shera-san would know if we asked her?"

"I wonder... I'll try asking her later."

While feeling a little unease about the letter Ruijerd had brought, I end the conversation there.

After that are more trifling conversations.

We talk about birthdays.

It seems that since roughly a month before my tenth birthday, the monsters in the forest had become more active. It seems that because Paul and Zenith were busy dealing with that, they hadn't had the free time to send me a present. It seems that they had finished dealing with the monster issue a day before my birthday, but when they started thinking about sending a present, they were teleported.

"By the way, what were you planning on giving me?"

"I was going to give you a gauntlet. I had thought a bit badly about it since it was something I had found inside our storehouse, but it was a magic item after all. It was as light as a feather, and though the size didn't fit me, I had thought that it'd fit you, Rudi."

"I see. So you had something like that as well."

"Yeah. Though Zenith had said that hers would be a secret, Lilia had seen her making a satisfied expression at a small locked box, so that was probably it."

"A box?"

I wonder what it was. I'm a little interested.

Still, no matter how much we talk about things I didn't get, nothing will come of it.

After this, the conversation ended up at the topic of Zenith's family.

The family that Zenith had come from was a distinguished family that had produced a number of excellent knights.

Zenith was as good as disowned, and so it seems the people I could call my maternal grandparents were not interested in searching for her.

However, it seems that they had completely changed their minds when they saw Norn.

No matter the world, grandparents are weak to their grandchildren.

"I wonder if we'd get more money if I showed my face as well."

"No, you'd probably have the opposite effect, huh..."

"...Right?"

Though I could fake the cuteness of a grandchild, it seems like I'd be inviting trouble.

I'd better not.

We had conversations like that, had an enjoyable dinner, and then I parted with Paul.

In the end, Norn had ignored me to the end but you can say that it was a fruitful dinner.

And in the blink of an eye, a week had passed.

It's the day we're to set off, we're at the Adventurer's District's gate. I had gotten on a carriage, and just as I was thinking 'Alright, let's go' Paul had come to see us off.

"Rudi. It'd be fine to stay just a bit longer, you know?"

For some reason Paul had said something easy-going, but it's a bit late now.

"If we keep saying "Just a bit", "Just a bit", it seems like we'll end up staying for a whole year."

"You and Norn haven't managed to make up, after all."

"It won't be too late to worry about that after I find the other three."

Moreover... I glance at Eris.

Eris had been caught by the scruff of her neck, and was glowering at Paul with a demonic expression.

I had thought that she was quick to change her mind about things, but it doesn't seem like that's the case.

"It isn't just me that wants to meet their family, right?"

"I see. But the Boreas family is most likely..."

"Please stop."

As he spoke with a complicated expression, I interrupted Paul with my hand.

"There's the possibility that the information just hasn't come, and when we return to the Fedoa region, both Philip-sama and Sauros-sama have already returned as well."

"...I see. That's true. But Rudi."

Paul spoke with a serious expression.

"Don't be too optimistic. Regarding Philip and the others returning home safely; with the scale of that disaster, who knows what's happened."

"What do you mean?"

Paul lowered his voice a little and said.

"I mean that for the sake of protecting himself, Philip's brother may have pushed all the blame onto one of the two."

When I hear this, certainly, it does seem like it's possible.

The feudal lord Sauros, and the mayor Philip.

The two of them were in charge of the region.

Even if they return safely, the burden of having lost their territory and their citizens will follow them around.

I don't know how nobles take responsibility according to Asura law.

However, at the very least, after the two of them return safely to their hometown, they probably wouldn't flaunt it as their ability as a lord.

There's also the possibility that the place where Philip's brother has escaped to might be closed up, and they might be murdered for the sake of crushing them politically.★

"If anything happens, protect that Ojou-sama. There might also be those who act on noblesse oblige, but it's nothing for you to worry about."

"I understand. I'll take your warning to heart."

My expression stiffened, and I nodded.

Paul makes a proud look, and nods as well.

"Also, regarding the writer of that letter, it seems Shera doesn't know either."

"I see..."

"She did say that she didn't think it'd be a dangerous person though."

"I understand. Please convey my thanks to her."

Paul nodded firmly.

And then, looking behind him, he calls out to the girl there.

"Come on, Norn. Say goodbye to your Onii-chan."

"...Don't wanna."

Norn was hiding behind Paul.

Half of her face is peeking out though. She's truly adorable.

In the future, she'll probably grow into a beautiful woman like Zenith.

"Norn. I don't know how many years later it'll be, but let's meet again."

"...Don't wanna."

Even until the end, Norn wouldn't turn her face to look at me.

While smiling bitterly, I returned to the carriage.

Like that, I left Milishion and began my journey.

— Paul's Perspective —

Rudeus has left on his journey.

As ever, he's quite the outstanding one.

Without reservation he decides on one thing, then the next, steadily taking action.

Elinalise had said that I lived at a fast pace, but I wonder what she'd say if she saw Rudeus.

I'd like for them to meet, but...

No, it'd actually be better if they didn't.

I don't wanna become Elinalise's papa or anything.

And while I was thinking about things like this, my shoulder was slapped.

When I turn to look, I find a monkey-faced man grinning at me.

"Yo, Paul. Done saying goodbye to your son?"

"Gisu..."

I can't thank this monkey-faced man enough.

Had it not been for him, my relationship with Rudeus would probably still be estranged.

"I've been in your care, huh?"

"No worries."

After saying that, I had suddenly realized that Gisu was wearing traveling clothes.

"What's this, Gisu? Where are you planning on going?"

"I haven't decided yet, but there's still a bunch of places that haven't been searched yet, right?"

With those words, I realized that Gisu was going to continue helping with the search.

It was quite the shock.

Gisu should have been the one most troubled by the break-up of our party.

He doesn't have fighting ability, and though he's a jack-of-all-trades, at the same time he couldn't really do anything; other parties wouldn't let him in, he wasn't able to independently complete requests, and so he was a guy who was left with no choice but to give up on being an adventurer.

It wouldn't have been strange if he was the one who resented me the most.

"Why are you going so far with your consideration, and helping me search?"

When I asked this, the corner of his mouth curved into his usual nihilistic smile.

"You'll jinx it, you know."

With his usual reply, he turned his monkey-face away from me.

I bring my hands to my hips and smile bitterly.

This guy believes in so many superstitions that I can't keep track of them all.

However, for some reason I feel pleasant, and I see Gisu off until I can no longer see his back.

"Alright."

I raised my voice in a roar, and gave Norn a piggyback.

I was overflowing with enthusiasm.

First I'll have to make sure the large-scale migration of the refugees is a success.

After that, I'll definitely find my family.

Having decided that, I returned to town.

This is sudden, but let's talk about the boy known as Cliff Grimoire.

Cliff was now 13 years old; his age was right between those of Eris and Rudeus.

When he was old enough to understand what was going on, he was in an orphanage.

It was an orphanage in Milishion. It was an orphanage that could be said to be the symbol of the prestige and authority of the Milis religious organization.

There were no problems with the management, and the children were able to grow without worries and were sent off to foster parents.

When Cliff was 5, he was adopted by his current foster parent.

He was an old man named Harry Grimoire.

He was a person who held a high position in the Milis religious organization.

Before he had been adopted by Harry, Cliff had been receiving special education for gifted children.

In just a few years he had reached advanced rank in healing, detoxification and summoning magic.

In offensive magic as well, he had reached intermediate rank in all elements.

He was even more proficient in fire magic, and had reached advanced rank.

Cliff was a genius.

Praise rained down on him from all around.

Everyone had anticipated that he would surely become an amazing individual when he grew up.

It could be described as a childhood quite similar to Rudeus.

However, unlike Rudeus who had retained memories from his previous life, Cliff was becoming impudent.

He had become conceited, as though he had no betters.

At any rate, even amongst his peers in the classroom, there was no one who could use as many different magics as Cliff.

There were those who had reached Saint rank in healing.

There were those who had reached Saint rank in detoxification.

However, only Cliff had reached Advanced level in all three.

Because of his diversity, there were those who began to call him a sage in the making.

Cliff grew even more impudent.

He gradually stopped listening to his teacher's words.

In the future, Cliff was to succeed his foster father in his occupation.

Cliff had understood this as well.

But even so, Cliff longed to become an adventurer.

Why an adventurer?

That was due to the influence of his days at the orphanage.

Many of those who had graduated from the orphanage became adventurers.

If the children at the orphanage weren't adopted by the age of ten, they would enter into a school managed by the Milis religious organization.

There, they would train for five years.

For example swordsmanship or magic, it was combat training. Like that, they would train for jobs that their talents suited.

Those who excelled in not only studying, but also swordsmanship and magic could become knights.

However, the majority became adventurers.

As a result, there were many adventurers among the orphanage alumni.

These alumni would occasionally come to the orphanage.

While greeting their former teachers, they'd also tell fun stories of their adventures to the orphans.

Hearing these, the orphans would yearn to become adventurers.

Cliff was no exception.

Of course, Cliff didn't think his dream would come true.

Though he longed for it, he also understood his own circumstances.

As an orphan, selfishness wasn't permitted.

He endured.

Indeed, in the beginning.

However, this stiff lifestyle accumulated resentment inside Cliff, and as the praise continued to be showered onto him, Cliff grew more arrogant by the day.

On a certain day, Cliff ran away from home and thought to register as an adventurer.

It was a bit of a test of his power.

There were even those amongst the teachers who as former adventurers would speak about their past boastfully.

'When I was young, I wanted to pile up experiences like that.' they would say.

He got ready.

With the staff that he received from his foster father on his 10th birthday in hand, he left the Sacred District and entered the Adventurers District.

On the way, he bought a robe like those magicians would wear.

It was blue colored. He headed to the Adventurers Guild.

If he registered as a healer, he'd probably be immediately found by the church.

However, if he registered as a magician then it would be fine.

While believing foolish things like this, he finished the registration.

And like that, he was an adventurer, just like everyone else.

'A great adventure awaits me in a world I've never seen.'

He thought, and surveyed the surroundings in excitement.

Everyone was a brawny man.

He realized that everyone was something like a warrior or a swordsman.

Cliff had heard from his seniors at the orphanage that their parties had desperately needed a skilled magician.

That's why he had thought that if he called himself a magician, he'd immediately be able to enter a party.

Cliff had ignored the talk about adventurer ranks.

He had thought of parties as groups that didn't involve ranks.

Of course he had been rejected.

Bluntly rejected.

Over and over, rejected.

By the fourth time, Cliff's patience had reached its limits.

"Why!? Why can't I enter the party!?"

"Like I said, your rank is different."

"So what about my rank!? I actually have the strength of an A ranker! I said that because it couldn't be helped, I'd bear with partying with you lot, didn't I!?"

"What was that...? Don't get too carried away, you brat! Do you think a magician like you can win after picking a fight at this distance...?"

"You're not good for anything but swinging a sword around. Don't get carried away!"

"You shitty brat..."

Cliff was grabbed by the collar, and was thinking that if he showed his true power, he could drive them away somehow.

"Stop that. You're being childish, you know."

The one who interrupted them was a red-haired girl of about Cliff's age.

Going back in time a little...

Eris Boreas Greyrat turned her feet towards the Adventurers Guild.

From an outsider's perspective, she was making a pleasant smile whilst quickly making her way down the main street.

She was dressed in her usual adventurers outfit.

Over her thick clothing were guards made of fur.

Over her fur pants were boots made of a thin but tough material.

At her hip was a sword, and at a glance anyone could tell that she was a swordswoman.

She wasn't wearing her usual hood.

If she wore the hood to the Adventurers Guild then she'd be mistaken for a magician, and strange men would approach her.

It was something she'd experienced countless times this past year.

Eris arrived in front of the Adventurers Guild.

The Milishion Adventurers Guild was at the end of the main road.

As expected of the headquarters, it was the largest building in the Adventurers District.

Without being overwhelmed by the awesome, and huge gate, Eris stepped inside.

Looking at the huge lobby, she unconsciously folded her arms.

Anyhow, it was even larger than the banquet halls in Roa.

It goes without saying that it was larger than all the Adventurers Guilds she had seen thus far.

If she were a young girl becoming an adventurer for the first time, in the face of such a spacious room, she might have shied away.

However, this was Eris.

She was an A ranker.

A competent adventurer.

She immediately began to walk towards her objective.

It was the request board.

It was far larger than other requests boards, and was overflowing with attached requests.

Eris looked at them, arms folded.

She wasn't looking at her usual B ranked requests, but was looking at the E ranked area.

There, she was looking for requests that were classified as Free Quests.

Free Quests were requests that were periodically issued by the nation.

The pay was lower, but because of its urgency, adventurers of any rank could accept it.

The reason Eris hadn't seen any on the Magic Continent was because there were no nations to speak of.

Amongst all the other requests, Eris had managed to single out the one she was looking for:

==========

Free

・Job: Goblin suppression

・Reward: 10 Milisian Copper Coins per ear

・Job details: Culling goblins

・Location: Eastern Milishion

・Time limit: None in particular

・Deadline: None in particular

・Client name: Holy Knight Orders of Milis

・Notes: Beginners be aware of the hobgoblins that occasionally appear.

Additionally, please do not tear off this request, and simply bring

the gathered items to the counter.

==========

Goblins were monsters that only appeared in the forests and plains.

Though they were humanoids and could use simple weapons, they couldn't comprehend human speech.

If there were just a few of them, it'd be fine to leave them alone, but if left to their own devices, they would steadily increase in population and start to attack the surrounding villages.

They were vermin, so to speak.

Be that as it may, because they lived in the forest and its surroundings, they acted as a natural defence against outbreaks of monsters from the forest.

Additionally, goblins were weak and so a young boy who dabbled in the sword was more than a match for one.

Making use of this fact, the Adventurers Guild prepared a reward suitable for beginners, and would prepare goblin suppression quests as a kind of introduction to suppression requests.

Also, though it was something Eris wasn't aware of, goblins were also used as a torture instrument for spies from enemy nations.

Due to the above reasons, the goblin population in Milis would be carefully maintained at a moderate level.

Now then, why would an A ranked adventurer like Eris, who could defeat the average C ranked adventurer barehanded, and whose strength had already been recognized by Ruijerd, be accepting such a request so late in her adventurer life?

There were two reasons.

First of all, it was simply one of Eris' dreams.

In the past, Eris had attended school for just a very short while.

Her male classmates had been huddled together, and talking about something.

That topic was about what they would do if they became adventurers.

First they would hunt goblins, and with money saved up from doing so, and whilst travelling bit by bit towards the southern region of the Central Continent, they would challenge themselves with dungeons and high ranked requests.

They spoke about that kind of dream.

Eris, who had been listening in from nearby, began to have delusions of one day doing so as well.

Her delusions began to swell, and then she approached the happily talking boys and told them to let her join in as well, but for various reasons they fought, and then she beat the three of them up.

After that, she dropped out of school and met Ghyslaine, and each time she spoke to Ghyslaine her feelings about adventurers became stronger.

After meeting Rudeus, she was filled with dreams of going on adventures with him.

She would be a swordswoman, and he would be a magician.

They would challenge dungeons, just the two of them.

However, after going on a journey for real, it was different from her dream.

In particular, Rudeus was more cool-headed and pragmatic than she had imagined.

Because of the danger, not once did they approach a dungeon.

If she proposed goblin hunting, he'd probably ask "What for?" with a stunned expression.

Eris was a woman who had become an adventurer on the Magic Continent, after all.

He wouldn't be able to understand what meaning there would be in hunting goblins now.

But putting that aside...

Goblin hunting was number one on Eris's list of 『Things I want to do when I become an adventurer』.

Even if there wasn't any meaning in it, it was something she wanted to try.

That was the first reason.

As for the second reason... it's a secret.

"I wonder if I'd be able to return before the sun goes down..."

While looking at the requests, Eris was thinking of the time it would take to go there and back.

This time she would be travelling on foot.

It was still morning at the moment, but it would be better to do things with time to spare.

"...Hm?"

Incidentally by the F ranked requests, a certain memo was attached near the edges of the request board.

『Refugees from the Fedoa region, please contact the following address』

Without reading the rest, Eris moved her gaze away.

She had seen this memo at Saint Port as well.

Rudi hadn't spoken about the Fedoa region issue.

Eris had thought that Rudeus had been considerate of her, and had undoubtedly been trying to avoid worrying her.

Today's independent action as well was probably so that he could work out what to do about this matter.

'I wouldn't understand difficult matters' Eris had been thinking.

'Even if I don't think deeply about it, Rudeus has probably thought of something, so Rudeus will properly discuss it when the time comes.'

So thought Eris.

Never in her wildest dreams did she imagine that Rudeus hadn't even known about it.

"Now then!"

With the request confirmed, in high spirits Eris got ready to leave the guild.

All there was left to do was walk east, and then hunt the goblins. Considering Eris' current enthusiasm, she would probably even destroy one or two nests.

There wasn't anything left to stop her.

It was time to sing a requiem for the pitiful goblins.

"Why!?"

Or so it had seemed, but suddenly hearing a shout, Eris stopped her feet.

It was the voice of a young boy.

She casually looked towards the source.

A youth was encircled by men twice his height.

"Why can't I enter the party!?"

The shouting youth was wearing a blue coloured robe.

He was a bit shorter than Rudeus, and his hair was dark brown.

His eyes were hidden by long forelocks.

His staff wasn't as splendid as Rudeus' 『Aqua Heartia』 either.

However, from the size of the mana crystal, it could be seen that it was still a staff made of expensive materials.

'My family is higher ranked than his, huh?' Eris naturally thought.

"I actually have the strength of an A ranker! I said that because it couldn't be helped, I'd bear with partying with you lot, didn't I!?"

Because of that arrogant manner of speaking, the men naturally became annoyed.

Even Eris would wallop him had those words been said to her.

"What was that...? Don't get too carried away, you brat! Do you think a magician like you can win after picking a fight at this distance...?"

"You're not good for anything but swinging a sword around. Don't get carried away!"

"What was that, you shitty brat...?"

Even caught by the collar, the youth still gave off an expression of composure.

However, Eris hadn't overlooked that his legs were shaking, if only a little.

Eris casually walked towards them, and placed herself between the two of them.

"Stop that. You're being childish, you know."

Had Rudeus been there, he would have been staring in wonder.

'Childish.'

They were words that you couldn't even imagine being said by the usual Eris.

Eris had gotten carried away by the mood.

'I'm an A ranked adventurer so I'm higher ranked than the angry men.'

'A man who's hurting a newbie, and me who's objecting.'

'So cool.'

It was that kind of mood.

"...Tsk. You're right. We were being pretty childish."

The man easily removed his hands from the boy.

Eris had already assumed that she'd get into a fight with the man, so she was a little disappointed.

"Let's go, guys."

The men had left, and only the youth remained.

With a composed expression, Eris awaited the youth's thanks.

'Thank you for saving me. Who are you?'

'I'm nobody famous.'

'At least give me your name.'

'Alright. Let's just go with Ruijerd of 『Dead End』.'

She had been thinking it'd go something like that.

Incidentally, it was something that Rudeus did on occasion.

"I never asked anyone for help, you know!"

The youth spat out these words, and Eris' proud expression froze.

"With my magic I could have worked out something of that level! Don't just decide on your own to butt in and settle things, ugly!"

The boy was lucky.

He had been knocked out in one hit, after all.

Not only that, but the men from before were still nearby.

Had it not been for their efforts in desperately stopping the enraged Eris, there's no doubt that the boy would have lost the two orbs that were most important as a man.

Despite having become a little displeased, Eris had come to the gates of Milishion.

Though she was the type to change gears quickly, she was still unhappy.

As for why...

"Wait! Please wait!"

The youth who had been revived after fainting had come running after her.

"I'm sorry about before. I was a bit confused from the shock..."

The youth had said this and politely bowed his head.

It was because of this that Eris' mood could still be called "a little" displeased.

The boy had just barely managed to escape from death.

However, had it not been for fainting after one hit, then he probably wouldn't have been capable of doing something as vigorous as running after Eris.

"I'm Cliff. Cliff Grimoire!"

"...I'm Eris."

Eris had decided to give up on giving the name 『Dead End』.

She couldn't give Ruijerd's name to a person she had beaten up in impatience.

"Eris-san! That's a wonderful name! That outfit means you're a swordswoman, right!? By all means, please form a party with me!"

Dead centre in the middle of the road was Cliff, who was talking on and on.

Eris had been thinking to just go with the flow and knock him out, but for now she was enduring.

"Don't want to."

Eris turned away in a huff and walked away.

Honestly speaking, she wasn't used to this kind of person.

To continue to approach her even after being beaten up...

Of the people she knew, there was basically only Rudeus.

"Is that so? Then please, at least let me cover you from behind! People have been saying that I'm a sage in the making. I'll definitely be useful!"

Had Rudeus been here...

'Just who exactly is a sage in the making? At best you're an unfertilized egg, you virgin asshole!'

{ C-Editor's note: The phrase 'a sage in the making' was translated from the original Japanese phrase 'a sage's egg' which is why Eris thinks of Cliff as an unffertilized egg at best. }

He probably would have spat out such insults towards the boy.

In his mind, at least.

Eris didn't say such vulgar insults.

'If you're an egg, then how about I break you to pieces and fry you sunny side up?' was all she had been thinking.

"I don't think even you've met a magician as strong as me, Eris-san. At any rate, I'm stronger than your average A ranked magician after all."

Being told this, Eris became annoyed.

To her, the "strongest magician" was none other than Rudeus.

Rudeus was such a skilled magician that even Ruijerd had acknowledged him.

Though he was certainly A ranked, you couldn't lump him together with any run-of-the-mill A rankers.

"By all means, please confirm this with your own eyes!"

'Then I will have a look!' Eris had ended up thinking.

"Fine. Come along, then."

"Yes!"

And like that, Eris and Cliff left to hunt goblins.

Seven goblins were burnt to cinders in an instant.

"How was that!? It was amazing, right!? An average magician wouldn't have been able to do this, you know!"

Making a face as if to ask 'How was that!?', Cliff looked over the annihilated goblins.

The goblins were completely carbonised, and were in a condition where you couldn't even collect their ears.

"Is that so? It wasn't amazing at all."

It wasn't a bluff.

Eris had meant it from the bottom of her heart.

Advanced Fire Magic 『Imprisoning Blaze Fire Bullet (Exodus Flame)』.

Eris had seen Rudeus using this before.

He hadn't spoken a long chant like Cliff had, and it was more powerful than Cliff's as well.

However, Rudeus would never have used such a magic against opponents as weak as goblins.

Had it been Rudeus, he would never have made the mistake of losing the goblin ears.

Also, until he had finished chanting, Eris had been fighting those goblins.

Because Cliff hadn't said anything to her when he had finished his chant, she had almost been caught up in his attack as well.

Had it been Rudeus, there was absolutely no way he would have done something as dangerous as that.

"Eris-san, you don't really know much about magic, huh? Listen, okay? In the first place, magic is something that..."

Cliff began a long and drawn out explanation of the tiers of magic from elementary to advanced, and how the one he was using was advanced, and was advanced enough that even the men from before couldn't use it.

Of course, this was something Eris knew.

It was discussed in Rudeus' lessons, after all.

Not only that, but Rudeus' lessons were 10 times easier to understand than Cliff's explanation.

"Do you understand just how amazing I am now?"

'Should I hit him?' Eris had been thinking.

Even though it was the goblin hunting that she had been dreaming of for so long, because of this guy, things had been spoilt for her.

Because of that, Eris took an imposing stance with her arms crossed and spoke ruthlessly.

"That's enough. You don't seem to be of use, so just go home."

Had it been Rudeus, he probably would have chosen to retreat temporarily.

However, it seemed as though Cliff couldn't read the mood.

"What on earth are you saying!? You've been struggling to fight just a few goblins. There's no way you'd be able to do it alone!"

Before she had noticed, her fist had already swung towards him.

Cliff grasped his face, while his nose ran with blood.

He had immediately chanted Healing, and stopped his nosebleed.

"What are you doing!?"

"Tsk."

Eris had clicked her tongue.

Because it wouldn't do to leave someone knocked out in the plains, she had gone easy on him, but the result was that he was able to get carried away like this.

"Yeah, of course I understand. That you're strong, Eris-san, is something I reaaally understand. In that case, let's head into the forest this time. I can't show you my true worth by fighting goblins after all."

There were no ulterior motives to his words.

He wanted to show Eris how amazing he was.

However, it was definitely not the case of a boy wanting to show the girl he loved his cool side.

He had simply wanted Eris to be amazed at his powerful self.

"The forest is no good."

Eris spoke briefly.

The forest is no good.

It was something that Rudeus always said.

Moreover, Ruijerd would agree with it.

Thus, Eris obediently abided by it.

"Though you'd be the last person I'd expect to say this, Eris-san, are you afraid?"

"I'm not afraid!"

However, Eris was still a simple girl.

As long as you used such a line, she was easily swayed.

It wasn't acceptable to allow someone to look down on the Boreas family like they were novice adventurers.

"The forest, right!? Fine! Let's go!"

And so the two of them made their way towards the dim forest.

"Even if we head into the forest, since it's Milis it's still no big deal, huh?"

While saying this, Eris was cutting down monkey monsters named Utans. They were D ranked monsters though, so they were no match for Eris.

"That's true. They aren't a match for me either."

Cliff spoke while again killing an Utan with intermediate wind magic.

Like that, they rapidly headed into the depths of the forest.

"Ah-"

Suddenly, Eris raised her voice.

"What's wrong, Eris-san!?"

With a happy expression, Cliff approached Eris.

Eris was openly making an unhappy face.

She then folded her arms, spread her legs shoulder-width apart, and overlooked Cliff with her chin raised.

"You. Do you know which way heads back to the city?"

"I don't."

Naturally, there was no way Cliff could know such a thing.

Because they had done this due to a sudden suggestion, they hadn't brought any equipment for entering forests.

"I see. Then we're lost, huh?"

Eris had calmly declared this.

Cliff had kept silent. And then, very quickly, his face became pale.

"W-, what should we do?"

Eris was calm.

Thus, Cliff had thought that she had some kind of idea.

However, deep down Eris had also thought that the situation was bad.

If those two found out that she had become lost in the forest, they'd be shocked.

They'd wonder why she entered a forest while hunting for goblins, and be shocked.

However, she would never show this in her attitude.

A lady of the Greyrat family should always be composed.

"Cliff, fly into the air for a bit and find out which way the city is in."

"There's no way I'd be able to do something like that, right?"

"Rudeus would be able to do it."

"Rudeus? Who's that?"

"My teacher."

"Ehh!?"

Eris let out a sigh.

Even if they argued, there'd be no meaning in it.

'What should I do at a time like this?'

Then it came to her; it was something that Ghyslaine had taught her for times when she was lost.

If she remembered correctly, it was to collect tree branches and start a fire.

The smoke would rise to the air, and could be seen from afar.

However, who would see it?

Ruijerd had said that he had things to do today.

Rudeus had said so as well.

Nobody would notice.

"..."

At some point, Eris had unconsciously folded her arms, and in an imposing stance, and the corners of her mouth had curved downwards.

She then closed her eyes and thought carefully. Ghyslaine had said this.

That at these times when she was anxious that she especially needed to compose herself.

Because of that, no matter the situation, she would never panic.

"Eh, Eris-san. What should we do?"

"There should be other adventurers in this forest."

"I-, I see. If we depend on them... Let's look for them."

Cliff had started running flusteredly.

However, Eris didn't move.

Ruijerd had taught her this.

That in times like this, she should stay still.

That while staying still, she should search for the presence of others.

She had also been taught how to search for them.

Even without a third eye, she could perceive sound, and the surroundings, as well as the flow of mana.

Though Eris was still immature, she did practice everyday.

"Eris-san...?"

"Quiet!"

Eris took a deep breath and then with her eyes still closed, she sharpened her mind.

The sound of the forest.

The sound of leaves rubbing against each other.

The sound of moving animals.

The sound of flying insects.

And then, the faintly audible sound of weapons.

"I've found them. This way."

Immediate decisions and immediate action.

Without hesitation, Eris began to walk.

"What is it? What did you find!?"

"People. They're that way."

"How!?"

"I searched for their presence."

"Did your teacher teach you this too!?"

Having been asked that, Eris thought for a little.

Is Ruijerd a teacher?

He's a teacher, right?

Though it's not as much as Ghyslaine, I've been taught various things by him as well.

He's a teacher.

No, he's someone you could even call a master.

"That's right."

"He's pretty amazing huh, that Rudeus person..."

"Hm? ...Right. Rudeus is amazing."

Without understanding why Rudeus's name was suddenly brought up, Eris continued forward.

They had left the forest.

The moment they did, they spotted a horse carriage being turned over.

"Get down!"

"Gueh!"

Eris had immediately gripped Cliff's head and thrown it to the ground.

As for herself, she was crouching and confirming the situation.

"..."

There were 6 people standing there.

One person was a knight in full body armor.

The knight was standing with their back to a tree, and had their sword in a guard.

In the area were men dressed from head to toe in black.

There were 5 of them.

The black clothed men were surrounding the knight.

In the area were three corpses.

All of them were wearing armor.

They were wearing the same armor as the surrounded knight.

The men slowly tightened their encirclement around the knight.

The difference in fighting ability was already clear.

Though this was the case, why wasn't the knight escaping?

The knight had their back to a tree, and looking carefully, a girl could be seen crouching by the base of the tree.

Her expression was brimming with anxiety and despair, and her face was wet with tears.

"Eris-san, that armor means that the knight belongs to the Order of the Temple!"

Cliff informed Eris in a whisper.

Eris' heart was beating fast.

The Order of the Temple.

She had heard of it.

It was one of Milis's three knight orders.

The elite group in charge of defending the country, the Order of the Church.

Spreading Milis' teachings around the world, making known their power, and doing mercenary-like work, the Order of Instruction.

Finally, the branch in charge of heresy inquisitions, their name a synonym for passing judgement onto heretics, the Order of the Temple.

Respectively,

The Order of the Church wore white armor.

The Order of Instruction wore silver armor.

The Order of the Temple wore blue armor.

Though the knight was a long way away, their sky blue armor could be seen.

There was no mistake.

The one who was now cornered was a Knight of the Order of the Temple.

"You bastards! You know who this lady is, don't you!?"

When they raised their voice, it was understood in an instant.

The cornered knight was a woman.

The men looked at each other, and then abruptly broke into laughter.

"That's obvious."

"Then why!?"

"It goes without saying, right?"

"You bastards! Are you with the pope's faction!?"

Eris couldn't understand their conversation.

However, she understood that the black-clothed men seemed to be bad guys, and wanted to kill that girl.

Eris placed her hand to the sword at her waist.

Cliff questioned it.

"W-, what are you planning to do, Eris-san? However you look at this, it's bad. That girl is the shrine maiden said to be one of the candidates for next Pope. In other words, those black-clothed men are definitely an assassination squad employed by the Pope of Milis. They're all skilled. Even if it's us, we don't have a chance of winning..."

Eris hadn't even wondered why Cliff knew so much about this.

All Eris was focusing on was the fact that if Eris couldn't save the girl now, she'd be killed.

Also, Eris was a member of 『Dead End』.

If she abandoned a child, she wouldn't be able to face Ruijerd. Rudeus would always say that as well, and would lend his hand to others.

"Let's just stay unnoticed, and let them do it."

"It's too late. We've already been noticed."

Eris understood.

One of the men had noticed them when she had pushed Cliff down.

She didn't know what the man was thinking.

However, whatever the case, Eris planned to take the initiative.

"You can just keep hiding here, Cliff!"

"E-, Eris-san!"

Eris drew her sword and at the same time leaped towards them.

In an instant, the black-clothed men had spread out.

However...

"You're slow!"

Eris' steps were more nimble than the men had anticipated.

Sword God Style Advanced Rank 『Soundless Longsword』.

As a technique below that of the longsword of light, it was a technique whose swing didn't leave a single sound.

Thanks to Ghyslaine and Ruijerd, Eris' skill in swordsmanship was improving considerably.

The sword entered one of the men from the shoulder, easily bisected his ribs, and perfectly split him in a cut that ran diagonally from the shoulder.

Without being bewildered by the sensation of cutting someone for the first time, Eris turned her sword towards the next opponent.

The men moved to surround Eris.

However, Eris's movements were even quicker.

She had been lectured quite a bit by Ruijerd on what to do when surrounded by multiple opponents.

Many types of monsters like to swarm their enemies.

It was a theory that involved killing them before you were surrounded.

"Haaaa!"

In the blink of an eye, one of the black-clothed men had been cut down.

A tremble ran through the men.

Eris' rhythm was irregular, and after preliminary movements that they couldn't grasp, her slashes came flying.

Because her attacks were difficult to deal with even when the men devoted themselves to evasion, they couldn't do anything else while defending.

However, the men were professionals.

Sacrificing one person, their encirclement was complete.

Two of the black-clothed men leaped in towards Eris at different times.

They were fast.

However, they weren't as fast as Ruijerd.

Their cooperation wasn't to the level of the Pack Coyotes on the Magic Continent either.

They were lukewarm.

"Those guys have daggers soaked in poison! Be careful!"

The knight protecting the girl had shouted that, whilst moving as well.

A slash from outside the encirclement killed one of the men.

When the woman moved, whilst predicting the movements of the men, Eris found an opening in their encirclement.

'I can win.'

Eris had confidence.

Whilst thinking this, she cut down another man.

There were two left.

"Retreat!"

One of the men had yelled this, and in an instant the two had turned around and made to escape.

However, Eris wasn't a naive girl who would relax near the end.

In a flash she had caught up, and slashed into one of their backs.

His upper and lower halves separated, and he fell with his entrails scattering about.

The other man was nowhere to be seen, and had disappeared beyond the plains.

"Hmph!"

Eris snorted.

She sent the blood on her blade flying with a swing.

Eris appeared as she usually did.

However, her heart was beating loudly.

Thinking about it, it was the first time she had fought a human for real, and it was also the first time she had killed a person.

Moreover, the enemy had daggers coated with poison.

They were weapons that could cause a fatal wound with just one cut.

There wasn't anyone like Rudeus or Ruijerd to protect her back either.

Though she had jumped towards them without a thought, had it not been for that female knight, Eris might have died.

However, Eris didn't reveal any of those thoughts.

She returned her sword to her scabbard, and turned towards the female knight.

"Sorry. One of them escaped."

The knight was a little taken aback by those words.

After all, though she was a girl who hadn't yet reached adulthood, she had passed through a life or death battle and looked excessively calm.

Without taking off her parrot-like helmet, the knight raised a fist to her abdomen and expressed her thanks in the proper manner for a knight of Milis.

"I humbly thank you for your assistance."

"As long as the child is safe, it's fine."

Without returning the courtesy, Eris remembered her own speaking style, and had spoken in a blunt manner.

"I am Therese Latreia of the Order of the Temple. I assume you're an adventurer, but could I ask for your name?"

"I'm E-..."

Eris had thought to give her real name, but stopped.

That's not it.

Rudeus wouldn't have done things like that.

"『Ruijerd of Dead End』. Though I look like this, I'm a Superd."

Hearing 'Superd', Therese's expression had become stern.

Though Eris didn't know it, the Order of the Temple was calling for the expulsion of the Demon Race.

Naturally, Eris didn't exhibit the characteristics of a Superd.

That's why Therese's expression loosened.

Because Eris had not given her real name, but the name of a race that the Order of the Temple was not comfortable with, Therese had judged it to be implying that Eris hadn't wanted to become mixed up in this incident any further.

Though she had saved someone of importance, she didn't desire thanks.

Therese had thought well of this attitude.

"Is that so? I understand..."

Therese had taken a long look at Eris, who was staring intensely with her arms crossed, and committed her face to memory.

After that, she whistled.

When she did, a single horse came running from inside the forest.

The horse which had escaped when the carriage was overturned had returned as practiced.

She placed the girl on the horse, and got on as well.

"If you ever have any trouble, remember the name Therese of the Order of the Knights!"

Therese had left those words, and rode away on the horse.

Eris silently saw her off.

Like a scene from a fairy-tale, the mounted knight rode away and was seen off by a fearless, red-haired swordsman.

The youth who had been hiding and unable to stand, did nothing except continue to watch them.

A certain priest of the Milis religious organization had fallen in love with a halfling woman.

A child born from the two of them had grown up, and married a woman.

And like that, Cliff was born.

Around the time of Cliff's birth, that priest had been in the midst of a power struggle.

Cliff's parents had been caught up in this and had died.

For the sake of keeping his grandchild Cliff away from the power struggle, he was temporarily left in the care of an orphanage.

The priest then triumphed in the power struggle and became pope, and welcomed in Cliff.

In other words, Cliff Grimoire was the grandchild of the pope.

However, even within the church there were few who knew this.

Because of that, Cliff knew quite well who the attacked girl was.

She was the trump card of the archbishop who was now competing against his grandfather for power, a shrine maiden who possessed wonderous power.

He was even acquainted with her.

Cliff didn't know why she was in such a place.

However, he knew the black-clothed group quite well.

They were the teachers that taught Cliff.

Cliff knew that they were in charge of these kinds of jobs.

And he also knew of their strength.

He had faced them many times in training, but hadn't won even once.

Those teachers hadn't been a problem for Eris.

In reality, she had just barely won, but what was reflected in Cliff's eyes were foes that he couldn't defeat even with all his might being overwhelmed by her.

Before he had noticed, Cliff had been looking at Eris with eyes of yearning.

The girl was walking towards town with a tired expression.

'This person will definitely become someone amazing.'

When he thought this, words spilled from his lips.

"Eris-san, please marry me!"

"Eh, absolutely not!"

Immediately making a displeased expression, Eris rejected him.

Cliff had thought that it was impossible that a proposal from his talented self could be rejected.

'Why?' he wondered.

He considered the conversation he had with her today.

Right, there was the person she had called her teacher.

She had mentioned her teacher again and again.

If he remembered correctly, the name was Ru... Ru...

"Rudeus."

When he recalled the name and he had tried saying it, Eris had turned to face him.

"What kind of person is the Rudeus that you mentioned?"

A few minutes later, Cliff had begun to absolutely hate himself for having asked that question.

He had thought that Eris was a taciturn girl, but that wasn't the case.

When telling stories about Rudeus, as though there were no one better, she continued to boast.

From the plains to the Adventurers Guild, she continued to talk.

Moreover, the expression she made was undeniably that of a maiden in love, and the contents of her talk were nothing but excessive praise.

Cliff had been made more than jealous enough.

"...It's about time I head home."

While aware that he was making a discouraged expression, he had said that to Eris.

Though it seemed as though Eris felt that she hadn't talked nearly enough, when Cliff said he was going home she simply waved her hand without concern for him.

"Bye then."

That curt attitude seemed like a completely different person from the one who had been passionately talking just a little earlier.

Until he could no longer see her figure, Cliff wordlessly saw her off.

The man named Rudeus who had softened the strong, beautiful and perfect Eris to this extent...

Thoughts of the as of yet unseen Rudeus had come to Cliff's mind as he returned home to the church.

After that, he was scolded by those who had been looking for him.

Because of the incident this time, the power struggles within the religious organization intensified, and because the Pope had considered that Milishion was too dangerous for Cliff, he sent his grandchild to another country but... that was something completely unrelated to Eris.

—

By the way, speaking of Eris...

When she had returned to the inn, the instant she saw the depressed Rudeus, the memories of this time's events were pushed into the recesses of her mind and she ended up completely forgetting.

However, that's another story.

Two months had passed.

We'd arrived at the port city West Port.

The townscape was the spitting image of Saint Port. However, the scale of the city was larger.

That's natural.

The journey from the capital of the Holy Kingdom Milis to the capital of the Kingdom of Asura was this world's Silk Road.

Every town could become a center for commerce.

West Port is one of these. Though the scale isn't as great as the Business District in Milishion, many businesses have their headquarters here, and the merchants associated with these businesses are crowded together here.

Even from the outside of the town, you can see large warehouses lined up by the harbour.

In the storehouse area are people who might be slaves or apprentices, busily working.

They've placed large fish on carts and are transporting them.

Robed figures are using water magic to freeze them.

Like that, the fish make their way to the warehouse.

After that, the fish are probably left in ice, or salted.

Perhaps they might even be smoked before being sent to various places.

Now then.

This is as far as the horse carriage goes.

The ferries of this world are different to those from my old life, and they can't transport carriages.

Thus, we'll sell it the same way we sold the lizard, and once we cross the ocean we'll buy a new one.

I sell it to a horse merchant.

Unlike the time with the lizard, this isn't particularly moving, so I'll give it a name.

Goodbye, Haru Urara

{ C-Editor's note: Haru Urara is the name of a Japanese racehorse who gained nationwide popularity in 2003, not due to her success, but rather, due to a long string of consecutive losses. }

After that, we headed towards the checking station.

Unlike the one in Saint Port, it's a large building.

There are armored guards standing by the entrance.

I've seen a lot of armored Milishion knights all over the city.

Looking at Ruijerd and Eris, I wonder if the armor they're wearing is enough to defend them, and I become anxious.

The offensive ability of the creatures in this world is high.

It's likely that taking just one hit is enough to destroy your armour and leave you in your underwear.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the video game Ghosts 'n Goblins where if the player is hurt, he is left in only his underwear. }

If you receive an attack, and are sent flying into a hole from the recoil, it'll be 'The End' for you.

Leaving the jokes aside, when we try entering, we find that the people inside are in a commotion.

Those who look like adventurers, those who look like merchants, they're all making energetic expressions and briskly interacting with the staff.

It's completely different to Wind Port where the station was deserted, and the staff had no enthusiasm at all.

For now, I face one of the counters and talk to one of the attendants.

The receptionist here is also large breasted.

I wonder if there's an unwritten law in this world that states that receptionists must be large breasted.

It's possible.

Though I had been thinking about this, I hadn't let it show.

"Excuse me, I'd like to apply for a voyage."

"I understand. In that case, please hold onto this and wait for a moment."

With that, she hands me a wooden ticket.

The number 34 is written on it.

This gives off a truly bureaucratic feeling.

I return to the waiting area and take a seat.

Eris had immediately sat down next to me.

Ruijerd is still standing.

When I take a look at our surroundings, I find that a lot of people are waiting like we are.

"It seems like it'll take a little while."

"Are we not going to hand over the letter?"

At Ruijerd's question, I had shaken my head.

"We'll do that after our number is called."

"So that's how you do things, huh...?"

Eris is fidgeting for some reason.

Eris isn't used to waiting for things.

I guess it can't be helped.

"Rudeus. We're sort of being watched..."

At her words, I look for what she had been gazing at.

What she had been looking at was a guard.

The guards had been sneaking glances at Eris.

Eris who had been on the receiving end of these gazes was now making an angry expression and returning their gaze with a glare.

"You mustn't get into a fight."

"I wasn't going to."

I have trouble believing that.

But, let's ignore that.

Now then, for what reason are the guards looking at Eris, I wonder.

I really don't have a clue.

Could it be that their eyes have been stolen away by her beauty?

Lately, Eris has become quite beautiful.

However, she's still classed as a child.

There's no way that every single one of these knights is a lolicon.

"Number 34, please come forward."

Because we were called, we head to the counter.

We hand over the letter to the receptionist, and let her know that we'd like to travel on a voyage.

She had received the letter with a smile, and then the moment she saw the name on the back, she made a puzzled expression.

"Please wait a moment."

After saying that, she had left her seat and disappeared further into the office.

After a while, a loud sound rang out from further inside the office.

At the same time, someone's angry voice could be heard.

A guard then ran out from further inside the office, and whispered something to another guard.

With a severe expression, the guard who had been whispered to now ran outside.

For some reason or another the atmosphere had become dangerous.

Though I had handed over the letter that Ruijerd trusted, it might really have been better had I investigated this Gouache Brush person.

The receptionist from a little while ago had returned.

She wasn't hiding her nervous expression.

"I'm sorry for keeping you waiting. It seems that Duke Baqciel wants to meet you."

I had nothing but a bad feeling about this.

"Chief of the Milis Continent Customs House, Duke Baqciel von Wieser."

That pig looks just like a pig.

Ah, my mistake.

That man looks just like a pig.

The area around his neck is covered in fat, and his chin is completely buried in it.

Light blonde hair clings to his skin.

There are shadows under his eyes, and he gives off the impression of a tanuki.

He looks both like a pig, and a tanuki, and he isn't hiding his displeasure.

In the past, I've seen a man like this somwhere before.

It was in the mirror.

"Hmph. For a filthy demon to bring me such a letter is..."

Baqciel is sitting in an extravagant leather chair.

Without standing, he strikes the sheet of paper in his hand.

While the chair squeaks, he glares over at us.

A tool for opening wax seals can be seen sitting on a high class work desk, amongst a lot of documents.

In other words, the paper is probably the letter we handed over.

"This letter has quite the name. The seal looks quite similar to the real thing as well. However, I won't be fooled. This is a forgery."

Baqciel had thrown the letter away. I reflexively catch it.

==========

Though this person is a Superd, they are someone I owe a great debt to.

Though they are of few words, they possess an admirable spirit.

You shall waive their voyage fee, and courteously send them to the Central Continent.

Galgard Nash Venick

Grand Master, Order of Instruction

==========

When I saw those words I nearly collapsed of dizziness.

Just where did he get the name Gouache Brush?

GAlgard naSH venick

GASH

Ah, so that's how he got Gouache?

If he's a good natured person, it's possible that he said something like 'Just call me Gash'.

If so, then Ruijerd might have taken this at face value, and was under the impression that it was his real name.

But then where did he get Brush from?

Moreover, that job position...

Grand Master of the Order of Instruction.

The Grand Master of one of Milis' three knight orders.

I'm starting to get a headache.

Why would someone like that be Ruijerd's acquaintance?

No, I can imagine how things are.

For instance... right, his position.

Becoming the Grand Master of the Order of Instruction meant that he was someone high up.

If it were made public that he was on good terms with a Superd, things would become bad.

That's why he used an alias, for example.

There's a simpler explanation as well.

Ruijerd had met him 40 years earlier, and in that time he had changed his name due to marriage or something, for example.

"To start with, that taciturn man would never do something like write a letter. I know that man quite well. It might be because he hates it, but he's a man who'll never write except for necessary documents and the like. For him to write a letter for a demon like you? Even jokes have their limits."

Speaking of Ruijerd, he's making a difficult expression.

The letter he had brought was judged to be a fake.

Considering his perspective, he might be thinking that it's because he's a Superd.

Actually, according to Paul, this Baqciel man is famous for hating the Demon Race.

That might not be completely wrong.

However, if Baqciel is famous for this, then regardless of if he's Gash or Galgard, he should know what kind of man Baqciel is.

In that case, it would be better for the contents of the letter to be a bit more persuasive.

There's also the possibility that the letter is a fake though...

No.

I recall Ruijerd's words.

Gash lives in a large building.

It's a building whose size is in the same league as Kishirisu Castle.

You can say that for a private residence, it's quite a large building.

However, if that were actually the headquarters of a knight order or something, then...

The building would be big, and there would probably be a lot of knights inside.

If that were the case, I would agree with Ruijerd's "He did have a lot of subordinates" comment.

Be that as it may, even if I did understand the situation, there'd be no meaning to it.

Baqciel has already concluded that the letter is a fake.

And having come this far, there's no way we can just say 'it was a forgery, I'm sorry and goodbye'.

I take a step forward.

"In other words, your Excellency is saying that this letter is a forgery?"

"Why are you... Children should stay out of it."

Duke Baqciel had made a suspicious expression.

It feels like it's been a while since I've been treated like a child.

It's a fresh feeling.

I'm not treated like a child when I want to be treated like a child, and I'm treated like a child when I want to be treated as an adult.

It's outside of my control.

While thinking about this, for now I raise my right hand to my chest and give a greeting in the manner of a noble.

"Please excuse the lateness of my introduction. I am Rudeus Greyrat."

When I said this, Baqciel's eyebrow twitched.

"Greyrat... you say?"

"Yes. Though it is shameful, I am one of the lowest ranking members of the high ranked Asura noble family, Greyrat."

"Hm... But the Greyrats attach the name of an ancient wind god to theirs."

"Truly. I'm from a branch family, so giving such a name is something that isn't permitted."

Branch family.

When Baqciel hears this, he starts to look down on me.

In that instant, I point out Eris with an open hand.

"However, Eris-ojousama is a genuine holder of the Boreas Greyrat name."

Having tapped her on the back, Eris took a step forward.

She's looking at me with a surprised expression, but isn't perturbed beyond this level.

Her arms are folded, and her legs are shoulder width apart.

However, as if thinking 'No, no, not like this', she holds her chest out, and moves to perform a curtsy in the manner of a lady, but realising that she isn't wearing a skirt, she holds her hand to her chest and greets in the same way as I do.

"I'm the daughter of Philip Boreas Greyrat, Eris Boreas Greyrat."

On top of being kind of stiff, I get the feeling that what she did was a little wrong.

I try and determine Baqciel's expression.

It's a little hard to understand.

Well whatever.

I'll just rely on the influence of Eris' family from here.

"Hm, why is the daughter of an Asura noble in such a place?"

It's a natural question.

There's no need for lies here.

"Is your Excellency aware of the Mana calamity that befell the Fedoa region 2 years ago?"

"I am aware. It seems a large number of people were teleported."

"Yes. We were wrapped up in it as well."

After that, because I needed to protect Eris, we had Ruijerd act as a guard and travel across the Magic Continent.

At the customs house for heading towards the Milis Continent, we managed somehow by selling off our belongings, but we don't have enough money for the trip from the Milis Continent to the Central Continent.

In particular, Ruijerd's voyage fee is too high.

Thus, as an acquaintance of the Greyrat family, as well as a friend of Ruijerd, we had asked Lord Galgard for help.

Lord Galgard gladly wrote a letter for us.

I spun a story like that.

"Ojou-sama is dressed in the manner of an adventurer, but that is for the purpose of concealing the fact that she is a high class noble, and avoiding the attention of unsavory individuals. Your Excellency must understand this as well."

"I see."

Baqciel still has a sour expression on.

"In other words, you lot are the allies of the slave thief group named 『Fedoa Region Search Group』."

"Y-... You're mistaken. What are you saying?"

"I don't know the name Eris Boreas Greyrat."

Snorting like a pig, Baqciel continues with a "however".

"I do know the name of a small-time scoundrel called Paul Greyrat. It's rumored that he's one of the recent slave abductors, you see."

Your bad reputation is merciless, Papa.

"In other words, you're saying the following: Galgard-sama's letter is a forgery and Eris-sama isn't an Asura noble. Furthermore, We are the allies of that undisciplined towards women, smelly footed, alcoholic, hopeless case who not only finds fault about everything his son does, but also puts his daughter through hardships. Correct?"

"Mmn."

What a cruel guy.

Paul has been giving his all in his own way.

He certainly has a lot of bad points, and he may have gone about things wrong.

However, it's absolutely unacceptable to call him a hopeless case and give up on him.

"Why do you think the seal on the letter is a forgery?"

Saying this, I point towards the paper on top of the desk.

Baqciel frowns ever so slightly, and then nods.

"There's a large supply of forgeries for the seal the Order of Instruction uses."

Is that how it is?

It's the first time I've heard this, huh.

"Why do you believe that my employer, Eris-ojousama, is a fake?"

"As if a daughter of Asura nobility could bear with looking like such a bumpkin swordswoman."

When I look at Eris, I find that she's folded her arms and is in her usual pose.

Although there are no marks on her chest, she's suntanned enough that you can't imagine that she's a refined lady, and her muscles look even firmer than that of your average young adventurer.

"I see. It seems that your Excellency does not know of Sauros-sama."

I laugh without warning.

Baqciel immediately takes the bait.

"Sauros... was it? The feudal lord of the Fedoa region?"

"As well as Eris-sama's grandfather. He had Eris-sama undertake special education for swordsmen."

"Why would he do such a thing...?"

"Though this is a a private matter... It has been decided that Eris will marry into the Notus family. Sauros-sama hates the present head of the Notus family so..."

"I see."

In summary, that Eris was raised to be such a boorish person for the sake of beating the head of the Notus family to death in the bedroom was what I had implied.

Eris is tilting her head in confusion.

If she understood, she would probably cave in my face.

"Thus, it is essential that Ojou-sama returns to Asura. Should you conclude that Ojou-sama is a fake, then we will return to Milishion and appeal this decision at the appropriate place."

I don't know where this 'Appropriate' place is.

I haven't looked this up, after all.

"Hmph, if you are the real thing as you say, then show me some proof."

"Galgard-sama's letter is better proof than anything."

"Foolishness. This is a pointless argument."

"That's fine even so. Could you be looking to start a confrontation with the Greyrats of Asura?"

Crap.

I have no idea what I'm saying or anything.

However, for now it seems like I'm getting through to him.

Baqciel is glaring at me.

"Very well. In that case, I shall grant you and that Ojou-sama passage."

"However, our guard-"

"With my name, Duke Baqciel, I'll appoint you several knights as guards. Rather than relying on a demon, this way would be safer, correct?"

I see.

In other words, if it's about passing a demon through, then he'll appoint two available knights instead.

Anyhow, it seems that Baqciel has no intention of allowing Ruijerd passage.

For him to be obstinate to this extent...

Though it's the first time seeing it personally, the prejudice towards the Demon Race is stronger than I had thought.

Now then, what do I do about this?

Should we transport just Ruijerd separately?

Would we end up in another fight with smugglers because of that?

It's possible.

What to do...?

-knock knock-

At that moment, a knock suddenly resounded through the room.

"What? I'm in the middle of something, you know?"

Though Baqciel was making a puzzled face but had opened the door without waiting for a reply.

There, dressed in a blue coloured armour, stood a blonde haired woman.

"Excuse me. I had heard that 『Ruijerd of Dead End』 was here, but..."

"...Kaa-sama?"

It was Zenith.

Because I had muttered the word 'kaa-sama', everyone there had turned their gazes towards the woman.

She glared at me indignantly.

"I'm single. I don't have a child as big as you."

Wait, Zenith-san?

Have you lost your memories in the time that I haven't seen you?

Or could it be that you've fallen out of love with Paul?

While thinking this, I stare at her.

When I do so, it becomes clear that there are a few places where she looks a little different.

Because we've been apart for a number of years, I don't remember Zenith's face that well, but the position of her mole is different, and her hair is a little different as well.

It's someone else.

"Forgive me. You resemble my missing mother."

"...I see."

She looked at me with pity.

I may have been seen as a child who had been separated from his mother.

Though I haven't really been treated as a child recently, my appearance is still that of a child after all.

"Well, well... If it isn't Temple Knight-dono, who has recently been demoted. Is there something you need?"

Baqciel snorts, and glares at the knight who resembles Zenith.

"A Superd has appeared inside the borders of Milis. I'm devoted to my work, so it's natural that I've come here, isn't it?"

"Your new post begins 10 days from now. Don't stick your nose in."

"Don't stick my nose in? That's a strange thing to say, Duke. Certainly, I have not yet taken up my position officially. However, the one who formerly held the post has already departed, and is no longer in Milishion. When there is a problem

at the customs house, it is a Temple Knight who proceeds with the matter. Though this is the case, there is no other Temple Knight to be found here besides myself. Just what is going on?"

The knight who resembles Zenith continued to talk on and on.

Baqciel had uttered "Uh-" and his complexion began to worsen.

"There should be two guards at the customs house. That is something decided by the Milis Religious Organization; an ironclad rule. Surely, Duke Baqciel, you aren't planning on rebelling against the Milis Church?"

"How could that be? I have no such intention. It's just that you've come to this town in no time at all. How about taking a break first?"

"That won't be necessary."

Duke Pig's expression was like that of livestock about to be slaughtered.

It seems like I'll be having a good time the next time I eat pork.

"So what's going on here?"

It seems that somehow or other, this knight is as important as the Duke.

Hearing 'Duke', you'd normally think of the highest class of noble, but...

Religion is very strong in Milis, so that might be a reason.

"What's happened is..."

With that, Baqciel begins to explain.

Sometimes Baqciel will say something colored in prejudice, and as appropriate, I provide supplementary explanations.

The female knight quietly listens to the end, and looks towards us.

"Hm... He certainly is a demon, huh...?"

She turns a particularly strong look towards Ruijerd.

However, the moment she sees Eris, that gaze relaxes.

Then, finally, our eyes meet, and she suddenly brings her hand to my chin in thought.

"...Earlier you mistook me for your mother, didn't you? Would it be fine if you told me her name?"

"It's Zenith. Zenith Greyrat."

"And your father's name?"

I glance at Baqciel.

Right.

I don't really wanna say it...

"It's Paul Greyrat."

For the time being, I say it frankly.

Baqciel's eyes open.

My father is a different person to that trash we mentioned earlier.

That's what I'll tell him.

My father is a saintly person.

He'll even give you money if you hit him just a little.

"I see."

The female knight had said this, and then crouched down and embraced me tightly.

"...Eh!"

I was shocked.

I suddenly got hugged out of nowhere.

"It must have been hard on you..."

While saying this, she started patting my head.

Because she's wearing armor, this doesn't feel very good.

However, she gives off the sweet and soft scent of a woman.

Naturally my lower parts... don't rise.

That's strange.

Why, oh son of mine?

What's happened?

It's the smell of slightly sweaty women that you love so much.

Just recently, even that time with Eris...

Which reminds me.

I look at Eris, find that her eyes are wide open and she's clenching her fists.

Scary.

"Umm... errm?"

After patting my head, the female knight had risen to a stand.

Without looking towards me, she then declared,

"I'll be taking custody of them."

"What!? One is a demon, you know!"

Baqciel is confused.

The female knight snatches the letter from my hand, and quickly looks over it.

"There's no problem with the letter, either. This is Lord Galgard's handwriting."

"It can't be. Is a Temple Knight going against Milis' teachings...?"

At that point, with an "Ah-", Eris raised her voice.

The female knight turns to face Eris and winks.

What?

"I, the Middle Leader of the Order of the Temple's 『Shield Group』 have spoken."

"Ku-, even though you had lost your subordinates, and were then demoted..."

"Hmph. I'll send those words right back at you. However, between I who had completed my duty, and you who had given up halfway, there's quite a difference in our positions."

Baqciel gnashed his teeth at that.

Somehow, it seems that he's also been demoted.

Considering this, despite being called 'Duke', the position seems quite a bit less important.

It's strange.

Bacqiel's eyes are full of hatred.

"You... No matter how high of birth you may be, if you get too carried away..."

Baqciel never finished his complaint.

The female knight had quickly lowered her head.

"No, I apologize. I've said too much. I have no intention of quarreling further with you. This case is a personal matter. Please forgive me."

I had been thinking that she had great timing.

Saying as much as she wanted, and then immediately apologizing.

With those few words, she had dispelled Baqciel's anger as well.

I'll try and copy her the next time I anger someone.

"A personal matter, you say?"

"Mmn."

The knight nodded firmly in the face of Baqciel's puzzled expression.

Then, with a slap she then places her hand on my shoulder.

"This child is my nephew."

What was that!?

Therese Latreia.

She's the fourth-born daughter of the Milishion noble family, Latreia, and having become a Middle Leader of the Order of the Temple at a young age, she's an up-and-coming knight.

Her family is the Latreia family that holds an Earldom.

Zenith's family is the Latreia family that holds an Earldom.

When it was revealed that I was her kin, Baqciel looked like he had given up on something, and after letting out a large sigh, waived the voyage fees for us.

Right now I'm in a West Port Inn, and am currently being hugged.

The ones in the room are Therese, Eris and I.

It might be because Ruijerd had read the mood, but he's not here.

"Rudeus-kun. I know about you from Nee-sama's letters."

"Is that so? What did mother write?"

"That you were extremely cute. And though I'd never imagined that I'd see the real thing, you truly are extremely cute."

While saying this, Therese is burying her face into the nape of my neck.

Thinking about it, in the 12 years I've been alive, though I've been called brazen, suspicious looking, or disgusting, the only one who's ever thought of me as cute is Zenith.

However, though I'm being embraced by a large-breasted beauty, for some reason the railgun between my legs isn't firing off any coins with its super electromagnetism.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the manga and anime series A Certain Scientific Railgun. }

Speaking of which, my VICTORY never did STAND UP when it was Zenith.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the song Stand Up To The Victory from the anime Mobile Suit Victory Gundam. }

Thinking about it, I never did think to become any closer to Norn than necessary.

...I wonder if it's because we're related.

"Therese. It's about time you let go of Rudeus."

Resting her chin in her hand, Eris taps at Therese.

She's in a bad mood.

She might be jealous.

I'm a sinful man.

"Eris-sama. Though I understand your feelings, I don't know when I'll be able to see Rudeus-kun again. Moreover, the next time we meet, he'll have definitely lost his cuteness. It's a fleeting moment. Please pardon this."

Without any shame, Therese continues to stroke my body.

"Therese-san, why are you speaking to Eris so respectfully?"

"I owe her my life, after all."

I decide to investigate further.

Eris had gone out to suppress goblins, and saved Therese when she was driven into a corner by enemy forces.

At the time, Therese had been protecting a certain VIP and had it not been for Eris, that VIP would have lost their life as well.

The story was something like that.

I hadn't heard a word of this.

When I had looked towards Eris, I found that she was making an awkward expression.

"Sorry, Rudeus. I had forgotten about it..."

According to Eris, she had seen me all depressed and forgotten all about about the goblin hunting incident.

It's my fault, huh?

Guess it couldn't be helped.

Therese is (I'm being hugged from behind so I'm not sure, but) probably making an expression of ecstasy and groping my body.

I won't go so far as to say it feels disgusting, but somehow I feel kind of uncomfortable.

At any rate, even having my body touched, with boobs pressed against my back, I'm not getting aroused.

It's a new sensation.

"Ahh, but Rudeus-kun really is cute. Cute enough that I'd eat him up."

"Do you mean eating me up in a sexual sense?"

I had tried to drop an appropriate joke in, but my mouth was covered up by her hand.

"...You're cuter when you don't talk, huh? When you do, I recall that Paul guy's face."

It appears that Therese doesn't like Paul very much.

"Still, Grand Master Gash is the same as ever, huh?"

While she continued to stroke me, Therese changed the subject.

"You'd think that it'd be obvious that that kind of thing would happen if you handed over such a letter to Baqciel."

According to Therese...

Galgard Nash Venick is the Grand Master of the Order of Instruction.

The Order of Instruction is a mercenary group that sends young knights to areas of strife for combat experience, and at the same time is responsible for spreading the teachings of Milis to various places.

Right now they're in a recruitment phase that occurs between expeditions, and have returned to Milis for the sake of recruiting new members.

"Gouache" is that Grand Master.

In the past he had returned as a survivor of the Magic Continent expedition, and over the past few decades he's been the driving force behind the Order of Instruction being successively known as the the strongest.

An unrefined and taciturn man, he rarely laughs.

It's rumored that no matter what kind of villain they are, he's able to deal with them impartially.

Participating in one of the Order of Instruction's expeditions is a coming of age ceremony for all Milishion knights.

Since the time Gash had become Grand Master, the survival of the Order of Instruction rose past 90%.

As a result, the Order of Instruction is presently well known as the 'strongest'.

There are a number of people who have had their lives saved by Gash, and currently there is no knight who doesn't hold him in respect.

"And he's also famous for hating writing and being of few words."

Though he promptly gives out orders on the battlefield, normally he's quite unmotivated and for example won't return greetings.

He hardly writes any letters, and completes most documents with a stamp.

There are hardly any people who have seen his handwriting.

According to Ruijerd's story, he was talkative and passionate.

However, Ruijerd isn't very talkative either, after all.

Perhaps our standards are just different.

There's also the possibility that he's just different with Ruijerd.

"Hey. Just how long are you planning to cling to him like that...?"

Eris was steadily becoming more irritated, and it felt like she was about 5 seconds away from being angry for real, so I separated from Therese.

"Ah... Rudeus-kun's warmth is..."

Though Therese is making a regretful expression, I'm not a hug-pillow. I wasn't even enjoying it, after all.

"Rudeus, come here."

Being told that, I sit down next to her.

When I do, my hand is firmly grasped.

"..."

When I look at Eris' face, I find that her ears are bright red.

Just by gazing at that profile, my mouth becomes a little slack.

Looking at Therese, I find that she had been hitting a pillow.

She could have just hit a wall.

She seems to lack muscle, though.

Therese let out a sigh and made a serious expression.

"That's right, Rudeus-kun. Let me give you just one piece of advice. It might not have much meaning since you're about to leave Milis but..."

Having introduced the topic, Therese continued.

"It'd be better not to mention the Superd race while you're in the country."

"Why?"

"One of the old teachings of the Milis Church dictates that the Demon Race should be completely expelled."

The Demon Race should be completely driven out of the Milis Continent.

That's one of Milis's teachings.

Though it's hardly practiced anymore, it's something that the Order of the Temple obediently adhere to.

It seems that for a Demon Race as famous as the Superd race, even if they were a fake, the knights would still drive them out with all their power.

"Because he had helped Rudeus-kun, even I can't help but overlook him. However, normally it absolutely wouldn't be overlooked."

"It's pointless."

Replying to the serious Therese was Eris with a cold look.

"If it's you guys, no matter how many people you bring, you won't be able to win against Ruijerd."

"That's true. It's as Eris-sama says."

Therese had spoken in a tone that implied that was natural, and made a bitter smile.

"However, the Order of the Temple is a gathering of religious zealots, myself included. That's why even if we understand that there's no chance of winning, we have no choice but to fight."

Among the knights of Milis, there are people like that too.

That's why, if we ever came back to the Milis continent, we had to be careful.

This was something that Therese made sure we understood.

This incident made me realize again just how deep-rooted the discrimination against the Demon Race was.

Restoring the honor of the Superd on our travels from now on may be difficult.

Also, it's possible that if it comes to light that I worship Roxy as a God, I might be caught by the heresy inquisition and be made to go through some horrible experiences.

That's why I decide to keep silent on my religious affiliation.

The voyage turned out well.

Therese had taken care of all the necessary arrangements, from the food on route, to medicine for seasickness.

I had thought that the pharmacology in this world wasn't very developed, but it seems that this world doesn't get by solely on healing magic.

They at least have something of the level of seasickness medicine.

However, I heard that it was quite expensive.

The things called 'Family Connections' are wonderful.

Therese had made things as comfortable as possible for Eris.

She had looked at Ruijerd with stern eyes but... that can't be helped.

Not everything has an easy solution to it.

Thanks to the seasickness medicine, though Eris looked a little uncomfortable, she was well enough that she hadn't asked me to use Healing.

Speaking of my true thoughts, I felt it was a shame that I couldn't see a meek Eris.

However, thanks to that, my gauge didn't fill up, my Buster Wolf didn't run wild, and I didn't receive Eris' Sunny Punch.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Fatal Fury: King of Fighters video game. }

It was as usual.

However, it might have been because Eris was uneasy about last time, but while we were on the boat, Eris was always attached to me.

She wasn't meek.

However, seeing that Eris was able to become excited about seeing the sea, I was satisfied as well.

"Yo, you two. Getting pretty steamy over there! Are you getting married in the Dragon King Kingdom?"

When the two of us were watching the sea, the sailors started whistling and poking fun at us.

"Yeah. It's going to be quite a grand one."

Because of that I got carried away and wrapped my arm around Eris' shoulder, and was hit.

"I-, it's still too early for marriage!"

Though Eris was hitting me, at the same time she didn't seem annoyed and was a little bashful.

It seems she hates being made fun of.

She'd prefer to do that kind of thing in a place with just the two of us, and where the mood was right.

Even Eris the sword-wielding Ashura was a maiden when it came to matters of love.

Still, marriage huh?

Philip and the others had tried to pair Eris and I together.

I wonder what's happened to them?

Paul had told me not to be optimistic but...

It's not just them.

Zenith and Lilia are still missing.

We don't even know where Aisha is.

There's no news of Sylphy either.

I don't know if Ghyslaine is alive, either.

It's nothing but worries.

No, it'd be best to not think in such a bad direction.

There's the possibility that unexpectedly, we might find upon returning to the Fedoa region that everyone has returned safely.

It's an optimistic thought.

I know that there's absolutely no way this is the case.

However, for now at least, I won't think about these worries.

That's what I've decided.

—

Just like that, we left the Milis Continent.

Roxy Migurdia returned to her hometown.

The circumstances of the village hadn't changed at all.

Her acquaintances in the village as well as the members had almost not changed at all.

The number of inhabitants had increased, but the way it was eerily quiet was just the same as in the old days.

Formerly she would never have thought it was eerie, but after traveling all around the world if you were to ask Roxy, this village is abnormal.

Just silently, even though there's no one speaking any words, the people of the village are just living while understanding their purpose.

Once they saw Roxy they just kept staring at her.

Roxy knew it.

They were using the Migurd races special ability, telepathy, to try and talk to her.

However, Roxy can't hear it.

She could hear something like a little bit of noise, but just that.

Roxy could not respond to their words.

After a little while, the figures of her parents appeared.

The first time seeing her parents in a while and again they had not changed at all.

They were delighted to see Roxy who had returned and welcomed her.

What she had been doing until now, or where she had gone by herself, they asked her with worried voices.

Elinalise and Talhand were waiting outside of the village.

It seems they thought something of one's return home.

Roxy told of her journey until now in an indifferent voice.

Her parents, while listening to her story, were surprised and made relieved faces.

They said for her to do as she likes.

However, Roxy felt alienated.

The words of worry and the words of welcome, to them they were a foreign language.

The truly important words for them, they would never speak with their mouth.

Especially, whispering words of love.

It could be the case that they are truly worried from the bottom of their hearts.

However, that was not transmitted to Roxy.

For I who cannot use the Migurd races ability, they are things that are not transmitted to me.

Roxy feels lonely about that matter.

If I were to stay here any longer than this it would just be painful.

It would just be confirming that I'm nothing but a failure in regards to the Migurd race.

After thinking that Roxy decided not to stay long and to quickly depart.

She quickly made preparations for the journey.

"You're already going to leave?"

"Yes."

"At least stay for one night."

"No, we're in a hurry on this journey, I was just stopping by for a bit."

Roxy shook her head with an expressionless face to her father who was making a worried expression.

"When is the next time you'll return?"

"I don't know. I might never return again."

Roxy said it honestly.

Then her mother standing next to her father made a worried expression as well.

"Roxy? Come back at least once every 20 years."

"Okay, I guess?"

She responded with a half-hearted answer.

"I may return within 50 years."

"Really? It's a promise."

"Yes."

Roxy vaguely nodded and her mother started crying.

"Ah, mother...?"

"Oh my, sorry. Even though I decided not to cry, I'm sorry..."

Tears.

After seeing that, something inside of Roxy started to move.

Unbeknownst to her, she was being hugged by her mother.

Then, her father embraced both Roxy and her mother at the same time.

That time, Roxy finally understood it.

That it's not something only said in words.

In the end, she stayed in the village for about three days.

For the first time in a while she spent those days taking it easy.

"The Owner of Dead End".

Its true identity was Rudeus Grayrat.

In order for Roxy to accept that fact required a number of hours.

After entering the Magic Continent, and moving north and further north while seeking information about Rudeus.

The further north they got, the more they heard the name Rudeus.

They were approaching it.

About the same time they thought that, they realized something strange was going on.

"Fake Dead End" information and Rudeus sighting information were awfully mixed together.

The young human race boy who can use voiceless incantations and "The Owner" of the fake Dead End.

It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say they are already the same person, on the way Talhand said it a number of times.

No, it was something she realized from the start.

She just didn't want to admit that they passed right by each other without realizing it.

However, after making it to this Town of Rikarisu, she had no choice other than to accept it.

The "Dead End" incident that happened two years prior.

The testimony from one who used to be her old party member, Nokopara.

And then the testimony from her parents in her hometown.

After compiling all of those, Roxy finally accepted it.

That "The Owner of Dead End" is Rudeus Greyrat.

"I see... Blaze died did he..."

"Ah, it seems that a Red-Fang Cobra swallowed him whole."

It's been several years since I left Magic Continent.

There should be a number of things piled up to talk about, but all we talked about were things of the old days.

Roxy closed her eyes and remembered things about Bureizu.

With a face like a pig, and a bad mouth, the moment Roxy made any sort of mistake he would start with the abusive language.

However, he wasn't a bad guy.

He was a reliable man in terms of warriors.

It seems that until he died he managed to make it together with a veteran party of B rank members.

He was the leader of a B rank party on the Magic Continent.

That sarcastic guy became a fine person.

However, the party name was Super Bureizu.

It seems that his naming sense hadn't changed from the past.

It seems that the opponent who wiped out that veteran party, was effortlessly defeated by Rudeus and the party he just formed a short while prior.

Soon after he started his adventure he subjugated an A rank monster.

It was something the old Roxy would never have been able to outdo.

However, that as well is just like Rudeus, thus Roxy laughed weakly.

"Roxy has changed quite a bit."

Nokopara said that while slowly drinking the specialty strong impact alcohol of the Magic Continent.

Roxy looked at the cup in her hand.

She looked at her own face reflected on the surface, and wondered if that was the case.

"I don't really get it myself though..."

"No, I mean you've become quite adult-like."

"What is that supposed to mean, are you treating me like a fool?"

During the time with Nokopara and the others were adventuring, Roxy had already reached the adult form of the Migurd race.

After that, there have been almost no changes to her figure.

I haven't changed at all, is what Roxy was self-conscious about.

"I'm not taking you for a fool. How do I put it, the atmosphere. The old you used to be more childish."

"Even though my outer appearance hasn't changed, I've been properly living after all."

While saying that Roxy was crunching away at some roasted bean snacks.

These beans are the seeds from Stone Treants.

With Roxy's sense of taste, she would never think they taste good.

Just, somehow or other she's moving them to her mouth.

It's a flavor that becomes a habit.

"In that sort of way. In the old days you were always desperate to be seen as an adult. If it were the old you, you would have been flying high from my words you know?"

"Is that the case?

...there may have been that sort of period."

We're talking about the time when I didn't want to accept my body height.

In the old days I didn't want my surroundings to think I was a child, so I gave it my best so that no one would underestimate me.

I'm a magician, there are no elements that I'm bad with, I made it public that I could do anything.

Before I noticed, that assessment had reversed, and my name alone started walking on its own.

Around the time I started being called "Water Saint Class Magician" things that I couldn't do were always being forced upon me.

In regards to the Magic Continent as well, the fact that I was Rudeus' teacher was a fact they were awfully surprised about.

It seems that Rudeus was going around saying, "It's the result of my shisho's teachings" at every chance he could.

Thanks to that, they even started to think that Roxy could use voiceless incantations.

Even though there's no way she could use something like voiceless incantation magic.

Once upon a time, I wonder if my own teacher felt this way about me is what Roxy was wondering.

If that's the case then she feels she did something bad and wants to reflect on it.

The agony of a shisho who has disciples that are too superior.

It's not something you could understand until you actually experience standing in that position.

It's a feeling of pride, while at the same time a feeling of shame.

Although, as mysterious as it is up to now, she's never felt that she doesn't want to be called shisho.

Rudeus is protecting what he said, the fact that he's making public that Roxy is his shisho simply makes her happy.

"Nokopara hasn't changed a bit."

"Is that so?"

"Yes, other than your appearance."

The fact that he's greedy for money, how he aims for the weak, it's just the same as the old days.

That she doesn't want to turn Nokopara into an enemy is something Roxy thought a number of times in the old days.

"What is that, is that an indirect way of saying I've grown old?"

"I guess you could say that is true. Nokopara has grown old."

"You've become able to say it haven't you."

Nokopara laughed in a nihilistic way with a hihin sound.

"How nostalgic..."

"That's right."

In those days there were two more here.

A boy who would spout abusive language every time Nokopara said something and a boy who would say "Oh my" and sigh every time a fight started before attempting to break it up.

Already those two are gone, the ones remaining were just these middle-aged two.

Although, thanks to their race one of them isn't really all that old?

Passed days will no longer return.

That day, until Nokopara drank himself unconscious, those two let old memories bloom.

Her parents and an old friend.

Just the fact that she met these two gave meaning to her return here.

With those feelings, her chest has grown one cup.

Rudeus should have arrived in Milishion about this time.

It's been six months since we passed by each other in Wind Port.

Even though it managed to overlap with the rainy season, the Holy Sword Highway is a path with nothing on it.

As long as they don't stop by villages of the elves or dwarves then they should have arrived in Milishion.

After all, as expected there was no need for us to come looking.

Just as Paul had said in his message, he was alright.

The girl named Eris who was teleported along with him.

With her alongside he easily passed through the Magic Continent.

Even though normally there would have been somewhere they were unable to progress, extremely simply and easily.

Moreover, with a Superd race who made Roxy helplessly afraid as an ally.

"Roxy's disciple sure is excellent huh."

"Really. It's hard to imagine that he is Paul's son."

Elinalise and Talhand praised him while saying that.

Though Roxy was thinking whose disciple or whose son are unrelated.

Rudeus was a genius before she met him.

Even if she hadn't met with him, he most likely would have been able to do this much.

Putting that aside.

"What are we going to do from here on out?"

After hearing Elinalise, Roxy started thinking.

For the time being, she wasn't able to meet with Rudeus which was her objective.

However, he has most likely already arrived in Milishion.

She really wants to meet him, but she shouldn't mistake what her objective was.

"Let's search the Northwest area of the Magic Continent."

Rudeus was found, but the remaining three were still missing.

Along the way up until now, they'd found a number of refugees from Fedoa region.

Therefore, there should be some in the Northwestern area as well.

"Is it fine if you don't meet with your disciple?"

"I don't mind."

After Talhand asked that, Roxy shook her head.

For starters, now that she knows they passed by each other without even realizing it, she doesn't have the face to meet him.

She's already in a miserable state as his shisho.

"There are still plenty of towns on the Magic Continent. Just as we have until now, we'll go through each of them one by one."

The two exchanged glances and had a small laugh.

Roxy Migurudia's journey continues on.

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Before I noticed it, I had become 12 years old.

I realized it when I suddenly looked at my adventurer's card.

The number in the age column had become 12.

I wonder when my birthday passed.

While we were traveling my sense of time had deviated.

Nevertheless, it's already been two years since the teleport.

How time flies.

Conversely, you could say that it cost us a whole two years.

After spending two years, you can say that we've finally been able to return to the Central Continent.

If we've made it this far, it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that Asura Kingdom is right in front of us.

When I think about the things that happened on the way to the Milis Continent, it seems like the journey from here on will be easy.

We have the money and the means to travel.

If I had any worries, it would just be the fact that my family is still missing... but Paul is searching together with an organization; however, even with that, no one has been found yet.

I believe that they are still alive.

However, even if I were to put in my best effort, at this point it's not like they would suddenly be found.

Currently, we're at the Dragon King Kingdom's most eastern point, the port city, East Port.

It's the same as West Port, a town filled with marine products and transported goods.

After we found an inn we held an operations meeting.

It's the same as usual with all three of us surrounding a map facing each other.

"Now then, let's talk about things from now on."

The two were looking at the map with serious faces.

It's something we've done many number of times, so you'd think we would get bored of it, but for Eris who is bad with the difficult talks, this is the only time when she listens with a serious face.

"In order to get from here to Asura Kingdom there are three routes."

Just like that I pointed my finger at the map we just bought and started explaining.

It's a simple map that only marks out roughly the locations of villages and the forests.

Creating and selling detailed maps is severely forbidden in this kingdom and against its laws.

It seems they're afraid of other kingdoms acquiring one.

Well, it's fine as long as we understand the general terrain.

"The first route is the general one used by merchants for trade purposes."

Then I followed along the map with my finger.

It's a roundabout route that follows a path around the Eastern side of the Dragon King Mountain Range.

"It's the safest route of them all. With our movement speed, it should take around 10 months to arrive."

It's the one that costs the most time, but since it's the road that has the most maintenance done to it, it's also the safest.

"Why is it bad if we don't take the roundabout way?"

Then Eris raised an obvious question.

No matter what the time is she will come out with obvious questions.

Since she's honest, they're easy to explain.

"The route that circles around West is covered in a forest."

I pointed my finger to the Western side of the Dragon King Mountain Range while answering that question.

To the West of the Dragon King Kingdom, there's a large dense forest area spread out.

Essentially, you cannot pass through it with a carriage.

However, if you have someone who knows the details about that path, you can cut your movement time by several months.

The prerequisites include horse riding skills as well.

Eris and I cannot ride a horse.

Ruijerd can probably do it.

However, no matter how small we are, it's impossible to fit three people on a single horse.

Since that's the case, we would have to pass this route on foot.

In the case of going on foot, we have no idea how many days it will take us to get there.

It seems practically everyone chooses the safe Eastern roundabout route.

It might not be all that big of a difference in time, or the Eastern route might even be faster.

If you're in a hurry, going around is the way to go.

That more or less summarizes the explanation.

"I see, then West is no good."

Eris seems to have accepted it.

"Then, the third route is..."

While saying that I pointed my finger to the final route.

Get on a boat and cross over into Begaritto Continent, we can search as we go and pass straight through into Asura.

I don't know how many days this would take.

"Although, this route is already rejected."

"Why?"

"Because it's dangerous."

Begaritto Continent is said to have a stronger flow of magic power than the Magic Continent.

If you look at it, the average monsters are equal in strength to those of Magic Continent, but in addition, there are a large number of labyrinths that exist underground and above ground strange weather phenomena often appear.

That climate can be explained in a single word.

Desert.

The continent is covered in sand.

And then, there are giant scorpions of the same size as the Great Land Turtles, and giant worms that eat those scorpions as their staple food are prevalent.

In the afternoon it's scorching heat, at night it's mid-winter.

There's almost no oasis, you can't take any breaks.

Also, if you head even further into the center of it, the sand disappears and for a while it turns into a snow-covered tundra.

From a desert it suddenly turns into a land covered in ice.

If you make it that far then monsters that you can eat almost entirely stop appearing.

Going to that sort of place to search and cut through... it's not realistic at all.

"Since that's the reason, we're going to take the route that goes around to the East."

"Rudeus is a coward, as usual."

"I am a person of many fears after all."

"I think it would be all right if it was us though?"

It seems like Eris wants to go to the Begaritto Continent.

Her eyes are sparkling.

However, the distance to go through the Begaritto Continent, it can't even be compared to the distance of going from Milis to the Central Continent.

"We would have to take a long boat trip, Eris are you alright with that?"

"Let's not go with Begaritto."

Since that's the case, we decided to go with passing the Eastern route.

I'm in a white room.

This feeling of something rising up from within my body.

It's a sensation which I'll never get used to no matter how many times, I'll sum it up in a single word.

Shit.

"Suddenly going with shit, as always, you're vulgar."

A mosaic. It's Hitogami.

Cheh... what do you mean same as always.

I was finally starting to forget and then you appear again.

"It's been a year hasn't it."

Yeah, it's been a year.

It's been a fairly long time.

Could it be you can only show your face once a year?

If that's the case, then I would be able to feel a bit relieved in my heart.

"That's not the case."

I thought so.

The first time it wasn't even a week before you showed your face again after all.

"In any case, as always, you're so cold to me. Even though you managed to get your hands on a demon eye thanks to me."

I didn't ask for it.

These are things which wouldn't really change whether or not I had them, and I'd rather have an essential person that would have helped us on our voyage.

If I'd gotten that, I wouldn't have been thrown into a prison and I might not have ended up missing the information that got me into a fight with Paul.

I am sure it must have been quite amusing to you.

Without acquiring the correct information I got into a fight with Paul, got depressed, received some comfort, then somehow or other we discussed and reconciled; it must have been fun to watch!

"That really was quite enjoyable. However, isn't it fine?"

Fine?

What's fine?

"Well, thinking of it all as my fault."

Cheh...

...Shit.

When I'm in this room, I feel like I returned to the past.

The time when I would always blame everything on others.

I reflected on it.

Reflected...Yeah, shit, I can't remember what kind of reflecting I did.

Why? Shit... damn it...

"Well, that is your flavor as well. After just reflecting on it a bit, you won't be able to advance forward at all."

Cheh, alright.

Just for now.

When I open my eyes I'll remember. I'll be able to reflect.

That's why I'm going to get serious and accept it.

I'm going to get serious and listen to what you say.

"Listen? Ohhh, this time unusually you're going to honestly listen to my advice?"

Yeah, that's right.

However, you know, there's one bit of advice I want to know.

"What is it? If it's something that I know, it's fine if I answer it for you."

I'd like you to tell me the location of my family.

"Isn't your family in a different world?"

Don't make fun of me, Zenith, Lilia, Aisha, those three.

If possible I'd also like to know where Sylphy, Ghyslaine, Philip, and Sauros are as well.

"Hmm."

What is it?

If a person is lowering their head and asking like this.

Quickly tell me.

"I wonder what I should do."

Why do you always take that viewpoint from above?

Just peeping into someone's life, a peeping tom- bastards like that.

What are you?

Do you only tell me things that are convenient for you?

Even though you'll let me meet the Great Demon Emperor, you won't let me meet my family?

"Yeah yeah, sorry sorry. I was going a bit overboard."

It's fine if you understand.

"However, is it okay? This time, I might lie you know?"

Oh, a lie!

Finally I get to hear that kind of talk from you.

That's right, you are the type to lie aren't you.

"No, it's not really about whether I lie or not. I'm asking if you're willing to believe in my words."

No, I won't believe them.

Since right now is an emergency situation I'll move according to what you say, but if you were to lie even once, I would never listen to your advice again?

"Then, I'd like you to make a promise with me."

What kind?

"If in the case that you reunite with your family following my next advice, I'd like you to believe in me from now on."

...

Believe in you, and become a puppet on strings you mean?

Listen to what you say and with a yes-yes, and serve you like a manservant?

"Nope, it's just, each and every time, you're belligerent like this and it's a bit tiring isn't it."

Even if I wasn't belligerent it's pretty tiring.

Don't you get it?

If possible I want to forget the sensation of being dragged back into the past that I wish I could fix. I reflect on it and memory that started to fade becomes fresh in my mind. Then, when I wake up in the morning there's this amazingly degrading feeling and I start to feel depressed.

"That true? I've done something bad. Then, do you want to decide on a rule? For example, only getting my advice on a certain day next time."

Yeah, that's a good idea!

How about if we make the next time you appear 100 years later?

"In that case, you would be dead by then."

Never show up again is what I'm saying.

"Hah... Well, I figured you would say that. Then, is it fine? Going without any advice this time."

...No, wait just a second.

I'm sorry about that.

I'll compromise as well.

If by following this advice I successfully manage to reunite with someone from my family, I'll stop being belligerent when I talk to you.

"Will you trust me?"

No, I can't go that far, but at the very least I'll stop with repeating the pointless "will I or will I not" dialogue.

"How positive of you."

That's why you should compromise as well.

Just like this time, don't just suddenly show your face.

Give me some time to prepare myself.

Otherwise enter some other guy's dreams and send me a letter.

"That is difficult. In order to appear in dreams, there are actually some conditions."

Hmmm?

Conditions?

In other words, it's not like you can just show your face whenever you want?

"That's exactly what it means. Appearing in their dreams won't work unless our wavelengths match up. It's considerably uncommon. People who can match up with the timing to receive my advice. You're pretty lucky."

Yeah, I'm so happy that I feel like I'll shed tears.

To the point where I want to let others feel this happiness.

Like those trash bugs around there or so...

But, hmm, is that how it is?

So there are conditions.

Incidentally, what are those conditions?

"Well, I don't really understand them myself. I just think, 'Ah, will it work with this guy on this day' and then it connects."

Oh~.

In other words, that means you can't control it.

Then, we'll have to give up on rules.

We'll have to go with something different.

That's alright I guess.

I'd like if you'd at least give me a bit more details in your advice.

Go over here and then come over there, without knowing what it would be good to do, it confuses me.

It feels like I'm dancing on top of your palm and being played with, which is irritating as well.

"Okay, details. I get it, let's go with that."

Alright, then, I'm depending on you.

"[Cough] Now then, I'll give you this time's advice."

—

In the next instant, a vision flowed into my demon eye.

<There was a back alley in some country>

<A single young girl was being captured violently>

<The hands that had captured her were from soldiers>

<There were two soldiers>

<A hand that wasn't being used to capture her picked up the paper that the young girl was carrying and tore it into pieces>

<After the young girl saw that, she shouted something>

The vision went up to there.

—

Wha-what was that just now!?

"Oh~ Rudeus. Listen well. The young girls name is Aisha Greyrat. Currently, she's being detained in Shirone Kingdom. After seeing the scene from just now, you will most likely come across it and save her. However, you must absolutely not use your own name. Use 'The Owner of Dead End' to name yourself and listen to her circumstances. After that, send a letter to an acquaintance in the Shirone Royal Palace. If you do that, you will be able to save Aisha and Lilia from the Royal Palace."

Eh...wai...what.

No, wait, why?

Acquaintance? Letter?

"Was that just a bit too many details I wonder? If I give too many details then it's not as interesting, so it's just going to be like that, I guess. Now then, which of them will you get along with I wonder?"

Eh?

Both Lilia and Aisha are together in the Shirone Kingdom?

Why?

If they're in that sort of place there's no reason why we shouldn't have found them.

What do you mean by get along with?

Does that mean I'll get into discord between either Lilia or Aisha?

"Well then, Rudeus. Give it your best.."

Best...best...best...

My consciousness sank as I continued to hear that echo.

I jumped up from bed.

My head was in pain like it was being smashed.

An overwhelming dizziness.

And then nausea came.

I left the bed, and half ran towards the exit of the room.

After I left the room, I entered the toilet.

After looking into the toilet, I immediately started to throw up.

My head hurts.

A tremendous headache and nausea.

My legs feel unsteady.

I left the toilet.

I felt like the room was very far away.

I put my hand on the wall, the power left my legs.

I slowly drop down to the floor.

I could hear an intense blowing sound from in the dark inn.

Searching the surrounding with just my eyes, I tried to find what it was.

I quickly realized it.

It's the sound of my breathing.

"What's wrong, are you all right...?"

As soon as I realize it, in the pitch darkness a white face is floating there.

It's Ruijerd.

He was looking at my face in a worried way.

"Yeah... I'm alright."

"What did you eat? Can you use detoxification magic?"

Ruijerd pulled a cloth from his pocket and wiped my mouth.

The scent from the vomit caused my nausea to get even stronger.

However, it didn't disappear when I threw up- it felt like something was remaining in my chest.

"I'm alright..."

I somehow managed to squeeze those words out from my throat.

"Really?"

In return to his worried voice I nodded.

I remember these headaches.

It was something I tasted in Wind Port.

"Yeah, it seems like I failed to adjust my demon eye when I was half asleep."

When I used the demon eye to try to look further than 10 seconds into the future, I got headaches like these.

When the headaches started was when I couldn't see beyond that point in the future.

However, I understood that intuitively that if it had gotten worse it would become like this.

Then, why has it become like this.

I can predict that as well.

That dream, that advice.

The vision I was shown in there, it's because of that.

Hitogami showed me a vision of the future.

Most likely, using the demon eye.

"Because of that, huh?"

After I slightly whispered that, Ruijerd made a puzzled face.

I remember the details about how I met the Great Demon Emperor in the port city and received the demon eye.

The sudden meeting, for what reason did I get my hands on this demon eye.

In regards to the journey the advice given was completely useless.

After all, the demon eye wasn't really all that useful.

No, thanks to the demon eye I feel like I've kept my life a number of times, but even without that I feel I could have managed somehow or other.

In hindsight, because of the demon eye, I let myself be negligent once or twice.

I could say it came to be a zero-sum balance.

For me it had no meaning.

However, for Hitogami, there was meaning.

Just because of that, for the sake of showing me the future, that might be why he let me meet with the Great Demon Emperor.

I have the feeling that some kind of plan is gradually being completed.

The anxiety is making my neck feel stiff.

Inside of me for the first time a fear was born of Hitogami.

It was the first time I really came to terms with the fact that 'that guy' is holding some kind of large power.

That guy wants me to do some kind of work.

That kind of premonition causes me to shiver.

"Rudeus, the color of your face is bad. Are you really alright?"

Ruijerd is making a very worried face.

And, just like that, I almost started to express my unease.

By the way, ever since the time I met you I've been observed by Hitogami and following his wishes, I've progressed with various things.

However, in that instant I realized a single truth.

(Since the time I met Ruijerd.)

That's right.

The first time I made contact with Hitogami was just before I met with Ruijerd.

And then that guy gave me advice to join up with Ruijerd.

It's a strange talk.

Why had he never made contact until now?

Why did he suddenly come calling right after the magic power disaster?

Why did he not just give the advice to depend on Ruijerd, but also the advice to "save him"?

I feel like everything has a connection.

I think that guy is planning something.

I have no proof, but it's a type of distrust.

However, from one of the unjust suspicions, this thought rose to the surface.

(Maybe, I wonder if Hitogami wants Ruijerd to do something.)

Hitogami said there were conditions in order for him to appear in dreams.

It might be that he's caught in those conditions and can't directly control Ruijerd.

Therefore, he had me who met the conditions, get involved with the magic disaster and get teleported, lead me into saving Ruijerd, and even had him escort us up to Central Continent?

...No, in that case, I don't understand the meaning in giving me the demon eye and advice to save Aisha.

I don't know.

What is that guy thinking??

In regards to that guy everything may be linked together, but I can't see those connecting points.

And thus I wonder if I should tell Ruijerd about Hitogami or not.

I'm lost.

"..."

These worries, I really want to talk with someone and have them resolved.

However, I really can't burden this man with anymore than this is what I think.

If by talking to Ruijerd about Hitogami, some sort of condition is put into place, it could allow Hitogami to come into contact with Ruijerd.

This honest man would almost certainly be easily deceived by Hitogami.

I myself can't even think I'm not being deceived by him.

I don't think so, but...

At the very least, the fact that I take a belligerent attitude with him is something that isn't good for Hitogami.

I would like to think that while I'm being belligerent I won't be deceived.

"Ruijerd-san. If during a painful time someone whispers sweet words to you, please do not believe in them. During those painful times, there will be guys who will come along in order to deceive you."

...In the end I didn't say it.

I never put the matters of Hitogami into words.

"...I don't know what you're talking about, but understood."

Ruijerd nodded with a serious face while holding some kind of complicated feelings.

He trusts me.

And yet I keep things secret.

I made the decision that it was better to keep it hidden, but even with that my heart won't clear up.

Just as I realized it the headaches and nausea have cleared up.

With my dizziness and head still shaking, I returned to the room.

The clear eyes and head that has become a whirlpool of thoughts.

After closing my eyes, my thoughts kept rising to the surface one after another.

There were no meaningful thoughts.

It wasn't theoretical thinking.

Like being in a maze with no exit, thoughts without answers rising up and then disappearing.

Even when I was lying down on the bed, I didn't feel like I could sleep.

"What is it nya..."

Suddenly, I heard that sleep talk and moved my gaze to the side.

On the nearby bed Eris is sleeping with her arms and legs spread out to the four corners.

As usual her sleeping posture is bad.

She sleeps with her legs spread out wide.

I can see her healthy legs stretching out from the shorts-like pajama substitute.

There are risky openings in the cloth that seem like they could be looked into.

The clothes getting rolled up and a lovely belly button peeked out.

After looking just above there's hills that you can now tell are her breasts.

Probably because she doesn't use a bra while sleeping, if I concentrate my eyes, pocchi rises to the surface.

And then there's that drooling face that is grinning and laughing to itself.

"Nfufu..."

I made a bitter smile hearing that sleep talk and got up.

I pulled down the hem of her clothes and covered her in a blanket.

"Ruuudeus sure is ecchi..."

It was a loose face.

While people are being this considerate, of all things you call them ecchi.

Just as you say should I go ahead and grope your chest.

Just as I was thinking that my drowsiness returned.

While yawning I fell onto my bed.

As expected of Eris.

While thinking that I completely fell asleep.

The next day.

While we were eating a meal in the bar, I made an announcement to the two.

"I want to do some searching on the way and make a short stop at the Shirone Kingdom."

The two tilted their head and nodded.

"Understood."

"Acknowledged."

Questions like "why?" or "for what reason?" didn't come.

I'm thankful that they aren't trying to ask the reason.

I want to go in that direction and talk about Hitogami as little as possible.

I decided on that and to keep an eye out, but I honestly have no idea how to explain things in regards to Hitogami, it just causes my head to be full of worries.

Ruijerd saw how I looked last night and it seems he came to his own conclusion.

Most likely, he's realized that I'm hiding something.

While his thoughts might be in the wrong direction, such as I'm hiding some sort of illness. No, Hitogami is like a demon of ill health, so it might not be all that wrong.

Eris is just the same as always.

"Shirone is that place right? The place where Rudeus' shisho is?"

After hearing those words from Eris, the figure of a single girl came to my mind.

Roxy Migurdia.

That's right.

She should be in Shirone.

Hitogami said to send a letter to an acquaintance as well.

At first I was wondering who it was, but if we're speaking of acquaintances who I would send letters to there's only one.

It most likely means to request assistance from her.

Roxy is a person I can rely on.

Hitogami occasionally makes suggestions that make sense.

"Yes. My most respected... sensei."

My shisho is what I was about to say, but I changed the word at the last minute.

Come to think of it, I was forbidden from calling her shisho.

Recently, I feel like I've said "shisho is amazing, shisho is amazing" to a variety of people but...

Well, it's fine.

"That's right, if it's a person Rudeus respects then we need to stop by and visit. They might be able to lend their strength to us after all."

Eris nodded to herself while saying that.

Roxy.

Because she was excellent, if it was her, then we would definitely become a strong power. There's no mistake about that.

Even though I say that, Roxy is a Royal Court magician.

Since she's probably busy I don't want to bother her too much.

It already seems like I'll be a bother and I don't want to show up as her pitiful student.

Although even putting aside using the disaster search as a cover, the fact that I want to see her won't change.

I want to thank her for the Demon God language dictionary as well.

If it weren't for that, I might still be on the Magic Continent.

I regret the fact that it was lost during the teleport.

That was something that should have been made into a manuscript and then sold all around the world.

"I want to meet and see Rudeus' sensei."

"Humu, I'm interested as well."

It seems Eris and Ruijerd are showing interest in going.

Probably because I would let out Roxy's name and give her a high praise during the journey.

I'm proud that Roxy is my sensei. It's natural that I wouldn't be embarrassed to let it be known everywhere.

"Well then, once we arrive in Shirone Kingdom, I'll introduce you."

While making that promise, we set off on our journey.

First off we'll advance along the highway and pass by the Dragon King Kingdom's Capital, Wyvern.

From the capital, there are two routes that stretch out along the East and West sides of the Dragon King Mountains.

One route stretches straight north.

And then the other route stretches out to the west.

Naturally, we chose the route that goes north.

We ended up staying in the capital Wyvern for about a week.

If we followed our original plans, we were only supposed to stay for about three days, but the newly bought carriage was in bad condition so it took time to repair it.

After all, cheap second-rate goods are no good.

If it was something made from stones or iron I could somehow or other do something about it, but I can't use magic on wood.

We gave the repairman a bit of a bonus in money and asked him to fix it a bit faster.

We were not in a hurry.

In the scene Hitogami showed me, Aisha was being captured by two men.

I was worried, but Hitogami said I would be present in that place.

In that case, even this incident where the carriage broke, it could be because fate was somehow being manipulated.

Most likely, if I were to rush as fast as I could, I won't encounter that scene.

I needed to calm my heart as mush as possible.

While thinking that we looked around and visited various places in Wyvern.

The Dragon King Kingdom is the third largest country in this world.

It's located in the southern part of the Central Continent and has four Vassal kingdoms under it.

It seems that in the past, it was just one of many great countries in the south, but they defeated the ruler of the Dragon King Mountain in the northwest, Dragon King Kajakuto. After obtaining the large amount of mineral resources in his territory, they became the dominant economic power and rapidly expanded to become a strong kingdom.

It's the birthplace of the 48 Magic Swords that are scattered around the world and a place where many stories of the North God hero are told.

It's a place with many anecdotes, but it doesn't feel like tradition is all that essential.

It's a country with a mixed feeling similar to America.

In this town, there are a large number of blacksmiths and swordsmanship dojos.

After taking a peek inside of the dojo, there were a large number of children being taught.

It seems like it's common for people to stay in the dojo until Advanced level.

After one look, Eris flared her nose while saying they weren't anything great, causing Ruijerd to rebuke her.

Well then, we went about gathering information about missing people in this town.

One of Paul's subordinates was in the Adventurer's Guild. He told us this country doesn't have any important information.

After all, now that such a long time has passed, it seems the missing won't be found so easily.

After that, I went with the usual market price investigation.

Wyvern is a town where the specialties of both the Milis Continent and the Central Continent are sold.

There are a large variety of ingredients.

In regards to that market, I finally discovered it. I witnessed rice being sold.

Rice... it's rice.

It's a little bit yellow in color, but it's certainly rice.

The way it comes out in the stores of this country, using a spoon to make it easier to eat, it comes out as something like a paella or porridge. It was a bit different from what I was seeking.

I want to eat white cooked rice. If there is none, then I'll make it myself, I had such an impulse. I don't have such a skill as cooking rice, but I carefully heard about that from a shop person.

The 3 liters of rice I bought were then carefully placed within a pot I made using earth magic. And then following the recipe I was taught by the store person I cooked the rice.

On the side I had already prepared salt and eggs. With a serious face I was using fire to cook the urchin and partway through Eris came to visit.

"What are you doing?"

"An experiment."

"Hmmm?"

I didn't think Eris would have any interest, but soon after she started her usual behavior nearby, she started glancing towards it. It seems she's interested.

I flipped an hourglass I had the bartender bring out and then strengthened the heat power.

Gradually raising the strength of the heat is the trick, according to the man from the store.

After I turned the hourglass over three times, I finally weakened the fire. And then another two turns of the hourglass. In the end I stopped the fire, and turned the hourglass twice.

"It's done."

"Really?"

After whispering that out loud, Eris stopped what she was doing and came over to crouch next to me. I could gently smell Eris' scent drifting about. It's a good smell. However, right now my appetite isn't sexual but for food.

She was looking at the pot with an excited expression. I was excited as well as I lifted off the lid. The flowing scent was the smell of rice.

"It's a good smell. As expected of Rudeus."

"If we don't taste it and see..."

While whispering that I picked up some rice with my finger and put it into my mouth.

... Humu.

"Forty-five points."

The taste and sensation were pretty far from what I remember. If I were to rank it by the current Japanese standards, it couldn't even be called C rank. I wonder if it's after all because rice isn't the staple food in this country.

It's dry and tasteless, and very rough. The color is a bit yellow as well. I'm sure it's also a matter of my cooking method being lousy, but the raw materials are bad as well.

I can't by any means call it Ginshari. In reality I want to give it 30 points and a red mark, but it's the first rice I've eaten in a long time that wasn't bad.

{ C-Editor's note: Ginshari is Japanese silver sushi rice. }

The nostalgia filled my chest. After seasoning it, it was +15 points. I sure am sweet.

"This is what we ate last night as well right? What kind of experiment is this?"

"From here on out is the real thing."

I put the cooked rice into a porcelain bowl I made with earth magic. Then, I picked up the egg that I conscientiously used detoxification magic on. Next, I cracked open the egg and poured it into the hole I made in the center of the rice. On top of that I sprinkled salt.

I prepared the chopsticks I made with earth magic and moved both of my hands to match.

{ C-Editor's note: He used both hands with the chopsticks to mix the egg well with the rice. }

"Itadakimasu."

"Eh? Wait, Rudeus, that egg... Raw..."

I opened my mouth wide and took a good bite of the yellow-stained rice. Umu, raw tasting.

For the time being I tried adding more salt, but there wasn't any real change. After eating it like this, the egg itself has a slightly different taste to it. I guess it would mean that something fresh is different than what you would eat in Japan.

After all, soy sauce is essential. I wonder if I'll be able to find soy sauce in this world. If not, I want to find the ingredients to make it.

While thinking, I gulped down the rice wholeheartedly.

"Hamu...hafuhafu, hafu!!!"

"..Is it good?"

In response to Eris' question, I created a second porcelain bowl with earth magic. There I served rice and sprinkled salt on top and then handed it to Eris.

On the occasion I created a spoon as well and handed it over. One made for beginners to start.

"Hey, is this all, that's it?"

[Swallow]

I silently nodded. It is possible to eat rice as just rice. That's why it's considered a staple food. I'm not bragging, but in my past life's golden age, I ate mountains of rice as my staple food.

There was a time with rice balls as a side dish. As long as there's white rice, it was an age where it could be eaten in any way.

"Hmmm..."

Eris was eating while squirming and making a complicated face. She's still a child.

However, after spreading an egg on top...

"Yeah, it's better than just now."

That's how she said it while filling her cheeks and eating it.

After all, tamago kake gohan is the best. It's a complete dish.

We continued to enjoy the rice and in the end even ate the burnt bits at the bottom with a crunch to finish the meal.

The only one who didn't get to eat any tamago kake gohan, Ruijerd, spoke of no complaints. He just smiled bitterly. As I thought, he's an adult.

However, I felt like I did something bad. Next time I'll make sure he gets to eat as well.

We departed from the Dragon King Kingdom and went north along the highway.

There are still two countries we have to pass through before we reach Shirone Kingdom: Sanakia Kingdom and Kikka Kingdom. Both of them are vassal states of the Dragon King Kingdom.

In the Sanakia Kingdom, cultivation of rice was popular. It has the correct climate for it and while we were traveling along the road I saw paddy fields on one side.

Around this area there are a number of rivers, the climate could be close to Japan and Eastern Asia.

After trying it out, I found it was the same as the stuff that I ate in the Dragon King Kingdom.

It seems that what was made here was being exported to the market of the Dragon King Kingdom. For the time being, I decided to name this location's rice, Sanakia brand rice.

The meals for the inn were often a mix of seafood and cooked rice. In this world I've always eaten with self-restraint, but I couldn't oppose the charm of rice after all.

Today, I filled my stomach full again. A happy end for another one of my days.

Recently, when it's time to eat, Eris will occasionally look at me with a blank expression.

Since I am one who was relatively fussy when it came to meals, when I suddenly started to eat in silence, she probably had some sort of thoughts about it.

"What's wrong?"

"Rudeus, I always took you as the type who would not eat very much."

Eris said something like that.

In my previous life I was never considered someone who eats lightly. My style was one where I would eat as much as there was and ask for seconds.

The reason why I ended up restraining myself so much in this world was because the staple food didn't match up.

Putting aside the stiff meat from the Magic Continent, the meals in Asura Kingdom were centered on bread and were a bit unsatisfying.

There's no way Zenith's cooking was bad, but the taste of rice was something I had always been seeking and can never give up.

Umu. Rice is good after all.

It wasn't just a quest for meals, but we showed our face in the Adventurer's Guild as well.

It would be best if I say as expected of the Central Continent. Even after I let out the name Dead End, no one was surprised.

If I were to say it, it's like even if someone was famous in America, they're not guaranteed to be well known even in Japan.

Even if they know Superman, there aren't many children who know about Captain America.

Even though I say that, they're adventurers as well. They've occasionally heard the name Dead End. For instance, if a celebrity from America suddenly came to Japan, no one other than the core fans would make a fuss about it.

In regards to the Superd race, there was no sign they would make a fuss about it. In the end, I wonder if the important part was the color of his hair after all.

This world's discrimination is something that could easily be understood by modern Japanese otaku.

If a Superd race doesn't have green hair then they're not a Superd race, if a track and field girl doesn't have black hair and a ponytail she's not a track and field girl, that sort of thing.

However, it seems once you get to A rank, they'll pay a certain amount of attention to you.

"Yo, I've never seen you guys faces around, A rank right? Did you recently form up?"

The one who came to talk to us, was a man who had a very similar atmosphere to Nokopara. Going from experience, I don't want to get along with this kind of man.

However, it could get troublesome if we just ignore him. We're limited to dealing with him in an adequate way.

"The time we formed up was two years ago."

"Oh, it must not have been around here. 'Dead End'. If I remember correctly, that was the name of a demon on the Magic Continent?"

"Yeah, we just got here after traveling from the Magic Continent."

"Hehe... you're kidding. Then that man over there would be that demon?" (!)

"That's right, but could you please not refer to him as a demon?"

"Why? Is it that sort of cover up?"

"Since it would cause a fuss he shaved his head, but he's the real thing after all."

The man laughed and said "you're kidding" again. But I had a serious face. Eris was on the verge of snapping, and Ruijerd was making a displeased face.

After seeing that, the man had a cold sweat going.

"Hey, seriously?"

"Since that's the case, would you like to see the jewel on his forehead?"

"No, no, it's fine. I'm sorry about that. I couldn't have imagined you were really "them". I guess that would mean they really existed, the Superd race..."

It's a good thing we rose up to A rank while we were on Magic Continent. It gave credibility to the fact that Ruijerd is really from the Superd race.

The criticism against Demon Races on the Central Continent is strong, but I wonder why the Superd race is feared less here than on the Magic Continent. I guess it would be a matter of danger being close at hand.

A person who says brown bears are safe is a person who hasn't actually encountered a brown bear in the mountains.

Our established reputation became unusable, but if they aren't afraid then methods to recover popularity should somehow or other work.

Our former prospects are looking bright. Even though I say that, it's certain that I can't think of any decent ideas.

Ruijerd figurines as well won't be well accepted in the area of influence of the Milis religion after all.

While thinking that, Eris was scowling at the man from before.

"Eris. Please don't get into a fight."

"I know that."

"Then that's good."

Recently Eris hasn't been picking as many fights. During this past year her demeanor has gotten considerably sharper.

The scent of an amateur has left her. Just from a glance people can tell she's an opponent that's dangerous to get involved with.

Also, it seems she's understood adventurers' sense of humor somehow or other.

Whenever she hears something that she realizes is a phrase she's heard before she responds, while making a displeased face, with a similar phrase with enough composure to manage it. Then if the other side laughs, Eris responds with a win face.

She's become like an adventurer. Although, it's not like she doesn't fight if someone picks one with her.

After finding out she's A rank even though she's young, there are guys who get into a fight with her seriously.

The majority of those are younger ones who are at best C rank. Even though they have no actual strength, they've even pulled in Ruijerd.

Those who pick a fight like that usually end up falling in one punch. There are these kind of guys in just about every Adventurer's Guild it seems. They're idiots.

Incidentally, people often get involved with me as well, but that's right, thanks to my danna, uhauha is how it is, I just conveniently deal with them like such. (!)

In reality, the reason we managed to rise up to A rank is largely because we were relying on Ruijerd after all.

It seems like Eris doesn't like that attitude of mine, but there's no way we could have reached A rank on our own.

Let's go with modesty.

After moving even further north.

In the Kikka Kingdom, a plant similar to rapeseed was cultivated and popular.

{ C-Editor's note: Rapeseed is used to make canola oil. }

Along the highway, we could see flower fields filled with white-ish flowers.

Incidentally, rice was the staple food in this country as well.

I understood it only after eating and comparing them, but the further north you go the better quality the rice gets.

With this, the day I meet the rice that I will fall in love with at first sight could be close at hand.

However, unfortunate as it is, in the current northern area of the Central Continent, large countries are always bickering with skirmishes.

In that sort of situation, there's no way they could make delicious rice. It's truly unfortunate.

In this country there's a current craze with a cooking style called "Nanahoshi Frying". You coat meat in wheat flour or rice flour and then cook in oil at a high temperature, that sort of thing. In other words it's deep frying.

Recently it's a huge fad that started up from development in the direction of Asura Kingdom, it seems that influence flowed down to here.

It seems many countries have a hard time producing oil for food, but in this country oil is produced in large quantities.

It was something I came to know after arriving in this country, but the cultivation of oil is an industry the Dragon King Kingdom forced onto Kikka Kingdom.

The paddy fields in Sanakia Kingdom as well were under the Dragon King Kingdom's instruction. Being a vassal kingdom must be difficult.

Incidentally, these fried foods are a bit bad tasting.

Even though they use meat, they're largely from sheep or pigs. Also, the temperature of the oil doesn't seem to be appropriate since they're a bit hard. The seasoning wasn't sticking properly either.

Of course, rock salt, dried herbs, and a variety of sauces that can be used to change the flavor in this land exist.

Overall, they're not bad. Rather, it's fine to praise them as well made.

A specialist at eating such as me is saying that but I understood the ingenuity of it.

The cooks of this country are giving it their best.

However, it was still a bit different from the taste I was craving. After all, the fact that there is no soy sauce is not good.

The seasoning should be a mix of soy sauce and garlic, with a bit of ginger on the side. It's not good if it doesn't finish up bittersweet.

"Rudeus, recently you've been making difficult faces while eating."

"That guy is fussy about flavor after all. I'm sure he's got some things on his mind about it."

"I think it's plenty good though."

While the two surrounding me at the table were saying that, I was munching away at my food.

They aren't fussy in regards to their food.

Even I never did comparisons like a champion food gourmet until I came to this sort of place.

However, just a bit more, I can't help but think that just a bit more and I'll have the flavor of soy sauce again.

"However, it's a mysterious food sensation isn't it? It's crispy, and when you chew it overflows."

"Yeah, it's good."

The two who were chomping away, afterwards they asked for seconds.

They were happy.

Cooking they ate for the first time, they would think it's good after all.

Since I know of a flavor above this one, I just can't honestly be happy about it.

White rice, soy sauce, and deep fried foods. After adding tofu, seaweed, and miso soup, my craving will finally be satisfied.

The never-ending quest for food.

Naturally, during that time we were also looking for missing people; however, naturally as it is, we passed days without gaining any sort of information.

That journey continued on for four months.

We arrived in Shirone Kingdom.

We arrived in Shirone Kingdom.

Shirone Kingdom is a small country, but it's an old country that has 200 years of history.

For this world- which keeps track of history in 1,000 year denominations- speaking of 200 years might not seem all that old.

However, 400 years ago, all human race countries except Asura Kingdom and the Holy Milis Kingdom were wiped out in the war.

Until 300 years ago when the Dragon King Kingdom took control of the southern-most tip, it was a region of intense strife.

Even now, if you go north, the strife zone spreads out.

The Shirone Kingdom is a country that is relatively close to that strife zone.

In such a place, how did the Shirone Kingdom manage to last as a country for 200 years?

Honestly, I don't have much interest in it, but for the most part I do know why.

It's because they formed an alliance with the Dragon King Kingdom early on in their history.

Although even if you were to call it an alliance, the difference in power is clear.

If you were to stop by the Shirone Kingdom on the way to the Dragon King Kingdom it's like the other two kingdoms, a vassal state.

The only fact that I have an interest in is that Roxy is in this country.

That young... No, she's not young.

I wonder if that lovely, slightly clumsy shisho is still in this country serving as magician for the Royal Court.

I had heard that she had burned one of the prince's hands, but I'm sure she's still somehow giving it her best.

I want to see her, as I haven't seen her in a while.

I want to meet her and tell her I'm safe.

I want to talk with Roxy and tell her about how I visited her hometown.

I want her to show me her King class magic.

While thinking that we move along the road towards the capital.

This place is like a vassal kingdom to the Dragon King Kingdom, but it's different from the two countries that we stopped by on the way, it doesn't give off the impression of being a colony.

It could be because they are so far apart, or maybe because it's kept as a buffer from the strife zone.

I don't really understand those points very well.

Along the highway, there were fields of crops that had no sense of unity and livestock that were left to freely graze.

There was an area that had something like clovers and grass, perhaps it was left uncultivated.

I have no knowledge about agriculture, but it seems this world's inhabitants are just producing crops without thinking.

While looking at that scenery, moving from side to side, we approached the Shirone Kingdom's capital, Ratakia.

We passed through the castle walls that surround the town.

In this world, major cities are generally surrounded by walls.

Roa and Milishion were both like that as well.

Even in Kikka Kingdom and Sanakia Kingdom, the large towns had walls.

If you look at them, they are reliable walls that give off a fantasy feeling.

The existence of walls wasn't any different on the Magic Continent.

Rather, you could say that on Magic Continent where the monsters are strong, they're even more thorough.

There were no towns that had large, natural walls like the town of Rikarisu, but in each of the towns the variety of races living nearby use their unique abilities in order to make solid walls to protect the town.

Also, even in small villages, monster extermination is done on a daily basis in the village's surroundings.

If you were to compare those walls to the castle walls on the Central Continent, you would think they were made just for the sake of looking the part.

We arrived in the capital Ratakia.

After we entered the town, just as usual, we left the carriage in a stable.

Probably because there are a lot of labyrinths that exist in the surroundings of this country, but there are a large number of sharp mannered adventurers.

A large number of adventurers who want to take part in exploring labyrinths exist.

Paul and Ghyslaine were like that as well, it seems like Roxy went into a labyrinth at one point as well.

Those who explore labyrinths are largely a skillful lot, or at least I have a feeling Paul told me something like that.

There are a large number of labyrinths in Shirone Kingdom.

If you are the first to conquer even one of those, a large amount of money would fall into your lap.

Now, even just among those adventurers wandering around over there, there are many S rank adventurers looking to get rich quick.

We found an inn.

It's the same as usual, an inn aimed at D rank adventurers.

I don't know if it's because this town has a lot of high rank adventurers, but even the low rank inns are fairly expensive.

Even though I say that, the quality of the rooms aimed at D rank on the Central Continent are better than ones aimed at C rank or above on the Magic Continent.

Therefore, it would be fine if we just dropped to a lower grade room, but we have enough money that we don't really need to bother about the price.

Saying it in reverse, we were able to get a higher grade room.

Once before I thought it would be better to get a good room, but even when you actually have enough money to use it leisurely, it's not that good of an idea to be extravagant.

Unexpectedly, I could be quite frugal.

Although over these past few months our food expenses have increased a bit.

"Well then, now that we've arrived in the Shirone Kingdom, let's start a strategy meeting."

With the other two on standby in the room before me, I made the usual announcement.

Clap-clap the usual applause.

They have completely gotten used to it.

"Now then, what should we start with..."

"Meeting with Rudeus's teacher right?"

After hearing Eris' words, I thought.

Remember Hitogami's words.

[Aisha Greyrat. Currently, she's being detained in Shirone Kingdom. The scene from just now, you will likely try to save her. However, you must absolutely not use your own name. Use 'The Owner of Dead End' to name yourself and listen to her circumstances. After that, send a letter to an acquaintance in the Shirone Royal Palace. If you do that, you will be able to save both Aisha and Lilia from the Shirone Royal Palace.]

It should have been something along those lines.

If I'm to believe that in its entirety.

In other words, it's fine if I walk around looking for the alley I saw in my dreams.

I wonder if it would be better to go together with Eris and Ruijerd.

I seem to make mistakes more often than not when I'm alone, if I go this time alone and then I'm unable to match the specification, I wonder if it's better if we go as a group.

Nevertheless that scene which I saw in my dream.

Two soldiers came out in there.

I've seen their outfit many times around the town.

It's this country's regular soldier outfit.

I'll think about it a bit and then see.

If I believe in Hitogami's words, then Lilia and Aisha should both be in the Shirone Royal Palace.

Then, Aisha should be detained in the Royal Palace.

How did she manage to escape from the Royal Palace? Regardless, the soldiers from the Royal Palace managed to catch up to her.

Then that would be the reason I clash with them there.

If I'm to save her from the front, then that would mean to face the Royal Palace head on.

Which is why he said to absolutely not name myself.

Give a false name here.

It might be good to hide my face as well.

Then while the knights are looking for me with a fake name, I send a letter to an acquaintance... to Roxy in the Royal Palace seeking help.

If Roxy is a Royal Court magician, then she should have some degree of power to act.

I'm sure she'll come to aid us.

She'll end up looking after me again.

Really I can't sleep with my feet pointed at Roxy.

{ C-Editor's note: An expression used to express gratitude/respect towards a certain person. }

Conversely, were she to do me the favor of sleeping with her feet pointing at me, I'd clean things up real nice for her while she slept.

Yeah, if I think about it simply, this advice is that sort of flow.

But, it's Hitogami we're talking about.

There's the possibility that he's planning something as well.

After giving this advice he made the statement, "If I make it too detailed, then it's less entertaining to watch."

In other words, in regards to him, interesting happenings could occur.

Most likely I won't be able to avoid those things.

Even though I say that, that guy said "Next time I'd like you to believe in me."

Then, even if some rough developments are waiting for me, I can predict that I won't get a major injury or that no one in my family will die.

Only if I believe in him to the end that is.

This time, he could have made up such a lie just in order to reliably deceive me and he might not even be thinking about next time.

However, even if that is true, if I pointlessly oppose him and the situation deteriorates I won't be able to face it.

I don't like the feeling that I'm dancing on the palms of his hands, but I have to listen to what he said.

In any case, look for Aisha, hide my name, and send a letter to Roxy.

These three are a sure thing.

However, now then, how should I convince these two?

The letter is fine.

A reason to search a back alley and a reason to hide our names, if I don't think about both at the same time it won't be good.

It was something I learned after we departed from Milishion, even if I specify a day as a day off, Ruijerd or Eris will absolutely end up coming along with me as I go around.

It seems the event where I got depressed that time with Paul has stuck with them.

It means I just worried them that much.

I can't apologize enough.

Even though I say that, this time the probability that I'll have to be careful of knights is high, if I bring along these two who suck at acting, I feel like a wild snake will come flying out the bush.

Snakes are hiding in wait all over the place.

Well then, what to do about it.

"Rudeus, what are you worrying about?"

Since I stopped my words for a long period, Eris is tilting her head and asking.

Humu...

They say delivering is easier than worrying, I'll have to try it.

"As a matter of fact, I want to hide our names while we're in this town."

"We're going to act again? Why?"

"...Umm."

Even if I hide things about Hitogami, there's no necessity to hide things from these two.

"Actually, from a certain source I got information, but it seems somewhere in this country my family is being held captive."

"Is that true?"

"Oh?"

Where or who I heard it from these two didn't ask.

In the first place, whenever I went information gathering one of these two was always with me.

If they aren't going to butt in and ask, that's convenient for my situation.

"I see now, if we name ourselves as Greyrat then they'll go on alert right!"

"That is the case."

"Then, who is here?"

"Lilia and Aisha... Our former maid and my younger sister."

Come to think of it, coming from me, I wonder what it would be good, for me to refer to Lilia as.

I don't think stepmother would be correct...

"Rudeus' younger sister? There was one in Milishion as well right? The cheeky one."

"There's one more."

"Hnn..."

Eris made a sour face looking as if it wasn't interesting.

Norn is cheeky, huh.

I didn't think so, but in terms of how Eris looks at it, that attitude would probably look cheeky.

If my younger sister gets hit, which side should I ally with?

"If that's the case then I have no complaints! As expected of Rudeus, he thinks about it well."

Eris let out a hn-hn snort with her nose.

Even if we say I'm thinking about it, it's more like I'm just following along with Hitogami's manipulation.

Humu. It's making me feel bad because I feel like I'm deceiving them.

"We're going to hide our names right. Will we use a false name?"

"A name that is pretty common would probably be best."

"Why?"

"I heard that a false name that is hard to remember is good."

While giving side glances to me as I considered them anxiously, they came up with a variety of false names.

"I wonder what kind of names are famous around this area."

"During our journey I heard the names Shaina and Reidaru pretty often."

Death God Knight Shaina is a female knight that comes out in the story of the North God hero.

She was one of the North God's three swordsmen, and she was one of the companions of the North God.

No matter how harsh the battle was she would always return alive, she was a person like Inou Seizontai.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the anime series Armored Trooper Votoms. }

Although that is most likely fiction.

Even though I say that, among the people around here, "My child got into an unforeseen accident and didn't die", therefore you'll hear them stuck with the name Shaina.

Reidaru is a Water God.

A genius of counters, he froze the ocean in order to create a foothold, he was a hero who defeated the Water Dragon King.

In order to accept that great person's name, the children of the Water God style have passed down for generations the name Reidaru if it's a male and Reida if it's a female.

This name as well has quite a few people with it.

It seems if you learn the Water God style, there are many cases of changing their name.

Just with saying we should hide our names, the two are properly thinking about it.

It's a thankful story.

However, I have the feeling that Hitogami said to name myself as "The Owner of Dead End".

No, that is a name which should be fine in regards to Aisha.

Humu, then it's fine, huh.

Alright, I'll seriously think about it.

"Rudeus, what will we do?"

"I guess, in this case, it would be best if they fully understand that we're using false names."

"Why?"

"Our faces and names aren't known, if we go with naming ourselves using a flashy name, they won't realize our objective, and the other side might get confused."

Or at least I think I heard something like that in an anime from somewhere before...

Frankly, any false name could pretty much be fine, but...

"Then, a cool one would be good."

A cool one huh.

"I understand then I will call myself the knight of the moon's shadow, Shadow Moon Knight."

"Shadow Moon Knight!?"

Eris' cheeks were red and her eyes were sparkling.

The real thing wears an outfit like being on school lunch duty.

Furthermore, he spits out arrogant haiku lines.

If it's Eris she would probably knock him down the instant she sees him.

"I want something like that as well! Ah, but if we use the same one it'll be troubling right, hmmm..."

She liked it that much, huh.

Alright, then I'll grant you a nice/knights name.

"Well then, Eris will be the Shadowmoon's Swordsman [Sword] and then Ruijerd will be Shadowmoon's Spear [Lance], if we go with that it should be fine. If we do that then we'd all be matching."

"That's nice, matching! Let's go with that."

I thought Ruijerd might be embarrassed with that kind of name, but it doesn't seem like he's all that unsatisfied with it.

Paul said my "Arrogant Water Dragon King, Aqua Heartia" was cool as well.

It seems like this world is a bit chuunibyou.

"However, Rudeus doesn't give off a knight feeling."

After we had settled on them, Eris came out whispering that.

I'm not a knight.

Then, should I call myself Magician(Evil) or General(Omega)?

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the anime series Space Knight Tekkaman Blade. }

...Well, I don't know if we'll actually need to call ourselves that, anything is fine really.

We'll decide based on the situation, and if it seems bad then it's fine to just call myself The Owner after all.

"Well then, the false names will be something like that."

"That's right, what are we going to do from here on out?"

"For the time being, I'll send a letter to Roxy in the Royal Palace then we'll gather information until I get a response."

I proclaimed that.

I'll look around during free time and try to encounter that scene.

I'll have to give it my best in order for it to go well.

The next day.

I bought some stationary and an envelope from the market, then wrote a letter.

Starting with seasonal greetings and then say that I'm safe after the teleport incident.

After that I'll say that I'm healthy so there's no need to worry. For the time being I've come to the capital of Shirone so I'd like to meet.

I'll lightly touch on the fact that everyone from Buina village is missing, and fan it with the fact that I'm in the middle of searching and no one has been found so I'm worried. After that, I'll casually touch on the topic of our maid Lilia, and then since it's an important matter I'll finish saying once again I'm worried about my family.

Then I'll position all of the contents so the first character of each word lines up reading, "Please help me."

If I write this much then I'm sure even Roxy would realize it.

Then I'll use the pattern I made of Roxy's pendant, turned into a stamp to seal it with wax.

I hesitated over the sender's name, but I sent them with the name Rudeus many times while I was in Roa.

I thought about using a false name here as well, but if she looks at it and says "I don't know who this is." and throws it away I'll be in trouble.

The fact that Roxy is clumsy like that sometimes is one of her occasional weak points.

"From the favorite disciple who is watching over your life, Rudeus Greyrat." like that.

Most likely even if I were to write a false name, Roxy would realize it's my writing the moment she sees it.

Even though I say that, being a bit scatterbrained at the crucial points and making a mistake is Roxy.

I won't know until I'm sure the letter makes its way into Roxy's hands.

It's Roxy the Schrödinger.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Schrödinger's cat thought experiment in quantum mechanics. }

Roxy getting inside of a box for me to pick up naturally comes to mind.

Oh~, my God, cardboard boxes are something which you hide in when they are turned upside down.

Well, putting that aside, I want to try and make sure that the contents actually are read.

"Well then, I'm off to send the letter."

"Yeah."

"Yes, have a safe trip."

Eris and Ruijerd were seeing me off with full face smiles.

I surely thought they would follow after me, but it was a bit of a letdown.

"Oh? What are you two going to do?"

"We plan to look around the town for information on Rudeus' little sister."

Ah, come to think of it, I did say we would be looking for information.

Well, information is power, there's no loss in collecting it.

Rather, I'm shocked at myself who was careless enough to give up on properly collecting information as well.

"I see then I leave it in your care. After I send the letter, I'll try to search for some information as well."

After saying that I separated from the two.

Several minutes after I sent the letter to the Adventurer's Guild.

I realized I was being followed.

At first I thought I was being observed by Ruijerd.

Whenever I'm alone I always seem to get into some kind of problem or other.

Which is why I thought he might be on standby in the case a problem occurs?

However, these past few months, Ruijerd hasn't gone out of his way to follow from behind and just acted together with me directly.

In the first place, Ruijerd 's ability to follow is extremely superior.

There's no way I could notice it.

The one who is currently following behind me is too obvious.

There's no way it's Ruijerd.

And then, most likely, it's not Eris either.

Eris is lousy at following. It wouldn't be strange if I noticed her presence from the time we left the inn.

I can't think of a reason why they would specifically choose to follow starting from the Adventurers Guild.

Then who is it.

Someone who would have a grudge against me in this country... I don't have any ideas.

After all, we just arrived in this country yesterday.

There's a high probability something will happen with this country from here on out, but currently we have yet to trouble anyone.

Otherwise, maybe it's related to some incident that happened on the Magic Continent.

Who would go out of their way to follow us all the way from Magic Continent just for revenge?

There's no way that can be the case.

There is the possibility that there are survivors from the smuggling organization of Saint Port.

They might have come across me coincidentally and chosen this chance to try and finish me off.

Although the probability that there is no relation is also high.

The fact that I was able to notice them is proof that their tracking techniques are crude.

While turning around a street corner I stole a glance behind me.

I saw a small shadow quickly hide under cover.

It's a child.

There's the possibility some neighborhood child somehow or other decided that I was conceited and therefore a villain, then started play following me.

I won't even bother thinking for what sake.

I'm sure there are children who suddenly start up with that kind of play.

I wonder if I should hide somewhere, then when they come up and start panicking after losing me, jump out and yell "Wah!"

No, in this world there's also the halfling race that have a short height.

Negligence is forbidden.

I decided to lose them somewhere.

While thinking that I crossed over two crossroads and turned right into a bit of a small alley.

"...Hnn?"

Suddenly, I felt like something was out of place.

But, without worrying about it much, I created an earth wall.

Using my magic power a 3 meter or so wall suddenly came up out of the ground, turning the alley into a dead end.

On the other side of the wall, I heard the sound of panic and hurried movements.

And then, the sound of hitting the wall without power.

There was no sign that they were going to try to destroy the wall with Magic or Swordsmanship.

I thought it could be Eris chasing after me, but if it were her she could jump right over a wall of this size.

I wonder if after all it was a prank by some children from the neighborhood.

After being satisfied with that conclusion I started to walk away from there.

Well then, I ended up coming a bit deep into this alley in order to break away from that child.

Which way was it to the main street?

It seems like I'm a bit lost.

Well, if I can find some sort of large road then I'll quickly find my way back.

While thinking that, I walked around various twists and turns of the alley, but I wasn't able to go in the direction I wanted and kept circling around.

The main street of this town is bent and twisted.

It's a huge difference from Milishion which has roads like a Go Board.

Even I, who doesn't have the attribute of a lost child, am surely on the verge of being lost right now.

In the worst case it would be fine if I use magic and jump up onto the roof.

Come to think of it, the scene Hitogami showed me was similar to an alley like this.

"Ah!"

Then, I remembered back to that out of place feeling from a moment ago.

That wasn't feeling out of place.

It was feeling something you've experienced before, déjà vu.

I quickly returned to where I left.

I ran through the many turns of the alley.

While getting lost in the forked roads, I continued to turn around and returned to the path from just now.

"No, stop it!"

I heard a young girl's scream.

The earth wall I created entered my field of vision.

"Give it back!"

I put my hand on the earth wall and started to concentrate on my magic power.

Using earth magic I manipulated the wall and created a fissure in it while simultaneously using wind magic to launch a shock wave through the center of the wall.

[BANG] a loud sound let out and the earth wall shattered into tiny pieces all over the place.

In my field of vision that scene entered.

A single young girl was violently captured.

The ones with their hands holding her were soldiers.

There were two of them.

The one who wasn't holding the young girl was tearing up a piece of paper taken from her.

"Don't rip up the letter I was sending it to father!"

The two soldiers looked at me with dumbfounded faces.

"Wh-who in the world are you...?"

Young girl.

Traces of Lilia could be seen in her face, she wore a ponytail with the same brown hair as Paul, while wearing a small maid outfit.

That face gave off the impression of normally being lively and aloof and it was currently distorted with tears and a dripping nose.

Looking down on that, those vulgar faces...

No, the two soldiers weren't making a vulgar face.

If you were to ask which, they were making apologetic faces.

They were just doing their jobs to the end, and their intention didn't seem to be in it.

"Who are you?! Name yourself!"

"I'm that child's..."

Oh wait, I'm not supposed to name myself right.

Umm.

"My name is the Knight of the Moon's Shadow, Shadow Moon Knight!"

"What do you mean Knight, no matter how you look at it you're a magician!"

"Uguu..."

I was hit with a precise tsukkomi.

{ C-Editor's note: In modern Japanese comedy double acts, tsukkomi is the role of the smart straight man who performs opposite the idiot funny man. }

Damn it.

Next time, I'll make sure to name myself with Magician Ebiru.

Well, it's fine.

"Listen here boy. It's fine to play make believe as an ally of justice, but even if we look like this, we old men are soldiers of the Royal Palace. Since she's lost, we're just trying to take her back home."

In the end they even looked at me with eyes of a rowdy child and gently gave me a warning.

I'm sure these words have a few lies mixed in, but after looking at Aisha sobbing on the side of the knight, she was making a bit of a troubled face.

I'm sure they're not bad guys.

There might have been some problem in the Royal Palace, and even though Aisha and Lilia are being detained, it's not something that the knights consider a bad thing.

It could be that, it would be bad to create hostility with these soldiers.

I might not be supposed to fight, solving this with conversation could be better.

"Even though it seems like you're tearing up the letter she was holding?"

"Ahh~... That is, well, what. There's various things, adult things."

That's right isn't it, there are a lot of different adult things, right?

"Ah!"

Then at that moment making use of a single gap, Aisha shook off the hands of the soldier.

"Pw-pwease shave me!"

She ran straight over to me, hid behind my back, and with a crumpled face covered in tears and snot she clung onto me.

After looking at the desperation in that face, I started to feel like it didn't matter if I turned a kingdom or two into enemies.

"Th-those pweople, foshefully, my letta, and teard..."

I have no idea what she's saying, but at least the desperation is being conveyed.

I give up, I give up.

A middle aged adult like me can't do something like a young ally of justice play.

I'll go about it in my usual way.

"...Hnnn!"

I suddenly raised my hand up and used voiceless incantations to send a rock bullet flying.

"Ah!"

The knight noticed the sudden rock bullet, unsheathed his blade in an instant and deflected it.

Uooh, their reaction was good!

Water God style, huh.

That's hard to deal with.

But, well, it's not like rock bullet is the only thing I can use.

With this much distance there's plenty of margin for error.

Fufu, avoiding my rock bullet, that makes you the 4th one you know.

"Voiceless incantations!?"

"Then this guy, could it be Roxy-dono's!?"

"He really came!"

"Call for reinforcements!"

"Under, uooh!"

I created a pit fall at the foot of the knight who was about to run off.

Rejection shot.

Simultaneously I fired off rock bullets in succession at the other knight to keep him in check, while asking Aisha a question.

"We're going to run, are you alright?"

"Hick...hiku, yeah...!"

Aisha nodded while continuing to sob.

Alright, alright.

After this we just need to knock out one more and then break away.

Just at the time I thought that.

[Whistle~?!]

Suddenly I heard a high pitched sound ring out like a birds cry.

The sound came out from the center of a hole.

It's a whistle.

They let out an alarm.

And then, from a bit of a distance away as well as nearby alleys I could hear the same sound of a whistle blowing.

[Whistle][Whistle][Whistle]!!

Each of the whistling methods and sounds were slightly different.

Most likely, they're letting each other know their position so they can meet using the sound.

After checking to see that my hand that was launching rock bullets had stopped, the soldier opened his mouth wide.

"All of the paths around this area have been sealed off! Soon soldiers will come here as well. Stop with the pointless resistance, hand over that girl! We won't treat you badly!"

"..."

This is bad.

He's called for allies.

Most likely, knights and soldiers will quickly be flooding into here.

But, I still have one hand left.

"Aisha, please hold onto me tightly!"

"Eh!!?"

"No matter what you must not let go!"

While Aisha was bewildered, she put her hands around my waist and tightly held onto me.

I grabbed her clothes with my left hand, and with my right hand started gathering magic power.

I released an earth spear [Earth Lance] centered at the flat point below my feet.

Using that momentum I flew into the air like a human bullet.

"Wha-what?!?"

"Kyaaa!"

With the soldiers' voices of confusion and Aisha's scream, I magnificently escaped from that place.

Wa ha ha, see you later foolish fellows!

Incidentally, since I was getting ahead of myself, I flew too high, and I ended up breaking both of my legs with a solid crack on the landing.

This type of dangerous magic is no good unless you practice it on a daily basis.

After using magic to escape like a catapult, Aisha cried for a short while.

Moaning and crying while her teeth were chattering and she was trembling, she even wet herself.

I understand her feelings.

If I were to be caught in the arms of a scary man and threatened, I might not go to the point of wetting myself, but my legs would be trembling as well.

At least up until leaking.

Though, those two knights, if you were to ask which side they were on, it would be more gentleman-like, but I guess the stimulus would be a bit too strong for a 5-6 year old child.

The differences in age start to become obvious from the time when you're small.

For example, for elementary and middle school students, high school students appear to be adults, if high school students are gathered together along on the side of a road, even if they aren't dressed like punks, they'll be unusually scared of them.

Even more so if it's two soldiers.

I am sure it was rather frightening.

I absolutely don't want to think that it was because she heard the sound of both of my legs snapping as they broke when we landed nearby.

I quickly fixed them using healing, but that certainly hurt.

I pretended not to notice the fact that she wet herself and swiftly moved to get her panties washed.

The place was our inn.

By the time I returned, neither Eris nor Ruijerd were around.

Since they said they were going out to gather information, they'll most likely return around night.

Well then, here I've once again experienced something mysterious.

Just now, Aisha took off her small, baggy maid outfit, tore off the wet panties she was wearing, wiped down her body, and then put the shirt I normally wear on.

In my hands is a wooden bucket and soap for the purpose of laundry, as well as a primary schoolgirl panties.

If it was the me from my past life, in this situation with these items, I would probably fall into an aroused state.

I'd like you to think about it and see.

On the nearby bed is a little girl who after being stripped once is now wearing my baggy clothes after she just wet herself and is currently crying.

Obviously with no panties.

If it's a gentleman, then anyone who falls into such a situation would normally be excited.

It's not like I can put Eris' panties on her.

Her panties are No Touch.

That's one of the important rules of this "Dead End".

No matter how much of an emergency situation it is, how could I possibly dig through her belongings when she's not around and pull some panties out...

Just thinking about it is frightening.

If I were to break the rules Ruijerd won't come to save me and if I use demon eyes to run away Eris will be displeased for around three days.

Even though I say that, if I get hit defenselessly then my face will change enough that I won't be able to taste meals for around three days.

Well, I could use healing magic to fix it.

In any case, it's a situation where it wouldn't be strange for the wild beast of my heart to be howling.

However, even in that situation, my heart is currently as calm and silent as the surface of a lake

Putting aside arousal, there's not even a single wave.

Clear and serene.

It's a strange thing.

In regards to the sobbing Aisha I felt "She's a troubled child" while embracing her, yet I can't remember any sexual arousal beyond that.

I wonder if I became a Sage while I wasn't paying attention.

Or else, maybe I touched upon Eris' imperial wrath without realizing it, and my Pocket Monster was made incompetent for battle.

{ C-Editor's note: Incompetent for battle meaning erectile dysfunction. }

Maybe in order to forget the overwhelming fear of that time, I placed a seal on the memories.

No, never!

That can't be the case, are you alright, My Son?

And while I was thinking like that, the laundry ended in a flash.

The linen panties with no sex appeal and the small maid outfit that appears to be made of relatively high class material.

I handed those over to Aisha who at some point had stopped crying, and she cheerfully started changing her clothes.

I carefully stared at that.

After all I'm not getting aroused.

I wonder if this body won't get aroused by family.

Even though my previous life it was men and women of all ages without discrimination...

The thing known as life is mysterious.

"I am called Aisha Greyrat! Thank you very much!"

Aisha carefully lowered her head while wearing the baggy maid outfit.

In rhythm with that her ponytail shook along with it.

After all ponytails are nice.

Eris occasionally wears a ponytail as well, but her ponytail gives off the feeling of a track and field club girl.

That alone is pretty good by itself, but Aisha's is yet another slightly different charm.

Aisha is terribly lovely, like a doll.

Since her eyes are currently bloodshot so it's kind of like a cursed doll though.

After she raises her face, she took a step closer.

Close.

"If I hadn't been saved by Knight-sama, I was about to be forcefully taken back!"

After hearing the words Knight-sama, I remembered that I named myself "Knight of the Moon's Shadow, Shadow Moon Knight" in front of her.

A line of cold sweat went down my back.

After the conversation with Eris earlier, I might have gone a bit overboard.

At this age I won't roll around after my back itches a bit but...

Around 10 years later this kind of thing will definitely end up as the content of a joke intended to tease.

After thinking that, I regret it a bit.

"Truly, thank you very much."

Aisha bowed deeply for a second time.

How old was she now again, 6 years old I guess?

Even though she's still young, she's a child who knows manners well.

"On top of saving me, I'd like to make a shameless request of you!"

"Ou."

Shameless, she sure knows some difficult words.

According to Paul's story she received special education from Lilia and she's quite clever.

"Please give me the tools needed to write a letter! Also, please tell me the location of the Adventurer's Guild! I'm counting on you!"

After saying that, she lowered her head.

When asking people for things she uses 'please', she's done well.

Yeah, she's a good child.

However, a little bit thoughtless.

"Are just those two fine? Do you have money?"

"...I don't have any money!"

"Weren't you taught by your mother that both the tools to write a letter and sending the letter required money?"

It's important to teach the importance of money from a young age.

I thought Lilia wouldn't have made a mistake in that area, but I'm sure there are things that aren't understood even if they are taught and there are things that can't be taught.

"Mother taught me that if a child like me asks with upturned eyes "I want to send a letter to father", then even without money it will work out."

Oh my, oh no, Lilia-san you mischievous one.

What are you teaching your own daughter?

The method to use her weapons as a woman?

After thinking that, this way of speaking and her gestures start to look like acting as well.

No really, what have you been teaching her.

"We've always been trying to get into contact with father, but the people of the castle say it's not allowed and won't let us send a letter!"

I heard that Lilia was being detained.

It seems they won't let her send a letter as well.

I wonder if it could be that she's being treated badly.

Since Hitogami used such words as "save her", after all.

This could be an NTR development that Paul won't find amusing.

"Aren't there any other reliable people than your father?"

"There aren't!"

"For example, that's right, a blue haired older sister... Or for example an older brother who might be somewhere?"

After casually mentioning that Aisha raised her eyebrows.

It was an unpleasant face.

Why?

"I have an older brother, but..."

"You have one but?"

"He isn't reliable."

Why not!

Just now didn't he magnificently save you!

"Is-is it okay if I hear the reason?"

"Reason! That's fine! My mother has told me about my brother in detail."

"Oh."

"However, all of it was unbelievable stuff! For example using intermediate level magic at three years old, or becoming a Saint Class magician at five. And to top it all off, becoming the home teacher of a Lord's daughter at seven? It's not impossible, but it's all unbelievable! It's definitely a lie!"

You can't believe it, huh.

I see.

I guess that would be the case.

"However, if you actually meet him, he could be a good older brother?"

"He's definitely not!"

"Wh-Why?"

"In our house we had this small box my mother treated as important. She would always say not to touch it or not to look inside of it for some reason. Somehow, it seems that it contained something precious to my older brother."

...Small box?

Well now, come to think of it I vaguely remember hearing something like that from Paul as well.

"During the time when my mother wasn't around, I secretly opened it and looked inside. And then what do you think was inside of it!?"

"We-well, I wonder what."

"It was panties. Panties belonging to a woman. Also, going off the size they were considerably small. Based on my calculations, they should have been panties belonging to a child around the age of 14. There was none. A person around that age, there was none in that house. I did consider the possibility that my older brother was a sister, but it's a bit much. There was only one person who I could link it to. My older brother's home teacher, a person named Roxy. When my older brother was four or five years old he treated a clearly older lady's panties as a religious object."

Calculations you say.

Wa-wait this child, isn't she just a bit too clever?

Eh? She's still five or six years old right?

How do I put it, from this kind of small child, I'm feeling this amazing gap, huh?

"However, there's the possibility it might be a misunderstanding right?"

"No, I casually managed to get the details out of my mother. My brother would do whatever he pleased like peeking on that lady Roxy when she was bathing or peek in on my father and mother when they were making love. It seemed like my mother was trying to keep it hidden, but there's no mistake. My older brother is without a doubt a hentai!"

{ C-Editor's note: Hentai is japanese for pervert. }

A hentai!

A hentai!

A hentai!

Without a doubt a hentai!

And adding it on once more, a hentai!

Please stop it already, Rudeus' mental HP is already zero!

"I-I see, your older brother is a hentai, huh, that is troubling, hahaha..."

Even though they say you get what you deserve, how could this be...

How could it be, this... Shit.

I see now.

It's this sort of thing.

That's why Hitogami told me not to name myself.

Just now, I've understood it in my heart.

As expected of Hitogami-san..

"By the way, Knight-san, what's your real name?"

"It's a secret. Though I'm often called [The Owner of Dead End] in public."

I replied with a stiff face.

It seems like it would be better to wait until a bit after to tell her that I'm her older brother.

I'll be treated as a pervert after all.

"Oh... The Owner-san is it. That's cool! After all can you use things like summoning techniques?"

"No, I just have two vicious dogs on a leash."

"Is that so, that's amazing!"

Aisha was looking at me with her eyes sparkling.

Like a puppy.

Moreover a deceived puppy.

Ah, my heart hurts a bit.

However, for the time being, the result is all right.

If I were to reveal myself as her older brother here, Aisha might not listen to what I say.

However, if it's at this rate, it seems she'll honestly listen to what The Owner says.

We'll go while hiding my identity, and coolly save Lilia.

If I do that, then Aisha will look at The Owner with eyes of respect.

And then, after when she comes to realize I'm her older brother, her impression will rise through the roof.

"Alright. Then I'll save your mother."

"Eh?"

After declaring that, Aisha looked at me with a flabbergasted expression.

"B-but."

"Please leave it to me."

Just like this I met with Aisha.

Even though she has an awful impression of me, it's not as bad as Norn who saw her father being beaten up in front of her eyes.

Even though I was called a pervert for having Roxy's panties, so what, one day she will come to understand.

That people all have a time when they need to believe in something.

However, to have the recognition to realize panties=pervert at this age, huh.

It's not an age where she should be able to link together sexual desire and underwear, in the first place it's questionable whether she should even understand sexual desire...

I wonder if someone taught her these things.

It would be no good if I didn't grant a severe punishment to the guy who taught my little sister strange things.

"By the way, The Owner-san."

"What is it?"

"Why did you know my name!?"

After that, my desperate explanation started, but I'll leave that out.

After that, I talked to Aisha for a short while.

We talked about the last two years.

I listened to the story of these past two years from Aisha.

It was a bit lacking in linguistic ability and an insufficient explanation, but I was able to grasp the outline.

Somehow, it seems that they were teleported into the Royal Palace of this country.

Naturally, they were captured as intruders, but as a result of Lilia telling them all sorts of things, they ended up being held in the Royal Palace on house arrest.

In regards to that front and back relation, Aisha didn't seem to understand it, but it seems there was some kind of reason they wouldn't let her send a letter.

It seems that nothing cruel was done to Lilia as well.

I guess that would mean that her body was not their aim.

Although, it could just be that Aisha doesn't know, and it's possible every night something is done to her.

Although Lilia is at a good age (She was older than Paul so in her mid 30s), it's not like she has a beauty that would make those living in the Royal Palace go out of their way after detaining her.

It doesn't change the fact that they were considered suspicious individuals, so I guess it would just be detainment?

In regards to that there are some slightly strange parts.

It's been two and a half years since the teleport.

I wonder if they would really be detained for that long without clearing up the misunderstanding.

There could be some kind of circumstances involved that I don't know about.

Come to think of it, Roxy's name never came out.

I wonder if she didn't go to save Lilia.

...No, it's possible that asking her to save them might have caused them to fall into this current situation.

In any case, I'm currently waiting for a reply from Roxy.

After listening to circumstances from her, like a puzzle piece falling into place, all of the doubts should be solved.

Incidentally, in regards to that situation Aisha wanted to send a letter to Paul asking for help.

However she got lost on the way, and she thought if she followed after someone wearing Adventurer-like clothes, she would be able to reach the guild.

That happened to coincidentally be me.

Coincidences are scary.

Well, I'm sure it went as Hitogami planned.

Aisha wanted to hear about me.

"Ohh, The Owner-san came here on a journey from the Magic Continent."

"Yeah, after getting involved with the Fedoa region teleport incident."

"What were you doing before that?"

"A home teacher. I was teaching a noble's daughter magic."

"I see, where were you teaching?"

"In Roa."

"Oh, then it would be the same as my older brother! It could be that you passed by each other in the town right!"

"Th-that's right, I guess that possibility does exist on a minuscule level..."

I can't think that her way of speaking is suitable for her age.

It could be that she is trying to act like an adult.

In any case, it seems that Aisha learned a variety of things from Lilia.

Common sense, manner etiquette, wisdom that would be useful in life, essential points of being a maid, etc.

Even I find it mysterious if she can understand everything at this young age, but at the very least she was able to explain it to a degree that I could understand.

She's clever, this child. Seriously.

She's had the power to absorb everything taught to her like a sponge from the time she was small.

I wonder what she will be like in the future.

I wonder if I'll be able to maintain my dignity as an older brother.

"If you're speaking about a noble young lady, then there might be a similar contact point with my older brother's employer, have you heard anything?"

"N-No, I was limited in information, things about such a person are..."

"Is that so. I wanted to hear about the impression of my older brother from The Owner-san."

"Umm, I've only heard rumors that the young lady of the lord was so violent she was out of everyone's hands."

Here the feeling to leak information about myself sprouted, but I strongly endure it.

It's going to be exposed after anyways.

If at the time she finds out it was a self-created story, her impression of me will drop after all.

After that, since I told her all sorts of things about the Magic Continent, we talked in detail.

For a child of this age, I thought talking about anything would be fine, but strangely she didn't get attached to the topics.

It might be because Aisha's conversation ability is high.

While thinking that, I genuinely enjoyed talking with my little sister on our mostly first meeting.

After a while, Aisha got tired and fell asleep.

Eris and Ruijerd returned after the sun had set.

After asking the two who seemed to have slightly tired expressions, it seems they went all the way to the slums to gather information, and got into a number of fights.

Another fight it seems.

The unapologetic duo.

Well, it's the same as always. I won't bother asking in detail.

Everyone makes mistakes, I do too, if something happens it's fine if we help each other.

I talked about how I met Aisha in the town and how Lilia is being held captive in the castle.

It seems a variety of things are suspicious.

Also, along with that I told them about the fact that I'm hiding my name.

I paid special care to the fact that they don't let Aisha find out that my identity is Rudeus.

"Why are you doing something so roundabout?"

"It appears that, she has learned some mistaken knowledge about her older brother, so I want to show her my cool parts in order to correct that recognition."

"Hnnn, I already think you're cool just as you are though?"

"Eris..."

After hearing her say something that made me happy, a "Good man" smile rose to the surface.

And then Eris suddenly took a step backwards.

"Uuuu... Why do you make that creepy face when I praise you!?"

It seems my triumphant face looks creepy.

It's a bit of a shock.

Someone please give me a new face.

"However, since that's the case it's an attack from now on right!"

"It's been a while since I last attacked a castle..."

Eris brought that up full of eagerness.

Even Ruijerd raised his spear.

I stopped the two in a panic.

"No, for the time being let's wait for a reply from Roxy."

After saying that, Eris made an extremely bored face.

As always she seems to like acting violently.

Rather than difficult thinking, attacking the castle and carrying off Lilia is certainly a simpler method, but if we were to cause trouble for Roxy then I wouldn't be able to face her.

First off we need to attentively confirm the situation.

It's absolutely not because of a reason like wanting to meet with Roxy.

While I was thinking about that, the day ended.

The next day.

It was almost noon.

Soldiers came to the inn.

Soldiers wearing the same outfit as the ones trying to capture Aisha yesterday.

Just in case I left Aisha in the room and interacted with them in the lobby of the inn.

I left Eris and Ruijerd in the room just in case.

"Are you Rudeus-dono?"

"Yes."

"I am the imperial guard attached to the seventh prince of Shirone, Ginger. Pleased to meet you."

"Thank you for the polite introduction. I'm Rudeus Greyrat."

There was one soldier and it was a woman.

After seeing my face her complexion didn't change a bit, and she gave a knight styled greeting and bow.

I responded as well using a noble style greeting.

I don't actually know how I should reply to such greetings, but anyways it's fine as long as the sincerity is conveyed.

"Roxy-dono is calling for you, would you please accompany me to the Royal Palace?"

In regards to me who is a child no matter how you look at it, she's considerably courteous in manner.

It wasn't like she was specifically hiding her face, but it seems like her mask wasn't split.

However, a prince's imperial guard, huh.

Why an imperial guard is what I was thinking, but I did know that Roxy was serving as a home teacher for the prince.

Then, it's not all that strange.

"..."

After being asked to accompany her, I hesitated.

I wonder what I should do with Aisha.

If I were to bring Aisha along then the fact that I attacked a knight would probably be exposed.

After all, the fact that I sent a rock bullet flying could have been a mistake.

...Alright, here we'll have Aisha look after the house.

If I have Roxy become a buffer and just talk with them then properly apologize, it should be fine.

After I decided that, I told them to absolutely not let Aisha leave the room, and left Eris and Ruijerd as her guards.

And then, a grooming check for the sake of meeting Roxy.

Making sure my hair isn't messy and my clothes are fine as the usual robe.

Ah, that's right, pastries or such are essential as well.

I wonder what would be fine to bring when meeting my shisho for the first time in a while in this world.

And there I found the unpopular first edition Ruijerd doll in the bottom of my tool bag.

Come to think of it, in a letter Roxy once mentioned the Roxy doll, had reached where she was.

If I show her this doll and say "Actually it was my work" then it might be amusing.

"Considerably careful aren't you."

"It's the first time I've met my shisho in a while after all."

"...You're going to properly introduce us right?"

"Yeah, of course."

While having that exchange with Eris, I completed preparations.

"Are you going to be alright alone?"

Ruijerd said that in a somewhat worried voice.

Problems always seem to occur when I'm alone after all.

I understand his worried feelings.

"There's no problem. If anything happens I'll fly and run away."

With a zoom~

"The Owner-san..."

"It's alright. Please leave everything to me."

I patted and caressed Aisha's head as she was making a worried face, she tightly shut her mouth and nodded.

Alright, good girl.

Led by the soldier Ginger, I was walking down the road towards the Royal Palace.

The two of us were walking with a bit of a quick pace down a small corner of the main street that carriages pass back and forth.

The main road is twisted and bent, occasionally to the extent that the pathway is too small for carriages to pass by.

I wonder if it's a counter-measure for when enemy nations are attacking.

In the Japan of my past life I've heard that the town in the region of Mino is twisted like this.

"..."

Ginger is a silent person and she doesn't talk about a single unnecessary thing.

Just, if I ask, she always opens her mouth to answer, and her manner is always polite.

"Alright, next is this guy! This guy is an ex-Washawa Country Knight! He's a slave for battle purposes! He's a bit impudent, but he's quite skilled! Starting from 3 gold coins!"

Suddenly I heard that powerful voice so I took a look in that direction.

In a location just off the main road there was a slave market.

On top of an especially high stand, almost like a balcony, there were slaves lined up.

Three human races and one beast race with ears like a rabbit.

Two men and two women.

Both the men and the women's upper body were nude, even from a distance I could see their shining skin.

In order to make the display better, they may have been covered in oil.

I wonder if that beast race was brought up from the Great Forest.

Even though I don't have the leeway or obligation to save her, it causes me to drop my eyebrows a bit.

While my eyebrows were coming a bit closer to my face, after seeing her chest my nether regions were reacting a bit.

I thought it was mysterious that I wasn't reacting to Aisha, but after all it seems I still have plenty of energy.

I could hear the merchant on the side of the slaves explain all sorts of things.

I couldn't follow the contents, but I'm sure it was the slaves' birthplace and abilities sales points.

After a little while, I heard the voice of the audience begin to rise.

It must be an auction system.

If Lilia and Aisha as well were unlucky, they might have been lined up over there.

After thinking that, I can't really say this current situation is all that bad.

...No, in the end, since I don't know what kind of situation Lilia is in right now, I can't really say anything.

After suddenly taking a look, Ginger was raising her eyebrows after seeing the slave market.

She is one of the ones who protect the public order in this country.

It must bother her for them to do that kind of thing out in the open.

"I thought slave markets would happen deeper in the city."

I let such words flow out.

I thought this was one such topic as well.

In other towns the slave markets are always deep in the back areas.

It doesn't seem like slaves are an especially bad thing in this world, but this is the first time I've seen it going on right off the main road.

"That's right, things like that are usually done deeper in the back."

I thought she might say something loathsome, but she responded with a flat tone.

"Is there some kind of event going on today?"

"No. The other day, it seems like there was a fight between adventurers in the place the slave market was originally. And then the market became unusable, so they decided to let them temporarily use this area as the slave market."

A fight...

A fight, huh.

A fight in the slave market.

A fight caused by Eris and Ruijierd.

I have no option but to feel like there's a link between them.

I'm getting nothing but bad premonitions now.

While thinking that I looked towards the slave market, then,

"Please."

Ginger grabbed onto my sides and raised me up so I could see well.

"Ah, thank you."

She's an easy person to get along with.

Her face was ordinary, and she absolutely doesn't give off the feeling of a beauty, but she notices the small details, I'm sure she'll find a good husband.

"Roxy-dono as well, when there were crowds of people she would start jumping up and down to see."

"I see."

"Yes, but when I would lift her up like this she would always make a complex face."

That scene floated into my eyes.

Roxy jumping up and down because she can't see well.

Then a soldier who lifts her up out of good intention.

Then the discouraged Roxy who asks to be let down.

"Were you able to lift Roxy-sensei up?"

"Yes, she quickly got angry and asked me to let her down though."

Of course, huh.

"Where did you hold onto?"

"Even if you ask where, just like now."

I am currently being held from just around my armpits as I'm raised up.

"What kind of feeling was it?"

"That's why I said, she made a complex face and quickly asked to be let down."

What I want to hear is about the sensation around Roxy's armpits though...

Well, it's fine.

"Please let me down."

From what I could roughly see, there wasn't anything especially interesting.

It's just the slaves who are about to be sold inside of a prison.

Since that's the case I had her put me down and we started walking towards the Royal Palace.

Suddenly I thought of it, but normally wouldn't you take a carriage to welcome someone into the Royal Palace.

Well, it's fine.

"What kind of things was Roxy-sensei doing in the Royal Palace?"

Having found a common topic, I asked Ginger.

"Normally she was teaching the prince, but during the times she was bored she would participate in the exercises with us soldiers."

Come to think of it, in the letter I received from Roxy while I was in Roa, I have a feeling something like that was written.

"If I remember correctly, it was exercises to prepare for fights with magicians, that sort of talk?"

According to the letter it was Roxy releasing magic in the middle of a melee and they were trying to ward it off, that kind of training.

If they can suddenly react to magic fired off and manage to deflect it, then it wouldn't be difficult for that to become the difference between life and death on the battlefield.

"That's correct. We're all Water God style intermediate level swordsmen, but thanks to Roxy-dono we were able to learn to deflect magic cast in an instant."

I see now, that's why the knight yesterday was able to deflect my rock bullet.

It was a bit of a shock for a common knight to deflect that, but if it's the result of Roxy's teachings I can accept it.

After that, I talked to Ginger for a short while about Roxy.

Things such as during magic training, Roxy accidentally scorched a tree and she went pale, all the soldiers were proud or during dinner when bell peppers suddenly came out she suddenly went pale, but still ate them pretending like nothing was wrong.

"I've heard stories about Rudeus-dono as well."

"Oh. Wh-what did she say?"

"A genius who can use magic with voiceless incantations at a young age."

"Sensei said such a thing?"

"Roxy-dono was often bragging about you. That child is not an existence which I really deserved to have taught."

"Dehehe, that's saying too much."

During that conversation we arrived at the castle.

It's a considerably large castle, but it's not as large as Kishirisu Castle of Rikarisu or the White Palace of Milishion.

It's about the same size as Eris' home.

In other words, this country would be about the same as a remote territory of Asura.

As expected, Asura Kingdom is amazing.

"..."

"Keep up the good work!"

Ginger lightly nodded to the guards and the guards stood themselves upright.

Come to think of it, she said she was an imperial guard?

I wonder if she's important.

"This way please."

Just as I was about to keep going straight ahead, Ginger suddenly turned to the side.

Turning around the castle, we came in through something like the back door.

"Please forgive me. Soldiers are forbidden from entering through the front gate."

"I see."

In the back entrance there was something like a soldier's station.

In a corner of the room there were two head desks lined up, and several soldiers were sitting down playing something like cards.

After they saw Ginger they quickly stood up and maintained an upright fixed posture.

"..."

"Keep up the good work!"

Ginger made a single nod again and went further into the room.

I continued to follow along with her while giving them a side glance.

"Ginger-san is an important person it seems."

"Among the soldiers I'm #12."

#12, it's hard to determine if that's high or low...

In this country there are probably some hundreds of soldiers, after thinking that, it's probably a relatively high position.

Most likely not low.

"This way please."

Ginger continued moving further inside.

Her manner of walking felt like it got a bit more cautious.

In regards to the people we would occasionally pass she would stop her feet and use a knight style greeting.

I followed suit with a noble style greeting.

I wouldn't stand for it if they were to say Roxy's disciple wasn't taught properly after all.

The noble like people either returned a greeting, or completely ignored and continued to pass by us.

It's largely different from Eris' home.

Fundamentally, there were no greetings in the corridors there.

I wonder if Roxy felt like it was hard to breathe working in a place like this.

After getting used to these greetings, I wondered if it wouldn't bother her.

Each floor had stairs in roughly three places.

The construction is similar to Eris' home.

I'm sure there's some sort of scheme to prevent it from being invaded all at once.

However, there's no doubt it's inconvenient for normal life.

Ginger stopped at the end of a corridor.

I wonder if this is Roxy's room.

It's a considerably quiet place.

However, you could say it seems like Roxy.

Ginger came to a halt.

Suddenly she looked at my appearance and held out her hand.

"I'll hold onto your staff and belongings."

"Ah, yes."

She even goes to the point of acting as a door boy, how kind.

After receiving my belongings Ginger knocked on the door.

"It's Ginger. I've brought Rudeus-dono."

"Enter."

The voice that replied was a man.

(Hn?)

While some questions were rising to mind, Ginger quickly opened the door, and led me into the room.

Just as lead, I went into the room.

"Oh... This is Rudeus, huh."

"Mogo!!?"

There a man was sitting, looking arrogantly.

He was a man like a small barrel.

On both of his sides were two maids.

The man was sitting awfully arrogantly, but his height was equally small.

It wasn't just his height, but his limbs were short as well.

It felt like he was pieced together out of a halfling and a dwarf.

However, only his face was huge, it was like one belonging to an adult human race male.

That face as well, if I were to word it based on the first impression it would be, unsightly.

It was a type of face that brought a feeling of familiarity to me.

After looking to the side, I don't recognize Maid A.

She seemed to be in the latter half of her 20s, her chest size was normal, no muscles. A normal female.

Maid B had a face that was the spitting image of Lilia.

Rather, it was Lilia.

It looks like she has aged a bit after five years, but it seems like her skin has a variety of bends in it piled on top, since she got involved in that teleport incident, it can't really be helped.

And then she was sitting in a chair.

The chair itself was wrapped in rope and she had a gag in her mouth.

I don't see Roxy's appearance anywhere.

"What does this mean?"

Even while in the midst of chaos I calmed down and thought to listen.

I thought Roxy should have been here.

Ah, I see. It was a trap.

"Drop him."

I opened my demon eye at the same time as the man's words.

One second in the future I was falling downwards.

I fell.

Before realizing it, I was in the middle of a magic circle.

Just as he signaled the floor below my feet was pulled down, I fell into something like a pitfall.

It took a few seconds to realize that.

It's a small room.

About 6 tatami mats or so.

A magic circle was drawn on the ground and it was dimly giving off some light.

However, I quickly created some earth magic.

I was going to raise my body up like an elevator.

"...What?"

However, the magic wouldn't invoke.

Once again I tried with a bit more magic power to create an earth pillar at my feet.

Strange.

I'm sure the magic power is certainly coming out, but the earth pillar isn't invoking.

No, it isn't strange.

This magic circle surrounding me.

It's because of this thing.

I'm inside of some kind of barrier.

"A... barrier."

I stretched my arms out to look around the edge of the magic circle and I touched something like a wall.

I tried hitting to check, but it won't shake a bit.

"Gyahahahaha! It's pointless! It's pointless! That magic circle is a barrier created in order to capture Roxy! Someone like you won't be able to do a thing!"

The circular man from just now came down the stairs.

And then, he stopped in front of me and made a broad grin with a repulsive smile, a feeling like he was elated with his victory.

"You are?"

"My name is Pax. It's Pax Shirone!"

Pax.

Ah, the seventh prince, huh.

In any case, this man.

I wonder why in the world he was planning on making this anti-magic barrier to capture Roxy.

No, in the letter it was written that he resembled me.

I'm a gentleman-like man.

Then, without a doubt he will be conducting himself like a gentleman.

Shit. What kind of gentleman-like treatment did this guy have planned?

"Kukuku, that's a good face. Rudeus Greyrat."

After seeing my mortified face the man laughed and smirked.

I put on a poker face and took some deep breaths.

Calm down.

This is the type of situation in which one needs to be calm.

"So I fell into a trap, huh. I understand. I'll officially apologize for attacking the soldiers yesterday. Before that, first off please call Roxy. I'm her former student, she will be able to prove my identity. After that, I'll call a lawyer, and the official trial will be after-"

"Roxy isn't here."

Roxy isn't here.

"What...did you say..."

Those words delivered enough of an impact to surprise even me.

Roxy isn't here.

In other words, it means the Absence of God.

Is there no God?

No, that cannot be the case.

That great mathematician, didn't he just say that our God doesn't exist.

The one who received the life of Ekacherina the 2nd, isn't she a splendid proof of the existence of God.

{ C-Editor's note: Rudeus is referring to mathematician Leonhard Euler and Russian Empress Catherine the Great. }

God exists.

I as well, my body itself is proof of the existence of God.

"No, God exists."

"...What? God?"

Pax made a blank face.

That's right.

God exists.

Without a doubt.

If you are to say she doesn't, then it's a crusade.

I don't know what this stuff is about the Milis Church, but anyone who wants to die feel free to come out.

I'll be the opponent of anyone who thinks they might win.

"Hnn, praying to god, huh. That's the correct option. Since there's no chance of you being saved in this situation."

"That seems to be so."

Well then, now that I've calmed down a bit it's about time to end with the jokes.

"And then, going off your statement from just now I can take it that Roxy is no longer in this country, correct?"

"That's right! You're bait in order to lure Roxy here!"

"If I'm going to be eaten in a single bite by Roxy then that is a definitely something to look forward to..."

While looking for a suitable response I was thinking.

In other words, it's that.

Roxy isn't in this country.

This person is trying to capture Roxy.

Why?

Is Roxy guilty of doing something and then escaping?

While I was thinking, Pax declared with his next words.

"I was surprised after seeing the letter. I couldn't have imagined that Roxy's lover would come to this country!"

"Eh!! Roxy has a lover!!?"

Seriously!

Since when. Even though there was nothing written about that in the letters...

"Mu? You aren't?"

Ah, he's mistaken me for Roxy's lover.

"Absolutely not! Such an amazing thing! I am but an unworthy disciple who cannot match up to her in any way!"

I strongly shook my head.

In reality I'm quite happy.

All excited like some kind of reindeer-like rare animal.

I'm excited like the person inside of the Metal Monster.

However, endure it.

"Hnn, even if you're not her lover, if it's her disciple then Roxy will come."

"I wonder if she will come."

"She will come. Lilia was weak as bait, but if it's you who she praised that much, Roxy will come! And then, the time when she comes will be Roxy's end as a woman. I'll keep her forever as my sex slave. I'll have her give birth to five of my heirs."

Speaking of sex slaves.

Getting excited over her displeasure.

Heir? Aren't you the seventh prince, do you have any political power?

However.

I still have on question.

"Umm. Is it fine to ask one question?"

"What is it, ah, that's right. The first time I'll rape her in front of your eyes! And then, I'll go for the second time as Roxy's eyes are stained in despair as your head is lopped off!"

His delusions are considerably strong.

"Until I came here, I never heard any information about Lilia... How do you plan to let Roxy realize that I'm being held captive?"

Pax suddenly stopped.

"Hnn, if it's the superior Roxy, then she'll hear about it from somewhere and come!"

I see now, Roxy is superior after all.

She might be able to find information that I wasn't able to find.

However, the probability of that is most likely low.

"Umm, couldn't you at least leak some information for example, wouldn't doing something like that be better?"

It's not like I want Roxy to be raped.

I don't, but if he would have at least done that much, Paul might have possibly caught onto Lilia a bit sooner.

That's what I was thinking.

"Hnn, I won't fall for that trick! You all have the protection of high class nobles of Asura right! If they were to know that Lilia or you are captured, Boreas or something might turn into our enemy right?"

"Turn into... I wonder...?"

Hnnn?

Something is strange.

Well, if they were to know I was captured, old man Sauros might come to save me...

However, how is Lilia related to that?

"Lilia as well tried to send letters a number of times after all! Like I would let someone come to save you!"

I wonder why he thinks someone will come to save her without letting her send a letter asking for help.

Ah, I see.

This guy is an idiot.

"No, if you don't let the information leak, and don't let her ask for help, I don't think anyone will come."

"Hnn! Didn't you actually nonchalantly come strolling in just now!"

Certainly!

No, no, that reasoning is strange.

"In the first place, wouldn't it have been fine to send the information directly to Roxy!"

"Did you send it to her?"

"We've been looking for her for two years, but we can't find her! However, we'll find her someday! That woman stands out after all!"

I don't think you'll specifically be able to find her because she stands out...

This is strange, I had a feeling that she wrote saying he was excellent like me...

Or else, could it be, that Roxy's impression of me is something like this?

If that's the case then I'll get depressed.

"Hnhnn, it seems like you've given up. I don't know what it is about the voiceless incantations, but it just means that you can't win against my authority."

Hnn, I absolutely won't lose to something like authority you know. Kii!!

"Yeah, those are good eyes. They give me chills. Will you make those eyes until the end? Yeah, that's something to look forward to indeed. I wonder if Roxy would hurry and come..."

While saying that Pax went back up the stairs.

There's no way she could come...

—

"Hey, who said you could take off Lilia's gag?"

"Please forgive my rudeness, I thought you should let her say something."

"Don't do unnecessary things!"

"Please, your highness, I'll do anything, so please just Rudeus-sama...!"

"Shut up, I'm not interested in middle-aged women!"

"Ahhh!!"

—

After hearing those kinds of voices from upstairs I heard a loud and dry noise echo.

Since the ceiling is still opened, I can almost hear it all.

—

"In any case, you still haven't found Aisha yet!"

"We're still currently searching, your highness!"

"Ku, what were the characteristics of the guy who carried her off!?"

—

I could hear Pax's irritated voice.

It seems they're talking about yesterday.

However, well, I'm in trouble.

I wasn't hiding my face, so it should be exposed pretty quickly.

The location of the inn was written on the letter as well...

Ruijerd and Eris are in the inn though.

If it's Ruijerd, if it's Ruijerd then somehow he'll lend me a hand.

There's also Eris who is an authority on Offense there.

—

"According to the report, it was a muscle bound, brawny gigantic man named Shadow Moon Knight. Supposedly he was a pervert that let out a loud laugh as he jumped along the rooftops."

"Why haven't you caught someone who stands out like that? Shit, every single one of you is so useless!"

"Ha, I'm very sorry."

—

Hey!

Soldier, soldier-san, report properly!

No, but if I think about it realistically, it could have been done out of good intention.

They could have tried to let Aisha get away out of good intention.

He did seem like a good person after all.

Good job, Soldier.

—

"But, we've already received a report that the letter was torn up."

"You can write a letter any number of times!"

"Even if you left it alone, upper class nobles wouldn't move for a letter from a child?"

"No way, no way! Search, or do you not care what happens to your family!"

"...Ku!! I'll send out a search team immediately."

—

I hear the sound of running about.

It seems Ginger has had her family taken hostage.

—

"Hnn, throw Lilia into the usual place!"

"Yes!!"

"Rudeus-sama! I'll absolutely come to save you!"

"Shut up! There's no way you could manage that!"

"Ahhh!!"

"Hnn, you know Roxy as well don't you. I'll slit his throat in front of that cheeky little female magician!"

—

Bang, I heard another dull sound.

I hear the sound of something being dragged.

—

"Hnn, Rudeus! Can you hear me! I'm definitely not letting you escape after all!"

—

I look up to where the voice is coming from.

I saw Pax's repulsive smile.

After giving me a glance, he moved to a place which couldn't be seen from the hole.

After a little while, something was placed on top of the hole I'm in.

It was a cover.

Only silence was left.

In my surroundings the magic circle was giving off a dim light.

"Sigh..."

That kind of ended in a daze.

He probably got angry and hit Lilia, but strangely anger isn't building up.

Probably because that exchange just now was just way too comical.

Or else, maybe it's because I was already told by Hitogami that Lilia would be saved.

Or maybe even though he's distorted it, it's because he's still worshiping Roxy.

Even I might become like him if I were to be thrown away by Roxy.

No, that's wrong.

Probably because he looks a bit similar to me in my previous life.

That's why rather than anger, I feel more lost and confused instead.

Well, when everything has ended I'll make sure he properly gets what he deserves.

"Now then..."

I roughly understand the situation.

In other words, the reason why Lilia was captured by Pax.

The pretense for detaining her could have been anything really. Another country's spy for example.

Then, while they were talking to her, it seems after the prince found out about her relation with Roxy, he came up with this plan.

Using Lilia as bait, then getting into contact with Roxy, and luring her out.

Since he's afraid of the Greyrat name, he's constantly doing it in secrecy.

Well, even if Asura Kingdom found out, Lilia is nothing but Paul's maid, so there's any number of ways to hush it up.

Unable to find Roxy, it ended with Lilia being detained for a long period.

Lilia was seeking help from Paul, but obviously the prince wouldn't allow it.

In that situation, Aisha escaped the castle, she tried to send a letter, but failed. The letter ended up being destroyed.

The mysterious part is after that, for some reason the soldiers' reports went in a direction that seemed to be aiding her.

It could just simply be that they hate the prince, or else there could be some sort of other reason...

It seems like he's holding hostages against Ginger after all, other soldiers might be in a similar situation.

In that situation, I walked straight into the spiders web is what it means. Hitogami did tell me to send a letter to Roxy after all, so it should mean that I would be captured like this is still within the range of assumption.

There's no reason to panic.

For now I just need to act as directed.

However, what am I going to do after this.

Most likely, right now in this instant, some kind of situation is happening in the background.

Then, it might be fine to just do nothing again this time.

If I just wait patiently here, there will be some kind of situation, and then if I go along with that, everything should work out well.

...No, wait.

Did I really move according to instructions?

For example, I named myself Knight of the Moon's Shadow, Shadow Moon Night.

According to Hitogami's advice, I was supposed to name myself "The Owner of Dead End" in front of Aisha.

However, what if in reality it was no good if I don't use The Owner name in front of the soldiers as well?

That's not all.

It's the same with the letter.

I surely thought it would be fine if I "Use my real name", but if I hadn't used Rudeus as the sender name, it wouldn't have ended up like this would it?

If I were to have just met the prince as an acquaintance of Roxy, wouldn't I have been able to talk with him a bit more peacefully?

This is bad, I have the feeling I made some kind of mistake.

No, not yet, it should still be alright I think?

This much shouldn't be outside of expectation, right?

I'm worried...

For the time being, it seems I should secretly try to secure an escape route.

Hello everybody. This is ex-HikiNEET Rudeus.

Today's topic is...

We're visiting the No Cost Apartment of Shirone Kingdom.

Deposit Zero.

Rent Zero.

One room with zero meals and afternoon naps included.

The construction is made of a reliable stone material, it's been laid out very hard and solidly.

The lack of sunlight and the fact that there's no bed are a couple of the small problems, but even so this price is just far too cheap!

It is zero rent after all.

The toilet is a bit lacking being the diaper-less-diaper model and all, and if you live here for a long period you'll without a doubt catch an illness, but even considering that the price is cheap!

Moreover, just looking at this security structure will give you a peace of mind.

Please take a look at this solid barrier.

Of all things, when you're inside of here, it nullifies all magic and you won't be able to leave!

It won't even budge after an A rank Adventurer like me seriously punches it.

No matter how much of a master at escaping they may be, I'm sure getting in and out of this place would be anything but simple.

Yeah, well, it's fine since this is the second time I've used this material as a joke.

I can't get out.

Someone save me.

Ruijerd quickly come save me, Rujsaveme!

Just like that I've fallen into a situation like the captured Princess Peach-sama.

{ C-Editor's note: Princess Peach Toadstool is a character in the Super Mario Bros. video games. }

It's been a full day since then and I was still trying to release the barrier.

Speaking of barriers, they are something cruel.

The fact that you can't use magic means that the number of things I can do is almost nothing.

Like trying to beat on the invisible wall, or trying to scratch out the magic circle on the floor.

Like trying to jump up and see if I can reach the nearby ceiling 4 meters above.

I've tried everything I can think of, but I wasn't able to do anything.

If I at least had my staff I might have been able to knock on the ceiling.

However, I left all of my belongings with Ginger.

It's not like I brought anything that great along with me though.

In regards to magic, I tried a variety of things to see.

However, all of them ended in a misfire.

If the magic power is being absorbed then I wanted to try using the maximum amount of magic power I could to try to break it.

I could think like a shounen manga and give it a try, but it doesn't have that kind of feeling.

I can use magic power, but for some reason it won't take shape.

I can't change the phenomenon into the variation stage.

It seems like it will work, but it doesn't.

How do I put it, it might be kind of similar to how a lighter can't be used in strong wind.

The spark comes out, the gas is there as well, but the fire won't start.

Or it could be that the fire starts, but it quickly gets blown out.

It's that kind of feeling.

It seems like a King Class Barrier magic.

It's amazing.

After I recognized that fact, my irritation gradually started to build up.

When the time comes, I can't do anything.

I'm currently in such a situation.

For example, if we were unlucky, even if Roxy were to come here right now, I would be unable to save her.

I would only be able to cry out to abandon me.

For example, if some kind of chance comes up and Eris gets caught, I wouldn't be able to save her.

In that case, I'm sure they would use me as a hostage, Ruijerd would have no choice but to try and do something.

So again, I would only be able to shout out to abandon me.

For example, Pax changes his mind, just having me as a hostage is plenty and he goes to kill Lilia.

After all I only have the option to shout out.

I still remember Hitogami's advice.

However, I didn't perfectly follow it.

It could be that I've already deviated from the advice.

Since it's Hitogami, I would expect him to include that in his assumptions.

However, that advice didn't say anything other than that Aisha and Lilia would be saved.

No, it was advice intended to gain my faith.

I can't imagine that there was something else behind the meaning.

Bad thoughts are circling around.

Shit.

If I don't hurry and escape...

I wonder exactly how much time passed while I was trying various things.

I'm tired.

It feels like it's been a long time since I used this much magic power.

The barrier hasn't even budged.

It is a barrier meant to capture Roxy after all.

I guess that would mean it won't be released that easily, huh...

Sigh...

I'll rest for a bit.

I have no watch and I can't see the sun either.

Since that's the case, my sense of time is vague.

I'm hungry.

Since a while ago my stomach has been grumbling.

That prince, he better not forget to feed me.

No that's wrong.

He might be reducing my meals, in order to starve me down into a delicate, phosphorus-like body.

In that case, he'd probably be even more excited at the time Roxy comes.

One meal a day, huh.

Since I'm in the middle of my growth period, it's a bit painful...

I wonder what I can do?

I can't escape using power.

It's probably good to switch gears a bit.

In my previous life, how did people escape from prison again?

For example, that's right playing dead or ill.

In order to bring a doctor or healing magician in they would need to release the barrier for a period of time.

No, there's the possibility they would just leave me to die. Holding someone hostage requires two people.

If it's a Hollywood star then when the guard comes close to the metal bars, arms would stretch out and knock them out in an instant, then they would steal the keys, but it won't work here.

Humu...

Other than that, what kind of methods was there?

In short, it would be fine if I could just get out of here.

If I was able to use magic, any number of things could be done.

Might as well just pretend to swear allegiance to him.

"Actually, I've always disliked Roxy since a while back, bro, guhehe. Actually I know the location of Roxy's family. Having her father and mother in front of her eyes, how does that sort of thing sound?"

If I go with that sort of feeling, he might actually get caught up in it.

He seems like an idiot after all.

...No, let's not go with that.

No matter what situation I'm in I can't speak badly of Roxy.

I can throw away as much as I need of my pride, but I can't speak badly of Roxy.

Clink...clink...

While I was worrying, a sound suddenly entered my ears.

They're footsteps.

They're gradually getting closer.

I wonder if Pax came down to check on me.

Clink...

The footsteps stopped just above me.

And then, soon after crossed the room and I could hear them coming down the stairs.

"Oh, it's just as Ginger said."

The one who came down from the stairway was... An unknown man.

However, I understood he was most likely royalty from a single look.

First, his clothes have a truly arrogant feel to them.

Using black as the basis, and red lines enter into that.

And then gold colored embroidery is mixed into it, I understood it was expensive from a glance.

In terms of age he should be around 20 years old.

Speaking of his face, it's a bit similar to Pax.

However, he has more of a tall and lanky look than Pax.

He's oval-faced, his cheekbones are clearly visible, and he wears glasses.

I haven't seen glasses used very often in this world, but the people who can use them do use them.

In a world where Cupid's existence has been proven through science, NEETs would have this kind of face most likely.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Love-yan manga. }

"Shirone Kingdom third prince, I'm Zanoba Shirone."

He said it with an excessively sober voice.

The third prince.

In other words, Pax's older brother, huh.

"Thank you for your courtesy. I'm Rudeus Greyrat."

"Umu."

"What kind of business do you have with me today?"

"Umu."

Zanoba nodded exaggeratedly and lifted up the bag he was holding in his hand.

It's the kind of tool bag you hang over your shoulder.

It's a bag I've seen somewhere before...

Rather, it's my bag.

Zanoba placed the bag on the ground, and carefully took something out from inside.

It was the Ruijerd doll.

"Where did you get your hands on this Demon Race doll?"

Zanoba placed the doll right outside of the barrier.

"Speak. From Ginger, I heard that you were the one holding onto it."

It was a demanding tone.

The Demon Race doll.

I brought it without thinking about it too deeply, but after all I wonder if they would consider a doll of a Demon Race to be an evil gods figure around here.

The Roxy doll has no characteristics of a demon race, but you can tell Ruijerd is a demon race in a single glance.

There is the jewel in the forehead after all.

I wonder how I should respond.

At the very least, it seems better if I didn't say I was the one who created it.

"...It's something that coincidentally came into my hands when I was traveling on the Magic Continent."

"Oh! Then it was made by Demon Race hands after all! Then around where did you get your hands on it? What was the name of the merchant who sold it to you? Do you know who the creator is!?"

Huh?

Isn't he giving off an amazingly good feeling?

His eyes are sparkling.

"We-well, anyways, I liked it from the moment I first saw it so I just purchased it, and I don't know the details..."

"What??"

Zanoba's glasses reflected a bright light with a sharp sound.

It's an amazing pressure.

Without a doubt, those are the eyes of a person who has killed.

"Ah, that's right. During the time the merchant was selling that doll he said it. If you hold onto that doll, you'll be fine even if you are attacked by a Superd race. If you show the doll and recite the chant "Ruijerdlikeschildren, Ruijerdlikeschildren" then suddenly the Superd race will become friendly like a person who you've known for tens of years, and then he'll put his hand on your shoulder in an over-familiar way and say "Hey Brotha" supposedly."

"Oh oh! For it to do that! Anything else!? Anything else!?"

"Umm, it will allow your children to be born in good health, also it might help you get better at swordsmanship?"

"No, not that sort of thing! In other words, that means it was made by someone who has a deep relation with the Superd race right!?"

I guess that would be the case.

Though the only Superd race I know is Ruijerd.

Even then, I guess if you call it a deep relation, it's deep.

In this world, it seems like the majority of people don't want to get involved with the Superd race very much.

"Humu, then I guess after all the chance should be high it should have the same producer as this?"

While Zanoba was saying 'hmmhmm' to himself, he held the doll in his hand and was rotating it around while looking at it.

Then he placed it on the ground and put his hand back into the bag.

Well now, if we're speaking of things I put in there other than that, it should just be emergency clothes?

"Well then, have you seen this doll before?"

What Zanoba took out was what I once sold to a merchant in the past, the 1/10 Roxy figurine.

The Roxy figurine was placed on the ground.

Zanoba sat down with a plunk in front of that.

I wonder if he didn't think his clean clothes would get dirty.

It doesn't seem like he does his own laundry.

"This demon race figure was discovered and purchased from the market five years ago..."

Zanoba carefully looked over the doll with affectionate eyes.

It's something I understood when I was on a missionary trip to spread the Ruijerd figurine, but thanks to the Milis Church's influence, Demon Race dolls are a contraband.

After all I wonder if he's going to lay blame for something like that.

Though he doesn't seem to be angry.

"It was something my little brother discovered, it looks really similar to our Royal Court magician Roxy, it was something that he bought from the peddler himself."

Hmm.

"She 'was' the Royal Court magician at the 'time'?"

"Yeah? That's right. It doesn't seem that you know, but Roxy Migurdia is already no longer in this country. She couldn't handle anymore of my little brother's sexual harassment so she ran away."

No, for the most part I did hear from Pax.

I see, she was escaping from the sexual harassment, huh.

"Concretely speaking what kind of sexual harassment was it?"

"Sexual? Like stealing her underwear or peeking on her in the bath."

Seriously?

That's unforgivable.

A person such as that deserves a strict punishment.

That's right, for example destroying his computer with a bat.

Or being forced to live under the same roof with a young lady who will punch you to within the edge of your life for every little thing.

Or being stripped nude and thrown into a prison then having cold water poured on you.

He needs some of that kind of punishment.

Since that's the case, it's fine if I personally use a thick [Earth Lance] to launch him into tomorrow morning as well.

He'll become something like an average traffic cone.

Really.

For him to steal Roxy's panties, I wonder if he thought such a thing was fine to do.

No, there isn't.

There's no excuse.

It's an unforgivable action.

Even if he is a prince, there's things you can and cannot do.

It's natural that Roxy would run away.

...Huh?

If I follow that logic, could it be that the reason why Roxy stopped being my home teacher is my fault?

"Rather than that, let's talk about this doll."

While saying that Zanoba patted the shoulder area of the Roxy doll.

That's right, it's better to change those kinds of gloomy topics.

While thinking that, I nodded with a serious face.

"I don't have eyes for dolls. I've been collecting dolls from all over the world, but..." (!)

Starting with the preface, he started to tell me.

That's right, he should speak.

"Only this doll, both the producer and the place of production are unknown. I can understand it was created by shaving down a stone, but it's heavier and harder than what the skilled Dwarves can make with their stone craftsmanship. In order to shave down such a solid and hard stone, such carving techniques don't exist right now... For example... look at this staff piece. It would probably be impossible for even the most skilled dwarves to shave down such a hard stone this thin."

Zanoba held up the staff the doll was holding in his fingers while saying that.

The thin parts like the staff break easily.

In order to compensate for that flaw, I had to make a considerable number of trial attempts and mistakes.

In return for all those attempts, it gained a high hardness and rigidity.

It's made of the same material as the grip part of Ruijerd doll's spear, but this part took a considerable amount of magic power, concentration, and time in order to create.

If I were to put it into detail, it took about 1 day to create 1 cm.

Even though I say that, you could call it the crystallization of my production technique.

It ended up becoming something that won't break or bend.

It's one of the parts that has a bit of a scheming to it.

It makes me happy to be praised.

"This sort of splendid item was being sold for only 5 Asura Gold coins. If it were me I'd have paid 100 Asura Gold coins for it. Those who live in the town really have no eye for quality, I'm troubled by how spineless they are. Although, I'm sure they took into account the fact that it was a Demon Race figurine when the price was made this cheap. If the Milis Church Temple Knights were to find out you were holding such a figure, even a prince of Shirone would be put through a heresy interrogation, and probably end up being killed as a follower of a Demon God cult. If you were to go in for bargaining, then there's many number of reasons you could use."

While holding his head, Zanoba sighed and shrugged his shoulders.

Would they kill you?

It seems like the Temple Knight Group are all fanatics.

"However, I still decided to try looking for the producer of this figurine. I don't really want to get involved with someone related to a Demon God cult, but I wanted to talk to the person who created this figure. During that time, Lilia suddenly appeared in my room. It was the next day after Roxy had left."

Hmmm.

It ended up with them crossing paths without realizing it by coincidence, huh.

"Lilia was captured by the soldiers, a variety of things happened and it ended up that Pax was managing her, but among Lilia's belonging there was this sort of thing."

While saying that Zanoba took a small box out from the bag.

It was a box about the size of a fist that I had no recollection of.

"I found it mysterious as to why she was carrying around something like this as an important item, but well, take a good look."

Zanoba opened the box enough for me the see well inside of it.

He took out a soft looking cloth that had been wrapped up and placed inside of it, Zanoba then carefully opened the cloth.

The thing that was wrapped inside of it was a pendant carved of wood.

I have a feeling like I've seen it somewhere before...

Naturally it was handmade, and it conveys a feeling of the clumsiness of the producer.

"That pendant... What about it?"

"Hmm, this pendant doesn't matter at all."

While saying that Zanoba placed the pendant on top of the bag.

All of his movements are one of carefulness.

You can sense his favorable impression.

However, I wonder what it means for the things inside of the box to not matter at all.

Then I saw it there.

I recognized the cloth that the pendant had been wrapped in.

"Well, it's these panties."

Zanoba said that while spreading the cloth.

There's no mistake.

That is...

The Holy Object of Roxy.

"It seemed like Lilia wanted to give this to you on your 10th birthday."

I see.

In other words, it's that.

The pendant is camouflage.

That cloth being used as wrapping was my precious item, I clearly understood that.

It could be that she intended to send it just like that at first, but she realized the abnormality in sending panties as a birthday present, and especially went out of her way to do something like this.

However, unfortunately it didn't make it.

The Holy Object panties have been cleanly washed.

Roxy's Extra Virgin Olive Oil has disappeared, and it has lost its divinity.

There's already no god residing within these panties.

In exchange, I guess you could say they have devotion packed into them though...

"A-And then, what is it about those panties?"

I asked in order to hide my trembling voice.

Zanoba nodded with an umu, and

"Before I talk about the panties, I'll explain about this doll."

Then Zanoba got onto all fours.

He treated the Roxy doll as a fragile item and his fingers were trembling.

And then, he started to talk.

That's right, he started to talk.

"Look at this from the front.

If you look at it closely, this is a normal magician preparing their staff.

However, it has a certain liveliness to it.

Look at this normal robe.

If you move one leg forward, then push out the staff, in that instant you'll distinctly understand.

And then, and then if you look in the sleeve and hem of the robe, it's the wrist and ankle!

The amount of skin being exposed is just a little bit.

It's just a bit, but it has an immeasurable erotic side to it.

With just this small bit, you can understand this young magician girl who appears skinny and definitely not voluptuous body is being hidden by the robe.

Even though it's this baggy, do you get it!

And then, you go like this, this time and look at it from behind.

The baggy robe originally doesn't extend beyond the body's line.

However, if you move the leg to the front and pull on by the cloth, and just a little bit of the butt line will rise to the surface.

It's a small butt. Most likely even if you saw the real thing, it wouldn't be all that erotic.

However, just like this, having it rise to the surface in this baggy robe, it's extremely erotic!

I definitely want to see, I want to strip it and see, it's a butt which makes you think as such.

After thinking that, of all things, this robe can be removed.

If you carefully remove the part that fastens the robe, the appearance of an innocent young girl in her underwear comes out.

Moreover, this young girl is not wearing a bra over her chest.

Going off the chest size of the person known as Roxy, this choice was correct.

And then if you look at it from the side, of all things, the left hand is hiding her chest.

Strange, just a minute ago her left hand was supposed to have been holding her staff.

While thinking that, take a look at the robe, of all things it has the left hand attached to it.

That's right. This figurine has three arms.

The appearance while wearing the robe and the underwear appearance. This gimmick makes this figurine have two figuries in one.

It's truly ingenious.

The fact that you can strip the robe means that the body's various poses were fixed.

However, by manipulating the arms position into the inside and outside like this, it raises the pose's degree of freedom.

That's not all, this time look at it from the side.

During the time when it's wearing the robe its back is straight, it's a pose like she's sticking her forefoot out.

However, if you remove the robe, for some reason she turns into a slouch.

It's almost like she's trying to conceal her chest and body.

In order to confirm that from above, look at the face.

During the time she has the robe attached, it's a dignified face, but now doesn't it seem like she's desperately trying to bear with her bashfulness?

I understand the one who created this. I understand it, that the expressions are the same.

Something that no one can imitate, "Supremacy" is here.

Certainly, you could say it's far from the skillful work of the Dwarves on various main parts.

You could even call it the work of an amateur.

However, this doll is certainly in a domain that the rough Dwarves can never reach their hands!"

I listened to that every single word in detail.

Normally one might listen with a blank expression.

However, I am this doll's producer.

Without missing a single word I reflected it on as I listened.

And then I felt satisfied.

Isn't that right, something that I created myself, is being told about with such passion.

There's no way I wouldn't be happy.

Regardless of this situation, the center of my chest has become warm.

That's right.

Of course, that's the case.

This Roxy figurine is something I poured all of the technique I had at the time into.

Even though it's definitely still an amateur creation, if a person who can see looks at it they'll understand.

It's something to be happy about.

For him to have even realized the tricks in the minor parts...

However, one part is missing.

Why would I make her hiding her chest with her hands...

"Huh?"

Then I realized it.

"The black on the underside is starting to fade."

"Hn?"

While saying that, Zanoba turned the Roxy doll around again.

"Ah, the black spots on the side? However, that hurt the beauty of the figurine so I erased it."

Zanoba casually said it.

I froze after hearing those words.

I was frozen.

I opened my eyes and stopped my movements.

"Er-erased it...?"

"Hmm, the fact that you knew there were dots here means that after all you know something about this figurine?"

"...Please turn that figure around and look at for a bit."

"Before that answer my question."

"It's fine so turn it around."

I made a voice so cold that it surprised even me.

Zanoba faltered with an "Uu" and following what I said he turned the figure around.

"Stop it there, please look at it from that angle."

I had him stop at the position where the mole was, at a position where Zanoba could just barely see it I had him stop.

"Please look at the position of the hand."

"What is it?"

"It's fine, so please take a look at it."

I understood that my somewhat strong tone was irritating Zanoba.

However, he honestly looked at the doll.

"Do you understand that her hands can't hide it?"

"...Hmmm?"

"Do you understand that the hands don't reach?"

"....Ah."

Zanoba let out a small voice.

It seems he finally understood it.

That's right, the reason why I had her hide her chest with her hands.

In regards to this world that doesn't have forbidden 18+, why I didn't make the lovely and reserved Roxy's chest go exposed.

"Do you understand that even though she can hide her chest, she wasn't able to hide her mole?"

"...How...could...that be?"

Zanoba was trembling and shaking.

That's right.

The reason why I put the moles on was certainly there.

The mole acts as a second nipple, and it expresses the bashfulness that she can't hide it.

That mole is the most erotic point of this figure.

"I...I ...I didn't understand a thing... And yet.. to this work.. I defiled it..."

Zanoba's eyes were hollow, his body started to convulse.

Bubbles started to appear from his mouth.

Isn't his reaction just a bit too oversensitive I wonder?

"Well, something like moles can be added again to fix it and it's fine, but then what was that about panties?"

"Pa...panties are... the same..."

Then after comparing the panties on the figure to the Holy Object, they were the same thing.

I get it now.

I equipped the thing I was most familiar with to the figurine.

If Lilia was planning to send these panties to me, then it's normal to think there's a connection between them.

Incidentally, Roxy of that time had four other panties, but the details were all slightly different.

Yeah, I see it, Roxy is fashionable.

"Is that the case? And then, what would it be fine for me to talk about in regards to that figurine?"

Well. It should be fine.

It seems Zanoba was treating this figure preciously.

He shouldn't suddenly push me off onto the Temple Knight Group.

"Nuuuuohh!"

Zanoba suddenly erupts into a large shout.

He threw his entire body to the ground.

I was surprised.

"So you were the producer of this figurine!"

As expected this even made me go blank.

Why is this guy suddenly bowing down before me?

About the only thing I understand is Roxy's Greatness.

"As expected of the 'Water King Class Magician' Roxy's disciple! This figurine was created using magic right!"

Don't use Roxy's name without honorific.

Add a -san.

"I've looked at your creation everyday. Every time I look at it I discover something, and the feeling of respect became stronger. Please, allow me to call you shisho."

While saying that he crawled on all fours with a rustling movement and tried to kiss my shoes, however, the barrier obstructed him, so he let out a roar "Uoooh" and started striking the barrier.

That appearance was just like the dead that gather for new publications on the 3rd day of summer.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to Comiket, a Japanese convention for fans of self-published creative works. }

He was throwing away his pride and dignity as a person, it was the appearance of one who lives true to his desires.

"Uoooh! What is with this barrier?! Who put up something like this?! Shisho! Please allow me to worship those godly handsaaaaguoooahhh!"

Just like this, I gained a slightly creepy disciple.

There were guys like this in my previous life as well.

They only ever interact on the net, it's a relationship you can't quite call friends, but they're there.

That's right, that guy, had this sort of face.

For someone to adore me this much is a first... However, it's convenient.

I'm sure, Hitogami predicted this.

The fact that I would be captured in the castle, I would become friends with him, then I would escape after receiving his help.

Alright. I can see the ending!

{ C-Editor's note: A Reference to The World God Only Knows anime series. }

I told him with a normal face.

"Oh disciple. In the room there should be a magic crystal that maintains this barrier. Find that and destroy it!"

"I understand shisho! After I execute that, please, please bestow upon me the method to produce such figurines?!"

"If you cannot find it, you will be excommunicated. You will not be allowed to call me shisho ever again."

"Of course I will comply!"

Zanoba stirred himself up using those words.

He started wandering around the room searching.

He also went around searching the room upstairs, I heard rustling like a cockroach creeping around the surroundings.

Throughout all that, about one hour passed.

If we were to speak of things he was able to find, it would only be an A4 size square hole in the ceiling.

It seems like Pax had intended to dump in the meals from there.

That's fine for meals, but I wonder what he was planning to do for excrement and illness.

Maybe he planned to use sleeping gas from above to put me asleep and then secretly release the barrier.

No, I'm sure he never thought about it.

That man known as Pax probably thinks as long as you feed your pet, everything else is fine.

For the time being, I received the bag and a bottle that Zanoba didn't need.

If I use that, then I can dispose of my own excrement.

No, I was already on the edge of leaking after all.

For the time being, if he can at least remove the trapdoor, I thought escape should be possible.

The ceiling is high.

About 4 meters.

However, if he were to hang a rope down, it should somehow reach.

However, it seems that the heavy stone plate is welded on almost like a manhole and since it's fixed in place it would be difficult to remove it.

It seems that there was a magic circle drawn above the cover as well.

I wonder if it's one set.

It seems difficult to destroy.

"Isn't there someone who is knowledgeable about barriers among your highness' followers?"

"No, since I have no followers!"

"Is that so? Even that Pax had an imperial guard though?"

"I traded the last one for the Roxy figurine! Heeh, it was a good deal!"

This guy is an idiot as well, huh.

Not to mention, trading his imperial guards, what is going on in this country.

Well, in any case, there was one thing we confirmed.

"Alright... I understand."

"Oh, do you understand, as expected of shisho!"

"Yes, if we continue like this, then it seems you're going to be excommunicated."

"How could this be!?"

For my slightly creepy disciple, he will be excommunicated at an unprecedented speed...

Is what won't happen.

I have no intention of losing my long awaited collaborator.

"I'll change the condition. Help me get out from here, at the time when I get out you will become my disciple."

"Oh! Is that fine! For a short while, for a short while please wait!! Right now I'll use my fists to smash in the ceiling!"

"Please stop with being unreasonable."

I panicked and stopped Zanoba as he tightly gripped his fists and glared at the ceiling.

It was a serious face.

It was a face which would continue to strike at the cover until his bones shattered and tore away.

He's a dangerous guy.

Zanoba was restless for a short while, but suddenly it seems he realized something and raised his face.

"Shisho, who was it that created this barrier?"

"Ummm, if I'm correct it was the seventh prince his highness Pax."

"Hmmm, come to think of it I remember Ginger saying something like that..."

"Did you not hear about the situation in detail?"

"Since my head is filled with thoughts about the figurine."

"Ah, I see."

For the time being, it seems like there's something with Ginger and this prince.

I wonder if Ginger is moving around behind the scenes as well.

It seems like that person doesn't want things to go well for Pax as well, it might be good to have him help in that direction.

No it's the opposite, he said he came here after being told by Ginger.

In other words, Ginger wanted to put Zanoba and me together.

I wonder if she thought our interests matched after seeing the Ruijerd figurine.

However, I wonder what Ginger wanted me to do by getting this unreliable prince as an ally.

I can't see what moves I should make.

"In other words, shisho, Pax would be able to do something about it right?"

"Hnn? Yeah, that is what it means I guess."

Zanoba thought about it for a bit there, and then afterwards, said in a quiet voice that had been frolicking around in high spirits until now,

"I understand, please be patient for a short while."

It seems he thought of something.

However, it doesn't seem like this prince is very smart.

If he makes some sort of weird move, I wonder if a snake will come out of the bush.

"Ummm, before you take any actions you should properly consult with someone. That's right, for example Ginger-san. I'm fine as well."

"Hahaha, shisho is of the worrying nature I see. Please rest easy, leave everything to me."

"Hey, wait just a second, where are you going, listen to me. What are you planning to do?!"

Zanoba went up the stairs while laughing.

"Seriously..."

At that moment I had the feeling like "Ah, I've done it now."

For that unreliable prince with no followers to take up that attitude, I thought I had told him to poke around in a bush filled with snakes.

I thought the situation was heading in an extraordinarily bad direction.

A bad premonition was haunting me.

Ah, if it was going to be like this, it would have been fine if I had at least had him bring me something to eat beforehand.

Is what I thought.

However, I would soon come to understand that was a mistake.

The person known as Zanoba Shirone.

I completely misread that.

After thinking about it later, from the point that Zanoba knew I was the figurine's producer, everything was already decided.

In this world there are children who are born with an abnormality in their magic power.

Speaking of [abnormality] something like a birth defect might come to mind, but many of them will appear normal in terms of outward appearances.

Just that only their appearance is normal.

Those children hold a special ability from the time they are born.

Abnormally fast legs,

superhuman strength,

hearing better than other people,

their body weight is as light as a feather,

or much heavier than normal.

Killing everything they touch,

spitting flames from the mouth,

poison coming out from their fingertips,

being able to teleport short distances,

being able to shoot beams out of their eyes.

Or the ability to nullify all kinds of poisons, or not getting tired even after not sleeping ever, or the ability to simultaneously embrace many hundreds of women and still not lose strength...

Such children who are born with exceptional abilities in this world are called "Miko".

On the other hand, if they aren't useful, or if they are abilities that inconvenience others or themselves, then they are called "Cursed Children" it seems, but let's put that aside.

Well then, now that we have that as the basis let's talk about things in the Shirone Royal Palace.

Currently, there are five princes in this Royal Palace.

The oldest prince is 32 years old and the youngest one is...

Well, their age really doesn't matter.

In regards to this country, when princes are born they're granted direct control over imperial guards.

They're granted in order to move as one's hands and feet since they are young, and it holds the design to let them learn to move people.

And then as they're raised and live, if they do good things the number of imperial guards they have are increased, and if they do something bad they're decreased.

When the King dies, the one who has the highest number of imperial guards at that time ends up becoming the next King.

Or at least that is the tradition in this country.

The more imperial guards you have, the more power you hold basically.

I think there are many problems, but among them the one who has the most imperial guards is the first prince.

The one who has the self-awareness as the eldest son, he might be a bit arrogant, but in regards to royalty it's an appropriate conduct.

Which is why, he holds close to 30 imperial guards.

Then, who is the one who has the fewest.

It's the one despised by the soldiers, the seventh prince Pax Shirone.

Certainly he has a few imperial guards.

Currently, he has around three.

For a period it had decreased down to one, but since he was able to create a connection with the slave market in the strife zone it increased by one.

The final one I'll mention later.

Three people.

Just three people.

His imperial guards are few.

However, there's someone even further below.

That is the third prince, Zanoba Shirone.

The number of his imperial guards is zero.

Zero.

0.

Not a single soldier exists that he can move himself.

Before he was alone, he had the imperial guard known as Ginger, this country's #12 in skills as an imperial guard.

However, eventually that last one as well, was traded for a certain figurine, and ended up becoming Pax's belonging.

It seems that at that point Ginger applied for a resignation, but Pax panicked and held her family as a hostage, so she unwillingly ended up becoming his imperial guard.

Well then, this third prince Zanoba Shirone.

He was a Miko.

He's had superhuman strength and a sturdy body since he was born.

Just by holding that ability alone, he became one who had a special existence.

It wasn't a significant ability, but the king was delighted.

A Miko will definitely be an useful person to the country in the future.

Especially, in this country which is close to the strife zone in the north, an existence which could become a war potential is something to hold with both arms into the air and congratulate.

The one who gave birth to Zanoba was a concubine, but with this she was seen as accomplishing her part, and felt relieved.

The time when the king lowered his raised arms was after three years had passed.

When Zanoba was three years old, the fourth prince was born.

He was the fourth prince, but in regards to the royal consort it was the first child.

It was a child like a ball and everyone was delighted, the country held a ceremony party.

In that party Zanoba walked and walked to the place where his own brother was.

And then, he started to touch his little brother stretched out on the bed, and said he's cute, like a doll.

Everyone who heard those words was laughing with smiles.

Since Zanoba was three years old he liked dolls after all.

The fact that he wants to liken it to something he likes is... pleasant.

In the next instant, Zanoba tore off his little brother's head.

Like a doll.

The party turned into a hell of agonizing cries.

The king and royal consort went mad and exiled Zanoba's mother outside of the country.

However, Zanoba remained within the country.

Part of it was because he was still young and it was also because he was a miko.

It seems that in regards to this world, mikos are very important individuals.

After that incident Zanoba's imperial guards were reduced to three.

It was originally eight, but it became three.

Never increase it beyond this, is what the king declared.

The next incident happened during the time he was 15 years old.

Around this time, though he was suffering from a doll disorder, Zanoba possessed judgement.

Since that was the case, it was decided he would accept a bride.

She was the daughter of a powerful family from a place somewhere to the north.

In regards to the king, during a time of war, he intended for Zanoba to bear the full brunt of it and stand strong.

The wedding ceremony completed safely.

The next day, after the first night...

The bride was discovered in the bed as a corpse without a head.

Zanoba tore it off.

The fact that a powerful family's daughter was killed caused a civil war which had to be suppressed.

The king took two imperial guards from Zanoba, and decided to confine him to the inside of the castle until a war starts.

On top of that, he tried to have Zanoba's favorite dolls taken away, but all the soldiers who took on that job had their heads torn off and died.

[Head Ripping Prince] Zanoba Shirone.

After that incident, Zanoba became called as such.

As expected, if he were to push things that far, the king must have tried to think of doing something.

However, as long as he had dolls he was fine.

As long as dolls were granted to him occasionally, then Zanoba had no harmful intent.

Which is why he thought that this is a dangerous weapon in the shape of a person, so he decided to act as such.

Since then, Zanoba was treated as a tumor, and we arrive at the present.

Although I'm arrogantly talking about it right now, the time when I heard this story was afterwards.

That time I still didn't know that Zanoba was the Shirone Royal Palace's greatest war potential.

Zanoba was standing there with a thoughtless smile on his face.

I looked at that with a drawn back face.

My gaze was not on his smiling face.

It was on the thing that he was holding in his hands.

"Shisho, how is this, with this you'll make me into your disciple right!"

"Ouchowowowow! Stop! Please stop older brother!"

"You're loud Pax."

"Ahhhgahhhh!"

That was the face of the captured Pax Shirone.

The places he was being held at had blood dripping from them.

It wasn't Pax whose blood was flowing.

Zanoba's entire body was covered in blood.

"..."

I was lost for words.

I don't understand the meaning.

I thought we were having a light talk about disciples and what not, then at some point unknown to me it had become a blood splattered horror.

No really, I have no idea what is going on.

Zanoba is smiling away.

It's an innocent smile. Scary.

A bloodstained smile is something that a beauty is supposed to show.

If this otaku-like gangly older brother does it, it just seems bizarre.

"Stop it Zanoba! Release your hand!"

"That...that's right Zanoba, get a hold of yourself!"

In this small room there are currently several people.

Ginger wielding her sword and three soldiers confronting her.

And hiding behind the soldiers, wearing expensive looking clothes, were two princes.

Even though they're both princes, one of them was considerably aged.

Inside of this small room there were nine including me. It's a bit cramped.

"Older brothers. Were you aware that Pax had taken his own soldiers' families hostage in order to manipulate them?"

"N-no..."

"It wasn't an imperial guard, it was something belonging to father, this country's soldiers."

Zanoba was smiling.

He was saying it as he smiled.

"Ginger as well, she had her family taken hostage."

"...Is that so?"

"Yes."

Ginger responded to the prince with her sword still drawn.

It was still with her sword drawn, but I wonder if that's fine.

Zanoba was without change wearing a smiling expression,

"Older brothers, do you remember Roxy?"

"Y-yeah. Pax's tutor..."

"She was a Water King Class magician who trained our Shirone soldiers in anti-magician fighting, a person who we owe a great favor. Didn't father officially invite Roxy into the Royal Palace? Thanks to Pax's shallow actions, he completely destroyed that opportunity and she left."

"Y-yes. I guess so, certainly Pax is in the wrong, but you..."

"Even though that's the case... Please take a look. That person's disciple... Rudeus-sama is being put through this disgraceful situation. By Pax's hand. According to Roxy, she was boasting that he was a disciple who had more talent than herself. He's someone who should have a wonderful talent."

Zanoba still hadn't changed his smiling face.

In some ways you could call that a form of poker faces.

"Y-you, during the congress you always make such bored faces as you listen. As an older brother I'm feeling relieved. I surely thought you didn't have any interest in the country..."

"Older brother, I have no interest in anything other than dolls. I'm just pointing out the illegitimacy of Pax's actions. There is just one reason why I'm doing this."

Zanoba clearly declared that and raised Pax up.

"Owowowowow!"

"Rudeus-sama is a great person who has created a wonderful doll with no replacement in this world. Such a great person, being used in Pax's worthless revenge, that is something that shouldn't happen!"

"Aaahhh! Breaking, breaking, breaking!"

Pax's bitter screaming was echoing throughout the room.

"Older brother, if you intend to side with Pax, then I will act violently."

The three soldiers and the two princes started to rustle.

I thought, aren't you already acting violently.

They were all surprised and shaking over that.

In my previous life, when I acted violently in my parents' house, it never became like this.

"I'm not saying anything difficult. I want to save the producer of this doll, but Pax's crime is getting in the way of it."

"However, Pax and the slave market..."

"Older brother, please don't make me say it again. I feel like I'm about to uproot my little brother's head."

Zanoba had already stopped laughing.

I still had no idea what was going on.

I was just bewildered over how or what kind of metaphor uproot was.

I just understood that Zanoba had control over this situation.

Give it your best my disciple.

You're a bit scary though...

"N-n-no way! Stop it! Save me Ginger! Save me! Your family, don't you care what happens to your family!"

"If it's about my family, last night Ruijerd-dono saved them."

"What!?"

Pax was struggling and Ginger coolly replied.

I wonder who Ruijerd saved.

He's always saving someone.

Even though I say that, after all it seems like something was moving in the background that I didn't know about.

"It's just like this older brother, since among the princes I'm the one with the least authority, I had no choice but to ask older brother in this way, if you were to turn me down, I'll act violently to the limits of my power. What, I'm sure with this distance, one of the older brothers or otherwise both will have their heads twisted off. After that, I might be burnt to death by the Royal Court magician, but..."

"Your highness, I'll follow you to the death."

A gangly man like you has quite a bit of confidence, huh.

I seriously thought about it.

It's dangerous to be under the impression that I'm strong, I'll thrillingly look over that in my heart.

Even saying that, most likely it just worked on the first prince and the second prince.

"U-understood! We'll do as you say!"

"Older brother, please properly investigate it? After that, somewhere in the castle should be the two who just caused an uproar before and captured Lilia. I would like you to guarantee their safety as well."

"Of course. We'll put in a word with father..."

I wonder why these two princes would defend trash like Pax.

I seriously considered those doubts.

However, it's different.

They're afraid of Zanoba.

They're afraid of what to do, like a bomb when it's about to go off.

While not knowing what was going on, I was let out of the barrier.

It seems like the magic crystal was hidden in the ceiling.

Pax was arrested and Lilia was released, while still dumbfounded the incident ended.

From here on out is a later day, revealing the trick of the incident.

From the flow of events where Lilia was detained.

It seems that at first she was suspected of being a foreign spy.

At the time when she was interrogated, since she let out names like Roxy and Paul, she managed to avoid prison and was instead held in confinement.

Then at the time when information on the teleport incident started to flow in, it seems she was about to be released, but Pax interfered and restricted the information, then locked her away in the castle.

After Roxy ran away, Pax supposedly created a connection with the slave market.

Then, through that slave market connection he employed a private army, abducted the families of the soldiers and kept them confined.

[If you care for their lives listen to what I say] is how he supposedly threatened them.

The soldiers wanted to try and do something, so they dug around in the slums.

For the most part they figured out the location of the hostages, but there were many strong guards, so rescue was difficult.

In the middle of that, Aisha escaped, and they received the pursuit order from the prince.

They unwillingly pursued the fleeing Aisha.

Then and there I appeared and magnificently carried off Aisha.

Adding to that, the soldiers were trying to save Aisha, from the moment they saw the voiceless incantation magic they realized I was Roxy's disciple.

Therefore, the soldiers began their plan.

First, start a fight at the slave market and make the market unusable.

Then, claiming that Aisha was taken away by a mysterious man, they started in pursuit of the private army.

After that they would talk to me about the situation and ask me to participate in rescuing the hostages.

They would launch an attack on the safekeeping place of the hostages when the security is weakened and save them.

And then, in return they would somehow save Lilia, that sort of flow.

Incidentally, before that plan could be realized, I came under the impression that Roxy was in the Royal Palace and sent a letter. After seeing that, prince Pax ordered me to be confined.

At least, if I had waited just another day before I sent that letter, I would have heard about the situation from them and in reverse Pax wouldn't have been able to spring that trap on me.

After all, the Hitogami's advice was to send the letter after saving Aisha.

Then, in regards to the rescue plan, they thought it would be setback, but it was realized.

When I wasn't at the inn, Ruijerd was there.

He heard the situation from the soldiers, it seems that it stirred him up and he saved the hostages in no time at all.

For the most part, it seems at that time he was using a false name.

After seeing the hostages home safely, Ruijerd planned to assault the castle, but the soldiers there said they would do it. Pride so to speak.

According to the soldiers' plan, after reporting that the hostages have returned, the prince would then hear about this in the slums and was planned to be murdered then and there.

If it's a murder in the slums, then he won't be quickly discovered, and they'll supposedly be able to hide the body.

It was a bit reckless of a plan in my opinion, but it seems there was a chance of success.

Ruijerd broke it.

Incidentally, these plans, it seems Ginger didn't know about them until they ended.

She was ostracized, or rather because she was an imperial guard, they thought it might be dangerous to include her.

How pitiful.

Then, at the time when the hostages were released, Ginger's family was discovered and following that flow they realized that Ginger was the same as them.

Meanwhile, Ginger thought this time was a good chance, so she handed the doll over to Zanoba.

Zanoba who holds the strongest combat power in this kingdom.

After handing the doll over to him, he would be interested in me.

If I were to speak about that doll, he might join my side after seeing a precious source of information.

There was that sort of calculation as well, but the fact that Ginger simply swore loyalty to Zanoba is another of the reasons.

If she could be released from Pax using this incident, she wanted to return to Zanoba's side it seems.

Even though she was sold for a doll, I wondered why she still swears her loyalty, but I'm sure she has had her own tearful episode.

Then...

The next day.

Zanoba killed two of Pax's imperial guards, and took him hostage.

No one beside Ginger predicted this flow it seems.

The king had a clearly tired face as he sentenced Pax to be exiled outside of the country.

It seems that the connection to the slave market was a bit wasteful, but taking the soldiers' families, moreover the imperial guards' families hostage, then capturing me who they would normally try to win over as a court magician, and even more so in order to try and lure out Roxy to rape and kill her.

He really had no choice but to discipline him there.

Since there's the matter of appearance, up front it would be studying abroad.

In reality, he was sent as a hostage, that could be killed, to the Dragon King Kingdom.

Zanoba was also being exiled from the country.

This side as well was being covered up as studying abroad.

The ones who proposed this were the first and second princes.

Their methods weren't really smart, Zanoba did actually make a mistake as well is what the first and second princes said, but in reality they were just afraid of having an unpredictable nuclear warhead around.

It seems like the king didn't want to send Zanoba away, but if the strings manipulating him are unreliable, then he probably thought keeping him outside of the castle was safer.

Then, Lilia was released, even after this there are people who were calling her a foreign spy.

Lilia was taking care of Pax, and in the back she was stealing information from Shirone.

While being confined she was able to do something like that, our Lilia sure is amazing.

Then, in order to prove her innocence, until Lilia makes it to Paul's place she is to be "escorted".

Not to Asura Kingdom, but Paul's place.

Well, even if she was taken to Asura Kingdom, there's no one who could prove her identity there, after all.

Ah, for the time being, Asura Kingdom was her birthplace.

She did try to take remittance, after all.

However, since they do have the relation of husband and wife, it seems she'll be taken to Paul's place.

It seems like the current Paul has stronger ties with Holy Milis Kingdom if you were to ask as well, I'm sure the Asura Kingdom has some weird suspicions about it.

Well, those are all political problems.

If it were up to me, I'd be worried about being killed to have my lips sealed on the way, but it seems Ginger is participating as an escort.

Protecting his shisho's family was supposedly an order from Zanoba.

For others, it seems soldiers saved by Ruijerd are also participating.

So I can feel relieved.

Then, in regards to me, king-sama directly asked if I wanted to be the Royal Court magician and said he would give me status if I stay in this land.

That's how he came to ask.

Judging from his tone, it felt like a sigh was mixed in with it, it seems like he wanted to ask even if it was no good.

Naturally as it was, I turned it down.

And then the king clearly sighed and took a breath, then he said it was fine to take my leave.

That's it.

Well, it's fine though.

From the start I knew something like that would happen, it's not like I'll ask for medical expenses.

When I was going to leave the Royal Place, Zanoba came begging in tears.

"Shisho!!! Are you going to leave without me? Are you planning to leave behind your disciple?"

"I'm very sorry. Since we're in a hurry on our journey..."

"Then the doll, will you please make a doll for me?"

"It takes quite a bit of time to make those, so that's a bit..."

"Of all things!"

It seems like Zanoba was saddened by the fact that he couldn't see me make a doll, he was clinging onto my hand sorrowfully crying.

It was at this time that I heard that this person was a miko.

He could dismember and scatter people's limbs and tear off their heads, the Prince of Massacre.

Honestly, I was considerably afraid.

I was nervous over whether my head would suddenly be torn off.

I'm afraid of a guy who I don't know where his kill switch is...

No, I really am thankful to him though.

Scary things are still scary.

"Next time we meet, I'll teach you the way to create figureins from the start."

"Eh! That, but, I, umm, is it fine? Isn't there some secret point?"

"What am I supposed to do if I'm not going to teach my disciple the method to make them?"

"Uooooh, Shisho!"

Zanoba threw my body in the air while crying.

I hit the ceiling solidly.

"O-.oh shit!! Ginger! Healing magic!"

"Yes!!"

Ginger started the incantation for healing magic, and quickly sealed my wounds.

Zanoba made a pale face when he came dangerously close to killing me, but when I stood up okay, he made a relieved face.

This guy, does he want to be excommunicated!?

No, let's not do that, I'd rather not have my head torn off.

"Well then, shisho, take care of yourself! I don't know where I am being sent to study abroad as punishment, but I have a feeling that I'll eventually see shisho again!"

"Gehooo... Yes, take care."

While crying a great deal Zanoba saw me off.

While watching, that Ginger also shed a few tears.

Just like this, the incident related to Shirone came to a close.

We were able to save Lilia and Aisha and are sending them off to Paul.

Pax was exiled from the country.

And I made a disciple by the name of Zanoba.

I had just intended to move according to the Hitogami's advice.

More or less, there were some points that I didn't arrive at but...

You could say the result calmed down in the best shape.

How do I put it, I can't shake the feeling that I'm still dancing on the palm of his hand.

No matter what kind of moves I make, if I roughly follow the advice, then I feel it will still end up with a similar result.

It's a feeling like I'm watching a farce.

However, certainly everything ended up going in a good direction.

Lilia and Aisha are both fully intact.

I don't really get Zanoba, but I didn't feel any animosity.

I felt plenty of animosity from Pax, but he was completely removed as a piece outside of the country.

Putting aside the process, at least it was a convenient conclusion for me.

All of the advices until now as well, they went in a direction that wasn't inconvenient for me I think.

It could be that it's fine to believe in the Hitogami a bit more.

No, when it comes to swindlers, the moment they feel they've got a hit the exploitation starts.

I'll keep going with caution while trying to see through him.

Well, a promise is a promise.

The next time he comes out, I'll stop being belligerent.

This is a small town in Shirone Kingdom.

There's a certain inn.

Whether you're going to Asura or Milis, it's the same up until this town.

The road separates here.

Which is why, here we'll part with Lilia and the others.

I was at a table facing Lilia.

Outside the window, I could hear Aisha and Eris talking.

"That's right! Ru..The Owner is amazing! If he gets serious he can even freeze heavy rain and the forest all at once!"

"Is that magic? That's amazing!"

"Of course! Rather than that there's a more amazing story, do you want to hear it?"

"Please tell me about it!"

Eris is telling about the exploits of The Owner full of pride.

I was making a bitter smile listening to that conversation, while facing Lilia with my awareness.

She was sitting on the other side of the table.

If it's her, in the past I've only talked to her bit by bit.

Well, I wonder what I should talk about.

While I was hesitating, Lilia started the conversation.

"Let me thank you once again, Rudeus-sama. To have my life saved by you not just once but twice, I am deeply moved."

"Please stop. This time I didn't do anything."

"No, I heard that from faint bits of information Rudeus-sama especially came to Shirone to visit."

While saying that Lilia deeply lowered her head.

I just did what the Hitogami said.

After that, I really didn't do anything at all.

I just disgracefully fell into a trap and had to wait for help.

If you're trying to say I deserve gratitude for that, the me in my past life would have been a big-shot.

"Please show your gratitude to Eris and Ruijerd. Thanks to their skillful actions things ended smoothly."

"I did talk to them for a bit longer, but they said it was all Rudeus-sama's scheme."

"There's no way that was the case."

"...If Rudeus-sama says so."

She looks dissatisfied.

It's not like I've called out black as white or anything.

"By the way, has Aisha said anything impolite to you?"

Lilia took a glance outside the window, sighing a bit while coming out saying something like that.

"Not at all. She's an excellent child. To be able to think and act like that at six years would normally never happen."

Well, her claws were just a bit too skilled though.

I'll keep silent.

I can't really talk about other people.

"I don't think it's to the extent of Rudeus-sama... These past few years, I had intended to teach her as much as I could. Even now she's still a stupid daughter that hasn't come to understand how wonderful Rudeus-sama is."

"Stupid is saying too much."

In the first place, I'm an exception.

Since I still have memories of my previous life.

I thought there might be a possibility of my little sister having them too, but as a test I tried talking a bit about the existence of televisions and cellphones, but she just fell into confusion.

My little sister is just simply a genius.

Paul's genes are unexpectedly amazing.

"Rudeus-sama, what do you think about Aisha?"

Suddenly, Lilia looked like she came up with an idea and asked that.

"Eh? Like I said, she's excellent."

"Not like that, in appearance."

"I think she's cute."

"She's my daughter, when she grows up her breasts will most likely be big as well."

Oh, her chest will...

No-no. I don't have any interest in my little sister's chest.

Or rather, what's this? What is she talking about?

"Rudeus-sama, if you're going to continue on your journey to Asura, please take Aisha along with you. I have no choice but to return to danna-sama, but would it be alright if I leave Aisha to you?"

"Do you mind if I can hear the reason?"

I asked in return on reflex.

"Rudeus-sama, I've always been teaching Aisha on a normal basis in order for her to serve Rudeus-sama in the future."

"That seems to be the case."

"I've taught my daughter every single thing that I know. She's still young now, but in another four years she'll surely have a good attractive body."

Attractive to men.

"Please wait just a moment. She's my little sister?"

"I know of Rudeus-sama's fondness for women."

Do you know of it, I see.

Though you know.

It seems that I'm different from my previous life, it seems like I'm not really interested in desire towards those linked to me with blood.

That's why, even if you say, "Aisha has grown up, now eat up", it will just trouble me.

Though, well, that sort of reason is just one of my real intentions.

There is one more intention.

"That child is still six years old, right? It's an age where she should remain with her parents."

"...If Rudeus-sama says so."

Lilia was disappointed.

I don't think I've said anything incorrect.

Aisha is still young. Isn't it better for her to remain together with her parents?

It's limited to my feelings as a Japanese, but it's desirable to be together with both the father and mother during the time they're small.

I do think that it's fine if it's either, but if it's neither then that's clearly no good.

"I understand. Certainly, Aisha is still a bit inexperienced. I can't very well let someone inexperienced serve by the side of Rudeus-sama."

"Umm, please don't teach her anything too weird? Umm, something about a pervert or other."

"I've only ever conveyed to her that Rudeus-sama is a wonderful person."

"Thanks to that, it seems she's being a bit rebellious though..."

"I guess that is true. Well, that's just for now."

Lilia abruptly made a small laugh with her breath and raised her face.

It was a bright face.

I can't take Aisha.

However, I've already received something important from Lilia.

One of those is hanging around my neck with a leather string attached, and the other one is preciously stored in a box.

I will never let go of them again.

"This pendant (and panties), thank you very much."

"No, since I had heard that it was something precious to Rudeus-sama."

I could hear the parts she didn't let out with her mouth.

Lilia has really looked after me quite a bit.

"...Umm, after all does holding onto panties make me into a pervert I wonder?"

"Pervert? Is that what you heard from Aisha?"

Lilia suddenly stood up.

Woah woah, stop stop.

Please sit.

Lilia made a small sigh.

"Since that child was allowed to move around relatively freely, someone may have taught her something weird I guess."

It's something strange, yeah.

That's right, it is something strange.

"If she considers you a pervert for something like panties, I can't imagine what would happen if she was employed in the Asura Royal Palace..."

"The Asura Royal Palace? Come to think of it, you used to work in the inner palace didn't you."

{ C-Editor's note: The Japanese word for inner palace could also mean royal harem. }

"Yes. If I were to compare it to that place, danna-sama and Rudeus-sama wouldn't even qualify to enter as a pervert."

"I-is that so.."

I had always considered myself as considerably that, but I see... It's even more than that, huh.

I wonder if the Asura Royal Palace is that sort of place.

After thinking about it, even the nobles of the remote regions were into the race-race after all.

No, it's not limited to the Greyrat family, the Shirone Royal Family was pretty bad as well.

"Inside there were cages for women as well."

"No, it's fine without telling me the concrete details."

Anymore than this is no good.

"In any case, for the higher ranked nobles and royalty, many of them have perverted interests. If I were to compare you to them, having an interest in the underwear of the one you're longing for is still normal."

Lilia made eyes looking far into the distance.

I'm sure she's remembering some bad things.

"Please take good care of father."

"I understand and will comply."

"Ah, I'll give you some travelling money, but if it seems like you're lacking then try to find one of fathers' subordinates in the Adventurer's Guild."

"I understand and will comply."

"I think you can trust the soldiers escorting you, but since the other side is unknown, please take care of yourself."

"There's no problem. We're already acquainted."

"Ah, I see, ummm..."

"Rudeus-sama."

While I was thinking of various things, Lilia suddenly stood up and walked over.

And then she hugged me with my head in her chest.

Her voluptuous chest was being pressed against my face.

Reflexively my nasal breathing got rough.

"Umm, Lilia-san, it's touching?"

"Rudeus-sama hasn't changed since the past."

While Lilia was saying that she made a small laugh.

The next day.

Just before we were about to depart.

Eris, Ruijerd, and I were doing final checks on the carriage to make sure if there were any deficiencies.

If it were to break down on the way, we would be in trouble after all.

Lilia and the others decided to leave ahead of us.

It seems they have a person who can repair the carriage.

I wonder if it would be good for me to learn when I have spare time.

"The Owner-san, The Owner-san!"

Aisha came trotting along.

"What is it?"

"Just a bit."

Then she started to pull on the hem of my clothes, she's trying to bring me somewhere.

I wonder why.

For the time being, I exchanged a glance with Ruijerd and followed after her.

The place I was taken to was a thicket by the roadside.

Aisha crouched down then made a gesture for me to sit down as well.

I crouched.

It's just like a secret talk.

No, it is a secret talk.

"The Owner-san, to be honest I have a secret request to make of you."

"A request? If it's something I can do."

If it's a request from my cute little sister then, I want to try to grant it as much as possible.

I'm hated by Norn, but I don't want to be hated by Aisha too.

Up until now it seems to be a good feeling, but that is because I'm The Owner after all.

If I were to open up as her older brother, she might look at me with eyes as if I'm trash.

"Somehow, please allow me to join you on your journey as an ally."

After hearing that, my eyes turned into dots.

....Lilia, huh.

"Were you told that by your mother?"

Since she was rejected directly, then this time she's going with the plan to have her daughter ask in tears.

She can do it surprisingly well, that person.

"No, there's no way my mother would say its okay."

"Hnn?"

Oh?

Just the other day Lilia asked if she could go together with me though.

What does this mean?

"My mother has always said it habitually. In the future, I will be serving my brother born of a different mother."

"She has said that."

"However!"

Aisha pounded the ground with her fist.

"I have to say sorry to that!"

It seems that things about me are greatly sorry.

Probably because I get excited from panties.

I'm sorry.

"We just talked about that the other day, right. My older brother is a pervert. I understand what The Owner-san said, but I definitely don't want to serve that kind of person."

"Is that so?"

I don't think you should say that much though...

"Please without fail save me. Like you just saved me the other day. From the hands of the pervert demon, gallantly!"

"I'll have to turn that down."

Don't joke about that.

If we were to journey together, my name will be exposed won't it.

If at the time when it's exposed she were to know about the lie then...

Oh?

However, since she's family, one day it will be exposed right?

"Why not? He's a pervert!"

"That is, something in your imagination, it isn't reality."

Alright. Here we should clear up a bit of the misunderstanding.

If I leave it to Lilia, I'm sure I'll always remain as a pervert after all.

She said there was something more amazing in the Royal Palace, but unless you actually see it you wouldn't understand.

"It's not like you've actually met right?"

"However, the panties were certainly there!"

"There could have been some sort of reason for them."

"What kind of reason could there be for treating panties preciously!?"

Even if you ask why? Why?

Look, for example a certain religion, if a Sage keeps a Holy Object on their body then it raises its divinity right?

Not to mention it's panties you know?

It's the panties Roxy used during her time of solo play you know?

It's the item of a first class player you know?

If you were a listener paying attention to the scene then, what would you do?

You take care of it with the utmost devotion of course!

The motto of my sect is "Let's take both sexual desire and study seriously!"

It's the double standard of erotic study.

Well, putting that aside.

"That Roxy person was the home teacher to your older brother right?"

"Yes."

"In other words, she should be a person who had a great influence on your older brother."

"I wonder if that is the case..."

Of course, I'm the one saying it so there's no mistake.

Something that I wasn't able to do in nearly 20 years, she's the person who allowed me to do it after all.

The reason why I'm living like this right now is all thanks to her.

"If it's something that person kept on their body then, all the more reason you would want to keep it, is what I think."

"Yeah..."

It doesn't seem like she accepts it.

Well then, I'll try giving her something belonging to The Owner-san who just saved her life and see.

I took a single thing out of my bag.

"This forehead protector is something I've always been using."

"What is this, suddenly?"

"I will give this to you."

I took out the forehead protector from my luggage and handed it over to her.

In the past, it's something I bought in the Town of Rikarisu.

It was put through the laundry, but since I've used it quite a bit, you could say it's got my sweat soaked into it.

After putting that into her hands, she made a bit of a taken back face..

"Ah! Somehow, I think I get it."

"It's not something with words, have you understood with your heart?"

"Yes, I've understood it! My older brother was not a pervert right!"

Since that's the case.

I decided to part with the old forehead protector.

This child sure is easy.

"The Owner-san is truly a good person right!"

"I wouldn't say all that much."

Sparkle, Rudeusmile.

Aisha was looking at me with sparkling eyes, but she suddenly seemed to realize it and whispered "Ah, that's right."

"Right now, my older brother is missing. If he were to die somewhere, would it be alright for me to serve The Owner-san?"

"No, I wonder about that."

"Is that no good? If I tell mother I think she will understand though, I think I'll grow pretty well! Into a body that attracts men!"

"Attracts men... do you understand the meaning of that?"

"It means a body that makes you want to make children, right?"

"Children shouldn't talk about making children."

You might be abducted by large fiends and your red rice day might be annihilated.

Really, who was it that you taught this.

"Is it absolutely no good...? Do you hate me?"

My little sister with her eyes watering.

Humu, adorable.

Of course I don't hate you.

"I understand, if you can't find your older brother, it's fine."

"Really?"

It's painful to deceive.

By the time she has grown up the journey will be over, we'll be able to live together getting along as a family again.

"Then, you're not angry that I said you were a pervert, right?"

"Yeah, of cour....eh?"

What did she say, just now?

"Thank you older brother!"

In the end, she said that, and suddenly stood up.

Then she just ran over to the three guards waiting at the carriage like that.

I proceeded to the carriage in a daze.

Aisha was waving her hand, Lilia as well slightly lowered her head.

And then finally.

"Bye bye, older brother! We'll meet again! It's a promise!"

The carriage went.

I watched that and returned to our carriage.

Still in a daze.

Eris was making a spoiled face and said.

"What's with that, after all it's already been exposed, hasn't it?"

"E-eh...?"

Ruijerd pulled on the reins of the horse.

The carriage started to move.

In the first place, if I think about it, there were many places to realize it.

In the beginning they yelled out my name as well, after that there was also the time she talked with Eris and Ruijerd, there was probably a time when they suddenly leaked Rudeus.

That means it was already exposed.

Then... why was she pretending not to know?

Think, think.

I quickly realized the answer.

Most likely she wants to make sure if her older brother was a person she could trust.

If I had continued to call myself The Owner there and tried to bring her along, there's no doubt she would have abandoned me.

"Ha ha."

After realizing that, I laughed.

Aisha is really clever, a smart child.

I'm looking forward to her future.

We are heading off towards the Asura Kingdom.

Heading west from Shirone Kingdom and continuing further.

It's a flat path and the weather is so good that I feel like I'll casually fall asleep.

On the sides of the road, there are plains as far as you can see.

In front, you can faintly see the Red Dragon Mountain Range.

I saw three shadows slowly circling above the Mountain Range.

It's peaceful.

Occasionally thieves who can't read the mood come out and tell us to leave our money and go, or say other things of similar nature, but just as they wished for, Eris gives them her fist and they run away in shame.

It seemed like at first Ruijerd was just going to go with slaughtering them all, but after listening to the situation, it seems most of them were just troubled being unable to eat, so for the time being we let them go.

Just once though.

Even though it's the Central Continent, the road around this area seems to have some slightly bad public order.

I wish they'd learn from the Magic Continent.

Thieves would never come out there.

Although, 10x as many monsters would come out compared to thieves.

I wonder if people being able to do as they please is proof of peace.

It seems if you head a bit further northward, a lot of small countries are jumbled together at war, and the thieves increased thanks to the influence of that war...

In any case, it sure is peaceful.

The Red Dragon Mountain range is a very long mountain range that covers the Central Continent.

The mountains are stretched out splitting the Central Continent into three parts, and throughout the range there are Red Dragons inhabiting it.

Red Dragons could be called the strongest monsters of the Central Continent.

They could also be called an absolute strength.

Each one holds S rank strength individually and yet they create packs of several hundred.

What is worth a special mention is their detection ability.

They'll absolutely never overlook a living organism that enters their territory.

Absolutely.

They won't even let a living being the size of a dog pass by, no matter how strong of a monster it is, if it enters into the territory of the Red Dragons, the swarm will eat it without even leaving a bone behind.

It's unknown how they manage to detect things that enter into their territory.

If you enter their territory, you die.

That's common sense in this world.

There are a number of categories of Dragons in this world.

Pretty much all of them are over A rank individually.

Among them, the ones that are said to be the most dangerous are the Red Dragons.

Individually they're said to be at lowest S rank, the scale of their territory is just too large, and at any rate they move in flocks.

The Red Dragons have settled down there; therefore, the Mountain Range was called Red Dragon Mountain Range.

It's a mountain range that is impossible to pass.

That is the Red Dragon Mountain Range.

Even with them being that much of a dangerous being, as a matter of fact the Red Dragons have a single weakness.

Their combat ability is high, but their flight ability is crude, therefore, they can't take off from a level ground.

They normally jump off from a high cliff in order to fly, otherwise a somewhat long slope is required to build up speed.

While the mountains in Central Continent are high, fundamentally it's nothing but plains and forests.

Therefore, the people living in the plains are rarely afraid of being attacked by the Red Dragons.

Although, it seems there are occasionally foolish individuals.

They might get involved with something like turbulence and fall down into the plains.

Such dragons are known as Stray Dragons.

Even if the lord of the skies falls to the ground, it's still a strong upper A rank.

With their overwhelming power, when they go into a rage, it seems that an enormous amount of damage is done.

If they fall near a human village, it's something the country raises an army to subjugate.

Emergency jobs are sent out, it's an uproar almost like poking a beehive.

Although, generally they will fall a good distance away from human villages.

Even though the rank of the job is S rank, in order to play it safe, seven or eight parties gather together, set traps, and hunting it is unexpectedly simple it seems.

Incidentally, it seems the Dragons' meat and bones are close to the highest quality of materials for equipment.

Also, the skin of Dragons has a high value as an article of art.

Of course, it's not just the skin, the entirety of the Dragon isn't spared and everything is used.

If 10 people were to equally split up the reward for subjugating just 1, it seems they'll earn enough money to go crazy for at least a year.

Putting it into detail, it seems one dragon is worth about 100 Asura Gold Coins.

{ C-Editor's note: About $100,000 in USD. }

Since the raw materials are valuable as well, it seems even freshly raised C ranks who can't accept the job, recklessly attempt to challenge it.

It seems that most of them are turned into fried meat and suppressed with a chomp.

The Red Dragon Mountain Range is such a place that has large amounts of those Red Dragons inhabiting it.

There is a single place that can be used for passage there.

Valleys surrounded by steep cliffs known as the "Red Dragon's Upper Jaw" and "Red Dragon's Lower Jaw".

These are valleys that have existed since the time of the second Great Human-Demon war and even at that time it was the only path that had a width which armies could pass through.

It seems that Laplace anticipated this and released the Red Dragons in the Red Dragon Mountain Range.

Since Ruijerd is the one saying it, there's no mistake.

We're heading towards the part that connects the southern and western parts of the Central Continent, the "Red Dragon's Lower Jaw".

After we pass there, it's Asura Kingdom.

However, the fact is that we have to circumvent the mountains. In other words a roundabout way.

There's one young lady here that doesn't like the roundabout way.

"Even without having to take a detour, since we have Ruijerd here we should be able to pass something like the Red Dragon Mountain Range!"

In other words, it's Eris' rash manner after seeing the small Red Dragons circling above the Red Dragon Mountain range.

"Don't be unreasonable."

Ruijerd replied with a bitter smile.

Even I thought it might be possible if it was Ruijerd, but it seems as expected even he wouldn't be able to pass the Red Dragon Mountain Range on foot.

Then, it's impossible for me as well.

Since I can't win against Ruijerd, after all.

"But Rudeus might be able to do it right!"

"No, that's impossible, what are you saying."

It seems that somehow or other Eris wants to experience exterminating a dragon.

It's not that I don't understand her feelings, but I'd like to say "wait just a bit."

As expected we have things we can and cannot do.

"Although, Ghyslaine said once before she defeated a Stray Red Dragon!"

"Is that true?"

I never heard that story.

It might not be a story from her Adventurer days.

If it were a story from her adventurer days, then I'm sure Paul would have bragged about it at least once.

"It seems before she became a Sword Saint she fought with a Red Dragon!"

"Ohh, alone?"

"Umm, I think she said it was together with around five other Advanced level swordsmen."

"Then, how many died?"

"Just two."

You idiot.

Doesn't that mean there's a 40% mortality rate?

Then why do you think I would be able to win against a Red Dragon?

"In the first place, the difference in strength between a Stray Dragon and the Dragons in the mountain is completely different. After all, they fly in the sky you know?"

The fact that they're flying in the sky means that they have a large advantage over people.

The fact that they possess the flight attribute means they're not weak against the bow.

Not to mention a flock.

Among the monsters that make a flock in this world, generally they all know the method to hunt with the flock.

Never mind the Dragon Kings that make flocks of at most a few in number as they act, or the Black Dragons that don't even make a flock in the first place, there's no way I could do anything but give up and be torn to pieces by the Red Dragons that come to attack in the hundreds.

"Right, Ruijerd-san?"

"Yeah, there's no one out there who can do anything to a flock of Red Dragons. If there were, it would only be the upper-ranked gods of the [Seven Great World Powers].

Most likely, even if it were the North God or Sword God they would be forced to go back the way they came from before they even make it halfway."

"Is that the case?"

If it were the [Seven Great World Powers] then I thought something like a Dragon would be a simple opponent though...

"Yeah, most likely they would be exhausted on the way. Since you wouldn't even be able to sleep."

I see now.

Several hundred dragons would continue to attack you throughout the night preventing you from sleeping.

Before it's even a problem of combat ability, the amount of resources they crush you with is overwhelming.

"Although, the King of those Red Dragons obeyed Laplace. Therefore, if it's the upper ranks of the [Seven Great World Powers] then they could probably do it.

Although, if it was the [Seven Great World Powers] of the past, then any of the seven would probably have been able to pass through the territory of the Red Dragons."

I get it now.

The currently sealed fourth, "Demon God", and the current fifth, "Death God".

It seems around there is a wall that can't be overcome.

"However, someday you want to try hunting at least one right?"

Today, Eris is just as dangerous as always.

Then someday, I'm sure I'll be dragged in as well.

In order to prepare for the day that is destined to come, I should start preparing counter-plans now for Red Dragons.

It's peaceful every day.

A certain day when we were still several days away from arriving at the Red Dragon's Lower Jaw.

I was thinking about Hitogami while making food.

The things that happened the other day at Shirone Kingdom.

I was comparing that advice and my own actions.

And then, I was threading it together with the information I heard after.

For example, when I escaped at the start using Earth Lance, if I had listened to the story of the soldiers.

I might have found out at that point that Roxy wasn't in the castle.

Then, I would have been able to avoid Pax's trap.

In reverse thanks to that I managed to be caught in the trap.

I'm sure the letter content would have been different as well if I had earned Ginger's cooperation.

In that case, I most likely wouldn't have made contact with Zanoba, but after all things should have still progressed smoothly.

Hmmm.

Honestly, the fact that I managed to meet Zanoba, as expected, was something I thought was strange afterward.

It allowed me to advance forward in a direction that was convenient for me.

It could be that besides just having the ability to see the future, Hitogami has the power to change the future as well.

No, regardless of the circumstances, Zanoba was in that place.

It's not like Zanoba's personality abruptly changed.

Even if for example I wasn't holding onto a doll, I have the feeling that Ginger would have drawn in Zanoba to me somehow.

Zanoba was holding onto the Roxy doll after all and he wanted to talk about it as well.

I'm sure I would have still pointed out the matter of the moles.

What about the false names?

At the very least thanks to the fact that I didn't name myself with my real name, I was able to get along with Aisha.

However, that itself wasn't really related to the incident was it...

In reverse, if for example I had used my real name there I wonder what would have happened.

It seems like Aisha thought I was a pervert.

In the end, we were able to clear up the misunderstanding.

However, at the very least by the point we arrived at the inn, she shouldn't have been sure I was her older brother yet.

Alone together in an inn with just her pervert of an older brother.

If it were me then I would recognize the crisis to my chastity.

For example say you're going to the bathroom then run away through the gap.

I wonder where she could have run away to.

Since she said she wanted to send the letter, she might have gone to steal some money.

If she has money, then she would be able to send the letter is what I told her.

If it's the clever her, then she could have used that money to buy some stationery, then asked someone on the path the way to the Adventurers Guild, and then send the letter there.

No, the soldiers found her once.

If she had gone to the Adventurer's Guild she would have been found by the soldiers.

I'm sure she could have entrusted it to another person.

However, she has no acquaintances.

If she hadn't been found by the soldiers in a dangerous situation, aimlessly walking around the town.

I would have searched for her.

I wonder how I would have searched for her.

With Ruijerd, I'm sure.

If I were to know that Aisha had disappeared, I'm sure I would have panicked and without thinking about the consequences fired an explosion magic into the sky, and then made contact with Ruijerd.

And then I would have said I found my little sister but she ran away, then we would have searched.

And then the lost Aisha would be left in the care of Ruijerd.

Ruijerd is kind to children.

I'm sure Aisha would have trusted him.

Yeah, after all, there's no problem.

The more I think about it, there's meaning in Hitogami's advice.

Even in the rough flow of my actions, it was made to reach a single conclusion.

Even until now, most likely it was the same.

The fact that we had Ruijerd save us and even if we hadn't accepted his help as well.

It still would have ended with us going on a journey together with Ruijerd.

After meeting Kishirika, no matter which Demon Eye I had received as well, I would have still gotten captured by the Dedorudia race in the Great Forest.

That guy is giving advice after thinking about a variety of things.

However, as usual the only thing I can't see is his objective.

If he would properly tell me about that, then even I would be a bit more honest.

Just being honest that is...

Just like that I was thinking while glancing at the sky.

Eris and Ruijerd are training again today without fail.

I was watching that as I made food.

In the start I was mixed in as well, but probably because of the difference in basic strength, I gave up halfway through.

Recently, Eris' strength has been eye opening.

One year ago, as long as I used my Demon Eyes, I could leisurely win.

If it was the Eris from that time, I could have probably pulled down her panties in the middle of battle.

However, now it's impossible.

If I give it my all while putting magic power into my Demon Eye the one who is standing at the end may be me, but most likely it will be a very close match.

Of course, if it's a fight with a certain distance, then my chances of winning go up simply through tactics.

The possibility of slipping into and touching her breasts in the confusion has been picked off.

However, I wonder if it's the thing called talent.

I think I'm giving it quite a bit of effort in my own way, but Eris is going above that.

The amount and quality of her hard work are both above me.

I think I need to work harder myself, but my body can't keep up.

It could be that this body doesn't have all that much physical strength.

I thought about it according to my previous life's standards, but according to this world's standard, I would fall short of average.

Since there's no one else around the same generation as Eris it's hard to tell.

While I was thinking about that, it seems the training for today has ended.

Recently Ruijerd has stopped asking Eris, "Understand now?"

I'm sure she can understand now even if he doesn't ask.

Eris is absorbing it well.

"Eris."

By the time they had returned to where I was, suddenly Ruijerd called out to Eris.

"What?"

Eris took a well-squeezed cloth from me and put her hand inside of her clothes to wipe up the sweat.

Previously she would have wiped down the sweat of all of her upper body with her bra, but since I would get excited it turned into the current situation.

I'm sure she feels disgusting being covered in sweat.

I'm sorry about that.

"It's fine if you call yourself a warrior from today on."

Ruijerd said it while plunking down on the ground with his back.

A warrior, huh.

Not a swordsman but a warrior.

Those known as warriors in this world are just not simply swordsmen and there's no large difference between their combat ability.

Therefore... Hnn?

Then I realized the meaning of Ruijerd's words there.

Eris as well, with her hands raised around her armpit stopped moving.

"....That means."

"You've become an adult."

Ruijerd said it quietly.

Eris made an awkward movement and threw the cloth in my direction.

I caught that, and then used a water technique to wet both sides, then wrung it out and dusted it.

Eris came to sit by my side.

I have recollection of this expression.

It's the face she made when she handed over my staff.

It's the kind of face she makes when she's so happy she wants to grin, but she feels she has no choice but to make a quiet face.

"Bu-but Ruijerd, I still haven't been able to win against you at all?"

"No problem, you already possess more than enough power as a warrior."

This is that.

If you were to ask and see, it might be something like a license.

Similar to how Ghyslaine had authorized her to name herself as an Advanced level of the Sword God style, Ruijerd has given permission for her to name herself as a Warrior.

I guess this would be something to congratulate her on.

"Eris, congratulations."

Eris' eyes were reflecting black and white, she might not have felt that was the reason she did her training.

"Ru-rudeus, could this be a dream, could you please pinch me a bit?"

"You won't hit me if I pinch you?"

"I won't hit you."

Since I got a promise, I tightly pinched her nipple.

Obviously, gently.

Oh wait, in this case it would be indecently, I guess?

Eris' fist was not gentle.

"Where are you pinching?"

"Please excuse me? But it's not a dream. If it were a dream it wouldn't hurt this bad."

I, with a pale face holding my jaw, said that to Eris who had a bright red face while holding her chest.

"I see, a warrior.."

Eris was looking at her own palm while coming to some kind of realization.

"However, don't be conceited. It just means I won't treat you as a child anymore, got it?"

He said it in a style almost like a parent warning a child about something.

"....Yes!"

Eris said that while making a meek face.

Well, the area around her cheeks is twitching like it's about to turn into a grin.

The food on that day was somehow a little better tasting than usual.

That night, around the time Eris fell asleep, suddenly something was bothering me so I opened my eyes.

I started talking to Ruijerd who was keeping guard while half-sleeping.

"Why did you say that sort of thing to Eris?"

Ruijerd opened his half-open eyes and looked at me.

"Because no matter how long has passed, you continue to treat that girl as a child."

...Well now.

Whether Eris is a child or not.

Well, she's a child.

If we were to compare to me in my previous life, she would be my junior by 20 years.

Not to mention, since the time when she was much smaller, I've been leading her around holding her hand, while being hit, and teaching her various things.

If you were to call it a child, it would be a child.

However, certainly Eris has grown-up recently.

It's not just her figure.

Just a bit, she started to bear in mind her judgement.

I feel like she's gone around acting violently without thinking about it less, compared to the past.

She still has ways to go when it comes to similar things, but I think the frequency has definitely decreased.

If you say it then I guess so.

I wonder if it's part of the process for her to turn from a child to an adult.

I can't really say with the compliment that I'm a splendid adult as well.

However...

"Hnnn..."

I was thinking about it and Ruijerd quietly closed his eyes.

"Well, I guess it can't be helped, huh..."

I wonder what it is that can't be helped.

I didn't properly think about the meaning of it.

I don't know, but I felt some kind of bad premonition.

"Ruijerd-san."

"What is it?"

"Please put one of these gold coins in your chest pocket."

After saying that, I took a gold coin out of my bag, and threw it to Ruijerd.

He hesitated.

Since his coat didn't have pockets.

Even so it seems he managed to succeed in sticking the gold coin in a seam near his chest.

"And, what is this?"

"A good luck charm."

I was satisfied with that and fell back to sleep.

Several days later.

Four months after we departed from Shirone.

We've arrived at the "Red Dragon's Lower Jaw".

We arrived in Asura Kingdom.

And then, we came to realize.

All things happen abruptly.

Bad things happen at times when you're unable to predict or prevent them.

Suddenly parents can die,

Suddenly your siblings can come to beat you up,

Suddenly a truck can come to hit you,

Suddenly you can be reincarnated in another world,

Suddenly your father can come to attack you and then force you into being a home teacher for a young lady,

Suddenly you could be thrown to another continent as well.

Most likely everything is a result of chance.

Furthermore, we would come to realize.

The severity of this world.

The fact that people can simply die.

The fact that any person anywhere can all too easily die.

The fact that there are no exceptions.

Only myself.

Or the fact that only people in my surroundings aren't conveniently allowed to live long lives.

Finally, at this late point.

We finally came to realize this reality.

The origin of the phenomenon known as death, the fact that a person nearby can suddenly disappear.

And then foolishly.

I was unable to connect that together with the truth at that time.

If at that time, I had properly understood the truth, if I had been thinking of acquiring a strength that wouldn't lose to anyone.

I may not have regretted it that much.

If here with this event, I had aimed to be the strongest in the world.

I may not have regretted it so much.

Even after such a thing happened, I was unable to get my hands on the desire for power.

There is just one thing that I can say.

As expected of Eris.

Red Dragon's Lower Jaw.

A valley with just a single main road continuing down it.

It's not straight like the Holy Sword Highway.

However, that doesn't change the fact that it's a single path with no forks.

In the space between national borders is a region that doesn't belong to any specific country.

After passing by here it will be Asura Kingdom.

That guy came, just normally walking by.

On the opposite side of the road.

Silver hair, golden eyes, no particular equipment, wearing a simple white coat made out of some kind of fur.

Neither riding on a horse, nor riding on a carriage, just walking along.

It was a man.

Going from my impression it was at most, "A guy with a bad look in his eyes."

This man had a serious case of Sanpaku eyes.

{ C-Editor's note: Refers to eyes in which either the white space above or below the iris is revealed. }

Rather than that, what my eyes stopped on was.

At his side.

There was a single black haired young girl.

I had a feeling I had met her somewhere before, but I can't remember.

There are few people with pure black hair in this world.

Even if it looks black, after taking a closer look it's a blackish-brown or closer to grey.

I had no intention of remembering a stranger based on their hair color, but I have a feeling it wouldn't be strange for me to remember her black hair.

Even though that's the case, I can't remember.

There's a reason why this young girl especially entered my sight.

That face.

There was a mask worn on her face.

If you were to ask if there's a characteristic, there would be but if you were to ask if there wasn't any, there wouldn't be.

It was pure white, with nothing written on it, a mask with no kind of ornament on it.

If I were to compare it then it would be like the mask from Dirty Mask.

It just stood out.

In regards to this world, I've never seen a person who wore a mask like this before.

It doesn't seem like fashion.

"...!!"

It's not like I was charmed by the girl, but at this point I hadn't realized that Ruijerd in the driver's seat had a pale face.

Eris was the same.

Each step closer the man took, that expression became even more severe, while holding onto the handle of her sword with enough strength that it had become pure white.

When the man recognized our figures he tilted his head with an "Oh?"

"Hmm... You, could it be you're from the Superd race?"

The man narrowed his Sanpaku eyes.

When I saw that I thought of a doubt.

The current Ruijerd has no hair and the jewel on his forehead is hidden.

How did he know I wonder?

I don't know, does he exude some kind of Superd smell?

While I was thinking such, Ruijerd turned around.

"Is he an... acquaintance...?"

My question paused partway through.

Ruijerd's face was different.

It was far too excessively different from normal.

All of the blood from his white skin had been drained.

The cold sweat was pouring, the hand that was holding his spear was trembling.

This is... I have a recollection of this expression.

It's terror.

"Rudeus, absolutely do not move, Eris as well."

Ruijerd's voice was trembling.

While I continued not knowing what was going on, I silently nodded.

Eris' face was bright red, it seemed like she was ready to jump out at any moment.

Both the arms and legs were trembling.

Are they frightened?

I'm sure there's that, but even more than that, Eris is showing hostility towards him.

However, he's an opponent who I don't know.

During some point when I don't know, did these two come across this man?

For the time being I continued to watch over the situation.

"Hnn? That voice, is it Ruijerd Superdia. Since you don't have any hair I couldn't recognize you for a moment. Why are you in this place?"

The man casually approached us.

Ruijerd prepared his spear.

I don't know.

Why is Ruijerd being so cautious of this man?

I don't know.

For the time being since the two were afraid I opened my demon eye.

Putting it frankly, it was with light feelings.

<The man's figure turned into several tens of blurs>

It was so blurred that I couldn't even tell where the silhouette was.

What is this?

"Hnn? That red hair over there is Eris Boreas Greyrat, huh. The other one is... Who? Well, it's fine. I see, I've seen it Ruijerd Superdia. For someone who likes children as much as you, you've come this far bringing these two, who were thrown to the Magic Continent in that teleport incident, back home."

Eris yelled in a surprised voice at the man who nodded with a face that appears to know everything.

"Wh-why do you know my name?"

Eris' words brought me even further into confusion.

Is it someone you don't know?

Is it your first meeting?

No, it's Eris, it wouldn't be strange for her to have forgotten.

Even though I say that, in this world I've almost never seen anyone with silver hair.

Those characteristic-like Sanpaku eyes and it seems like only Eris and Ruijerd are feeling some kind of bizarre sensation.

If they've already met once, then as expected you would usually remember.

"Who are you? How do you know my name?"

Ruijerd thrust his spear at the man.

It seems it's not an acquaintance of Ruijerd as well.

Eris and Ruijerd say they don't know the man.

I don't know the man.

The man doesn't know me.

However, the man knows Eris and Ruijerd.

Well, that's fine on its own.

Ruijerd is famous.

His name isn't all that well known on the Central Continent, but if you were to go to the Magic Continent generally everyone would know his name and face.

In regards to Eris I don't really know, but if you were to speak of a Red Haired Bishoujo Swordsman, then you could probably hit it with some guesswork.

But, what's strange isn't that.

The obviously strange point isn't that kind of thing.

It's the behavior.

The atmosphere if you could call it that.

The difference in behavior between the man and these two is far too different.

The man's behavior is extremely friendly.

His tone of voice as well, if you were to ask which way, it has some happiness mixed in as if one met an old friend in an unexpected place.

In contrast to Ruijerd, it seems like he's about ready to attack at any moment.

However, he's not moving his hands.

He's clearly looking at him with hostility, but he's not commencing his attack.

I don't understand the reason.

Even Eris who is always trying to take the first move isn't moving a bit.

I can't imagine it's just because Ruijerd told us not to move.

"This is a strange place to meet but... It seems like you're doing well. Then it's fine."

The man took a good look at Ruijerd who was holding the spear towards him, but soon after, he laughed to himself, and took one step backwards.

After seeing that, the girl wearing the mask let out a small whisper.

"Is it fine?"

"It can't be helped at the current point in time."

I couldn't comprehend it, shortly after the conversation excluding the subject,

"I've been a hindrance to you."

The man slowly started to walk just to our side.

The black haired girl followed afterwards.

Ruijerd never took his eyes off.

Of course, Eris as well.

"About me... eventually, you'll understand."

In the end he quietly said that.

A profound meaning.

This man knows something.

I thought that intuitively.

I'm getting a similar feeling to the Hitogami from this man.

"Please wait a minute!"

Before I realized it I had called out to him.

The man turned around.

It was a surprised face.

And then, Eris and Ruijerd as well were looking at me with surprised faces.

"What is it? Who are you?"

"Ah, excuse me. I'm Rudeus Greyrat."

"It's a name I've never heard before."

Well it is our first meeting after all.

"No, Greyrat, huh. What's your parent's name?"

"Rather than that, won't you name yourself?"

"Hmmm... Well, I don't mind I guess. I'm Orsted."

Orsted.

A name I have no memory of hearing.

I don't know it to the point that I'm the same as the people who died and are apologizing in the other world.

After looking at Ruijerd, it seems like he doesn't know either.

"Ummm, are you an acquaintance of these two?"

"No, we haven't become acquaintances yet."

"Yet? What do you mean?"

"It's fine if you don't know. Then your parents?"

They were words that were bluntly refused.

Even though I answered your question, you should answer my question as well, huh.

Well fine.

I wouldn't be bothered over something to that degree.

"It's Paul Greyrat."

"...Hmmm? Paul shouldn't have a son. He should only have two daughters."

How rude.

He does you know, my father has a single son that looks quite similar to him.

An idiot son who left home and went all the way to Magic Continent to work.

"...Hnnn?"

There Orsted leaned his head like he realized something.

He slowly took steps towards me.

"Don't get any closer than that!"

"Yeah, I understand."

However he was threatened by Ruijerd and maintained his distance.

While closing a bit of the distance, he was taking a good look at my face.

I caught that gaze from the front.

"You don't avoid eye contact, do you?"

"Since the look in your eyes is scary, it feels like I might turn away any moment now."

"Hmmm, in other words, you aren't feeling any fear."

The man's brow dropped.

"Hmmm. That's strange. I have no memory of meeting you."

I don't either.

It's our first meeting.

I don't know a name like Orsted.

I have no recollection of his appearance either.

Not to mention he just keeps saying things that I have no idea what they are about.

Next, he finally said some words I could comprehend.

"You, could it be, you have heard of the words Human God, Hitogami before?"

That is right, finally.

Finally, that name.

Finally something that I could understand came out.

I'll say it clearly.

I was letting my guard down.

Even though it was something that no one had said until now.

Suddenly hearing it from another person's mouth, not to mention the fact that it was from the mouth of this man who keeps talking about things I can't understand.

There were no common points in the language to connect our conversation, so I thought, ah, if it's that even I understand.

With just that kind of light feeling about it.

I said it.

"I do, the one known as Hitogami comes out in my dreams..."

I suddenly saw a vision.

<Orsted's arm has gone through my chest>

At a speed almost as if he had teleported, it went straight through my chest.

I can't avoid it.

With just one second, it's too short.

"Rudeus!"

In a moment the vision of it going through disappeared, Ruijerd forced himself in front of me.

The thrust stopped at Ruijerd and I fell backwards.

The man was looking over Ruijerd's shoulder.

They were cold eyes.

"I see, you were the pawn of Hitogami."

It's a false accusation.

Ruijerd shouted.

"Run away! Rudeus!"

"You're in the way, Ruijerd."

Ruijerd swung his spear.

I couldn't move.

In the first place, there wasn't enough time to run.

There were several seconds before Ruijerd suffered damage.

He twisted around like a baby, I couldn't do anything but silently watch.

Ruijerd is strong.

He's supposed to be strong.

In the end, over the course of this journey Eris hasn't been able to get even a single good hit on him.

Five hundred years worth of combat experience should have made him worthy of being unrivaled.

He's supposed to be a man with strength above King Class.

The fact that such a Ruijerd would lose was something that I could clearly see.

I saw through the whole thing while watching with my demon eye.

In terms of time, it was at most 10 seconds.

Orsted was by no means faster than Ruijerd.

Just, each time Ruijerd made a single move, just a little bit, Ruijerd started to lose his advantage.

That continued to repeat one time, three times, four times.

While Ruijerd was moving he was digging his own grave.

A little, again a little, he was gradually being cornered.

Each time he received an attack his stance collapsed just a bit, each time he went in to attack he had the initiative reversed on him.

Ability.

There was certainly nothing but ability there.

Even I could clearly see it, Orsted was striking down Ruijerd.

Orsted was overwhelmingly exceeding him.

Even looking from my eyes, I could clearly understand it.

It was a brilliant technique.

With the most minimum movement possible, yet he was rendering Ruijerd powerless at his fastest speed.

If you could realize that, it would most likely end up with those movements.

He completely saw through the distance with Ruijerd, he always left his body in the inner part of the spears effective range.

Ruijerd was using his mastered combination at his specialty distance.

That was being destroyed as if it were being ridiculed, staggered, gaps were being created, attacks that you absolutely can't take were being guarded.

Most likely, if he were to try and kill he would have been able to do it.

However, that guy wasn't doing it.

He knocked him unconscious.

He was going easy with that Ruijerd as an opponent.

And then.

Ruijerd was unable to do anything.

All of his means disappeared.

It was checkmate.

A fist very deeply landed in Ruijerd's solar plexus, subsequently a second fist grazed the tip of his jaw.

The third hit, a fist that reaped Ruijerd's consciousness attacked his temple.

He rotated twice and then fell to the ground.

Ruijerd wasn't moving.

He wasn't dead, but he wasn't moving.

Orsted could have probably gotten a single hit whenever.

While going for the second hit he probably devoted to it.

However, in order to steal Ruijerd's consciousness it required three hits.

Even though that was able to render Ruijerd helpless, it could have been called the fastest performance.

"Now then."

"Uuuuaaa!"

The one who shouted wasn't I.

It was Eris.

She moved in front of me, she faced Orsted with a flash of the drawn sword and fired it off.

"...Hidden Technique, [Streaming Current]"

In regards to Eris it didn't cost Orsted any time.

Just, he only caught her sword gently on the palm of his hand.

At least that's how it looked to me.

With just that, Eris's body started to spin like a tornado and was blown away.

It was almost like the time when receiving a certain kill technique in battle and being blown off.

Eris flew out of that guy's field of vision.

The instant Ruijerd fell, Eris fired off a slash in his blind spot.

Even looking at it from my eyes, it was an attack that I thought had no shortcomings.

Without a thought for defense, a completely focused sword strike.

In regards to that, that guy reversed it one technique.

I don't know what was done specifically.

In my eyes, it just looked like his hand went to the side of Eris' sword.

In the next instant, Eris was sent flying with a tailspin.

No, I've seen something similar to that.

Paul showed it to me.

It was a technique of the Water God style.

It was a move that seemed like that with a much more honed and sharpened feel to it.

Every bit of the energy from her motion was returned to Eris.

"Gaha..!"

Eris crashed into a stone wall.

While scattering rocks all over the place she fell.

Since she has trained, I want to think that she wouldn't die.

However, it could be that something like her bones had fractured.

"Eris Boreas Greyrat. It seems you've advanced your skill with the sword considerably. I did think you had the potential, but... It's still rough."

"Uu...uu.."

Eris was trying to get up while letting out a groan.

If it was the usual me, I think I would have quickly tried to use healing magic on her.

However, I had other things to worry about than that.

His eyes were aimed at me.

It was in the blink of an eye.

In the blink of an eye the two of them were beaten.

I always had my demon eye opened.

One second ahead, what I saw there was despair.

No matter what timing I reacted with, I would just have it turned back on me.

The me one second ahead had all of my vital points being crushed.

Head, throat, heart, lung...

I could see visions of each of them being crushed, furthermore, I saw the vision that guy was there.

I didn't understand the meaning.

If this is true, then that means one second later there will be five of him.

I couldn't move.

I understood that everything was futile.

Continuing unable to do anything, one second passed.

He was right in front of me.

Right in front of me as I couldn't move.

It was a slide movement that would make you think he was completely ignoring the laws of physics.

He appeared in front of me almost as if he had teleported.

Abruptly, almost like an anime lacking the inbetween frames.

And then, by the time he had arrived in front of me, he had already finished the movements for his attack.

These sorts of movements I once saw somewhere in an old Fighting Game.

It was the game of the century, where every character had an eternal combo or instant death combo.

By the time I realized it I had already taken the palm of his hand unguarded.

Eight or so of my ribs simultaneously broke.

There was an impact.

However, my body was by no means sent flying backwards.

I felt a pressure almost as if my back had simultaneously received an attack as well.

The damage was all collected internally.

My lung was crushed.

"Goha!!"

In an instant blood came up my throat and I spit out blood.

"If you crush the lung of a magician it restricts them..."

He said that like nothing at all was happening to me while I was on my knees.

I was looking at my old blood spread out on the ground and somewhere in my heart I thought "I see now", and understood it.

It's fine if its just crushing the lung of a magician.

They won't be able to use incantations.

In reality at this point my healing magic has already been sealed.

Of course, incantations aren't the only thing I won't be able to do after a lung is crushed.

I won't be able to maintain life activity.

In other words, it's fatal.

"It's fine for you to die and tell the Hitogami that the Dragon God Orsted will never let you live."

Dragon God.

[Seven Great World Powers] Second ranked.

Orsted gave a glance over me who was crouched over holding my chest.

He pushed me over with his heel.

I saw that as negligence.

I've already received a fatal wound, putting aside defeat, death is already imminent.

In that condition, why did I still think to fight I don't know.

I wonder if it's because I saw Eris still trying to stand in the edge of my field of vision.

This man especially went out of his way to stop those two just in order to ascertain that I would die after.

In any case, I sent a Rock Bullet aimed flying at him.

Why didn't I use a stronger magic?

I have even more advanced magic that I could have used.

Even after, I couldn't understand it.

Just, I most likely used the magic that I was most accustomed to using.

A rock that was as hard as possible, at a velocity that was as fast as possible, with a rotation speed as fast as possible added.

I think that rock bullet was at such a high power that it surprised even me.

The man and I were at an exceedingly close distance, the rock bullet went flying at a red hot speed.

<Orsted turned around and pulverized the rock bullet with his fist>

And then it was smashed.

The rock fell.

After it fell to the ground there was a dinging sound almost as if it was metal.

Orsted looked at his own fist.

"Just now was that a rock bullet... that was an absurd power. To think this magic could leave a wound on my body..."

The skin on the back of Orsted's hand was coming off.

It was just a scratch.

It was no good, there was no point to the rock bullet.

I'm unable to damage this man.

"Your lung should have been crushed though... voiceless incantations? Is that a power you gained from the Hitogami? What other powers have you gained?"

Orsted looked over me as he was surveying.

Wouldn't it be fine if he just quickly stopped it?

He looked at me ruthlessly almost like watching over a grasshopper that has had its legs torn off.

It's painful...

"Geha...!"

I used wind magic and forcefully sent air into my lung.

I violently choked.

I have the feeling it was meaningless, but I forcefully send it in.

And then having accumulated air with all my might, I held my breath.

"Oh. That was an interesting usage, what meaning was there in that just now? Why don't you use voiceless incantations to heal your lung?"

Orsted put his hand on his chin and looked over me as if my suffering was of great interest.

In my fading consciousness I created a fire ball with my right hand.

In fire magic the more magic power you pour into it the greater the temperature rises and the scale increases.

If the rock bullet speed and hardness is no good then what about heat and explosive power?

"That is already fine. 'Ran Ma' [Disturb Magic]!"

That shallow thought was easily erased.

The instant I pointed my right hand at Orsted, the consistency of magic power gathering at the end of my hand was disturbed.

The magic power that continued to come out from the end of my hand never took shape and scattered.

Even in my hazy state I understood it.

It was interfering with the magic power coming out from my hand, by disturbing it he's cancelling out my magic.

It seems like something I could do as well, I carelessly thought.

My right hand is sealed.

However, I still have my left hand.

I started to construct magic with my other hand, I'll drive a shock wave into the middle of Orsted.

I heard a heavy sound ring out, Orsted was blown backwards.

Simultaneously, I was also able to fly back.

"Hmm... you managed to cancel [Magic Disturb]? No, it's different...it's a form of multiple incantations. Being able to do it with voiceless incantations what a skillful guy you are. This sort of feeling."

With his left hand the man pointed his finger and a small sound came out.

And then, at the man's feet a small window about 50 cm in every direction appeared.

It was a pretty window that was silver in color adorned with gaudy dragon ornaments.

"Oh, it's surprisingly strong."

Without minding anything, I fired off the most high power fire magic I could at Orsted.

My image was a huge blaze. A mushroom cloud.

Nuclear explosion.

I gathered my power in order to hit him, I simply continued to concentrate my magic power.

I wasn't really thinking about the fact that Eris and Ruijerd would be swallowed up in it.

I had already lost the power to think.

"Open, [First Dragon Gate]."

After the man muttered that the window opened.

In that instant, the magic power that was going to become magic in my left hand was sucked up.

The frame of the window made a noise as it cracked.

Simultaneously, an explosion happened near Orsted.

It was overwhelmingly smaller than what I was assuming.

He was able to simply avoid it.

"What a frightening amount of magic power. Even the [First Dragon Gate] couldn't bear this size. It's almost at the same level as Laplace. There's a reason for the Hitogami to make you into an apostle. However, why haven't you used healing magic on your lung since a while ago? Are you trying to get me to let my guard down?"

At that time, my consciousness was already on the verge of being interrupted.

I didn't have any judgment left.

Since a while ago I haven't been able to breathe sufficiently.

The man continued to look at me again as he surveyed.

Our eyes met.

"Is it over?"

Just a moment.

Orsted was closing in on the bewildered me.

I already had nothing left.

"Can you not do anything beyond magic?"

My magic has been sealed and my legs are cramped, I can't move.

In front of this overwhelming intent to kill, I can't do anything.

In the edge of my vision the border of the window disappeared.

However, I wasn't able to do anything.

"Go ba!!'

What I suddenly let out was the very small roar that I learned in the Dorudia village.

"Mu...!"

Orsted put himself on guard to my action.

However.

Obviously.

All I did was spit up blood, there was no effect.

"...Just magic power, huh. What were you planning?"

I already can't do anything.

My magic has been sealed, there's no chance of winning to be found with physical techniques.

The only thing left that I could do is nothing but prostrate myself.

"Well, it's fine, die."

But, Orsted wouldn't even let me prostrate myself.

"Ga fu..."

The arm sent flying at a super speed easily pierced through my body.

The fist certainly went through my heart.

Certainly a fatal wound.

A wound that wouldn't even be healed with healing magic.

"Too quick. Damn Hitogami. Did you make someone who can't even wear touki [Fighting Spirit] into a pawn. What were you planning?"

He pulled out his fist.

There it was, splattered with my blood.

I tried to stand.

My body isn't listening to what I say.

Against my will, my body crumbles.

At the edge of my vision, I saw Eris with her face raised looking at me blankly.

Our eyes met.

"Ahh...a... Ru...Rudeu...Rudeus...!"

In my fading consciousness, I calmly thought about it.

Ah, this is bad.

I don't want to die.

I haven't fulfilled my promise to Eris yet.

At least two more years, please wait two years.

Even though I could go without any regrets if that were the case...

It's healing.

Healing...

Gather the magic power, there's only one wound.

I can't do the incantation, my lung has a hole in it as well.

However, do it, slowly, gather the magic power.

Fix it, I'll fix it.

I can't afford to die yet.

"Uwaaaaahhhhh...aaa!"

Eris cried out.

It was a scream of bitterness.

"Was he someone precious? Sorry about that Eris Boreas Greyrat. However, one day will come when you understand. Let's go, Nanahoshi."

"Y-yes..."

Orsted leisurely walked away leading the girl.

Eris couldn't stand up.

Was it damage or was it terror.

Or else was it shock.

Only able to raise her shout, without a sword, just crying and shouting.

"Ruijerd! Ghyslaine! Grandfather! Father! Mother! Therese! Paul! It doesn't matter who, it doesn't matter who so just save him! Rudeus will die!"

This is bad, my consciousness is starting to fade.

Are you serious?

Is it really over here?

I don't want to...

...die...

—

"Hey Orsted, there's one thing that's bothering me but... Wouldn't it be better to leave this guy alive?"

On the verge of my consciousness stopping.

I had the feeling that I heard that voice.

Once I realized it, I'm in a white place.

A pure white space.

A space with nothing at all.

Normally, I would be filled with a disgusting feeling here.

The memories of my previous life are refreshed and I return to that familiar and unsightly 34 year old body.

Regret, conflict, vulgarity, and dependency.

The 12 years of my life start to fade almost like a dream, and my heart fills with dejection.

I fall into a feeling like I've been watching a long dream.

An irritation enough to tear it off fills my chest.

However, limited to this time, it didn't happen.

The usual degrading feelings didn't come rising to the surface.

In exchange I had a feeling of loss, like a gaping hole was opened in my chest.

After taking a look, my chest had an air hole opened in it.

{ C-Editor's note: A Reference to the Bleach manga and anime series. }

Ah, as I thought I died, didn't I...

"Yo!"

Suddenly I realized that Hitogami was standing there.

As usual he had that irritating smile floating on his face.

I don't know why, but today I didn't feel any irritation towards that.

I wonder why.

I wonder if it's because a gaping hole has opened up in my chest.

Or because I decided before to stop being belligerent.

...Well, it's fine.

"Well, I guess, it was unfortunate wasn't it."

Yeah, really, how unfortunate.

"...Today you're in a different mood than usual. Are you alright? Are you feeling bad?"

It's just as you can see, there's a hole opened up in my chest.

...Hey, there's one thing I'd like to hear from you, but is it okay?

"What is it?"

That guy, it's about that Orsted guy.

The instant he heard your name he started to attack me.

What's up with that?

"That guy is an Evil Dragon God after all, in regards to how I'm Virtuous, he recognizes me as an enemy."

Virtue, I see.

Well, you certainly are easy to consider as an enemy after all.

However, in that case wouldn't it have been fine for you to tell me about it in advance?

You, can see a variety of things, right?

I'm sure you knew I would meet with Orsted there, right?

If you had at least said one word about it, 'even if Orsted asks, don't let my name out', then even I would have...

"No, sorry, actually I can't see things in regards to the [Dragon God]. I can't see his future or his present. I didn't know that you would meet him."

Is that the case?

Why?

"Since that guy has that sort of curse on him."

Curse.

Is there that kind as well?

"Yeah. Were there none in your world? From the time they're born there's some kind of abnormality in their magic power, and they end up as a child with some kind of strange ability."

The concept of magic power doesn't even exist in my world after all.

There are people with a strong supernatural sense or ones that call themselves that, but honestly, they're lacking in credibility.

"Oh~, is that how it is. Over here, there are ones called Cursed Children, and there are some pretty strange ones. Orsted is one of those. Well, he also has another three or so curses as well."

Four curses.

That is quite amazing.

Come to think of it, I think I've heard about it.

Miko and Cursed Children was it?

"That's right. It's the same sort of thing. Humans like to differentiate between them."

I see.

Then, what kind of curses does that guy have?

"Look, Ruijerd and Eris were afraid of him, right? That is one of his curses. All manner of living beings in this world feel hate and fear towards him."

It makes him hated by everyone, that is... how do I put it, kind of sucks.

If it were me then my heart would quickly break.

I understand the feelings of the side being hated.

"Wait a second there, sympathy is unnecessary you know. Since the time he was born he was a bad guy that had planned to destroy the world you know."

Well, don't say it like that.

If you were to feel nothing but animosity from your surroundings, anyone would want to destroy one or two worlds.

Even I in my previous life, held those kinds of thoughts.

Everyone should just die, I would often complain on the World Wide Web.

"Hnn, is it that sort of thing. I hate that guy as well, so I don't really want to understand though."

Hn?

Ah, does the curse have an influence on you as well?

Being unable to see him, is the fault of that curse right?

The curse to be hated and the curse that makes it so you can't see him and...

What else?

"Who knows, since I can't see him I don't really know well."

I see...

However, even more so if it's that sort of dangerous guy.

I would have liked if you had told me beforehand that there were guys like that in this world.

That was way too sudden so I was troubled.

"Even I couldn't have possibly imagined that you would meet him. Who knows what the probability is of you walking around and meeting him in this vast world?"

Well, I guess so...

It's like finding a single grain of sesame seed in the desert.

Come to think of it, I didn't feel neither hate nor fear towards that guy.

Why is that?

"Wouldn't that be because you came from another world?"

People from another world are not influenced by the effects of a curse?

"That does seem to be the case. It was the same during the time when you met Ruijerd right?"

...Eh?

Wait just a second, what do you mean?

Does that mean Ruijerd is one of those Cursed Children as well?

"No~, that is the Curse from the Spear of Laplace. Laplace possessed the "Curse of Fear" as well though, then he transferred that into a Spear, then that lead to blaming everything on the Superd race. They always do in regards to things that look like Emerald Green Hair that is."

Curse?

Blaming it on?

Hey.

What is that? What do you mean?

You, did you know that from the start?

Even though you knew that, you told me to assist him?

Did you make me do something pointless?

"No, don't be mistaken. The curse that was cast on the entirety of the Superd race is starting to disappear with the passage of time. Ruijerd himself still has a bit of the curse remaining, but thanks to the fact that he cut his hair it's rapidly started to fade."

Hair, huh.

Come to think of it, Sylphy was bullied as well, but it didn't feel like they were afraid of her...

Why is it hair?

Is it the origin of magic power or something?

"It's because Laplace's hair was Green as well."

Ah, I see now.

My world has stuff like that as well.

Things with a common likeness are used for their curse to cast it or remove it.

"In any case, thanks to getting involved with you, the curse is about to disappear. There's still the firmly rooted discrimination remaining, but something can be done about that with the passage of time and Ruijerd's effort."

In other words, it wasn't pointless is what you're trying to say?

That's great...

You are properly thinking about it as you act after all.

"Well, perfectly restoring it would be difficult even so."

Well, it is a difficult problem after all.

However, I see...

That is great.

"Yeah, it is great isn't it? It means that it was worth it to bring you together with Ruijerd."

Did you bring us together with that kind of reason?

If that's the case if you had just said it then it would have been fine wouldn't it?

"Didn't you have any intention of listening to my words at all in the start? I didn't have any allowance."

...Well, that is true isn't it?

I was being belligerent and rejecting it after all. Certainly.

In any case, that Ruijerd as well, was defeated so easily by Orsted...

I couldn't have imagined that he would be beaten that easily.

"Well, that guy is probably impossible for Ruijerd after all."

At any rate, he is one of the [Seven Great World Powers] after all.

How can you win against him?

"You can't win."

Can't win, huh.

As I thought is there just too big of a difference in real ability?

"He is, you know, the strongest in this world. With his body being restricted by a number of curses that is."

Oh?

However, isn't the Dragon God number two on the seven great world powers?

What about number one?

"The Technique God is strong as well. However, if they were to fight seriously, the one to win would be Orsted. Orsted can use the techniques and arts of all living things in this world. Adding to that, he has the Dragon God's peculiar characteristic magic and he can even use his own original magic."

All of the techniques and arts, huh.

That would make him like a certain Last Savior of the Century then.

"Oh~, is there something like that in your world as well?"

He can copy all of the techniques opponents have used against him up until then.

Although even if he doesn't use the techniques of his opponents he's still strong.

With just a single fingertip to his opponents and they go poof.

"With just a single fingertip huh. That's amazing. However, Orsted is amazing as well. If he gets serious, he can destroy this world."

Is he that strong?

The expression of strength seems to feel overshadowed.

Abnormal? Natural disaster?

"Though, thanks to a curse he can't get serious."

Is that the case?

Curses sure do seem troublesome.

By the way, is it fine if I ask something?

"What is it?'

You know.

You said just now that you didn't know about the curses.

The curse that makes him hated and the curse that makes it so you can't see him.

Even though you said you didn't know the others, how do you know he can't get serious?

"...Ummm."

Ah, actually it's fine.

Since it's the last time, let's keep it friendly.

Even if you're hiding something, I won't really feel bothered by it.

I know that you were doing a courtesy for Ruijerd now after all.

Just the other day as well, thanks to you I was able to save both Lilia and Aisha as well.

If I take that into account, even if there are some lies mixed in some places, I won't be bothered over it.

Even after this, the fact that you might have wanted me to do something as well, it's all become water under the bridge after all.

Although in reality, there are various other things that I want to hear about.

For example, why you pulled me towards the Great Demon Emperor?

For example, where the other missing people are located?

For example, in the first place what was your real objective?

Even if I heard it at this point, it's all stuff that I can't help either way after all.

Well, what is it.

We're both companions in mutual mistakes, let's keep up with it being friendly.

Let's forget about formalities and make some noise.

Dancing naked and hidden talents are both okay, of course I won't be bothered by you expressing yourself as well.

"Last?"

Yeah, last.

Isn't that the case?

Since I died after all.

"I see now, and then you've fallen into self-abandonment...It's completely reversed from the first time isn't it?"

That time, I died while not knowing what was going on after all.

This time is, well, it can't be helped.

Besides, somehow or other, on the verge of death, I had the feeling that I knew I would end up coming here after all.

I don't know where people go when they die, but I thought you would come to talk to me on the verge of death.

And my consciousness is starting to fade.

It seems like it's about time for us to part.

I'm glad I was able to talk to you with a calm feeling for the last time.

"Is that so? Then, I have good news for you."

Hn?

"You aren't dead."

After I realized it, the hole in my chest had disappeared.

Suddenly, I woke up.

Eris was nearby.

In front of my eyes.

I was lying down looking up at Eris.

I quickly realized that it was a lap pillow.

Eris was looking at my face with a worried expression like she saw something that she didn't want to see, when I opened my eyes she made a relieved face.

Her eyes were bloodshot.

"Ru-rudeus...have you woken up!?"

"U...ge...ha!!"

When I went to say something I spit up blood.

"Rudeus!"

Eris embraced me.

"[Cough]..[Cough]..!!"

I continued to vomit blood and violently choked on it.

Eris was caressing my back.

"...Are you all right?"

I looked at Eris's perplexed expression, I tilted my head.

"Why... am I alive?"

The wound on my chest had completely healed.

Completely would be a faulty expression.

There was still a large hole opened in the center of my robe, and there was a scar almost as if it was welded together on the skin that could be seen under it.

Well now, it's rather odd.

Even though my right hand is not a parasite, it's just a lover.

{ C-Editor's note: A Reference to the Parasyte anime series. }

"Just now, that woman said something, then that one called Orsted or whatever healed you using healing magic."

Eris answered me while confused herself, with a question she had to me in response to my genuine doubt.

"Woman?"

"The one called Nanahoshi."

Nanahoshi.

That girl huh.

Come to think of it, she was called that wasn't she?

However, Nanahoshi, I have the feeling I've heard it somewhere.

Also, it was even this past year or so.

Where was it again, I can't remember.

"Does that mean they especially went out of their way to heal the opponent they killed?"

I wonder what they were thinking.

However, I was certain he had pierced my heart.

Damage to vital internal organs can't be healed with intermediate healing magic.

In other words it must have been Advanced, or even higher.

Orsted used healing magic that healed fatal level wounds in an instant.

It might not necessarily be a lie when Hitogami said that he can use all of the techniques and arts in this world.

"It was utter defeat..."

When you say the class is different, it must mean something like that.

Second of the [Seven Great World Powers].

And, according to what the Hitogami said, the strongest in the world.

Either way, it's not just for show.

Ruijerd, Eris, and I as well were all taken out.

Taken out with effort to spare.

Moreover, it seems that he was never serious from the start.

"How is Ruijerd?"

"He still hasn't woken up yet."

After looking, Ruijerd is laying on the side of the road.

The carriage as well was brought to the side of the road, and a bonfire was started.

Did Eris do it all herself?

"It's the first time I've seen Ruijerd laying horizontally."

"Rudeus don't talk yet. You were just spitting up blood."

"I'm already fine. It was just the portion that was remaining in my throat."

Even while saying that, I didn't move from Eris' lap.

I don't want to move.

I want to stay here forever.

If I were to turn over right now, I wonder if she would hit me in objection.

Only those sorts of things were floating into my head.

I wonder if they're survival instincts coming out.

When people are about to die it seems they feel like leaving offspring after all..

I can't really tell for sure though.

Yeah, it's already fine.

I'll go with not thinking about anything difficult.

I'll continue lying down.

"Living is so wonderful."

While saying that I turned my body around, and embraced Eris' hips.

I took a deep breath, and I have a feeling that I caught on to a somehow bittersweet scent.

"Rudeus...it seems you're considerably healthy."

"Hn? Somehow, you know, I feel like a variety of things are overflowing."

More than usual even.

I'm sure it's because of that man known as Orsted.

Or else, maybe it's because I saw the dream with Hitogami.

I'll say it once more, but I don't really have the feeling that I wandered the boundary between life and death.

However, it wasn't a mistake that I feel more energetic when I woke up.

"Then, will you be all right even if I hit you?"

Eris' trembling voice came out.

Great anger it seems.

Well, it can't be helped.

Even though she was worried about me, I suddenly sexually harassed her after all.

Even I would get angry, that is...

"Indeed it is."

I was hit.

Lightly with a bop.

And then, I was pulled in and had my head embraced.

I could feel the soft sensation of Eris' chest on my cheek.

Deeper inside the beating of her heart and from above the quiet sobbing as well.

"...U...gusu..."

Eris cried.

She quietly cried.

"I'm glad..."

Eris whispered that.

I was exhausted so I patted her back.

After that three days passed.

And then we entered the Asura Kingdom.

The place of our objective is already imminent.

It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say we've already arrived.

Even though that's the case the expressions in the party aren't clearing up.

The incident that just happened the other day cooled things down a lot I'm sure.

The gap between the bright expressions of the people passing by us on the road is intense.

It was complete defeat after all.

We were all too quickly annihilated, I even had my life stolen.

I don't know what kind of whim it was, but he especially went out of the way to revive me.

If it weren't for that, I wouldn't be in this world.

In my regards I can't really feel the reality of it.

It's something mysterious to even me, but that time I wasn't really feeling very much fear.

The instant he dealt the final blow, I certainly thought that I didn't want to die.

I thought it wouldn't be strange for it to end up as a trauma.

Even though that's the case, by the time I had woken up, for some reason I was completely refreshed...

That's not really the correct way of putting it, but [Ah, a dream huh.] I had that sort of feeling.

The same sensation as when you see a nightmare.

Is it because the sensation when I was on the verge of death is connected with that dream, though it felt like everything was a dream it could have been that kind of feeling.

After thinking that, I considered that the Hitogami might have planned that and interrupted my consciousness at that moment.

Honestly, there's an unbearable feeling like I was instinctively denying it as well, but it seems like he was also thinking about Ruijerd, so it might be that he's not actually all that bad of a guy.

Ever since I was on the verge of death, the distance between Eris has felt somehow really close.

Previously when we were sitting in the carriage, there was more of a slanted feel to how we would stand,

"It's balance training, why don't you try it as well Rudeus?"

Is how she said it, but recently it's become sitting.

Right by my side.

With a distance where her thighs were glued to mine.

After getting to that distance, there were various things that came into my sight.

For example this is about a certain day.

I could peek in at the skin from the hem of Eris's pants and clothes.

And then after peeking at such a thing, the human heart wants to unintentionally caress such a thing.

Since that's the case I just unintentionally caressed with my right hand to see, then I get glared at with a bright red face.

Here as expected, even I was hesitating a bit.

That's right, she won't hit me.

Eris won't hit me.

Everything I've done until now that she would hit me for, but now she won't hit me anymore.

She just glares at me with her face bright red.

Just staring at me like that.

Moreover, unchanged as always Eris continues to sit down as if she's stuck to me again.

Until now if I had made such actions then she would have pulled back a certain distance.

However, our current distance has remained close.

Being serious though, I'm starting to feel like I want to just stick my hand straight into her pants, so I'd like for her to separate for a bit around now.

I know there are things that you can finish with a laugh and ones you can't just laugh off.

And even I understand that I want to do the things that can't just be laughed off.

I'm enduring it.

Unknown to that kind of conflict within me, Eris' distance is close.

"..."

If I were to let my hand do as it pleases then it ends up stretching out in the direction of Eris.

Therefore.

Currently, I've started the operation where I'm creating magic with my left hand and then using my right hand to disturb that magic power.

It's the magic Orsted used.

If I remember correctly it was called, "Ran Ma" [Disturb Magic].

Just before the magic power that comes out of my hand takes shape, I use a different magic power to interfere with it and cause it to scatter.

It's simple and it consumes a very small amount of magic power, but it's an amazing technique.

After thinking about it, the King Class Barrier used a similar method to nullify magic.

It's simple to say it in words, but it's actually considerably difficult to put it into practice.

I wonder if it's because I'm trying to use the magic with my left hand.

More often than not the magic fails to take shape.

In order to completely nullify it like Orsted did, it must take a considerable amount of practice.

However, even just this much should work as a restraint.

No, he really taught me something good.

"Hey Rudeus, what have you been doing since just now?"

"I'm trying to imitate the magic that Orsted used."

After saying that Eris fixed her gaze on my hand.

In my left hand a small warped rock part was created and then suddenly fell to the ground.

Another failure.

It feels kind of like trying to play rock, paper and scissors with both hands.

I always end up allowing my right hand to win.

I can't just do whatever is relevant.

Most likely, there's some sort of rule for the magic power to operate along or else it won't work.

Yeah.

The fact that whatever works, won't work means there's some sort of rule at work during the time it's being disturbed.

Then, if I were to take into consideration the rule when I release the magic power, in reverse would I be able to nullify [Magic Disturber] as well I wonder?

The dream is spreading out.

"What kind of magic is it?"

"It's magic that nullifies magic."

"Can you do such a thing?"

"That's what the purpose of this practice is for."

"How do you know about something like that?"

"Since there have been a number of cases where my magic has been sealed and I've been unable to do anything recently, I'm researching it after all. Well, in the case that we end up meeting Orsted and have to fight again, don't you want to at least be able to run away?"

Eris was at a loss for words after hearing that, she just kept silent.

After a short while, the sound of the rocks falling and rolling around continued.

"Hey, why is Rudeus that strong?"

Eris was silent for a long time, but suddenly she came out asking that.

I wonder if I'm strong.

No, there's no way that can be the case.

I'm not bragging, but these past few years, I haven't felt the reality of my own strength at all.

It was an everyday life with nothing but powerlessness.

"I think Eris is the strong one though?"

"That's not the case."

"..."

"..."

There the conversation paused.

Eris seemed to want to say something, but she kept silent since it seemed difficult to say.

I wonder what it is.

I don't know.

No, it isn't that I don't know.

"Are you still bothered by the fact that we were beaten so easily the other day?"

"...Yeah."

I'm sure that can't be helped.

Just as Hitogami said, that guy is the strongest in the world, Dragon God-sama.

Even that Ruijerd was lightly dealt with.

The opponent was bad.

In this world, there exists a domain that can't be reached through just hard work.

In my previous life, I tried a variety of things, and I was able to reach a reasonably high level in some of them, but I never even once was able to reach the highest level.

Playing a game, if it was this then I thought I could be unbeatable, but there are always those who can go above you.

It seems that Orsted is impeded by a number of restrictions as well.

Even with that in terms of physical techniques he exceeded Ruijerd, he dealt with Eris with one hand, and completely rendered me powerless.

Furthermore, he fought and defeated us in such a way that the greatest amount of damage to our HP would accurately be hit.

{ C-Editor's note: HP means HIT/Health points in online gaming. }

It seemed he still had plenty of spare energy remaining as well.

I have no idea how strong he would be if he got serious.

It seems he can't become serious because of the curse, but...

Even if he doesn't get serious, you can't win against that guy.

Most likely, no matter how much effort you put in you'll never win.

"The opponent was bad, that can't really be helped."

"...But."

I understand Eris' worried feelings.

At any rate, Eris was defeated in a single blow after all.

He just caught her sword and just like that she was blown away.

"Eris is still young, depending on your effort you can still become stronger."

"I wonder if that's true."

"Yeah, Ghyslaine and Ruijerd both said it didn't they?"

Eris suddenly raised her face.

She was looking straight at me.

"Rudeus was about to die you know? How can you be that... how can you say it so simply?"

That is... because the feeling doesn't really remain very much.

I'm not thinking about fighting at all.

The next time I see that guy's face, I'm running away like a rocket.

Or else like a mouse, hiding in the shadow of something.

If I can't run away then this time I might beg for my life.

If my wish can be granted, I really hope Eris doesn't have to see that spectacle.

However, putting that pathetic intention into words is embarrassing.

"Since I don't want to die next time."

"...That's right, you don't want to die right."

"Please feel relieved. Even if Eris gets into a dangerous situation, I'll make sure I can at least escape holding on to you."

Eris made a complicated face and placed her head on my shoulder.

If I were to caress her head here right now, I thought it might end up happening, but my right hand is currently in the middle of [Disturb Magic].

"Well, in any case, it won't be good if I don't get a bit stronger."

A bit more.

That's right, a bit more.

As expected, I won't be able to become the strongest in this world.

The ceiling of this world is way too high.

I couldn't even become the best in the world in my previous life.

Without even a glimpse of that talent, even the means of my effort was incompetent.

I don't know how much talent I have in regards to this world, but it doesn't seem like I can believe in something so simple about myself and be devoted to it.

However, I want to at least be able to run away if I end up running into some kind of weird guy and suddenly get attacked.

I buried my face in Eris' hair, [Sniff] [Sniff], while smelling the scent, I was thinking about that.

After it became night and Eris fell asleep, I started a conversation with Ruijerd.

Since that day, the number of things he was saying had decreased even more than usual.

He was never all that talkative in the first place, but became completely sullen and silent.

It seems he's bothered over that time.

He's a man with a strong sense of responsibility after all.

Even though he promised to escort us home safely, he might think he wasn't able to protect that.

It's stupid.

Even though it was rough luck, I'm as healthy as I look.

"That man known as Orsted was the Dragon God it seems. The second of the [Seven Great World Powers]."

First I entered using those words as a jab.

It can't be helped since the opponent was strong.

While holding onto that sort of nuance.

"I see, that does explain it..."

"He sure was strong wasn't he, after that, I was done in without being able to do a thing as well."

"The last time I realized with a glance that I had no chance of winning hasn't been since the time of Laplace."

According to Hitogami, it seems that Orsted is stronger than Laplace.

It seems even including the fact that he's under restrictions that won't let him become serious...

There's no point in telling Ruijerd about that.

He was dealt with using just physical techniques while being taken down easily.

That fact might have been a shock to Ruijerd.

Is what I thought, but,

"Even I never thought I would stand a chance against the upper ranks of the [Seven Great World Powers]. Those guys are true monsters that are beyond comprehension. I can't call it anything but bad luck that we would run into a guy like that just walking along the side of the road. And then I can't call it anything but good luck that we managed to survive. Rudeus if you ever meet a guy like that again, never pick a fight with them. There's no way to match them. If you don't want it to end up like this time at least."

"Yeah. Well, next time I'll probably avoid eye contact and pass through."

I was scolded by him.

Well, if I hadn't called out to him then it would have ended with nothing but passing by one another after all.

Let's go with reflecting on that.

Although, from the start he really didn't look like that much of a dangerous guy to me...

No, Ruijerd and Eris were showing that much of a reaction, I should have been more cautious.

"Then, what are you worrying about?"

After asking Ruijerd looked over at me.

"What is Hitogami?"

Oh. That matter.

"That guy had intended to overlook us at first. Even while scattering his blood thirst, he wasn't even taking us into consideration. However, the moment the name Hitogami came out of his mouth, his blood thirst was entirely focused on you."

I closed my eyes.

Should I tell him, or should I not.

I think I used to have the answer decided but...

It seems that despite how he looks the Hitogami isn't all that bad of a guy, even after such a thing happened I'm still hiding it.

It is also true that I don't like that fact.

Since that's the case, I decided to tell him.

"Actually, Hitogami is..."

Even though I worried about it that much, after I made a decision it quickly came out.

And then my mouth smoothly moved.

The fact that since the time of the teleport incident, an unknown individual calling himself Hitogami has occasionally appeared in my dreams.

The fact that individual gave me advice to help Ruijerd.

The fact that more than that he granted me a variety of other pieces of advice.

The fact that many of my strange actions were due to following those advices.

And then, the fact that Hitogami and Dragon God have a relationship of hostility.

My conversations with Hitogami are hazy and I think there were many things I was forgetting.

However, I think I conveyed all of the general parts.

"Hitogami and Dragon God... The seven gods of the ancient times huh... It's suddenly turned into an unbelievable story."

"I'm sure."

"However, there are parts which I can understand."

After saying that Ruijerd went silent.

Only the sound of the fire wood crackling away ruled the place.

The shadow created by the fire swayed from side to side, a single older warrior's face came to mind.

Thanks to his race Ruijerd looks young, but that expression has something that shows of its long history.

Suddenly, I remembered touching on the matter of the curse about Ruijerd in my last dream.

"Come to think of it, Ruijerd-san. It's about the dishonor of the Superd race, but it seems that was a curse."

"...What?"

"Putting it precisely, Laplace transferred his own curse into a spear and then had those spears given out to the entirety of your race...that sort of thing it seems."

"I see... a curse..."

I intended to bring it up as good news, but Ruijerd continued to think about it even more with a gloomy face.

"I had never heard about him transferring the curse, but if it's Laplace then it's possible. That guy was a man who could do anything after all."

I'm not really sure on the details, but I'd imagine Ruijerd would be more familiar with things regarding curses.

It seems like he thought about a variety of things for a short while, but finally he laughed weakly.

"If it's a curse then there's no method to remove it."

"Is that the case?"

"Yeah. Curses are curses because there's no method to remove them."

So there's no method to remove curses, huh.

"I've never heard about curses placed on the entirety of a race but... If it's something that god said, it might be the truth."

I laughed in self-derision, that I might have said something pointless.

I thought it was just the light, but I slightly saw tears welling up in the edges of the eyes.

"But."

"What is it?"

"The Human God said that the curse in the spear was different than normal, it seems it was about to disappear after the passage of time."

"What?"

"He said that the remaining curse is in Ruijerd himself, thanks to cutting your hair it's started to rapidly fade."

"Really!"

Ruijerd suddenly said that in a large voice.

Eris moved a bit and raised her voice with a "Hnn..."

I wonder if it would have been better to let her hear this conversation as well...

Well, it's fine if I tell her when she wakes up.

"Yeah. It seems that it's just the remains of the curse now and the prejudice received from the start of the curse supposedly. Depending on the effort Ruijerd-san puts into it from here on out, the popularity of the Superd race can slowly recover."

"I see... I get it, so that was how it was."

"However, it's something Hitogami said, I think we can believe what he says to some extent, but it's better not to swallow the story whole. It's better to keep going with caution just like up until now."

"I understand. However, it's plenty for me just hearing that."

Ruijerd went silent.

It wasn't just the light playing tricks on me anymore.

Ruijerd let tears flow.

"Then, it's about time for me to sleep."

"Yeah."

I decided to pretend as if I hadn't seen those tears.

The Ruijerd-san that we rely on is a strong man who would never let tears flow.

And then one month after that.

We were aiming straight north.

Rather than going in the direction of the capital, we travelled further north along a thin road.

We moved from point to point along small rural villages, continuing north with fields of wheat, water wheels, and small huts along the sides.

We never even bothered collecting information.

With the fastest speed possible, we aimed north.

I thought we would understand all of the information once we arrived at the refugee camp.

However, more than that, it's just a bit more, the thought that I wanted to hurry and arrive.

We arrived in the Fedoa region.

We came to know there was nothing left.

No, we had already known about this matter.

Just, in that place which there used to be something, there was now nothing.

The field of wheat, the flower garden of Batirusu, the water wheel shed, as well as the livestock sheds it was all gone.

It was just a grass-covered plain spreading out.

A vast, vast grassland.

While holding a sense of loneliness from that spectacle, we arrived at what you could call the only current town in Fedoa region.

We arrived at the refugee camp.

The land of our final objective.

Just a few steps before the entrance of that place, Ruijerd stopped the carriage.

"Hn? What's wrong?"

Ruijerd descended from the driver's seat.

I looked over the surroundings wondering if a monster had appeared, no shadows of an enemy.

Ruijerd walked around to the back of the carriage and said it.

"I'll be taking my leave here."

"Eh!!"

The words that were suddenly declared.

I raised my voice in surprise.

Eris' eyes were opened wide as well.

"Wai-wait just a minute."

We got off the carriage as if we were about to fall over and went to face Ruijerd.

Isn't this too fast?

We only just arrived at the refugee camp.

No, we haven't even arrived yet we're just standing outside of it.

"At the very least how about taking it easy for one day or so, No, at least come together with us into the town?"

"That's right, after all..."

"There's no need."

Ruijerd looked at us with those blunt words.

"There's no need for a warrior here. There's no need for protection."

"..."

Eris went silent in response to those words.

Honestly.

I might have forgotten about it a bit.

Ruijerd came along only just to see us up to our hometown.

Now that the objective has been completed, it's only natural for us to separate.

Even though I thought we would be together forever.

"Ruijerd-san..."

After opening my mouth I hesitated.

If I try to detain him, will he stay I wonder...

No, after re-thinking it, I have brought a heavy amount of troubles onto this man.

There were certainly plenty of times where I have troubled him, but the times when I showed him my shameful parts were common.

Even though that's the case, he recognized me as a Warrior.

I don't think I can depend on him anymore than this.

"If it weren't for Ruijerd-san, I'm sure we wouldn't have been able to make it here in three years."

"No, if it was you then it should have been possible."

"There's no way that's the case. Since there are places where I'm lacking, I think I would have stumbled somewhere."

"As long as you can say that you'll be all right."

There were quite a few situations where I had no solution.

For example, the time when I was captured in Shirone, if it hadn't been for the existence of Ruijerd, I would have panicked more, I'm sure I would have been more distracted.

"...Rudeus, I said it once before, but."

Ruijerd looked over me with an even more peaceful face than usual.

"You've already accomplished yourself as a magician. Even though you possess that much talent you haven't grown arrogant. You should hold self-awareness that you were able to do that much at such a young age."

I received those words with complicated feelings.

Even if you say youth, the age of my experiences has already gone over 40 years.

The reason I haven't grown arrogant is because I still have memories of that time.

However, even if I said it's 40 years, if I look at it in comparison to Ruijerd's age, then it would enter into the category of young.

"I..."

Here is where I should I have started to talk about my bad portions.

However, I had a feeling that would have been just too shameful.

In front of this man, I want to stand a bit tall.

"No, I understand. Ruijerd-san, we've really depended on you quite a bit until now."

After saying that and lowering my head, I was caught and stopped.

"Rudeus don't lower your head to me."

"...Why?"

"You might think you've been depending on me, but I think I've been depending on you. Thanks to you, I have the feeling I've been able to see hope for the recovery of my family's honor."

"I haven't done anything at all. I couldn't really do much at all."

In regards to the Magic Continent, I think we did end up making the name Dead End into something agreeable, but that was limited to just the framework of Adventurers.

Since our established reputation couldn't be used in the Milis Continent, while I was thinking about different methods to approach it, it just kept being put off.

In the end, since the time we came to Central Continent, we haven't done anything.

Up until now, I feel that the influence has started to come around a bit.

However, that is limited to just a bit.

Putting aside the largely remaining history of persecution in the world and of course the prejudice towards the Superd race, we weren't able to do anything.

"No, you were able to achieve a variety of things. You were able to teach someone like me who only knows how to honestly save children that a variety of methods exist."

"However, all of them had weak effects."

"However, it certainly has changed. I remember everything. According to your scheme in the Town of Rikarisu, the words of the old woman who said she didn't fear the Superd race. The happy faces of the adventurers who laughed without fear after hearing the name Dead End. The closeness to the Dedorudia race warriors who came to recognize us even after hearing the name Superd race. The Shirone soldiers who thanked me in tears after being reunited with their families."

Putting aside the first two, the two after were all Ruijerd giving it his best effort.

I haven't done anything.

"..That is Ruijerd-san, your own power."

"No. I couldn't do anything myself. It's been 400 years since the war, I moved around alone and I wasn't able to advance even one step forward. The one who allowed me to take that step forward was you, Rudeus."

"...However, that was always under the advice of Hitogami."

"Things about a god that I've never seen don't matter at all. The one who actually saved me was you. I don't know what you think, but I feel a debt of gratitude towards you. Therefore, don't lower your head, you and I are equal, rather than thanking, look with your eyes."

While saying that Ruijerd faced me and held out his hand.

While I was looking him in the eyes.

Without averting my eyes from there I grabbed his hand.

"I'll say it once more. Rudeus, thanks for the assistance"

"We as well, thank for the assistance."

While tightly holding onto his hand, the strength of Ruijerd was conveyed.

The inner corners of my eyes got hot.

This shameful I, this I who made nothing but mistakes, Ruijerd recognized me.

After a short while, we quietly released our hands.

That hand moved to the side and was placed on top of Eris' head.

"Eris."

"...What is it?"

"Is it fine if I treat you like a child in the end?"

"It's fine, really."

Eris bluntly responded.

Ruijerd lightly smiled and caressed Eris' head.

"Eris, you have talent. You should have enough talent to become far stronger than me."

"That's a lie, after all... That guy..."

Eris linked her lips together in a frown and made a sullen face.

Ruijerd suddenly laughed a bit, normally, he would have said words about training.

"You fought against someone with the name of God, and received their technique. The meaning of that..."

Understood?

Eris was definitely glaring at Ruijerd.

Before long, she opened her eyes wide.

"...I understand."

"Alright, good girl."

Ruijerd patted Eris' head and then removed his hand.

Eris continued with her lips shaped in a frown and grasped her fist tightly.

It looked like she was on the verge of crying but desperately tried to endure it.

I asked Ruijerd without taking my eyes off her.

"Ruijerd-san, what are you going to do from here on out?"

"I don't know, I intend to search around for survivors of the Superd race in Central Continent for a short while. If it's just me alone, then recovering the honor is just a dream within a dream after all."

"I see, please give it your best. If I have any spare time, I'll try playing some kind of hand."

"...fu...Then I as well, if I have spare time I'll look for your mother."

Ruijerd said that while facing me.

Preparations for a journey are unnecessary for him.

He can live and walk on with just the clothes on his back.

However, he suddenly stopped.

"Come to think of it, I still needed to return this."

While saying that, Ruijerd took off the pendant that was hanging around his neck.

The pendant I received from Roxy.

The Migurd race pendant.

It was the only item that connected Roxy and I.

"That is, Ruijerd-san please hold onto it."

"Is it fine? Isn't it a precious item?"

"It's because it's a precious item."

After saying that, Ruijerd nodded silently.

It seems like he'll accept it.

"Well then, Rudeus, Eris... Let's meet again."

While saying that Ruijerd left us.

The time when he decided to come along with us, he talked about all sorts of things, but during the time he leaves, it's in an instant.

I had a lot of things I wanted to say.

Meeting in Magic Continent and coming together with us to the Asura Kingdom.

Really a lot of things happened.

Enough that you can't even put it into words, a lot of things, a lot of feelings...

The feelings towards an ally who I don't want to part with.

"Let's meet again."

I summarized those feelings with just those words and watched Ruijerd's back disappear into the distance.

That's right, it's fine if we meet again.

I'm sure we'll meet again.

As long as we're both alive, definitely.

Eris and I watched Ruijerd's figure until we could no longer see him.

Just quietly, packed together with our thanks until now.

—

Just like this, our journey came to an end.

Refugee Camp.

It was a quiet place.

In terms of scale, it was the size of a village.

Or on Magic Continent then you could probably just barely call it a town.

However, there was no energy.

There was an overall silent atmosphere floating around.

Even in regards to the scale, there were few people.

I could feel the presence of people inside of the log houses that were under construction.

Though it seems like there are at least a few people who plan to stay, but I couldn't feel their energy.

The atmosphere had stagnated.

In the center of such a refugee camp.

To a place almost like an Adventurer's Guild, we proceeded.

Refugee Camp Headquarters entrance was written there.

We entered inside.

There were a few people, but after all it was melancholic here as well.

I was getting nothing but bad premonitions.

"Rudeus, that..."

Where Eris was pointing her finger, there was a paper with the names of those who were missing.

In small letters, the names were crowded together written there.

Ordered by village and town respectively.

On the very top was, Fedoa region lord.

James Boreas Greyrat's name and written was "Seeking Information on Missing and Dead Individuals".

"Let's look later."

"Yeah."

A terrifying number of dead.

And then the fact that the name of the lord wasn't Sauros.

While holding both of those anxieties, we continued further into the building.

After informing of Eris' name at the counter, the old lady at the reception quickly went into the back.

And then, with an amazing vigor she returned with a pair of people.

A man and woman I have recollection of.

One of them was a man in his prime, wearing somewhat prosperous merchant-like clothes, with graying hair and a beard growing out into a face that you couldn't imagine anything but a butler.

It was Alphonse.

The other one was a woman with chocolate colored skin and wearing a swordsman like outfit.

"Ghyslaine!"

Eris ran at her with a full face smile rising to the surface.

She was so happy I was wondering if she had a tail.

I'm happy as well.

We never got any information on Ghyslaine, but she still looks energetic.

The fact that there was no information on Paul's side must mean that we passed by it during this past year.

Ghyslaine as well had a smile on her face after seeing Eris' face.

"Eris, No, Eris-sama, you did well making it here safely..."

"...Really, it's fine just as Eris."

Ghyslaine made a happy face for a short while, but soon that face turned into a frown.

Alphonse as well was looking at her with pity.

It can't be...

The feelings of anxiety attacked my heart.

"Eris... Let's talk inside."

Ghyslaine's voice was stiff.

Her tail was standing as well.

It's the face she makes when she's tense.

It wasn't just the face of her being delighted over Eris' return.

"I understand."

It seems Eris understood something after seeing that face as well.

Following Ghyslaine we walked deep into the building.

I was planning to continue following like that, and

"Rudeus-dono, please wait outside."

"Eh? Ah, yes."

I was stopped.

I nodded to Alphonse's words.

I see, for the most part I was in the position of someone being hired after all, they won't let me listen to the important talk.

"That's no good, Rudeus come as well."

Eris' tone was strong.

With enough presence that it couldn't be overturned.

"If Eris-sama says that it's fine."

The area around Eris' mouth was looking strained more than usual, her hands as well were being gripped enough to make them turn white.

We silently followed along through the corridor and entered a room like the officials meeting room.

In the center was a sofa and at the end was a vase with Batirusu flowers in it.

There weren't any unnecessary ornaments in the room, a cheap looking officials desk was there.

Eris went and sat down on the sofa without having to be told by anyone.

And then she took my hand and had me sit beside her.

Ghyslaine was the same as always, standing in the corner of the room.

Alphonse was standing in front of Eris, he was taking on the manner of a butler.

"Welcome home Eris-ojousama. We had already received contact about ojousama's return and we were awaiting you..."

"It's fine without the introductions, just say it. Who died?"

Eris interrupted the butler's words and asked in a stronger tone than anyone here.

Who died?

The words without being oblate were asked.

That stance was no doubt a strong gaze.

However, I knew that her heart was a whirlpool of anxiety.

Because, she was tightly holding onto my hand.

"That is..."

Alphonse hesitated with his words.

If it's this reaction then Sauros, huh.

Eris was a grandfather's child after all.

Even through everything she was imitating Sauros.

If he were to die as expected even Eris would get depressed.

Alphonse informed us as if to squeeze it out.

"Sauros-sama, Philip-sama, Hilda-sama...these three have all passed away."

The instant we heard those words, my hand was crushed.

And a pain intense enough to want to take it away.

However, rather than the pain, the reality that Alphonse informed us about, my brain was in disorder.

Isn't there some kind of mistake?

It's only been a little less than three years.

That's right, not even three years have passed.

No, you could say that soon three years will have passed.

"There's no mistake? Right?"

In response to Eris' trembling voice, Alphonse deeply nodded.

"Philip-sama and Hilda-sama teleported together and passed away in the strife zone. This is something that Ghyslaine confirmed."

Ghyslaine nodded.

"I see... Where was Ghyslaine teleported to?"

"The same place as Philip-sama, the strife zone."

Ghyslaine didn't talk about it in much detail.

On the way while breaking through the strife zone on foot, she discovered the remains of Philip and Hilda.

She just told us of that.

The condition of the corpses or the situation she found them in at the time were things she didn't say.

Just, going off that expression, I understood it was terrible.

I don't know what was terrible about it.

Was the condition of the corpse terrible?

Was the situation the corpse was in terrible?

Or else, did she see something else that would make you want to turn your eyes away even more.

Did she hear something that would make you want to seal your ears?

Eris just took a breath with a single, "Hnn."

The hand that was holding mine was trembling.

"And then, what about Grandfather?"

"...He took responsibility for the Fedoa region teleport incident and was executed."

"No way."

I spontaneously whispered it.

"What need was there for Sauros-sama to be executed?"

Taking responsibility for that natural disaster and executed?

Don't be stupid.

There's nothing he could have done about it.

Or else, are you saying he could have defended against it?

Didn't it just happen suddenly without any signs?

Taking responsibility for that?

"Rudeus, sit down."

"..."

My hand was pulled by Eris and I was forced to sit down.

It seems I had stood up at some point unaware.

Inexpressible feelings were turning around inside my head.

Thanks to the intense pain I couldn't settle them well.

My hand hurts.

No, even I understand.

Even without signs.

Even if you couldn't defend against it.

People died, all of the fields in the region and the crops produced there vanished.

The losses were immeasurable.

The displeasure was great and there would be blame.

There was no choice other than to have someone become the lightning rod.

Even in Japan in my previous life, whenever something happened, the prime minister would quickly take responsibility and resign.

At the time, I thought they should continue to look over the situation until it's solved in order to take responsibility, but simultaneously, I thought it might be a good method as well.

Through death, he ends up disappearing carrying with him the complaints of the people.

The next one to take office is usually someone who is expected to fix the situation.

If you do that, to some extent you can cause peoples complaints to fall...

That's not all.

I'm sure, there was some sort of power struggle related among the nobles.

I don't know how much power old man Sauros had.

However, it seems he had enough power that losing his standing meant he had to be killed.

That's right, forcing him to agree to it is possible as well.

It's possible, but...

However, I wonder if that would end in this state.

An inactive refugee camp.

An unpopular headquarters.

I can't think that the country is seriously trying to reconstruct the Fedoa region.

If Sauros was still alive then possibly there would have been more activity and movement.

That old man was the type of person to be useful right at these times.

No. That's all a front.

In my regard that's all just trivial matters.

Eris' feelings.

After thinking about that, my heart can't remain calm no matter what.

Eris has no family left.

I don't know under what conditions Philip and Hilda died.

Was it before Sauros' death, or was it after?

Sauros was alive.

He could have even been called the last one.

It should have been fine even without killing him.

In that disaster.

In that teleport incident.

How many people do you think died?

Even though one hundred or two hundred pointlessly died.

Why did they especially have to go out of their way to kill a person who returned alive?

Even though Eris finally returned.

Ah, shit, I can't collect my thoughts. My hand hurts.

"Rudeus-dono, I understand your feelings but... this is the current Asura Kingdom."

It's not a problem that can be put to order with just a single word like that is it.

Alphonse.

Your own lord was killed you know.

Ghyslaine.

The benefactor of your life was killed you know.

I wanted to say it like that.

"..."

However, the words didn't come out.

Since Eris didn't say anything.

Even if I shouted here it can't be helped.

Even though I depended on them, even though we were relatives, in regards to me Sauros was a stranger.

Even though the family isn't saying anything, even if I said something it can't be helped.

"...And then, what's going to happen?"

Unusually, Eris didn't shout, didn't act violently, she just quietly asked.

"I've been told that Philemon Notus Greyrat-sama would like to welcome Eris-sama as a concubine."

Even I understood that Ghyslaine was letting out blood thirst.

"Alphonse! Do you intend to go along with that talk!?"

An angry roar from Ghyslaine.

It was a beast voice loud enough that I thought my ear drums would rupture.

"You remember what that man said, don't you!"

In response to Ghyslaine in a rage, Alphonse remained composed.

"However. If we were to think about Fedoa region from now on then, a bit of inconvenience is..."

"There's no way she would find happiness marrying into that man's side!"

"Even if he's trash, it's a distinguished family. There are many instances of unwanted marriages that ended up in happiness."

"I don't know of any such precedent! Are you really thinking about Eris!?"

"What I'm thinking about is the Boreas family and Fedoa region."

"Do you intend to sacrifice Eris for that sake?"

"If it's necessary."

The two suddenly started quarreling.

I looked blankly up at the two.

When I realized it, Eris had stood up.

She released my hand, crossed both her arms, pushed her jaw out and was standing in the usual pose.

"Shut up!"

It was a sound loud enough for Ghyslaine to hold her ears.

Recently, I haven't heard it at all, Eris' serious loud voice.

However, her vigor quickly faded.

"...Leave me alone for a bit. I'll think."

After listening to a withering voice, the two were taken aback.

First, Alphonse went straight out of the room.

Ghyslaine looked reluctantly at Eris and left the room.

And then I remained.

I was hesitating over what to say to her.

"Eris... ummm..."

"Rudeus, didn't you hear me? Leave me alone for a while."

Indeed, it was a forceful tone.

I just received a bit of a shock.

After thinking about it, this might have been the first time in these past few years where Eris has rejected me.

"...Under..stood."

I quickly lowered my head and left the room with my back facing Eris.

And then on the verge of shutting the door, I had the feeling I heard the sound of a nose sniffling.

Alphonse prepared rooms for our sake.

In a certain house near the headquarters, most likely for the purpose of refugees, four narrow rooms were in a row.

I was carrying my own luggage into one of those rooms and Eris' luggage into an adjoining room.

I changed from traveling clothes into casual clothes.

I threw my robe with a clumsy trace of stitching in the center of it on the bed and left the room.

Returning to the headquarters.

I thought about talking to Ghyslaine and Alphonse a bit, but I couldn't find them.

As expected since I didn't have the energy, I absent mindedly looked at the notice board.

Paul's message, the one that I've seen a number of times these past few months, was there.

Search in the northern part of the Central Continent.

This was written at the time when I was 10 years old.

I'm soon to be 13 years old.

A considerable amount of time has passed.

The dead. I let my eyes glaze over the list of missing.

The column for Buina Village.

Among the names I know of, they were all lined up along the missing list.

However, more than half of those have lines drawn through them.

After glancing at the dead column, the same names had lines drawn through them.

It seems, if death is confirmed, then a line is drawn through and they're added to the dead column.

The list is missing fewer in number, but even then the list of dead column is densely filled.

I noticed that Rawl's name had a line through it on the missing list and raised my eyebrows.

I heard that Rawls had died from Paul.

I hadn't heard the details about his cause of death though.

And then right below that.

The letters for Sylphy were on the missing column.

There was a line drawn through it.

I suddenly heard my heart pound with a beat.

It can't be, while thinking that I look at the column of dead.

It's not close to Rawl's name.

Looking at them in order from the top.

However, it's not there.

The name of Sylphiette wasn't there.

...Huh?

"Umm, this, there's a name here that has a line through it, but the name isn't on that side...?"

I thought it was strange so I asked the personnel.

"Yes, that would mean that they've been confirmed to be alive."

After hearing those words something in my chest fell.

Just like that it continued to pierce through my chest and fell into my stomach, after piercing through my stomach I thought I would crap myself.

Sylphy is alive.

I felt relieved over this fact.

"Then, umm, do you know how they can be contacted?"

"No, that is, unless you actually ask at the headquarters."

"It's the name Sylphiette, could I ask you to check up on it?"

"Please wait just a minute."

Several tens of minutes after I asked the personnel.

"I'm very sorry, there was no contact information registered."

"I see."

Either she hasn't settled down yet or the person who found her updated the list and the person themself hasn't added the contact information, one of those.

Otherwise, there's the possibility of omitting the entry, but I can't imagine it.

There's a high probability that Sylphy is alive.

For now I'll just be delighted over that fact.

Of course I'm worried.

For example the color of her hair.

The tint is a bit different from the Superd race, but it's the same green.

According to Hitogami, the curse doesn't apply to anyone that isn't a Superd race, she shouldn't be progressively bullied by anyone outside of the children of Buina village.

However, there are plenty of heartless people in the world.

She might be crying somewhere after being called out by her hair.

No, according to Paul, he said Sylphy can use healing magic with voiceless incantations.

It was just something I heard, but I felt like she already has enough power to survive on her own.

Similar to me, she might be acting as an adventurer somewhere.

I also heard that Lilia taught her manners and etiquette, I'm sure she could live anywhere.

Or she might not know her family has died and she might be searching for them.

Rather, if she managed to survive that teleport then that possibility is high.

I'll just pray that she didn't end up as a slave.

For the time being, I drew a line through Lilia and Aisha's names.

The name Rudeus already had a line drawn through it.

It seems that they had received a report that Eris was heading here, it must have included information on me as well.

Among the Paul household, the only name remaining is Zenith Greyrat.

After all, she must not have been found yet.

Next time Hitogami appears in my dreams I'll have to ask and see.

Eris still hasn't come out from her room.

I wonder if this is the first time that Eris who is fast at changing her mood has worried this long.

However, we traveled for a long time, when we finally returned back to our hometown, there was no warm family waiting to accept us.

As expected even Eris would get down over that.

After all I wonder if it would be better for me to return and comfort her...

No, I'll wait a bit longer.

While thinking like that, I returned to the building where I transported our luggage.

After returning I thought over a variety of things, but I couldn't think of what to do.

I'll rest for a bit.

Just at the time I was planning to leave for the headquarters, Alphonse called for me.

He had me sit down on a chair in his room in the Refugee Camp Headquarters.

Alphonse in front of my eyes, on my right Ghyslaine was sitting there.

The reason the two were sitting was probably because Eris wasn't around.

Different from me, they properly understand the employer and employee relationship.

"Now then, Rudeus-dono, since conciseness is necessary, please report."

"Report?"

"Yes, these past three years, what have you been doing?"

"Ah, that's right."

After being asked by Alphonse like that I started to talk about these past three years.

That we were teleported to the Magic Continent and met with Ruijerd.

That we registered as Adventurers and moved while earning money.

That there was a bit of strife at the Great Forest.

That we met with Paul and the Fedoa Region Search Group in Milishion and there we understood the situation for the first time.

Then we went north while searching for information and about the strife in Shirone Kingdom.

Then about meeting Orsted in the Red Dragon's Lower Jaw.

Mostly centering around things that involved Eris, it was an exceedingly concise talk.

Alphonse listened quietly and finally sunk down.

Suddenly he raised his voice at our separation with Ruijerd.

"...Did that escort go back?"

"Yes, we depended on him quite a bit."

"Is that so, I thought about proposing an official reward from Eris-sama when she calms down."

"He's not a person who would accept such things."

"Is that so?"

Alphonse nodded and then silently met with my gaze.

They were the fatigued eyes of a man.

"Then, Rudeus-dono... as for the people who were working for Sauros-sama, we are all that is left."

"...What about the other maids?"

"The fact that they haven't returned would mean they either died or returned to their hometown."

"I see."

Those cat ears were annihilated as well, huh.

It could be that a number of them returned to the Great Forest...

"Even after they received such assistance from Sauros-sama, it's sad."

"In the end, it's a relationship made through just money."

After saying that, Alphonse's poker face shifted a bit.

It might be a severe way of putting it, but it's that sort of thing.

"I hesitated over whether to add the still young Rudeus-dono in as well but... if you are able to answer in such a way then there should be no problem. You have protected Eris-sama and returned her home safely. In recognition of that achievement, we will recognize your enrollment as a vassal of the Boreas Greyrat family."

Vassal Group.

It seems that this is that sort of gathering.

"From here on we are going to start a Vassal Group meeting, but do you mind?"

A meeting huh.

I'm sure, even before the teleport incident, they had them when I wasn't around.

Probably, Ghyslaine as well wasn't included in them previously.

Now it's just the three of us, but formerly that is. A lot more vassals would have probably had a discussion.

"Thank you very much. Then what is the agenda?"

I had no intention of pointless talk, so I asked that.

At any rate, Philip and Sauros are already gone.

It's already been decided who the topic would be about.

"It's about Eris-sama."

Just look.

"Concretely, I would like to discuss about Eris-sama from now on."

"From now on?"

Think about it.

Eris returned to her home town.

However, there was nothing there.

Her family is gone and house is gone.

She can't return to how she used to live.

"Yes, Eris-sama from now on."

"Certainly Sauros-sama and Philip-sama have passed away, but it's not like the Boreas family itself has perished, right? Can't a house be prepared for her to live in?"

"James-sama is a person who worries over rumors, so he would most likely reject responsibility for Eris-sama."

James, Eris' uncle, huh.

The current lord.

If I remember right, he's the guy who got into a power struggle with Philip and won.

If he's bothered over rumors then certainly he wouldn't want Eris who isn't like a noble to be added into his family.

Her manners are pretty vague, it's hard to even treat her as a child of nobles.

Also, he should already have Eris' siblings included among his family.

Several other cousins as well.

If Eris were to cause some kind of problem with them, it's not hard to imagine.

Eris isn't so sweet that he would still want to take care of her knowing a problem would occur.

"Even if in case he would have been willing to look after her, whether he would treat her properly as a noble in the first place is suspicious... It's not unthinkable that he would have Eris-sama imitate a maid servant. Since that's the case, this is rejected."

I nodded to those words.

That's right, it's better to stop there.

Even though we could say Eris has become considerably more mature, her rough disposition is the same as always.

She's not enough of an adult that she wouldn't strike back when being looked down on.

"Next, Philemon Notus Greyrat-sama conveyed that if Eris-sama were able to return alive, he would definitely like for her to become his concubine."

Philemon. My uncle, huh. Paul's younger brother.

The current Notus family head was him.

It seems like old man Sauros hated him though...

He's the person who was the source of the quarrel from just before.

After looking at Ghyslaine, she lowered her brow and closed her eyes.

"It's not a bad talk, but there are a number of dark rumors about Philemon-sama."

"Dark rumors?"

"Yes, rumors about how he's been sucking up to High Minister Darius Silver Ganius for the recent assistance being given."

How is that a dark rumor I wonder.

I'm sure there are a variety of nobles, those with power making up to those with more power, isn't that normal.

"Lord Darius has been fixing problems for him these past few years, and he backs the first prince, they ended up having the second princess exiled from the country behind the scenes."

Hmmm.

I don't get it. Even if you suddenly start with the first and second, the only thing I know about is radio gymnastics.

"Philemon-sama was affiliated with those backing the second princess faction but..."

"Since she was exiled out of the country, that power has rapidly dropped?"

"That is correct."

That seems to be the case.

In other words, since his own boss was about to lose, he was scheming to change sides to the winning side.

"Isn't that fine just like that. What is the problem?"

"Rudeus-dono, do you remember the kidnapping incident some time ago?"

"Kidnapping incident?"

"The incident when real kidnappers abducted Eris-sama."

Ah, the one I suggested huh.

"The one who was behind that kidnapping, was Lord Darius."

"...Oh?"

"Lord Darius came to Fedoa region for a visit once, and it seems at that time he was considerably pleased after seeing Eris-sama at a glance."

"That is, in a sexual meaning?"

"Of course."

Then, since he was pleased with her, he asked Sauros to give her to him, but all too quickly he was refused, so he tried to abduct her.

The truth that has finally been revealed several years later.

No, in reality it should have already been confirmed at that time.

They just couldn't make a fuss out of it because the other side is a big shot.

I wonder why Sauros refused him.

...Is it because he hates Darius?

He was that kind of old man that decides everything based on feeling.

Well, in regards to what basis he used to make the decision, this dangerous topic is fine.

"In the case that Philemon-sama were to take Eris-sama as a concubine, with some kind of reason attached he would probably offer her to Lord Darius. Philemon-sama would treat Eris-sama like an item."

Hmmm, so that Darius is a pervert noble guy, huh.

It seems they're common in Asura Kingdom.

If what he's seeking is Eris, then I can't think his tastes are bad.

Though it's just his taste that isn't bad.

"Then, that's rejected isn't it."

"No, in regards to Lord Darius himself, I can only frown from what I know, but Lord Darius is the one who has the most influence with the current king. I'm sure Eris-sama will experience some troubles, but her social status and treatment will be guaranteed."

"However...?"

"If it was a bit of selfishness, then Lord Darius should listen and give in. For example, reconstructing a village for the sake of the Fedoa region's population..."

I see now.

If you become the woman of one possessing power then you can use some of that power and money yourself.

Even though I say that, I really don't want Eris to become that kind of pervert's belonging.

"Any others?"

"On the side of other nobles, most likely Eris-sama is... Now that Sauros-sama and Philip-sama are dead, Eris-sama's worth as the daughter of a noble is almost nothing."

Worth, worth, huh...

Is it that sort of thing I wonder?

If you were to ask me, Eris has quite a bit of worth on her own...

"Rudeus-dono which way do you think would be best?"

"....before you ask my opinion, do you mind if I listen to Ghyslaine's opinion?"

In response to the sudden question I softly responded saying that, running away.

My thoughts still haven't collected yet.

"I think it would be best if Eris-ojousama remains together with Rudeus."

"Together with me?"

"You are Paul's son. Zenith as well is an influential noble from Milishion. Since your lineage and background are both clearly known, then you should be able to become a noble of Asura Kingdom."

No, I wonder about that.

I don't think I can.

While thinking that I look at Alphonse.

"It isn't impossible. Paul-dono has earned some merit from this incident, if we were to make use of that then making Rudeus-dono into a noble is possible. However, in order to become strong enough to manage Fedoa region, it would be difficult. I can't imagine that Philemon-sama would allow Paul-dono's son to hold any power. Also, if you were to marry Eris-sama in order to take on some power, then I can't imagine you would have a good face towards Lord Darius or James-sama."

I thought as much...

Well, but, I somehow or other understood it.

According to Alphonse's thinking, he's only focused on the region's recovery.

"Then it would be fine for Rudeus to take Eris-ojousama and run away."

"What about the Fedoa region?"

"You do something about it."

Ghyslaine's words were forsaking him.

She might fundamentally have a bad relationship with Alphonse.

"Isn't having Eris-sama govern this land that Sauros-sama loved precisely our dearest wish?"

"That's limited to your dearest wish, don't stick us together. I'm fine as long as Eris-ojousama is happy."

"Will she be able to be happy if she runs away with Rudeus-dono?"

"At the very least, more than if she were to marry Philemon."

"What about the people of this region?"

"It's not something we can know. From the start nothing of that sort was ever expected from Eris-ojousama."

The Vassal Group was split in half on difference of opinion.

I'll put it into order.

In other words, Alphonse wants Eris to follow in the footsteps of Sauros and Philip.

And then, he wants her to govern this land.

If it's for that sake, he's saying that she should endure with doing some perverted things with a perverted noble.

Ghyslaine is saying that sort of thing has no relation and wants Eris to be happy.

If it's for that sake, she's saying to throw away power and family name, and elope with me.

If you were to ask me, I side more with Ghyslaine.

It's a sentimental thing.

After all, a girl I protected all the way up to here, I wouldn't want her to become the belonging of a guy like a pig.

No, I don't really know if that Darius guy is a pig or not though.

Even if that's the case, eloping with Eris is still the better option.

I really don't care about power at all either.

However, I understand somewhat what Alphonse wants to say.

He wants Eris to take over what Sauros started.

If I think about the importance of that matter, for the time being I can understand it.

Though I can't agree to it.

Well, it doesn't really matter which.

"We can't come to a conclusion."

I muttered that.

The two disputing looked over at me.

"What do you mean?"

In response to Alphonse's request, I said,

"In any case, the one to decide is Eris. There's no meaning in us talking about it like this. Rather than that, let's search for a more constructive topic. Isn't there anything else?"

Alphonse was looking at me with a dumbfounded face.

Ghyslaine as well, sunk into silence.

"If there isn't, then I'd like to go rest."

The meeting on that day came to a close just like that.

Author's Note: The chapter this time is a bit perverted in description, I tried to keep it in the Rated 15+ range but it might have ended up barely outside of this range, so anyone who dislikes these developments should be aware and avoid them.

By the time the meeting ended, the sun had already set.

I returned to my room.

It was a room with the bare minimum of furnishings.

I was going to organize my belongings but I wasn't feeling any motivation so I sat on the bed.

My body sank into the hard bed.

I was more tired than I thought, it seems.

"Fuu..."

I don't think I did anything today that should have worn me out.

I'm feeling really fatigued to the core.

Maybe this is mental fatigue.

No, that's not it.

I could be in shock as well.

Sauros, Philip, Hilda.

I wasn't all that close to them, but if I close my eyes I can still remember.

The time when Old Man Sauros came to check up on Eris when we went out to look at the countryside.

Philip, with a villain's smile, asking me to join him in usurping the Boreas family power.

Hilda telling me to become their child and marry Eris.

They are no longer in this world.

Even more, that house doesn't even remain.

That large house, where voices would sometimes echo is no longer around.

The banquet hall where I danced with Eris, the tower where I interrupted Old Man Sauros's love affair, the large amount of paperwork and books, it's all already gone.

It's not just the house. Buina village as well.

I haven't actually seen it myself, but the tree Zenith took so much care of, the tree Roxy burnt down with Saint Class magic, the large tree Sylphy and I played together at, it had all disappeared.

...When it comes to Buina Village, why is it that I remember so many trees?

Well, whatever.

Anyways, everything has disappeared.

I thought I understood it when Paul told me, but after actually seeing it, it's more of a shock than I thought.

"Fuuu..."

After my second sigh, *knock knock*, someone was knocking at the door.

"...Come in."

The one who came in was Eris.

"Good evening, Rudeus."

"Eris, are you feeling better now?"

"I'm alright."

Saying that Eris stood in front of me and took her usual pose.

It doesn't look like she's feeling too down.

As expected of Eris.

After just learning that her family has been annihilated, she's way stronger than me it seems.

No, she could actually be feeling quite down.

Normally she wouldn't even have knocked on the door.

She would have kicked it open.

"Well, I thought this might possibly be the case a while back."

"Is that so..."

Eris said it as if it was nothing.

Sometime ago she said she was prepared mentally in the case that this happened.

That she prepared herself for the possibility that her family had died.

It's something I couldn't have done.

Even now I'm still thinking that somewhere Zenith is out there alive.

Even if I understand in my head that the possibility of her being dead is higher.

"Eris, what are you going to do from here on out?"

"What am I going to do?"

"Um, have you heard the story from Alphonse yet?"

"I heard. However, that doesn't matter at all."

"Doesn't matter at all..."

Eris was looking straight at me.

Suddenly, I finally realized, her appearance was different from normal.

Eris was wearing the black one piece she bought in Milishion.

The black one piece matched well with her red hair, almost like a dress.

Maybe because of the thin material, but her chest really stood out.

Hm?

It's because she's not wearing a bra.

After looking closely I noticed her hair was a bit wet.

It looked as though she just washed it in the bath.

That's not all, I could smell a bit of a sweet smell unlike normal.

What is it?

I've smelled something like it before. Perfume?

"Rudeus. I'm alone now."

Alone?

Ah, I see.

Her family is already gone.

She still has blood related siblings, but no family.

"And, I turned 15 recently."

Speaking of 15 years old... hearing that I panicked.

When was it?

When was her birthday?

My birthday was 1-2 months ago or so.

Therefore, it was more than a month ago.

I didn't realize.

"Umm, sorry, I totally didn't realize it."

When was it?

I don't think I saw anything that would have shown that.

If it's Eris, normally she would be making a lot of noise around her birthday.

Was there a day Eris did something unusual?

I can't remember.

"Rudeus didn't realize, but it was the day Ruijerd told me I was now an adult."

"Ah."

It was that day, huh.

I remember, right in the middle of the road, now I understand, that's why. That's why Ruijerd told Eris she was now an adult.

This is bad, I might have screwed up.

Did I really not realize...

"Umm, is it alright if I prepare something now? Is there anything you want?"

"That's right, there is one thing that I want."

"What is it?"

"A family."

I was at a loss for words.

That is something that I can't really prepare.

I can't revive people from the dead.

"Rudeus, become my family."

"Eh?"

I suddenly looked at Eris' face in the darkness and it was bright red.

Then that is that.

A proposal?

No, it can't be.

"That is, then, you want to be older sister and younger brother?"

"It doesn't matter what the relationship is."

With a bright red face down to her ears Eris was avoiding eye contact.

"In other words, umm, let's sleep together, is what it means."

What does it mean?

Calm down, think about the meaning of the words.

...Sleep together.

I understand.

In other words, with everything that's happened, Eris is in shock.

In order to heal the wounds in her heart, she wants to know she's not alone and feel the warmth of another.

Family.

In this case it would be playing family.

But...

"Even though you were feeling lonely today, I might try to do something perverted?"

Some night in the past I said something similar to that.

Frankly, I have no confidence.

I have no confidence that I can hold myself back while lying in the same bed and feeling Eris' warmth.

Eris should understand something like that as well.

Right...

"To-today it's okay."

"I told you before though, I won't be able to stop at just a little bit."

"I remember. Today, it's alright if you mess me up."

Hearing that reply, I just kept staring at Eris' face.

Thinking about what I just heard.

But.

If you say something like that, my son's gonna do a standing ovation you know?

"Wh-why are you suddenly saying something like that?"

"Didn't we promise that it would be okay when I turned 15?"

"I thought we were talking about when *I* turn 15?"

"I don't mind either way."

"Mind it!"

Strange.

Something is very strange.

Think, what is strange?

That's right.

In other words Eris is lonely.

She might be throwing herself away.

I've experienced many scenes like this in ero games.

When someone dies, they go to someone else in order to comfort them.

And a physical relationship is formed.

Yeah, I understand.

However, if I lay my hand on her, then isn't it like I'm taking advantage of her weakness?

Do I want to do that?

My worthless parts are yelling "Graduate from your Virginity!" and feeling very happy.

But, wouldn't it be better to do that under more normal circumstances?

I don't think it's a good idea to do it in this mentally cornered state.

If we do it while both of us are suffering emotionally.

Later, we might regret it.

Ah, but, a chance where Eris says it's okay might not come again.

In the case that Eris goes to where Philemon is, certainly the promise at 15 years old will be scrapped.

No, in the first place, if someone else steals her virginity...

Do it.

I want to do it.

However, I feel like I shouldn't do it.

I'm an indecisive harem story protagonist.

A coward when it comes time to show his manly side.

But, in reality when it comes down to it I'm retreating.

I can't think of a good word for it.

What would be the best choice.

I have a feeling I'll end up regretting it regardless of which decision I make.

I'm sure I'll regret it two years later.

Expecting Eris on a bed wrapped in ribbons on my 15th birthday.

[It's your birthday present! I might accidentally hit you, so I've tied myself up, do whatever you want with me!]

As if something like that would actually happen.

Ah, no, wait.

I almost died recently.

That time before I was about to die I was really regretting it.

Thinking that I still had something left to do.

Who knows if I'll still be alive 2 years from now?

I was in a number of critical situations up to now.

Wouldn't it be better to throw away my regrets and just do it now?

No, but, wait...

"...Geez!"

While I was lost in thought.

Eris coughed a bit and sat on my lap.

And facing me put her arms around my neck.

Eris' beautiful face and her sun burnt chest spread out before my field of vision.

When she noticed something between her thighs she opened her mouth a bit.

And her face went even more red.

"What is this..."

"Because Eris is cute."

Eris sighed and grinded her inner thighs against the head of my son.

That sensation was so sweet and soft.

My son was very delighted.

"This happens when you get excited, right?"

"Yeah."

"It's not like you don't want to do it with me, right?"

"Yeah."

"You were fond of Father and Grandfather as well, right?

"Yeah."

"Rudeus, for a while now you've had a perverted look on your face."

"Yeah."

"Even though you've been saying we can't?"

"...Yeah."

I nodded for the last time.

My gaze was already pinned to her chest and nape.

I felt her soft thighs and the sensation of her chest pressing against me.

Inhaling a full breath of her scent.

My body was already giving in to instinct.

I gathered the last tiny bit of my reason and spoke.

"Promise... wasn't it a promise? Not to do it until 15."

Of course, that was just for show.

At this moment, frankly, I couldn't care less about it at all.

Why I'm even resisting at all is pretty vague.

Hearing my words, Eris sighed and said.

"Hey, Rudeus. I learned something from Mother but, it was forbidden, and since it's embarrassing I'm only going to say it once."

After saying that she took a single deep breath.

She brought her face close to my ear.

And said a single line with a voice like a child wanting to be spoiled.

Undoing the forbidden seal.

"I want to be Rudeus's kitten, nyan~"

Those words quickly invaded my ears and devoured my last bit of resistance and reason.

This person is called the problematic Mad Dog in public and it matches her perfectly.

A dog, a dog, but nyan!

I reacted with instinct.

Through instinct I became a beast and pushed Eris down on the bed.

That night.

Eris and I climbed the stairs to adulthood together.

During that moment I forgot about everything that was bothering me.

Only focusing on being together with Eris.

I never said it out loud, but I thought that I love her.

I thought I want to protect her forever.

I thought that nothing else beyond that mattered.

Didn't Paul say it?

Noble responsibility doesn't matter at all.

There's no need to think about anything difficult.

In order to save her, doing anything would be fine is what I thought.

I think 3 children would be good, but we'll probably make more is what I thought.

Yes, if that's the case.

I was totally happy.

I wasn't thinking at all about what Eris was thinking about.

–Eris Point of View–

That day I, Eris Boreas Greyrat became an adult.

I received Rudeus as my present for my 15th birthday.

It was a bit different from the promise, but I was bound together with Rudeus.

I love him.

When was it that I clearly became aware of it?

That's right, I'm certain the first time I realized I liked him was during his 10th birthday.

It was the time when my mother forced me up when I was sleeping, she put a deep red nightgown on me, and with a serious face said, "Go to his room and entrust your body to him."

It wasn't that I didn't want to do it.

However, I was a bit confused.

Things like that I had heard about a number of times from my mother and Edona.

Eventually it would become like that, is how I was instructed.

However, that day I still hadn't resolved myself.

I thought it would be further in the future.

Whether he knew or didn't know of my confusion, Rudeus touched my body.

It seemed like he was up until late talking about something with my father, could it be, that they had this kind of conversation?

While thinking that a certain thought rose to the surface within me.

"He might not like me."

It could be that, he had no choice other than to follow what my father told him and lay his hands on me.

Rudeus in those days was an amazing person.

He knew everything and could do anything.

Even though that was the case he never let his desire to learn weaken, and just kept advancing forward.

I wonder if he and I match together.

Looking at Rudeus who was breathing heavily, I thought my feelings didn't matter at all to him.

I am a reward given to him by my father.

After thinking that it became unpleasant.

I pushed him away and ran.

After running away from the room this time I was afraid.

That right now I could be doing something that I can't recover from...

It could be that right now I'm about to lose my final chance.

I was told by mother that there would be no other person than Rudeus willing to accept me.

I think that is the case as well.

I've met with the children of nobles a number of times, but there were none of them with as much backbone as Rudeus.

Rudeus has been interested in my body since he was younger.

He would often come to flip up my skirt and try to pull my panties down, and whenever he can he tries to touch my chest.

Each time I would hit him and drive him off.

During the short period when I went to school, there was a time when a boy tried to tease me and I hit him, that child never said anything cheeky again.

However, Rudeus didn't respond to it at all.

I strongly felt the reality of the words my mother said, that there is no one other than Rudeus.

If I'm to be hated by him, I thought I would be forever alone.

I thought isn't it fine even if it's as a reward?

As long as we can remain together.

I returned to Rudeus' room.

After seeing me, he rolled up into a ball like a frog.

He apologized saying he was wrong.

Even though it was me that wasn't resolved?

In response to him, while looking down from above, I said to wait another five years.

At the time I thought that much would be good.

If it was the adult Rudeus, I thought he would wait for me.

That time I realized that I had come to like him.

However, the situation soon underwent a sudden change.

We were thrown to some unknown place, then when I opened my eyes what was in front of me was a Superd race.

I thought I was receiving retribution.

I thought I was receiving retribution for doing whatever I liked until now.

Mother always used to say any number of times if I'm always selfish a Superd race will come and eat me.

That's why I thought I would be eaten by this demon.

At least I felt it would have been good if I had let Rudeus do as he pleased at that time.

The main thing starts at 15 years old, but it's fine.

Until Rudeus is satisfied, it would have been fine if I had just endured.

I cried, screamed, and crouched to the ground.

The one who came to save me was neither Ghyslaine nor my grandfather, it was Rudeus.

He was talking with that Superd race.

Even though he should have been considerably worried as well, he was comforting and calming me who is older.

I thought how much courage he has.

I found another thing that I like about him.

After that Rudeus gave it his best.

With a pale face, he made a deal with the Demon Race.

He didn't eat much food at all.

He hid the fact that his condition was bad.

I'm sure it's so he doesn't worry me, he's suffering when I'm not looking.

That's why, I decided to endure it.

I'll bear with it during the times I want to cry out and leave it to Rudeus.

As much as I can, I'll continue to behave as I usually do.

However, there were a number of times where I couldn't endure it.

The anxiety never stopped, it continued to well up in the bottom of my heart.

Since it was a painful situation, I think I was being quite selfish.

Rudeus never got angry, he continued to stay by my side.

Without saying a single word of sarcasm, he caressed my head, embraced my shoulders, and comforted me.

During those times he wouldn't do a single ecchi thing.

Even though he normally would do as he pleases, during just those times he would only touch my body as much as was needed.

I thought that being ecchi was his method of playfulness.

He might act like that on a normal basis in order to make us feel relieved.

That's how I thought.

He isn't thinking about just himself, but he was thinking about me as well.

I thought I had to become strong.

At least enough that I wouldn't get in Rudeus' way.

The only thing that I could do better than Rudeus was just waving a sword.

Just fighting.

Even in that, I'm still far from Ruijerd who became our ally.

If it was just the sword... but I can't win against Rudeus when he is using magic too.

Rudeus allowed me to gain experience.

I'm sure, if it was just Rudeus and Ruijerd, they could have defeated monsters in a simpler way, and they could have continued the journey in a simpler way without delay.

After thinking like that I felt like crying.

If Rudeus were to realize that, if he were to come to hate me along the way, he would leave me and return. That's how I thought.

Therefore, I desperately tried to get stronger.

I challenged Ruijerd for training and was defeated over and over.

Each time, I would hear Ruijerd say "Understand now?".

Each time, I would remember Ghyslaine's words.

Rational, that's right, it's rational.

There's rationality to the movements of a master.

If you see something stronger than yourself, first carefully observe them.

Ruijerd is strong, most likely stronger than Ghyslaine.

That's why I was watching.

Nothing but looking at his movements, trying to imitate it until I was able to do it.

Ruijerd helped me to become stronger.

All night long after Rudeus gets tired and falls asleep, without making an unpleasant face, he accompanied me with my training.

I did intensive training as well.

As if it was the most obvious thing, Ruijerd would beat me down.

For him who likes children, beating me down should have been something painful.

In regards to me, Ruijerd is already an existence I can call shisho.

One year after we started our journey.

I thought I had become strong.

I felt like I understood I was different from those days when Ghyslaine would say with a sour face, "rational-rational".

While training with Ruijerd I understood the true meaning of rational.

The movements of my body that were always fine being made up on the spot until now, every bit of them suddenly had a meaning to their existence.

I finally understood the meaning of the feints that I thought were crafty and the nonchalant pre-emptive attacks up until now.

Then one day, I managed to land my first hit on Ruijerd.

If I think about it now, it seems like he was distracted by some other matter.

However, in regards to me, those kinds of gaps didn't matter at all.

I managed to take my first hit off him.

With this I wouldn't get in Rudeus' way.

I can go on walking by Rudeus' side.

That's right, I was getting ahead of myself.

That impudence, Rudeus all too easily crushed.

He suddenly got his hands on a demon eye and all too easily pinned me down.

I lost to Rudeus.

In a head on battle without magic at that.

It was a shock.

I already have nothing left I can win against him with.

I thought it was unfair.

I thought that was against the rules.

The path that I had been walking down for a number of years, in a single go, he overturned it.

The same time reality was forced on me.

Without changing I was still holding him back.

I secretly cried.

Early morning the next day, while swinging my sword on the beach I cried.

Ruijerd said not to let it bother me.

From the start, Rudeus had a good affinity with demon eyes.

If you train, then you'll be able to become stronger.

He said I have talent, therefore don't give up.

What do you mean talent?

Ghyslaine and Ruijerd are full of lies.

I thought that.

Around that time Rudeus looked huge to me.

Overwhelmingly large, he looked as if he held a light so bright I couldn't look directly at him.

I was turning him into a deity.

If you were to speak of who is a perfect human, I would have answered Rudeus without a doubt.

I thought I needed to try and catch up somehow, but I had given up somewhere thinking it was impossible.

That only changed after we crossed over into Milis Continent.

We met Gisu, I came to understand that there were a variety of skills other than the sword and magic in the world.

I thought I would learn them, but I was rejected.

I thought, why? At that time.

I couldn't accept it.

And then the events at Milishion.

At the very least, I had to make sure I could do things on my own and then I went off to do the simplest Goblin Subjugation.

I wanted to think even a bit that I can do it by myself.

For the first time I came to realize a portion of my own talent at that time.

I ended up fighting against some strange assassins and overwhelmed the other side.

At some point I had grown without realizing it.

And then, when I returned, Rudeus had weakened.

After somehow listening to the situation, it seems Paul is in this town and his meeting with Rudeus was painful.

Even though he wasn't crying, while looking at the deeply depressed Rudeus, I remembered that he was still a child two years younger than me.

Even though that was the case, he became this selfish woman's home teacher, he never received congratulations from his family on his 10th birthday, and he was forced to travel along with someone dragging his legs down on the Magic Continent.

And then he was pushed away by his father.

It was something I couldn't possibly forgive.

For someone who is seated at the very lowest of seats in the Asura nobility, I decided in my heart to kill Paul Greyrat.

I often heard about the strength of this person known as Paul from my father.

It was talk about how he's a genius swordsman who has raised Sword God style, Water God style, and North God style, all three styles to Advanced level.

And then he's that Rudeus' father.

However, I didn't want to think that I might lose.

The things that Ruijerd had taught me had properly become power within me.

The swordsmanship taught to me by Ghyslaine and the combat techniques taught to me by Ruijerd.

If I hold both of those then I shouldn't be defeated.

I can't lose to a fiend.

However, I was stopped by Ruijerd.

After asking why, he said it's because this is a parent and child fight.

I had heard that Ruijerd was lamenting things about his own children.

That's why this time I decided to do as Ruijerd said.

Now that I think about it, even after everything, Rudeus enjoyed the time he was talking with Paul.

A parent and child who get along well just got into a bit of a petty fight.

After thinking like that, it feels like something in my guts cooled down.

However, the me from that time couldn't accept it.

In the end, Rudeus and Paul reconciled.

It ended up just like Ruijerd had said.

I'll say it once more, I couldn't accept it.

I couldn't understand why Rudeus forgave his father.

That's right, he forgave him.

He, to that inhuman father...

If it was me, he would be an opponent that I would absolutely never forgive.

In regards to that matter, Rudeus didn't talk very much about it.

Ruijerd wouldn't tell me about it either.

Since they are adults.

After that, we crossed over to Central Continent.

During this time he had become energetic, he became able to eat a lot of food.

And then, as usual, Rudeus was amazing.

In the Shirone Kingdom, he became friends with the third prince in a single day and managed to rescue his family.

If you were to ask me, all I did was just rage about along with Ruijerd.

In terms of results, raging about without thinking ended up being what saved Rudeus.

He said [I didn't do anything.] and [You saved me.] but at that rate even if he had been alone he would have without a doubt solved everything.

Rudeus was large.

He was too large.

That large figure, that day, the day we met with the Dragon God, became even greater.

The confrontation with the Dragon God.

During the time when Ruijerd and I were trembling from that guy who was like the symbol of fear itself, only Rudeus was calm.

Against that opponent who Ruijerd couldn't do a thing to, he even managed to land a single hit.

The magic he used at that time couldn't be seen by my eyes.

Rudeus said it was a rock bullet, but I've never seen that terrifying of a rock bullet until now.

It was amazing. Rudeus who was being serious.

He was able to properly fight against the Dragon God that is said to be the strongest in the world.

The next instant after I thought that, Rudeus died.

Until that instant I thought death was something completely unrelated to us.

Rudeus is strong, so he would never die.

While I'm being protected by him, I wouldn't die either.

Since Ruijerd is here as well, it's safe.

That's how I thought.

It was a misunderstanding.

Rudeus was about to die.

If in the case the young girl who was accompanying that Dragon God hadn't requested to heal him on a whim, or if the Dragon God hadn't been able to use healing magic, Rudeus would be dead.

I was afraid.

I was not only a shackle to him, but I had become a burden.

That's right, I felt it all over again.

Even after that, I still looked at Rudeus like a deity.

Because even if he was almost killed he managed to survive.

Moreover, he started to train under the assumption that he might have to fight that Dragon God again.

Three days after he was on the verge of death.

I couldn't comprehend that.

I couldn't comprehend it, but in any case I was afraid, so I stood by his side.

I had the feeling that if I wasn't by his side he would die.

I had the feeling that I would be left behind.

And then we separated from Ruijerd.

Ruijerd said it was impossible to win against that Dragon God.

However, in the very end he taught me.

He told me to remember the technique the Dragon God used.

Burn into my eyes that scene, the Dragon God's movements, that technique that warded off my sword.

I found rationality in that.

The Dragon God wasn't some monster with an unknown identity.

He was a master who used human techniques.

And then in the end.

We arrived at home, we came to understand there was nothing left.

I came to know of the death of my Father, Grandfather, and Mother.

I was sad.

Even though it was this painful trying to return, I had nothing left.

My house and my family were gone.

Ghyslaine and Alphonse were here, but somehow they were scolding me like different people.

Already, I had nothing left but Rudeus.

That's why I thought to become family with him.

I was impatient.

His job was already coming to a close.

The contracted time was five years and it had already long since passed.

His role of escorting me home had ended as well.

Not all of his family had been found yet.

He would soon go off on a journey most likely.

Leaving me behind.

I thought that.

In order to restrain him, I closed in with my body.

He was reluctant at first.

I thought he might not accept me.

Rudeus had shown interest in my underwear, but he never came to peek on me when I was bathing.

Even in the ship crossing over to Milis Continent, if he had such an intention he could have touched me or stripped me as much as he pleased, but he didn't.

That's why I thought he might not have any interest in my body.

Since I had always spent my time training with the sword, I wouldn't have as much feminity as other girls.

I thought no matter how ecchi Rudeus is, he might not want to actually embrace this.

That was not the case.

Rudeus was extremely excited.

After seeing Rudeus that excited, I got excited as well.

And then we combined our bodies for the first time.

In the beginning it hurt a bit, but gradually it started to feel good.

Compared to Rudeus it seemed like he was feeling good in the start, and then on the way he started to get weak, then fragile, and then he seemed to break.

There I realized it.

I realized it again.

Rudeus is smaller than me.

Of course, I'm rather sturdy as a woman, but putting aside stature his entire body was smaller as whole. Even more than me.

Rudeus is younger than me, I understood it for the first time then.

Even though Rudeus is this young, he was always protecting me.

Even the time when we were on the ship, he continued to cast healing on me.

During the time when we got off the ship, he was considerably tired.

After getting on that disgusting feeling vehicle, even he shouldn't have been able to remain composed.

That's right.

If it hadn't been for that healing, then after we got off the ship Rudeus might not have been captured by that beast race Gyes.

Compared to him, what about me I wonder.

I had become stronger.

Even my swordsmanship, it has become relatively skilled.

However, I had never thought much about Rudeus.

My eyes were always so focused on his greatness, my eyes were turned away from how small he is.

In the end I used the worries of losing my family as a means to close in on Rudeus, following my own desires, I even behaved like this.

I'll say it once more.

I love Rudeus.

However, I am not appropriate for Rudeus.

I am nothing but a burden for Rudeus.

We were able to become family, but we can't have a relationship beyond that.

We can't become a couple.

It's just like he said, being siblings would be just right.

I don't balance up with him.

Even if we stayed together, I would just continue to drag him down.

It seems like it would be good to put a bit of distance between us for a little while.

I naturally started to think that.

If I remain together with Rudeus, I will most likely be spoiled by him.

That luscious sensation is still remaining deep inside my stomach.

A bit unsatisfactory almost.

This wretchedness is a characteristic of the Greyrat family.

Unexpectedly, Rudeus might not be all that strong in that sorta way.

Rudeus who is giving it his best, he even makes this direction feel lost.

That is something that shouldn't be done.

Even if that is said, after all I like him.

I have no intention to marry another man like Alphonse said.

In the first place, trying to live as a ladylike noble's child at this point is already impossible.

In the first place, even if you tell me to give it my best for the sake of the unacquainted people of our land, it doesn't come to me.

In the first place, I can't understand why I would have no choice other than to do such a thing.

Grandfather and Father and Mother are all already gone.

Fedoa region as well is already gone.

In that case, I as well will throw away the name of "Boreas".

However I am still my Grandfather's grandchild, and my Father and Mother's daughter.

I have no choice but to live with a steel willpower.

I will become strong.

I thought that all over again.

After I part with him, I'll train more and more.

At the very least, until I've done enough that I can stand shoulder to shoulder with Rudeus.

It's fine even if I can't win against him.

However, at the very least, I want to become a woman who is in harmony with Rudeus.

I want to become a woman who won't be talked about or pointed out by being by his side.

It's impossible for me to live cleverly like Rudeus.

That's why I'll seek out strength.

Ghyslaine and Ruijerd and Gisu all said it.

I have talent with the sword.

From the time I met Rudeus until now, I've never once thought I was strong.

However, I'll believe in the words of those that have allowed me to grow.

Following Ghyslaine's suggestion I'll go to the Holy Land of the Sword.

There, I'll become a strong swordsman.

I will be the swordsman and Rudeus will be the magician.

The male and female roles are reversed.

However, that's fine for us.

After I grow, after I become strong, we'll meet once again.

At that time, I'll take one step forward as family and become a couple.

I'll give birth to his child and we'll live happily together.

Yeah.

Let's do that.

Now then, but, how should I separate...

Rudeus is skilled with his words.

Even with everything he might try to hold me back.

Saying he's worried about me going alone, he might follow along.

Putting himself aside, he might try to follow along with me.

Leave behind a letter?

However, even if I leave behind a letter, I'll probably leave some kind of trace behind of where I'm going.

After seeing that, if Rudeus were to come chasing after me it would be terrible.

It's not good if he continues to be held back by me.

He's a person who will steadily move further into the future.

I don't want to drag down his future as well.

During these times, swordsmen in stories usually just leave without saying anything.

However, Rudeus hates those sorts of things.

During our travels we had enough reports, communication methods, and meetings to make ones' mouth sour.

It's not like I wanted to be hated by him.

Alright!

I'll just leave behind a single line.

And with that, I'm certain Rudeus will understand!

–Rudeus Point of View–

Good morning, everyone.

Good morning, it's a good morning isn't it virgin fellows!

Virginity is only forgiven until elementary school it seems, but are you all okay?

Oh my, I was no good. Haha... I'm soon to be 13 years old after all.

If we were to convert it I would be a middle school student. Haha!!

And then Hello, non-virgin fellows!

From today on I'm joining your group as well!

It's the so called, real fulfilling life, sort of thing right!

{ C-Editor's note: Real fulfilling life meaning people who have girl/boyfriends and are popular among their peers. }

I couldn't have possibly imagined that I would be included on that side, but as a real fulfilling life beginner please warmly show me in.

They say there's no point fighting among the rich after all, let's just get along together!

You know that rumor that masturbating feels better than sex? Yeah, that's a lie.

After all, when masturbating that, or this, or the mouth, or below aren't attached.

There's no meaning to it if you don't taste their entire body.

Sight, sound, touch, taste, smell, everything to satisfy you is there.

I wonder if that's what's no good.

[Don't think you're a boyfriend just because you held her once], such a line is out there.

I get what you want to say.

Though you know.

How do I put it... you know.

If you circulate your hand around her lower back, then hold onto her tightly.

And then she'll put her hands around your back and hold you tightly.

The rough breathing that can be heard next to your ear, the gaze which intertwines together if you look at her face.

If you lick around her mouth she'll offer her tongue, and then the upper mouth and the lower mouth will both turn into a flood.

It feels like, reciprocal things become reciprocal and then it turns into a hustle.

Would that be the spiritual satisfaction I guess?

Requesting love and giving it.

That is? For a person who is used to it, they may be thinking, don't be mistaken right.

However, that's impossible for a beginner like me.

I'm totally going to put on the face of a boyfriend.

And then since we're both beginners there's no problems.

I'm sure even Eris will want to put on the face of a girlfriend.

Oh my my my, excuse me. This was a topic that is a bit too stimulating for the virgin fellows wasn't it.

Excuse me, excuse me.

I as well you know, I think I should calm down a bit more as well though you know.

I've had 47 years of bodily experiences.

After getting my hands on something that I never had in that time, I'm a bit restless.

Oh my, in this case it would be letting go of something wouldn't it?

In the past I thought if it ever came down to it I would stay COOL but...

Hahaha, it ended up being something that I couldn't control very well!

Oh my? It's already this time, huh.

Please excuse me, I have previous plans to have morning pillow talk with her.

No, real fulfilling lives are really quite busy after all.

Especially the plans for at night are busy right!

Tonight again we'll go with Beast Mode and Burning Time.

It could be that we are even busier in the afternoon.

Look Eris, it's morning.

Wake up, if you don't wake up I'll play a trick on you~

And she's not here.

The other side of the bed is empty.

She always gets up early after all.

Even though it was already decided that the first morning would have pillow talk and a coffee break.

Really now, she's so shy.

"Alright."

I get up.

The area around my hips is returning a good listless feeling.

Thanks to this, I realized in an instant that last night wasn't just a dream.

It's truly a good feeling.

For the time being I'll put on the clothes scattered around.

I found my pants but I can't find my underwear.

Since there's no helping it I'll put on my pants with no underwear, Eris' panties were on the side of the bed, so I put them into my pocket.

After putting on my coat I did a big stretch.

"Hnnn? It's good."

I've never felt a morning as refreshing as this before.

And then there I noticed there was something scattered on the floor.

Something red was scattered about.

"Eh??"

It was hair.

Bright red hair had fallen to the floor.

"What is up with this?"

I grabbed a clump of that hair and sniffed the scent of it.

It was the scent I smelled a lot last night of Eris.

"Huh??"

While confused I shifted my gaze in front of me.

And then I noticed a single piece of paper was left there.

After that I picked it up, and read the letters written there.

"Right now, Rudeus and I don't match up together. I'm going off on a journey."

That meaning I carefully tried to digest.

One second.

Two seconds.

Three seconds.

I ran out of the room.

I look at Eris' room.

There's no luggage.

I quickly ran outside.

I entered the headquarters.

I found Alphonse.

"A...Alphonse-san, where is Eris?!"

"Together with Ghyslaine, she left on a journey."

"To...to where?"

After hearing that Alphonse looked at me with a bit of a cold expression.

And then he slowly opened his mouth.

"I was told not to disclose it to Rudeus-sama."

"Ah?? I see."

Huh?

Why?

I don't know what is going on.

Huh?

Why am I trembling?

No, I was thrown away?

I was left behind?

Huh?

Family???

Huh?

I spent about one week in a daze.

Sometimes Alphonse would come by and give jobs to me.

I thought there was nothing left in Fedoa region, but it seems that small farming villages are gradually increasing.

If you move a bit away from the refugee camp, then you can find that cultivation of wheat has started.

Following what Alphonse said I created a protective earth wall around the village and created a bank on the river to prevent it from flooding.

It was slow, but the reconstruction was progressing.

Although, the main stream cultivation wasn't set to start until they bring all the immigrants from Milishion supposedly.

It seems they were going to go with the fact that Eris died.

Eris Boreas Greyrat has passed away, and just Eris was born.

Thanks to that it seems that a variety of matters are going to be difficult, so Alphonse isn't planning to announce it officially until several years later.

In order to receive the assistance from that Darius guy or something.

Well, it doesn't really matter at all.

Even without Eris, Alphonse is making a face like nothing happened at all.

When I tried mixing jokes in and saying it's unfortunate that Eris ran away, he ended up saying, regardless he's just focused on the reconstruction of Fedoa region.

And just like that he carelessly repeated it.

In reality it seems like he was supposed to listen to the situation more beyond that.

However, since Eris is no longer around, he just started to feel like it didn't matter at all.

He's already fed up with being thrown around by political strife and people doing things at their own convenience, that kind of feeling.

Then if you were to ask what I was thinking about during that one week.

I was always thinking about the reason why Eris disappeared.

That night I was thinking back on my own actions and conduct.

However, even if I think back to it, all that would come to mind is a pink colored scene.

All of my memories were overwritten by that moment.

It could be that I was lousy in bed.

Since I attacked her with all of my desires, she might have been disillusioned.

No, that is strange, the one who attacked her is me, but the one inviting should have been Eris.

No, I can't say that.

I was tired of courtesy.

If I think about it, these past three years, there's been nothing but mistakes throughout the journey.

In terms of result most of them turned out good, but it ended up with us being saved by Ruijerd.

Eris probably didn't want to be followed around for another two years by such a partner.

That's why she paid in advance on the promise to get it over with and then said goodbye.

I don't understand the reason why she took up such suggestive behavior, but...

For the time being, that's right, I arrived at a conclusion.

In the end, I hadn't grown at all.

It can't be helped that I had grown tired of courtesy.

That's right at that time when I had given up, I suddenly remembered it.

"Ah! That's right, I need to search for Zenith or else.."

Just like this, I set out on a journey to the Northern part of Central Continent.

Roxy Migurdia had arrived in Kurasuma town.

Kurasuma town was situated in the northern tip of the Magic Continent.

Though it wasn't to the extent of Rikarisu town, it was certainly a flourishing city.

It didn't seem to have any special features at a glance, and was an average town that you could find anywhere.

However, in truth the Demon King reigning over the town had good relations with the Sea Race so there was trade between them.

Kurasuma town was the location for that trade, and was a town where the goods of both the Sea Race and Demon Race were gathered.

From the Sea Race came the blessings of the sea and from the Demon Continent were strong herbs characteristic to the area.

Kurasuma town was home to an extremely delicious cuisine that made use of the two of them.

It could be said that only one or two other towns on the Demon Continent could compete with it in food. Incidentally, one of those towns was Windport.

"The food here goes well with alcohol!"

Having come to the town, Talhand was in high spirits.

Kurasuma town not only had the dry drinks of the Demon Continent, but also the sweet drinks of the Sea Race.

Talhand, a dwarf, was a drinker.

As long as it was his beloved alcohol, no matter how bad the drinks might have been, he would unfailingly head to the tavern, hit it off with the ruffians there, and drench himself in alcohol.

You could find taverns everywhere, so he could find people he got along with everywhere.

Moreover, as long as you gathered good drinks, Talhand would be in high spirits.

However, to Roxy who had childish tastes, the cuisine of this town was a little disagreeable.

To begin with, the cuisine and seasonings of the Demon Continent weren't very palatable to her.

That's why no matter how it was modified, she didn't think it'd be very tasty.

Roxy was a person who liked sweet things.

However, the specialty of the Sea Race was their sweet alcoholic drinks.

This was good.

To Roxy whose common sense dictated that alcoholic drinks were dry, the existence of sweet drinks was quite a shock.

If you sniffed them, you'd find they had the scent of the sea, and if you held it in your mouth, an indescribable sweetness would spread across your tongue.

Though it left just a faintly salty aftertaste, it was something you could get rid of with snacks.

"What's this, what's this? Isn't this a rare sight!? You're going to drink, Roxy!?"

"Yes, I'll be drinking."

"Well aren't you in good spirits today!? Let's drink! Barkeep! Bring us a cask! I'll show you how we dwarves drink!"

Talhand saw Roxy drinking, and in a good mood, placed an additional order.

It was at times like these that Roxy was glad for the low prices of the Magic Continent.

After all, no matter how much they ate and drank, a single Asura copper coin was enough to cover it all.

"Jii-san, you drink pretty well!"

"Chug! Chug! Chug! Chug!"

"As expected of a dwarf, huhhh!?"

"Alright, let's have a match! Barkeep, a cask for me too!"

Talhand who drank by the barrel had set off a trigger, and other customers began drinking as well.

Incidentally, Elinalise had already come across a man she liked, and they had disappeared into the night together.

Usually Roxy would begin to feel alienated, but before she noticed, she was already cheering on Talhand with the girl next to her.

"Faaahahaha! He's quite the agreeable dwarf, isn't he!? A cask, you know, a cask! No matter the age, the dwarves never change, do they!? Hey, don't you agree?"

"Yeah, that's true."

"Ohhh! It begins! Drink! Drink! Drink!"

"Chug! Chug!"

After carrying over casks, along with another demon, Talhand began to chug down the alcohol magnificently.

Though he certainly had a wide body, just where did the alcohol go?

Having drained a cask that could barely be carried with one arm, he had burped.

Immediately afterwards, he carried over another.

"Oi! More drinks!"

"Shaddap! We're out already!"

"If you don't have any then buy some from a neighboring tavern!"

"Ohhh! There was that option as well!? Orright! You there, go buy some!"

"Leave it to me! You lot chip in as well! Tonight we'll drink to the end!"

"Ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!"

Like that, a bag for collecting money was passed around.

"Hahah! Ojou-sama! Have some pity on a wretched drunkard!"

"Okay. Tonight is... my treat!"

At any rate, the mood today was good.

Roxy chipped in 1 green mineral coin.

Seeing that, the men lowered their heads, laughing and grinning.

"As expected of Ojou-sama! Oi! You're rich!"

"Huhu, that's... obvious!"

In a relaxed and pleasant mood, Roxy gave an exaggerated nod. Though her response sounded quite similar to usual, she was drunk.

"Faaahahaha! Tonight, I have money as well! Graciously accept it! Then make merry! Tonight, we'll forget about social status!"

The girl next to Roxy produced a scrap iron coin and chipped in as well.

Though they'd usually crack jokes about someone who only chipped in a scrap iron coin after all that big talk, the guy collecting the money was drunk as well.

"Uehehe! Thank you very much, Ohime-sama! Tonight we'll drink until we hurl!"

"Good, good! Hurl lots!"

The girl nodded self-importantly, and the collector continued around the room, collecting money.

"Very good, very good! This atmosphere brings to mind the old days!"

Roxy didn't know when the girl had sat down next to her.

By the time she had noticed, the girl was already next to her and munching on the food that Elinalise had left behind.

Roxy didn't mind though; she was drunk after all.

"Well, whatever. Have a drink."

"Ohhh, thank you. Still, it's fortunate that I had come to see what was so fun here," -gulp gulp- "Come now. Won't you drink as well!?"

"I am drinking."

"Drink more!"

"Drink more? I guess it can't be helped..."

Since Roxy was told to drink as well, she gulped down the contents of her cup.

"Puhaa!"

"Here! One more for the Ojou-sama!"

"Ah, thanks."

When she had placed her cup on the table with a bang, a cheerful man had come out of nowhere and poured her another cup.

As long as it was this sweet drink, she really could drink endlessly.

"You're quite a heavy drinker as well, are you not!? For one so young, you're splendid!"

"I don't want to be called young by you."

Roxy stared at the girl.

Boots that came up to her knees.

Leather short-shorts.

A leather tube-top.

Her collarbone, curveless waist, navel and thighs – all of her skin was pale.

Voluminous and wavy violet hair and horns like a goat.

No matter how she looked at it, this girl was younger than her.

"Huhu, thank you for the flattery. One keeps their age in mind, after all!"

Seeing this girl, normally Roxy would have wondered, [Was there a demon clan like this?]

However, she didn't consider it.

She was drunk, after all.

"I'm keeping my age in mind as well. Well anyway, have a drink."

"Ohhh, thank you. Still, the drinks have gotten quite tasty over these past few centuries. In the past, there wasn't anything like these sweet drinks on the Magic Continent."

"I hear it's the Sea Race's drink. The Demon King here has been doing business with them or something."

"What was that!? That Baglah Haglah bastard has been hiding this from me, huh!? Unforgivable!"

"Isn't it fine? Abandon all ceremony, and forget about social status."

"Ohhh, you're right. Tonight we were ignoring social status!"

Demon King Baglah Haglah was the Demon King who reigned over this area.

He was a stout and chubby, pig-faced Demon King, and it's said that he was the most knowledgeable about food and drink on the Magic Continent.

Though he was politically moderate, he had participated in fierce attacks during the Laplace campaign.

Because he had plundered all the food and drink from the territory of the Human Race, he gained the name 『Plundering Demon King』.

"Whoa, he's smashed!"

"-Uuiiiick- Who's next? Anyone is fine, so bring it on!"

"Anyone!? Is there anyone who's up to it!?"

At some point Talhand had become topless and was sitting on the table, leaning his elbows against a cask and displaying his might.

Then who challenged him was the girl next to Roxy.

"Alright! You can leave things to me!"

"What's this, Ojou-chan? Do you think you can win against me? Wouldn't it be fine to challenge me again 20 years from now?"

"Faaahahaha! Oh, foolish dwarf, can you not tell at a glance? Despite appearances, I have lived for 300 years already!"

"I see, I see. My bad. Well then, bring it on!"

"Very well... Oh, but before that, I ask for your name! I shall certainly remember the foolish one who challenged me!"

"It's 『Talhand of the Great Rigid Peak』."

"I see! The one who defeats you is the 『Demon Empress of the Demon Eye, Kishirika Kishirisu』!"

And like that, Kishirika and Talhand's battle began.

In the blink of an eye, the extra alcohol was drained, and a bag for chipping in was passed around a second and third time.

Because Roxy decided to take responsibility, she chipped in 5 green mineral coins and sent off the shop boy.

Thanks to some strong men, a large amount of alcohol was carried in.

While everyone drank and passed it around, Talhand and Kishirika emptied it.

Roxy was the referee.

Though it wasn't clear what or how she was refereeing, while sitting and drinking, she was somehow left with the job of counting how many they had drunk.

"That's 40 cups."

The fated moment.

Until that instant, the match had seemed like a close struggle.

Putting aside the dwarf Talhand who was as strong as he looked, just where on earth did the girl who called herself Demon Empress store all the alcohol she drank?

No one at all had noticed.

They were drunk, after all.

Then, the conclusion was reached.

"Mugu-... Kpyu..."

The moment after Talhand had begun making mysterious noises, he began to throw up alcohol like a water fountain.

Then, just like a cask, holding his sides he collapsed.

With a noise, he fell from the table to the floor and a liquid that reeked of alcohol leaked from his mouth.

"It's my win!"

"Uohhhhhhh! Incredible! She beat a dwarf in a drinking competition!"

"My name is Kishirika! Great Empress of the Demon Realm, Kishirika Kishirisu! Say my name!"

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Jagi character in the Fist of the North Star manga series. }

"Kishirika! Kishirika! Kishirika!"

"Who is the greatest in this world!?"

"Kishirika! Kishirika! Kishirika!"

The moment Kishirika was declared the winner of the match, they began chanting in unison, and Kishirika's mood became extremely good.

"Faaahahahahahaha! Faaahahaha!"

"Bravo! Bravo!"

"Strip! Strip!"

Roxy couldn't really remember what happened after that.

Roxy was staggering from overdrinking as well.

While thinking about taking revenge for her fallen comrade, but thinking that it was a little impossible, she lost consciousness.

What she saw before she fainted was the sight of Kishirika on top of the counter, dancing about naked.

The next day, Roxy woke up.

"Uuu..."

Finding that she had a splitting headache, and that her own breath smelled of liquor, she frowned.

So as to clear the alcohol out of her body, she applied Healing to her head.

When she looked around her surroundings, she found that she was in the tavern.

It might have been because a brawl had broken out, but the table was broken, the liquor bottles were smashed, and a large amount of empty barrels were rolling about.

"Uuu, I overdrank, huh...?"

Her memory was fuzzy.

She remembered clearly though, that she had overdrank.

When she had incidentally looked to her side, she found that a half-naked Talhand was lying about with the whites of his eyes showing.

For a moment she had thought that he might have died, but it was impossible for a dwarf to die from drinking alcohol.

Even if they did somehow die, one of their childhood dreams was to die drinking, so it would probably be a satisfying death.

However, Roxy looked around once more.

She saw corpses all around.

Whether they were clans good at drinking, or clans weak at drinking, everyone was lying around groaning.

Amongst them was the man who had been collecting money.

All of them had passed out from drinking, and were suffering from hangovers.

[Even though you can't use healing magic, you were all drinking absurdly after all] thought Roxy.

However, amongst them stood two figures.

"Like I said, it's reparations, you know? Reparations. With my shop all messed up like this, I can't open up business, you know."

"No, well, but-"

"What, you can't pay? You had said it'd be your treat, right?"

"That is true, but I thought I'd have enough at the start..."

They were the figures of the angry shopkeeper, and the dejected Kishirika.

"So you don't have money?"

"No, well, sorry, I'm completely broke..."

"Well then, I guess there's no option left but to sell you at the slave market."

"What!? Sell me, you say...!? Wait, wait, I'll immediately contact Haglah so please wait for but a short while."

"I'm not waiting. That's just a plan to escape, right?"

Roxy sighed and felt for her purse.

Then, finding that there was only a single gold coin, she frowned.

While drunk, she had chipped in quite an amount.

(No, the one who was actually drinking was Talhand-san after all.)

With that excuse in mind, she unfastened the coin purse from the fainted Talhand's hips.

Looking inside, she found that there was plenty, and Roxy got up.

Frowning about the sour smell near her shoulder, she approached the shopkeeper.

"Here. It's payment."

"Mn?"

Roxy produced 6 green mineral coins from the coin purse and slipped them into the shopkeeper's hands.

"This isn't quite enough."

"This tavern completely sold out, so you've made quite a bit right?"

"...Well, it's fine I guess."

Saying this, the shopkeeper turned around and headed into the kitchen area.

While sighing, Roxy tossed the coin purse onto Talhand's hips.

"Ohhh... Ohhhhh... Thank you, truly, thank you!"

While trembling all over, Kishirika had looked up at Roxy.

Looking down on this sight, Roxy remembered what she had heard long ago from the village chief about the Great Empress of the Demon Realm.

Though her image was a little different, Kishirika's characteristics resembled what Roxy had heard.

If she was from a clan that possessed immortality, it wouldn't be strange for her age to be different from her appearance.

She was drunk last night so she had paid it no heed, but Kishirika seemed to be on good terms with the Demon King.

"Excuse me, I'd just like to ask once more, but you're the true Great Empress of the Demon Realm, Kishirika Kishirisu-sama, correct?"

"Mn? Ohh, that's right. Not many believe me these days though. Your name is?"

"Ah, excuse me. I'm from the Migurd clan of the Biegoya region, Roxy."

When Roxy named herself, Kishirika exclaimed 'Ohhh' and nodded.

"Roxy? Ohh, I know you, I know you. You're Rudeus' shisho, aren't you!?"

"...Do you know Rudeus?"

"We met by chance in Windport. He was quite the interesting man."

"I-, is that so...?"

Roxy was wondering just what he had said about her, but she was too afraid to ask.

In fact, Kishirika was just pretending to know, and had heard about Roxy on her travels here.

Roxy didn't know this, however.

"Hrm, I was saved by Rudeus as well; you're a truly splendid teacher and student, are you not? I've been saved by you as well so, let's see, I'll grant you a reward."

Hearing the word 'reward', Roxy's heart leaped.

The demon eyes that the Great Empress of the Demon Realm bestowed on others were famous.

It was because she had this power that she wasn't a Demon King, but was instead called Demon Empress, and possessed enough power to start a Great Human-Demon War, thought Roxy, when she suddenly recalled a certain matter.

"Um, can Your Majesty's demon eyes be used to search for missing people?"

"Mn. They can. Just the other day I had met Badi by chance, and now there isn't a person in this world that I can't find."

{ C-Editor's note: Badigadi is the Demon King of the region that Rikarisu town is in. }

"Is that so... In that case, please look for the whereabouts of Rudeus and his family. His family is currently missing."

Roxy spoke without hesitation.

Though she had regretted not being bestowed demon eyes by Kishirika, Kishirika had a high level demon eye called the 『All-seeing Eye』, that purportedly held the ability to see anything in the world without fail.

"Oh? To use your only wish for the sake of another; you're quite an admirable one, aren't you! Had times not changed, I'd have offered you a position as a Demon King."

"No, I don't need that sort of thing."

"I see, I see. You're a modest one. Let's see..."

With a spin.

The colour of Kishirika's eyes changed.

After that, she turned her head this way and that, and nodded with an "mmn".

"Rudeus is presently in the northern parts of the Central Continent. He's wearing light clothes and running."

Roxy firmly nodded.

It seems that somehow or other, he was searching in the northern areas of the Central Continent like the message had asked him to.

Though he could have gone from Milishion to the Begaritto Continent, he had probably wanted to confirm the state of his hometown.

"The father is in Milishion. Together with a maid. ...Hm, this maid seems to be called Lilia. Oh, and his two daughters are in the same building."

A sigh leaked from Roxy's mouth.

Though she had heard that Lilia and Aisha were still missing, it seemed that they had been found safely.

It's possible that Rudeus had found them on the Demon Continent and escorted them over.

Dead End was a group of three, but there might have been two others outside of the party.

"The mother is... wait just a moment."

Kishirika frowned making "mumumu" sounds, and put more power into her eye.

Then she saw Zenith's location.

"It seems she's in the Begaritto Continent's Dungeon City Lapan."

Roxy's expression brightened.

Though it was a place far from here, at least she had confirmed that all of them were alive.

Though she had thought it wouldn't have been strange had one or two of them died, she also thought [As expected of the Greyrat family].

They had great luck, it seems.

"However... It's a little strange, huh..."

Kishirika frowned, and her eye turned.

"Is there a problem?"

"Well, hmmm. I can't see very well."

"You can't see very well? Is it because it's underground?"

"I'm still not in my best condition, you see... Well, it'll be fine if you just head there and look yourself."

"That's a little troubling. If there's a problem, please tell me the details."

Though Kishirika had spoken as if it were nothing, Roxy furthered the conversation.

On the journey thus far, she had seen the tragic conditions that the refugees were in.

It was something tragic that you couldn't see even with a demon eye from the Great Empress of the Demon Realm.

She was currently happy thanks to what Kishirika had told her, but it was possible that it would be a short-lived happiness.

"What? ...Even if you say that, things that can't be seen just can't be seen. Ohhh, that's right. She might be inside a dungeon. It's called Dungeon City after all, though I've never been there myself."

"You can't see into a dungeon?"

"Mmmn. The dungeons in the Begaritto Continent have a thick mana concentration after all."

Roxy thought things through.

She had heard that Zenith, along with Paul, Elinalise, Talhand and some others had gone dungeon exploring.

During their travels together, she knew very well about Elinalise and Talhand's strength.

If she had journeyed with them, then she'd probably be able to survive even a dungeon.

However, why hadn't she made any contact?

It'd already been three years...

"At any rate she's alive isn't she?"

"Mmn. There's no mistake."

Roxy had decided to believe in those words.

It seems that for some reason or another, she was unable to leave the dungeon.

Thinking this, Roxy nodded her head.

"I understand. Thank you very much."

"It's fine, it's fine. It's my thanks for being saved."

Kishirika nodded exaggeratedly and tottered out of the tavern.

That afternoon.

Talhand who had begun drinking again as though nothing had happened and Elinalise who returned with a huge number of kiss marks on her nape.

Roxy was having a meeting with the two of them.

"To be able to meet with someone like the Great Empress of the Demon Realm, your luck is quite good, isn't it?"

When Roxy spoke of Kishirika, Elinalise just laughed quietly.

Roxy didn't think of it as a big deal either.

Perhaps it was because she had met her while drunk in a tavern.

Or perhaps it was because she wasn't particularly dignified.

"However, this brings our journey to an end, doesn't it?"

Talhand had spoken a little regretfully.

It would still take at least a year to return to the Milis Continent.

However, the purpose of the journey was achieved.

They had confirmed the lives of all of Paul's family, and had pinpointed the location of the last member as well.

It was the end.

"What are you going to do, Roxy?"

"I plan to return to Milishion and talk to Paul about this matter."

"I see. Then it seems we'll be parting on-route."

It seems that Elinalise and Talhand didn't want to meet with Paul.

Though it seemed that they had parted following some big fight, Roxy never heard the details.

She wasn't that interested in it though, so she never did press for details.

"Hmmmm, still, Rudeus is pretty far away all by himself."

Talhand had brought his hand to his chin, and said that in a sigh.

Hearing this, Roxy suddenly realised as well.

From here, Roxy would return to Milishion.

She would probably then accompany Paul and the others to the Begaritto Continent.

In that case, only Rudeus would be out of the loop, and would continue to search the northern parts of the Central Continent.

Because he was in the middle of searching, it meant that they wouldn't know his location, nor could they send letters.

"It really would be best to let him know somehow, huh...?"

Elinalise spoke worriedly.

However, there was no way to do so.

Though the northern parts of the Central Continent looked close, they were far.

Roxy sank back into thought.

Rudeus was outstanding but he was still young.

It really would be pitiful for him to waste away this period of his life.

Even if he was going to meet with this family, or even if he was going to do things independently like that, at least a few words...

Roxy wanted to tell him [It's fine for you to stop searching.]

"And there I went BABABABANG!"

"And then I also went BANGBABANG!"

Suddenly.

Suddenly, these two had appeared.

"Tell me about what happened!"

"We overheard!"

The door opened with a bang, and there entered a great man.

He was someone you could recognise as a demon in a glance, with obsidian skin and six arms.

His topmost arms were folded, his middle arms were pointed towards Roxy, and his lower arms were placed at his hips.

He had violet hair that stretched down his back.

And on top of those shoulders of him, sitting there as if a matter of fact, was the Great Empress of the Demon Realm.

"Alright! I am Kishirika Kishirisu! A.K.A. THE GREAT EMPRESS OF THE DEMON REALM!"

"And I am her fiancé, Demon King Badigadi!"

The two who had suddenly appeared, and the three who were stunned.

The first one to react was Elinalise.

"Um, we haven't seen each other since this morning, huh, Onii-san!"

"Huhahahaha, it was quite a night huh, Onee-san!"

Badi had replied while making a vulgar gesture with his hands.

With a cold sweat, Roxy asked,

"I-, is he an acquaintance?"

"Umm, I guess technically speaking...?"

It seems that after leaving the bar with a man, Elinalise then visited another bar.

With ulterior motives, a man had gotten Elinalise to drink, and also with ulterior motives, Elinalise drank.

Dead drunk, Elinalise was brought to an inn...

When she had come to her senses, she was in the pitch-black arms of this man.

And then somehow or another, there was penetration and they did it until afternoon.

"Eh? But just now, he said fiancé... Huh? Ah, should I greet you first?"

In a fluster, Roxy lowered her head.

"Mmmn, dear Roxy. Raise your head. Badi is popular, so this kind of thing is an everyday occurrence anyway."

"Mmn. Rather than that, since I can't enter Kishirika sexually yet, it can't be helped!"

Roxy's mind couldn't process such uninhibited words.

Thanks to Elinalise, Roxy had recently amassed quite a bit of superficial knowledge about sex, but this Demon Empress and Demon King fiancé pair who were fine with adultery exceeded Roxy's comprehension.

"Howeeever! That's fine!"

"Mmn. It was just a passing relationship anyway!"

Honestly speaking, Roxy didn't feel that she could understand these rather high-spirited two.

The Demon King Badigadi.

She knew of him.

He was the Demon King that reigned over the Biegoya area.

『The Immortal Demon King, Badigadi』

He was the younger brother of the one who rampaged during the Laplace Campaign, 『Immortal Demon King Atohfe』.

He was of the moderate faction during the Laplace campaign, and had fought and been defeated by the Demon God Laplace at Kishirika Castle.

Though he was currently missing, he was said to be quite an important person.

"Dear Roxy, I also owe a debt to Rudeus. If Rudeus has lost his way, then I will also assist!"

"Though she says this, she's still just borrowing my political power, you see!"

Talhand had recovered quicker than Roxy, who was still in great confusion.

He was stroking his ample beard whilst looking at Kishirika doubtfully.

"Is that really fine?"

"Ohh! You're that dwarf from yesterday! It's fine, it's fine, isn't it Badi?"

Kishirika hit him on the head, and the Demon King nodded.

"Mn. I'm also quite interested you see, in this brat named Rudeus that Kishirika says is so amazing! I'm going to see with my own eyes if he's actually amazing or not!"

"What's this, what's this? Are you jealous, darling?"

"Indeed this is jealousy, honey."

"Goodness, you're still a child, aren't you Badi? You're the only one I love..."

"Fuu, I'm not above being influenced by love. I'll smash up any rivals I have."

[It'd be troubling if you smashed him up...] thought Roxy, but the two didn't seem in the mood to listen.

"Huhuhu"

"Huhaha"

"Faaahahahaha! Faaahahaha! Faaaha-COUGH COUGH-"

"Huhahahahaha! Huhahahaha! Huaha... Are you alright?"

Though Roxy still couldn't catch up, the conversation progressed regardless.

The common sense of this world dictated that the seas were ruled by the Sea Race, and that those who lived on the ground were restricted in crossing them.

This was related to the confusion that occurred during the Laplace Post-War Period, but we'll leave that aside for now.

As an individual, the Demon King Baglah Haglah was friends with the Sea Race.

Though it wouldn't be good for a friend to break a law that was decided by the whole Sea Race, it was a different story for them to quietly consent to a friend breaking the law in secret.

Demon King Badigadi and Demon King Baglah Haglah were old friends.

Using this connection, it was easy to travel to the Central Continent, and they wouldn't even need to pass through the Heaven Continent.

However, if Roxy crossed the seas with them, then informing Paul in Milishion would be delayed.

Someone had to head to Milishion.

Moreover, you couldn't travel the Magic Continent alone.

Unlike the safe Central Continent, monsters were abundant on the Magic Continent.

Taking Roxy for example, she was a powerful magician.

Her judgement was quick, and her chanting was quick as well.

If it was just battle, then Roxy might be fine on her own.

However, she would have to sleep at night, and if she were attacked by a huge number of monsters, there was still the possibility that she'd be defeated.

At the very least, the Magic Continent had to be travelled in pairs.

"I don't want to. I don't want to see Paul's face." said Elinalise.

"I don't want to either." said Talhand.

"I understand. In that case, I'll go."

Faced with those two's selfishness, Roxy decided to head to Milishion first.

Although she had wanted to meet with Rudeus, it couldn't be helped.

Now she just needed one more person.

The two looked at each other, and Talhand immediately gave in.

"Hmm, then I'll be going with you. Honestly speaking, I really don't want to get on a boat..."

"Sorry, Talhand." Elinalise said.

Talhand's shoulders drooped.

[There's no need to head all the way to Milishion. We could just send a letter at some point.] thought Roxy. However, these two had their own ideas, so there was no need to overthink things.

As for Roxy herself, she had no reason to be against meeting Paul.

Like that, their party split into two.

Roxy and Talhand were going back the way they came, to Milishion, and Elinalise was heading to the Central Continent with Great Empress of the Demon Realm, Kishirika Kishirisu, and Demon King Badigadi.

There was still a little time until the boat departed.

However, Roxy departed first.

"Elinalise-san. Thank you for everything."

"Thank you for everything as well, Roxy."

Roxy firmly shook hands with Elinalise.

"Roxy, if you meet a good man, don't let him go, okay? You have to use both your upper mouth and lower mouth and properly catch him."

"You're saying things like that again?"

"It's fine, so listen up. If it's someone you really like, you have to come on strongly. You can just worry about making him love you afterwards."

Talhand let out a sigh at Elinalise's words.

"You... Did you say that to Zenith as well?"

"I did. Because of that, Zenith got her hands on Paul. My teachings are flawless."

Hearing this, [I see] thought Roxy.

To Roxy, Zenith and Paul were the ideal couple.

If they ended up like that because of Elinalise's advice, then there might be merit in listening to her.

"I understand, Elinalise-san. I'll come on strongly."

Their hands parted.

Because Roxy was short, she was looking up at Elinalise.

"Please tell Rudi that I send my regards."

"Of course. I'll make sure to tell him about how you were moving about at night from the loneliness of being apart from him."

"Wai-, why do you know that? Don't tell him such a thing. After all, it's not like I was dreaming about Rudeus or anything."

"Okay, okay."

Then, suddenly Roxy thought,

[What if Rudeus and Elinalise meet, and like that they head off to an inn together?]

If he was searching in the north, then Elinalise would probably meet with him in about a year.

It had been close to 10 years since Roxy had last seen him.

Rudeus was already 13 or 14 years old. In that case, it wouldn't be strange for him to catch Elinalise's eye.

That was just a little unpleasant.

"What's wrong? You suddenly went quiet."

"No, well, actually, if Rudeus turns out to be a good man, are you not going to make a move on him?"

Roxy was pretending to be casual about it and asked, and Elinalise sighed in response.

"I don't plan in the least on becoming Paul's daughter, you know."

She really did seem displeased about the idea.

While feeling relieved, Roxy replied [I see.]

"Well then, it's about time that we depart."

"Take care, Roxy. Stay well."

"Yes. You too, Elinalise-san."

Elinalise glanced at Talhand.

She looked down at the dwarf who was shorter than her, with eyes like she was looking at an insect.

"Don't die in a ditch somewhere, Talhand."

Talhand made an unhappy expression from the bottom of his heart, and spat.

"I'll send those words right back at you."

Seeing this, Roxy once again thought that the two were pretty close.

And then, Elinalise got on the boat.

It was an Sea Race boat from very long ago.

It was a boat drawn by marine magic beasts, and compared to the boats of the Human Race, it was a little shabby looking. However, it was faster than human boats and very safe as well.

Elinalise and Badigadi crossed the gangway together.

When they did, Kishirika's laughter resounded from behind them.

"Faaahahahaha! Well then, let us meet again, oh Badi! If you start to miss me, then feel free to immediately return to the Magic Continent!"

"Mmmn. Stay healthy, my fiancé! Let us meet again someday! Huhahahaha!"

"Who knows how many years we'll be separated this time! Faahahahaha!"

The Great Empress of the Demon Realm, Kishirika Kishirisu didn't get on the boat.

Elinalise tilted her head in confusion.

"Ara? Will the lady not be getting on?"

"Mmn. Kishirika can't leave the Magic Continent!"

"I see. Is it a curse?"

"Something like that."

The Great Empress of the Demon Realm couldn't leave the Magic Continent.

As a result, today as well, she would be roaming about the Magic Continent.

Roxy didn't know about this at all.

She had believed that Kishirika was boarding the boat with them, and was probably heading to meet with Rudeus.

Had she known about this earlier, Elinalise would have wanted Kishirika to accompany Roxy as well.

The Magic Continent was rife with dangers.

With Talhand with her, the worst was unlikely to come to pass but it would have been even safer with even one more person.

If that one person was the Great Empress of the Demon Realm, then their safety would have been virtually guaranteed.

However, Elinalise immediately changed her mind.

Had such a person followed her about, Roxy would surely be pitiable.

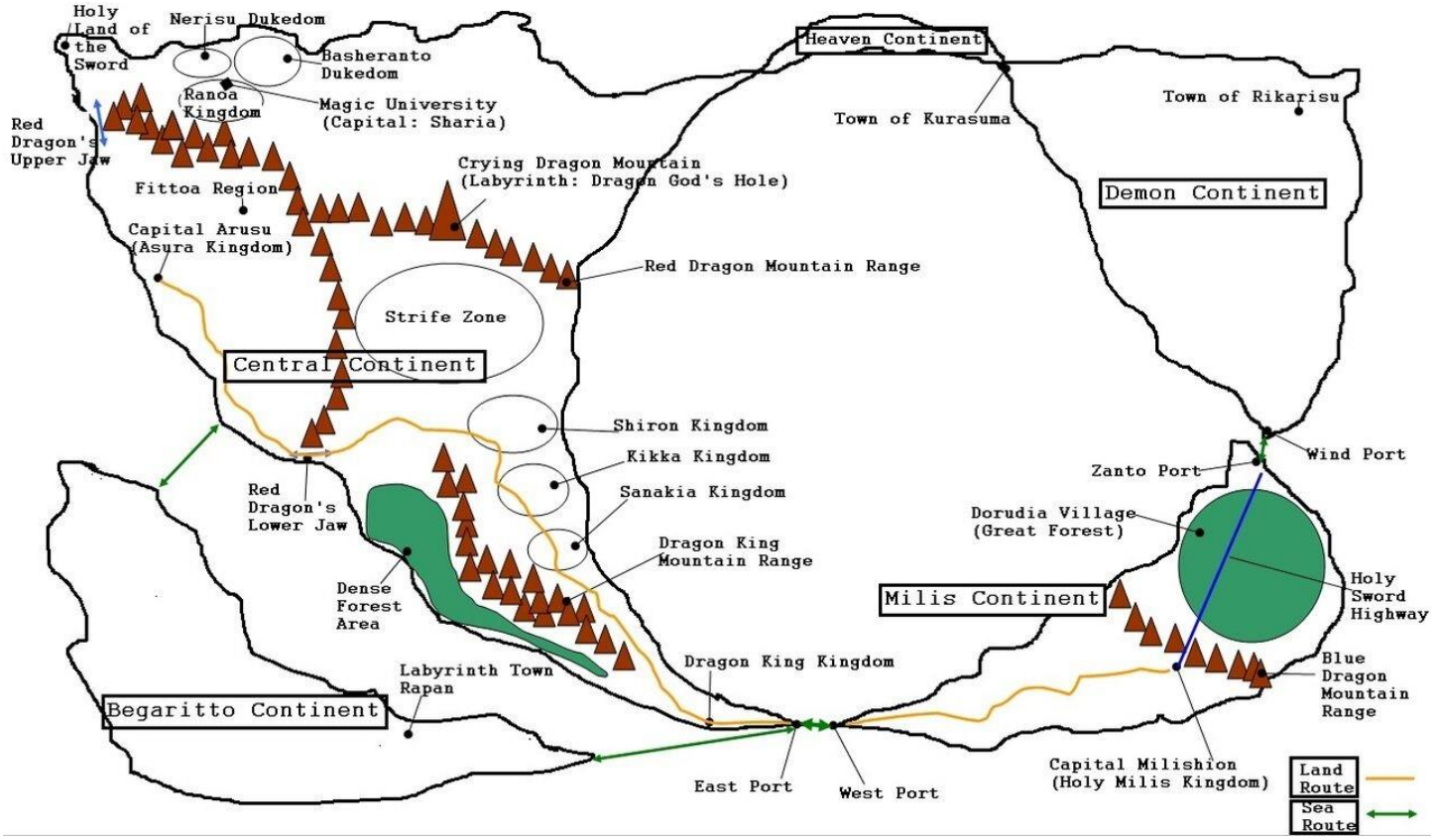
——

Roxy Migurdia continued her journey.

Author's Note:

These are notebook-like memos. I'll explain it roughly.

If you don't have any particular interest in it, please feel free to skip over it.



The map was created extremely rough.

Please only use it as reference to get a rough image.

It's split into three parts by the Red Dragon Mountain Range.

The poor and needy Northern areas with many wars, Asura Kingdom in the West one of the world's most abundant and rich regions, a number of large countries are always struggling for power and rioting in the Southern area.

Human race makes up the majority of the population.

Asura Kingdom

The country that holds the greatest national power in the world.

It's abundant with natural resources, a land of fertility with no starvation. The soil hasn't become barren.

Fedoa (or Fittoa) Territory

The region in the Northeast of Asura Kingdoms interior. Asuran barley (wheat) and Flowers of Batirusu are the local specialty products.

Red Dragon's Lower Jaw, Upper Jaw

The only valleys of the Red Dragon Mountain Range that can be passed through.

Dragon King Kingdom

The third ranked country in the world.

It holds a wide territory in the southern area.

West Port – East Port

Port cities that connect Central Continent and Milis Continent.

Shiron Kingdom

An ally of the Dragon King Kingdom. The border area of the strife zone.

Sanakia Kingdom

A vassal nation of the Dragon King Kingdom. Local specialty is rice.

Kikka Kingdom

A vassal nation of the Dragon King Kingdom. Local specialty is oil (side dish).

Strife Zone

A place where large countries just keep continuing with nothing but skirmishes.

Demon Continent

A poor place with strong monsters.

There are Demon Kings ruling over various places.

Demon (Magic) Race make up the largest portion of the population.

Town of Rikarisu

Great Demon Emperor Kishirika Kishirisu's old castle. It was created in the center of a large crater.

The current ruler is Demon King Badigadi.

Town of Kurasuma

The only town where Magic Continent and the Sea Race make exchanges.

The current ruler is Demon King Bagurahagura.

Wind Port – Saint Port

The port cities that connect Milis Continent to Demon Continent.

Milis Continent

In the north there's the Great Forest, in the south there's the Holy Milis Kingdom.

Splitting those two regions is the Blue Dragon Mountain Range, with the Holy Sword Highway going straight through them from top to bottom with not a single monster on the Highway.

Population is roughly 50/50 of Human Race and Beast Race.

Great Forest

A huge forest where the beast races live. Within each year there's a three month period of rainy season.

Holy Milis Kingdom

The worlds second ranked country. The place where the worlds largest religious faction "Milis Church" headquarters and the Adventurer's Guild headquarters exist.

The name of the capital is Milishion.

Begaritto Continent

A large number of labyrinths, a place of many strange occurrences in terms of magical power.

The strength of the monsters is equal to those of Demon Continent.

A variety of races live here. The majority of them are Adventurers or ex-Adventurers.

Heaven Continent

A level ground 3000 meters above sea level.

The place where the Heavenly Race live.

Mushoku Tensei: Isekai Ittara Honki Dasu - Volume 7

[Mana Calamity.]

The term commonly used to describe the event known as the [Fedoa Territory Metastasis Incident] which happened 5 years ago.

Since that time, it was reported that the territory's feudal lord, Sauros Boreas Greyrat, was executed.

From the city of Roa, the mayor, Philip Boreas Greyrat, and his wife, Hilda Greyrat, also reportedly died.

And in the latest reports, the daughter of Philip, Eris Boreas Greyrat, was also listed as deceased.

With this conclusion, the High Minister, Darius Silva Ganius, terminated financial support to the Fedoa refugee camp's search and rescue efforts, and instead, he redirected the focus of that organization to land reclamation and rebuilding.

Only private parties continued independent rescue efforts.

In this way, the Asura Kingdom's involvement with the Mana Calamity ended.

But for those who still had concerns involving the Mana Calamity, nothing had ended.

Year of Armored Dragon 422.

The location is Basherant Dukedom in the Northwestern part of the Central Continent.

Basherant Dukedom is one of the Three Great Magic Nations, and as such, is one of the most powerful nations in the northern lands.

In this nation, we arrive at the third city [Pipia].

He has attached himself to the city as an adventurer for a while now... and has become known to the public simply as [Quagmire].

This man was once flung to a far-off place by the Mana Calamity and is only one of many such people who tasted despair after a lengthy return of several years to the Fedoa Region.

He moved towards the so-called 'Northern Lands' of the Central Continent in an effort to find his still-missing family under the guise of just being an adventurer.

It is early in the morning for Quagmire.

Before the day begins, he himself is a deeply devoted disciple of his religion.

He offers a prayer to his God – A quiet prayer for the 'Shinto and Buddhist' deities that he has stored in a small wooden box – something that would not be accepted by the Milis Religion.

No, perhaps if someone from the Milis Religion saw it, they would frown upon the nature of it, but they could never dispute the earnestness of the prayers of the faithful Quagmire.

After morning prayers, Quagmire begins his training regimen. Changing into some comfortable and easy to move clothes, he does laps around the town.

The Quagmire often says that maintaining physical strength is one of the basics of being an adventurer.

[Though I am a magician, I am an adventurer first! What good is it if I can't move well when it counts?]

He does the training unique to his hometown, starting with one hour of running.

He then performs an exercise not seen anywhere in the Basherant Dukedom; it consists of the body lying prostrated on the ground being elevated and lowered, repeatedly by using only the arms.

He repeats this activity 100 times.

Afterwards, he changes positions onto his back and proceeds to raise and lower his upper torso 100 times as well.

It is said that he never misses these daily activities.

[Muscles are enviable! They work everyday without fail without needing to be reconciled in some way. Like a lady friend... But, unlike the lady who disappears suddenly, muscles will never become a traitor.]

Said the Quagmire whose laughing voice had a bit of loneliness to it.

After he finishes the morning exercises, he goes to the town.

Where he goes is a dining room on the first floor of an inn to have his breakfast.

The average amount of food an adventurer eats compared to a person of the general populace is about 2-3 times more.

The cost of food in the Northern Lands is high, and occasionally, one has to skip a meal here and there to save coin.

However, the Quagmire is different from even the normal adventurer.

He eats.

He eats about 1.2 times the amount of food even a normal adventurer does!

Vigorously eating dishes that are piled high with rice and beans.

The morning meal is perhaps the greatest source of his strength.

After eating, he heads towards the Adventurer's Guild.

The place where the town's many ruffians gather.

When Quagmire enters, he is at the center of everyone's attention.

The reason being is that Quagmire has no official party affiliation.

Oh, but he will temporarily join one if the situation requires it, or if it is a dangerous mission to solo.

The demand for the magician known as Quagmire is great.

And today, like usual, the leader of an S-rank adventuring party called out to him.

[Oi!, Quagmire!, have you heard the news? A stray Red Dragon has been spotted here in the Northern Lands!]

The S-rank Adventurer [Soldat Heckler].

The man had many physical features particular to a human found living in the Northern Lands.

He had attained the swordsmanship ranks of:

Sword God Style: Advanced

Water God Style: Intermediate

He also is one of the most famous adventurers around this area.

He is the leader of [Stepped Leader], a party affiliated with a larger clan known as [Thunderbolt], which is active throughout the whole Basherant Dukedom.

It is a combat oriented unit that deals primarily with subjugation requests.

[Stepped Leader]'s party composition consists of 6 people.

2 Swordsmen,

1 Warrior,

2 Healers, and

1 Magician.

The party had a 7th member, another Magician at one point, but he died in an unexpected accident.

So their firepower was lacking.

[C'mon Quagmire, why don't you join our party officially already? You surely can't be feeling uncomfortable about it by now, right?]

Much like that, Soldat has invited the Quagmire just about every day, but Quagmire just shakes his head in rejection.

[There's no point in sticking around that long. I'm famous enough here already, and I have other countries I must still visit and spread my name.]

Quagmire had a purpose in saying that.

Family.

He was searching for his mother.

However, Quagmire knows that because it has been five years since the Mana Calamity, the discovery of any new information on her whereabouts will not be easy to uncover.

So, Quagmire spreads word of his name while he carefully searches each country he visits from end-to-end, missing nothing.

If he becomes famous enough in each area, surely a family member will be able to recognize and find him, or so he speculates.

[Ah, but still, at least join us for the stray Red Dragon Extermination!]

Quagmire received the job request.

If it is successful, he will become quite famous for slaying a dragon.

So together they went to the counter and registered the party.

[Umm... it's not just our party participating is it? Where are the other parties who are also participating?]

[There'll be more joining, Quagmire... It's the first big job like this in a while. Everyone will be motivated to join!]

Dragon exterminations are usually done by two or more parties working together.

To do so with only one party is pretty much... suicidal.

Five parties expressed desire to join in the Dragon Extermination.

S-rank party [Stepped Leader]

A-rank party [Road Knights]

A-rank party [Iron Lump Corps]

A-rank party [Cellar World]

A-rank party [Drunken Jokers]

In total, a 25 member raid group.

A certain kill group would consist of at least 7 or more parties, so the number of people gathered right now is rather low.

[Oi! Oi! It's a Red Dragon you know? It's a huge bounty, so where is everyone already? Everyone here is A-rank, where are all the S-rankers at?]

[Word is that a new labyrinth was discovered out in the east, so everyone went to take a look at it.]

Soldat was impatient.

Inside the Adventurer's Guild, one man sighed then chimed in.

[...I guess with just this few, it's probably impossible to accomplish it after all.]

So the party [Cellar World] withdrew from the raid, and there were just 21 members left.

It seemed that a total dissolution of the mission could be expected at this point.

With the number of people left, it was a very risky proposition. Everyone thought so.

At that point, Soldat spoke with great authority.

[Alright! 21 People, that means everyone gets a bigger cut from the bounty!]

Everyone was anxious enough, but after that, no one said anything disheartening.

21 adventurers walked the chilly tundra of the Northern Lands.

A thin layer of snow powdered the trails.

The leaves fell from the trees, and the branches were whitening from the chilly air.

Soon, the long winter will come.

[Quagmire, Can you scout ahead?]

Following the order of Soldat, Quagmire used the appropriate magic.

He brought forth a pillar of earth and snow that he stood atop as it rose high up into the air, granting him a great vision for quite some distance.

Quagmire then conveys what he sees. The target is a large Red Dragon.

One that is not difficult to be missed with continual reconnaissance.

What's this?

Quagmire also spied something else.

[Raster Grizzly at 2 o'clock. Seems like a bunch of them. They are kicking the hell up out of the snow!]

[How many are there!?]

[8...no wait, 10 of them moving this way. I wonder if they noticed us. Approaching from dead ahead! And fast!]

These monsters were not the target though.

For the so few members of the group gathered, there isn't really enough spare energy to go wasting on small fry monsters like this.

However, when evil comes, one must defend.

[Everyone, spread out! Quagmire, hurry down, we're going to need you for support!]

[Understood!]

Soldat gave the order, and four parties deployed their members.

The plan was to flank the enemy and herd them towards Quagmire's ambush.

[Quagmire!]

[I'm on it!]

On Soldat's order, Quagmire moved.

He was called "Quagmire" for the skill he had using Earth Magic.

He had an amazing skill that instantly created mires of mud, bogging down enemies.

Landing him with the nickname of [Quagmire.]

A herd of ten Raster Grizzly were funneled towards him, and all fell victim almost instantly to the highly adhesive mud in which they found themselves quite stuck in.

"Now!"

The members of the raid group who suddenly sprang out from the surrounding areas quickly surrounded the monsters, charging in and ruthlessly dispatching each and every one.

No mercy.

Any mercy shown now could mean death the next time; such a thing was common sense to an adventurer.

And in short order, the Raster Grizzly threat was eliminated.

However, after dealing with these enemies, someone noticed IT.

[Hey! It's the Red Dragon! It's coming!]

[Ah, these Grizzly must have been running away from it!]

The Stray.

Red Dragon.

The strongest monster that exists on the Central Continent.

And his prey was the group of Raster Grizzly we defeated.

[Quagmire! Why's this guy here?]

[It must have been hiding in the wake of the snow powder that was being kicked up by the Grizzly. I didn't see it anywhere before!]

In regards to dealing with the sudden arrival of the Red Dragon, the adventurers pretty much lost their wits about them.

Originally the plan was to prepare an ambush from farther away, then launch a surprise attack on it.

And now, not only was there no preparation, but the dragon was launching a surprise attack on the raid group instead.

There was practically no chance of winning this fight.

[Damn it! Retreat, everyone Retreat!]

A Red Dragon is a creature that flies in the sky.

Its outer shell is resilient and is deceptively dexterous.

And truth be told, a Dragon on the ground is a dreadfully powerful thing.

In this chaotic scene.

The Quagmire goes to work.

[I'm putting up the smokescreen! Please scatter while you retreat!]

Quagmire was calm.

Using much practiced Fire Magic, he vaporizes the latent snow around him to raise a wall of steam.

A smokescreen, improvised from the use of the surrounding nature.

A skilled magician cheating the enemy of its vision.

However, the Stray Dragon was also clever and sharp-eyed.

It took aim at the Quagmire.

[....Kuh!]

Quagmire fled from it in the opposite direction of the retreating group members.

If he was targeted, it was his role to make it give chase.

Speedy Quagmire.

He was alive now because of the training he did every morning.

He knew the secret to staying alive was to be able to keep running, to keep moving away.

The vexed dragon's mouth was burning; it opened wide, and what spewed forth was a hellish flame.

In a mere moment, the entire surrounding area was painted with fire.

It was the Red Dragon's finishing move: [Fire Breath].

Everything in the path of the flame was incinerated.

Was the Quagmire killed by this?

No, He was still alive.

Quagmire glanced backward quickly and instantly raised a titanic wall of water.

As Quagmire moved, he tore through the densely rising steam.

Embers of flame burnt the edge of his robe.

He paid it no mind, and instead started magically producing a casing of rock.

The rock bullet shot forth at a high speed and pierced the scaly hide of the Red Dragon.

[GYAaaaa!]

Rock bullets were released one after another.

The Red Dragon managed to avoid several of them.

However, it could not avoid all of the bullets that traveled at such a high speed.

The Red Dragon immediately turned around and prepared to take flight.

The Red Dragon was also a wise creature. It immediately understood that small creature called "Quagmire" was concealing a high offensive power.

The Quagmire didn't give chase.

Did he let the precious prey escape?

It seemed so at the time.

[GUKYAaaaAA!]

The howl of the Red Dragon echoed.

Before it could get away, a quagmire came to be in existence.

The Red Dragon found itself having sunk into a highly adhesive mire of mud. Again and again, the Quagmire calls his magical power forth. The Red Dragon madly tries to escape from the mud, but finds the mud it's trapped in is becoming more and more adhesive and even solidifying.

[Ah, captured....]

The little Quagmire muttered something so unexpected, then proceeded to smash the squirming Red Dragon with an enormous mass of rock.

The scattered adventurers returned.

[Jeez, Quagmire, you are a ridiculously strong guy...]

[Seems that return trip from the Magic Continent paid off.]

[But still, to defeat THAT, you have to be on another level of strong!]

The companions unanimously praised Quagmire, but he remained humble about it, not giving in to arrogance.

He knew that acting arrogant now would just cause friction for everyone.

[The raid was close to certain death, right? I mean, I didn't think for a second that I could defeat this thing just by myself you know... But that matter aside, we need to figure out how all of us are going to handle looting this Dragon's corpse for the return trip.]

So he extends the sense of achievement of successfully slaying the dragon to every one of the adventurers.

In doing so, he ensures that fame of his name is spread throughout the country.

[All of us...? Are you good with that?]

[I can't loot it all by myself, and if I leave it here, monsters will just devour it. Get what can be gotten, because I must burn the body soon. It'll be problematic if it becomes a Dragon Zombie.]

Thus, the day of the Quagmire is over.

Actually, locating the Red Dragon and returning from the trip took about seven actual days, but the [day] of the Quagmire was over.

Today's harvest was materials from the Red Dragon.

After selling a fortune's worth of materials, he returns to his bed with a warm feeling in his chest.

Before turning in to bed, he stops for a meal at the bar and eats a substantially smaller amount of food as compared to his breakfast.

He who is devoted, prays to God gratefully for passing yet another day safely.

The Good Night ritual is not something seen or known to others, but it is an important thing to him.

Because it meant that now that the day of having to be the Quagmire is over, he can resume his search for his long lost family on the morrow.

— From Rudeus's point of view —

The nightly event.

I am eating a meal as usual in the bar.

Of course I'm by myself.

The meal is just enough for myself.

This guy is rich and lonely.

But it's not like it's a bad thing.

Because I hate being crowded anyways.

[It was right at that moment! The Red Dragon had appeared!]

On the stage in the bar, three minstrels brought with them their instruments and began to play.

One stands in front of the others and with a sweet sounding voice, spins a tale. The two others perform the background music accordingly, joining in with a JARAN~ sound effect.

The Minstrel.

It's an occupation that makes money by being commissioned as entertainment by singing about or reciting poetic tales.

In the case of a big town, it's normal to be part of a Theater and to have exclusive contracts to certain places.

But it's not just that.

Adventurers with the occupation [Minstrel] are splendid people.

They sing of their travels with other adventurers, and the tales they twist are funny and exciting.

The affinity between an adventurer and minstrel is good.

In addition, in this world without copyright, on a daily basis, the tales they hear are often taken in and retold in a new and unique way.

There are also the times when some minstrels gather, share ideas, and evolve their craft.

Among them, those with different instruments often party up by forming a band and travelling the world.

Of course, even they have enough skill to fight against monsters.

A singing, dancing, fighting adventurer.

In this world, that is what a Minstrel is!

Occasionally, this party of three minstrels I'm watching have been seen in the Adventurer's Guild from time to time.

They must have been a C-rank party.

Their name was [Big Voice Band].

It was a wonderfully ostentatious name.

However, they weren't really talented, and their own works were unpopular.

In an effort to keep creating something more popular, I received an interview request about this and that and the subjugation job I did the other day.

The song being sung now is the story they heard me tell of my journey.

I consider the one who's singing.

Is he doing alright?

Hmm, it's okay.

In my previous life, I was crazy about music.

I tried to produce a song for a certain Vocaloid, but it ended up as a complete failure.

{ C-Editor's note: A vocaloid is a voice synthesizer computer program used to create music. }

Since then, the only musical instrument I continue to say I can play is the KETSU-Drum.

I am always up to the task to play those drums.

They twisted a tale just from the story I told them of what happened.

Even if they aren't talented, their creativeness will at least be accepted.

The song is played in the style of a village's storytelling old gramps.

It reminds me of a television documentary program.

It should be interesting to hear it.

But the narration is bland, and the song will likely remain unpopular.

Even if they were to change it now, the heckling has already started.

Even I, the actual hero of the story, would say it is terrible.

Around the time I'm thinking such things...

BAM!

Suddenly the door to the bar is thrown open.

A chilly air blew in.

Eyes stared.

People trembled.

[At last I've finally found you, "Rudeus of the Quagmire"!]

There stood a member of the Long Ear Tribe with hair like French bread.

While it looked like an adventurer, its clothes were suitably dress-like.

It wore a backpack and had a sword and shield hung around the waist.

The only word needed to describe her face was Beautiful.

Almond eyes, long ears, and lustrous blonde hair.

A slender body with a flat chest and long ears.

It certainly feels like this is what's called an 'Elf'.

Before she could point a finger.

All eyes were fixed on me.

[Geh... "Quagmire" ...isn't here...?]

The man who had just been heckling now wore an unpleasant face.

I disregard it.

Because I'm tolerant.

I turn back and look at the Elf.

[Have I finally been found at last...?]

I suitably replied.

However, she doesn't recognize me for the moment.

I certainly haven't done anything in the last few years to warrant someone carrying a grudge.

I work in order to make my name famous.

The name 'Rudeus of the Quagmire'.

I help others, I don't pick fights, and I am always careful not to get a bad reputation.

I have often been given thanks to by those I wasn't really acquainted with, but this is the first time I have been talked to this way by such a beautiful woman.

She is probably one of those types too...

But then again, my intuition tells me differently.

[Since you are famous, you were easily found.]

[Eh, just a moment ago, didn't you say you had 'finally' found me?]

[Actually, I thought you were still to the East a bit more.]

The woman said as such and quietly watched me with such beautiful eyes.

Somehow, something like drool began to slide down the side of her mouth.

She quickly licks it away.

Heh, is it love at first sight for her?

Or perhaps she desires my body which has recently become quite toned.

I have been training a lot recently, and I am also in a growth period.

And so of course muscles would form.

Muscles.

[Is there something wrong?]

[No, no, there is nothing wrong at all!]

The Elvish woman cleared her throat with a sound like 'Ko~hon' then took a seat next to me.

{ C-Editor's note: Similar to 'ahem'. A throaty sound to change topics or garner attention. }

Suddenly the bar was filled with whispers of "Ooohhh!".

I heard something along the lines of [So that's the Quagmire's woman.]

What a surprising thing to hear.

How is it possible that I have something as outrageous as this woman?

[Fuu~]

She unloads the backpack and places it by her feet, grabs a chair, and with a bang, it hits the ground next to me, then she sits down close.

CLOSE.

WAY TOO CLOSE.

If I was still a DT I would think "What's there to like about this guy?"

{ C-Editor's note: DT meaning Doutei which is Japanese slang for a male virgin. }

[My name is Elinalise. Elinalise Dragonroad. A former party member with your father, Paul...]

[Hmm.]

I see.

Paul's friend.

It might be that she's been searching for me.

[Of course, I am also a friend of Roxy as well.]

[EH!! A friend of sensei! Where is sensei now?]

It's been a long time since I've heard the name Roxy spoken from another person's mouth.

I was excited to hear about it so I leaned in closer.

Elinalise didn't answer the question I wanted to hear about the most.

I leaned in closer still and practically kissed my ear to her mouth.

[I heard it, you know, that you had a manly, crushing solo victory against a stray dragon.]

[Eh.. well... sort of, though, everyone and I was nearly killed.]

[I can understand why you are Roxy's pride and joy.]

But there was a lot more flexibility dealing with it.

Compared to dealing with Dragon God Orsted, the pressure was significantly less.

If you consider a man like that, the dragon was something strangely calm.

[To hear that I'm Sensei's pride and joy is rather embarrassing after all... Is it because I'm emotional about it inside?]

[Your chest. It's rather strong.]

Before I realized it, Elinalise was feeling around my upper arm and chest with her hands.

It tickles.

She said I was strong, and I didn't feel egotistical about it.

[What's this?]

The fingers of Elinalise were touching something.

It was the pendant I had received from Lilia.

[I see, I see. It's cute and clumsily made. Who gave it to you?]

[My family's house maid.]

[Maid? by chance, are they of the Long Ear Tribe?]

[Eh? No, she's not... why do you ask?]

Oh damn, we changed topics.

[It's not a big deal, however...]

Elinalise seemed to particularly mind the sword attached to her waist.

She shows me what is attached to the scabbard.

It is a similarly shaped pendant.

However, it is far more elaborate than mine.

Mine is an amateur's work – hers is definitely professional.

[...It seems we match.]

Elinalise has seemingly snuggled in closer and closer to me.

What's going on here?

She has been way too extremely frisky with me for a while now.

[Is yours from a while ago? Perhaps from a guy you really like?]

[Yeah, he's a good man. Better than I expected. It's surprising really. I wanted to make more children with him... He was very vigorous and A~MA~ZING....]

I wonder if I'm being teased.

I'm a bit excited.

[Well, the Onee-chan here is also quite beautiful.]

Hmph.

I am not such a DT that I will panic when teased.

So, I quickly push a finger up to close my hanging jaw.

[Nnn...]

Then, Elinalise quietly closed her eyes.

It was the full gesture of waiting for a kiss.

Even though it seemed like a joke, her hand reached around the back of my head and moved in..

[...eh?]

Seriously?

Was there the atmosphere for this?

Is it alright?

It's alright if I go Zukyu~~n?

{ C-Editor's note: Zukyun - the sound made after being struck in the heart with a love arrow. }

The moment I thought that, the eyes of Elinalise opened with a click sound.

[Yaaa, That was my fault. I'll stop here.]

[You really shouldn't go that overboard with the teasing.]

[I am not the kind of person to leave it at a tease with a man. But, I have no intention of becoming a daughter of Paul. I also wish to stay friends with Roxy as well.]

...That explained the matter.

What kind of thing happened back in those days when Paul split from his party that this woman doesn't even want to associate with his son?

Whatever, it's fine like this anyways.

[Well then, Elinalise-san, do you have official business with me?]

[Sort of. I came to deliver you some good news.]

Elinalise gave me a sweet smile.

On that day.

I learned my mother Zenith had been located.

One week has passed since I heard that Zenith has been found.

I still remained at an inn in the Basherant Kingdom.

I want to head to the Begaritto Continent, but winter quickly approached.

So, I decided I would stay in this country for a little while longer.

The winters in the Northern Lands of the Central Continent are severe.

Snow continually falls and can get as deep as 5 meters.

The highway and some important country roads are passable, but that changes when heading to foreign lands.

I could use my magic to stop a snow storm, melt the snow and travel onwards...

However I don't know a magic to clear all the roads, so there's no way to make it to the next country without having to camp outside.

I would likely meet with a disaster.

Anyway, Zenith is alive, and the word was that the labyrinth is being sought.

Though there were a couple of problems, Paul and Roxy were heading there.

And Elinalise said that there was no need to rush there.

It was better to head there after the winter when the danger was minimal.

So, with plans to eventually go there, I continued with my daily training regimen.

I wake up in the morning and do training.

During my lifetime, I trained to keep my body healthy as long as I can, that's why right now my body moves well.

After all, a healthy body is a healthy mind.

In the afternoon I didn't head towards the Adventurer's Guild.

It is a one-week holiday right now.

I'll do training until midday, then I'll look around the market.

If winter is coming, I need to get appropriate clothes now.

While thinking about various things, I began training.

It's a bit difficult because it's a holiday.

Running through the snow, I reached the outer wall of the town and assisted by my magic, I climbed the hill.

[Whoa~!? Say, Quagmire, You shouldn't go out! How about you take a break today?]

[Can't, I've got to do my daily training.]

[You're a hard worker aren't ya? Ah, that's right, can you help me with repairing a wall next time? I'll reward you with some rice!]

[If you let me rub your daughter's tits, I'll rebuild your whole house!]

[Now listen here you....]

[Just kidding!]

After greeting with the soldier on top of the outer wall, I jumped down to the city outskirts.

Then I proceeded to run one lap around the city.

Unlike the freshly snow-shoveled streets in the city interior, snow is piled high outside the wall.

I run while making my own road through the snow I melted with fire magic.

After my lap, I proceeded to do sword-swinging exercises.

I learned how to do image training from Ghyslaine and Paul, so the shadow of the person I'm chasing today was Ruijerd.

I can move neither hand nor my foot against him.

I have to train harder.

Afterwards, I took the same route home.

When I was returning to the hotel, I saw Elinalise appear in the window of the room on the second floor.

[Ah... Isn't it, Rudei, err, -us, welcome home.]

Though she has seen and spoken to my face, the circumstances are strange.

Her hand grabs the window edge, she is making unsightly faces, and her head moves in a rhythmic fashion.

She was trying to keep her voice low but the volume of her groans of [Nnh, Nnh] was rising.

A bare-skinned shoulder.

Yep. Busted.

[I'm back Elinalise-san, You are 'energetic' as well again today it seems.]

[Eh? 'Energetic?' Wh-whatever do you mean by thaAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHH~t!]

Surely, on the other side of the window there, there is a man who is taking care of Elinalise from behind.

Even though it was cold outside, she engages in the advanced art of open-window play.

She is an 'energetic' thing.

I took my eyes off her and entered the hotel, returning to my room.

I've come to understand in this one week, that Elinalise is one hell of a bitch in heat.

The existence of such a woman is surely some kind of criminal sex offense.

Although I wouldn't mind being caught up in that kind of crime scene.

But to tell the truth, for the last 2 years, I've been suffering from a certain disease.

It's a sickness of the Heart and Body.

It's difficult to speak about it in detail.

Well, let me use an example of a plant bulb to try and explain.

If a bulb sees some mountains or a valley, it will sprout out the bud.

And as it grows towards the heavens, it becomes swollen, a splendid stalk that cannot be knocked down by heavy winds or fierce rains.

Then it will release a splendid flower which will bloom.

But, right now my bulb does not grow, and the flower does not bloom.

...In short, It's ED.

{ C-Editor's note: Erectile dysfunction. }

And no, it's not a cassette tape.

That's right.

Since that separation experience from Eris, it won't stand.

Of course, I made an effort to overcome it.

I headed in the direction of a strange place called the Red-Light District.

In my previous life, I would never ever have gone there.

However, the result was complete defeat.

The stem that would come from my beloved bud was instead peacefully at rest.

Afterwards, when I sold my name as an adventurer, I was able to court a lady adventurer.

Even though I surely had a lewd face, I managed to coerce her into my room.

Or, it might have been that because I considered that she may have been a professional.

It'll stand ready.

However, with it in this worthless state, it was over, and when she was finished being angry with me, she left.

So I gave up.

If I see a naked woman, I do get excited.

But, there is no signal from the spinal cord to that place on the body.

Afterwards, a sense of helplessness and loneliness descended upon me.

My heart broke.

I also don't think that anymore, there isn't someone else who can make it grow.

There is no beloved partner.

After that kind of betrayal, only someone who I could see, and feel, and love from the start would be good.

I don't desire anything more than that.

Hasn't it been that way since the olden days?

I managed it once, and I desire more.

There is no good advancement from before.

If I choose solo-play that might be good.

I don't need a partner.

I hate being crowded anyway.

No, recently, even solo-play has to be rather...

I can't even cry about it!

[Haa~]

I came back to my room.

With magic I warmed the room, then I produced some warm water, and proceeded to wipe my body down.

After changing clothes, I left the room to go eat.

[Ah?]

[Eh?]

And just then, I bumped into Elinalise and the company who had just finished shouldering her burden.

Coming out of the room holding the shoulder was Soldat, who had recently been the one accepting her job requests.

After seeing my face, his own face turned pale.

[Ah, it's not like that Quagmire.... I didn't intend to make a move on your woman.]

[Ah, it's not like that Soldat, Elinalise-san was never my woman. Besides you know how it is.]

[Y-yeah, it's like that isn't it, S-sorry. I didn't mean to dredge up that emotional scar. I didn't have any intention to go against you, especially after what we accomplished the other day.]

[Don't worry about it... By the way, was she good?]

[Yeah, she was the the absolute best.]

When Soldat said that, his face went hot.

[Tch...]

After asking him myself, a tongue clicking sound came out.

[About that, Elinalise-san. Does it make you feel good?]

[But of course, it's only natural that I try to bring every man closer to happiness.]

[....Ah, so that's how it is.]

I know about it.

Soldat's male party members and many others have already been gobbled up by Elinalise.

Each and every one of them offered me an apology as they spoke fondly of her.

I don't really need any apologies.

However, are the other men aware of what happened?

If it comes out, will it become a scene of carnage?

Well, it's not my concern.

I'm not a participant.

It's too troublesome to deal with the awkwardness of those situations.

In the last two years, I have done my best to avoid getting involved in troublesome situations like this.

I don't cause grudges, and I don't start fights.

In other words, I should offer her a word of advice here.

[Elinalise-san]

[What is it?]

[It's okay if you make a mess eating whatever you like, but please clean up after yourself, alright?]

Personal maintenance.

She nodded in assent as if it was a natural conclusion.

[Of course.]

[Oi, Oi, what's the story?]

I cannot say what kind of face Soldat was making.

Elinalise gave him a kiss on the cheek and ushered him downstairs.

[It's nothing at all, now then, shall we eat the meal?]

She is a cruel woman.

Elinalise Dragonroad.

Paul's former party member.

It seems that along with Roxy, she was also looking for Paul's family that were involved with the Mana Calamity.

Together with Roxy, they traveled across the Magic Continent, happened upon Kishirika, then came back towards the Central Continent.

I was grateful hearing the story.

Roxy rushed back from the edge of the Magic Continent.

She was going to inform Paul about Zenith's discovered whereabouts.

In other words, this selfish woman is saying that Roxy is not otherwise coming here.

Damn.

No, hearing the situation, originally everyone was going to return to Milishion.

It couldn't be helped if I was left out of the plans.

I should probably be grateful.

It's fine how it is.

If I head to Begaritto Continent, I can meet Roxy.

I don't have to rush it.

Elinalise's adventurer rank is S-class.

Her class is a [Warrior.]

Only once did I do a subjugation request with her. Truthfully speaking, she is not weak.

Her offensive ability is a bit low, but her aggro control is extremely good.

As far as warriors go, she is first-class.

However, she isn't the strongest.

The strongest [Warrior] to me is without a doubt Ruijerd.

Though, I feel bad having that as a basis for comparison.

Her luxurious blonde hair rolls extravagantly; this elf has an Ojou-sama like beauty.

Though her demeanor is gentle, her conduct is different towards men.

She is always gazing into men's eyes, casually touching their bodies, and, one by one, seducing them.

I wonder, if it was me at that time, maybe even I could have been charmed?

Naturally, I've managed to avoid a misunderstanding.

Moreover, she has the skill to make the men in this world MeroMero.

{ C-Editor's note: Meromero is the Japanese word for madly in love. }

And apparently, her fighting power on the bed is rather high.

Having said that, there is no reason to look down on or despise her.

She gives advice to the love-struck girl on how to use her feminine wiles to get a man.

In a party, she will take the lead and protect everyone like a reliable Onee-san.

Excluding the small chest which is a characteristic of the Elf Race, I would say she is a faultless perfect woman.

Better known as a Femme Fatale.

The only downside to her is her freelance eating of so many men.

It's like a fire lighting a fuse when she looks at one.

But, since her aggro control is good, she avoids bloodshed in that matter.

However, how should it be said?

There is a problem that occurs often as well.

She's never in a party for a lengthy time.

Incidentally, she is in a party with me right now.

She puts on the caring pretense of [I will properly get you to Begaritto.]

Still, the journey to Begaritto will take two years, and it's problematic if I go alone. Having another person to travel and talk with is something to be grateful for.

Her fighting power isn't low either.

It's possible as an adventurer she could even go Solo.

However, she sits next to me and him when we eat.

They lean in close to each other and continue with the irritating petting.

[Soldat-san. Don't be naughty now, Rudeus is looking, you know.]

[Didn't he say he was fine with it though?]

[Ara Ara, what a bad boy you are....]

{ C-Editor's note: 'Ara' or 'Ara Ara' is a Japanese expression used by women that means 'oh my' or 'oh dear'. }

Right now Soldat and Elinalise are flirting in front of me.

I was fine eating alone – why are these two together at the table with me?

Perhaps she wants to flaunt it?

Damn woman.

Something like that isn't gonna make me jealous at all.

[....]

Soldat is DEREDERE for Elinalise.

{ C-Editor's note: Deredere is a Japanese term that means to be lovey-dovey. }

All of [Stepped Leader] were also like that.

So how does Elinalise managed to avoid raising the reverse-harem flag from here?

As much as I want to avoid problems like this, I have a feeling I'm going to have to face it eventually.

I want to straighten this problem out before it gets out of hand, but my actual experience level in such matters is low.

I have a feeling though that if I interfere, I'll only cause more problems.

Or so I thought.

[Well then, here's what I promised to pay you.]

[That is, I'm sorry.... Getting to do something so good and then getting paid for it....]

[It's fine, but in return, you absolutely cannot fall in love with me, okay?]

As she said so, she handed over some coinage to Soldat.

I finally get it.

It was reverse-prostitution.

If that's how it is, there should be a problem right?

Still, isn't that a bit unbecoming...?

Life continued on this way for a month until one particular day.

A letter addressed to me arrived.

It was a firmly sealed letter.

On the surface was written the words: [Ranoa Magic Academy].

What's this?

I went ahead and tore the seal and looked at the contents of the letter.

[Rudeus Greyrat-sama,

Pleased to meet you.

I am Vice Principal Jinas of [Ranoa Magic University], Recently, the fame of [Rudeus of the Quagmire] echoes throughout the Ranoa Kingdom.

I have heard from various adventurers that you are a virtuoso of chantless incantation.

On further investigation, it appears that you have also been a disciple of the [Water King Class] Magician known as Roxy.

Do you have any intention of further polishing your magic techniques?

Ranoa Magic University is ready to invite you as a [Special Student].

[Special Student] includes certain class exemptions, and tuition exemptions.

You are of course free to make use of all the books and facilities our school has to offer you as a student.

If you manage to complete your studies after 7 years and submit your thesis to the school upon graduation or to the magic guilds, there is also the unconditional possibility for you to receive a membership recommendation to a C-Class Magic Guild.

Of course, graduating without any significant thesis will still allow you to earn the right to enter a D-class guild.

May I please be given the opportunity of greeting you once by any means?

I apologize for the suddenness of this request, but I would appreciate your consideration as well.

With my best regards,

[Ranoa Magic Academy] Vice Principal, Jinas Halfas]

It was written there.

[Special Student]...

In short, is this a letter of recommendation for a scholarship student?

I know about the existence of this world's Magic Guild.

But I have no idea what it does.

I also incidentally know there is a Thieves Guild.

They have a black market network to sell goods and slaves.

But I don't know about the Magic Guild.

I could expect that they do research on as well as publication of books on the subject of Magic.

Honestly, I just don't know.

What am I even doing here?

However, why after all this time am I getting such a thing sent to me now?

Certainly, I feel that my magic has reached a bottleneck.

But living over these last two years has taught me that the degree of magic power I have is more than enough to live by.

It was enough to defeat that stray dragon the other day.

...even though that group was weak, it doesn't change the fact that it was defeated.

The strong make the rules.

At any rate, with my test scores, I don't really feel the need to attend school.

I don't really know why I'm here,

I don't really know why this letter of recommendation came.

And I don't really know why I would have been recommended in the first place.

Perhaps this is some new kind of scam?

If I just carelessly head there, some scary looking Onii-san types will surround me, then cover me head to toe in gold paint and parade me around.

All joking aside.

I'm honestly thrilled that such a letter came to me.

The Ranoa Magic University is Roxy's Alma Mater, and the fact that I received a letter of recommendation from there...

I want to know what the real reason behind it is.

Whether or not this letter is somehow a fraud.

[Elinalise-san, I'm heading out to the Adventurer's Guild for a bit.]

[Wha? Weren't you taking today off?]

I called out to Elinalise-san, who, since she hadn't yet fished up a man, was tending to her luxurious hair instead.

[I want to check up on something right now.]

[Wait just a moment, I will also come with you.]

Elinalise put down her brush and stood up.

Though she hadn't decided on the exact setting of her hair, it still looked fine.

[I may or may not take a request and come back sometime.]

[In the old days, Paul used to say something like that when he was going to the Adventurer's Guild to flirt around.]

[Is that so, that is something Paul-like, isn't it? Now that you mention it.]

[When flirting around, two people have a better chance at success than just one. Plus, it's also easier to take aim at a couple.]

This bitch says something wild all of a sudden.

[Please stop it. Especially when it comes to couples. I will hold a grudge if you come between two lovers.]

[It's fine. I know what things to watch out for when it comes to that.]

[Let's try this again. I'm not going to flirt, and you are just accompanying me to the guild.]

In times of peace, there is only one thing in the head of Elinalise.

However, when she takes a job, she instantly changes into reliable Onee-san mode.

Is that personality gap another facet of her sex appeal?

[You know, it's because you don't take care of this body that I have to leave it to other men...]

[I wouldn't mind taking care of it you know? When my "son" recovers that is.]

[I want you to know that I am honestly trying my best to not become a daughter of Paul. Also there's the promise I made with Roxy, too. I really don't want to be hated by Roxy.]

What inconsistent things she says.

What a carefree life this woman leads.

[I don't want to be hated by Roxy.]

Only those words I understand.

And, judging her on those words alone, I cannot come to dislike Elinalise's way of life.

[I don't want to be hated by anyone.]

I understand that feeling.

However, even I don't want to be hated by Elinalise.

Seriously?

O-, MAI, GOD.

Enough of that.

[But that's not my fault, is it? It's because of Elinalise-san's personal reasons, isn't it?]

[That's right. But it's not always easy you know, flirting, finding a good healthy boy to gobble up.]

[And what about a healthy delinquent boy?]

[Ara, those are tasty.]

For whatever reason, I proceeded to the Adventurer's Guild with Elinalise after all.

Even though I won't be flirting.

It's early afternoon now.

Adventurers are sparse around this time of day.

There is no sign of Soldat or the others of [Stepped Leader] today.

They may already be out on a request.

During the winter months, there are a considerable amount of subjugation requests.

Monsters don't have holidays it seems.

Despite being a bear, [Raster Grizzly] doesn't seem to hibernate.

Taking a glance around, I saw the guys of the A-ranked party [Cellar World].

They are a mage-centered party.

A small 4 member party.

One is a magic warrior, and the other three are magicians.

All of the members are above middle rank in magic, and the leader is Advanced rank in fire magic.

[Yo Quagmire, on a date today?]

[Eh, she wouldn't stop nagging me until I took her out to play around.]

[Huh?]

I chatted with Conrad, the leader of [Cellar World].

He is a 40-year old veteran, a skilled and bitter man with a fancy mustache.

Though he had not participated in the dragon subjugation last time, I do have a good work relationship with him.

I have been invited to his party several times.

As an attack mage who can also use healing magic, I am valuable even to them.

[So, finally found the balls to join our party on the long-term?]

[Psh, a lone wolf like myself doesn't like crowds. I hate sharing an umbrella with others, you know?]

[So you say, but you went ahead and made a party with THAT woman.]

THAT woman. Hearing that word alone, I turn around and see Elinalise-san playfully flirting with the D-Rank adventurer named "Mallory".

Another victim.

From a distance, his face is long since colored red, and he is clearly emitting what the Beast Tribe would call the [Scent of Arousal].

Mallory is a 16-year old boy – his class is Warrior.

We aren't acquainted.

Looking at him, I get the feeling he is not experienced in such matters, especially against the seduction ability of Elinalise, and his arousal is greater than his embarrassment.

[Such things don't bother me Conrad-san. Rather, I have a little something I need you to hear me out on.]

[What is it, come to extort money out of me? Didn't you get enough reward from the stray dragon subjugation? A~h, If only we went along as well. I heard it was you that solo'ed it...]

[I'll treat you well next time. Now then, what I need you to hear....Conrad-san was a graduate of Ranoa Magic Academy, right?]

[I was until the 5th year when I dropped out.]

Even if he dropped out, I don't mind it.

I asked Conrad about the letter I received.

First off, about what being a [Special Student] meant.

[Ah, a Special Student eh? It is, It is. At the magic university, there are other magicians who can use various magics like yourself, and other adventurers who got their name through fame or recommendation from a Magic Guild, Royal families from foreign countries, or even nobles. Proactively searched for, Special Students are people with great magic power and potential. They aren't obligated to attend classes, and they only have to lend their name to the school as someone who did attend there.

Listen, this way when someone from there becomes famous, isn't it like free advertising for how good the Academy is?]

It seems it's like this.

In my previous life, I seem to remember something like this.

Is it different from a Scholarship Student?

Maybe something like having an Honorary Membership?

At any rate, it doesn't seem to be a complete scam at all.

[What goes on in a Magic Guild?]

[They assist with production of things like [Magic Items] and [Scrolls].

I'm not enlightened on more than that. For the moment I belong to an F-class guild.]

[Ah, is it true if I just graduate from the Academy that I am qualified to join a D-class guild?]

[Graduate huh...]

The Magic Guild seems to carry out support for all areas related to magic.

As the rank rises, authority increases, and various aids can be received.

Even if at best all someone could only use was a Beginner grade magic, they can also join.

Normal graduates of the Magic Academies may usually find themselves in an E-class guild.

The top of the magic academy is also an executive member of the magic guild, since it's the magic academy that keeps the magic guild running. If I graduated, I can surely become a member of a D-class guild.

If a [Special Student] submits a thesis, C-class.

Of course, even those who are not [Special Students] who are also excellent magicians may actually be rewarded with C-class.

Incidentally, F-class seems to get next to no support at all.

As for Magic Guild Ranks, You can rank-up if you complete certain requests from the guild, or if you contribute certain services to the guild.

Unlike the Adventurer's Guild, there isn't a clear path in how you get to the top.

Even a skillful ass-kisser with an executive connection can manage to rank up.

Truth be told, entrance even up to B-class can be bought with money.

[Quagmire, haven't you already gone to school?]

[I had a private tutor.]

[Hmm~ Weren't you quite rich though?]

[Just in name, as part of the upper aristocracy of Asura]

[...Sorry Quagmire, what was your family name again?]

[Greyrat. I am Rudeus Greyrat.]

Even though the name [Rudeus of the Quagmire] is famous, it seems the name of Greyrat is not spread with it.

It doesn't matter to me.

Even I don't know Conrad's family name.

Though I heard it when we introduced ourselves, I've already forgotten it.

[Greyrat, wasn't that the name of some regional lord in Asura Kingdom? That's amazing, but if that's the case, why are you a solo adventurer out here?]

[That is because....]

As I started to speak, everything about Eris flooded my mind.

Her face, her warmth that night, and the painful loss of her the next day.

...and then my worthless little man after that...

Tears were noticeably flowing.

[Huh, W-what..? Sorry, I guess you have your own difficulties as to why.]

I still care about her it seems.

Isn't it about time I forgot about her already?

I'm sure she's changed a lot already, She's probably already forgotten all about me.

There's really no point in me carrying a torch for her anymore.

Don't Think.

Don't Feel.

[But still, if you are being given preferential treatment from them, do you have any good reason not to go?]

Conrad said it, and I suddenly recalled it.

The reason I bothered tutoring Eris in the first place, is because it was necessary to earn tuition for the Magic Academy.I was going to take Sylphy with me.

That was my first goal.

However, I don't feel the need to go there right now.

The circumstances now are different from back then.

Although, good things might happen if I join the Magic Guild.

It's not something that I particularly need to do right now.

I'd probably be better off joining Paul.

[That's right. I'm with Paul on this matter, even he wanted you to attend that school. You are already at a good age, why don't you learn to become independent?]

When I noticed it, Elinalise was suddenly next to me.

She seems to dislike Paul a great deal.

[It might not be too late to meet with my whole family once again.]

[I'm told Zenith was safe. Just live your life. You'll surely meet her again.]

[No, the first meeting will likely be a family dissolution.]

[Paul and everyone, wouldn't they come back to Asura?]

[Isn't it more likely they will go to live in Milishion?]

[Milishion is not the place where a man with two wives can live comfortably.]

In the Milis religion, the premise of 1 husband 1 wife is common sense.

Certainly, a guy like Paul would find it a little bit difficult.

[I mean, does Elinalise-san really not want to see father that badly?]

[That's right!]

Elinalise said so unconcernedly while shrugging her shoulders.

But even if she doesn't want to meet Paul, she's not going to give up on her plans to get me safely to him.

There are times when I just don't know what she's thinking.

[By the way, Quagmire]

[What is it?]

[Isn't it about time you introduced me to that Onee-chan of yours?]

Conrad followed Elinalise with a lewd pair of eyes.

This woman, how is she so popular?

Anyways.

Nothing is lost.

Though it's a very tempting offer, I think I'll pass on the Magic Academy right now.

That night.

I was in a white place.

There is a guy.

It's that guy.

The mosaic.

It's been two years.

[Un, It's been a while.]

Ah, without a doubt, it's Hitogami.

[What's with that expression?]

It's nothing, don't worry about it.

[I don't mind it. I'm just used to the weird way you say things.]

Is that so?

Even though it's been a long time since this dream came, the feeling isn't as unpleasant as before.

Have I gotten used to it?

[Have you adapted?]

I wonder.

For these kind of things, in the middle of searching for Zenith, how many times did I call out for you?

Couldn't you have appeared once then?

[There are certain reasons for that.]

Is that the reason?

Well, since the result was that she was found, it's fine for now.

I feel like I lost two years worth of feelings.

[Aren't you glad? Your mother has been found.]

Ah, I never thought that Roxy would be taking the trouble to search.

[That girl is a hard worker, isn't she?]

I'm truly proud of my shishou.

I want to meet her quickly on the way to the Begaritto continent.

[Are you sure about that? That you want to show your current and pitiable self to your proud shishou right now?]

...eh?

Pitiable self?

Current?

[Isn't it the case? Eris ran away after all, that thing is useless too, and even though your magic skill has improved, it's barely better than back then.

Even your swordsmanship hasn't improved. You just go through the motions of swinging your sword.

Though your body has became somewhat stronger, can you really say that with conviction?

To say to her "Your Student has grown up splendidly", do you really have the confidence?]

Gununu...

Have you said all that you are going to say?

What is it that you really want to say to me?

[Shouldn't you be training yourself now? If you go to the Magic Academy, you'll be incomparable to various adventurers, you should be able to learn all kinds of important things.]

What is this, where are you hiding the cram teacher at?

Ah.

Although that's rather straightforward, is that the advice this time?

[Yes, did that give you a good feeling?]

In front of me is still a shady-looking guy.

[Oh still that kind of feeling? But, you should listen to what I say this time. If you go to the Begaritto continent, you will REGRET it.]

REGRET?

Why is that?

[I cannot tell you that.]

Is that it?

Anyways, it's not like you haven't been hiding all sorts of things from me since the start.

But, you should know that kind of reasoning is weak.

Even I want to settle down now that I've found everyone again.

[Yes, so then, the real advice begins now]

Alright, I'm listening.

[*Ahem.* Rudeus, Enter the Ranoa Magic University. Then investigate the "Mana Calamity" cases of the Fedoa territory. You may regain your confidence and ability as a man once more.]

Eh?

Really?

Hitogami-sama! Does my Erectile Dysfunction get healed at Magic Academy?

I wonder....wonder....wonder...?

The echo trails, and my consciousness fades.

I woke up, and there was Elinalise's face really close to me.

I was startled when I gazed at her.

I try and remember last night.

It was an unusual failure in her boys hunt.

At night, she slipped into my bed with the excuse [I can't sleep when I'm cold].

Certainly, the winter nights of the northern lands are cold.

There is a fireplace in the hotel. Though it's warmer than the outside, this world doesn't have air conditioning or gas stoves.

At a high-class hotel, each room is furnished with a fireplace, and magical heat warms the whole building that way.

However, the reality is that this is a cheap hotel for C-class adventurers.

The only provision against the cold is a thick comforter.

Because I can warm the whole room by magic, I don't have any problems in particular.

However, Elinalise is rather low on body fat, and that seems to contribute to her being cold.

Well, I'll just have to consider this a side benefit.

It doesn't mean that last night wasn't fun.

No, actually last night was not enjoyable at all.

Sleeping next to this Onee-chan with no sense of virtue, my fur seal lays limp, and we only exchange an empty silence.

Even if I experimentally grope the sleeping body of this woman, my fur seal remains silent.

Even with the so called "unauthorized usage" of the female body that I yearned to do in my previous life.

Despite how excited the reaction in my head is, no reaction came from the spinal cord to that place.

[Nnn~]

When I moved my hand, I was latched onto, much in the way an octopus does.

Though the degree of her fleshiness was rather thin, she had the soft build particular to a woman, and I was wrapped up in her.

She makes incredibly lascivious movements and coils up around me. Though as usual, there is no reaction.

However, my brain is surely excited...

After not too long, the movements of Elinalise stopped, and she resumes the quiet breathing of a sleeping person once again.

The excitement instantly fades.

Only the miserable feelings of loneliness and nothingness remain.

I shed tears.

[Is that so? This really gets healed....?]

I made up my mind right then to go to the Ranoa Magic Academy.

—

3 months later.

At the end of winter.

I started on a journey to Ranoa Kingdom.

Ranoa Kingdom.

The largest country in the Northern Lands of the Central Continent.

Though it's the largest, the current national power is around the same level as Shirone Kingdom.

However it is intimately allied with Neris and Basherant kingdoms by way of the Magic Guild.

If you put the combined power of all three countries together, even though they are located in the pitiable northern lands, they can be considered to be the world's hidden fourth strongest power.

Ranoa, Basherant and Neris.

Together, these three countries make up the power known as [Magic Triumvirate].

Why is it the 『Magic』 Triumvirate?

Is it because the Magic Guild Headquarters is located here?

That's one reason.

However, the best reason is that these three countries lay a great emphasis on the study and further research of the magical arts.

Without regards for expense, the most magically talented and capable people are gathered with the aim of advancing magical knowledge.

This point alone was why there was an alliance between these countries.

And so, this big city came to be on the edges of each nation's shared border.

The city of magic 『Shari'a』

This city boasts the 『Ranoa Magic Academy』 『Magic Guild Headquarters』 『Neris Magical Tool Atelier』, and into these three locations, everything there is to know about magic was condensed and stored.

The heart of the 『Magic Triumvirate』

It wouldn't be wrong to call it the most prosperous city.

When the Magic City Sharia is seen from above,

at the center is the Magic guild, constructed with the latest in magic-proof bricking, and towards the East is the student town centered around the Magic Academy.

Towards the West is the crafting town centered around the Magic Tool Atelier.

In the North is the Shopping District run by the Commerce Guild.

And in the South is the Adventurer's Post, a small town that welcomes in adventurers.

If looked at with a discerning eye, certain aspects of Milishon seem to be have been used as a reference for this city's design.

At least when I saw a map, I realized it at once.

Even though I can only talk about what I've already came across.

Elinalise and I stayed in a hotel in the Adventurer's Post town.

When she is cold, she will crawl into the bed.

And while she is sleeping defenselessly in front of me, I want to take advantage of her.

If I touch her though, I'll just get depressed.

So I made sure to choose an A-rank hotel that was fully equipped with a heater.

Elinalise had no complaints about it either.

I seemed to have learned along our trip out here that she has a certain reason for doing the things she does with men.

On our way here, we got sidetracked off course for a week until we arrived at the next town.

Her physical condition was the worst I've ever seen, and the look she had was on the level of a lusty predator.

Even if she looked at me like that, it was hopeless, because even if I was up to the task, I wasn't UP to the task.

Hearing about it in detail, it seems to be some kind of Curse.

It is the Curse of Promiscuity, if she doesn't couple with a man on a regular basis, she will die.

Seeing it spelled out like that evokes a strong feeling.

However, Elinalise doesn't seem to have any real distress over this matter.

It seems she is naturally prone to being erotic as it is.

Even if there was no curse, she said there wouldn't be much of a change in her lifestyle.

I can definitely say that I can get along well with someone who has an affliction like this.

[Now then, I will be off to pay my respect to Jinas-san. What is Elinalise-san going to be doing?]

[Of course I am also coming with you.]

[...Why?]

Surely I thought Elinalise was going to be man-fishing at the Adventurer's Guild.

[Even if it's difficult, I too want to try enrolling at the Magic Academy.]

[...Why? Are you interested in learning magic?]

[Not at all, I am interested in boys who happen to be about Rudeus' age.]

[Ah, I see.]

In other words, business as usual.

Because it's an academy, of course there would be children my age there.

Though I don't know the laws of this country, are there any laws protecting minors from being caught by her?

...Then again, it's not like it's a bad thing to get caught sometimes.

I feel myself getting a bit hazy on that topic.

It's not something I need to worry about anyways.

[However, doesn't the normal enrollment require a rather expensive tuition?]

[That is not a problem for me, I happen to possess quite the sum of money.]

Elinalise said merrily, as she slaps the pouch of coins she has.

The total amount of money contained in there is more than 5 Asura gold coins worth.

There are also many magical crystals in the backpack she carried as well.

She showed me once a magical crystal she owned, it was a beautiful golden sphere and looked very much like a Superball.

If it was sold, the price would be in excess of 10 Asura Gold Coins.

I wonder where she had obtained it?

Although as an adventurer, she is primarily a Labyrinth Explorer.

I figured that she must have walked away with that as some kind of alternate compensation for doing a job.

Entrance to the Academy does cost money.

However, money doesn't concern her.

Although her reason for entering is impure, I can't complain.

I had no real reason to stop her anyway.

[So then, shall we go?]

And so, we pointed our feet in the direction of the Magic Academy.

Ranoa Magic Academy boasts quite the gigantic school-grounds.

This vast area was fashioned mostly with brickwork, buildings composed of various bricking styles fashioned the sides of the ridged pathway, leading directly to the central building which looked like a castle.

Upon first seeing it from far away, it looks like it could have been used as a fortress.

The best image I could use to describe it is Tsukuba Daigaku.

{ C-Editor's note: Tsukuba Daigaku is the University of Tsukuba in Japan. }

Maybe not though, I've never actually seen a photograph of Tsukuba Daigaku before.

For now, I showed the letter I had received to the guard at the gate of the school.

[Excuse me, I appear to have received this letter...]

The guard took a look at the letter, and gave me an understanding nod.

[Do you know where the Administrative Building is?]

[I'm sorry, I do not know yet.]

[Alright then, From here go straight, it'll be to the right of the statue of the Academy's Founder. The building with the blue roof. Just hand this letter to the receptionist there, and she'll take care of the rest for you.]

[I see, thank you very much for your help.]

In no time, I already noticed Elinalise-san making eyes at the guard, so I responsibly pulled her by the ear along with me.

Indeed, straight ahead of us was the statue of the Academy Founder.

Lining both sides of the road, there are withered trees.

If spring were to come, would Sakura bloom here?

I doubt that this world even has Sakura trees.

Towering 3 meters higher than the largest of the withered trees here, was a brick wall.

Even if facing an attack by many people, a wall archer would probably say something like [Take 'em on!]

[All the buildings here are made from Magic-proof brick, it seems.]

[Hmm...]

As Elinalise muttered that, I examined the wall closely.

As for what the Magic-proof bricks are,

As the name implies, it is a brick that has a high tolerance for magical power.

It seems that it would be able to withstand an attack by certain large-scale attack magics.

I wonder how much tolerance there is though?

I kind of want to fire a shot and confirm it that way.

I probably shouldn't though.

I heard that the Magic Guild has a monopoly on manufacturing and sales regarding it.

In Asura Kingdom, it's so expensive to get that it's only being used in the Castle town.

I didn't even see any in the Dragon King Country or Milis for that matter.

However, it's quite prevalent in the lands of the Magic Triumvirate.

Though the manufacturing process is strictly confidential, the raw material costs might not be that high.

Coming through the brick passage, the road opens up into a large plaza.

The road forks into three paths from here.

At the center is the statue of a woman wearing a robe.

『Ranoa Magic Academy, First Principal – Frau Claudia. Fifty-Sixth Generational Head of the Magic Guild.』。

Such was written on a plate affixed to the statue.

It seems this is the statue of the first principal.

The walls of brick taper off here.

On the road in front of us, a huge group of school buildings look like a fortress.

It seems I can only fit about 6 buildings in my scope of vision.

Suddenly, from a place near the side of the school building that looked like an activities field, a large flame erupted into the air.

Is class in session I wonder?

To the left, there are a number of red-roofed buildings.

This is also a gargantuan building, with many windows, and an attached veranda.

I wonder, if in the student dorms, if the veranda is where you put the laundry out to dry...?

Now then.

The blue roofs are on the right, and the red roofs are on the left.

Because I am not a Sylvanian Family I went to the right.

{ C-Editor's note: Sylvanian Families is a Japanese line of collectible anthropomorphic animal figurines. Their houses usually had red roofs. }

[Somehow, I'm getting more excited the closer we get.]

Elinalise cheerily spoke

[Really?]

[But, that's because it's such a big building!]

What's made this bitch suddenly start acting like this?

{ C-Editor's note: The English word 'Bitch' used in Japan tends to be a term for someone with a slutty character but is often used endearingly and not in a mean-spirited way. }

So I thought about it for a moment.

It seems that Adventurers don't usually have any business heading into large buildings like this.

At most, the largest building they will visit is that of the Adventurer's Guild.

So the opportunities to see such a huge building are few if any.

[So, Elinalise-san, what's the largest building you've ever entered up until now?]

[Of course it would have to be the Milishon Adventurer's Guild!]

[Ho~, That was a rather large building wasn't it?]

I have also visited the Milishon Adventurer's Guild before.

It was certainly a wonderful place.

But it wasn't surprising to me who has seen far bigger buildings in my previous life.

[What a dull boy you are. The first time I saw the Milishon Adventurer's Guild, I was so excited seeing it that I was unintentionally clinging on to Paul.... Tch, Now why did you have to make me go and remember a thing like that.]

Elinalise-san grumbled, then made an unpleasant face by herself.

She really dislikes Paul.

To the woman who self-proclaims that any man is satisfactory... when it comes to Paul...

Just what the hell did you do Paul?

I wonder how many years it has been since Paul and Elinalise separated?

I'm 15 years old now, so it surely has to be longer than that.

[Pardon me for asking, but how old is Elinalise-san?]

[Ara ara, you know it's not nice to ask a lady her age.]

[For the record, I'll be 50 years old soon.]

[What a liar!]

Chatting while we walked, we finally reached the building with the blue roof at last.

When I passed the letter to the receptionist, I was ushered into a receiving room.

[Please rest here for a short while.]

Leaving us with just those words, Ms. Receptionist disappears.

While we wait, we sit quietly on the available sofa.

Elinalise of course snuggles right into me.

Whenever she sits next to a man, she does that. It's really a bad habit.

But since it doesn't really bother me, I let it go.

She's happy to feel my manlike body, and I'm happy to have such a beautiful Nee-san next to me.

Everybody wins.

The only loser is that son of mine who doesn't react at all to the situation.

While lost in thought, I looked at my surroundings.

I'd give this receiving room a grade of C-rank.

The sofa is rather hard, and there is minimal furnishing.

However as a place for meeting with adventurers, it's actually fitting.

[Thank you for your patience, I am Vice Principal Jinas.]

After a wait of about one hour, Vice Principal Jinas appeared.

For not having an appointment, we were still met promptly.

With a receding hairline, he seems like a nervous man in the prime of his life.

He wears about himself a deep blue robe.

Is he a user of water magic?

[Pleased to meet you for the first time, I am Rudeus Greyrat.]

I greet him in the aristocratic form I learned, quickly bowing my head.

When I glanced at her, Elinalise also was bowing respectfully.

[And who is this person if I may inquire?]

[I am Elinalise Dragonroad. I share membership in a party with Rudeus.]

[I see....]

Who is it? Why did they come?

One glance of his eyes showed that Elinalise was of no concern to him.

Jinas, in whatever form of good spirit, offered us a seat.

[Never did I think you would come here so soon.]

[A certain person suggested that I should.]

[A certain person...? Ah, perhaps it was Ms. Roxy then.]

Mind your business you big forehead bastard.

Though I didn't say it aloud, my heart screamed those words.

[Of course Roxy-sensei had recommended that I come as well, however, the one giving me the push to actually come is someone else after all.]

[Mmm... ...Then, shall we go ahead and enroll you here at the academy?]

[Perhaps, we shall...?]

Jinas leans forward.

With a little subtle pressure, I nod slightly.

[For what I may say, please forgive me, I find that many magicians who have come into great power tend to be very prideful. Especially a young magician like yourself who may come to dislike or look down upon our academy.]

[I see]

[I have also heard the story of how Rudeus-san defeated the Stray Dragon a short time ago. I thought someone like that would not think about pursuing school immediately.]

In these past two years, I have come to understand the tendencies of adventurers.

Though it differs by race and country, but for the most part, in this world, 15 years old is often considered an adult.

It is the age most debut as an adventurer.

However, there are a considerable number of adventurers who are not yet "grown up".

Since there is not a particular age restriction.

However, there are those who exhibit talent and manage to climb to a high rank before becoming 15 years old, though they are few.

And those young people who reach the top, are usually a bundle of pride.

I have only once seen a 14-year old boy called a B-rank adventurer.

And that fellow was a Tengu who regarded me as a rival.

{ C-Editor's note: Tengu is a Japanese demon with a very long nose. }

Perhaps he was unable to stomach that I, who was the same age as him at the time, was an A-rank.

Well, come to think of it I hadn't seen him in a while, I wonder if he made a mistake and died on a subjugation request.

Jinas probably thought that of me, that I myself was a bit of a Tengu, like the type I just described.

I regret to inform that these days my Tengu is lacking in vitality.

{ C-Editor's note: Referring to his ED problem. }

Am I suffering a spiritual power shortage?

[The first thing is that there are many facilities here to assist you with whatever you wish to pursue. Whether that be General Curriculum, Specialized Research, or Practical and Experimental Application.That is, of course, I will have allowance to advertise that you were a graduate here, correct?]

While Jinas smiled wryly, I recalled Conrad's story.

[If there is something you need to frankly discuss or inquire about, please don't withhold it here.]

[Actually, What exactly is a [Special Student]? I do not yet properly understand what it is, even after all this talk.]

Jinas once again smiled wryly, suddenly recalling something important.

[Ah, Before I get into that, May I be allowed to give you a brief examination?]

[Examination?]

Maybe it's something like the Scholarship Student Examination?

It seems like something naturally asked for.

This might be bad.

It's been ten years since I learned about magic from Roxy.

Exactly how much do I remember?

Umm.., Well I do remember Melded Magic....

Damn it, if I had known this was going to happen, I would have brushed up a bit.

[Yes, Well, this is a test to determine if you are in fact the same Rudeus as the rumors say.]

Apparently, there will not be a written portion of the test.

I don't want be told I have to defeat another stray dragon.

I am not as brave as I was before.

That's all I want to say honestly, however Jinas's wry smile tells me that might be Impossible.

This guy has too many wry smiles.

We left the building together with Jinas.

Our destination was somewhere in the group of school buildings.

It seems to be a training room in a training building.

The location was where they perform magical experiments and examinations.

[There are an extremely large number of buildings here. Are there really that many students here?]

Jinas nods his head, and I took that as a confirmation.

[Ranoa Magic Academy is different from a normal magical school, but since we have classes that are the same as a normal school, we have increased the number of classrooms to match the need. Instructions for nobles, and even a math department for merchants.However no matter the section, lessons on magic are adapted to fit the curriculum if necessary.]

There are lesson courses for various fields, not just limited to magic.

It is as Roxy said, they will accept just about anyone.

That is why it has become a Mammoth school.

[Still, while we don't have someone to teach royal studies, I feel more than confident that our teachers surpass those of the Ranoa Royal Academy when it comes to that of Magic.]

[Oh?]

[For the time being, there is a nearly unpopulated department that teaches the Military Sciences.]

[As an example, would there be a division in the medical department that teaches about how to use medicine for healing a mental illness?]

[Medicine for mental illness? No, I'm afraid there isn't something like that. However I am proud to say we have a good assembly of teachers skilled in Recovery and Detoxification magic.... Does this field differ greatly from magic?]

[You can say that...]

Although this is an Academy, there isn't an Academy hospital.

Well, there is the advice from Hitogami.

I don't need to rush anything yet.

[Is there an acquaintance who has become sick?]

[I can't call it a sickness... Well, it's something more like a curse.]

[I see, you insinuate that you are here to do research on how to cure a curse, that is a splendid goal.]

[No, I'm not really planning to do anything great here.]

As we talk, we entered one particular building.

In here as well, is the Magic-proof bricking.

The inside of the building was made to look like a deficient gymnasium, on the floor are 4 magic circles with a radius of 5 meters each, and they are partitioned off by horizontal lines.

At the edge of the magic formations, were about 20 people.

All of them wore a similar looking robe, two of them entered the magic formation, and were casting spells at each other.

Are they not concerned with being injured?

[Those are students who will become fourth graders this year, I believe that class had many aristocrats in it. Our school considers curriculum for actual combat, so we can perform mock battles here.]

I watch on, taking in the explanation Jinas offers, as one student strikes the other with a fireball directly.

The student is being wrapped in flames, as it happens the magic formation under their feet shines immediately, the flames are extinguished. The student who was just wrapped in flames comes out with not even a scorch.

[What is this magic formation?]

[It is attuned to Saint class recovery magic. Even if the attack is received, any injury will be recovered instantaneously.]

[That is really amazing!]

[In addition, an advanced level barrier is set into the outer circumference of the formation, and some magic won't even move an inch outside of it.]

Amazing.

As for what he called a magic formation, even though I saw magic textbooks a long time ago, with all the bad experiences on the return trip from the Magic Continent, I never managed to look through one.

I wonder if I wouldn't have come to know how they are used.

Could I have somehow dealt with the situation with the magic formation in Shirone?

While I think about that, students entered from the opposite ends of the magic formation.

[Now then, what shall I be doing?]

[I have heard that Rudeus-san is capable in using voiceless incantation. I would like you to demonstrate that.]

[Is it good if I just use anything? Supposing the case that I am a fake, do you have a way to verify it?]

[Ah, you bring up a good point, though there was only one teacher in our school who could use voiceless incantations, he died of old age last year...]

When it looked like Jinas might worry about such a thing, his hands came together in a loud clap.

[Ah~, It is fine though, in fact, there is a child in our school who can also use the voiceless incantation magic as well.

While he may not be as strong as Rudeus-san, he is the prodigy of my school.

They belong to the student council this year... no, is that a good thing?

Gaiter*-sensei! Will it be all right if I borrow Fitts-kun for a moment?]

While Jinas ran towards a different magic formation, the teacher called out in a voice as well.

After a while, they brought a lone boy.

He had short white hair, and wore a pair of sunglasses.

The ears were long, was it perhaps an Elf?

He has a small build. No, perhaps he's just young? About 13 years old or so?

His muscles are overwhelmingly insufficient.

But he is supposed to be the type who is talented.

If he is a man, he should train his body more.

He's younger. However next year he will be my senpai.

I should probably greet him properly.

[Ru-....!]

He looked at me, and was going to rush up to me.

I went before him, while making my greeting with a loud voice.

[Pleased to meet you, I am Rudeus Greyrat.

If there are no problems, I will become your kouhai from next year on.

If I find myself in a difficult place, I hope you will please instruct and encourage me.]

[.....EH? Ah, Y-, Yes!]

Though it looked like Fitts tried to say something, I had already finished the greeting.

When it came to the self-introduction, the early bird gets the worm.

Though his mouth kept flapping open and closed.

Before too long, it stays tightly shut.

[I am Fitts, please treat me well.]

His voice was a little high and sounded stiff.

It seems the breaking of the voice has not yet come to him.

Is he even younger than I thought?

However, a senpai is a senpai after all.

Since I am a bit scared of bullying, I will remain humble.

[Since I am forced to trouble you with this matter, let's cooperate well.]

[A~...Right!]

Entering the magic formation, Jinas grumbles something, and the formation activates.

I have a disagreeable recollection about being in a magic formation.

I test the outer limit of the formation with a tap, but my hand slipped through.

[Huh? Jinas-sensei, is the magic formation not operating correctly?]

[Rudeus-san, in here, the only barrier is towards magic.]

[So...anything physical passes through?]

Thats how it appears to be.

If I remember correctly, the formation in Shirone was King-class?

But both physical and magical properties were negated in that.

Well, perhaps if I have free time shall I come study this some more?

After coming all this way to the Academy, it might be a good idea to be taught this stuff.

[Now then, since Rudeus is an adventurer, are you alright with having a mock battle with Fitts?

Please feel free to use your standard form of voiceless incantations.]

[No problem.]

Jinas nods at me, then turns and nods at Fitts.

What's that?

Are you trying to say that if I lose normally then I'll have to pay the tuition fee among other things?

That's lame.

Even though I have some extra money from the stray dragon subjugation, I've been continuing to live my life on the cheap, and if possible I'd like to keep my living expenses minimal out here too.

Should I go all out from the start?

Fitts stands across from me at the center point of the magic formation.

He is holding in his hand a small wand.

How nostalgic! I used to have a wand just like that in the old days, too.

I also brought out my wand.

This wand has been with me since I was 10 years old, the 『Aqua HartiaArrogant water dragon』

Recently, I've given thought to changing the name of 『Aqua HartiaArrogant water dragon』 to 『Charlene』.

Truth be told, whether I use it or not, won't make much of a difference.

Jinas raises his hand.

[Now then, Begin!]

[『Disturb MagicRan Ma』 ！！]

At the same time the order to start was given, I used the 『Disturb Magic』 at Fitts' wand.

Fitts made a surprised face when the spell that should have shot out from the wand didn't take shape.

In my left hand, I created a Rock Bullet.

The best reason for it is that it is the easiest spell to use.

It becomes even more powerful if I pinpoint a place to take aim at.

Since I've been making figurines for a while, it's incredibly easy for me to adjust the power settings of the spell, and it's easy to fire off successive shots.

The fundamentals on all my subjugation jobs consisted of me using the [Rock Bullet] and my [Quagmire].

And depending on the situation, I can even use them in different ways.

As the saying goes, [If you play with fire magic, you are going to get burned.]

[...What's with this!!]

[Gee, I wonder.]

Size: Tiny.

Rotation: High

Propulsion: High

Target: Center of Fitts's Forehead.

...

I thought about it, but changed my mind.

FIRE!

The rock bullet makes a surprising sound much like a doppler ping, it passes right by the edge of Fitts' face, and a sound similar to a panel of glass breaking is made when the outer magic barrier limitations are exceeded.

It pierced the wall which was made of the Magic-proof bricking, the impact shattered and flung debris that was once the wall in every direction, and then the piercing movement of the rock bullet stopped.

[.....!]

From the side of Fitts' cheek, a bit of blood trickled out, before the wound suddenly closed thanks to the magic of the formation.

Fitts ran a finger along his cheek, and skimmed the blood, then looked behind him at the final destination of the bullet.

Then with a thump, he fell on his rear.

I'm glad my aim was that good.

Healing magic isn't almighty after all.

In the case of an easy wound like this, Saint class magic will recover a wound like that instantly, but if I had hit him head-on with that, he might have died immediately.

And instant death is not remedied by Saint class healing magic.

[...]

Suddenly, Fitts' eyes met with mine.

Although I couldn't see where he was looking because of the sunglasses,

Somehow, I knew Fitts' eyes were watching only me.

[.....]

[...]

We said nothing to each other.

Fitts' stare just kept getting more intense.

Somehow,

I felt that I had really gone and done it now.

From the other side of the magic formation, was a downpour of stares.

Even Jinas stared at me with wide eyes.

Elinalise yawned.

[J, Just now.... how did you do...?]

Fitts' voice was trembling.

Jinas too seemed to make a face wanting to know what had just happened.

[It was the magic called 『Disturb MagicRan Ma』. Do you know about it?]

Fitts shook his head.

It seems he did not know of the Ran Ma type of magic.

Is it relatively minor?

Although I think it is extremely effective magic if you ever have to PvP another magician...

Now that I think about it, outside of that one time with Orsted, I don't think I've ever seen it used before.

Fitts still quietly watches me.

The gaze from behind his glasses is painfully transmitted to me.

[...]

By Jinas' own words, he called Fitts a genius.

That he should have fallen on his rear in front of everyone...

The chance that I may have damaged his honor is high.

Fitts' glance is painful.

I tried to quietly divert my eyes.

His eyes are locked on to mine.

A deer in the headlights?

Crying over spilled milk?

Those are reasons that lead to bad feelings.

If possible, I don't want him to have to suffer that.

Alright.

[Thank you very much Senpai! You allowed a new student like me to take the credit for this match!]

[Eh?]

While I was smiling and laughing, I said it in a way that other students could hear, as I approached him.

And I stretched a hand out towards him.

Though Fitts seems a little puzzled, he catches my hand.

Fitts' hand was soft.

I wonder if he's ever held a sword?

[Please give me the pleasure of returning my thanks for today in the future.]

[...!]

As I'm helping him rise, I whisper that while I'm close to his ear, Fitts' body is trembling, he nods for only a moment.

I think when it's time to pay my respects after I enter school, I will bring him a box of cake.

Yeah, I think I'll do that.

I quietly decided so.

Oh, by the way I passed the examination.

Jinas applauded and praised me.

Fitts didn't even complain about being shut-out.

And so, one month later, I have become a resident of the Academy dorms.

I received a detailed explanation about the [Special Students] afterwards.

Exempt from basic school expenses.

Exempt from classes under certain circumstances.

I can receive or join in any class curriculum aimed at the general students, it's encouraged that I mix in with them if I do.

Homeroom attendance is mandatory once a month, I am free to do basically anything in the school.

I may borrow one room in the research building for devoted research.

I may borrow one room in the training building for training time.

If I choose to, I can spend all my time reading in the library.

I am free to eat meals in the dining room.

If I leave campus, it is fine to continue acting as though I was still an active adventurer.

I am free to publish my research findings if I visit the magic guild.

I am free to play around in the red-light district.

However, anything done outside of the campus is my own responsibility.

Though I am called a student, my actual title is closer to that of a researcher.

However, it seems that there are many other types of [Special Students].

Other students may for example not be exempt from the fundamental lessons.

I seem to have been provided with considerable amounts of personal freedom.

Of course there are some forbidden things.

For instance, committing something regarded as a crime in Ranoa Kingdom.

Or subversive activities towards the Academy and towards the Magic Guild.

I was given a thin booklet outlining all the school rules and regulations for further reading and inquiry.

I read a little bit on the spot when I received it.

Basically as long as I use common sense, there shouldn't be a problem.

It's just about the same thing as what was on the Adventurer's Guild application.

Although the Adventurer's Guild cracks down a bit harder on violations.

By the way, Elinalise also enrolled in the Academy.

She paid money as normal.

From what I understood, the Entrance fee and school expenses until graduation are lumped together and the total amount is about 3 Asura Gold coins.

That's incredibly cheap!

Can there really be such a difference in prices?

By the way if I entered normally and took the exam, and received excellent results, I would have received some exemption towards basic school expenses and the enrollment fee.

Otherwise if I had no practical way to pay up front, I could work out a deal to properly pay for my tuition after graduating.

There seems to be more flexibility the more talented of a person you are.

Oh, but that has nothing to do with me.

[Fumu~]

I combed over the school regulations twice.

For a penal code entry in the matters of sexual relations.

And I examined that page properly.

[Elinalise-san. As long as you don't... force yourself on them, you appear to be free to do whatever you want.]

[What a wonderful school! Did you know? That kind of thing is strictly prohibited at a Milishion school after all.]

Though the subject almost went out on a tangent, an adequate answer was returned.

As expected, people with their mind in the pink are different.

When I go with the knowledge that I had from my previous life, there is a serious confusion of public morals when it comes to being able to do it with a child who is attending school, which can lead to a breakdown in discipline.

The youngest children in this school are about 10 years old, but there are people on the register who exceed 100 years old as well.

Although it seems for the time being there are many young men here, the ages are various, the races are various, and even the common sense is various.

Also, there are even others here who are cursed like Elinalise.

In such a situation, that is no good, this is also no good, since it seems like it would be easy for a problem to easily occur.

Especially when the mating season starts.

Well, you might say there is a reason for the free school tradition.

To have a reason to live, for me that reason is the effort I will put forth with the desire to reclaim my manhood again.

Uwaah, Let's do our best!

I will make my son BIG.

Just kidding.

Actually, there is still the advice from Hitogami, it will definitely be healed soon.

I continued along taking comfort in that.

Ranoa Magic Academy.

The world's largest Magic School, it is sponsored by the Magic Guilds of the 『Magic Triumvirate』 and boasts one of the largest campus areas.

The current Principal is one of the heads of the Magic Guild and is known as 『Wind King Class Magician Georg』.

The current number of students in the register exceeds 10,000.

Though it's labeled as a [Magic] Academy, the teachers have layers upon layers of various knowledge, and in truth you can be taught just about anything there.

People from all tribes, species, and social standings can be admitted.

Such as those who would avoid anything to do with the Milis Religion, where there is still deep prejudice against the Demon races.

Such as those who would typically find themselves excluded. The moody types like those of the Beast Race.

Such as those of royal or noble lineage who find themselves in jeopardy or exile by way of political power struggles.

Such as those who were born with a curse, or aristocratic children who are deemed unmanageable.

Though it seems that none from the Heaven Race or Sea Race are on the student register.

A person of high magic ability or a person with a deep relationship with magic, even a person with just some kind of magical issue can also enroll.

It's said one time a matter arose with the Magic Guild when it tried to ally with the other world powers.

Asura Kingdom knew that if another country gained the use of the Magic Guild it would be hard pressed to compete against them.

So Asura Kingdom made a number of investments to the magic guild in the effort of building amicable relations.

Incidentally Holy Milis Country has an order...The 『Temple Knights』 are directly opposed to the methods of this school.

However, since this school is on the opposite side of the world from Milishion, there has been no reason yet to expressly call for war with it.

The normal enrollment period is for seven years.

The maximum is nine years.

It is possible to continue indefinite enrollment if one is doing research with expressed permission from an affiliated Magic Guild.

There is a huge dormitory that is five stories tall, and boarding is free.

There are those who attend from residential homes that are in the downtown district as well.

But it seems the usual choice for commute is to stay in the dormitory.

A room has already been prepared for myself in the dormitory, it seems.

The dorm room was simplistic.

It is on the second floor.

A 6-tatami length room, fitted with bunk beds.

One table and chair provided.

While the room is normally shared by two people, those who are approved as a [Special Student] are granted exclusive use.

If I wished for it, I could have a roommate.

However I passed on that.

I didn't come here to make friends.

It seems aristocrats can pay a bit of money and move to a larger and higher-security room, but for me, I think it's unnecessary.

I'm not living the kind of life where I need to worry about assassination.

There is a toilet in the hallway.

I was surprised to find that it had a flushing feature!

There was a lever and a jar.

It seems I can draw water from a basin near the toilet with the bucket, and then pour it into the jar.

From the jar, I can use the lever to operate a mechanism that lets the waste-water drain out into a pipe leading to a sewer.

Of course, a guy like me doesn't need to use a bucket, since I can just use my own water magic.

It seems there is a duty rotation to refill the water basin, but because I am a [Special Student], I am of course exempt.

I am provided with a uniform.

Gentlemen are provided with a school suit, while ladies are provided with a blazer.

Honestly, it's a pretty sweet design too!

I heard that until this year, there wasn't a standard unified uniform.

If that's the case, then the gym uniform should be bloomers right?

Sadly, here, it happens to be a robe.

I was not provided with the specifics.

It seems like there isn't a person who understand the importance of bloomers.

For the time being, even someone without money to spend on a uniform is still provided with the cheapest type.

[So, does it suit me?]

Elinalise is in front of me putting on a fashion show with her new clothes.

Because her lengthy luxurious hairstyle was rolled just under the shoulder, she gave off the impression of wearing her robe as someone who did cosplay.

{ C-Editor's note: Cosplay is the practice of dressing up as a character from a movie, book, or video game. }

The uniform suits her reasonably well.

It seems that since I know the true nature of Elinalise-san, I can't help but to see it as Cosplay after all.

[If the skirt was altered to be shorter, it would be much easier to go man-fishing. Just to the point where the panties almost become visible.]

After I advise her of this, the look on her face that she gave me said: "You are a Genius!"

[If it's this short won't I be feeling the cold more?]

[I think that if you were to put on some socks that reach all the way up to your thighs you won't be.]

[Amazing, just as expected of Rudeus. You are truly a genius!]

As Elinalise said this to me, she began folding the skirt until it felt like one that belonged to a high school girl.

Then when she spun around, the fluttering of her skirt allowed the momentary showing off of her panties.

Yep.

It's as I thought, pairing the panties and the uniform was definitely a good idea.

So, I headed to the entrance ceremony.

Even at a school like this, there exists an entrance ceremony.

The new students this year are gathered in a cold schoolyard.

Of course there is no orderly file.

Some students appear to be listening to the Principal's speech intently, while others appear rather uninterested.

There are also those gathered who are acquaintances and they are chatting away.

If this was a Japanese school, this would be the place where the guidance councelor would shout at us.

The principal gives a speech on a platform constructed of the ever-present brick material to the many different types of people who are standing before him.

[Ladies and Gentlemen, for the longest time, the ones called "Magician" have been looked down upon by the ones called "Swordsman".

Indeed, that fencing art that the Sword God created might reign supreme.

However! Magic is also a form of supremacy!

After all, in the end, fencing is just a murderer's tool.

However, magic is different, there is a future for those who practice magic!

When we stand together united and exchange and build upon our current chanting methods, we can regain our once lost magic system and bring about a new evolution of . . .]

Elinalise and I just stood there quietly.

No matter what world you are in, the principal's speech is long.

However, no one here who is listening to his speech seems tired.

I guess perhaps the motivation to use magic is overflowing?

No, it's different.

It's because everyone seems to be interested in watching the principal desperately trying to pin his wig down before it takes flight off of his head!

Elinalise is looking about the surrounding area, examining all the men closely.

She seems to be having trouble choosing one at the moment.

[. . . That is all. Gentlemen and Ladies, may your path of magic be straight and true!]

Finally the Principal wrapped it up in words like some protector of freedom and justice.

There is no school song sung in unison.

This is likely because there is no school song to begin with.

A national anthem exists, but I can't sing it.

[Continuing on, we will now hear some words from our Student Council President to the new students.]

With the words of Vice Principal Jinas, a mix of three boys and girls climbed up to the stage.

The girl in the lead has beautiful blonde hair.

Her long silky hair has been put into a braid.

Her uniform is the same as ours, though much newer, and she oozes dignity and grace from the way she carries herself as she walks across the stage.

Compared to that one, the Ojou-sama next to me is a fake.

But then, Elinalise's standing behavior says with an act "Not enough opportunities..."

[Oh, isn't that the young child Rudeus made cry the other day?]

She said this when looking at one of the two people who were trailing behind.

The person with the White hair and wearing sunglasses.

It was Fitts.

While moving across the stage, he is vigilantly surveying the area.

The other boy is one I don't know yet.

I guess he would be a bit older than me.

Fussy brown hair in a combed back style and a sword is visibly worn on the waist.

He does not seem to be a magician.

The way he moves makes me think he is likely a swordsman.

Above all though, he is an ikemen.

{ C-Editor's note: An ikemen is a good-looking man. }

According to my investigation, of the countries of central continent, from the faces I've imagined ikemen to have, it seems that the ones who possess a "strong-man" expression are the most popular.

To put it simply, those with a Paul-like face are popular.

Actually that guy looks similar to Paul.

Incidentally, it turns out I'm not bad looking either, but apparently the way I laugh causes people to be disgusted.

Only Elinalise has praised my fantastically masculine smile.

When they went to the top of the stage, the young students present began to chat noisily.

[Hey, isn't that Ariel-sama...?]

[Then isn't that one 『Silent Fitts』?]

[Kyaa~, It's Luke-sama!]

It seems they are somehow famous.

The schoolgirls all raise their squealing voices.

Perhaps that Paul-like man might be this 『Luke』?

Girls send their support with [Kyaa~ Kyaa~], and he returns it with a wave of his hand.

He's really popular.

Tch, I don't like this Mannequin-like guy with an AV actor's name.

{ C-Editor's note: AV = adult video. }

[Ara, that's a fine man.]

It seems he is suitable to Elinalise's discerning tastes.

[Quiet down! Ariel-sama will be speaking now!]

On Luke's (likely) order, the noise in the surrounding area momentarily quiets down.

He's incredible for not needing to use a megaphone.

Choosing the moment when it's quiet enough, the girl from before comes out.

[I am Ariel Anemoi Asura. The Second Princess of the Asura Kingdom, and in charge of the Magic Academy's Student Council!]

Her commanding voice penetrated to the core.

Attacking the earlobes, and shaking the brain.

Can I call it charisma?

This is not just a penetrating voice.

Just hearing it brings about the feeling of a good mood.

[You have come here together from places all over the world. And there are those of us with big differences in our common sense.

But, here at the Magic Academy, the way we protect it is different than your hometown.]

The contents of what she speaks are basically just school regulations.

Things like even if things are done too differently, please respect what is considered a rule here.

However the way in which it was said was profoundly sunk into the heart.

That's right, the rules should be followed.

Even though I was formerly Japanese, it doesn't seem that this is why I care.

I seemed to care because I honestly believed in her words.

[. . . Now then, please lead a good student life.]

Once Ariel's speech had ended, she got off of the stage.

At that time, suddenly Fitts' glance caught me.

Even though he was wearing sunglasses, I was convinced he was looking at me.

His gaze was strong.

This might be bad, I should hurry and go buy a box of cakes already...

After the entrance ceremony ended, I separated from Elinalise and went towards a certain classroom.

It is necessary to participate in homeroom at least once a month.

According to the story I heard, including me, there are only six others who are [Special Students], I was asked in earnest to avoid quarreling with them.

Even if it was asked of me, I don't have any intention to get into a fight with anyone anyway.

I'll just shrug away whatever is troublesome.

As I think this, I reach one end of three school buildings set in a line.

My classroom is in the rear room on the third floor.

On the way there, is a line drawn on the ground, it reads, [Ahead of here is the classroom for 『Special Students』].

It seems that the classroom is isolated.

Though as a 『Special Student』 I can go freely anywhere I want to on campus.

Is it the opposite?

Because things like pride can make a lot of trouble, is this a consideration for the general students to avoid unnecessary contact?

Well, if they went to the trouble to call it special, I will have to trust that there is a reason for it for the time being.

Lost in that thought, I finally reached the classroom.

The placard above the door has 『Special Student Room』 written on it.

When things are handled like this, I am getting an unpleasant feeling.

I calmly open the door, and enter the classroom quietly.

Somehow this classroom gave off a familiar feeling.

It seems that the black board and teacher's desk are not the only new additions to this room.

Wooden desks are lined up in rows all over the classroom.

Though the window was closed, it was somehow still bright in the classroom.

There are four people sitting in their seats.

One is a boy sitting in the front row and reading a book . . . he's likely studying.

Impressively concealing his eyes is his dark brown hair.

He glances at me for a moment then looks away uninterested.

Near the back of the room at the side by the window are seated two girls.

Both are members of the Beast Race.

One seems to be munching on some kind of meat-on-a-bone, she looks at me with suspicion. She's of the Adorudia [Canine] Race.

The other one, resting her feet on top of the desk while leaning back, both hands are clasped together behind her head, Looks at me. She's of the Dedorudia [Feline] Race.

When I see these two, I am reminded of the two little girls from the Dorudia village that I met once.

I wonder what their names were again . . . .

They were both nice children though.

Compared to them, these two seem to be ill-mannered.

Completely Ko-gal.

{ C-Editor's note: Kogal is a Japanese fashion culture that involves schoolgirls wearing outfits based on Japanese school uniforms. }

And the last one.

It was a young man I'd seen somewhere before.

He has a long face, with round glasses attached.

In my former school days I would have called such a person "Spock".

{ C-Editor's note: Mr. Spock from the Star Trek science fiction media franchise. }

He was looking at me gap-jawed for a while now.

His expression doesn't change, as he suddenly stands up with a bang.

I was enlightened by way of the Eye of Foresight.

[Shi.....SHISHOUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUU!]

As if the desk was a hindrance, he flung it out of his way.

Crashing into desks aside as if he was something like a snowplow.

One after another was being tossed aside as he crashed into them.

Yes, come crash into me!

[Rock Bullet!]

There is a heavy sounding thunk.

[Shishouuuuuuuuu!]

My rock bullet hits his face then falls to the ground with a thud, he didn't even stagger from it.

However was there enough power behind it to return this grown man to sanity from his delusional state?

Unreal. Is this a 『MIKO』's power?

This guy grabs me around the waist and lifts me up easily into the air.

[Whoa~! Hold it, hold it, take it easy, RELAX, calm down already!]

I braced myself for the impact with the ceiling.

However, I was put down safely somehow.

[Shishou! Have you forgotten myself? It is I, Zanoba!]

While Zanoba laughs with a wide smile, he politely hugs me.

Am I now your beach-house newlywed wife?

[Hah Hah, of course I remember you! My disciple, please let go of me now, you are scaring me.]

Third Prince of Shirone, Zanoba was here.

Under the characteristic pretext of 'studying abroad,' it seems Zanoba was sent here to Ranoa Magic Academy for a while.

Properly understood, not being able to control the Miko power is treated the same as having a curse.

It seems that as long as there isn't a major disturbance, there is no need to refuse his acceptance here.

However there is a division in the Magic Guild who does research into Curses and Blessings.

Miko are valuable existences, especially a sample such as this one.

And with such a reason, Zanoba was enrolled as a 『Special Student』

In exchange for being a [Sample], Zanoba felt he had the right to take classes.

And typical of a place so focused on Magic, it was a convenient solution.

[With Myself's teacher as a target, every day has been spent training with the Earth Magic.]

Oh, Zanoba.

What an industrious disciple you are.

[Is that so now? Your highness seems to be most energetic. When I get settled down, I will come make figurines together with you.]

[Please do!]

Zanoba deeply nodded his smiling face.

How nice.

I remember being a junior at my middle school back in that life.

Didn't I also speak with strong feelings about things I did, how proud I was when I could create my own PC?

[Though, in the case of this school, isn't His Highness actually my senpai? What year are you in now?]

[Second year. However, ha ha, please do not call me "your highness" or "senpai", but Zanoba instead. And I will call Myself's Shishou as "Shishou".]

[Zanoba.]

[Yes, Shishou.]

It is this kind of feeling when I am chatting with Zanoba.

With a *bang*, there was the sound of something being thrown.

Involuntarily, we face the direction of the sound.

It was at the place where the Beast Race girls where at, where there were two feet on the desk before, now there was just one.

Since she is wearing a skirt, a certain place is able to be seen.

[You two are making me sick-nya]

Nya!

Nya . . . . . .

The Dedorudia family say Nya.

Eris also used . . . no I don't want to remember that right now.

If I go and remember Eris now, I'll just be frustrated.

[Oi! Zanoba and YOU? What the hell are you all chattin' about?]

[Rinia-dono, this is the gentleman I spoke of before, Myself's Shishou...]

[When'd I ever listen ta' anything y'said?]

This cat eared girl was irritated, and so she kicked the table above her with the heel of her foot, loudly.

[Zanoba, Oi! C'mere, you, oi. You understand, right-nya? You understand what I'm saying to you right? Hah?]

The face of Zanoba stiffens.

Is it possible- this person is bullying him?

If it's Zanoba we're talking about, then this person must be considerably strong...

Wait, it might just be a matter of something like Jocks and Nerds.

[If you understand then bring that guy already!]

After a couple of short tugs, I am pulled away.

[Sorry, Shishou...]

[Don't be, it's not a problem for me.]

I approach the cat-eared girl as told.

A cat-eared girl and a dog-eared girl.

The both of them stare me down for a moment.

If it was the me from before, my feet would probably be shaking from their glares.

However, I'm not scared at all.

Should I say something . . . ? I've been like this for a moment now.

However it is not only glares, it seems to be also some kind of bloodlust?

It might almost be like the real thing that Ruijerd could do.

[Thank you, pleased to meet you, I am Rudeus Greyrat. From today on I will be in your care, I will be mindful not to intrude in your affairs. Please treat me well.]

I bend deeply at the waist, in the Japanese style.

After all, there's nothing better than behaving properly in front of people that act like this.

The reason being that I am trying with the utmost of my ability to have nothing to do with them.

Then I was laughed at by Rinia.

[Oh, can't hate an obedient guy like this.

I am Rinia Dedorudia, 5th year-nya.

Though I may not look like it, I am the daughter of the Village Chief Gyes of the Dorudia Village-nya.

I'll be the head of the family soon-nya.

I'm just taking care of some things here until then-nya.]

That sounds like typical matters of Dorudia tribe after all.

Moreover, Gyes's Daughter.

Didn't I remember him saying his eldest daughter was abroad studying at another country?

Was it here?

How nostalgic.

[Ah, is that how it is!

When I was last in Dorudia village I was deeply indebted to Gyes-san!

Ah, I am deeply moved! To think that I might be able to meet the daughter of my benefactor in such a place as this!

Ah, so how are such things faring for the granddaughter of Gustav-san?

Gustav-san was also a considerable help to me as well.

He lent me a house to stay in during the rainy season!]

[O . . . oh, is that so? You were also acquainted with Gr-Gramps . . . ?]

While talking like a machine gun, Rinia was looking at me with a face of amazement.

Though it is trivial now, when she kicked the desk earlier, I was able to see into the certain place.

They were blue.

The kid next to her who was eating the meat, her nose twitched with a tiny sniffing sound, then she frowned.

[Smells . . .]

She was suddenly impolite.

Did you say that I was smelly?

However that doesn't seem visible in her face.

So, I greeted the dog-girl properly.

[Pardon me, may I be allowed to hear senpai's name?]

[. . . . . .It's Pursena. Same reasons as Rinia said.]

[Pursena-san, what a nice name! Please look after me as well!]

She suppressed her nose, and abruptly turned her face away.

[. . . Fakku-nano.]

Is that last word meant as an insult?

When a young lady speaks like that, it makes an old man excitable.

At any rate, it seems the pre-emptive strike was a success.

I want to believe with this, I will be able to avoid being involved in any unreasonable situations now.

After touching base with those two, I listened to Zanoba who was making a complicated face.

And after I left, he whispered to me,

[Shishou, what's the reason for you to bow and scrape to that degree?]

I hear what you are saying.

[... My disciple, it is an essential thing that we avoid all unnecessary quarreling between students.]

[Is...that why?... If that is what Shishou says, Myself will say nothing further on that matter.]

Zanoba nodded regrettably.

I have no idea what was done before, but if this guy is bullied next time, I will become his shield properly.

Bullying is no good.

Absolutely no good.

[Oi!]

While I am thinking a voice calls out from behind me.

[Yes, what is it?]

When turning around, it was the boy who was in the front row now standing.

[You, just a moment ago, did you say your name was Rudeus?]

[Yes, I am called Rudeus Greyrat. I am pleased to meet your acquaintance from here on, senpai.]

The boy had the look of complete confusion when I went about bowing my head.

[Cliff Grimoire. The Genius Magician.]

Genius Magician, is it?

Isn't that amazing?

Does a genius call himself that?

Isn't that a bit shameful?

[In just two years I have managed to learn all attack magic to the Advanced Level.

My recovery, detoxification, and divine-attack magic are already advanced level.

Though my Barrier magic is only at the Beginner rank, I will soon be at intermediate.

Unfortunately there aren't better teachers of it here.]

[That's pretty impressive.]

I honestly praised him.

I nod my head to his self-proclamation of being a genius.

Exactly how much effort would be required to get seven categories of magic all the way up to the advanced rank in just two years time?

For me, my recovery is only middle rank, and my detoxification is still beginner rank.

Though I thought that there was always going to be someone better, nonetheless it's still an amazing thing to meet one.

Is this a special classroom?

Is my pride undamaged because I've acquired up to saint rank in water rank magic?

[Taking you two years to get just the four basic attack magics to the upper rank. Senpai must be amazing.]

[...Tch, It's nothing to get all worked up about.]

While I was honestly trying to praise Cliff, He suddenly clicked his tongue, and fell into a bad mood.

He grabs my lapels, although without any real power, and stares at me.

Since I am the taller one, he has to look up.

[You aren't just a magician, you also use swordplay?]

[Eh? Yeah, I do have a bit of an interest in it...]

I am tentatively ranked Intermediate in Sword God Style.

I barely even remember any of the Water God Style.

Though I treat my sword swings as more of a form of strength training than any practical application.

I haven't really used my fencing skills in actual combat.

That's the extent of which I have a taste for.

To put it bluntly, Eris and Ruijerd and other Swordsmen, they understand the trick to strengthening the body through the proper sword techniques, and no matter how much I try, I just can't understand how, so I am halfway over giving up on swordplay entirely.

Even so....

[Who did you hear it from? That I can use swordplay?]

[....from Eris-san.]

I was shocked.

In these last two years, did he meet with Eris?

I wouldn't think she would come to the Magic Academy though....

[Is she also at this school?]

[Huh? Why would she have any reason to be?]

Cliff retorted coldly.

Is that how it is?

The fact that Eris would be going to school now isn't really expected.

[E~to.... Where did you meet her at?]

[...]

He doesn't answer.

Just stares at me.

Did I say something strange.....?

Ah, perhaps a long time ago this kid was pummeled by Eris too?

Sorry, sorry, for our Eris, I'm truly sorry.

[Ee~to.... Has she said anything about me by chance?]

Now Cliff seems to be giving me some kind of dramatic glares and scowls.

Staring at me from top to bottom.

[Hmph, she said that you were small (in stature).]

[....Is, is that so? I was small (down there), she said?]

I was about to cry.

Was she lost to me now after that one affair after all?

And for someone with a bigger one too...

[W-well, you might say that after being separated from her for two years, I have grown up because of her.]

[Eh? Did you separate from Eris-san?]

[Hm?]

I get the feeling that something isn't meshing right in this delicate conversation.

That something is very wrong.

Before I can confirm what that is,

[Ah, it'll be fine though, In the end someone like you doesn't balance well with someone like Eris-san anyways, right!]

My chest caved in at such a phrase.

Cliff snorted and then returned determinedly to his seat.

I need to give special attention to this one.

Afterwards, the teacher came and after my introduction and some simple contact information, homeroom was over.

It seems one person was missing.

[Ara? Did't I hear that there was one more who was also a [Special Student]?]

When I tried to ask Zanoba, he shook his head.

[Silent-dono is exempt from morning homeroom gathering for 1 month it seems.]

[And the reason?]

[Myself is not sure of that.]

The last person seems to be called Silent.

I wonder if they are capable of using KageJutsu also?

{ C-Editor's note: Kage Bunshin no Jutsu is a ninja technique used in the Naruto manga and anime series. }

[They are also an amazing person too, right?]

[It is well known that they are doing this and that behind the scenes of the school right now.

They expanded the menu of the school cafeteria, They have created new magic items.....even these uniforms were conceived by Silent-dono.

It's even rumored that she has received a recommendation by one of the Seven Great World Powers, and that's why she's receiving special treatment.]

Hearing Zanoba go on, my mind was painted with the thought of only one kind of man, a "Mad Scientist".

Adorned in a white robe, with big bottle-bottom glasses, wielding a flask containing some kind of green concoction.

Though the head comes up with good ideas, usually he leaves people with bad feelings.

[Silent-dono is usually shut up in their laboratory, but sooner or later they will have something to do that will require them to show up before Shishou.]

Zanoba had said such a thing.

By the way, Silent happens to be a 3rd year student here.

Another Senpai.

I will be humble when I meet them.

[Afterword.]

In this way I managed to successfully enter into the [Special Student] class.

It seems because the characters have increased, I need to tidy that up at once.

1st Years: Rudeus (Hentai Magician), Elinalise (Bitch Elf)

2nd Years: Zanoba (Super Strong Figurine Otaku), Cliff (Genius Magician)

3rd Years: Silent (Mystery man)

4th Years: Ariel (Asura Kingdom's 2nd Princess), Fitts (White Hair & Sunglasses), Luke (Ikemen)

5th Years: Rinia (Cat), Pursena (Dog)

After homeroom ended, Zanoba dutifully attended his next class.

It seems he is not allowed lesson exemptions.

Cliff seems to be naturally serious about his lessons.

Rinia and Pursena seem to give off the feeling they're boycotting their lessons, but they appear to attend seriously.

According to Zanoba, in two hours, it will be time for lunch.

I was invited to join him for the meal.

How pleasant!

I will eventually be taking classes.

However, don't misunderstand my reason for coming here.

I never came to this school to study.

But I also can't be 'doing nothing' for as long as two hours.

Though, I did not come to play around either.

For the time being.

I decided to take a look around the campus.

I was able to see the approximate locations of each classroom on the map.

However, it would probably be better if I went to see it by walking there.

As I thought this, I began to walk.

First off is the School Infirmary.

The infirmary of this school is spacious.

It has 8 beds which are in a line,

There are two healing art users residing here.

It must mean that it is possible that there are many people who become injured in magical accidents.

Just now a man twice my height was carried in with a stretcher.

One arm seems to be broken, and a leg is bent in an unusual way.

One of the healing art users is rapidly chanting spells on the broken arm.

It is Intermediate-rank recovery magic.

At once, the man's tortured expression relaxed a bit.

So as to not be a nuisance there, I left.

When I looked at the placard at the entrance, I saw [Primary Medical Ward] written there.

It wasn't the School Infirmary.

Next stop was the Athletics Warehouse.

This room was adjoined to the one I took the training examination in the other day.

Of course the door is locked.

Do I need to get the key from the administrator's office, or perhaps I need to find the gym teacher?

Or, if I was to happen to use a little bit of chantless incantation earth magic, would I not be able to unlock it that way?

So, with just a little bit of magic, I unlocked the door and entered inside.

The inside is a bit dusty and smells of mold.

Rather than an athletics warehouse, I got the feeling it was just a regular warehouse.

Lining the shelves were various kendo equipments, like helmets and chest protectors, in the corner of the room is a box that looks like an umbrella stand, which has many places for magicians to put their magic wands.

Some kind of iron figure had a number of places marked with some kind of unknown white powder.

However, this is not what I was looking for.

It seems this school doesn't have the equipment for platform or floor exercises.

So basically, this isn't an athletics warehouse, it's just a [Training Tools Room].

Next stop, the rooftop of the school building... oh this school doesn't have a rooftop access.

Since it snows a lot in this area of the world, a sharply sloping roof is a fundamental design it seems.

Though it seems there is something like an attic, I pass on it for now.

With the rooftop being no good, I decide to visit the library.

The library of this school has its own independent building.

Leaving the athletics warehouse, I walked for about ten minutes until at last I reached a particular two-story building.

When I tried to enter, I was stopped by a door guard.

[Stop!]

[Eh?]

[I haven't seen your face before, are you a new student? A problem with your lessons?]

[Eh, yes, I'm a new student. [Special Student], and I'm exempt from lessons.]

[Show me your student identification.]

Trying not to act suspiciously, from my breast pocket, I take out the identification, and hand it over.

The guard stares me up and down for a moment, alright, I seem to be confirmed.

I am deliberately checked for anything suspicious.

Afterwards, a rough explanation of the important points on how to use the library was told to me.

Magic is forbidden in the library.

Removing a book from the library is strictly prohibited, however sometimes certain materials may be loaned out, but only temporarily.

In cases like that, permission must be obtained from a librarian, which means forms need to be filled out.

Naturally, any damage to a book will be met with a disciplinary action.

It's pretty much the same as any library anywhere.

But if a book is heavily damaged, it's possible that the result could be a heavy fine and expulsion.

Incidentally, all the books that exist in this library are said to be transcripts.

Even if the damage is just to a transcript, that is grounds for being made to withdraw from school.

Is that because books in this world are naturally expensive?

[You are considerably strict here, aren't you?]

[There was a troublesome person here before who was substituting books. They were selling these precious materials in the marketplace.]

So the guard says.

When I entered the library, it had the faint smell of books.

The unique mixture of mustiness dried ink and old paper.

It also has a bathroom near the entrance.

Perhaps it's a countermeasure to the Aoki Mariko phenomenon?

{ C-Editor's note: The Mariko Aoki phenomenon refers to the Japanese urban myth of the sudden urge to defecate after entering bookstores. }

I offer a light greeting to the librarian, then head further inside.

At the entrance are tables and desks lined up, from the middle to the back are rows of bookshelves.

[Ooooh.]

I instinctively exclaimed in sheer admiration.

How many books have I read since coming to this world?

It is the first time I have seen such a large amount of books side by side.

The first floor opened up wide to an atrium-like ceiling.

The entire second floor is occupied by bookshelves.

Various places throughout the library have a chair and desk, as expected there is likely no shortage of schoolwork that needs to be done here.

It's just about time I looked into some things.

[Ah.]

Then, I recalled the advice of Hitogami.

[Rudeus, enter Ranoa Magic Academy.

Then, examine the matters of the Fedoa Territory Metastasis Event.

If you do this, you can regain your confidence as a man once more.]

Up until now, I have done nothing but give special care to that last sentence.

However, [Investigate the Metastasis Cases] was what he was saying right?

That was close.

I had almost completely forgotten.

It's fine though.

There should be quite a few books on that subject, so in regards to it, I should be able to do some detailed research.

However, since there are just a few books... where should I begin looking from?

[Should I ask a librarian about this...?]

I shook my head and decided against it.

For the time being, it's not like I have to immediately start researching.

And anyway, as for facts about the Metastasis Event cases, Asura Kingdom wasn't done confirming everything yet.

And just a cursory amount of studying won't make me understand the whole situation at once.

So for now, it'll be good just to know where the book reference materials are in the library, I guess.

As I thought this, I meandered between the bookshelves.

There were indeed many books of different kinds.

Though the majority of the books were in Human language, there were those that were also written in Beast God language or Demon God language.

There was a book in Fighting God language as well. I am not knowledgeable if there are some in Heaven God language or Sea God language languages though.

I would need to transliterate the letters of those languages to one I know already, before I could even begin reading it.

[Ah!]

From behind me, a small voice raised up.

I turned around.

That white-haired, sunglasses-wearing boy was looking at me.

It's Fitts!

He seemed to be carrying several books and scrolls.

I panicked for a moment, stood at attention quickly, and then bowed apologetically.

[I am sorry for the other day.

It was through my thoughtless actions yesterday that may have caused senpai to lose face.

I am truly sorry for what I have done.]

[I was thinking about going out for a box of cakes for which I planned to bring them to you when greeting you properly at a future time, but since I just became a new student moments ago, I've been caught up doing this or that since....]

[Uea!? ...I, It's fine, raise your head.]

In my previous life, the one person I respected was a character called [Masa].

He is a member of society who managed to weather all the problems of the world by performing dogeza.

{ C-Editor's note: Dogeza - kneeling and bowing so low as to have one's head touching the ground. }

One of his techniques is called [When you've made a mess of something, make the humble apology in a place like a toilet or the like, not by shouting abruptly in an important place!]

I rushed into a direction where I would be excused of the bad feelings Fitts may have held for me, and tried to clear them away.

It seems successful.

[Rude...eh, Rudeus-kun? For what reason are you here?]

[Doing a little bit of research.]

[About what?]

[Metastasis Events.]

When I mentioned that, Fitts seemed to bring his eyebrows together.

Did I say something strange?

[The Metastasis Event? Why?]

[I was also a resident of Fedoa Territory in the Asura Kingdom. And the Metastasis Event there had flung me far away to the Magic Continent, for instance.]

[The Magic Continent!?]

Fitts-senpai's astonishment seemed exaggerated.

[Yeah, it took as long as three years, but I managed to come back.

During that time I managed to find my family.

Though there is still one person I haven't found yet.

But there is a good chance, if I examine this in detail, I may find a lead, right?]

[...Is perhaps, for the sake of that one person the reason you are in this school?]

[That's right.]

Though there is no way I can say that the reason is actually for the sake of curing my Erectile Dysfunction.

However, it's not a lie to say I do want to examine what happened with the Metastasis Events.

Why did that event even occur? I have the desire to know.

[I see, you are an amazing person...after all.]

Fitts says so, and the back of his ear makes a crunching sound as he scratches it.

What's so amazing about a person who hasn't discovered anything yet?

That is, what did you mean by that?

Well, it's fine, however.

[So, what is senpai doing here?]

[Aaaaaah! That's right! I was supposed to be bringing these materials somewhere.

I've got to run. Rudeus-kun, see you later!]

[Ah, sure, later!]

Fitts gave off a panicked look, he was about to turn on his heels and head to the librarian.

[Oh, that's right.... If it's about Metastasis, then a book by Animas called [Investigation Records of the Metastasis Labyrinth] is a good story you should read, it'll be easy to understand what it's about.]

And with those parting words, Fitts left.

While it did not seem Fitts was good at talking with me, he didn't leave me with the impression that he harbored ill feelings towards me.

It appears that he wasn't holding a grudge about the matter of the examination test after all.

Though I may have misunderstood because his gaze was so strong, it seems that he might be a relatively good person after all.

I inquired with the librarian where the [Investigation Records of the Metastasis Labyrinth] was located, and passed the remaining time until lunch came, lost in reading.

It wasn't a very thick book.

It was barely the thickness of a notebook; the number of pages was less than 100.

The story was about Animas Macedonias who was an Adventurer from the Northern Lands who was said to have challenged a labyrinth.

The labyrinth he challenged was said to be the [Labyrinth of Metastasis].

It was a rare labyrinth where it was said that all of the traps were teleportation traps.

And there were 5 kinds of monsters that inhabited it.

All of the monsters were highly intelligent, and knew the locations in the labyrinth where the traps would fling adventurers to.

When an unfortunate person steps on the teleportation trap, they are sent to a room where there are usually a large number of monsters waiting to kill them.

It is difficult to avoid stepping on traps during battles within the labyrinth.

If the battle becomes complicated, then the whole party could end up scattered throughout the Labyrinth.

The labyrinth's difficulty level is classified as extremely high.

Animas and his associates went to challenge the labyrinth, and investigated about the teleportation traps while they were there.

Chiefly, there are three kinds of teleportation traps.

One. One-way teleporting. It is always to the same location, returning must be done manually.

Two. Two-way teleporting. There is usually a magic formation which can return you back the same way somewhere in the location one was teleported to.

Three. Random teleporting. There is no way of knowing where you will end up, and no guarantee of being able to go back.

In the metastasis labyrinth, it's just a matter of aiming for the interior of the cavern while repeatedly dealing with the teleporting traps that move you further inside.

However, the random teleporting traps are interspersed.

If one accidentally steps on it by mistake, the party can be separated, and one person can be stuck fighting solo against a huge swarm of monsters.

There was even a record on how to recognize a random teleport magic formation over other types.

In the middle of the story, Animas discovered a method of use, to allow him to be transported towards the back of the labyrinth rapidly.

Animas and company gradually got careless.

And they thought they would be able to conquer the labyrinth.

However, they were not able to tell the method with certainty how to distinguish the trap.

The final part of the story involved failing to identify a formation correctly, and stepping on a random teleportation trap which put an end to the party.

Animas was surrounded by a large amount of enemies, and though he lost his right hand, he somehow managed to survive.

However, he lost three colleagues at the same time.

And since Animas' body was no longer able to fight, he gave up adventuring.

The end of the book was a story of why it was written, and that the secrets of capturing the labyrinth were entrusted to whoever read this book.

Whether this story was fiction or non-fiction is unknown.

However, the fact that his party [Monster House] ended up dividing into new parties is considerably amazing.

In my previous life, I seem to remember an RPG that had a dungeon similar to one like this.

However, the conditions required in order to clear the dungeon in the game are different, it's not always possible to reach the final level in one of this world's dungeons.

Although other adventurers have said that at the innermost part of the Labyrinth is almost always a magic crystal.

However, I wouldn't be surprised to find there was one fraudulent dungeon that didn't have an achievable end to it.

The study with regard to the random teleportation magic formations appeared at the end of the book.

Essentially the limitations and ranges of the random teleportation formations, and their usual or unusual characteristics.

Also, that it is highly unlikely to wind up being teleported into the middle of something, like the ground or a wall- even if it is inside a cave.

If it's the case with Animas, it's because the magical power of the metastasis ahead and the magic of the thing itself doing the metastasis repel each other, this may be related to the concept of not being able to materialize an attack magic directly inside the body of a person.

Attack magic cannot be generated directly into the body of another person.

Even I seem to have been aware of that principle.

However the recovery magic is able to be done inside of the body of another person.

It's fuzzy logic like that what keeps me from being able to use chantless incantation healing magic.

Even if it's related to metastasis, such a theoretical exception may work.

Even if earth magic is generated from the soil, it cannot be generated into it.

Unexpectedly, it is a simple theory, to move a person's body to a certain space may require a certain level of extra magic over the normal required amount.

While thinking, the noon bell sounded.

Time flies.

I head to the meeting place with Zanoba, it's the dining room.

The dining hall is a separate building with three floors.

Students are separated by hierarchy.

The 3rd floor is for royalty and nobility of the Human Race.

The 2nd floor is for the commoners of the Beast Race.

The 1st floor is for adventurers and Demon Race.

I think this is more distinction than discrimination.

When nobles eat with demons and adventurers, fights happen too often.

That, and there is a big difference, like table manners and such.

Because I am an adventurer, I thought the first floor would be good.

[Please come this way]

Zanoba recommended that we will get a better meal and service on the third floor, so he is pulling me along.

[Uu....]

When I appeared from the stairs, the gaze of everyone was on me all at once.

It seems that with the current shape I'm in, the smell of commoner is oozing out of me.

I am wearing my robe over my uniform because it is cold outside.

The grey robe bought five years ago, the cuff is worn out, and large patches are visible near the chest.

Since I have become taller recently, likewise it has appeared smaller on me.

To say it bluntly, it is a shabby thing now.

There were some students on the 1st~2nd floors who wore a robe as a counter-measure against the cold outside.

However, there was not even one person on the 3rd floor who did.

Those of the third floor who wished to stay warm would wear a mantle or cardigan.

If I use an easy to understand analogy: if everyone is wearing a suit, I alone am wearing a jersey.

Even I, who don't care about clothes, can read the piercing atmosphere.

[Zanoba, I don't think I'm agreeable to the atmosphere here, could we possibly go eat on the second floor?]

[I don't go down to the second floor, because of Rinia and Pursena.]

[Then, what about the first floor?]

[The number of crass people on the first floor who do not comprehend a concept such as table manners is high. Royalty such as myself will not for a single moment share company with the likes of them.]

[Then, I guess we will be eating apart.]

[How cruel! This one up until now hasn't been able to meet Shishou, does he not think of how much I must have had to endure? At least take a meal together with myself....]

[Please don't make me have to stomach eating here.]

We argued on the edge of the stairs.

Though the stairs were made wide, because of us, some students are having an issue going past us who are blocking the top.

At that moment...

[Kya~ It's Luke-sama!]

From downstairs, I hear noisy voices.

Those shrill voices approach closer.

[Luke-sama~ is next to me~]

[No way! Luke-sama don't go~!]

[Nee~ Luke-sama, for your next date, would it be alright if I also go with you?]

One lady-killer, besieged by women, tries to make the climb up the stairs.

[I can't possibly do that, I am sorry, I can't possibly date more than two women at once.

You see, I only have two arms, if I were to date three, since I don't have three arms, that lady would feel terrible if I was unable to lead her around as well, right?]

[E~ That would be disappointing~]

[Fufu, Terrible right? Because I'm such a popular person. Let's make a date for another time alright? Certainly, if it's next month, my left arm will be vacant by then!]

While saying some incredible things on the way, from downstairs came the boy who looked Paul-like.

On both sides of the boy are girls whose chests are clearly cramped into their uniforms.

Moving his hands to their waists, while laughing frivolously, he climbs the stairs.

This is definitely the same fellow I saw at the entrance ceremony.

Luke? Was what he was called, right?

What was his family name? Skywalker?

{ C-Editor's note: Star Wars reference to Luke Skywalker. }

While pondering that, suddenly his eyes focused on me.

[Hey you....]

Luke's eyes narrowed.

That frivolous face from before gradually steepens.

[If I remember right, the one of Fitts'...]

As he said that, I bowed immediately.

This person was also one who saw the match between Fitts and I.

And while it seems Fitts might not be angry any longer, because he is a colleague, there may be some lingering feelings of animosity with this one too.

These kind of people tend to worry about the honor of their group members.

[It is nice to meet you, I am Rudeus Greyrat.

From this day forward I hope to receive your favor. Please kindly look after me, senpai.]

[Ah~ I know of you, heard about it from Fitts.]

Luke looks at me in a disagreeable way.

[Then, I take it that you know my name already?]

[No....]

Like the younger brother of an end of the century champion suddenly being asked a question, I shook my head.

Though I have heard the name Luke, I didn't know his real name.

[I see, so you have no consideration for others do you?]

[S, sorry. If it is alright with you, may I please receive the honor of knowing your name?]

For a little while, Luke just looked into my face with a sullen mood.

After a while, he let out a harrumph, and then a snort.

[I am Luke Notus Greyrat.]

[Eh~ What's this, is it not impossible~?]

[Perhaps I should tell you, but that robe, wa~y unfashionable, you should probably start by trimming the edges on that thing.]

[Since the fabric is worn out, you might as well buy a new one instead~]

I hear the reproaching voices of the accompanying girls group as they sharply rain down criticisms.

But nothing they said to me went into my ears.

Luke Notus Greyrat.

It was a former name of my father Paul. Paul Notus Greyrat.

A love child?

Not likely.

Paul had long since thrown away the Notus name.

But since he stated his name in a dignified way, perhaps he is... something like a cousin?

[Shishou, you sure seem to be attracted to all sorts of troublesome people.]

[Indeed, now, how will I go about stopping all this attraction?]

[That one was Luke, an upper level noble of the Asura Kingdom. Though he is tentatively a student, he is actually a guard of Princess Ariel.]

[...At any rate, I will certainly be giving a pass to eating here.]

[Isn't there some other way...?]

Afterwards, as a compromise, we ate the meal outside.

Since the weather was cooperating, the earth magic was really easy to create a table and chairs with, an impromptu Café Terrasse was completed.

Zanoba upon seeing this one act of magic was impressed and loudly voiced a [Whoa!].

I happily accepted the feelings of the one before me who was so moved.

While eating, I heard all about the situation of Princess Ariel and her honorable entourage.

Ariel Anemoi Asura. Age 17.

A genuine heir to the Asura Royal Family.

The Second Princess.

The Empress of Asura was not blessed with many children and had just one daughter; she was given third rights of succession to the throne.

After the Empress gave birth to another, the recovery of the child after birth was terrible, and she was unable to bear with burying the corpse of her (stillborn?) child.

In the end, she was only able to produce one with the blood of the Asura lineage.

In addition to Ariel, there are two princes who also aim for succession.

The 1st Prince and the 2nd Prince.

The influential people of Asura Kingdom's upper aristocracy competed to bring one of them to power as a king, then drew the benefits of their backing.

As is almost always the case, with many supporters available, not everyone will be able to have their backing returned.

Because there is a rank in the minister's group, it's a natural course of events.

Those of low rank are neglected.

Therefore, those who would have been unlikely to be backed by either prince, crowded the naive princess (Ariel) with promises.

This was the creation of the Second Princess Faction.

However, four years prior to current times, the group of men who gave the most support had been overthrown.

Under the pretext of studying abroad, she headed to this school in a self-imposed exile.

Such a princess has two Guards.

The first is Fitts.

[Silent Fitts]

A person who can use voiceless incantation magic.

During the chaotic time when (the princess') group lost power, he fended off would-be assassins with tremendous ability.

Where he was born and what he has done until adulthood are largely a mystery, but the thing that is known is that he is a member of the Elven Race.

Those who can be taught to use voiceless incantation are said to be few.

Although I have not heard of their master.

It seems to be a tendency to conceal all that they can about his existence.

The cover story given was that Fitts was secretly trained by the Asura royal palace to be some kind of cold blooded Killer-MachineCombat Machine.

The other guard is Luke.

Luke Notus Greyrat.

The second son of the current head of family of the Notus branch, Philemon Notus Greyrat.

From the beginning, he was Princess Ariel's Guardian Knight; from the time he was born, he had been given a special education.

Even after she lost her standing, he continued wanting to be her Guardian Knight, if by chance the princess can recover her standing, at that time he will be her insurance when it is time to return to the succession dispute.

They have kept bathing in the limelight since they first came to this school, at the same time they are envied, it seems they are also respectfully feared.

[However, some of this story includes This One's conjecture, I warn you.]

So finished Zanoba.

[Ah, thanks.... Say Zanoba, you seem to be well informed.]

[It was because Myself had been made to check into it.]

[By whom?]

[It was those two foolish people of the Beast Race.]

Rinia and Pursena it seems.

The pained face of Zanoba said as much.

Was he also made to be a porter too?

[Zanoba... you.... Are you being bullied by those two people?]

[Bullying? No, this one had to admit defeat during a fight, that's all of the matter.]

[Surrendered, eh?]

Zanoba made a difficult face.

However, his voice is flat.

If he consented to such a thing it's fine....

If bullying is done by those people to make it hard for Zanoba to go outside.

If this guy is being troubled, I want to help him out.

However, I don't know the power of the other party.

Perhaps I should join the Zanoba faction, I think.

Among the beast race, they are from the Dorudia Tribe because of that, they are like a special existence – they also make enemies of and terrorize other members of the beast race.

They immediately take a prejudiced view to things.

It's scary how much of a difference in common sense there is.

But, there are also those who are good guys.

Like Ghyslaine for example.

Besides, I am an ally of the bullied children!

[Please say if you have something unpleasant done to you, even if I can't do much, I want to help.]

[HAHAHA! Shishou need not be tied up with my troubles, don't worry.

Instead, let us talk about wonderful things, like the figurines!]

Zanoba said so and laughed.

Fu~mu...

Hmm, I'll look into the situation for a little longer.

After lunch, I returned to strolling.

However, since I couldn't think of a place I should see, after I took a rough tour of the school building I turned around, I went back to the library.

I hunted for more documents related to the Metastasis Event.

But, to begin with, I have not really ever used the thing called a library until now.

Just searching for the documents, I had used up a considerable amount of time.

The librarian hands me a book list to look over.

One book had the word [Metastasis] in its title, so I chose that book.

Also, I found a book from the Sea Race I sought out.

All of it took about a few hours.

Moreover, the book I got is not a detailed account with regards to teleportation, and has a great deal of difficult words and technical terms.

It's written in a language I don't even know....

If I don't read this book carefully, I will lose out on the majority of information.

[For the time being, if I'm going to be doing a proper research, I would like to at least have a notebook.]

Reading, learning, and memorizing all have their limitation

After realizing this, I get permission to keep the book for now, and I left.

It had already become evening outside.

All the students who were done being taught their lessons began to head back towards the dorms.

There are a few who also seem to be heading to the library.

I braved the oncoming flow of students, and went towards the canteen.

The canteen, it is in the vicinity of this school building.

Rather than a canteen, it felt like a corner drug store.

When I went inside, there were several students merrily shopping.

When looking about, roughly, there were magic textbooks, magic stones, robes, wooden swords, training wands, and etc. placed out for sale.

Even daily necessities like bags, shoes, and soap were also placed out for sale.

Again, even food such as dried meat and smoked meat, and bottles of drinks such as sake or drinking water were placed out for sale.

In short, it gave off the feeling of having had just about everything one needed.

I make a proper purchase of a bunch of paper (held together by a cord), ink, and pen, and then I headed back.

In the first place, I wasn't shooting to buy these many things in coming to school.

Honestly, what was I coming to do here anyway?

Of course, it was to treat my illness.

I still have no clue where to begin treating this matter.

After I finished making my purchases, and went outside, the surroundings were dark.

While something like a streetlight was non-existent, the normal road was dimly lit, so it could be walked without an issue.

Even though winter is over, there is still a bit of remaining snow on the road.

While watching my step, I hurried along the road to the dormitory.

There is no one around the surroundings.

Though I can hear some clamoring in the distance, I got the sense that I had strayed off into a place where people don't normally go.

In the case of the schoolhouse in front of me, it's the women's dormitory. While it's near the men's dormitory as well, the road that leads to the men's dormitory happens to cross in front of the women's dormitory as well.

Without thinking deeply about it, I just press on walking.

And then...

[Mm?]

Suddenly, something dropped from above.

It was white.

However, it was not snow.

I caught it by reflex.

[Oou]

When I expanded it, it was a pure white cloth.

It had a little decoration, but was not too showy, giving off the impression that it was neat and clean.

The traditionally respected name was "Panties".

Someone may have possibly been trying to dry them in the shade.

I thought that if I looked up, I had the feeling I might be able to see the owner of this missing item.

However, because it is dark, I cannot make out a face.

But, I saw a form...

[...Ee~to, Did someone lose something important?]

[Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa! Underwear Thief!]

Eh?

A schoolgirl's yell.

It wasn't from above.

I heard it from behind.

Turning around flustered, I was being pointed at, while a figure was shrieking.

It's a misunderstanding.

But, it's too late to think about it now.

In a matter of moments from the time the shriek began, a window from the veranda opened with a banging sound.

And from the first floor, a shadow jumped out. Shadow. Shadow.

With that, while besieged by accusations, I remained in the position of holding the raised panties.

Somehow, I don't know what's going on.

[A, e~to, um...]

[Hmpf!]

The one spearheading it was a girl with an excessively well-built body.

How should I say it? A girl? A woman? A bandit? A gorilla?

This person gave off that kind of impression.

The width of her shoulders was nearly twice my own.

Is she a Beast Race...? Instead she's likely a Demon Race.

[You are perverted trash!]

To the confused me, she spat that.

I was suddenly insulted.

That doesn't seem like the actions of someone who is supposed to be the sage of the forest.

What?

What is going on?

Why am I suddenly being treated as an underwear thief?

Certainly, as a 15 year old boy, I have an interest in underwear. But, I wasn't trying to steal them this time, I didn't even smell them.

I just had grabbed it before it reached the ground is all, I was only trying to return it to its owner.

[Please wait a minute, I haven't done anything.]

[Haven't done anything?]

The Gorilla-girl grabbed my arm.

She's got huge hands.

[If it's nothing, then what do you have in your hand?]

There is a certain item in my hand.

A face was made, about to say that it was the evidence in question against me.

The surrounding stares are filled with hostility.

My feet start to tremble.

[Those, those are Ariel-sama's underwear aren't they? Even if someone like you admires the princess, you must have no shame at all to do something so brazen as that!]

To Gorilla-san's caustic words, the surrounding girls pour on the jeers towards me with things like [That's right!] [Hentai!] [Go Die!]

What the hell, I am already crying now.

[Listen! Don't come this way, someone like you should repent on their actions, and never be allowed to do these kinds of things again.]

I am pulled along, being caught from arm-to-shoulder.

The only resistance I could put up was the tracks in the dirt the bottoms of my shoes left as I was being dragged.

The power of the women's dorm.

Even though I had been building up my muscles, was the difference in our muscle strength really that great?

I am being dragged into the building, as it is.

Am I about to be subjected to a horrible lynch mob?

I'm being falsely accused.

Should I run away?

Even though I didn't do anything wrong?

If I run away, will rumors spread widely?

What should I do, this is like the feeling of being falsely accused as a train molester.

Can I make them understand through talking?

However it's probably already too late for that....

No, at times like this I need to remain stubbornly confident in my innocence.

I did nothing wrong here.

Thinking so, I used earth magic, and firmly affixed my feet in place.

I immediately stop being dragged, and the Gorilla makes a surprised face.

I was going to fight through the misunderstanding.

[Hee~, What's this, planning to become violent?

Even though you are just a shitty, shameless underwear thief.

Against this number of people, do you think you can win?]

Maybe, I wonder.

While I get the feeling I won't win in the way I want to.

However, underwear thief.

If I get violent here, I will have the label of my person changed to that of an underwear thief.

It's a false accusation.

However, if I get violent, the false charge would likely change into something like rape and pile up.

Then, the current false charge becomes lost entirely.

I might be dealt with in some kind of appeasing move by the administration, could be driven in a corner to the point where I would have to withdraw from school.

How annoying.

What good can come out of this?

[Wait a moment! Stop the arrest, wait for just a moment!]

It was the voice of a boy with a high pitch.

[Fitts-sama!]

[E~! Fitts-sama!?]

[Fitts-sama talked!?]

[What's going on here!?]

Parting the crowd here, was a small boy with white hair and wearing sunglasses.

It was Fitts.

[I am sorry- that underwear- I was just trying to air dry them after I cleaned them, and they accidentally fell down. He only picked them up because of my mistake.]

Fitts stands between the Gorilla and me, while panting heavily.

And took the trouble to explain what had happened.

Gorilla made a snort and humph.

[Fitts...sama. I already know that Ariel has entrusted you with taking care of washing her undergarments.]

However, the Gorilla continues.

[That and this are a different story though. This guy, at this time of night, was walking in front of here.

It was decided already that after sunset only women can go down this street.]

Oh, is that how it was?

I didn't see any sign mentioning that.

I who look puzzled, gave a backward glance to Fitts.

[He is a new student, a [Special Student], with a single room so he didn't have a roommate who would have explained that minor rule of the dorms to him yet. Will you please overlook this matter for me?]

Fitts was desperate.

I also felt the desperation in his voice.

I somehow want to know why.

The Gorilla faces this direction.

Is it the truth, or so she was about to say.

I nodded moment by moment.

The Gorilla had gripped my hand for a moment still, Fitts' face was also looked at.

[Hmph, since Fitts-sama is defending you here this much. It might be the truth.

However, it is also true that you violated the agreement of the dormitory.

So you still need to receive a punishment as a lesson.]

As she said that, she tried to drag me again, but her movement was stopped.

Before anyone noticed, Fitts had pulled his wand out.

And it was pointed at Gorilla's face.

[I'm pretty sure I just said he wasn't in the wrong.

Listen up, you better take your hands off....]

[Fu~ Fitts....sama?]

A voice that has anger mixed into it.

The surroundings became noisy.

Even in the dark, I could understand that Gorilla's face was going pale.

[Or perhaps, everyone here would like me to send them to the medical office?]

SO COOL~

I also want to be able to say something like that once.

[Tch.... Fine I get it already.]

My hand was released albeit a little violently.

And she separated from this child who was pinned.

My wrist hurt still.

However I didn't need recovery magic.

[Fitts-sama, only because you went to all the trouble to show deference to him.

However, you over there!

Never again find yourself after dark wandering around the women's dorm.

If I find you next time, there will be no forgiveness then!]

After throwing such a parting threat directed at me, she returned through the veranda window that she popped out from.

The other girls also, after giving me a strong look, faded away.

In a split second, all the women were gone from that place.

[Fuu~... Honestly, Goriade-san, not listening to a person's explanation first...]

Fitts breathed a sigh of relief, all the girls were seen off.

Some time ago, the Gorilla had been called Goria-de.

That Strength and Power satisfies having a name like that.

The exact case of Name-is-body.

Fitts bowed to me.

[Sorry, it's because of me accidentally dropping that underwear...]

I wonder why this boy is in the women's dorm washing underwear.

Perhaps it is because he has such confidence from being a guard of Princess Ariel that he may be specially permitted to attend to her here?

He seems to be a sincere person.

The feeling that he's harmless comes out from his whole body.

He's reliable.

He's young.

A handsome guy wearing sunglasses.

Rather, I get the feeling he's part of the "Pretty Boy" faction.

It would be dangerous if he said he longed to be by my side.

Would it be indecent of me if I said I wanted to lick your feet?

[No, Fitts-senpai isn't at fault either... I was rescued.]

[To say rescued.... If you were serious at all, they might have been injured.]

It was then that I understood the reason he panicked and seemed upset when he came to help.

If I behaved violently, I would have injured the girls.

He probably considered that.

Although, in consideration of that, he still cared about me.

[However, I was suddenly surprised. So what now then?]

[A.. un. Goria-de-san also said that after the sun sets, any boy who approaches the girl's dorm is no good.]

[Is that so? But, something like that should be in the school regulations.]

[It was a mutual arrangement between fellow students who lived in the dorms.

At sunset this road isn't used by the boys, and instead the roundabout way is taken instead to the men's dorm.]

Is it called a "local rule"?

Even though I didn't know, it would have been good if someone had taught me that from the start.

For example, Zanoba...

[I didn't know about it.]

[It couldn't be helped. Just be careful from now on, okay?]

[Sure.]

It goes without saying.

Even if it's daytime, I'm sure that I won't ever take this road again.

Besides I don't need more hostile glances from any more people.

To be surrounded by those devils, well I'll be alright if the number is kept limited to the count on one hand.

The general trend of the looks women have given me is hostility.

If I think about it, I tremble.

[Anyway, I was saved. If I can ever return the favor to Fitts-senpai please do not hesitate to ask me....]

[It's fine already, I only did what was natural.]

What was natural...?

When I think, I remember all the times in the last few years where I have acquired all kinds of misunderstandings and false accusations.

Starting from Beast Race, Paul, and Orsted.

Maybe my face instills distrust?

However, Fitts-Sempai did not assume me to be a bad person.

Instead, he even stood by my side.

An even-handed position.

Though there might have been my mistake in that basis too.

Even the matter with the examination as well...

It's a nice thing.

Fitts-Senpai.

A refreshing disposition, no grudge about the examination matter.

Gave me advice in the library.

Is well known in the academy, and isn't prideful.

Properly helped before with the state of things.

Externally he's a shota, but he's a man of character.

A senpai.

That's right. I will get him to allow me to call him senpai.

Fitts-senpai, and I will put a lot of respect in it when I call him senpai.

[If it's Rudeus-kun, can you not get through it on your own power?]

[Things aren't like that, really, thank you though, senpai.]

When I bowed, Fitts-Senpai was scratching his cheek with a crunchy sound while being embarrassed.

[Ahahaha.... The way Rudeus-kun says his thanks, gives me a strange feeling.]

[Eh? Why is that?]

When I asked why, Fitts embarrassingly laughed.

[.....It's a secret.]

To me, the loser, that smile left me completely shocked.

—

Thus, my first day of school ended.

Around one week had passed.

School life is monotonous.

My day goes as follows:

When I wake up in the morning, the first thing I do is start my daily training regimen.

In accordance with this one manga I had read in my former life, a certain man did 100 push-ups, sit-ups, squats and then ran 10 kilometers a day and by sacrificing his hair, he achieved something like the world's strongest power.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to One-Punch Man. }

I came back to my room, and did a little bit of magic training as well.

Though it had been a while, I resumed creating figurines.

Because Zanoba wouldn't stop with the [Please teach me Shishou!], I began my own difficult rehabilitation.

However I am unable to progress much here.

After a short while, Zanoba comes and invites me to go eat breakfast.

The order in which students of the dormitory eat is decided by what year of schooling they are in and their social position.

That's more or less how things went.

It's a rather hectic morning.

After breakfast ends, I part from Zanoba, and head towards the library.

Doing my investigation on Metastasis has recently become interesting.

When the noon bell rings, I rendezvous with Zanoba and we eat lunch together.

He is also doing his best. The parts of his lessons he doesn't understand from class, I inquire about.

If it's something I understand, I try and explain it to the best of my ability.

It seems Zanoba only takes classes involving earth magic.

Well, I think it's fine for him to do what he likes.

By the way, I've been eating meals with Zanoba almost entirely outside.

Occasionally, I get a strange look, but no one seems to have a problem with it.

Once in a while Elinalise pops in, Zanoba doesn't ever seem to catch her considering eye, then she just suddenly leaves for somewhere else.

Her hangout is roughly the first and second floors of the dining hall.

The reason being that she cannot bring a boy inside the girl's dormitory, when the reason for why is made clear, they instead go "parking" late at night off the side of the road in the neighborhood.

{ C-Editor's note: Having sex in public parks is a social phenomenon in Japan. }

Busy by day, busy by night, what a tough person.

Incidentally, the dining hall has many different cuisines that satisfy my palate.

Usually the meal will be made with the Karaage-style Nanahoshi Grilling method, or Curry Soup, which is another different but good imitation of the Curry I once knew.

While it hasn't made it to being one of my favorite foods, I am satisfied enough just because something similar to it came out.

In the afternoon, I head for a class in the Main school building.

The lessons I learn are the foundations of divine-attack and barrier magic.

Divine-attack magic's principles are said to be particularly effective for dealing with things like Ghost-like entities or monsters that are gaseous in nature.

It's probably closest in theory to [Disturb Magic].

That's the image I have now of just throwing magic out like that.

However, just throwing magic power out will not give damage, there is some special action needed, but I don't understand what it is.

If I was perhaps a Master Exorcist in my previous life, I might have some understanding in this area.

But, since I'm just learning the theories behind it, I am going to be memorizing each chant one by one.

It seems that minor changes need to be done to the technique per-enemy basis, depending on the characteristics or type.

If I wanted to excel in divine-attack magic, it's important that I'll be able to assess my opponent.

Not a big deal since I wasn't planning to limit myself to divine-attack magic anyway.

Incidentally, it seems that a first-class swordsman can even strike down a ghost...

Barrier magic is called that because it's quite literally a magic that makes a magical barrier.

It requires fundamental usage of magical formations, and it's even possible to use it from barely the elementary level chanting.

I learned how to use [Magic Shield], it's an elementary level magic, It's something like putting up a wall of magical power in front of me to block an incoming attack.

[Magic Shield] seems to mainly intercept and reduce the damaging effects of flame and frost magic.

The magic-resistant bricks used for managing the hotel's heating were developed from a technique similar to this.

While there are magical barriers, there also appears to be physical barriers as well.

In fact, the barrier in Shirone Kingdom was made for repelling physical attacks.

I'll be learning this sooner or later, won't I?

When I ask a teacher about that, I learn that when it comes to divine-attack and barrier magic, that the Milis Religious Order seems to be the only ones who have the rights to be teaching higher level magic in those fields.

The academy is limited to only an elementary level class on the subject.

I was told I couldn't learn how to use a physical barrier here, since physical barriers were considered an intermediate level technique.

While the teacher can use it, it would be a violation if they were to teach it to others.

If it comes out that there was a violation committed, it's possible that they will be excommunicated from the Milis religion, and may face a heresy inquisition.

It seems that originally even a beginner level class on these two subjects were not allowed before, however about two years ago, provided certain conditions were followed, limited teaching was authorized.

Because of such limiting circumstances, it seems the focus of the class shifts more to the methods of how magical barriers can be broken instead.

Barrier properties are anti-physical and anti-magical, it's said that if a person is a Saint-class and above, they can combine the properties of both barriers and create one with a special trait.

Also, barriers have various purposes, such as for the sake of defending oneself and for the sake of imprisoning other things.

Roxy had spoken to me a little about barriers, back then, I didn't really understand what she meant about barriers, and I guess I more or less ended up ignoring that part.

With that being the case, I end up studying from the beginning, and it also serves as a review.

When class ends, I return to the library.

Until it gets dark, I study about metastasis.

And then when I return back to my dormitory, I eat dinner, and go to sleep after a little bit of time is spent making a figurine.

When the daily life cycle was established, flexibility in things began to appear.

However, the [Burning General of the Night] remains [Extinguished] by the town's [Freeloading Firefighter].

In other words, there are still no signs of recovery.

Then such an occurrence happened one day.

I was in the library during the evening.

There studying metastasis cases and then Fitts-senpai showed up.

Sunglasses and White hair.

He had on a stylish mantle, over the specified school uniform, sturdy boots, and tight white gloves.

Though I've met Fitts-senpai many times, I have a feeling he is always dressed in these clothes.

[Rudeus-kun, is it alright if I join you?]

[No need for formalities, now then, I warmed a place for you, please sit down and have a thaw.]

[Ahaha, sorry to trouble you...]

When I handed over the seat I was using, Fitts-senpai sat down while trying not to be embarrassed.

I pull a new seat next to him, and continue conducting my research.

[Have you made any progress in your researching?]

Fitts takes a look through what books I have at hand.

It's been a week since then.

I have come here everyday hunting documents related to metastasis.

[I have come to understand that similar cases to what happened to Fedoa Territory also have happened in the past.]

Fitts-senpai asked to hear all about what I had researched so far.

[Nothing as large scale as what happened in Fedoa Territory surely, but there are cases of someone just going out one day and disappearing, then suddenly one day they are back again. These stories seem to mostly fit that criteria.]

The so called spiriting-away.

One person suddenly disappears by themselves, they appear somewhere else, then just as suddenly they reappear back in the same place.

Things such as this are relatively frequent in this world... though it is a rare occurrence.

[So, then, you are saying what happened to Fedoa Territory is like the same thing?]

[I am wondering about that...]

Casually, I happened to look at what Fitts had in his hand, it was a book on metastasis as well.

[Perhaps, you would be willing to give me a hand with this?]

When he heard that, he shook his head.

[I don't think so. I also am just examining the metastasis event normally.]

[Oh is that so? Is there a special reason for that? Perhaps a command from Princess Ariel?]

[It's nothing like that...]

Fitts-senpai moves his hand to his jaw, and seemed to consider something for a little while, then the edges of his mouth crooked and he laughed.

He was laughing at himself.

[To tell you the truth, an acquaintance of mine also became missing because of the metastasis event.]

[That is, umm, what can I say? That's not good...]

I remembered the list of fatalities at the refugee camp.

The number of fatalities was vast.

And it's been five years since it happened.

It's already been considered too late to find any other survivors.

Surely, even an acquaintance of Fitts-senpai wouldn't be alive still.

I, who had every member of his family still alive, was immeasurably lucky.

[Actually, I recently came into the knowledge that they somehow are still alive.]

[Eh? Ah, is that so?]

[Yeah. But, up until that point I had been studying everything I could about Metastasis... Like for instance, I hoped to be able to discern a pattern where one could potentially occur in the future. I thought something like that would be easy to locate, so I searched and searched!]

Is there a trend in the appearance of the metastasis events?

Indeed, I hadn't even considered such an idea.

[As expected of senpai! How very insightful.]

[Nah, it's nothing like that... Besides, I wasn't able to come to any kind of conclusion with all that I had found in the end.]

Fitts-senpai said so, his jaw slackened, and he seemed to be looking depressed.

According to the story I heard, it was one year after the metastasis event that the Princess was overthrown.

Naturally, there may have been signs before the overthrowing, but at that time Fitts-senpai was a guard. He would have had his hands full with work.

[Sometimes it just can't be helped.]

There is a thing called a viewpoint.

To give up the search when there is no longer any more reason to keep on participating.

Rather, using the position of the guard, this school's library could be used to check matters concerning the case from different angles.

Having been found, the information gathering was being done.

With that much alone, it can be said that it was enough.

[Past aside, let's consider this matter from here on, for the time being senpai, can you tell me about what information you've manage to find in your search?]

[Sure, I'll bring you the consolidated information tomorrow... However, I don't want you to hold too many expectations. Because I don't think I was skillful at researching it, Rudeus-kun may find too many things wrong with it immediately after looking at it.]

Fitts-senpai seems to have no confidence.

Isn't he currently a 4th year student?

Is it like what I heard a few days ago: that Fitts mostly guarded Princess Ariel to and from classes, and then did whatever routine and miscellaneous duties?

Also, didn't you later say that you belonged to the student council?

And in the middle of all of that, still had time to do research on this little by little.

Not escaping from all that hectic work even with a so called reason.

He's an amazing person.

[Just let me borrow some of your time, senpai.]

Anyhow, all morning is assigned to research.

Having seen the situation, and having my previous life's knowledge, I more or less came up with a prediction.

[Umm, that is... Rudeus-kun. Can I consult with you on this matter?]

Abruptly scratching the back of his ear, Fitts-senpai cast his eyes downward and muttered a bit.

I tilt my head to the side in puzzlement.

[Isn't it alright?]

There is the matter of thanking you for helping me the other day.

I'll gladly listen to anything you have to say.

[In researching the Metastasis events, I'd like you to lend me a hand with it.]

I felt deeply grateful in hearing those words.

[No, rather you would be the one lending me a hand. I've only just started researching a few days ago, so the amount of information I've gotten so far is minimal.]

[But, I cannot give you very much time. Most likely I imagine Rudeus-kun would be doing all the research alone by himself.

Wouldn't you hate it? Someone who just takes advantage of a partner and when he comes, is likely just a nuisance?]

I would disapprove of a guy who only sometimes shows up for something like a research project and leaves it to the other person to do all the work alone.

When hearing it like that, it certainly sounds disagreeable.

Possibly, Fitts isn't one of those types who will do something in vain.

I know that I am not a very bright person.

If it's true Fitts-senpai is considered a genius, if he was to check my findings, it's possible he might be able to find something useful.

[It's not that disagreeable of a thing. I look forward to working with you.]

[Right, I also look forward to working with you.]

When I said so and shook his hand, Fitts became shy and laughed.

With his small face, and soft hand.

My heart throbs.

A male partner...

...no, couldn't be.

It might be my mind playing tricks on me.

Afterwards, when I had finished performing my share of the researching, we parted ways.

By the time we came out of the library, it was becoming dark.

On the way back to the dorms, I have a leisurely chat with Fitts.

He appears to have lots of guard work and miscellaneous duties after all, however, it seems that once every 10 days he has free time.

[Come to think of it, Rudeus-kun. I saw you at lunchtime today. It was impressive.]

Though he said lunchtime, I put on a puzzled expression.

Now what was I doing at lunchtime?

[It's actually surprising to see how that Zanoba Shirone has taken to you like a puppy.]

[...Haa]

So by lunchtime, he means the time when I was eating a meal at the impromptu café terrasse I created outside with Zanoba and was being watched by everyone.

[You might not already know this, but from the moment he enrolled here, he only ever got into fights, and was nothing but a hooligan and problem child.]

Hearing that he was nothing but a "problem child", I smiled wryly.

Even if you go and say it like that...

That makes it seem like he wasn't a victim of bullying.

You know, a person who can easily rip someone's head off might not be so easily bullied after all.

[After all, Rinia and Pursena were said to be... Misbehaving too when they were controlling the students, before they were made to be docile.]

Well, it seems that Rinia and Pursena happen to be the school bancho.

{ C-Editor's note: A bancho is the leader of a group of juvenile delinquents. }

The new student who was raging challenged them to a fight, and was defeated.

Two against one.

I won't say it was cowardly.

Then Zanoba seems to have been treated as an underling of those two.

I haven't seen much of that kind of scene though.

[Please be careful around Rinia and Pursena, since they may decide to pick a fight with you soon.]

[I get the feeling I'll be fine...]

I have already shown submission to them.

I don't need to show my face anywhere near them.

While I don't know where the delinquents gather, I rarely see them in the dining hall.

[Umm, That is... I think that they don't want to meet me again]

[And why is that?]

[During the time I was a first year, in order to mess with Ariel, they picked a fight, and I ended up defeating them.]

[The two of them against you?]

[Yes, however that is... I think they might still be holding some resentment towards me.]

Indeed.

However if that's the case, it's definitely decided that Fitts-senpai is strong.

Fitts senpai took out Rinia and Pursena's 2v1 and Zanoba lost to their 2v1.

Since I beat Fitts, does that mean I am the strongest?

No way, right?

There would be an issue of affinity.

Good affinity as to whether or not he also could use the voiceless incantation Disturb Magic now that I had used it on him.

But it could also be that it was just a surprise attack too.

[However if it's Rudeus-kun I think you'll be alright.]

[Now then, why's that?]

[Because there is no one in this school who can defeat me one-on-one. And even though I may appear this way, I had never lost until you.]

Although Fitts praises me by saying that, I would rather commend Fitts-senpai's disposition.

An undefeated person was defeated for the first time.

And to top it off he doesn't carry a grudge.

Are there no feelings of regret?

[That magic, was... called Disturb Magic? It was incredible! Teach me it next time.]

[Eh? Sure thing!]

I cheerfully consented.

If Fitts masters the Disturb Magic, it may become impossible to defeat him.

Even though I think that, I don't have the thought to decline teaching him.

[Ah, but since it's like that, take care of yourself.

Because some of those [Special Student]-types are rather eccentric...

The one called Cliff is quick to start a fight, and even Silent also caused a number of problems back when they were admitted. Furthermore, I even heard that there was a strange Elf adventurer who became a first year student. She has been attacking boys.]

Although I am not properly acquainted yet with the first two people mentioned, I am with the third person, though the meaning of "attacking" is a bit different.

[I'm the kind of person who will try and walk away if I can, instead of getting into a fight..]

While I was talking, we came to a fork in the road.

If I continue straight ahead, I will be at the women's dormitory.

Though it is not completely dark yet, I have never again had the nerve to walk down this road.

[Ah, I have errands from Ariel-sama that still need to be done.]

[Right. Thanks for your hard work today. Let's do it again sometime.]

[I don't have much time tomorrow, but I'll try and drop in at the library anyway.]

Fitts said that as he started walking towards the woman's dorm.

Free to come from and go to that garden of women... I don't really feel jealous,

Maybe it's because I still have the memories of Muscle-bomber-san from the other day.

...Or else.

Just maybe.

Is putting my trust in Fitts-senpai who can enter that garden of women the key to the ultimate reason I have entered this school for?

As of yet, I still cannot see the intention of Hitogami's advice.

It has been decided that I will cooperate with Fitts-senpai in the matter of the metastasis research.

I think that he has become friendlier toward me.

Though I feel that it is something a bit more than just "Friendly".

I was glad that I was still able to build good relations with him.

He seems to be very mysterious.

[If I might ask, why does Senpai wear sunglasses?]

[Sunglasses...ah, you mean these glasses?]

Fitts-senpai has never taken off those sunglasses.

Certainly, never, however when do they come off?

[Well, there is a certain reason for it, however I cannot say what it is, I'm sorry.]

[It's fine.]

There was a certain part of his real face I wanted to see.

However, I didn't want there to be any ill feeling of me trying to forcibly see what he had a reason to hide.

[So, what floor of the dormitory does senpai live on?

I have never seen you there when it's time to eat.]

[Well, for the time being, when it comes to staying at the women's dormitory, I am there only as a guard to Ariel-sama.]

So, does a problem never happen then?

However I remembered that if permission is received, one can bring a slave into the dormitory.

Though not a slave, because of matters of Royalty and Nobility, there is a little flexibility that can be requested.

There is a Noble with a maid in the boy's dormitory after all.

And naturally, it's because if the maid or servant causes a problem, the responsibility falls to the master.

Though Fitts-senpai handles the students, Ariel however has her charisma and the Asura Royal Family's power.

In addition, there is also the matter that Fitts-senpai himself is said to be trusted.

It was the girl named Goria-de-san... or was it Big Bang Vader -san, who also acknowledged Fitts-senpai's capability.

And, according to Elinalise's gossip, it seems that Fitts-senpai seems to be considerably popular among the girls.

The calls Luke gets of Kya~kya~ make him seem like a new guy trying to be trendy. When it comes to the Master, Fitts's listless face causes my heart to become completely twisted up.

Though when I talk to him, I get the feeling that he's not listless at all.

However I know what I want to say to him.

[Come to think of it, Senpai talks rather normally with me.]

[...?]

[I've heard you are a really reticent person though.]

[I, that is... I am really quite shy of people.]

Comparatively, I felt that he spoke to me as if he was myself.

Despite not being connected, could you call it 'being on the same wavelength'?

Anyway, as far as when it comes to common knowledge of the school, it's that Fitts says surprisingly next to nothing.

Coupled with the fact he can use voiceless incantation, he was given the name Fitts of the [Silence].

Or the [Silent Magician].

[Fitts-senpai's family name isn't "Raibakku" by any chance is it?]

{ C-Editor's note: Casey Ryback was the fictional action hero in the Under Siege movies. }

[Eh? "Raibakku"... I think maybe the 2nd Generation North God has a name similar to that maybe? Perhaps it's different. Anyway I don't carry such a thing as a family name, since I am not a noble.]

[You're kidding! You wouldn't happen to consider cooking as one of your strong points?]

[Umm, I am able to cook... but what's that got to do with a family name...?]

My joke wasn't caught.

However was something funny? Fitts-senpai seemed to chuckle.

A man of many mysteries, Fitts-senpai.

Even why he is cooperative with me is a mystery.

But I have no particular plans to expose those mysteries.

The person in question is also clearly intending to keep it hidden.

And if that's the intention, then there is a reason for it.

To help the person hiding it, to expose it forcibly, I would never do such an ungrateful action.

Of course, it would be a lie to say I am not interested.

However, there is also Hitogami's advice.

And moving in accordance to Hitogami's advice, I have met Fitts-senpai.

From experience up until now, whenever I do something pertaining to Hitogami's advice, it seems to always affect some greater conclusion to an extent.

In other words, as long as I stay close to Fitts-senpai, a clue pertaining to my medical treatment will eventually be within reach.

I need not be in a hurry.

So I thought.

Mushoku Tensei: Isekai Ittara Honki Dasu - Volume 8

Zanoba Shirone. The third prince of the Shirone Kingdom. A miko who possessed superhuman strength from birth.

He's a deviant. Undeniably a deviant. You could perhaps say that he's a figurine otaku taken to the extreme. Before he had noticed, he was gazing at dolls everyday. When he feels like it, he'll gently pat the dolls.

He'll never treat a doll roughly. Though he'll be unable to suppress his superhuman strength when he gets excited, he'll never make a mistake in handling the dolls.

He might be in love with dolls.

Love.

Right, he loves dolls. He dotes on them.

For example, in his room is a copper statue of a naked woman. I hear that he had caught sight of it in town, and bought it on impulse.

It's the naked figure of a slim, but bewitching girl.

When I had first looked for Zanoba's room, he was hugging that statue in the nude. It was my fault for trying to surprise him by entering without knocking. There's no doubt that I was in the wrong, but when Zanoba saw me he flusteredly put on clothes, and bowed his head in an unsightly manner.

I'm fine even if he doesn't go out of his way to explain what he was doing hugging it naked.

His love for dolls is abnormal. It still snows occasionally, up here in the north. It's cold outside, and it goes without saying how cold a statue would be. Though on the verge of getting frostbite, he was satisfying his desires. It was devotion to a level that no one else could imitate.

However, it's not abnormal to an extent that I can't understand it. In my past life, I had "used" figurines as well, after all. However, I've never used the Holy Statue (Roxy Figurine) for that. It's something unacceptable after all.

...Speaking of which, I didn't see a Roxy doll in Zanoba's room. Did he perhaps leave it in Shirone?

That Zanoba, on a certain day...

He suddenly performed a dogeza in front of me. It was something that happened at night. In my hand was the figurine I was making.

"Shishou, please teach me how to create dolls(figurines)!"

Over this past month, I've been continuing to tell Zanoba to wait a little longer. Though he had been patiently "waiting" like a pet dog, it seems that he finally reached his limits.

"Did we not make a promise!? Why have we not began our lessons yet!?"

Zanoba was a little angry. Of course I had no reason to refuse. I had promised him after all. For the sake of teaching him I had been practising to rehabilitate my skills. There was also the fact that my everyday life hadn't calmed down yet, that I was still far away from achieving my ultimate goal, and that I hadn't found a chance to teach him yet.

"...My dear Zanoba. This training of mine will be harsh, you know."

I had deliberately spoken rather affectedly, and Zanoba was taken aback. He then nodded solemnly.

"Of course. Shishou, please do not underestimate me. Even if I have to vomit blood, I'll learn the heart of Shishou's doll creation method."

"Mmmn. You have spirit."

And like that, I began to teach Zanoba my doll creation methods.

Using the time before bed, I'd teach him about 1~2 hours a day.

I had my own motives as well. His love towards dolls was the real thing. Additionally, he was royalty; he was rich.

I had given up on colouring the dolls, and on my dreams of mass producing dolls, but it might be possible with his influence.

First, I'd mass produce Roxy dolls. In the past I had created it as an unique item, but the art of creating bronze statues as well as the art of creating western styled dolls existed in this world. Even if the craftsmanship quality falls, appropriating these two techniques should allow me to mass produce them.

After that would be Ruijerd dolls. Using the real history as a basis, I would write books that glorified the Superd clan. It'd be filled with battle scenes that the people of this world love so much, and in contrast to the depictions of famous heroes, it'd be about a man who never gave up and the suffering and conflicts that he faced as he endeavoured. It would come with a figurine.

The figurine would come with the book as a gift. After all, it makes a big difference to show the protagonist visually. If this turned out to be a success, it might be nice to produce books that depicted Roxy and her glorious exploits next.

Alright, we can do it. Though it might be impossible on my own, no matter what they may say about him, Zanoba is still royalty. He's rich. He's got passion as well. As a partner for this enterprise, there'd surely be no one better.

There's a saying about counting chickens before they've hatched. It was surely a fitting description for me at the time.

"Well then, I'll teach you my secret techniques!"

"Yes! Shishou!"

Our doll creating was just beginning.

Let's just start with the conclusion.

He couldn't do it. Zanoba couldn't use voiceless earth magic to create dolls.

There were two reasons. First there was the fact that he couldn't control chantless magic. Second of all, there was the fact that he lacked my overwhelming mana capacity.

Thinking about it, there are hardly any people in this world who can use chantless magic. Among the people I've met, there were only Orsted, Fitts and Sylphy. In this school there was one more; a teacher who could use voiceless wind magic. However, I was told that he died last year. Since I had been able to use it since childhood, it had never really occurred to me but chantless magic was a high level technique. Thinking back on it, Eris and Ghyslaine weren't able to learn chantless magic either. Since it was like that, there was no way a person who just started learning magic like Zanoba would be able to use it.

Moreover, the issue of mana capacity is an important one. When I create figurines, my mana is consumed continuously. I use up a considerable amount of mana to produce them.

It was then that I understood it for the first time. It seems that somehow or other, the amount of mana I have is far greater than others. No, strictly speaking I had vaguely noticed it. I thought that I had more than the average. However, I hadn't thought that it'd be so far above the average. When I was an adventurer and I had seen magicians who ran out of mana, I would think something like "they've been wasting their mana on useless things". To express things numerically, if we said that a normal magician had 100 mana points, I had thought that I was around 500 or so. However, the reality is that it seems I have much, much more than that. To think that Zanoba couldn't produce even a single doll part.

Well, leaving me aside for now, Zanoba put in great effort.

Waking up early, he'd use up his mana until he fainted, then when he woke up, he'd use up his mana until he fainted. He repeated this all day long. It might be because he'd continued to use his mana until he reached his limits, but his cheeks were thinning and starting to sag a little. His face was like a skeleton, and was wet with tears and mucus. He didn't have talent in the thing he wanted to do most. That much was obvious.

I've done something quite cruel to him. I reflected on it. Doing so, I apologised.

"I'm sorry."

Zanoba shook his head and replied without any power.

"No, if I was more talented..."

The figure of a man stricken with grief. The figure of a loser, surrounded by a shroud of sorrow. It wouldn't be good to give up here.

I think about things.

It really is quite pitiful that Zanoba can't even manage the first step in creating figurines. Even so, it can't be helped since chantless magic is impossible for him. Since he lacks in mana as well, it's probably impossible for him to create figurines using the same method that I do.

"Alright. Let's change the creation method."

I spontaneously reach such a conclusion.

"There's another way of doing it!?"

The grieving Zanoba suddenly recovered, and now leans in towards me.

"Yeah. Let's try a method that uses mana as little as possible."

Saying this, I create a lump of earth. It's clay.

"Though I used magic to create this, you should probably be able to find this naturally in the wild."

Just where do people get clay? I hear that famous potters like to seclude themselves in the mountains, but the mountains and forests in this world are dangerous. Although, those golem things seem to be made of something like clay, and you can probably obtain clay even without having to dig up the earth yourself.

"What are you going to do with that?"

"I'm going to carve it."

Carving.

It's the oldest method, the most reliable method, but also the most difficult method.

I'll create the figurine parts one by one by carving the clay. If I do things like this, it should be possible to create figurines even without using mana. There's the problem of lacking the appropriate carving tools, but we can probably work it out by looking for a magic item in town. In the past, I've seen things like knives that can cut through stone like butter.

"I see, Shishou! With this method, even I should be able to do it!" said Zanoba in a cheerful voice.

His expression was filled with hope.

His hope was very simply crushed.

Zanoba couldn't use his fingers skilfully. The cause was an ability he possessed since birth.

Superhuman strength.

Indeed, he was hindered by that superhuman strength. He could keep it in check enough that he didn't destroy everything. However, that was as far as he could control it. It was difficult to perform the delicate work required to carve the parts.

Zanoba persevered each day with bloodshot eyes. His passion was the real thing.

Without even a wink of sleep, he immersed himself in doll creation until he almost starved himself to death. Because it hadn't gone the way he had wanted, he redid things again and again. Each time he would cry, shout and let out strange noises.

And then it would be finished; the doll that he had created from scratch.

It couldn't be called beautiful by any means. The workmanship was bad, and had it been in my previous life, I might have laughed at it in scorn. It was like the badly done joke photoshops that you could find in abundance on the internet. However, I knew. I knew that this was his passion. I'd never laugh at him. However, even without me laughing, Zanoba himself could tell that it was badly done.

"Shishou, I can't do it... I... can't do it the way Shishou does it!"

Zanoba cried. Unable to create what he saw in his mind, he cried. Stricken with grief, he seemed like he had no energy left to stand.

From the beginning of our lessons to the end was 2 months. Even seeing Zanoba's depressed and worn out expression, there was nothing I could do.

"And that's how it is."

I had consulted Fitts-senpai. Asking someone else for advice about my student; I was truly shameful as a shishou. However, I still wanted to rely on someone else's wisdom. Zanoba was too pitiful after all.

"Making dolls?"

Fitts-senpai couldn't really understand. While sitting on some chairs that were lined up inside the library, he listened to my story and then tilted his head in puzzlement.

"Yes. That's basically how it is."

Using earth magic, I create a simple doll to show him. It was a simple doll without any clothing, and was a bit like a Sarubobo.

{ C-Editor's note: Sarubobos are red human-shaped dolls, with no facial features, made in a variety of sizes. }

"A-, amazing..."

Fitts-senpai stared at my hands, and looked fixedly at the doll I had finished making. Then as though wondering if he could do it as well, he gathers mana into his fingertips and creates a wiggly something or other that was a bit like slime. Considering that he had just tried to copy me on the spot, he really was amazing.

However, it seems that it didn't turn out the way he wanted. In the end Fitts-senpai sighed and gave up.

"I can't do it."

Well, creating figurines is something that I've been diligently practising for a long time now, and is an accumulation of the techniques that I've studied. If it was something that could be easily imitated just by looking, I'd cry. Nevertheless, it feels to me that if Fitts-senpai practised, he'd be able to do it. In the first place, he's someone who can use chantless magic.

"This is something that a normal person can't imitate."

"That's true. I had thought that another method involving carving from a lump of clay would work out, but..."

"Since he was clumsy with his hands, he couldn't do it, you said."

Fitts-senpai let out a 'Mmmmm' and was thinking about it with his hand to his chin. It seems to be a habit of his to bring his hand to his chin when he thinks. It might be because of the sunglasses, but it looks awfully uncomfortable. Incidentally, when he's awkward or embarrassed, he'll scratch his cheek or behind his ears. It's an action that's quite suiting of his age, and suits him really well. However, since elves are long-lived, he might not be as young as he seems.

"Mmmm, let's see. I'm not sure if you'll be able to use them as a reference, but there are people like him in the Asura capital as well."

"People like him?"

"Mmn. People who have things they want to do themselves, but lack the ability or skill."

"What do these people do?"

When I asked that, Fitts-senpai seemed a little reluctant to answer and scratched himself behind the ear.

"Ummm, well, they get slaves to do it."

"Hohh."

{ C-Editor's note: "Hohh" meaning "I see", "hmmm", or "Really now?" }

According to Fitts-senpai, those people in the capital had the knowledge, but lacked the skill. That's why they would buy slaves, train those slaves, and had the slaves create what they wanted.

"According to what I've heard, that Zanoba-kun likes the dolls that you make, Rudeus-kun, and because he wants more of them, he wants to create them himself, right?"

"...Huh? Was that what I said?"

"Umm, that's how it sounded to me?"

Is that so? But still, normally even if you liked figurines, you'd just paint them yourself or remodel them; you wouldn't think to create them from scratch yourself. When I was alive, at best I was an average remodeller.

"I'm sure that Zanoba-kun wanted you as his personal doll-maker, Rudeus-kun, but he himself knew that it'd be impossible and so that might be why he said something like becoming your student, right?"

"Well, I don't think it'd be impossible though."

Employed by Zanoba in the Shirone Royal Palace, and spending each day making figurines. In the end, a lifestyle like that might not be bad. Working for a royal palace would probably mean a stable income. Speaking of which, how much does Fitts-senpai get from Princess Ariel each month?

...It feels like it'd be rude to ask, huh?

"Well, I'll try suggesting it to Zanoba once. Thank you very much."

"Mn, you're very welcome."

When I bowed, Fitts-senpai smiled bashfully. Why is it that I feel so startled when I see that smiling face of his?

It's a mystery.

The mysterious man, Fitts. Truly a mystery.

Buy a slave, teach them, and they'll be able to create dolls. When I told Zanoba about this idea, he agreed.

As I expected, he began making arrangements to buy a slave with great joy.

It seems that he had originally wanted to create them himself. However, it seems that he realised that since it was impossible, there was no choice but to give up on it. Unexpectedly, the method that Fitts-senpai had suggested was typical for this world. Be that as it may, for a student to ask their shishou to teach a slave instead of themselves was quite rude it seems. After all, in the beginning Zanoba tried to learn it until he was vomiting blood. That's why although he couldn't bring up the topic, when I suggested it instead, he was relieved.

"And so our next monthly break, we'll be going to the slave market."

Once again, I expressed my thanks to Fitts-senpai. As someone who gave me advice when I was troubled, I really was thankful to him.

"I see. It'd be good if you found a good slave."

And like that, the topic came to a close. Though it had come to a close, afterwards Fitts-senpai was a little fidgety. What to say?

"Speaking of which, I'm free as well next monthly-break."

"Is that so?"

"Mn. And so, umm, I don't have anything to do, and I was thinking to visit the town, but it's not like there's anywhere I wanted to go in particular... I don't have any friends, so I'd be going by myself..."

From his fragmented speech, and his occasional glances towards me, he conveyed what he meant.

Is this okay for a guard?

Wouldn't it be bad if he wasn't near the princess when something happened?

...Well, that's not for me to worry about.

I'm sure Luke would be able to deal with it somehow.

"Umm, would you like to come with us, senpai?"

"Is that okay? Wouldn't I bother you?"

"It's fine. As thanks for your advice, I'll treat you to a meal."

"Really? Then I'll accept."

Saying that, Fitts-senpai smiled bashfully.

——

Like that, the plan was for the three of us to go to the slave market.

I had originally thought to make the subheading one of the following:

"Rudeus vs Zanoba"

"Shishou's Mana Capacity Is the Greatest in the Wooooooooooooooorld!"

"A Flower in Each Hand!? Heart-Throbbing Shopping with Prince Super-Strength and Prince Bashful!"

but I decided against it.

"It's nice to meet you. I'm... Fitts."

When Fitts met Zanoba, he was a little nervous. If he's a senpai, then he should act more like one. More grand and dignified... or so I was thinking, but the thing about him being shy around strangers might really be the case. Zanoba steps forward with a jerk.

"Third prince of the Shirone Kingdom, Zanoba Shironnoaaa!"

Zanoba was getting cocky, so I kick him behind the knees. He topples a little. It's not like I have plans to reinforce the pecking order. It's just that it'd probably be best to be a little more humble when meeting a senior for the first time.

"Zanoba, the one who came up with our current plan was Fitts-senpai. Pay him your respects properly."

When I said this, Zanoba bent at the hips and greeted him.

"I understand, Shishou... I do not believe I have had the pleasure of meeting you before. I am Shirone Kingdom's Third Prince, Zanoba Shirone. Pleased to make your acquaintance."

"N-, no, it's all go-, fine. Because you're a person of royalty, please stop with that."

While waving his arms in a fluster, Fitts-senpai took his place behind me. Seeing that, Zanoba stared in wonder. There was quite an astonishing gap between his appearance, the rumours about him, and his current speech and conduct.

Despite being a magician of voiceless incantation, and being called Silent Fitts, he was acting afraid like this. Despite wearing sunglasses, and looking a little... once you spoke to him, he was quite typical of his age. He's a good senpai who looks after his kouhai.

"Well then, now that we've all met, let's go."

At my command, the two begin to walk.

The slave market is in the Commerce Street.

The slave trading business was just barely scraping along on the Milis continent and in the southern parts of the Central Continent. However, it's different here in the north.

Here, the slave trade is perfectly legalized in most countries, and is endorsed. To the countries in the northern parts of the Central Continent, the slave trade is an important business. They're reliant on it to the point where the countries wouldn't be able to survive without it.

There are a variety of reasons for a person to become a slave.

Those who are orphaned in a war.

Those who are up to their ears in debt due to bad harvests, and so sell their children.

Those who sell themselves off to save their family.

It's also rumored that in the dark side of the Thieves Guild, there's something like a slave farm.

The Ranoa Kingdom that is included in the 『Magic Triumvirate』 would survive even without slaves. However, heading further east are a great number of poor villages that have to sell children at fixed intervals.

Those slaves are bought by warrior and mercenary groups or countries and used as disposable soldiers in warfare.

However, there are those in the business that are connected with the Kingdom of Asura. Slaves that are beautiful or have a lot of ability are brought to the Kingdom of Asura to sell. The Kingdom of Asura is a place that doesn't know poverty. Though there are those who live in destitution, there's nobody who suffers from starvation. Slaves who are brought there are basically winners. I honestly think that you've lost the moment you become a slave though.

Also, because the slaves here in the north are excellent and robust, there are those who come all the way here to make their purchases. There are many looking to buy people.

"So it's this place, huh?"

In fact, I'd gathered information at the Adventurers Guild beforehand.

In a district as big as this, there are numerous slave markets. This particular district has 5 of them,

Though there are 5, they range in quality. For example, I was told about one of them "absolutely never buy from there". I was told that in a slave market with low credibility, there are slaves who are diseased or dying that people try to pawn off to others with a straight face. Well, I also heard that you could occasionally find a bargain there, but since we're all beginners we'd all have no way to tell the difference.

Because we're new to this, we head to a better slave market.

"Hmm, it's quite different to my homeland."

Zanoba nodded in interest.

The slave market looked just like a normal building at a glance. Made of stone and earth, it was a typical building for these parts. Judging by the standards of this world, this building was on the large side. There were three of them in a row. Written above the door that served as the entrance was 『Rium Company – Slave Trade Centre』.

There were fires burning at the entrance, and standing around were men who wore leather armour over winter clothing. They were unshaven, but didn't give a particularly bad feeling. ...I've spent 2 years as an adventurer though, so it might be that I've become used to this kind of appearance. I probably would've thought different about them in the past.

"The slave market isn't outside huh..."

Fitts-senpai's voice sounded surprised. In the north, there are many slave markets that are held indoors. The reason is simple.

"Shall we enter?"

When we enter, a waft of hot air surrounds our bodies. There are fires throughout the inside of the building.

And on top of the countless daises are naked slaves lined up in a row. The reason they don't do it outside is basically because it's cold. The slaves would catch colds.

However, because indoor markets would lose passing customers, there are those who still do it outside.

"Hmm, there are a lot of different sales places, aren't there? Shishou, what should we do?"

"Since it's my first time buying as well, first let's look around as appropriate."

We start to walk around without much of a plan. The 8 slave stands are merchants associated with the Rium Company. Gathered around each place are possibly those who are selling slaves they've bought.

They probably alternate when they've sold out, or it might be something like switching over after their designated timeslot has passed.

It's quite a successful business, and there are crowds of people around each of the stands. Their outfits are quite varied; there are those like me who are dressed like adventurers, those who like Fitts-senpai and Zanoba are dressed like nobles, as well as those dressed like merchants, townspeople, commoners and students. Among them are merchants whose aim seems to be the resale of slaves. Further away from the stalls are those who have just purchased their slaves and are having a chat with each other.

Could the seedy looking ones be pickpockets? No, pickpockets wouldn't come to a guarded place like this. They might be slaves who are sent by their masters to purchase other slaves.

Nonetheless, I clutch onto the coin purse under my robes. This time I've been entrusted with the funds. It wouldn't be a joke if they were stolen.

"U-, uwah, uwah... They're really all naked..."

Seeing the slave stalls, Fitts-senpai's eyes are staring in surprise. His face is bright red. Because he's wearing a mantle I can't really tell, but he seems to be bashfully standing pidgeon-toed.

"T-, they're big, huh...? To become like that..."

Following his line of sight, I find that he was looking at some slaves who seemed like warriors, being introduced as featured goods. Whether man or woman, every one of them was well built. In particular, the female warrior in the middle was good. She was big. It goes without saying that her stature was big, but her bulging chest was something that made you look on with longing. Though it seems that goods as big as those would get in the way of battle, as I understand from Eris, in this world even if they're huge, there's not really a problem.

"Senpai, is this your first time at a slave market?"

"Eh? Ah, mmn..."

While scratching behind his ear, one of Fitts-senpai's hands was already holding his mantle in front in embarassment. He was probably worried about the position of his thing. Truly the reaction of a DT. I was like that as well, once. Now? Well, look, right now my motive is a little different.

"Y-you sure are used to it huh, Rudeus-kun?"

Though Fitts-senpai was my senpai, it seems that he still hasn't had any experience. When I think about it like that, I feel like boasting about my victory a bit, but I've only done it once too, and my partner ran away from me. It's not something I can be proud about. Still, with just that as experience, I really am a little calmer about these things. It's a problem now that I'm too calm, though!

"I think once you've had some experience as well, senpai, you'll more or less grow used to it."

"Y-, you think? Wait, so you've had some experience, Rudeus-kun..."

Fitts-senpai seems a little down. He really is young, huh? Truly young.

"Shishou, we have no need for warriors, so what we should be looking for is a race that can use magic and is good with their hands, right?"

As if to say he had no interest in these things, Zanoba jerked his chin in another direction. It seems that he essentially doesn't have interest in women. Technically he is a widower, so it might not be that he has no interest in sex at all.

"If it's a race that's good with their hands, I guess it has to be dwarves, right?"

"It seems so. A dwarf who can use earth magic would probably be best. Although I don't really think there's a need to fuss over the race."

Saying that, I have a look around one of the stands. Though it's a slave market as big as this, the number of dwarf slaves is few. The majority of the slaves are those with combat ability, and there are almost no slaves who would seem to be suitable for crafting.

"Umm, Rudeus-kun. If you were to teach them magic, then I think a young child who can't use magic would be better."

Fitts-senpai gives some advice.

"Why?"

"Chantless magic is something that you can learn easily as a child."

"Ah, is that how it is?"

"Mn. I think that after you become 10, you basically can't learn it."

Is that how it is? But thinking about it, though Sylphy could do it, Eris couldn't. Could there be a relationship with age?

"Is there a relationship with one's age?"

"Mn. From my experience, my master's words, and the words of the teachers at school, I've concluded that I shouldn't be wrong but... Ah, also, if you start using magic from when you're about 5, your mana capacity increases tremendously. If you want them to create dolls using your method, Rudeus-kun, it'd be better to have greater mana capacity, right?"

If you start using magic from when you're about 5, your mana capacity increases tremendously. I had come up with a similar hypothesis in the past, but this is the first time hearing it from someone else.

"I've heard that your mana capacity is determined at birth, but..."

"That's wrong. It certainly says that in the textbook, but because you can't increase it past the age of 10, I think they're probably misunderstanding."

I see. So if you start using magic from when you're about 5, your mana capacity increases tremendously huh? Since I've been using magic since 2 or 3 and my mana capacity is large, it's something that I can assent to. Also, since Fitts-senpai said he had personal experience, he's probably concealing a considerable amount of mana as well.

"Fitts-senpai has been using magic since young as well, huh?"

"Mn. That's... In the past, I was saved by my master, and at that time I begged them to teach me."

"Hehh."

Perhaps he was attacked by some monster in the forest. No, since he was young, the chance that it was a kidnapping is high. In this world there's quite a kidnapping boom going on. Since senpai would probably be a bishounen if he took off those sunglasses, I can understand that kidnappers would aim for him.

"That master of yours can also use chantless magic?"

"Mn. They're an amazing person, you know. I respect them even now."

"Is that so? In that case I'd really like to meet them one day."

A person who can use chantless magic. If I met him, my magic might be able to improve a little. At any rate, I'd probably benefit somehow... or so I was thinking, but Fitts-senpai smiled bitterly.

"Umm, that's probably impossible..."

"I see. So they're someone quite important after all, huh?"

Fitts is a guard to the princess after all. His master might be a court magician or something. For example, by luck a court magician saved him, and then using that connection became that magician's disciple. He then grew up, and became the

princess' guard. It might be something like that. If they're a court magician of the Kingdom of Asura, then they should probably be able to use chantless magic at least.

"An important person... they're not really, umm, they're someone from the Fedoa region."

"Ahhh..."

They were wrapped up in the teleportation huh? In that case, their whereabouts would be unknown.

"That's um... It'd be good if they were alive."

"They are alive. I've already found them after all."

Speaking of which, he did mention that he was studying the teleportation incident because he was looking for an acquaintance. Wait, if he found them recently then...

"Huh? Then why can't I meet them?

"Huhu... It's a secret."

Fitts-senpai laughed bashfully.

...Why is it that when I see that smile, my heart starts to throb like this?

Though I can love traps when they're 2d, I was sure that I wasn't a homo but...

Perhaps it's just that kind of drastic measure.

Following Fitts-senpai's advice, we search for a slave.

A slave that's about 5 (if they're younger than that, there's a good chance they wouldn't understand us),

a dwarf (it's better that they're dexterous so that if it comes down to it, they'll be able to use the carving method), and a cute little girl (my personal preference).

"A girl? Their gender doesn't matter to me, but Shishou, aren't you getting our objectives mixed up?"

"Rudeus-kun..."

As we piled up the criteria one by one, once we got to the final criterion, they looked at me with eyes of criticism.

"Huuhhh?"

Since we were all guys here, I had thought that they'd have been on-board instead, but... Well, it seems like they aren't the type. If it was Elinalise, then she might have approved. If it was her, she might be suggesting we find cute little boys instead. Lately her interest in shota has been awakening after all.

"But still, if we buy a 5 year old then we shouldn't expect too much regarding education. They might not even understand our words. If it turns out that they can only speak the Beast God Language, then we wouldn't be able to teach them magic after all."

"I can speak the Beast God Language, so if that's the case then I can teach them."

"What! You can speak the Beast God Language, Shishou? As expected of you..."

"Huu, well that's how it is."

At Zanoba's praise, I start to feel proud and I hold out my chest. Though I look like this, I'm multilingual.

I've also taught a 5 year old before. Speaking of which, I wonder if Sylphy is doing well.

Even without seeing Elinalise and Fitts-senpai, you could say that elves are really to my taste, or that they had the type of face that Japanese of the fantasy generation preferred. Elves brought to mind something like a slim and beautiful man and woman pair. If I remember correctly, Sylphy was roughly my age, so she might be 15 right now. She's probably become considerably beautiful. According to Paul, she could use magic, and on top of that, she has green hair. Since I'd probably hear rumours of her right away, I'd probably be able to find her immediately. I haven't heard a single rumour though... I wonder where she is right now.

"Anyway, since we've already decided on the criteria, let's go ask a sales assistant."

I head to place where 『Help Office』 is written. The man at the reception had a completely clean-shaven head, and when combined with his beard, was quite a macho man. Though he looked at Fitts-senpai and I with suspicious looks, when he saw Zanoba he accepted it and nodded.

"Um, excuse me, we're actually..."

The macho man ignored my words, and spoke to Zanoba who was behind me.

"Yo, welcome Onii-san. What is it that you're looking for? A warrior for a guard? Right now we have guys that can teach the sword as well, you know. We also have some magicians, but it'd probably be better to head to the Magic University for that. Or could it be that you're looking for THOSE? No, no, I shouldn't say it. You don't seem all that popular after all. We've got a real voluptuous one in her 20s you know. She was recently a whore so THAT would be perfect as well. Of course they aren't diseaAGAAAAAH!"

The macho man then ate Zanoba's Iron Claw, and was raised into the air.

"Don't ignore Shishou. Yakking on and on like that, I'll pull out that noisy tongue of yours and rip off your jaw, you know."

"H-, hey! What are you doing!?"

The guards around had immediately moved to capture Zanoba, but he was undisturbed. Conversely, with just a shake he sent them flying. Mmn well, he's quite high powered.

The muscular guards are being swung around by a skinny otaku-looking guy. It's surreal. So this is the power of a miko, huh? Oops, this isn't the time to be standing here watching.

"NO! Zanoba, stop this! HOUSE!"

"Yes!"

At my voice, Zanoba released his grip. In the face of the suddenly motionless Zanoba, the guards stop moving as well. I face the guards and bow my head.

"I'm truly sorry. He just got a little excited."

"No, it's fine... Just don't act too violently, alright? We'll draw our swords the next time."

They easily let us off. Though there was a little fear in their eyes, they decided that they hadn't seen anything this time. It wouldn't be good even if they poked their noses in further.

What surprised me was that the moment Zanoba was caught, Fitts-senpai had prepared his stance before I did. It was an extremely fast and decisive movement. As expected of the princess' guard. You could also say that I was just cowardly though. Anyway, it seems that there isn't anyone particularly vigilant here, uh? After all, using adventurer terms, the guards around here were only C rank, or at best B rank. Well whatever. I'll continue speaking to him.

"We're looking for a dwarf around the age of 5."

I speak to the macho man again.

"Around 5...?"

While cowering, he looked over the list in his hand. Flipping through the pages, he squints his eyes.

"There aren't many dwarves in the first place here and on top of that a 5 year old..."

So the criteria really were too strict? The dwarves basically live on the Milis Continent after all. Even with all the kidnapping going on, the dwarf slaves basically don't end up here.

"As long as it's a race that's good with crafting, even if they aren't a dwarf it won't be a problem. We definitely wouldn't complain if they were young though..."

"Oh, there is one."

The man tapped a part of the list with his finger.

"A dwarf girl of 6 years old. Because of her parent's debts, the whole family were sold into slavery. Her health is a little on the bad side though. It might be because of malnutrition. Well, she'll probably be back to normal if you feed her. She can't speak the Human Language, and though it's natural for a 6 year old, she can't read either."

"I see. What happened to her parents?"

"Both her parents have been sold."

It's something I heard in a tavern during my days as an adventurer, but amongst the dwarves exist a social class who believe that they can live with nothing but the mountains. It'd be fine to leave the Milis Continent and work in the Dragon King Mountain Range, but occasionally there'd be idiots who guessed wrong and headed too far north, and without re-entering the mountains were unable to make a living. They'd even get their families wrapped up; truly useless fathers.

"For now, let's just meet them."

At the macho man's call, after a while a single merchant appears.

He's a man with dark skin. It's not just suntan. He's probably from the Begaritto Continent, or one of his parents was from the Begaritto Continent. He's a little fat and drenched in sweat. Though there's a cloth hung over his shoulder for wiping up the sweat, that cloth too is soaked. Though the smell of sweat wafts about, this marketplace is hot so it can't be helped. I had already taken off my robe as well, and Zanoba undid his mantle as well. Fitts-senpai is dressed as usual with a nonchalant look.

His face is red though.

For a different reason.

"Hello. I'm the branch manager of one of the Rium Firm's associate firms, the Domehni firm, Fe'Burrito."

The merchant names himself. He turns to Zanoba and extends his hand. Zanoba was reaching his hand towards the merchant's face, so I took his hand instead.

"Hello. I'm Rudeus of the Quagmire."

I give that name a go, and for an instant looks at me puzzled, but immediately smiles broadly.

"Ohhh, so you were Quagmire! I've heard about you. Just before winter, you killed a stray dragon."

"I was just lucky; the dragon was weakened you see."

The name of the A ranked adventurer, Rudeus of the Quagmire is known in these parts as well, somehow. The efforts I put into spreading my name weren't just for show.

"Today I'm looking for a dwarf but..."

Fe'Burrito glances at Zanoba and Fitts-senpai.

"Right. These two are contributing to the funds. We're looking for a child so that we can teach them crafting from a young age."

I tried saying something appropriate. It wasn't a lie.

"I see, so it was something like that... Though it isn't a good one that I'd really recommend... Anyway, please just have a look. It's this way."

We listen to Fe'Burrito and from the other side of the market, move into the neighbouring building. We're heading to a slave storehouse. Though I say a storehouse, there are iron bars attached to pulleys lined up in a row, and inside those are slaves. The inside of the bars are about a tatami mat in size and all have one or two slaves inside. Before they're brought to the marketplace, they're washed and covered in oil, but right now they stink. The slaves inside are crying children, and glaring slaves who send killing intent our way.

Inside the warehouse are a number of people like us who are directly trading.

Fe'Burrito walks between the barred cages. He then calls for a man standing to the side. It's probably a subordinate.

We head further in. We stop in front of one of the cages.

Inside the cage is a girl with empty eyes, sitting with her knees huddled up.

"It's this one. ...Oi, bring em out."

"'Right."

Fe'Burrito's subordinate nods, and opening the cage, pulls the child out of the cage. The child is shackled with an iron collar. A rag is concealing the flaws in her skin and bones body. Her hair is something like a reddish orange. It's unkempt and has some white hairs mixed in. Her complexion is also bad.

She was hugging herself and shivering. It might be because we're further into the storehouse, but it's a little cold. The eyes she's looking at us with are completely empty. She looks truly pitiful.

Fe'Burrito's subordinate pays this no heed, and unhesitatingly removes the rag from the girl. Her skinny body, like a child who misses meals, is completely revealed. Seeing this, Fitts-senpai frowns.

"Rudeus-kun..."

Be at ease. Even I have no intention of creating Pulitzer prize winning photographs.

Wanting to quickly buy her, feed her, and give her a warm bath; I'm filled with these kinds of feelings. However, I'm a bit worried about her eyes. Those empty eyes. I've seen eyes like those before.

"As you can see, it's a dwarf child. 6 years old. Possesses no skills in particular. Both parents are dwarves. Father was a blacksmith and mother created decorations. As long as it's hereditary, the dexterity of her hands should be as you wish. However, she can only understand the Beast God Language. Because we hadn't thought she'd sell, her health isn't the best. Because of that, we'll sell her at a discount."

While making a difficult expression, Fitts-senpai approached the girl and touched her cheek. After a few seconds, the girl's complexion became somewhat better. He might have done something.

"Naturally she's a virgin. There are no concerns about infectious diseases and the like, but as you can see, she might be a little weak. Though we'll treat her with healing magic upon purchase, this really isn't a good that we'd recommend."

Fitts-senpai is looking at her with eyes like a child who's found an abandoned puppy. At any rate she's fulfilled the criteria so I was planning to buy her anyway though.

『Hello, little Miss.』

I crouch down and speak to her in Beast God Language. The first step is to interview her.

『I'm Rudeus. You are?』

『...』

『Actually, there was something we wanted you to do for us.』

『...』

『Umm...』

The girl just looked at me with empty eyes, and didn't reply at all. Fe'Burrito's subordinate brandishes the whip at his hip, but I stop him with my hand.

"Shishou, what's the matter?"

"She's in quite a bit of despair. She's got the face of someone who hasn't any hopes at all and just wants to die."

"...Have you seen that kind of face before, Shishou?"

"In the past, many times you see."

Zanoba and Fitts-senpai look like they're brooding over something. Well, it'd be best not to talk about things from my past life too much. It's just a lot of negative things after all.

I looked at the girl for a little while. They're nostalgic eyes. In the past I had a period when I made eyes like this too. Let's see, it was when I had just passed 20 I think. I hadn't finished my education, I had no prospects, I had no job experience, and I was thinking that my life from now on would just be nothing but eating and shitting. They were the same eyes as that time. Thinking about it, at that time there were still things I could do. However, because I was despairing over my situation, I gave up on everything. After a few years, I became defiant about being a NEET and got even worse, however. During that period of my life, I really didn't have a single hope. I just thought that I wanted to die.

『Do you want to die?』

『...』

『You can't do anything about this yourself, huh? I can understand your feelings.』

『...』

The girl's eyes slowly noticed me.

『In that case, shall I end things for you?』

I said this seriously. I think my tone was light.

I had truly thought that I wanted to die. However, without dying, I continued to live on, and on. It was a long time, filled with regrets.

I can't save her from this kind of life. Of course I can buy her and give her work to do. I can buy her clothing, I can feed her food, and I can speak kind words to her. However, the fact that doing those kinds of things isn't saving her is something I should already understand very well. Forcing her to do things that she doesn't want to do is by no means saving her.

In that case, it would be better to end things for her.

If she became like me. If she was able to live another life after dying. It would be good if she could abandon her current life, and try her best in a new one. There's someone like that out there, without a doubt. Telling someone something like 'your hard work will pay off' is just a pretense to make you feel better about yourself.

I don't know if she's this kind of person. From my perspective, she can still keep at it. She's still young, or rather, very young, and as long as she tries her best from now on, whatever happens things will work out.

However, it's not for me to say. I was someone who was an incurable idiot even up until death.

It's something that depends on how willing she herself is. I'm not the one who gets to decide.

『...』

『Say something.』

The girl didn't tremble. However, she slowly parted her lips.

『————I don't want to die.』

She murmured only that. It was a feeble voice. Though it was a spiritless response, that's fine. It's just how it is. I was like that too. It's fine like that. It's fine even if she doesn't want to live. As long as she doesn't want to die, that's fine.

"We'll take her."

I covered the girl with the robe that had been in my hands. I create hot air to warm her body, and chant detoxification magic. Recovery magic won't restore her strength; after this we'll let her eat.

"Fe'Burrito-san, how much is she?"

One Large Asura Copper Coin. That was how much the girl cost.

{ C-Editor's note: About 1000 Yen or $10 USD }

After buying her, we cleaned the girl in the washing area that was in the corner of the marketplace. After that, we bought clothes and the like for her in the commercial districts, as well as other necessary items. We then entered a suitable cafe.

It wasn't a simple eatery. It was a cafe with a good atmosphere. It's a shop that I'd definitely avoid were I by myself. The one who picked it was Fitts-senpai. Unlike me though, this kind of cafe suits Fitts-senpai quite well. It can't be helped, but I feel out of place here and can't stop fidgeting.

As expected of a royalty I might say, Zanoba is quite dignified. The girl we've just bought is single-mindedly shoveling food into her mouth. The only one who's uncomfortable is me.

Fitts-senpai seemed to be in a good mood. While saying something like 'I'm glad', he's patting the girl on the head.

"By the way, Rudeus-kun, what's this girl's name?"

Being asked that, I noticed that I haven't yet asked for her name. That Fe'Burrito didn't tell me her name.

『What's your name?』

The girl looks at my face as if she's heard something strange.

『...Name?』

Huh?

Could it be that my Beast God Language isn't getting through to her? It's certainly been about three years since I've used it, but it seemed to work fine in the Great Forest... Could it be that in the Dorudia village I was looked at like Michael (an American, self-proclaimed fluent Japanese speaker) who had just come to Tokyo? No, there's no way... The way I spoke shouldn't have been very different from Ruijerd.

『Umm, what do people call you?』

『...Bazelle of the Sacred Iron and Lilitella of the Beautiful Snowy Ridge's child.』

Because that didn't quite seem to be what I was looking for, I conveyed what she said to Fitts-senpai. When I did, he went "ah, I see" and nodded with a knowing look.

"The dwarves don't get a proper name until they reach 7 years of age."

"Proper name?"

"Mn, until age 7 dwarves aren't given a name, and when they turn 7, they're given a name based on things they like, or things they admire, or things that they're good at for example."

So he said. As expected of Fitts-senpai, he really is knowledgeable, huh?

"I see. It's quite inconvenient if she doesn't have a name."

"Her parents aren't here anymore, so there's no choice except for us to give her one."

I see.

『We're going to give you a name now, but do you have any kinds of hopes?』

When I had asked this just in case, she tilted her head in puzzlement. I wonder if someone like this will really be able to create figurines. I've become a little uneasy.

"Since she's a girl, let's give her a lovely name."

Fitts-senpai said that kind of girly line. Hearing this, on the contrary I start to want to give her a gallant and manly name.

Ah, no good, no good.

"Zanoba. Let's hear your thoughts!"

When I said this, Zanoba turned towards us.

"Mn? Will it be fine if I decide?"

"I'm not the one who paid after all."

"In that case, 'Julius'."

There's no mistake that he said that. He didn't look like he had thought about it.

"That's, a man's name, right?"

"Yes, it's the name of the pitiful younger brother that I accidentally killed."

I'm probably making a strange face. Fitts-senpai looks like he doesn't know what's going on.

"This child will be staying in my room, right? In that case, it'd be better for her to have a name that I'm comfortable with."

Certainly, this child will end up living with Zanoba. As a room for royalty, Zanoba's room is large after all. I could also get permission and have her live in my room, but it'd be much easier for royalty to get permission. That's why although my room would be fine as well, we've naturally planned for her to stay with the rich Zanoba. That's how our conversation had gone. However, since she can't understand his words, it might be good for her to stay in my room instead. Another option might be for me to stay in Zanoba's room as well.

"Well, since it's a name that you've determined, I think that it's fine too, but let's at least give her a girl's name like Juliette."

"That's fine with me. Let's make it Juliette then."

"Juli...ette, huhuh, it's a good name, isn't it?"

Fitts-senpai had found something funny, and was laughing delightedly. At this age, people will laugh about anything after all, huh...

Having settled our views, I tell the girl just that.

『From today onwards, your name is Juliette.』

『Julie...?』

『Juliette.』

『Julie.』

The girl said that and smiled clumsily. Though she couldn't remember anything past 'Julie', that's not a problem.

——

And so we bring Juliette (nickname: Julie) to Zanoba's place. While learning this and that from the surroundings, she would toddle behind the messy Zanoba and support him. When night fell, she'd learn Human Language and chantless

magic from me. Before going to bed, she'd continue to earnestly listen about dolls according to Zanoba, and was brainwa-... educated like that. That kind of training and effort continues on.

Incidentally, Zanoba continued to practice moving his fingers carefully. He probably wants to be able to create things himself one day.

——

Our doll creation plan continues to advance little by little.

Additionally, my true objective shows no signs of progress.

Rinia Dedorudia. The Dedorudia are one of the two Dorudia clans that serve as the protectors of the Great Forest. She's the granddaughter of that clan chief, Gustav. and the daughter of that clan's warrior chief, Gyes, who is the next clan chief.

Pursena Adorudia. The Adorudia is the other Dorudia clan that serve as the protectors of the Great Forest. She's the granddaughter of that clan chief, Buldg and the daughter of that clan's warrior chief, Telteria, who is also the next clan chief.

Among the Beast Race, the Dorudia clan are a special existence.

They have roots that go back roughly 5500 years. They span back to the time of the first Great Human-Demon War.

An all-out war between the Human Race and the Demon Race. The Great Human-Demon War. The winner of that war was the Human Race.

The humans treated the demons like slaves, and grew arrogant. One by one, they declared wars with the other races. The Beast Race that lived in the Great Forest with plentiful wood resources was no exception.

An approaching army. The one who rose up against this threat was the top of the Beast Race in those days, 『Beast God Giger』.

Beast God Giger gathered a Beast Race army to face the cowardly humans, and naturally fought on the front lines himself. Exhibiting his might, and occasionally his wit, occasionally saving other Beast People, in the end he managed to protect the Great Forest.

『Beast God』 was a man who reigned over all of the Beast Races. It was the name of a hero. That Beast God Giger was a member of the Dorudia clan.

As a result, the Dorudia clan became the top clan of the Beast People that lived in the Great Forest.

It might not sound like that big of a deal. However, currently the Beast Race doesn't exist only in the Great Forest, and the Beast Race diaspora can be seen even on the Central Continent and the Begaritto Continent. The total population isn't as great as the Human Race. However, it is definitely not a number that can be ignored. Specifically, they possess enough power to wage a war with the Holy Kingdom of Milis.

They're a race with that much military might.

And Rinia and Pursena are the grandchildren of the clan chiefs. They're the direct descendants of the Beast God. They carry a special significance.

They're people who might become clan chiefs, or the wives of clan chiefs in the future. To use the Human Race as a reference, they're something like people who have the right to inherit the crown... princesses, you could say. On top of that, they could be said to be on the level of princesses from the Human Race's greatest country, the Kingdom of Asura. As a result, when they first enrolled in the school, they were seen as extremely important personages.

Why were such important girls separated from their homelands and sent to a far off land to study? That's because of a screw up caused by the previous generation's prince and princess.

Like the prince (Gyes) and princess (Ghyslaine) of the previous generation, these two girls were stupid. As a result, lamenting about this, the clan chief (Gustav) sent them to study in a far off land with the mission of acquiring knowledge. In a place where they couldn't use their political power, they might acquire some good judgement of their own, he thought.

However... He made one miscalculation. He had sent them to the Magic University thinking "they won't be treated as the Beast Race clan chief's granddaughters".

Because they were of the Beast Race, the two of them even thought they might be persecuted instead. What awaited the two, despite expectations, were teachers who treated them with great caution and students who sucked up to them.

Right, in other words it was the result of the Dorudia clan's political power.

The two of them got carried away. Though they were a little afraid when they first enrolled, because of the voice magic passed down in the Dorudia clan, their superior agility, their physical strength, and the characteristics special to their race, they were strong. Furthermore, when the magic they learned in class was added to this, they could even beat down upperclassmen without much trouble, and when they noticed this, their attitudes gradually grew worse and worse. Boycotting things, shakedowns, extortion, loitering... They'd basically do everything that a bad student would, and became gang bosses in their first year.

However, that steady advance suddenly came to a stop.

When they became 2nd years, the Asura princess came along. Ariel Anemoi Asura. She was a person who until just recently was wrapped up in a power struggle amongst political factions. Along with her came two guards, and as if they owned the place, intruded on Rinia and Pursena's territory. And unbearably, the students and teachers who had been wagging their tails at Rinia and Pursena now wagged their tails at Ariel and her lot.

Even so, they endured it for half a year. While thinking that they couldn't accept it, absolutely couldn't accept it, they still endured it. However, they immediately reached their limits. Because Ariel was outstanding, she became the student council president as a first year. When Ariel ascended to student council president, it was almost saying to them that Ariel was admired as an honours student, while they were labelled as delinquents. Because the label of a delinquent was due to their own actions, their resentment towards Ariel was unjustified.

Rinia and Pursena began making trouble for the Asura princess and her entourage. They began straight out harassment like spitting on the ground where she was about to walk, or going out of their way to bump shoulders, or splashing water, and escalated even to stealing her underwear and leaving them in front of the boy's dorms. In the end they gathered the other delinquents and led an attack on her.

And then they were beaten up by Fitts-senpai. Almost 20 attackers were crushed by Fitts-senpai alone. The two of them were also beaten mercilessly by Fitts-senpai.

When the incident came to light, the teachers even had a conference. 20 or so attackers dropped out of school.

However, Rinia and Pursena didn't. It was judged that expelling the two ladies of the Dorudia clan would be bad.

The number of delinquents dropped, and Rinia and Pursena's influence crashed. The Asura princess and her entourage were seen as heroes by the other students. Incidentally, the Asura princess was also going to be a Special Student, but in accordance with her wishes, she was enrolled as a normal student and treated the same as the others.

Of course this wasn't amusing to Rinia and Pursena. Though they found it unamusing, the difference in their power was clear, and they had already run out of underlings to use.

At best, because the special students Cliff and Zanoba who entered last year were rampaging about, they used it as a pretext to pick a fight and defeated them. They used Zanoba to gather information on the princess, but they didn't plan on revenge. Recently, though they still showed some bad behaviour, they were properly attending classes. You could say that they were rehabilitating.

To a new student like me, it was just a story about Fitts-senpai's greatness.

Case closed.

At least it should have been.

I am Zanoba Shirone.

Right, the beginning of this incident was on a certain night.

Shishou was single-mindedly teaching Julie earth magic.

Shishou had said "This is an experiment." and started some strange training. At first he had made her practice chanted magic only once, but after that he had her do nothing but create earth bullets voicelessly. At first I had thought that there was no way she'd be able to use such a spell without chanting.

However, it only took one month. Right, in just one month Julie succeeded in using the earth bullet spell. It was voiceless. It was something to be amazed about.

According to Shishou, Julie was still far off from our desired level. Certainly, though Julie had tried to use earth bullet many times, she only succeeded once. She also ran out of mana quickly. On some days she wouldn't succeed even after practising the whole day. However, compared to I who had no talent... I expect that it would be best if I increase my abilities in another area.

Nevertheless, a young child like this could use chantless magic. Shishou had said "I was just following Fitts-senpai's advice" and didn't say anything else. But the one who taught Julie was Shishou. As expected of Shishou.

I had not made a mistake in becoming Shishou's disciple.

At the same time as doing this, Shishou also teaches Julie the Human Language. Surprisingly, she can understand it as long as it's just some basic words. Thinking about it, since she had spent a number of years in the Central Continent with her parents, this much is natural. It might be because of this that teaching her is really simple it seems. That merchant lied. No, since he had no reason to lie, it might be that Julie simply hadn't spoken it in their presence.

I think that Julie is a great purchase as well. Julie is a really sharp child. If I tell her to bring me this, she'll bring it to me. If I tell her to bring that, she'll bring it. She's good at guessing what I mean. She's almost like Ginger.

Normally so that they won't run away, a slave will be branded using a special magic seal. However, Shishou doesn't like those sorts of things. When we bought Julie, we didn't do that either. In the end he treated her as a disciple rather than a slave. Because of that, I decided to treat Julie as a young disciple. Thinking of her as a younger disciple rather than a slave, she mysteriously became more adorable.

Now then. That incident happened after class on a certain day.

When Shishou finishes his lessons with Julie, I tell Julie about the magnificence of dolls. It's an important time. One can't achieve great things without passion. Julie who has become the core of Shishou's grand plan must come to understand the magnificence of dolls.

Right, on that day. Today using the 『Ruijerd Doll』 as an example, I was going to talk about the greatness of Shishou's doll creating. Thinking that, I took out the doll from the locked box.

While Shishou was preparing to return to his room, he suddenly said something.

"Speaking of which, what happened to the one of Roxy?"

Because it was this topic, I ran a cold sweat. What I had thought he wouldn't ask, definitely wouldn't ask up until now, he asked. I was unconsciously going to tell him that I had left it in the Shirone Kingdom. However, I bit my lip and resisted. I won't lie. To Shishou, I'll definitely never lie.

"The truth is... it's, I have it here but..."

I can't speak smoothly. My hands are shaking. If Shishou knows about this, he might excommunicate me. Thinking this, my body feels like lead and I become unable to move.

"It's here? Since it's been a long time I want to see it. Could you please bring it out?"

Shishou's excited voice. My chest hurts.

After much effort, I finally bring out a single locked box from under the bed. My shaking hands undo the lock, and I produce the contents.

The moment he saw this, Shishou's gaze stopped moving.

"Oi, what is this...?"

Shishou's voice is trembling. His flat, monotone voice is trembling. I wanted to cry. It wasn't anything that scary.

Shishou's number one masterpiece. The 『1/10 Roxy Figurine』 was... cruelly broken into pieces, after all.

The head was removed, the parts for dressing her were broken, the arms were broken from the elbow, and the legs were twisted in unnatural directions. It was a miserable corpse. Only the cane was strong, so it wasn't broken.

"What's the meaning of this Zanoba? You, I, oi, just what the hell happened, hah...?"

Shishou was mad. Shishou who normally would speak uninterestedly in honorifics. His speech was strange and off tone.

"Haven't I told you how much I respect, and am grateful to her? Didn't you know just how much of my thoughts for Sensei were put into this figure?"

I clearly understood that Shishou was truly mad. Shishou who abased himself and praised Rinia and Pursena, who was just downhearted after being attacked by Cliff, who just made a troubled face when he was made fun of by Luke was truly mad.

He let off killing intent. Julie had become scared, and was now hiding behind me. I'm the one who wants to hide.

"You, could it be that you're ridiculing Roxy? Hey, could it be that you're an enemy?"

"T-, t-, t-, that's not the case!"

I shook my head in a panic. I always hear Shishou talk about Roxy. Shishou would always talk about how she was a wonderful person, or how she was someone who should be respected. It wasn't just admiration; you could feel some kind of fanaticism from it. Right, it's the same type of feeling that you'd get from the Order of the Temple in Milis.

Honestly speaking I don't particularly care about Roxy. However, if I say that plainly right now, Shishou will probably use his magic. If Shishou uses his magic in seriousness... I won't even leave behind ashes. Though I am said to be a miko with superhuman strength, this body of mine isn't that strong against magic.

"You're mistaken! This is something that I bet in a duel against Rinia and Pursena; it's something that is extremely important to me! When I lost the duel it was cruelly destroyed and stepped on, but I'd never, never think of ridiculing Roxy-dono!"

"Duel?"

I continued my explanation. I spoke single-mindedly. About how in my first year, I was challenged by Rinia and Pursena to a duel. About how at the time we wagered what was important to us. About how I brought the '1/10 Roxy Doll'. As a miko, I've never lost in the Shirone Kingdom. That's why I had no doubts about my victory. Even if they used advanced level magic, I was resolved to bear with it and swing my fists. However, they suddenly used a strange technique. Because of that, my free will was snatched away. After that they harassed and made fun of me. Losing without being able to do anything, I let go of the doll in tears. It couldn't be helped. I had lost after all. It couldn't be helped that that wonderful doll was taken from me. It was something that anyone would want. Thinking this, I resigned myself. However those two bitches who don't know the value of things... They'd say things like "What is this?" and "It's gross nya" and dropped the doll, kicked and trampled it, and broke it into pieces.

Shishou's killing intent lessened.

"I see, you've suffered as well."

He pats me on the shoulder. He understood. Thinking this, I raise my voice and let out a miserable "Hii".

"If something like that happened, you should have told me from the start. Had I known, I wouldn't have smiled at them so frivolously."

Those kind words are said with a colourless face. His tone is different from usual. Somehow Shishou has gone past anger. Shishou doesn't talk about dolls often. Lately I had been thinking that perhaps he didn't love dolls that much. However I was wrong. The passion that Shishou hides deep down burns hotter than anyone's.

"Let's teach those girls a lesson."

Tonight, those two girls are going to die. I had confidence in this. I started to tremble in fear.

However, after a few seconds, that fearful trembling stopped and changed into trembles of joy. I realised that I had gained a powerful ally and would be able to take revenge for the doll.

"Yes, Shishou!"

What an absolutely unforgivable story. To not only steal away something a person created, but also crush it underfoot... It's an outrageous display of violence. It's the same as smashing up someone's laptop with a baseball bat. To destroy people's belongings like nothing is...! Aahh, shit. They're disgusting and I can't forgive them.

What I can't forgive above anything else is that they stepped on Roxy. Even if it was a doll, they stepped on Roxy.

In the Edo period, the Tokugawa shogunate would force concealed Christians to step on pictures of Jesus or Mary. In the past, I had laughed at this. 'As if you could identify them with a test like that!' I had thought. However, I understand it now. The feelings of those Christians. The disgrace you feel when something you believe in is trampled in front of you. The reality of the Shimabara Rebellion. The Humiliation of Canossa. The crusaders who forced themselves forward even when it was impossible. I understand it now.

I have to teach them a lesson.

I have to teach those two stupid animals just what it is they've done.

I must teach them a lesson.

I must teach them that there are consequences born from doing whatever you please.

"Listen up, Zanoba-san."

"Y-, yes."

"We'll catch them alive. We won't kill them. We must punish them for defying god."

"Punish them? I see."

"I think that for now we should catch them separately."

"However, those two always act together."

A two-man cell. Animals that move in packs really are smart.

"That's true. They're smart enough that you wouldn't think of them as animals. And speaking of those two, they have combat strength enough to defeat you, a miko... It seems like it'll be quite a tough battle for us."

"No, I think that with Shishou here it'll be more than manageable."

"It's no good to overestimate me. Victory is something that you grasp by always being modest, you know."

I keep myself composed. I keep composed. I keep cool. In my adventurer days, whether or not I was calm determined whether I lived or died. I'll always keep cool, always keep composed, and beat those animals to death.

"Let me tell you the plan."

"Sir!"

"Though their battle strength is unknown, we've already grasped their attack style. One of them will quickly charge forward while causing chaos with magic, and in that time the other will use voice magic to render the enemy powerless. It's simple, but the two of them are equally strong. Even if we attack the one in the rear, they have the ability to immediately change roles."

The one attacked will devote themselves to defence, and the other will wholeheartedly try to use the stun technique. Did Fitts-senpai defeat this combination? It would've been good to hear about it. Well, whatever. It's probably fine.

"However, this time it'll be two on two. If you use your real power, I don't think that you, a miko, will lose to them."

"...No, even if it wasn't a two on two, I think that Shishou alone would be plenty though."

"Zanoba. You admire me as a shishou. I'm glad. Regarding close combat, however, I have a childhood friend who's 2 years older than me that would always beat me up. Since then I've been trying to work out, but frankly speaking I have no confidence at all."

"Eh!? There's a person who can beat Shishou up!?"

"There certainly is. At the very least, I know of three such people."

They're Eris, Ruijerd, and Orsted. Though I only know three people, if I searched I'd definitely find more. And it isn't necessarily true that Rinia and Pursena aren't among them.

If I use my demon eye and magic, I can win against Eris. However, I've virtually never fought with her for real. Rinia and Pursena are about the same age as Eris. It would be better to treat them as having that level of power.

"Shishou is being too humble."

"Zanoba-kun. Victory is not something you can be certain of. We mustn't let Roxy-sensei be trampled on again. I actually want to ask Elinalise or Fitts-senpai for help. Unfortunately, the two of them are busy, so this time it'll just be us."

Elinalise doesn't really get involved with personal quarrels. Even though she had been in Roxy's care, 'Isn't it fine if it's just a doll? It's not as if Roxy herself has been done in.' she would say. She's a cold-hearted one.

"Sir! In that case let's immediately send them a letter for a duel. In my country, we have an ancient custom of sending a letter with a knife and a single flower when we duel. The Dorudia tribe have a similar custom where they throw a rotting fruit at their enemy's head. However, I've never heard of such a custom so it might just be a lie, but it's what I heard when I dueled them. What will Shishou be doing?"

"I'm going to ambush them."

"Eh? Isn't that unfair...?"

Hmph, if it's unfair then great. This isn't a duel. This is a crusade. Since it's a crusade, being unfair is fine. As long as it's in the name of religion, anything is acceptable. Victory is all that matters.

However, I gave up on the ambush. I couldn't think of a way to fool the noses of the Dorudia tribe after all.

In the end, we simply waited to attack them. It was from the front, fair and square.

There's a separate building a little distance away from the main school building. From there we search for a route to the dorms, and position ourselves somewhere with no people. It's by the forest and is an open space that's hard to see from elsewhere.

There, we wait grandly, taking imposing poses. It's evening now. There are few passerbys. I don't have a policy of holding my duels during the evening or anything. It's because right now is when their lessons end and they're leaving the school building. By the end of the day their mana is depleted, or so my plan went.

Even so, they're late. They disgrace all delinquents because they properly attend their lessons. Even though it would have been fine to gather on the rooftop late in the afternoon.

{ C-Editor's note: The yankees/delinquents in Japan would sometimes gather on building rooftops. }

My arms are crossed, and together with Zanoba I'm waiting in an imposing stance. It had gone past evening and it was just about to truly darken, and was around the time that I'd be done with dolls. At that time, they appeared.

"What's this, nya?"

"Like, what's this, nano?"

They saw the two of us who posed here. Rinia glared at me in suspicion.

"Oi, you guys, if you stand there you'll get in people's way, nya. Move aside, nya."

So she said, but I didn't move. Pursena sniffs at the air. Pursena licks her lips and grins broadly.

"Rinia, it seems that these guys like, wanna have a go."

Hearing this, Rinia stares at Zanoba who's standing behind me. Then she sighs.

"Zanoba. Aren't you ashamed, nya? Though it's revenge for that time, what's the deal about bringing that first year boy along, nya...?"

"Hmph."

Zanoba snorts and turns his head away. A vein bulges on Rinia's head.

"Pissing me off, it's an attitude that I can't stomach nya. It looooks like I'll have to break the other doll, nya."

"Mu... Shishou, I'll-"

With an angry expression Zanoba made to step forward but I stopped him. I'm irritated as well. By the other doll, she probably means the Ruijerd doll. In other words they intend to break the figurine of my benefactor and friend.

"Isn't it fine? There's nothing to be ashamed about. You two who are always together are much more shameful. People are always saying that you can't do anything by yourselves, anyhow."

"What was that nya...?"

Rinia and Pursena are making threatening expressions like "!?" are floating in the air. However, as expected they're not scary. I know someone who holds a much more terrifying bloodthirst. If that person was told a line like that, without a sword she'd jump in and attack. She'd hit you, pull you to the ground, mount you and pound you with her fists while hurling acidic words at you. These guys are lukewarm.

"You... Don't get too carried away, you first year. Since you seemed to be Jii-chan's acquaintance I overlooked you nya, but if your mouth gets too big I'll beat you to death, you know."

What's with that? It's like we're picking a fight with them for no reason, isn't it?

"Look, if you get it then piss off, nya. We're already done with messing around nya, so we're busy honours students now nya. Go pick a fight somewhere else nya."

Saying that, Rinia waved us away. I can't stand anything about her. Though I used to get really aroused by this 'nyaa nyaa' business in the past, I'm angry at the moment and I can't see it except as making fun of us.

"You're freaking noisy with all the 'nyaa nyaa'. Can the Beast Race speak nothing but that kind of shitty Human Language? My acquaintances all speak it perfectly, you know. You're not a baby so how about you try pronouncing things properly!?"

"Nya!?"

!?

Rinia's mouth shot open in anger. Her pupils suddenly narrowed. She let out a breath angrily, and her tail is standing on end.

"You... I'll strip you nyaked and pour water all over you!"

That's something that's already happened to me. It's second-rate as a threat. And hearing this makes her seem like quite the idiot.

"Rinia gets like, angry right away... Fakku nano."

Muttering this, Pursena bared her fangs and brought her hands to her mouth. It brings to mind the time when I was done in by Gyes. It's voice magic.

"Hukaaah!"

Pursena seemed to be preparing her technique. Rinia kicked off the ground. With a sound, Rinia leapt sideways and vanished.

<Rinia will move right beside me in 3 steps, and will suddenly charge in to attack me>

It's reasonably fast. However, I've already activated my demon eye. It's not so fast that I can't see her.

"Zanoba! Pursena!"

I watch Rinia and give instructions to Zanoba.

While I speak, I aim my hand towards Pursena. It's difficult to tell when her voice magic activates using my demon eye. It'd be better to stop her before that happens. However, I don't understand the flow of mana for the voice magic. As a result, I don't know if I can use Disturb Magic. That's why I create a huge cloud of sand before her.

"...! -Cough! Cough!-"

Pursena who inhaled quite a bit is now coughing violently.

"Shaa!"

At the same time Rinia thrusts. I see it. It's slow, crude, and she throws her whole weight in. I could probably dodge it just fine even without using my demon eye. She can't even hold a flame to Eris. Eris was faster, sharper and more beast-like than the Beast Race, more determined and finally, stronger.

I match her movements and counter her. I shoot my palm towards her chin. With just that, Rinia jerks and messes up her stance. I pursue her. I strike her forehead and bring her to the ground. I step on her chest. Overlooking her, I create a rock bullet. A clear sound resounds.

"GINYAN!?"

Rinia easily parts with her consciousness. I remove my foot from Rinia who looks like a squashed frog. Because of the force from the fight, her skirt is upturned. Hm, it's white today, huh?

I turn my eyes towards Pursena and Zanoba. As according to the plan, Zanoba moves towards the attacker in the rear who is assigned the role of using voice magic. Zanoba can't catch up. Pursena who is moving on four limbs is fast. Or more like, Zanoba is slow. Is he a throw character or something!? All he has is physical strength. He needs to train his running more.

{ C-Editor's note: Throw characters in online fighting games have excessively huge bodies, low mobility and are very strong. }

I create a bog in front of Pursena. Because the ground in front of her was suddenly turned muddy, she tripped up and fell face first into the mud.

"Wahu!?"

At the same time, I use earth magic and harden the mud.

"What!? Like what's this, nano!?"

Pursena was trying to pull out of the hardened mud in a panic. I fired an earth bullet from my right hand.

"GYAN!?"

A nice sound rang out and Pursena fainted.

It was over.

"Hu... Alright, come!"

At my signal, Julie who's been hiding behind a bush trots over with a large sack. Together with Zanoba, they stuff the two girls into the sack.

Still, that ended more quickly than I'd expected. Is that just how these things are?

Eris would never think of going out of her way to attack from the side. Her fist would always find the shortest path. Also, she would never have been hit by that first counter. Even assuming she was hit, she'd have changed the site of impact and avoided being concussed. Doing so, she wouldn't have received the attack on the temple and fallen to the ground either. Even if she did fall to the ground, she'd immediately begin to grapple and attack. She wouldn't have allowed me to step on her chest either. In the instant that I did that, she'd catch my knee or ankle and might even break them. Even if she broke them, my rock bullet wouldn't stop though.

It was the same for Pursena's situation, too. If it were Eris, she wouldn't have tripped up just because the ground in front of her turned into mud. She'd properly keep her balance, or she'd stand still and get out of it.

Of course, there's no way Eris could do this in the beginning. Because she stacked up a lot of experience in battling me, she became able to cope with it. However, when I did something like that to Paul, he dealt with it even on the first time. As long as it's an advanced ranked swordsman with plenty of experience, they'd be able to avoid something like a bog.

Moreover, these days even monsters won't be caught by bogs. Even the stray dragon... Hm? The stray dragon got caught didn't it?

...Hm?

Could it be that Paul and Eris are just really strong? I'd heard that they had talent but...

"As expected of Shishou, I didn't even get a turn."

Zanoba returns carrying the sack. I stop thinking about those things and turn to face him.

"No, even I was surprised."

"You're being modest. Come on, let's return to the room."

"Yeah."

We walk down the now dark path while taking care not to be seen by anyone.

"Julie, watch your feet, okay?"

"I', I'm fi, ne."

It feels that there's a bit of fear mixed into Julie's eyes when she looks at me.

I was wondering just which of these I should pick as the subtitle,

"Rudeus vs Rinia vs Pursena"

"Good-for-Nothing Bluedeus"

"We're Going to Get Two Pets!? Huge Chaos Due to Pet Turmoil!"

but decided against it.

We returned to the room and a little time had passed.

A cat-eared and dog-eared girl in school uniforms. Their hands are bound behind their backs with shackles made from earth magic, and they're gagged. Zanoba and I were sitting on chairs, waiting for them to wake up. Didn't I do anything to the girls, you ask? Don't say stupid things. I'm a gentleman, after all.

"Mguh!?"

"Nnuuu! Nnuuu!"

The two of them immediately opened their eyes. Realising the situation they're in, they go 'uuu, uuu'.

"Good morning."

While standing up I calmly greeted them, and overlooked the two.

The two of them are twisting their bodies, and turn their gazes toward me. Though there's a little fear in their eyes, they're glaring at me.

"Nnuu!"

A voice of protest. It seems they don't really understand their situation.

"Now then... where should I start from?"

I watch the two as I bring my hand to my chin. The two of them are twisting their bodies around so their skirts are overturned, and their young thighs are exposed. It's truly an obscene sight.

"Hmm."

"Nnuu!?"

Pursena noticed where my gaze lay. She then started sniffing and her expression turned into one of unease. Whether it's what I'm looking at, or what I'm thinking about, she understands because of that nose. On the other hand, Rinia doesn't seem to understand, and is still glaring at me going 'huuu huuu'.

It seems that Pursena's nose is better. In reality, they basically shouldn't be able to smell such a thing from this disease-wracked body of mine but...

"Hmm."

And then I suddenly came up with an idea. These animal-eared high school girls were bound, their clothing was in a mess, and they couldn't move. It's incredibly stimulating.

Could it be that I could cure my sickness using this?

I've heard that all Asura nobles have perverted inclinations. Since I've lost my DT, I might be able to use this method to awaken instead. I didn't hate this sort of thing in my past life. Well, it's not like it was something I loved though.

"Hm."

I immediately try out what came to mind. My two hands are moving in excitement as I approach Pursena, and touch that huge mountain range. She tightly shut her eyes. What an expression. She's acting like I've done something extremely cruel, hasn't she? There are heaps of women in this world who freely let men touch their breasts you know.

Still, it's a really nice sensation. She's big after all. However, my arousal is weak. Though he should have returned, I didn't hear the first cry of my poor baby. I part my hands from her, my arousal disappears in an instant, and I'm left with a feeling of desolation that has nowhere to go.

...It really was no use.

When I removed my hands, Pursena looked blankly for a moment. After sniffing for a bit, she immediately made a relieved face, and then a slightly complicated expression appeared in its stead.

"Shishou? Are you going to be giving them that sort of punishment?"

"No, it was just a little test."

At Zanoba's question, I calmly reply and look at Rinia.

The moment our gazes meet, Rinia glares at me in anger. I may touch her as well. She's smaller than Pursena, but she's got some fine ones as well. Generally speaking there are a lot of huge ones in the Dorudia clan.

However, as expected my tomcat doesn't rejoice. Basically the only thing that changes is that Rinia's gaze is filled with even more humiliation and anger, it seems. It's been said that to those interested in bondage, pushing the owner of such a gaze into further despair is the ultimate joy. It's something I understood in my past life. However, it seems that it's a little different from when I see it on a monitor.

I don't gain anything from it. The test ends.

"Now then, do you know what you two have done?"

First, I made sure. The two of them looked at each other and both shook their heads. Since Rinia seems like she'll be noisy, I ungag Pursena. After thinking for a little, she sighs.

"...We shouldn't have like, done anything to you nano."

"Hohhh, haven't done anything!"

I repeat her words affectedly, and snap my fingers. Zanoba timidly brought over a box. Then when the box was opened, inside were the cruel remains of the Roxy doll.

"The one who did this was you, right?"

"...Like what about that disgusting doll?"

"Disgusting!"

I repeated Pursena's words. To say that Roxy was disgusting! The Roxy that I had poured my effort into, and whose craftsmanship was good enough that it could sell! Dis-gus-ting! No, calm down. Be cool.

"This is a doll made in the shape of my god."

"G-, god?"

"That's right. Because I was saved by her, I came to know the world."

While speaking, I move to the corner of my room. There sits a small shrine. When I moved into this room I immediately set up a shrine. When I open the small double doors, the insides are revealed.

"Mmmm!"

"L-, like what is this nano...?"

"S-, Shishou, this is..."

"..."

At the sight of the divinity of the god enshrined there, it seems the two of them were deeply struck. Even Zanoba winced, and Julie was pulling at Zanoba's clothing looking as though she was about to cry.

"That figurine is my god. You two kicked it, stomped on it, and broke it into pieces."

Rinia and Pursena's eyes widened and they looked between my face and the shrine. They then slowly look at Zanoba, and Julie who is about to cry. They return their gazes to me. During this whole chain of look about, their faces gradually paled. Their faces are like Blu-ray Discs, huh?

It seems that they understood just what it was that they had done.

"Now then, do you have any excuses?"

Pursena thought about my question for a few seconds. She then spoke.

"Y-, you're mistaken the one who stepped on it was Rinia I like told her to stop."

"Mmm!?"

For her to make excuses before apologising... Hmph, very well. Since it's amusing, I'll undo Rinia's gag.

When I did, the two of them started clamouring in high pitched voices.

"The one who said it was gross so we didn't nyeed it was Pursena, nya!"

"But the one who like stepped on it was Rinia, nano."

"Ah, my foot just slipped. Besides, Pursena was the one who kicked it in the end and broke it into pieces nya. When she saw Zanoba picking up the pieces even deep into the nyight, she was snickering at him nya!"

To search for those small fragments even deep into the night... Even though the ankle parts are as small as a pinky. Zanoba-kun, a guy like you is...

Right now my impression of Zanoba has tripled. You're heading straight down the Rudeus Route, aren't you, Zanoba! Oop, let's leave that aside for now.

{ C-Editor's note: In dating games, each heroine generally has her own route/story. }

"SHUT UP! You two are guilty of the same crime."

First I'll shut up this unsightly act. Then,

"Your crimes must be punished."

I hand down my judgement.

"Though I say this, my religious sect was only recently created so we don't have a precedent on what to do during times like this. What kind of punishment is given in your village during times like this?"

"I-, if you do anything weird to us, Tou-chan and Jii-chan won't stay quiet, nya. Even in the Great Forest we're two of the best warriors after all, nya! Ah..."

It seems that Rinia has recalled it. That Gyes and Gustav are my acquaintances. Then I remember. The Great Forest's 『Punishment』.

"Gyes-san? Ahh, I've remembered. I was given false charges by him. I was said to have done something indecent to Holy Beast-sama, and was stripped naked, had cold water splashed all over me, and spent a week in jail. I see, so shall we do something like that for you two as well?"

By the way, I'm not in the least resentful about that incident. However, that's how these girls seemed to have interpreted it. The two of them are speechless and have become horribly pale. As expected, to that race, that punishment amounted to a terrible torture.

"N-, no, I'll do whatever you want so just spare me from that nya."

"You can do like whatever you want to Rinia's body so please have mercy on just me nano!"

"Right nya, you can do whatever you want to me s-... Uehhh!?"

Even when the two of them are begging they're doing a manzai routine. They sure aren't reflecting enough. Especially the dog.

"Your Dorudia tribe was really cruel when this happened to your esteemed Holy Beast-sama, you know? Whenever something happened they'd suspect me and pile false charges on me. Compared to that, your crimes are the truth, through and through."

"I'm begging you, please forgive me... I didn't know it was such an important doll...!"

"Indeed, that does seem to be the case."

"I like won't do it a second time..."

What 'second time'? Like you'd be able to do it a second time. Things that are broken will never come back, you know. Do these guys understand how it feels for a person to have their precious things broken in front of them? Even now I remember that moment. When my younger brother destroyed my laptop with a bat. I don't have any intention of getting angry about that all over again though. All I remember is the despair and emotions I felt at the time. They're emotions I had when my only emotional support was broken into pieces!

"I'll apologise nya, I'll even show you my belly nya..."

"That's right, though it's embarassing I'll like bear with it too nano."

Show her belly? Ahh, it's the Beast Race's dogeza that Gyes did, huh? Even if I see that kind of insincere dogeza, I won't be able to calm down.

"If you want to be forgiven then fix this doll!"

R O X Y, R O X Y!

"Right, even Shishou can't mend it!"

Zanoba condemns the two of them.

But Zanoba, it's not like I can't fix it you know. You've got all the parts here, and the most important part, the cane is untouched. I've gotten more skilled at this than I was when I made this. Without any marks, beautifully...

Mn?

That's right. I can fix it. I can fix it, huh! It's not like it'll never come back.

They've apologised too. The two of them are repenting. I feel like it's fine even if I forgive them. Or more like, this is a crime, isn't it? If this comes to light, on the contrary we'll be the one in trouble, huh. For example if this scene was seen by a certain spear-wielding baldy...

No! That's not the problem! The problem is that these two easily broke what someone else held precious! But if I let them off easy here, they'll definitely do this again! I have to carve reflection into their bodies! In the name of the Roxy Faith!

Speaking of which, since I've calmed down a bit, I'm reminded of some rather more esoteric punishments.

"Zanoba, do you have any ideas?"

"Let's have them suffer what the doll did."

Zanoba's eyes were extremely ruthless. It seems that he's still angry. It's natural; it happened before his eyes after all.

If I said 'shall we?' he probably would leave them in the same state as the Roxy doll. They'd be broken into little pieces by his hands. He'd do it. This man would do it. The Neck-Ripping Prince is in good health.

"No, Zanoba. Killing them is probably going too far. I don't like killing people."

"In that case let's sell them to a slave merchant. Though it's forbidden to sell those of the Dorudia clan, if I remember correctly there's an Asura noble family that finds the Beast Race irresistible. The daughters of the Dorudia clan's chiefs... If they could make someone like that into a slave, even if it was breaking the law they'd buy them."

Zanoba was wild-eyed. Having said that, selling them as slaves is also probably going too far. It might end up as a war with the Beast Race.

"That Asura family is currently on the verge of being wiped out, so it'd probably be difficult."

I wonder what's happened with the Boreas family. Not a lot of information reaches up here in the north. Just that it's in quite a severe condition and it might only be a matter of time before the family is wiped out.

"Listen up, Zanoba. Even if they're like this, they're princesses. If we don't use a method that doesn't cause too many problems, this matter will come back to bite us."

"As expected of Shishou; even when blood is rushing through your head, to still be thinking about how to protect yourself is..."

"Be silent."

Mmmmn. What should I do? At this rate I won't be able to feel better. It might be good to just continue looking at this lovely sight. Though this isn't really my hobby, these two are counted as bishoujo as well.

No, no, in the first place this might have become a problem the moment we kidnapped them. It'd be better not to hold them captive for too long a time.

These two seem to be reflecting as well. I can fix the doll. I'd really like to get this over with on the spot, but...

Mmmn.

If I'm troubled, then I consult Fitts-senpai for help. Lately I've fallen into something like a pattern. Fitts-senpai is knowledgable after all, and will reply properly for most problems.

"Wa-, wait a moment. Doesn't this mean that those two girls are in your room right now, Rudeus-kun...?"

"They are, huh... Please be at ease. I've properly made sure they have an excuse for missing classes today, and have contacted the school."

"Umm, that's, by catching them, that is, in other words, right now those girls are confined together in a room with Zanoba-kun?"

Oh. So you could see it like that? Two kemonomimi bishoujo are being confined, huh? I think it was on my previous life's "List of Things to Do before I Die". But what I wanted to do back in the day was a step beyond this; a step that I don't have the ability to take at the moment.

"Rudeus-kun, that, umm, after you confined them, did you umm...?"

Fitts-senpai's face was bright red and he was looking at me a bit like he didn't know me or something. No good. He seems to have misunderstood.

"No, I haven't done anything sexual, you know."

"R-, really?"

"At the most I rubbed their chest a little."

"Y-, you touched their chest...?"

"Yeah. I had something I wanted to test out, so."

"...? Umm, you didn't touch them with 'that' kind of meaning in mind?"

What kind of meaning is 'that' kind of meaning? No, in other words he's asking if I was touching them with something sexual in mind. Broadly speaking, you can certainly take it that way. However, from my point of view, in the end it's just for the sake of medical treatment, and was just an experiment.

"I don't think it was 'that' kind of meaning."

Fitts-senpai looked a little relieved.

"I-, I see. But that'll be a problem, you know. Even if they're like that, they're still the daughters of Dorudia clan chiefs after all."

"Please be at ease. The clan chief and the chief warrior are acquaintances, after all."

"Eh!? Really!?"

"Yes. As long as I say something like 'they were slacking off in school so I had to whip them into shape', I'm sure they'll understand."

"H-, how did they become your acquaintances!? The Dorudia clan are really seclusive so it's rare to be able to meet someone like the clan chief, you know."

I told Fitts-senpai about the incident in the Great Forest. It was a pretty shameful episode of my life if you ask me. Saving children and then being caught, and after that being liberated and spending each day playing with a dog and such, or making figurines. It was that kind of lifestyle after all.

"Hahh, you're amazing aren't you, Rudeus-kun..."

Thought it was a shameful story, Fitts-senpai let out a breath of admiration. Just what part of that story was amazing exactly?

"For the holy beast to become attached to you..."

I see. Now that it's mentioned, just why did Holy Beast-sama come over to me anyway? I get that it was Gisu's fault, but... There's no way that it really came to like me.

"Even though it's just a mongrel, it seems to at least understand that I saved it, huh?"

"You can't let a Beast Person hear you talking like that, okay?"

Obviously, if someone called Roxy a filthy demon or something and made fun of her in front of me, I'd get angry after all. I intend to clearly avoid crossing the line.

"Anyway, please lend me your wisdom again, Fitts-senpai. A punishment that'll satisfy me and get rid of my resentment, but isn't so harsh so that they won't seek revenge from me. Do you have any ideas?"

"That's a difficult question, huh?"

Even so, Fitts-senpai went 'mmmmm' as he was thinking. I had thought that he'd have asked me to release them immediately though.

"I'm the same, you know. I can't forgive people that gang up on others, snatch away their belongings and destroy them."

Or so he said. I completely agree.

Incidentally, he and Zanoba have become close enough to greet each other when passing by. Hearing about what happened to an acquaintance, he got angry as well. I had thought so while we were buying slaves as well, but Fitts-senpai might have a strong sense of justice.

"Alright, I've got a good idea."

"Hohh."

Since a line like that is usually bad news, I decide it best not to say anything. Well whatever.

And so our investigation finishes early that day, and Fitts-senpai and I head back to the room together.

When I return to the room, I find that a sharp smell is wafting about. The bed is wet. It completely stinks. Pursena and Rinia are completely out of it, and have no strength left.

...It might have been better to let them use the toilet at least.

Since it really was unpleasant, I used magic to dry them, I opened up the windows for some air, and removing their soiled panties and skirts, wiped them clean. The clothes end up laundered.

Just to mention it, since they aren't completely naked, it should be fine. Thinking this, I had a look at their expressions to check, but the two of them had completely resigned themselves to everything.

"At least you could have just treated us violently nya... but if you were going to keep us like pets in your room, you could have at least undone the handcuffs nya... it's really tough nyot being able to move nya... I won't run away, so please nya..."

It seems that for a cat-type like her, being restrained for about 24 hours was really tough.

"We'll be good girls, so at least let us like eat please. I like won't bark at night... I like won't bite either... I like wanna eat meat... I'm like hungry nano..."

I didn't notice up until now, but this one seems to be a glutton character. Thinking about it, when we first met she was eating meat, wasn't she?

Still, to give up after just one day... It might really be because she had nothing to eat. When you're hungry, you become weak hearted after all.

I undo their handcuffs. When I do, the two of them kneel in front of me. Because they're not wearing anything below, it's outrageously erotic. My lips unconsciously extend into a perverted smile. Unfortunately the thing downstairs doesn't extend as well.

"Rudeus-kun..."

It's the voice of Fitts-senpai who's right beside me, washing their skirts and panties.

"Ummm... Since the two of them do seem to have reflected, I wonder if it wouldn't be best to forgive them already...? Though you might not have calmed down yet, not being able to move for a whole day is really tough you know? Since this is a man's dorm, there are lots of 'hungry' men around so the two of them must have been scared too."

"Right nya."

"Everytime I heard footsteps I thought it was like all over for me nano..."

No, as far as I know there shouldn't be that many 'hungry' men around at all. We're allowed to go outside, and if you were starving for women you could just head to the red light district or something, and lately all of the first years are fine because of the rumoured man-eating elf. Or was it dangerous for them because they've made a lot of enemies? Ahh, but there might be a lot of people who would just sell them off to a slave merchant if they found two girls bound like this.

"From now on we'll listen to what you say nya, we'll become your henchmen nya."

"That's why please like forgive us nano."

The two of them are pretty regretful. At least they look regretful.

"It's not like I have any absurd requests for you... but I won't forgive you if you make light of Roxy."

Just saying that was enough to cause the two to turn ghastly pale and nod repeatedly.

"Of course, nya. It wouldn't be strange even if we were killed after making fun of someone else's god nya."

"Uuu, I suddenly remembered like the terror of being chased by the Order of the Temple..."

When I told them that I had family in the Order of the Temple as well, the two of them became even more pale. It seems that the saying about having money and connections was right.

After a little while.

The laundry is done and the two of them happily put on their clothing. Just why is the action of putting on panties so arousing? To me it's even more erotic than watching them take them off.

They've learned their place and put on their clothes. Because of this, their attitude returned.

"Even if I said that we'd listen to what you say, I won't do anything like making babies with you nya. That kind of thing is for after we've properly dated and married nya."

"That's right. But it's fine if you just want to like touch Rinia's boobs a little nano."

"Right nya, if it's fine if you just want to... WHY ME NYA!?"

"I'm expensive. If you gave me like, expensive meat, nano."

Though these two girls are delinquents, they're relatively chaste. As expected of princesses.

Still, half of that meek attitude from before was acting, huh? As long as they've really reflected then it's fine but...

"Ah, that's right, Rudeus-kun. Be careful of being ambushed, okay?"

At Fitts-senpai's words, the two of them made shocked expressions.

"Nya!? Hang on, Fitts, don't say weird things nya!"

"That's right!"

"Boss is a messed up fiend of a man nya, if we lose again who knyows what would happen to us, so just who would do something like that!?"

Just who is a fiend of a man? That's a really horrible way of putting it. But if they're this scared of me, then at least I'll be able to sleep soundly at night.

"Boss, can we like go yet nano?"

Pursena tilts her head slightly as she asks. Which reminds me, what's this 'boss' business? Not that I mind.

"I'm hungry, so I wanna go back nano, to eat meat."

"Right nya, we haven't eaten or drunk since yesterday evening nyaa..."

What's with that? It's like I'm the bad guy here! Have they really reflected enough?

"It seems like they haven't reflected enough, huh."

The one who said that was Fitts-senpai.

"Fitts, this has nyothing to with you nya."

"That's right... Like, fakku nano..."

Fitts-senpai has become a little shocked. I shouted.

"You two, seiza!"

The two of them unwillingly sit down. Fitts-senpai produced a bottle from his chest. It's a bottle with black paint inside. Then he produces a brush. This is what you'd call a 'good idea'.

When we're done, my anger is almost completely gone.

"...Fitts, we'll remember this nya..."

"Like, fakku nano..."

The two of them are making resentful expressions. Both of their eyebrows are joined together into a monobrow, and there are eyes drawn on their eyelids. There's a beard that looks like something a thief might have drawn on their faces.

And then on their cheeks.

『I'm a cat who lost to Rudeus』 『I'm a dog who lost to Rudeus』

It's a new style of bodypainting. It's a bit arousing, huh.

"I've used a paint that a certain clan uses to leave tattoos on their bodies. If I use a special chant it won't come off for the rest of your life."

It seems to be such a paint. I guess it's this world's tattoo. Speaking of which, I saw such a thing a number of times during my adventurer days.

"It won't disappear if you just wash it with water you know. If you oppose Rudeus again, I'll use magic to make sure it doesn't disappear for your whole life!"

"I, I get it nya, I won't do such a thing nya."

"...I like get it nano."

The two nodded whilst trembling in trepidation. They're making some pretty terrible expressions, huh? If it becomes permanent they probably won't be able to become brides. Fitts-senpai is pretty nasty as well.

"You can leave for today, but you'll be spending all of tomorrow like that. If you do so, I'll erase it for you. However, the stuff on your bodies I won't erase for half a year!"

"I get it, please forgive us nya."

"...-sniff-"

Pursena is in tears. By the way, some pretty indecent words are written on their backs. If it becomes permanent they'll probably live in shame for the rest of their lives.

Since we'd get in trouble if the two of them are seen in the hallway, they left from the window. It's the 2nd floor here, but it'll probably be okay. It's only the 2nd floor after all.

Just before leaving, as if she suddenly remembered, Rinia asked,

"Boss, even though you're just a magician, what kind of training did you do to be able to see my movements?"

"I didn't do anything special. I just followed my Shishou's teachings and did things like she said."

The training that I did with Eris wasn't for nothing, I guess. I always thought of myself as weak. Comparing myself to Eris' growth, I had thought that I wasn't growing at all. However, it seems that we were just growing at different rates, and I might have become strong as well.

"Who's your Shishou, nya?"

"Umm, it's Ghyslaine I guess."

"By Ghyslaine... you mean my aunt?"

"Yeah, that's right. Ghyslaine the Sword King."

"...I see nya."

Saying that, she made an accepting expression.

"Bye then, nya."

"Later, boss. I'm like really sorry about the doll nano."

Said the two, and they left.

"Sorry, Rudeus-kun. Even though I'm unrelated, I got carried away."

"No, it was good to see the two of them afraid like that."

More importantly.

"You said that you'd need a special chant, but if there were others who knew the chant wouldn't it be bad?"

It seems the two don't really know, but the tool has already been used and this chant isn't something that only Fitts-senpai knows. If someone chanted the spell as a joke... Thinking this, I feel they're a little pitiful.

"Eh? Ah, mmn, that was a lie."

Fitts-senpai spoke rather blankly.

"There certainly is a paint like that, but the one I used was just a normal one for drawing magic circles. It'll come off in the wash."

Fitts-senpai spoke while giggling. Almost like a child whose prank succeeded. I relaxed.

Fitts-senpai stayed in my room for a little longer. For some reason he was fidgety and couldn't calm down. Walking back and forth in my room, he asked many times about this or that that he found curious.

"What's this? Is there something inside?"

Fitts-senpai had a good eye and pointed at the shrine.

"The god that my faith worships is enshrined in there."

"Huh? So you weren't a follower of the Milis Religion, Rudeus-kun. Could I have a look?"

"The Roxy Faith is... Please don't open it!"

I stopped Fitts-senpai who was about to open the shrine. Our god is divine and isn't something for outsiders to gaze upon. And geez, what was up with me yesterday? Even if I showed them the panties, they just drew away from me.

"Ah, sorry."

Fitts-senpai withdrew his hand in a fluster. After that he looked and this and that, but then suddenly his gaze stopped on top of my bed. He picks up my pillow.

"This pillow is making grainy sounds, huh."

"It's a self-made pillow."

A self-made pillow. The Mustard Turrents monsters in the forests of the north drop seeds. There are nuts inside that resemble walnuts, but the shell resembles buckwheat chaff. That's why I crushed it and put it into a sack, which I then covered with monster fur. Since the day I completed it, I've been assured a good night's sleep.

"Hehh... Do you mind if I try it out a little?"

"Feel free."

Fitts-senpai put down the pillow and lay on my bed.

"It's a good pillow, isn't it?"

"You're the only one who's said that."

The only other person who's tried it is Elinalise. She said "The best pillow is a man's arm" though.

"..."

Even laying down he won't take off his glasses. It's something he's probably picky about. I wonder if he'll let me see his real face one day. No, on the other hand, Fitts-senpai in sunglasses might be the real him.

...If I reached out my hand now, and took them off, what would happen?

No, it's probably not just pickiness; he did say that he had a reason. For example he might have a complex about his eyes. I'd better forget it. I don't want to be hated.

"..."

Fitts-senpai is still laying down, and for a while a silence hangs in the air. It might be because he's noticed my gaze, but Fitts-senpai sits up.

"It's about time I return to Ariel-sama."

"I see. Thank you for today."

"Mmn, see you later, Rudeus-kun."

"Thank you very much for everything."

"You're very welcome."

Fitts-senpai left through the window. Though I was thinking 'just leave from through the corridor', it might be that the window is closer to the girls' dorm. Well whatever.

A little smell was left in my room. I spread a powder that adventurers used to remove smells and lay on my bed. There's a smell that's different from usual coming from my pillow. It might be Fitts-senpai's scent. It's not unpleasant.

"Huu..."

This time abducting those two girls ended up in a pretty erotic situation, but as expected there are no signs of being cured. Whether it was looking at them or rubbing them, neither worked out.

There's no progress.

——

This is something that happened later, but those scribbles on their faces were seen by Zanoba the next day. Zanoba didn't seem as though he'd forgive them with only something like that. However, after being told "You didn't even do anything this time", in conjunction with showing him my emergency repairs of the Roxy doll, he immediately started to smile widely and forgave them.

Also, though their confinement had almost become a problem,

"It's nyot a big deal! Nyothing happened, I just lost a duel and got this drawn on in their room as a prank, nya!"

"That's right... Nothing happened at all... Really, nothing happened at all nano... -tremble tremble-..."

Or so the two of them insisted, and so it didn't turn into a big problem.

All's well that ends well.

Cliff Grimoire. The grandchild of the Pope of the Milis Faith. Young and excellent with magic, a genius youth.

He was a bit quick to pick a fight, his self-respect was strong, and he had a habit of seeing himself as a big deal. As a result, he had no friends.

He had talent. However, he didn't rely on this alone and was diligent in his training. Though his mouth was terrible, his actions weren't. Though they were few, there were those who thought well of him.

Cliff was now 16. Though he had become an adult a year ago, there wasn't anyone to celebrate that.

His reason for coming to the Magic University was simple. In a few words, it was due to a power struggle.

A few years ago in Milishion there was an attempt on a miko's [Shrine Maiden's] life. Because this incident was the work of the Pope's faction, the internal struggles intensified. During the conflicts, naturally the Pope had his grandchild take refuge on the other side of the world, in the Kingdom of Ranoa.

"Cliff, you possess great ability. Be not conceited and look outside of yourself."

The Pope sent Cliff away.

Cliff understood that there were expectations for him. It was natural. Though he had lost to Eris, he was still a genius after all. So Cliff thought.

After a long journey, he arrived in the Kingdom of Ranoa; a harsh land. The food didn't suit him, the climate was harsh, and there was a fuss because his way of thinking was drastically different to the locals'.

Even so... Cliff continued to believe that he was a genius. He was a Special Student, the grandchild of the Pope, and as someone who would carry the Milis Faith in the future, he was different to others. So he thought.

In his first year he received two major shocks.

The first time was by a person named Zanoba Shirone. He was a miko. He was a person who was loved by the gods since birth. Though he was a bit messed up, his power was the real thing. He'd been seen lifting someone thrice his weight up by the head, and then throwing them.

Though he had such power, he was at the Magic University. He was learning magic, focused completely on earth magic.

From Cliff's perspective, his growth was slow. However, to begin with there shouldn't have been a need for a miko to learn magic. One of the theories regarding magic stated that it was a means for the weak to imitate the acts of the gods in the ancient past. Miko were people who possessed the power of the gods. They didn't have a need to learn things like magic. Thinking that, Cliff went and asked him,

"Why are you learning magic?"

"Mm. There's something that I want to do."

Saying this, Zanoba brought over a box and produced from it a doll. He then began to talk for a long time about the doll. Cliff only understood half of what Zanoba said. However, he at least understood from Zanoba's talk that this doll was something wonderful.

"I've become the disciple of this doll's creator, and I wish to spread dolls throughout the world with him! For this reason I must be able to create dolls! If I'm not capable of the fundamentals of doll creating by my next meeting with Shishou, I won't be able to face him! However, I do also want to be able to create dolls myself, you see!"

It was what people called a 『dream』.

That was something that Cliff didn't have. Nay, it was something Cliff had given up on.

Even though a miko would be burdened with the expectations of his homeland... Even though upon his homecoming, he probably wouldn't have any freedom... This man hadn't given up on his hope, in the chance that one day he might suddenly gain his freedom. And he planned to do what he wanted to do the moment that day came.

Incidentally, Cliff didn't know about the circumstances surrounding the Shirone Kingdom and Zanoba. The conclusions he came to were a result of his common sense.

He misunderstood. However, it left Cliff with a deep impression. He thought Zanoba was quite the person.

"What kind of person is this shishou of yours?"

"He's a person named Rudeus Greyrat."

Hearing this, Cliff received an incredible surprise. Rudeus Greyrat. Since the day he was rejected by Eris, this name had remained in his heart. He hadn't thought that he'd hear it again here, and furthermore from the mouth of the person who had left such an impression on him.

The shock was huge.

The second time was because of a senpai.

Though this was as to be expected, Cliff had been under the impression that he was the strongest in the school. If you included close combat, then he was absolutely no match for Eris. However, he believed that there wasn't anyone who could beat him as a magician. He was a genius after all, and the ones enrolled in the school were student-level. Even among the teachers there were many who couldn't use more magic than he could. As a result, he concluded he was the strongest in the school.

This was simply him being conceited and was something he would learn roughly 2 months into enrollment. It was when he lost to the two Beast Race girls who were also rumoured to be top class amongst the school; Rinia and Pursena.

Just who was it that started the fight?

Cliff had a bad mouth and everything that came out of it was intolerable. At the time, though Rinia and Pursena had already relatively calmed down, as expected, an impudent first year would rub them the wrong way.

Cliff couldn't remember just what he had said that had angered them.

However, he remembered the battle that followed. When Cliff used advanced level magic, Pursena used elementary level magic to deal with it and at the same time put a stop to Cliff's chanting and movements. Rinia then drew closer and thoroughly beat him down.

Because he had been beaten to a pulp in public, he cried once he was alone. 'Since it was two on one, it couldn't be helped. I didn't lose.' he told himself. And then one day, a senpai named Fitts defeated the two of them by himself, and Cliff received his second major shock.

There was always someone stronger. Since coming to this school, Cliff realised this obvious fact. And that just being able to use advanced level magic didn't make you strong was something that Cliff finally understood.

Then two years after he first entered...

He received two more shocks that were even greater.

The first shock; Rudeus Greyrat entered the school. He had an expression that lacked confidence. He was wearing a shabby grey robe. On first meetings, he would ingratiate himself to others while debasing himself. He'd lower his back and took an attitude that could be called servile. When he saw women, his gaze would stick to them. He had no appeal as a man...

He was too far from the person that Cliff had envisioned based on the things he had heard from Eris and Zanoba.

'A guy like this?' he thought. 'It's probably just someone with the same name', he thought. However, Zanoba called him Shishou and he knew about Eris as well.

In that case, he had lied to them, Cliff concluded. Piling up lies upon lies, he fooled Zanoba and Eris, he thought.

As proof of that, even when Rinia and Pursena provoked him, he simply smiled foolishly and lowered his head. If he were truly strong, he'd beat the two of them down.

Or so Cliff had judged. However, his true character would immediately be revealed, he thought. Zanoba was the real deal as a miko, and he was a hard worker as well. Rinia and Pursena's ability was also assured. He wouldn't be able to get by with lies or deception.

Though he had also heard the rumour that Fitts was defeated by Rudeus, there was surely some mistake or perhaps Rudeus had lied again, or he had used some sort of cowardly trick.

That was what Cliff had thought.

But Rudeus showed his true power. He was a user of chantless magic. To start with, Zanoba's adoration for him further increased. Rinia and Pursena also withdrew. That Fitts had recognised him as well, and it was said that once every few days they would study together in the library.

Though he had this much ability he was seen going to classes too. They were classes in 『Elementary Level』 divine-attack and barrier magic. Even though he'd have no use for them after all this time, he still greedily made to learn the things that he was lacking in.

Rudeus Greyrat had more ability than him. He was more diligent than him. He produced different results from him.

It was a reality that Cliff shouldn't have wanted to recognise. However, it was probably because he had met with Zanoba, and had been defeated by Rinia and Pursena. Unexpectedly, he readily accepted it; that this youth was far, far ahead of him.

Even so, it wasn't as though he had come to like him. Accepting this reality and coming to like Rudeus were completely different matters after all.

Then the final shock.

It was something that happened on a certain day. It was something that happened when it had turned into the evening. It was something that happened while he was walking down the road. It was something that happened when he had looked up by chance.

There, stood a goddess.

She had magnificent golden hair. She was leaning against the window and with a languid expression she was looking outside. Her face, dyed in the red of the evening, was beautiful.

Cliff's heart was pierced. His gaze was stolen at a glance.

However, it was purely physical. During his childhood when he was yearning for the life of an adventurer, he had said something like 'It'd be nice if my bride were someone beautiful' or something like that. The reason was because the alumni of the orphanage that had become clerics were beautiful.

"...!"

At the time, the woman by the window noticed Cliff. She gently smiled and waved at him.

That gesture, that smile, that situation; all of it hit Cliff head on.

Cliff thought,

'I was born to meet this woman.'

'She was born to meet me.'

In that instant, Eris changed from the target of his first love into someone he simply admired.

I'm attending the once-a-month homeroom.

Presently, lined up around me are Zanoba, Rinia and Pursena. As expected, it's a nice thing to have your friends' desks lined up along yours. Incidentally, Julie is sitting on Zanoba's lap.

As always, Rinia has her feet on the desk and her healthy thighs are freely revealed before me. This lifestyle where I can see these up close is really not bad.

"Boss' eyes are always nyailed to our legs nya. So Boss is also a hungry male huh... Lookie, lookie ...Gyaa! Don't put your hand up my skirt nya!"

Since Rinia occasionally provokes me for no reason, I feel her up without hesitation. However, no matter how much I may touch, it's all in vain. The libido that has nowhere to go turns into sadness, and it just piles up.

"Nya!? What's with those eyes nya! Even though you touched me yourself, why are you making such a face nya!? Just what is it that you didn't like about me nya!?"

Honestly speaking, these days I'd rather just touch their ears and tails. Cat ears and cat tails can heal you.

"Rinia is like, an idiot nano."

Pursena is sitting just outside of reach and eating meat. Dried meat, grilled meat, fresh meat... though there are a lot of types, it's essentially always meat. Though she normally pretends to be the cool type and makes fun of Rinia, if you lure her with meat her tail will wag about like an electric fan and she'll come towards you. Her fur is softer than Rinia's so it feels great to stroke.

It's something that's been on my mind for a long time now, but the members of the Beast Race don't have human ears. Their hairline is sort of diagonally to the side of where we humans would have ears. However, it depends on the species and there are also those who have their ears further to the side. It's because their skull structure is different. It's probable that the internal structures of their ears are different as well. Were I a biologist, I'd probably love to dissect one of them for analysis. However, I'm not a biologist. The type of analysis I'd like to do is completely different. However, everything starts after I'm cured.

Unlike Rinia, unless I offer her meat she won't let me pat her. On the other hand, as long as I give her meat, she'll let me do so. Though she's quite chaste, I'm still a little worried about her.

"Shishou, for a while now, the angle of the ankle has been getting worse."

"Goshujinsama, I'll fix it."

"Julie, call me Master. And call Shishou Grandmaster."

"Yes, Master."

Zanoba is the same as always.

However, his position in this group has dropped to the lowest. Since the one who did all the work in the duel the other day was just me, Zanoba just ended up as a tag-along. 'I can't accept someone who just borrows someone else's authority', or so Rinia said.

In response, Zanoba asserted 'I am Shishou's first disciple'. However, I've also taught Sylphy, Eris and Ghyslaine, making him the fourth. Since Ghyslaine was also my master, excluding her puts him third. When I told him this, Zanoba made a miserable expression, and I felt a bit like I'd done something bad. I followed up and told him that he was my first disciple in doll making.

The second doll-making disciple Julie listened earnestly to Zanoba's lectures on the Roxy doll. It seems she's quite brainwashed now. She's also become quite motivated about doll-making and will ask questions herself. Though I say that, she's still far from the level of Zanoba and I when it comes to talking about dolls.

Also, though it's still unskillful, she can use chantless magic. As expected, you really can increase your mana capacity when you're young, you can also use chantless magic, and so it seems that Fitts-senpai's theory was on the mark.

"...Grandmaster. I couldn't do it."

"Right."

However, it might be because she's still young, but she fails a lot. Just now she made the bubble on the Roxy doll's leg bigger. It's probably impossible for her to create small-sized earth magic.

Of course I'm not angry. I teach her to try things herself. I teach her not to feel bad about failing, and to try to redo it as many times as it takes. Failure is the mother of success, and if you give up upon failing once you're on a straight track to becoming a shut-in.

"It seems it's still a bit early for you to fix the Roxy doll, huh."

"I'm sorry."

The eyes that she looks at me with are sometimes a little fearful.

'Why are you so afraid of me? Aren't I the one that saved you?'

When I tried asking this, I was told about a dwarven bedtime story; 『The Hole Monster』.

It lives inside of a hole, and occasionally comes out to abduct bad children. Even if they try to escape, the ground beneath their feet will turn into a bog and they'll be trapped. The monster then stuffs them into a sack and brings them back into the depths of his hole. Though the bad children are taken by the Hole Monster they will one day suddenly return, and be good children, almost like different people.

I see, now that I'm told this it does make sense. I used a bog to defeat Rinia and Pursena, and then I stuffed them into a sack and abducted and confined them. While Zanoba and Julie weren't there, Fitts-senpai helped me out and we concluded their punishment. Rinia and Pursena were talking big to me. Perhaps that's how Julie saw it.

"Faaa, I'm sleepy nya."

"Like, lately it's gotten warmer nano."

"Boss, next time we'll show you our napping spot nya."

"Eh? Is it okay to mess around with you while you sleep, Rinia-san?"

"...Don't you think about anything but perverted things, Boss?"

"Shishou thinks about dolls before anything."

"Whenever you open your mouth complicated stuff comes out, so like, be quiet."

"However,"

"Like, just do it and go buy me some meat."

"The teacher is about to come nya."

"Like, dash for it then."

"In that case, I'll,"

"If you're going to go, Boss, then I may as well."

"Go ahead, go ahead."

"Nya!?"

Until the teacher arrives, we just continue to chat like this. Well, it was probably noisy. Without a doubt, it was noisy.

Well then, there's another person in the room. He's sitting in the front. A youth studying by himself. A youth who's studying in earnest. Cliff. He got angry at our chatter and stood up in anger.

"You're noisy! I can't concentrate! If you're just here to play around then just go home!"

I shut up. Zanoba stopped chatting as well, and returned to Julie's lectures. However, the two former delinquents took that as an invitation to a fight.

"Just who the hell do you think you're talking to, nya?"

"The insides of your bag are like, all my meat from now on nano."

"!?"s are suspended in the classroom.

Usually those who have just been done in would be all show. However, I've heard that these two have already fought with Cliff. When Cliff first entered the school, he was done in by the two, and since then he's been earnestly studying. Using failure to feed growth. He's a diligent youth. It'd be better not to disturb him.

"We apologise. It seems we've gotten in the way of your studies; we'll be quiet. Come on, you two sit down, sit down, I said to sit, SIT!"

"...If Boss says that then there's no helping it nya."

"Like, fakku nano..."

With unhappy expressions, Rinia and Pursena sat with a thump.

"Hmph, if you get it then good. God, even Zanoba, what are you all doing...!"

Cliff snorted. Rinia and Pursena clicked their tongues. I won't get in the way of those who are living their lives seriously. I don't have any intention of living otherwise either though.

Whatever the case, I probably won't cross paths with him. So I thought at the time.

After that a week passed. As usual, I was researching teleportation with Fitts-senpai.

It's something I realised recently but there are some similarities between teleportation and summoning. The magic circles are similar. The colour of the mana light is also similar.

However, there are some decisive differences; that is 『People cannot be summoned』.

No matter the summoning magic, people can't be summoned. Magic beasts, ghosts, plants... all of these can be summoned but people can't be.

Whether in literature, documents or stories, there are no mentions of human summoning. Humans, demons, beast people... though there are many types in this world, as long as they're designated as people they can't be summoned.

However, neither I nor Fitts-senpai are experts in summoning so though I say they're similar it's not a strong assertion. However, there's a part that I'm stuck at.

The 『summoning of living people』 can't be done.

Then what about just their 『soul』?

"..."

I don't speak of it. However, I thought that it would be good to ask an expert about it. The wandering soul of someone from another world. Would that be possible to summon?

"Fitts-senpai, could you see if there's a teacher who's knowledgeable about summoning?"

"Eh? Mn, got it. But I don't think there's anyone at this school who knows about anything but enchanting-type summoning, you know? Are there really any teachers who know about what we're researching...?"

Is that so? Speaking of which, there really wasn't 'summoning magic' listed amongst the available courses, huh. I noticed the things that I was familiar with, but didn't pay much attention to the things that I wasn't. However, enchanting was categorized under summoning? Did I see that in a magic textbook?

"For now, there's probably nothing we can do but try searching for one."

At that time, unease sprouted in my heart. I didn't let it show. It's a needless worry.

There shouldn't be any connection.

That disaster happened when I was 10. It had been 10 years since I had reincarnated. Right, in those 10 years, nothing had happened at all.

There shouldn't be any connection.

In this world, it might be that the sunrise and sunset are affected by the seasons. It was evening at the time when I first entered but on the way back to the dorms, it's night now.

A characteristic of the north, now that the snow has completely vanished, is that only the reddish-brown ground remained. While walking along the stone-laden path embedded in this ground, I happened to hear a voice.

"Oi, wait!"

"Don't think you can use your chants!"

From behind the school building appeared a fallen youth. Chasing them were 6 men.

The youth had been gaining distance to chant. At first he had tried to use a large magic but were stopped by the men, but even when he used elementary magic it made no difference due to the numbers. The youth was cornered, beaten, and thrown about. The six of them were attacking the youth who was like a turtle, unable to move, just bearing with it.

It was bullying. It was the scene of bullying. It was something that hurt to see.

Unconsciously, I raised my voice.

"Oi, oi, you guys. Don't bully people (turtles) who can't escape."

When I unconsciously ran up while saying that, the six of them simultaneously turned towards me with a glare. Because they were also a little taller than me, it felt daunting.

"The hell you say!?"

However, one of them noticed.

"O-, oi, Quagmire..."

"Quagmire...? R-, Rudeus!?"

"The one who confined Rinia-san and Pursena-san in his room and trained them!? That Rudeus!?"

I didn't train them!

"Nah, that's just a story right!?"

"Pursena-san called him Boss and wagged her tail at him you know...!?"

"But she'll basically wag her tail at anyone who gives her food!"

"But you know, those two really listened to what he said yanno?"

"Ahh, I saw them with scribbles all over their faces in class you know."

"What was it again? 『I'm Rudeus-sama's sex slave』 was it?"

"Nah, I didn't really see it but..."

"After he beat them in a duel, he kidnapped them as slaves...? Seriously...?"

"...Not just that, but someone from the Dorudia clan, you know?"

"Doesn't he think about consequences...?"

The men were just talking without even taking a glance at me. Finally, they nodded with a gulp, and with a shudder turned to look at me. After exchanging looks, they nod together. They then lower their gazes to the fallen youth.

"Oi, we'll let you off for today."

For today. I'm sensitive to words like that.

"By 'for today', you mean that you'll do the same thing another day? Six of you bullying a single person?"

When I said this harshly, the six of them openly showed on their faces that this had become troublesome.

"Tsk..."

"Hey, Rudeus...san, this is none of your business, right...?"

These guys are always the same. None of your business. None of your business. I was well aware that it was none of my business when I stuck my nose in you know.

"I don't know the circumstances, but 6 vs 1 is unfair, you know."

"..."

The six of them exchange glances, and then shake their heads. Don't have a discussion using your eyes.

"We get it. We'll stop it. But yanno, it's not like that guy is innocent."

One of the men said that, and went back behind the school. The other 5 accompanied him. The area behind the school building might be their hangout.

"Phew."

I sighed. As expected I get pretty nervous when faced with so many imposing guys. I've mentally simulated battles with multiple opponents, but even so, this is a matter of the heart. I wouldn't be afraid in a 1 vs 1 fight though...

"Hey, are you alright?"

I approached the youth who was getting up. While dusting off his clothes, he chanted Healing in a quiet voice. It's to be expected of a Magic University, but for even bullying victims to be able to use healing magic is...

While I was thinking that, the youth turned his head. It was Cliff.

"..."

Frankly speaking, I don't have any good memories of Cliff. Each time we meet he flares up and this time he'll probably just say "You had no business saving me!" I thought.

"You had no business..."

Cliff stopped speaking halfway. He then made an expression like he was sullenly thinking. He then let out a sigh.

"...No, you saved me. Thanks."

"You're welcome."

Bowing once, Cliff quickly walked away.

I was shocked to see that. I certainly did save him. But for him to suddenly change his attitude like this. It's enough to make me wonder if he's scheming something.

No, it might be best for me to obediently accept this. Though Cliff has been really snapping at me up until now, I've never snapped back. Cliff might have finally recognised that I'm not an enemy. To begin with, I don't even know why I was hated so much...

"Well whatever."

I returned to the dorm.

The next day. When I had just finished lunch, Cliff called out to me.

Then, I was summoned behind the school building after school.

Cliff was angry. I didn't know what he was angry about. But he was making a difficult expression.

He might want to fight, huh? Or so I vaguely thought. I'd already activated my demon eye. Whilst paying attention to my surroundings, I gathered mana to my right hand.

To pay back my kindness with evil... Turtles sure are cruel these days. Or so I was thinking.

"Alright. Here seems fine."

Making sure no one was nearby, Cliff turned around. His face was bright red.

I immediately understood. This wasn't a duel. He hadn't called me here for such a reason. On the contrary, it's a confession. That's basically how things are in a situation like this.

Oh man. No matter how many times I've failed with women, I don't recall ever becoming a Pants Wrestler. Phew, it's tough being popular. Just kidding.

"T-, the truth is..."

"Aye."

I've decided on what to say. I'll answer him with dignity.

'Let's just start out as friends first, then after that, once we get to know each other better, we'll still stay as just friends.'

"There's someone I like."

"A-, aye..."

With shyness written all over his face, the completely blushing Cliff cast his eyes down. Am I going to reject this? My stomach hurts. I think about how it would be were this a girl. Though my sword is a holy sword, I don't have that sheathe either.

But Cliff raised his head and pointed to a certain place.

"It's her."

His finger is pointed to the school building. Some distance away, a person can be seen through the window. Even from here I can see their swaying, long, blonde hair. Beholding the scenery of the school dyed in the colour of the evening, with a languid expression she looks out the window.

"Today, I saw you. Talking to her. Is she an acquaintance? That's, um, could you introduce me?"

"...Aye."

The person who had appeared in the school building... That was a person I knew well. An oft-talked about problem child. A devilish woman who would 'eat up' her classmates like a succubus.

It was Elinalise Dragonroad.

I was wondering just which of these I should pick as the subtitle,

"Cliff vs Elinalise"

"The Deceived Virgin ~The Impure Lust That Crushes a Pure Love~"

"I Became Intimate with That Boy That Bothered Me!? That Impudent Boy's Crush!"

but decided against it.

Good day, this is Rudeus. Ummm, right, so you see, what happened was, you see, the other day Cliff-kun asked me a favour you see. He was in love with Elinalise, and wanted me to introduce him. Right.

Certainly, Elinalise is my acquaintance. She's my parents' former party member you see. Right.

Though I don't know much about how romance works in this world, if Cliff is in love, and if he wants my cooperation so that he can make his feelings clear, then I feel that I also want to help him out.

That's how I feel. That's how I feel, but...

Let's just recall what kind of a person Elinalise is.

Elinalise Dragonroad. S-class adventurer. Vanguard. Warrior. Magic University First Year. Age 50 . Unexpectedly diligent in her studies, and has been said to have excellent grades. Has recently been able to incorporate elementary water magic into her battle tactics. Adventurers who accompany her for a long time come to hate her, but she's capable, she's good at taking care of others, and she's good in bed.

Right, she's good in bed.

Her body is afflicted with a certain curse. Thus, night after night she has to slurp up men's 'essence'. Thus, she'll never stay with a particular man, and she just repeats one night stands over and over again. I've heard that she's given birth before. She wouldn't tell me what happened to those children. It's possible that she just abandoned them here or there, or sold them into slavery. In reality though, she hardly ever becomes pregnant, so it does seem that she raises them properly until they're independent though.

Well anyway, I don't know the details. To introduce such a person as the target of someone's love is, is it really a good idea?

Cliff doesn't know that Elinalise is that kind of person. When I asked him about his impression of Elinalise, I became greatly troubled. Elinalise was an untainted, pure white angel. His reply was along these lines.

Of course, he's also investigated Elinalise.

『The Sovereign by the Window. She's extremely famous. Her name is Elinalise Dragonroad. It's a beautiful and valiant name that's worthy of her. Though this is obvious, she's diligent and her grades are said to be good as well. Because she was an adventurer until just recently, she's also knowledgeable about the application of magic in real combat.』

Anyway, I have nothing to say about this except for the Sovereign by the Window thing. The window is probably just where she sticks her butt out after all. However, I don't think that Cliff knows that the sovereign stands by windows to have sex.

『Still, that rumour that she'll sleep with people without discrimination is no good. It's likely that someone who's jealous of her has been spreading it.』

Or so Cliff interpreted for the most important part.

The fight the other day was the same. The six men from the other day had heard the rumours about Elinalise. That she would spread her legs to anyone, and that they should have a go with her as well, they said. Hearing this, Cliff became angry. 'Don't look down on others because of rumours', he warned them. Of course the rumours are true, but...

The six of them were upperclassmen, they had strong physiques, and they were delinquents. Because they were given a warning by Cliff who was not only an underclassman, but also smaller than them, they got a little irritated and retorted with vulgar expressions,

"Just the other day my kouhai and another man were taken care of by her at the same time. Since you can't see the truth, how about you go have her take care of your first time as well?"

Cliff was enraged. In a fit of recklessness, he attacked them. Not with magic. With his fists.

Cliff was supposed to be pretty good at fighting as well. But it was 6 vs 1. Their physiques were different. It would have been better had he used magic, but the moment he used his fists to engage them, he lost all chance of winning. And then, I appeared.

For the purpose of gathering information, it was a splendid chat that we had. But hmmm. Now what do I do?

I have no obligations towards Cliff. Even if I introduce him to Elinalise and that illusion of his is smashed to pieces, it's still none of my business. But even so. Even so, can I just push him onto Elinalise without a care?

Elinalise might be grateful to me. She's generally quite happy about being introduced to men. Lately she's been especially interested in hunting for virgins, and it can't be helped. It's nice when they're innocent and apologetic, and for their first time they put up a strong front. It's nice when, although they were like that in the beginning, after doing it again and again,

they start to change. In my previous life, this was something that I'd seen countless times in eroge. That's why it's not like I can't understand her feelings.

Cliff looks to be a virgin, and Elinalise will probably gladly eat him up.

But how would Cliff be? He's misunderstanding the type of person that Elinalise is. If he met her for real and started going out with her, he'd probably see how she really is. Wouldn't he be angry at that time? He might end up thinking that it was my fault that he had to go through something horrible. If you ask me it'd be getting his just deserts, but if I introduce him knowing all this, I'll have my small share of responsibility too.

But on the other hand, I might have no choice but to introduce him. He might come up with some weird suspicions about me if I don't. For example, that I might actually be aiming for Elinalise as well, or something. Were my disease to heal, I might want to try that kind of one night stand with her as well. However, there's no way that I'd be aiming for her.

What should I do?

And so,

"Fitts-senpai, there's something I'd like to discuss with you. Is that okay?"

After school I went to the library and asked that of Fitts-senpai.

"What?"

"It's kind of a a love problem."

"A love problem!?"

Fitts-senpai turned his whole body towards me. Almost leaning his whole body in, his mouth turned just a little crooked.

"R-, Rudeus-kun, you have someone you like!?"

He's unexpectedly enthusiastic about this. His eyes are sparkling... well, they may or may not be; I can't tell with the glasses on. Fitts-senpai is probably also at an age where he's interested in romance.

"No, it's about someone I know."

"Someone you know...?"

"Yes, someone I know."

"M-, mn. Continue."

"This acquaintance has become enamoured with someone at first sight."

"First sight... And so, by discussing with me... C-, could it be Ariel-sama? I-, if that's the case then it's pointless. There are heaps of people who wanted my help for this but..."

Fitts-senpai starts to trail off. There are probably lots of people whose gazes were stolen by that princess at first sight. It's natural that as a guard you'd see them all as pests that you'd want to shut out.

"No, it's someone else. It's not Princess Ariel."

"I-, I see. Thank goodness."

"This acquaintance of mine had their gaze stolen by that person. It's someone that I know, if I introduce them as a love interest there's a bit of a problem, you see. I'm hesitant over whether or not to introduce them."

When I looked at Fitts-senpai by chance, I found that he was making a strange expression. He had his hand to his mouth, and a strong gaze came at me from beneath his sunglasses.

"Does this acquaintance know about this woman's 『problem』?"

"No, he doesn't."

...Hm? Did I mention that it was a woman? No, it's probably because we were talking about Princess Ariel that he just went on assuming that it was a woman. Well, since Elinalise is a woman, there's no problem but... Or could it be that he thinks that I'm the "acquaintance"?

"I'm just saying this to make sure, but this isn't about me, you know. Since it's Fitts-senpai, I'll tell you that it's the Special Student Cliff-senpai."

"Ah, really? Sorry, I misunderstood."

Fitts-senpai is scratching behind his ear. Did he really think it was about me? Well, saying stuff like "someone I know" is a cliched way of talking about your own matters after all.

"Anyway, that's how it is, so what should I do?"

"Umm, perhaps you should tell them about that 『problem』... or, not, I wonder? Unless of course there's a reason you can't tell him..."

Fitts-senpai seems to be lacking in confidence a little. Speaking of which, senpai is also a virgin, huh. He might not have much experience in love matters.

"There's no problem if I tell him, but Cliff-senpai is misunderstanding and he's an intense person, so if I tell him there's a good chance he might not believe me. He might even misunderstand and think that I also like that woman."

"Ah, really that could happen."

"Yes. That's why I was thinking that perhaps it might be better if he doesn't hear it from me."

Mn. If I'm the one who says it, he could misunderstand a little. It might be better for Cliff to hear it from another woman that he trusts, or from words around him. ...No, it might be best if he hears it from the person herself, huh?

"Umm, Rudeus-kun, do you not like her too?"

"I don't hate her, but I can't see her as a love interest."

Since I hear that she's really skilled, I would be interested in trying a night with her, though I'd be a little reluctant to date her seriously. I'd immediately be cheated on, after all.

"So that's how it is... But though you might not be able to see her like that, it might look different to Cliff-kun, huh."

Right? To a person who sees her as a untainted white angel, he probably doesn't think that anyone can see her any differently, but just who is that?

"Mmm."

Should I introduce him? Should I not introduce him? I'm lost. After a while, Fitts-senpai murmured.

"Umm, I have someone that I like as well, so I can understand his feelings. It'd normally be someone I wouldn't see as a love interest, but I like them even so."

Someone that Fitts-senpai likes? I wonder who? ...Thinking about it normally, it'd be Princess Ariel, huh? Just now he had that huge reaction as well. Certainly it'd be difficult to see Princess Ariel as a love interest. She's Asura royalty after all, and she's way out of his league. No, it's fine even so.

"I think it'd be tough only being able to watch them and not confess."

Fitts-senpai's face is red. He's red all the way up to his ears.

"That's why, umm, wouldn't it be fine to properly introduce them and give him a chance to confess?"

"But there might be problems that arise afterwards."

"That can't be helped. I mean, after you've already introduced them, what happens afterwards is something that's their problem, right?"

Ohhhh, that's true. What happens after the introduction is their problem. That's certainly true. As long as I make this clear beforehand, it should be fine.

"I understand. I'll try doing it like that, then. Fitts-senpai, thank you very much."

"M-, mmn... I'm glad that I, was of, help...

Fitts-senpai seemed a little unconfident. He's probably thinking something like 'What am I talking all big for when I have no experience?'. However, even without experience, what he said was spot on, so there's no problems at all.

Anyway, I've decided on my approach.

I'm a bit concerned about Fitts-senpai since he collapsed onto his desk when I left, but... it's probably because at his age, acting all big and giving advice is something embarrassing. All I have are thanks for him though.

The next day, I called out to Cliff. Cliff, whose gaze held a little anticipation.

"I don't mind introducing you, but there's just something I'd like to say."

"What is it?"

"Cliff-senpai. Since I've also formed a party with Elinalise-san before, I know a bit more about her than other people do."

At 'formed a party', Cliff's eyebrows twitched a little.

"I won't say anything about her temperament myself. However, that's not because I'm deceiving you. I want you two to meet in person, talk, and then decide for yourself what kind of person she is."

"What do you mean?"

"In other words, what happens afterwards, for example 'she's different from what you say' or 'why didn't you say anything' or 'you've really pulled a blind one on me'; I'm saying I don't want to be accused of such things afterwards."

I'm protecting myself just in case. Then I guard myself. I also didn't forget to imply that she has some sort of problem.

"Of course. I'm a devout follower of Milis! I'll pay the proper respects to my matchmaker!"

Matchmaker? Is that how I'm seen according to the Milis Faith? Since I'm not an adherent of the Milis Faith, I'm not really sure. Ohhh, my Goddess, please guide me!

"Since I'm not a believer of Milis, afterwards please don't say that I was playing matchmaker or anything, okay?"

"I won't."

"However this ends, this isn't my business after all."

Cliff nods as if this is obvious.

"I'm prepared to be rejected before anything!"

I feel that you might experience something more repulsive than just being rejected though.

Elinalise was in a room by herself. Today she was leaning against a window as well, but today there was nothing like a two-torsoed centaur. She's looking out the window and idling about. I know what she's thinking about: 'Won't it hurry up and turn to night? Once it's night the tavern will open and in there I'll find lots and lots of men.' They're probably those kinds of pink colored thoughts. However, if you looked at her without knowing any better, certainly she might seem like an angel.

"Ara, Rudeus... Isn't this a rare occasion? For you to come to me."

When Elinalise notices me, without particularly smiling, she just says that in surprise. Certainly since entering this school, I haven't spoken to her much. At most I'd just drop in at lunchtime on occasion to see how things were.

"Ara? Who might that be?"

Cliff hops out from behind me. He then brings his hand to his chest, and his feet together. It might be Milishion etiquette.

"Elinalise-san, this is Cliff Grimoire. He's a Special Student, and one year above us."

"As introduced, I am Cliff."

He then bows where he is.

"Ara ara, how very courteous of you. I'm Elinalise Dragonroad. And so, what business might Cliff-san have with me?"

"Nothing in particular; he wanted me to introduce him to you, Elinalise-san, so I brought him along."

"Yes. I've always seen your beautiful face, Elinalise-san! Please go out with me!"

A silence befalls us. Elinalise is staring blankly. After a while, she slowly leaves her chair, and grabs a hold of my arm.

"Hang on."

Saying this, she brings me to a corner of the room. She then draws near my ear.

"What is it?"

"How much do you want?"

I don't understand what she means, and a few seconds pass by. Could it be that this is a 'how much money do I need to pay to bring this man into my bed?' type of talk? That would be the worst.

"I don't need money."

"In that case, what? What's your goal?"

"No, somehow he likes you, Elinalise-san."

"You're lying... Rudeus, you know what kind of person I am, right? To bring such an easily fooled boy like that to me... Please have some shame."

Having some shame or whatever... I feel like I'm being told this by the number one shameless person. Well, it's fine but...

"I didn't deceive him or do anything else; all I said was that I'd introduce him to you."

"Is that true?"

"I don't have any ulterior motives. If it pleases you, I'll even swear on Roxy-sensei."

I said that, and after she thought for a while, her eyebrows raised into a ノ乀.

"Even if you're telling the truth, Rudeus, I'm a little troubled by such a serious kid."

Troubled? That's unexpected. I had thought that since it was Elinalise, she'd happily say "Since it's like that, I'll bring him to an inn".

"You're aware that I'm cursed, right? I can't date a single person, you know."

She can't date a single person. As a result, she'll never get serious and continue to have monetary or playful relationships with an indefinite number of men. I feel that I've heard this before. Well, it seems that even she's thinking. Since it's like this, then I guess dating is impossible huh.

"There's no helping it then. Please reject him cleanly."

"Is that fine? Won't it throw mud all over your name, Rudeus?"

"That's not a problem."

It's not really that big a deal in the first place. It is 'quagmire' after all, and I also have no need to sell my name anymore.

"But please try your best to explain to him the truth. That it's not because I secretly want to date you or anything."

"I understand already."

Alright.

Our little conference ends and Elinalise walks over to face Cliff. She's taller than him. Cliff is small. The more I look at it, the more unbalanced they look. However, people's bodies being mismatching has nothing to do with the heart. Thinking that, it somehow becomes a rather depressing situation.

"Rudeus, people's romance isn't something you should be peeking at."

"Ah, that's true. In that case I take my leave."

I leave at Elinalise's words. I feel a bit sorry for Cliff. However, this is likely the best result. There's also the issue about the curse, but Elinalise is a lascivious woman to begin with. On the other hand, Cliff is an earnest honours student. It's like water and oil.

"Rudeus... Umm, thank you!"

Cliff's words rang out behind me. My chest hurt.

After that, about a week passed.

It was our once-a-month homeroom. There, sat an openly flirting couple. A tall woman was sitting on a man's lap, and they were flirting away.

"It's easy to remember how to create the melded magic phenomena. Even if you can't use two magic, you can use things that occur in nature to achieve the same effect."

"As expected of Cliff; you're so knowledgeable."

"It's not a big deal."

Both of them were people I know; they were Cliff and Elinalise. I slowly approached them and my head tilted a little.

"Mn? Rudeus! Thanks for the other day!"

Cliff made to stand up and thank me, but because there was a woman sitting on his lap, he sat in place and bowed.

"You're welcome... Elinalise-san, what's going on?"

Sitting on his lap, Elinalise smiled gently.

"We're going out now."

Huuuuuh? Why? Seriously, why? Isn't this different to what she said?

"Umm, isn't this different to what you said?"

"Rudeus, in the face of such a manly proposal, even my heart would skip a beat, you know."

Propose? No matter what the case is, isn't that too fast?

"Stop it, it's embarrassing."

"『I'll definitely save you from your curse, so please marry me!』"

"O-, oi!"

"And then at the inn, Cliff's innocent... aahh! I feel like I'm going to 'come' just from remembering it."

"S-, stop it I said. There are people here."

Cliff's face was bright red. Though he said to stop it, he didn't seem that unhappy. First of all, congratulations on your graduation. I'm not really annoyed about this; is it because I've already thrown 'that' away as well? Or could it be that it's because I know what Elinalise is really like?

Still... It seems he's heard about the curse. It doesn't seem like Elinalise plans on stopping her numerous liaisons with random men, after all. Her reason for not being able to date just a single person is also valid. It's the truth after all. So why? Cliff heard about it. Eh? Propose?

"From now on, I'm going to try my best to endure for Cliff."

"I-, I said you didn't really need to. It's a curse, so there's no helping it, so a-, as long as your heart belongs just to me, then..."

"Cliff... Of course. For everyone else it's just body... but with you I'll give both my body and my heart."

Cliff gently brushes the hair of the enraptured Elinalise. Their gazes meet. Because she's sitting on his lap, their faces are close.

"Elinalise..."

"Cliff..."

Then it leads to a kiss.

After that, they begin to flirt as though I'm not there. Boldly flirting, and flirting out in the open. Is that okay, Cliff? Is that really okay? Though this woman may be saying some admirable things, you'll be treated like a doormat you know? Aren't you just being blinded by love?

"..."

As I'm about to say that, I firmly endure it. We'd agreed that after I introduced them, there'd be no complaints no matter the outcome. I feel that it'll be weird if I'm the one who says something.

I look towards the back of the classroom. The three of them didn't seem to care. Pursena is chewing on dried meat, and Zanoba is talking to Julie about a doll he spotted in the markets the other day. Julie's eyes are full of seriousness and doesn't register the idiot lovebirds.

Only Rinia was sulking, like she'd say "urgh" at any moment.

"Boss, what's up with that woman nya? When I say something sarcastic she replies pretty intensely nya."

"I don't really get it either."

It's weird. While thinking that, I sort things out in my head.

The other day when I left them, she said she was going to completely reject him. Then after that, the talk should have gone in that direction as well. So as to avoid future troubles, she probably tried to get him to give up by telling him all about the curse and the like, as well as the fact that the rumours were the truth.

However, it seems she was proposed to. 'I'll cure you, so please marry me'. It seems that she gave in after being told something like that. I have absolutely no idea how after hearing all that, Cliff ended up at such a thought.

However, I consider it for a bit. If I were in Elinalise's position, how would things have gone? 'I'll definitely cure you of your illness, so please marry me'; if I were told that straight to my face, then...

I might fall in love. Violently so.

Though I wouldn't know if they'd be able to heal the thing that I've been worried about, they'd earnestly give it their all. I don't know just how much Elinalise is troubled by this curse. No matter how much she likes doing those things, there's probably no way that she isn't worried about it at all. She might... fall in love?

No, I shouldn't just talk about Elinalise. Cliff tried his best. He showed his manliness and softened Elinalise.

"Boss, I've thought of a good idea nya."

"What is it?"

"Let's go out and get them back, nya."

So Rinia suggested. At any rate, it's probably a temporary arrangement. Still, I want to experiment now.

"Rinia-senpai. I don't mind going out, but I'm actually impotent. Will you give it your all to heal me if we go out?"

"Eh?"

At those words, everyone besides Elinalise suddenly muttered "Eh?". Their gazes gather on me. It's like they're wondering 'Just what is this guy saying?' or something like that. What, is it that weird if Rinia and I go out together?

Or so I was wondering, when Rinia became flustered.

"Bo-, Bo-, Boss, c-, could it be that you heard what we said the other day nya?"

"The other day?"

"That although you had confined the super attractive us, and you touched and stripped us, you didn't mate with us, so you might be floppy dicked... the stuff we were saying at lunchtime nya."

The hell? This is the first time I'm hearing this. When I was thinking this, I looked at Pursena and she quickly averted her eyes.

"T-, that's wrong nano. We weren't speaking badly of you. Like, it's just that on that day when you touched me your scent was weak, so like, I was wondering if perhaps that was the case, that's all nano..."

At Pursena's words, all of the gazes on me turned to some like pity. They were gazes of sympathy.

Still, it wasn't the dating stuff that they were shocked about, but the impotence huh? Though I had hidden it, was it really that strange?

"Like, we weren't spreading rumours about you or anything nano. The only one who used the words 'floppy dicked' was Rinia nano. She's totally, like, fakku nano."

"But Pursena was the one who said that you were harmless since you touched us but didn't attack us nya."

"I was like, praising him nano."

"Nya!?"

Giving a sidelong glance at the two who began a Manzai routine, I sat down.

"Well, it's fine anyway. It's not something that'll trouble me if known, after all."

"R-, right nya. It's not like we'll be prejudiced against Boss because you're impotent or anything, nya."

"That's right. Like, whether it's an impotent Boss, or a normal Boss, Boss is Boss nano."

Impotent, impotent, stop freaking repeating it. It hurts, you know. Should I have kept it hidden after all?

"Shishou, do not worry about it. Let us live for dolls."

Zanoba said that and patted me on the shoulder. Julie tilts her head.

"Master, what is 'impotence'?"

"Mmm, it's when you cannot fulfill your duties as a man... Should I put it like that...? Even so, it's basically something unrelated to doll making."

"Hmmm."

Zanoba might have been trying to console me. I understand keenly that he picked his words carefully.

"Boss, I had thought that you were thinking about nothing but perverted things all day, but you were actually desperately trying to cure yourself nya... It's moving nya..."

"If there seems like something I can do, I'll cooperate nano. Like, only if you give me meat, though..."

Their sympathy feels a bit forced. How do you say it? It feels kind of different. I'm not going to fall in love with them or anything because of these words.

"Rudeus. Technically I've also undergone training for listening to the confessions of our believers. Though it's been said that I don't have much skill in it, I can at least do something like think about the problem together. If anything happens, I can give you some counsel."

Cliff-san's words were sincere and warm. I kind of understood Elinalise's feelings a little. No, I'm not a homo so I won't fall in love or anything, you know.

——

And like that, Cliff and Elinalise ended up going out. Honestly, I think that it'll be impossible for that Elinalise to continue enduring this. I absolutely don't think that Cliff will be able to endure Elinalise sleeping with other men, either. Though it's fine, eventually this relationship will completely collapse... Though I thought this, I didn't voice it.

And my sickness became something well known to those of the Special Class. Though I took a little damage, everyone did technically say that they'd cooperate.

Have I finally taken the first step...?

I want to hurry up and get better so I can flirt about with someone too.

——

-Supplement-

Cliff was under the impression that because of her curse, Elinalise was forced to have sex contrary to her desires, and courageously, so that no one would be able to tell, she acted the part of a slut; he was 『convinced』 that she was a tragic heroine.

Onigashima.

Biheiriru Kingdom, the Northern lands on the far eastern tip.

Even further east from there.

After crossing the ocean, that island is there.

Onigashima.

A small island called as such.

There lives an unique race known as the Ogre Race.

With dark brown hair and a horn on their head, a strong combat group of fighters lead by a Chief known as "Fierce God".

That is the Ogre Race.

They are a variety of Demon Race, but they didn't participate in the Human-Demon war or the Laplace campaign.

For that reason the people don't consider them a variety of Demon Race and recognize them as a similar race to the Elves and Dwarves.

Even though that's the case, because they fundamentally never leave Onigashima, their popularity is low.

The number of those who don't know about the existence of Onigashima is large.

They are a seclusive race.

The only human race they are connected with are those of the Biheiriru Kingdom.

Outsiders who enter within their territory are mercilessly attacked and destroyed.

However, that race as well openly welcomes guests who they recognize for themselves.

Currently, there's one such guest here.

He came here journeying on the ship of the Sea Race, but after approaching this island his interest was piqued so he came to land.

Through great fusses he came to be approved by the "Fierce God", and was a person treated as a guest.

He settled down on the comfortable Onigashima.

He talked with the frank and sociable "Fierce God", drank alcohol together with the Ogres, and occasionally participated in training with the young Ogres.

That sort of lifestyle continued for roughly two years.

To that guest, the time of several years is a period of time almost like an instant.

One day a letter arrived for that guest.

It was sent as an urgent job request in which an S rank adventurer sent out the letter in a hurry.

The contents were short and concise.

"Found the person being searched for in the Magic Triumvirate. Traveling towards Ranoa Kingdom Magic University several months after."

After seeing that letter the guest stood up.

After seeing the letter's content and that guest's face the "Fierce God" asked.

"Are you going?"

The guest nodded in an exaggerated way and responded as such.

"Humu. It won't be good if I don't get going soon."

The ogres who heard that each said.

That it would become lonely.

Please don't go.

Wouldn't it be fine to live here?

After being told as such the guest nodded with a "Humu."

"I would really like to do that. However, the life span of the human race is short, if I keep taking my time, slowly he might end up passing away. It was a short period but I enjoyed myself. We'll meet again."

Only the leader of the Ogres the "Fierce God" didn't try to restrain him.

He said just a single line, "Take care of yourself."

The words of the "Fierce God" that is the decision of the Ogres.

Even while feeling reluctance to part, the other Ogres obeyed his decision.

However, at least...

At least.. a final banquet.

In response to those words, the settlement of Ogres held a grand banquet.

The Ogres held a match where they often boasted of their skill similar to Sumo, as well as a number of drinking contests, the "Fierce God" and the guest both greatly enjoyed themselves.

And then, the guest set off feeling good.

A good humored man that one day suddenly came along and spent close to two years freeloading in the village.

He fought the "Fierce God", was defeated, but the next day he revived, he was defeated over and over again as he continued to revive, and then before one realized it he had come to get along with the Ogres, the immortal man.

A large man with jet black skin and six arms.

"Fuhahahahaha! Just you wait!"

He plunged towards the west.

A certain country was surprised over his sudden invasion and attacked with Advanced level magic,

A certain country was surprised over his sudden invasion and offered tribute.

However, he ignored everything.

He continued plunging forward to the west.

Passing the forest, overcoming the mountains, with a speed surpassing that at which the human race could relay information.

By the time the various countries set out to search for his objective, he had already passed through that country and arrived in the next.

West and further west.

With an overwhelming speed.

And then he arrived.

"Humu, it is here."

At the Magic University.

—Rudeus Point of View—

Since I entered the Magic University time has flown by, it's already been six months.

The season is autumn, an autumn of good harvest.

This season is extremely short.

However, it's an essential harvesting period for the sake of overcoming the bitter winter, unusually it's a season where festivals are thrown in the town as well...

And then in regards to the Beast Race it has a special implication of going into heat.

During this season the Beast race men and women all get restless.

It's not as if the Magic University has that many Beast race enrolled.

Even if you were to look at the 10,000 students, it would be at best 5%.

That's still around 500 people.

If you think about how vast the Magic University is then it's not all that many.

It's not all that many, but during this season you can catch sights of those few dueling in various places.

The ones dueling are men and women.

During this season the Beast race duel the opposite sex in order to become companions.

After the duel ends, they will end up flirting for several months, and then marry after.

It seems that the one who wins the duel becomes the Boss of that "family."

Well, it seems limited to just being a [Custom that has continued since the past.]

In regards to the Beast race, Rinia and Pursena are [flowers beyond reach].

In terms of combat ability they're at the top class among the Beast race at this school.

And then they are the princesses of the Dorudia race, so of course they would be popular.

Following the customs of the human race, they are regarded as adults at 15 years old, and a great number of Beast race have challenged them to duels.

Among them are even those who have gone out of their way to travel a long distance to come as well.

Outsiders are forbidden from entering.

Normally it would be a concern from the school's side to stop them.

But, during the in-heat period, since it's a reproduction custom, it's an extremely delicate problem.

If they were to forbid everything, there's the possibility that the Beast Race students would riot.

Therefore, from the school side, if you properly get permission, you can use "observing the grounds" as a pretext to enter even if you're not a student.

Well then, Rinia and Pursena.

In regards to the courtship of those two and winning a duel, that would in other words mean aiming at the patriarch seat of the Dedorudia race.

You won't become the patriarch right away, but at the time when the patriarch is chosen, you would without a doubt be included among the candidates.

Although, since they came all this way for the purpose of studying, it's not like they can just decide on their marriage themselves.

When they turned 15 years old they rejected all of the marriage proposals.

However, even after taking such an attitude, the number of Beast race warriors coming to propose never decreased.

They're popular.

Supposedly there were those among them that forcefully tried to attack them.

Nothing but people who think that as long as they can establish a relationship after the fact then it's fine.

Since that becomes the case, the two end up secluding themselves to their dorm rooms during this season.

Rejecting them is too much of a pain.

Even if they reject them they'll be attacked by starving men.

The female dorm can't be called safe, but at the very least if someone were to intrude on the dorm, all of the girls would drive them out.

Therefore, during this season the two didn't come out of their rooms.

Since that's the case, they took a vacation from homeroom as well.

I wonder if this is the so called physiological holiday.

{ C-Editor's note: Referring to absence of menstruation. }

The fact that it's the in-heat period would mean that the two are currently in such a state.

When I think that those two are getting all nyannyan-wanwan in their rooms I get a bit aroused as well.

Although, it's limited to just getting excited in my head.

I received a letter in my place from them stating, "We'll cause a bit of trouble for Boss, but we're depending on you after."

Even if you tell me you're depending on me after, I haven't done anything in particular.

I wonder if that means they want me to work as their proxy or something.

It's impossible since I don't even know what classes they show up to.

Furthermore, it's not just the Beast Race that goes into heat in autumn.

And then during this season the Magic University won't stand for rape-like incidents.

I guess you could call it an evil practice for those of mixed races.

I can agree with the firm security stance they take at each of the dorms.

If it's between the same race during heat then you could call it the so called natural providence, but if it comes down to a completely unrelated first year, they might be attacked without having any idea what is going on.

Of course, the action of rape is prohibited in the school rules.

For that reason, during this season there's security guards posted within the school.

Rape is no good, but if it's pushing someone down with "consent" during a duel then it's okay.

And attacking someone after they've rejected your challenge to a duel is strictly forbidden.

It seems it's that sort of feeling.

There was a warning about it even from the teacher in homeroom.

During this season you shouldn't carelessly accept duels, and anyone lacking confidence in their combat power should always remain together in groups when they move around.

Fitts-senpai worried about me as well and told me to be careful.

Since you're strong, there might be some women who come along and challenge you to a "mere training duel", but that is a lie, so after you reject it, no matter how much they provoke you don't accept it and quickly escape while being careful of your back.

Women in heat.

If it was the old me then I might have gone around dueling everyone right and left to build up a harem.

However, with this body that is being violated by illness, even if I did something like that it would just end up bitter.

The in-heat period.

It is something that is of no relation to me.

Look, what has relation to me are the two young ones over there.

The two who cleared things up and ended up becoming lovers, an elf and a human boy.

The eternally in-heat elf is sitting on the lap of the boy and studying together.

No really, from morning to night it's hot over there.

The heart bubbles are drifting over here...

However, putting aside Cliff, the way in which Elinalise acts looks the same as she does with other men to me.

Since I felt that it would be pitiful to report to Cliff, I won't say it out loud but...

Frankly, I can't see it as anything but an act.

I wonder if everything is all right between those two.

"Shisho, wouldn't it be a good time to start with a new work?"

While I was looking at those two, Zanoba started a conversation.

He was operating normally.

He knows nothing and doesn't care about the heat period, basically sums it up.

"A new work huh?"

The other day, in order to rehabilitate I started to create a 1/8 Eris, but for some reason when I started making it tears were coming out so I gave up midway.

Since then, somehow my skill has been dulled.

I wonder if it's a slump.

"That's right, who should we create?"

"We might as well just move away from people."

"Then, should we try making a Red Dragon?"

"Oh, come to think of it you once beat one didn't you?"

"That time was terrible, I thought I would die."

"Wawawa, how modest."

"...Master, what are you talking about?"

Since Julie was tilting her head, I told her about how I defeated a Red Dragon in my adventurer days.

And then, her cheeks flushed red and her eyes were sparkling.

After all, it seems like the children of this world like these sorts of stories.

She's not really receiving child-like treatment, but even then she's still six years old.

"Alright, then, I'll make a Red Dragon for Julie's sake."

"Mu...Shi..shisho, what about me? Won't you make anything for me?"

"If she's your disciple as well, shouldn't you say something about helping out?"

"..!! Ha..Shisho, even though my ability is poor I will help out!"

Even with my slightly bad pace, I'm operating normally as well.

My Elementary class Barrier lesson will end soon as well.

Next is well... these days I'm a bit worried over what class I should try taking.

I guess, it should be Intermediate level Detoxification.

However, up until now, I've never been troubled over Detoxification.

Just by remembering Elementary level I've more or less covered everything else, I wonder if Intermediate or above is necessary.

Or else maybe I should take Advanced level Healing.

As well as this, most things can be covered with just Intermediate, so I wonder if it's really necessary.

Or else, maybe I should look into the Summoning category, Enchanting class.

Enchanting is a kind of magic related to the production of Magic Tools.

Why something that has to do with production would be categorized as Summoning I don't really know but...

It might not be too bad to consider it a challenge into learning a new field.

Might as well just skip out on taking classes and increase the time I spend in the library.

The things in regards to the teleport incident have reached a bit of an impasse, but trying to learn some other race's languages might be interesting.

If I'm not going to take classes, then what about having Cliff teach me Divine-attack?

No, he's recently been stuck to Elinalise.

I don't really want to be thought of as a hindrance, I'll keep my distance for a bit.

Or else, maybe I should try looking into some other field of magic.

Horse-riding classes might be interesting as well.

While thinking like that the day continued on.

A peaceful day.

Is what I was thinking until...

"I recognize you as the A rank Adventurer who defeated a Stray Dragon, the lone horseman, Rudeus of the Quagmire! I challenge you to a customary courtship duel!"

While I was on the way to the library I was challenged to a duel.

After turning around what was reflected in my eyes was a beautiful girl.

A girl with dark skin and flowing dark blue hair that was gathered behind her.

In terms of age she should be 17 or 18.

Her mouth was tightly linked and her looks in a single word would be, dignified.

If I were to say it, then I guess it would be something like a female warrior.

Her clothes were an ultramarine color that stood out. I wonder if she likes blue.

Her chest was reasonable.

She seems to have quite the nice bit of muscle as well.

On her hip was a long sword with a curve that is commonly used by the Sword God style swordsmen.

Her clothes weren't a uniform, but swordsman-like clothes.

Such a girl was looking in my direction.

If I were to state it precisely, she was looking at the person in front of me with a surprised face.

She was looking at the untalented Beast race covered in fuzzy hair that challenged me to a duel.

That's right.

The one that said it was an untalented man.

No matter how you look at it he wasn't a magician, he was a dog-eared Beast Race with bulging muscles.

The girl was probably just passing by.

I think anyone would be surprised if a large man nearby suddenly said something like that.

It is that sort of season right now after all.

She probably was wondering if it was said to herself.

"Umm."

Well, putting aside the girl.

The problem is the man.

I'm a man and this guy is a man.

That would mean that I received a challenge to a duel from a man.

It's a huge problem.

"Isn't it that the courtship duels that are popular during this season?"

"Indeed!"

Ha?!

"Sorry about this, but, umm, even if I look like this I'm generally normal, so please excuse me from the homosexual stuff. Please allow me to humbly reject this offer."

"It seems there's a bit of a misunderstanding."

"Excuse me, since I have piano practice, I will now take my leave from this place if you please..."

After I rejected him, without listening to anything further I left the place.

I acted just as Fitts-senpai told me.

"Wait?!"

Is what I was going for, but the hairy man jumped up with a loud sound.

And then he jumped over me and landed in front of me.

It was a jumping strength almost like reverse joints.

He could become a Dragon Knight.

"You have no right to reject! My name is Buruku Adorudia! I seek marriage with Pursena with the intent to become the head of the Adorudia!"

"Pursena-senpai is currently in the dorm taking an in-heat holiday, so please ask over there."

After saying that Buruku shook his head and spat out an insult.

"According to the words left behind by Pursena-sama, I have identified you as the Boss of the group! I have heard of your fame from Gyes-dono! That act of freezing the entire forest during the rainy season! That ability that allowed you to kill a Red Dragon as a lone horseman! It's certainly a true ability appropriate for one that rules this school, you're not lacking as an opponent!"

Lone horseman, lone horseman you've been saying it since just now, but I travel by foot you know.

Well it's fine though...

"What will happen if I refuse?"

"As the boss of the group you have an obligation to accept the duel!"

Let's sort things out a bit.

In other words.

The other day after I defeated Rinia and Pursena in a duel, I've come to be known as their boss.

If you desire for the bitch under the boss, then defeating the boss is how it goes.

Then, if he were to defeat me, he would get his hands on Pursena as the prize.

It seems that accepting a duel is the obligation of the group's boss.

I didn't become the boss of that group of girls because I wanted to, but it seems that it doesn't matter.

It's the Animal Rule.

In other words, if I were to intentionally lose, I would be dismissed as the boss of the group, and Pursena would become this guy's bride.

After this, it would stand to reason that guys like this would no longer have a reason to come and challenge me to a duel.

"Now I advance... let's fight!"

Without waiting for my response, Buruku yelled out loudly and came leaping at me.

.....

.....

...

Well, what the.

He was all talk.

He came plunging at me from the front, caught his legs in a bog, and was knocked out with a rock bullet.

Around three seconds I'd say.

It seems I somehow or other defeated him reflexively, but after giving it some thought, there's really no need for me to lose intentionally.

It doesn't seem like Pursena intends to marry anyone for the time being as well.

In other words, what was written on the letter [We'll trouble you] is this sort of thing.

I don't really care how they just threw it onto me, but if the opponents are at this level then I can deal with them somehow or other, it should be fine I guess.

While I was thinking lightly about it as such, I was attacked five times on the way to the library.

They were all people calling out that they've waited for this day.

Rinia and Pursena are really popular.

I wonder what's so good about those two.

Their body?

No, it seems that many of them haven't even seen their face.

In other words, it's status.

The first guy did say he wanted to become the patriarch after all.

They want to become the leader that much huh.

Which area aviation staff officer are you.

However, it seems that they've already decided the order in line to duel.

The guys who tried to pick a fight with me on the way ended up being yelled at over skipping in line.

This and that all seems to be customs of the Beast Race.

The Beast Race really is all about their customs.

Really, these damn Beast Races...

However, as mysterious as it is, they didn't come raiding the inside of the library.

I guess they were told from the school's side not to act violently inside of the buildings.

Or else this might be another custom of the Beast Race.

I don't know, but in any case it's a shelter for a short while.

In the evening Fitts-senpai showed up in the library.

"Rudeus-kun, it's become something amazing outside, what have you done?"

He was giving me a look with a bit of blame in it.

"Nothing, it seems that if you want to take Rinia and Pursena as your bride you have to defeat me."

"What's that!?"

Since Fitts-senpai's brow dropped I explained it in detail.

It seems that since I defeated Rinia and Pursena they've come to recognize me as their boss.

In other words it seems to be something like if you defeat the boss then you get your hands on the girl.

After finishing the explanation, Fitts-senpai was making a bit of a sullen face.

"That shouldn't be the case. You aren't the patriarch of the Dedorudia race. You might have won over them once, but you shouldn't have the right to accompany them."

Hmm... After all that's true, huh.

That would be right wouldn't it?

If that were the case then I should have more freedom to do as I please with the bodies of those two.

"Even though that's the case, how are we supposed to make them give up?"

"Eh? Hnn?? Even if you say it, the Beast race won't stop during this season after all.."

Fitts-senpai put his hand to his chin and thought while nodding.

"In reality, there shouldn't be any need for you to be their opponent, but even they would give up and return if they are defeated in a duel."

"...Does that mean in the end I still have to accept the duel?"

"That's what it comes down to."

You sure say that easily.

I don't know how many there are, but it seems there's at least 30 people lined up outside.

Almost all of them are untalented men who want to become the patriarch.

And that I have to defeat all of them...

"I don't wish for such a violence-filled daily life."

"I know that. However, if you don't do something you won't be able to leave here. And even if you keep hiding they might get impatient and come inside, we'll be in trouble if they act violently in the library."

"I guess so."

Well then, what a troublesome thing.

"Dueling with a bunch of dirty men huh..."

Who benefits from this I wonder.

"Umm, it's not as if they're all men, it seemed like there was one girl as well."

"Seriously? Was she a cute girl?"

"Rudeus-kun?? Will you accept the duel from that girl?"

"No, that can't be."

I somehow or other shook my head to that threatening glance.

However, I would like to see her face.

I wonder where she came to know about me.

"But, doesn't it make you curious?"

If they were trying to get close with good intention, then of course that would make me curious.

Of course, having them accompany me somewhere afterwards would be a talk for after my illness is cured.

"Is that so? You're curious? Hnn.."

...I don't know why but for some reason it seems Fitts-senpai is in a bad mood.

I wonder if it was because he told me not to carelessly accept duels.

Ah, that's right.

I'm sure, Luke was guilty of something like that in the past and he was left to deal with it.

That's why he's irritated at me for thinking about it so lightly.

"However, if it's become this sort of serious matter, can't the student council do something about it?"

"It can't be helped during the in-heat season. If we were to forbid it, it would become something even more terrible."

It seems that the student council is quite busy with various things during this season as well.

There are many students who rampaged, there are also guys who act violently outside of the school grounds.

Taking advantage of the strife during the duel, it seems there are guys who attack in the darkness as well.

It seems the students attached to the student council protect the students who have low combat ability from such fellows.

In small groups they patrol the school and if any misconduct occurs they stop it on the spot.

Supposedly Fitts-senpai as well, after he showed his face here was going to enter into that sort of patrol rotation.

"If the student council is doing that kind of thing then save me as well."

"Rudeus-kun you should do something yourself, you can right?"

Fitts-senpai's tone today is somehow a lot colder than usual.

I wonder if I did something to get on his nerves...

No.

It could be that he's remembered the examination from a while back.

Fitts-senpai said he didn't mind that I won.

However, here I'm sneakily running away.

I'm sure if Fitts-senpai is known to have lost to a coward, his fame would fall.

I've depended on Fitts-senpai in a variety of ways.

I don't really want to do it, but here I should give it my best for once.

"I understand, for the sake of Fitts-senpai's honor, let's go with massacring those guys."

"Ki...killing them is no good!"

"I know that, it was a joke."

Even though it's called a duel, we won't go as far as taking lives.

There's that sort of unwritten law.

Even though I say that, it might be that there's a strong one mixed in with them.

I can't let my guard down.

Let's go while bracing myself.

Since the plan had been decided we went outside.

There, an unexpected spectacle was spreading out.

"...What the heck is this?"

A large number of Beast Race men were scattered about.

It was exactly a scene appropriate for the expression, "heaps of corpses."

They were all Beast Race men.

There were a variety of shapes and sizes.

The shape of their ears were also various.

There really is quite a variety among the beast race.

There were also guys wearing a uniform, but there were many who weren't wearing one as well.

Ah, there is one girl.

It was that swordsman-like girl from just now.

I wonder if she got dragged into it.

Or else maybe she fell for me?

And then in front of my thinking a single man's laughter resounded.

"Fuhahahahaha!!"

And there he was in the wasteland of those heaps of corpses.

A single man was standing there.

That guy was holding onto the final one and letting out a loud laughter filled voice.

"For you to challenge this one! It seems you do not know your place, but it seems that there are many with backbone gathered at the Magic University!"

Fitts-senpai and I were dumbfounded.

After all, we came outside and suddenly this?

Heaps of corpses and something amazing is standing there you know?

"..Umm."

That guy tossed the last one aside and looked over here.

"Oh~, they said if I don't want to wait in line then I should try to defeat them, so I tried it and you really came out soon after didn't you! Splendid splendid! One who protects their promises is greatly desired!"

That obsidian-like skin and six arms, you can recognize it as a Demon Race at a glance.

The top pair was folded, the middle pair was stretched towards us, and the lower pair was holding onto the hips.

Long purple hair that stretched down to his waist.

"This one's name is Demon King Badigadi!"

Demon King.

Speaking of Demon Kings is it that, the ones that go around abducting young women from villages in order to eat them without a problem in a sexual meaning.

The ones that as long as they deal with the occasional assassin known by the name of hero, they can do whatever they please.

No, that is fine.

The problem is, that's right.

What is a Demon King doing here?

"That Foresight eye! You are Rudeus Greyrat huh! I've heard about you from my Fiancée, Great Demon Empress Kishirika!"

That guy came walking up in front of me.

And then a single line.

"I challenge you to a duel!"

If I offer up a young dog and cat girl as a sacrifice I wonder if he'll let me go...

"Godzilla vs Rudeus"

"Suicidal Demon King B. Gadi"

"Troubled by being surrounded by puppies!? Heart pounding heat season of the Magic University!"

Demon King Invasion.

That report spread like lightning to the countries in the vicinity of the Magic University.

Invasion and Information.

Normally the information should come first.

However, since the Demon King's movement speed was tremendously fast, the time when each country received the information and the time when the Demon King arrived in the land of his objective were almost simultaneous.

Each of the nations became flustered in a panic.

Those known as Demon Kings, fundamentally never leave the Magic Continent.

The Demon Kings of the Truce Faction and the Armed Factions almost completely died out during the Laplace Campaign.

Therefore, they had already thought that the Magic Continent had no interest in fighting, nothing but the Moderate Faction and Conservation Faction Demon Kings remained.

However, even though they are called the Moderate Faction and Conservation Faction, they are still those who hold enough power to reign over the Magic Continent.

If for some reason or other they started to act violently, they would most likely spread around an overwhelming amount of destruction.

After hearing about the invasion of the Demon King Badigadi the three countries of Ranoa, Nerisu, and Basheranto started to move their internal knight groups.

Simultaneously Adventurers were gathered up.

However, there was some distance until they reached the University.

Magic City Sharia where the Ranoa Magic University is located.

The Adventurer's Guild and Magic Guild located there.

And then the three countries combined the knight group that resided there.

They gathered up their insufficient military force and encircled the Magic University.

If it comes down to it, they must slow him down until reinforcements from the three countries come.

However, the Demon King's objective was completely unknown.

His shape and appearance were reasonably famous.

Jet black skin and six arms.

Demon King of Immortality, Badigadi.

Living since before the Laplace Campaign, one of the ancient Demon Kings.

His ability is just as the name sounds, "Immortality."

Since he is a part of the Moderate Faction, there are few of those who knew of his combat power.

According to one text, it is said that he fought against that Laplace as well.

If that is true then it would mean not even that Laplace could destroy him.

Why and for what reason would that Demon King appear at the Magic University.

And why or what reason would he knock innocent ordinary students and Beast Race people unconscious.

Various countries, as well as the Magic University would only come to know of that reason a bit later.

—Rudeus Point of View—

Currently, I'm in the training field for Advanced magic used in the Magic University.

I'm in the center of a very spacious schoolyard, unarmed, confronting Badigadi.

Standing rather confidently with my arms crossed, legs spread wide, jaw pointing down, but inside I'm currently fearing for my life.

Shouldn't that be obvious?

Being glared at by a large man with pitch black skin, I don't know how anyone could remain calm.

Certainly, recently I've been thinking, "I wonder if I might actually be a bit strong?"

But, when it comes down to a Demon King, it's not just a matter of them being a bit stronger.

I feel like I've had the nail struck in just when I was getting ahead of myself.

Or rather quite plainly I already want to run away.

I continued to run everyday as training for the sake of this day.

I want to run away as far as my endurance and magic power will take me.

"..."

If I look behind me there are a large number of onlookers lined up.

Men and women and teachers as well.

They're all looking in my direction.

If I were to run away here, gone with the wind, I wonder what they would think about it.

No, I'm already at the point where I don't really care either way, but I can't help but feel like I've lost the timing to run away.

Suddenly a single person appears from the onlookers running over towards me with a quick pace.

He was a man that wore a somewhat suggestive hair accessory that suited him well.

..It seems there are wigs in this world as well.

"I've heard about the situation from Jinas. I'm sorry about this but could you please try to stall for time for a short while. Currently, we're gathering up our combat power."

He briefly left me with those words and returned.

Rather, who was that fellow just now.

I have the feeling I've seen him somewhere...

However, I understood the meaning of his words.

I don't know if Jinas is aware of the situation or what and why this is going on.

However, it seems if I stall for time they'll somehow help me out.

After all at times like these, people with authority are strong.

"Humu, still not ready yet?"

"I think it will just be a bit longer."

Badigadi was waiting with all of his jet black arms folded.

Currently, I've asked Fitts-senpai to retrieve my, Aqua HartiaArrogant Water Dragon King.

It seems like he's willing to follow my request and asked to wait until then.

In any case, he's slow.

It's not like there's all that much distance between the library and the dorms.

I don't remember leaving it in a strange place either.

Just as always, I've left it leaning against the side of the bed with a cloth covering the top of it.

I thought it would be quickly discovered.

"Humu, I always thought the human race were impatient and in a hurry, but it doesn't seem like you're in a hurry. As expected of one who has been acknowledged by this one's fiancée."

"Fiancée?? Umm, Kishirika..sama was it."

After asking that Badigadi nodded with an, "Humu."

Great Demon Empress Kishirika Kishirisu.

It's not like I've forgotten.

The one who gave me my Demon Eye.

I never thought she was the real thing at the time, she abruptly appeared and then abruptly left so it was more like I was just dumbfounded.

However, I wonder why that fiancé is appearing now.

It can't be that like the Beast Race, he came to propose marriage.

"I only really talked to Kishirika-sama for a very short time. Although I did receive the demon eye."

"Kishirika was giving you a high appraisal saying, amazing-amazing. It's been quite a while since I last saw her speaking with so much excitement you know. Even the tolerant I felt a small bit of jealousy."

Badigadi said that with one of his eyebrows raised, grinning broadly.

Jealousy?

Even though I can't remember a single thing worth being jealous over.

What is it, what did I do to bother him.

Could it be, that time when I was half-joking and requested doing her once?

No, that was just an attempt.

She said it was impossible because she was engaged...

Ah, shit, this guy is the fiancé she was talking about that time.

"I'm just a small fry. Nothing but a pitiful lone young mouse. I..I'm not something so amazing that Demon King-sama should feel jealous of. I'm sure Kishirika-sama was just exaggerating everything a bit as she said it."

While hiding my internal unrest I gave an exceedingly calm answer.

And then that guy laughed.

He laughed in an extremely strange way.

"Fuhahahahaha, don't be modest. I've heard about that enormous magic power dwelling within your body."

Enormous magic power.

Even if you tell me that.

I've only recently started to realize that it was overwhelmingly more than others.

However, no matter how you put it, it shouldn't be enough to make a Demon King jealous..Right?

No, but come to think of it, that time, I kind of have the feeling she said something like that.

What was it she said again?

I could only remember it as a laughable memory.

"Umm, it seems that my magic power is only a little bit greater than others."

"Fuhahahaha! That's right, just a bit!"

Badigadi was laughing for a short while.

However, he suddenly stopped with the loud laughter and then lowered his body to the ground with a thump.

"It would be fine for you to sit."

I did as I was told and sat as well.

Even while sitting Badigadi was huge.

I guess you could call it, a brawny structure.

I want this kind of muscle as well.

"It seems you don't understand the meaning of being told you were amazing by that Great Demon Empress Kishirika Kishirisu."

"..Even if you tell me that."

"There's a guy out there with some amazing magic power. Even more amazing than Laplace. For her to say something like that, you're the first."

Laplace. The Demon God was it.

Even if you tell me I have magic power more amazing than the Demon God, it doesn't really come to me.

Certainly I've almost never actually run out of magic power, but it's not like my physical ability is particularly high or anything.

"The Demon God Laplace's aggregate magic power was top class throughout history. In other words, you have the top class aggregate magic power in the world that you can boast of."

"I'm sure you're just joking."

While saying that my chest was dancing a bit.

At any rate, the one saying it was a Demon King.

The other side has actual results.

I have the kind of feeling where if a Pro Player said "actually you have talent."

"This one does not know of the authenticity. Kishirika generally goes with whatever works after all. Unexpectedly, I might have misheard something as well."

While saying that Badigadi made a bitter expression.

I wonder if he has some sort of recollection.

No, but if it's that Demon Empress-sama then I can imagine something like that.

"Certainly, in the past I underwent training in order to increase my magic power, but top class is going too far I'm sure. If they underwent the same training as I did then I'm sure anyone could be number one in the world."

"Humu, normally it's something that never happens."

Normally it would never happen.

Then, I wonder if it's something that's possible if they reincarnate from another world like me.

Or else, did I receive some kind of cheat from the Human God [Hitogami] when I wasn't paying attention.

I'll try asking.

"Come to think of it, Demon King-sama, there's one thing I'd like to try asking you."

"What is it, feel free to ask anything."

"That is, the person who I'm about to speak of is absolutely not someone I'm the subordinate or follower or that kind of thing, therefore, I'd like for you not to suddenly attack me."

"Didn't you say to wait, Demon Kings don't break promises."

An Indian doesn't lie.

{ C-Editor's note: This became a catch phrase in Japan after the movie The Lone Ranger played there. Sidekick Tonto says 'White man lies. Indian does not lie.' }

That better be the truth.

Don't attack me. Absolutely don't attack me.

"Have you ever heard of the name Hitogami?"

"....You, where did you hear of that name?"

"He comes out in my dreams."

Badigadi unfolded the top pair of arms and stroked his chin.

I wonder if he knows something.

"Humu, I see.. In a dream huh."

"Do you know anything?"

After asking that Badigadi gave it some thought for a short while.

But, he nodded with a "Humu." and shook his head.

"I see now. No clue! I have the feeling I've heard it somewhere before, but I can't remember! At the very least, it's a name I haven't heard about it in these past several hundred years!"

"I see, thank you very much."

Speaking of several hundred years, how very vague.

"Humu, if I remember I'll inform you! Fuhahahaha!"

"Please do."

"What a boring guy you are, you should laugh as well. Fuhahahahaaha!"

Badigadi is a person who laughs so enjoyably.

Since just now, even though nothing particularly interesting has been said, the laughs just haven't stopped.

Suddenly, I remembered the time when I met Ruijerd.

That time as well, through laughing with him we deepened our friendship.

Laughing could be considered a common language in this world.

The other side has come to talk while laughing.

It would be rude to not return the smile.

Alright, I'll laugh.

"Fu..hahahahahaha!"

"That's good, that's good, Kishirika said it as well. No matter the time you should just laugh! I remember, the last time Kishirika died as well and was laughing in a loud voice, fuhahahaahah!"

Badigadi said that and laughed.

His appearance is frightening, but it seems that this man isn't all that bad of a fellow.

"Hn?"

Around the time when I was laughing with Badigadi it seems like the onlookers from behind have suddenly gotten noisy.

After turning around to take a look it seems like someone is rustling around.

After clearing my ears to hear, I was able to catch some of the conversation.

"Let go! If I don't deliver the staff!"

"Stop it! After you deliver that staff the duel will start!"

"What are you going to do if the duel starts without the staff? Will you leave him to die!?"

"Tha..that is."

"Leave this to myself!"

"Ah...Zanoba-kun!"

"Zanoba Shirone is it! Hey, let go, let me go... owwowowowo!"

Fitts-senpai came flying over the onlookers.

And then with an amazing speed he came running here.

Those are some unreasonably fast legs.

Probably, three times faster than me.

But, he isn't red and doesn't have horns or anything?

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Mobile Suit Gundam character Char Aznable. }

"Ha..ha..Sorry, Rude...Rudeus-kun. The teachers got in my way."

Fitts-senpai was breathing roughly while carrying the staff.

"Se..senpai your legs are fast aren't they."

"Eh?? Ha..shoes, are a magic item bestowed with magic power after all.."

After hearing that I look at the boots senpai always wears.

Is that so, they were a magic item bestowed with magic power was it.

It could be that the mantle he's always wearing is a magic item as well.

This person, he never takes off the mantle even when it seems hot out after all.

"Could it be those sunglasses as well?"

"Ha..ha...these as well..yea..no... that is, a secret so.."

Fitts-senpai laughed with a bit of an Eh~

I wonder why this person's laughing face is this cute.

I'm feeling my heart pound.

"Fu...Yes, Rudeus-kun, give it your best.. but don't overdo it. If you don't think you can win, even if you say sorry and run away, it's an opponent where no one will say anything. Don't worry about some kind of strange pride, at least your life, right?"

I received the Aqua HartiaArrogant Water Dragon King from Fitts-senpai.

It's been quite a while since I last seriously fought while holding this guy.

Let's give it our best, partner Charlene.

As a present for the other world I'll tell you.

That after we return we'll get married and have some Pineapple Salad.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Macross TV series where the pineapple salad is a symbol of death flags for characters. }

I removed the cloth wrapping my Aqua HartiaArrogant Water Dragon King.

I understood that Fitts-senpai held his breath.

Some feelings of playing a bit of a prank sprouted.

"..Fitts-senpai, look at the magic stone at the end of this, what do you think of this?"

"Am..amazing, big??"

"!"

Somehow, just now a bit, I felt a bit of a shock around the back of my hips.

I wonder what that was.

No, let's stop with the jokes here.

Badigadi was standing up and rotating his shoulders.

I wonder if I've managed to stall for some time.

Wouldn't it be impossible to hold him off with conversation until the military force gathers?

Fitts-senpai reluctantly returned.

It would have been fine for you to stay here and back me up though.

Rather, how about saving me...

"Are you ready?"

"If possible I would prefer to just keep talking while laughing like this."

"Fuhahahahaha! We can do that again later!"

Does that mean he doesn't intend to take my life?

No, he's a person with a kind of vague feeling to him.

He might think I'll be fine since my aggregate magic power is large and just happens to kill me like that.

It might have been better to get a few more words in just now.

That I'd like to go with an exchange that spares my life.

Badigadi stood loosely with his hands at his hips.

It seems he doesn't intend to commence attack.

I wonder if he's waiting for some kind of signal.

For the time being I'll open my foresight eye.

"..Huh?"

I couldn't see anything with my foresight.

In the place where Badigadi was standing, nothing was standing there.

"What are you making a surprised face about...? Oh, I see. You immediately started using the Demon Eye you got from Kishirika. However, that's unfortunate. Demon eyes don't work on me."

He carelessly said it and Badigadi snorted with a Hmphm.

Seriously.

Demon eyes don't work huh.

As expected of a Demon King.

However, if this is the case then it's bad.

The probability that I won't be able to barely avoid a fatal wound is increasing.

My physical ability isn't all that high.

The chance that I might get hit in a bad place increased.

"Demon King-sama."

"Badi is fine. I asked you to laugh and those who honestly laugh are permitted to call me by that name."

"Badi-sama. I'd like to make one suggestion."

"What is it?"

"Even if I were to lose, somehow please at least leave me my life."

After saying that, Badigadi broke out into laughter.

"Fuhahahahaha! Pleading for one's life before you even start! What an interesting guy!"

"Life is meant to be treated preciously."

"Humu, that is true. The human race quickly dies after all! I hear there are many who think as such!"

Badigadi continued to laugh.

"However, even while you possess such a tremendous amount of magic power, it seems you don't have any confidence in your power!"

"Since two years prior a person named something like the Dragon God just had me on the verge of death after all."

After saying that, Badigadi's laughing voice instantly stopped.

"By Dragon God, you mean Dragon God Orsted? After fighting that guy, you survived?"

"I was on the verge of death. If he hadn't left me alive on some sort of whim, I would be a ghost right now."

Badigadi's face became serious.

This is bad.

Since Hitogami's name was alright I felt a bit relieved.

It seems Orsted's name was no good either.

"Did you manage to leave even a bit of wound on that Dragon God during the fight?"

"Eh? Yeah, though it was just to the degree of some skin peeling off on the back of the hand."

"...."

Badigadi completely sealed his mouth.

A scary face.

Le..let's laugh.

"Then, I'll make one suggestion from my side."

"Wh...what is it?"

I made a serious face while asking Badigadi.

"Just a single hit."

"...?"

"Fire off one shot of your ultimate technique at me. That's right, it's fine to use what you used to wound the Dragon God. I will receive that and if you manage to do any damage through my Fighting Spirit it's your win. If there's no damage then it will be my victory, how does that sound?"

Yeah.

It's a suggestion just as I'd wish for it to be.

Splendid.

They're considerably favorable terms.

Moreover, we can end it without me being hit.

I wonder if it's fine.

"But, I wonder if in that case, wouldn't I have too much of an advantage?"

"Advantage? Advantage you say? Humu, that is true isn't it! Then, if in the case your attack does almost nothing, I'll perform a counterattack. Just one attack that is!"

I have the feeling I dug my own grave.

But, I mean what if that single attack goes through my heart?

Let's stop already, I don't want to dig my grave any further than this.

I don't want anymore holes opened up in my chest.

"I understand. Well then, let's go with that."

"Humu."

While saying that I prepared my staff.

I packed as much magic power as I possibly could into my staff.

What I'm producing is a Rock Bullet.

However, I'll make it even harder than the one I used on Orsted.

That time I was barehanded, one handed, and created it in an instant.

This time there's the staff as well.

The power should be several times greater.

Formation.

Refine the magic power, harder, even harder.

The foundation is the same as when creating a figurine.

Just, without thinking about its pliability, just make it harder.

Sharpening as much as possible in a spindle shape.

With notches almost like a drill attached.

And then apply a rotation to that.

A high speed rotation as fast as possible.

Nothing but spinning.

Even I don't know exactly how many times it's rotating per second.

All that's left is the firing speed.

Magic power should be worked into here as well.

Set it forth at the fastest speed possible.

There's never been a time where I focused this much magic power into a Rock Bullet.

It takes some time to pack the magic power into it, I'm sure it could almost never be used in actual combat.

Even if I were to use it, it would just be overkill on most monsters.

However, if it's a Demon King, then they might be able to endure it.

I'd like to at least leave some damage.

I don't want to be hit.

"Then, here I come."

"Humu! Come!"

Fire!

I heard a whistling sound.

There was no recoil.

I don't know why but no reactions exist from magic.

However, as natural as it is, an impact occurs.

The Rock Bullet made a loud bang sound as it crashed into the standing Badigadi, his upper body was shattered into very small pieces that went flying, his six arms were disassembled and scattered, even just his lower body was sent flying backwards several tens of meters and then fell over.

"....Eh?"

He's not moving an inch.

I timidly, slowly walked towards where the lower half of his body went.

And then my eyes fell onto his lower body with it's internal organs flooding out.

There was no blood flowing out.

I wonder if it's because he's a Demon King.

I thought he was a guy without tears who could only laugh.

Could it be that he was a guy with neither blood nor tears.

"....Eh?"

No, it can't be.

Eh?

It's a lie right???

He died?

I didn't understand very well what was going on.

After taking a look behind me, it was silent and still as death.

Everyone was looking over here.

The gazes hurt.

No one was moving, not even a quiver.

Swallowing their saliva.

A loud gulp sound came from my throat.

Di...did I kill him???

No, I mean, it's a lie right.

I mean, No, why.

Even though he was that full of confidence.

Eh?

I mean, he's the Immortal Demon King right.

Eh?

He was full of confidence and said to come at him with just one hit.

Eh, Eh?

Slowly and timidly, I turned around once more.

I was going to confirm what I was guilty of.

"Fuhahahaha! My great resurrection!"

I was close to firing off another Rock Bullet.

There, a half-sized Badigadi was standing.

He was about the same height as me, but the large size of his face hadn't changed.

Therefore I was getting an unbalanced impression.

Putting aside the matter of his size.

"Ah, you survived."

I felt relieved.

I thought I had become a murderer for a bit there.

That's great, that the opponent wasn't a human.

"Fuhahahahaha, I thought I was going to die! But, humu, I see now, I get it well. Choosing not to fight was the correct answer! If we had fought seriously, all around here would have become a wasteland after all!"

Badigadi was laughing with a Fuhahahaha.

On his side, his six arms were crawling up and combining with Badigadi.

Badigadi's height continued to bulge larger.

But, he didn't return to his previous size.

"Oh, it flew considerably far didn't it!? It seems that it will take a bit of time in order to return to normal!"

It seemed that Badigadi was a bit excited.

"It's your victory, Rudeus! It's fine for you to call yourself Hero!"

"No, I'd rather refrain from that."

"Then at least let out a cry of victory! Fuhahahaha!"

While saying that Badigadi took my right hand.

He grabbed the hand holding my staff and raises it upward.

Almost like a Boxing Champion.

I wonder if it was the decision for a win.

It was a conclusion that I don't really understand.

"Ka??"

However, if he says that it's my win, then it's probably a win.

"I won....nnn!"

The onlookers were all still stuck in the dead of silence.

I don't really get it but they were all dead silent.

Shortly after confirming that, Badigadi nodded to himself.

"They're really a lot that doesn't go with the flow. Well then, I'll have you let me get one hit in."

Is what he said.

"Eh!!?"

That's different from our promise!

Just as I was thinking that, his fist caught my face.

With just one hit.

Just, when it came to him, he counts three fists as one hit.

In the situation where my arm was being held onto I couldn't even defend.

I was knocked unconscious with three hits.

This damn lying Demon King...

After that, it seems Badigadi was taken away somewhere by the middle aged man with the hair accessory from just before, a middle aged ikemen type man in armor, and an old man in a robe.

I guess they're having some kind of talk among important people.

I resurrected from my unconsciousness after Fitts-senpai used healing magic.

After that, I was brought to and warmly welcomed into a staff room by Jinas.

After receiving some tea and cakes I took a single breath.

Jinas didn't talk about it very much.

It seems, that he couldn't really understand the situation all that well either.

A Demon King suddenly came in and knocked out the consciousness of some students and outsiders.

Then he challenged me to a duel and after declaring me the winner he hit me and knocked me unconscious.

It's not like you can understand the situation just by knowing that much.

Also, it seems that there were no deaths among the students that were knocked out by the Demon King.

In the first place Badigadi is part of the Moderate Faction, so that means he won't especially go out of his way to kill people.

In regards to his objective, it seems the important people are investigating it from here on.

It seems that the accessory middle aged man was this school's Principal.

What was his name again? That's right, the Wind King class magician Georg.

I did see him during the time of the entrance ceremony.

The ones taking part in the talks seem to be the leader of the three countries' knight group which came to protect this town and the leader of the Magic Guild.

The four were gathered together and currently talking about various things.

"However, as expected of Rudeus-san. To finish off the Demon King with a single pre-emptive attack! And then to be recognized by the Demon King??! The Principal said that even though you were "The Quagmire" as just a lone adventurer stalling for time would be the best you can do. However, we never could have imagined it would turn out like this! After reaching this age I can't remember ever having gotten so excited over such a scene before!"

Jinas couldn't hide his excitement and was saying something like that.

It seems, they don't know about the contents of what we talked about prior to the duel.

That Badigadi intentionally took on the magic for example or that even if it had been ineffective it would have ended with that.

A short while after being looked at with eyes of respect by Jinas I was released.

For the time being, I was told to be on standby in the dorm until various things are decided.

After I left the staff room, Zanoba came running up to me.

"Oh~, Shisho, I was watching. As expected isn't it. No, I guess I should say it's only natural."

Zanoba was praising me like that but I shook my head.

"He just lent me his chest and I took it."

Certainly the attack was effective, but the opponent didn't evade or defend.

And then from there, there's that regeneration ability.

If we were to fight seriously, I can't imagine that it would just pass with my win.

"You're being modest. Isn't just landing a hit on a Demon King an amazing thing?"

Zanoba said that while laughing.

Julie looked at me with eyes of even greater fear.

I'm sure even from a distance it looked like a splatter.

I've shown her something frightening.

On my way back to the dorm I ran into a considerably glowing Elinalise and Cliff.

"Oh my Rudeus, what was the disturbance about?"

"Umm, what were you guys doing?"

"Exactly what you think we were doing."

Elinalise was laughing with a "hohoho", and Cliff went bright red and got angry with a, "Don't say anything unnecessary!"

It seems that the two were opening an adult meeting while the Demon King was invading.

They sure are happy.

"Just now, Badigadi-sama challenged me to a duel and I somehow managed to win."

"Eh!! That guy has already come here!?"

....Already?

What the heck do you mean by already?

"Did you know? That he would come?"

"Yes, but he was being restrained by the Ogres, it seemed he wanted to stay there for a little while so I went on ahead myself. Look, those sorts, they're pretty loose with time right? Which is why I thought he wouldn't move for another 10 years or so? In reality, the time when we separated was two years ago after all.."

If you've lived for denominations in the thousands of years, I guess your sense of time would deviate.

In my previous life, even though I passed thirty years, time felt like it passed quite quickly.

The denomination is just a bit large.

"But, he was a good guy right?"

"He didn't seem like a bad person."

Among the nobles and royalty that I've met he was a top class good person.

He laughs well after all.

He did break his promise, but if you think of the difference between one hit and one strike then that is fine as it is.

"Hey, what are you talking about?"

"Oh my oh my, Cliff you, are you jealous? It's alright, right now, the only one whom my heart can love is just you."

"No, not that, ah, don't stick so close, Rudeus is watching, isn't he?"

"I'm showing him."

Since they had started flirting, I dispersed from that location.

From behind I heard a loud voice yelling, "There's no way a Demon King would come to a place like this, right?"

I thought the same until just a short while ago.

Fitts-senpai was waiting at the entrance to the dorm.

After seeing my face he made an indescribable face.

After all, I wonder if he is excited as well.

His cheeks were red and he was tightly holding his hands.

A feeling sort of like he saw something amazing, but the impression isn't coming out.

"Rudeus-kun is am..amazingly strong isn't he!"

An average impression.

That sort of word floated into mind.

"I couldn't have imagined you would do it in a single hit!"

"A single hit, since we had decided on such rules for victory and defeat, I used the strongest magic I could in terms of power."

"The strongest?... Huh, isn't that the same thing you used during the time of the examination against me right, that amazing one right?"

"Yeah, it's a Rock Bullet. Although I had 'accumulated' a considerable amount into it."

"Even though it's just intermediate magic, if you master it it'll have that much power!?"

Fitts-senpai raised his voice in admiration with a "Oh~" and started making a Rock Bullet that has a rotation and fired it.

A whistling sound let out and it pierced into the ground far away.

He's quite good to reproduce something he's only seen once or twice.

However, it didn't have as much power as mine.

"I don't really have the intention to master it though."

"Are you normally using nothing but earth magic?"

"I guess so, at one period it was nothing but water, but at some point it became nothing but earth."

"After all! Since we're using the same system of magic, that should mean I can get better at it right."

I wonder if that's the case.

No, I have the feeling I did gradually get better at making the figurines.

"..I, guess so. I wonder if you call it precision getting higher."

"However, the consumed magic power will increase as well right!"

"That's right. During the times when I'm making dolls it's considerably difficult."

Fitts-senpai seemed very happy.

Come to think of it, I haven't had very many opportunities to talk about voiceless incantations with Fitts-senpai.

"Also, sorry, I'm sure you're tired. I'm sorry for holding you back. Today you should rest at ease."

"Ah, yes."

After saying that Fitts-senpai ran towards the school building.

I wanted to talk for a bit longer, but well it's fine.

It's immediately after that incident after all.

I'm sure he's busy with the student council as well.

I returned to my own room.

I lean my staff against the wall.

Things about the Demon King and what not, today was difficult.

My mental and physical fatigues are both building up, so I lay down on the bed.

I'm somehow tired...

After that sort of thing happened, a month has passed by in a flash.

The Magic Triumvirate talked with Badigadi and it seems they decided to treat him as a state guest.

In response, to apologize for the trouble he caused, Badigadi decided to lend an arm to the Magic Guild for researching immortality.

Furthermore he ended up participating as a temporary martial arts adviser for the combined knight group.

And then...

Next homeroom.

The two senpai came out from the dorm.

Since Badigadi put order to all of the Beast Races, it seems they became able to come to class.

"As expected of boss nya, thank you nya. I'll treat you to something next time nya."

"But, I couldn't have possibly imagined that a Demon King would come nano. We're such devilish women nano. You did well in protecting us. In return you're free to grope the chest, of Rinia that is."

"Thank you very much."

Since I received the privilege of groping the chest, without reservation I'll grope them.

Rinia's that is.

"Ginya!"

She scratched my face.

Even though she said it was fine.

Even though she said she would treat me.

That's cruel nya.

It's stingy.

If it's a lady then all of them have them, isn't just a bit fine?

"Shisho is considerably open to women but, however, I've heard one uncertain story."

"Hey, stop Zanoba, you're not allowed to say anymore than that! Look, that matter!"

"..Oh, that's right isn't it, please excuse me."

Recently, Cliff's seat has become quite close.

It seems he hears stories about me from Elinalise sometimes.

I don't know what they're talking about, but it seems they are reasonably good rumors.

Somehow, it seems to be talk about sympathy, it may be or may not.

It seems that the reason why I ended up being rejected by Eris has become because of the illness.

Well, it's fine though.

The things about Eris are already fine, I'm over them??!

This past month, Cliff and Elinalise's public flirting gradually decreased.

Even though I say that, it seems they haven't separated yet.

Once in every two or three days Cliff comes in tired.

I'm sure he's being squeezed out.

If she's not allowed to flirt in public, I wonder if they properly talked together.

Rather, I wonder if that isn't a hindrance to their studies.

Well, I'll leave things of the two to themselves.

It's not really a problem that I have any say on.

I'm a bit jealous.

"...Grand master, I don't have enough magic power to make this hard part, please make it."

Julie is continuing to make dolls everyday with diligence.

Recently we've been teaching her workmanship at the same time.

Although, since that side isn't our main expertise, Zanoba got a dwarf in his year to help out.

We weren't told anything but an outline of information in regards to Demon King Badigadi.

Badigadi said he came this far because he was jealous of me.

In other words, that would mean I have some level of responsibility remaining for the problem I wonder.

No, I want to think that Jinas somehow cleared up things like that.

He's the one who scouted me after all.

And then at that time, the door suddenly opened.

Excluding Silent, all of the Special Students were in attendance.

It's still too early for the teacher to come.

It can't be, Silent is showing their face in home room?

And the instant I thought that.

"Fuhahahahaha!"

The loud laughter was resounding through the classroom.

And then he came into the classroom.

Magnificently, without a care about what others think.

And then he stopped on the platform and looked over us.

"The Immortal Demon King Badigadi has arrived!"

That's a lie right.

He's wearing a uniform!? This guy.

—

And then he entered the Magic University as an advertisement.

Without specifically planning to learn or research anything, but it seems occasionally observing and offering some tips or concerns.

Although, if it weren't for the tips, it seems that the Demon King's wisdom wouldn't be granted...

In any case, just like this, the Demon King invasion incident of the Ranoa Kingdom ended.

Recently, I've been feared.

By almost all of the students attending the Magic University.

I didn't realize it at first.

I just simply thought I was being avoided.

For example, if some bad looking guys came walking in my direction.

If I said to them, "In order not to trip you should walk rather than run."

However, for some reason after the other side realizes it they disappear somewhere in the hall.

Occasionally there's a guy who suddenly looks out the window and says, "The weather outside sure is good today."

Even though it's raining.

I thought "I'm lucky for them to not pick fights".

I couldn't have possibly imagined that the other side thought that as well...

The first time I gained self-awareness of it was when I was returning from Detoxification magic class.

Recently, I've been taking Intermediate Detoxification magic classes where many fourth years are learning.

For the time being, let's put that matter aside.

After the class ended and I went into the hall and spotted Goriade.

Goriade.

That's right, it's the muscle bound female who blamed me and made false charges of stealing panties on my first day.

Since her body is huge she stands out.

It seems simultaneously the other side saw me and our eyes met.

For the time being, I tried to start up a conversation, since the other side is a senpai.

It would be rude if I don't say at least one word of greeting.

While thinking that, I approached her, thinking about apologizing again for the events on the first day of school.

And then she was surprised and her body started to tremble while avoiding eye contact.

With that large shoulder length being squeezed in, her toes were pointing inwards while cowering.

"Goriade-senpai. It's about the events on my first day of school."

After I brought that up, she stiffened up and started to shake.

And then with a fragile voice said it.

"Th..that time, was umm, I'm sorry...very much, please forgive me??"

It was a clearly different attitude from how she was on the first day.

I was bewildered as well.

It almost looks like I'm extorting her or something.

"Ummm? No, that is, the one that should be apologizing is me. Since I wasn't aware of the dorm rules, umm, that sort of thing happened.."

While I was going on, incoherently onlookers started to gather.

"Hey, look. It's Rudeus."

"The events from the first day, he was still bothered over that..."

"Goriade-san, how pitiful..."

"Even though he was the one who broke the rules, what a guy..."

"Idiot... What will you do if he hears that."

From the surrounding voices I started to hear pity and criticism.

Tears started to appear in Goriade's eyes.

I felt like tears were about to appear in my own eyes as well.

Strange. What's with this?

The gazes hurt.

"Nya? What's this, what's this, a fight?"

"How vigorous even though it's noon nano."

Just at that time, Rinia and Pursena happened to pass by.

According to a story I heard afterwards, it seems the two were in the same year as Goriade.

After seeing my appearance and Goriade with tears in her eyes.

And then it seems like they came to some kind of understanding and nodded to themselves.

Then, while making some smug faces they interrupted.

"Boss, let her off with something like that nya. I'm sure Goriade meant no harm nya. I'd like for you to let us save face here as the same Beast Race nya."

"Look, let's hurry and go. Learn a lesson from this and never again do anything that bothers Boss nano. You have good luck nano. If the No.2 like me hadn't been passing by, you'd have been torn limb from limb nano."

"Ah, wa, yes??!"

Goriade made a face as if she had just been saved and lowered her head to the two, and then quickly left the place while trying to make that wide back look small.

"Look, you all scatter as well nya! This isn't an exhibition nya!"

After hearing Rinia's words the onlookers all scattered like the clouds.

I took a breath in relief as well.

"Pursena what was that just now nya?"

"What do you mean by just now nano?"

"The No.2 is me nya."

"Recently the boss's underlings have increased, the idiotic Rinia doesn't fit the job nano."

"Pursena's grades are the same nya."

I thought about asking about the situation, and was about to turn around and the two had started a well practiced comedy act.

"Look, you two don't just get into a fight on your own, it's fine if there's two No.2."

"Boss doesn't get it nya. It's no good if you don't properly decide the order of the organization nya."

"That's right, it's something important nano."

Humu. It seems that hierarchy is an important matter to the Beast Race.

But, in the first place I have no intention of standing at the top of an organization.

I don't care who is No.2.

Putting that aside.

For the time being, I thanked the two.

I decided to give them some kind of present next time.

I'm sure a fish or something would be fine.

"However, to touch upon the Boss's imperial wrath, Goriade is an idiot as well nya. Nyat did she do?"

"No, she mistook me for an underwear thief on the first day of school..."

"Ah!! It's that! So the underwear thief was boss nya!"

"...Fakku nano."

They started sending me looks of scorn.

Let me talk to the end.

It's a false charge. False charge.

Should I give you despair and humiliation as a present again?

"Come to think of it, previously Goriade was boasting about it. That Fitts covered for a cowardly first year boy. The one cowering was that guy. How laughable nano."

"To let an opponent who was making a fool of him off the hook, Boss sure is lenient nya... However, if you don't properly discipline them, next time I'll do it properly nya."

Do it properly huh.

Didn't you guys stop being delinquents and turn into honor students?

"Please stop that. What are you going to do by unnecessarily increasing my enemies?"

"Ha, boss doesn't aim high enough nya. If you were to team up with us right now, you would be able to defeat Ariel and rule over the dorms."

"That's right, since boss can win against Fitts he can be the top of the school nano."

Somehow it seems like all the Beast Race guys are obsessed with standing at the top.

They might seriously be patients suffering from "New Leader Illness".

"Rule over the dorm and become the top of the school, then what are you telling me to do?"

I couldn't care less about the top.

I fundamentally always go with a principle that doesn't get into fights.

In order to stand above people, in other words means to buy into the possibility of resentment.

In this world your heart can suddenly be penetrated while just walking down the road.

Therefore, if you treat all of your opponents as above yourself it's about just right.

"After becoming the top of the school nya? I guess so nya?? For starters how about forcing all of the girls in the dorm to strip off their panties?"

"That sounds good nano. Since boss likes panties enough to decorate his shelves with them, I'm sure it'll make him happy."

"It won't...make me happy?"

I do like panties but.

It... It's not like I want to decorate with them just because I like them.

Getting them from a girl whose face I don't know... wouldn't make me happy?

For example, even if I got them from Goriade-san whose face I do know they wouldn't make me happy.

However, there are occasionally cute girls.

Even if they aren't to my taste...

For example, I might be a bit happy if it were from Rinia or Pursena.

These guys smell a bit of beast, but even with everything they're considerably beautiful girls.

I'm sure their blankets smell like a girl's.

No, but though you know.

Right, that's right. It's Fitts-senpai.

I'm sure Fitts-senpai hates that kind of conduct.

That's why it's no good.

Yeah.

Alright.

I won't be deceived.

Be gone, oh Mara.

That was almost a dangerous situation for you, female students who I have yet to see.

If I wasn't being afflicted by this illness it could have been a dangerous situation.

"I have no interest in the panties of the masses, if you're going to do it you two can do it yourselves. Although if you're going to cause trouble for Fitts-senpai, then I will become your enemy."

"Ugu..We..well, if boss says to behave ourselves nya, then we'll obey that nya."

"..That's right, we'll do as you say nano."

And.

After that sort of event happened.

I finally became aware of it.

It seems that somehow I'm being feared.

Even after I became aware of it I didn't ask, "Why?"

I defeated the number one in real ability, Fitts.

Forced all of the problem Special Students to obey.

And then, defeated the Demon King who brought terror upon the school in a single hit.

The last one was especially effective.

That is... I'm sure they would be afraid.

It's a story I heard from Badigadi but..

It seems that in order to leave a wound on his jet black body clad in Fighting Spirit you would need to use techniques at the level of Sword God style King class or else it wouldn't work.

King class.

In other words, only after reaching Ruijerd and Ghyslaine's level will they finally be able to fight against him.

And then since he fights while entrusting it to his flesh, it seems that most opponents' attacks that Badigadi receives do almost no damage but...

Putting that aside.

If I'm to believe that story then it would mean my Rock Bullet is already over King class in power.

In the time I wasn't aware, my Rock Bullet has really grown to have quite the high firepower.

Although, it's just power.

According to Badigadi I'm not wearing Fighting Spirit.

Fighting Spirit after all seems to be something that all of the swordsmen in the world casually wear.

However, no matter how much I train, my flesh will never become as strong or fast as Ruijerd or Eris.

My muscles will grow, but just that.

In the end, the only thing I'm strong with is attack power.

Thanks to the demon eye and other stuff, I can win against opponents around here.

My aggregate magic power is on the level of Laplace (it seems).

However, my flesh is normal.

Although there's no way for the normal students to understand that.

They probably think since my attack power is King class then, my body should have an equivalent level of strength.

An existence beyond a Demon King.

If I was in the same position as the average student, I don't think I would want to get involved.

"Boss should have more confidence in himself nya. I'm sure if you have more confidence it will resolve 'that' as well nya!"

"That's right, but after you resolve it I'd like for you to only attack Rinia nano."

Those were Rinia and Pursena's words.

Confidence, huh.

I wonder if my son's seclusion is related to my lack of self-confidence.

After hearing it, I kind of have that sort of feeling.

Defeated by Orsted, rejected by Eris and falling into despair unable to show my power.

If I were to get back my self-confidence, it might possibly stand up.

Certainly, now might be the ideal chance to regain my self-confidence.

The students are afraid of me.

After giving it a try and walking around leading Rinia and Pursena, the sea of students split.

I never stood in such a position in my previous life.

It's fresh.

I guess you could say it's a position where you're walking shoulders with the wind.

Almost like a Director-sensei doing hospital rounds.

Or maybe Moses.

It's truly a good feeling.

Move, don't stand in my hallway...

And just as I was getting full of myself.

I suddenly thought.

Could it be.

That the guys who bullied me in my previous life felt this sort of feeling while getting full of themselves.

.....

...

I remembered a bit of something bad...

Let's go without getting too full of ourselves.

I won't return to being a NEET.

One day among such days.

I was doing the same as always, investigating things in the library.

The more I try to investigate, the number of common points between the teleport and summoning increase.

Calling out to and sending off.

The differences between these are limited to just the shape of the magic circle and the light given off.

All factors of them resemble each other.

It seems like there's a necessity to study summoning in depth.

Is what I was thinking, but there are no teachers that specialize in summoning in this school.

It seems there are some people who use them in the Magic Guild, but at best it's elementary or intermediate class.

It's only to the degree of summoning useless familiars or spirits with almost no ego.

There's no way I could hear about expert related knowledge.

It seems there are people who can use up to the Advanced class of Enchantment type Summoning, but Enchantment and Summoning are considerably different, even if I ask about teleportation, I doubt they'll have an answer.

It seems like Jinas was bragging about the teachers in this school, but it was just talk.

Even though I say that, in such a world I guess it's something that can't be helped.

After giving it some thought, I've never even seen something like Summoning magic in my adventurer days.

Summoning magicians are without a doubt among the fewest in number.

Or maybe they're like Barriers and Divine-attack, the techniques are monopolized by certain countries.

However, somehow I, it seems like I have the feeling I know someone who is knowledgeable about Summoning techniques.

Where did I hear about them again?

If I could encounter them I think I could remember though.

Well, the fact that I can't remember means I haven't met with them.

Well then, I've more or less finished all of the literature in regards to Summoning in the library.

Anymore than this, there's probably no option other than learning it on my own.

Therefore, I'm feeling at a bit of a deadlock.

During such a time, Fitts-senpai managed to find something out.

"Rudeus-kun. I've finally found it. There was a person who was an expert in the field of Summoning magic in this school!"

"Oh!"

"After I asked Vice Principal Jinas and Principal Georg, who do you think it was?"

Fitts-senpai seemed to come up with a prank, he came asking with a grin.

There's one in the school.

For starters, it shouldn't be a teacher.

Among the students there were some who were trying to learn Summoning, but anything above Advanced or Saint class came up with nothing.

I wonder where in the world they are...

"...In the Magic Guild side?"

If it's the Magic Guild, then I'm sure there are people who use Summoning techniques as their main.

Such a researcher might be using this school as a headquarters as they continue their research.

"Hmm, well, they are someone who is known to be A rank among the Magic Guild."

"Oh."

According to my investigations, A rank among the Magic Guild is Subdivision Head Class.

That would mean S rank is executive class.

Certainly, Principal Georg is S and Vice Principal Jinas is B.

"Wasn't A rank the same rank as a Subdivision Head of the Magic guild?"

"Yeah. It's surprising isn't it."

I have the feeling I heard that even B rank would be given capital support and the know-how for making things at the Magic School.

"Then, who is it?"

"Rudeus it's a name you should have heard at least once as well."

It's a name I've heard...

Well then, I don't think there any A rank with the Magic Guild among my acquaintances.

However, the name Fitts-senpai mentioned was a name I had heard a number of times.

"It's Special Student Silent."

Special Student. Silent.

The number of achievements they've left behind for this school is immeasurable.

First, they improved the menu of the cafeteria.

They established a transportation route to get ingredients from Asura Kingdom. It became where you can even eat food made of ingredients that won't be found in the Northern regions.

Also, following their own recipe, they made something similar to Curry Soup.

After placing carrots, potatoes, and onions in a pot you use a mix of ten types of spices to spice it.

Then you use bread to eat the thick tan soup from the pan.

In other words, it's curry.

It's quite different to the taste that my tongue remembers, but the recipe is extremely similar to curry.

The one who came up with the idea for uniforms was Silent as well.

They worked in Asura Kingdom as a designer and still owns a workshop, there the outfits were created.

By creating a uniform, they managed to clean up the mixed image of the various races.

In other words they succeeded at improving the image of the entire school.

And then, the one who suggested the idea of black boards was Silent as well.

It's a board colored with black paint and then chalk is made using lime for writing letters.

It's just something of that level, but they've become popular for making the lessons smoothly advance forward.

I'm sure there are quite a few others if we search.

It seems Silent really suggested a large number of trivial things.

In recognition for those achievements, the Magic Guild granted them A rank in the guild.

Now. About the things they've made.

All of them are things I have recollection of.

Things that I know, that the inhabitants of this world don't know.

No matter how dense I am, I somehow understand.

I can imagine what kind of existence Silent is.

But, at that time I wasn't ready to allow such words to pass my lips.

I wonder why.

I don't know.

I might have wanted to see myself as a special sort of existence.

I might have wanted to think about myself as a special existence in this world.

The only existence that holds memories of a different world.

However, after giving it some thought, there's no way it would just be me.

Speaking frankly, I'm afraid of the existence of Silent.

I thought that if possible I don't want to make contact.

Under the same conditions, I thought I don't want to meet someone else doing better than me.

On top of that if that person were to say, "What have you been playing around doing when you were born in this blessed of an environment?" something like that, I would feel like running away.

However, since I heard the name from Fitts-senpai, I decided on the spot to meet with Silent.

I might have been getting full of myself.

That's right.

Around this time I was getting full of myself.

Making a miko into a disciple and being called shisho,

Winning over the number one delinquents in the school and being called boss,

Receiving eyes of compassion from the number one genius in the school,

Winning over a Demon King from Magic Continent and being called a friend,

Being feared by all the students.

I was getting full of myself.

Of course, I swore somewhere in my heart that I wouldn't get full of myself.

However, after all with each and every thing at some point I ended up becoming arrogant.

If I'm this well made, then there's no way anyone could look down on me from above.

I might have thought as such subconsciously.

I heard the location from Vice Principal Jinas.

The third floor of the research building.

I see.

Silent is borrowing three rooms there.

Those three rooms were remodeled into a single research room and they almost never come out from living in there.

I went to that research room to pay a visit alone.

I don't know the reason.

In reality, I probably should have gone together with Fitts-senpai.

However, I had the feeling that it wouldn't be good if I don't go alone.

I took a deep breath in front of the door.

I made my resolve.

Even if Silent was the same "Reincarnated individual" as me.

I will absolutely not flinch.

I lightly knocked.

"...Come in."

Then a short and somewhat irritated sounding voice responded.

I put my hand on the door and slowly pushed it open.

Inside the research room there was a large amount of books and paper scattered about, in each place there were magic tools which I don't know what they were used for scattered around, and then a large amount of magic crystals and magic stones were piling into a mountain.

The person sitting deep in the room.

I was lost for words the moment they turned around.

"Oh my, we meet again."

That guy had black hair.

That guy was a girl.

And then something I couldn't forget.

I absolutely won't forget.

That blank white mask was attached.

"Gyaaaaa????!"

I screamed and made a run for it.

It's that white mask young girl.

The one that was with Orsted.

I can't remember their name.

That's right, Orsted, it's Orsted.

I had the resolve to meet with a reincarnated individual.

But, I hadn't made the resolve to meet with Orsted.

The terror from the time I was about to die vividly came back to me.

That instant, almost all of the fear I felt at that time was brought back to life the moment I saw that white mask.

The suffering from the time when my lung was crushed.

The powerlessness of having everything I tried made pointless.

The pain from the time something went through my heart.

And then the fear from the time when death was before my eyes.

Everything came back to me so I ran.

Ran and ran and ran.

I don't know where I'm running.

After looking behind me.

Of all things I'm being chased after.

The white mask is chasing after me.

I run even more.

While falling down, while scraping myself, I continue to run away with my unreliable legs almost like a drunkard.

Even though I thought I had trained my legs just for the sake of running away at times like this

My legs won't listen to what I tell them.

Even though they didn't tremble during the time I confronted the Demon King.

"?? !!"

Suddenly I saw Fitts-senpai's figure at the bottom of the stairs.

If it's him, if it's him then he'll save me.

After thinking that, my tension loosened a bit.

"Fu..to suddenly scream when you see a person's face and then run away, isn't that rude?"

I felt something tap on my shoulder.

After turning around that guy was there.

My body went into convulsions of shock and fear, in the next instant, my foot slipped and I fell down the stairs, falling unconscious in an unsightly way.

I woke up to the sensation of someone caressing my head.

It was a gentle hand.

I felt something flowing out from that hand, almost as if it was reducing the bad parts of my blood circulation.

There was that sort of sensation.

After moving my gaze to look at the owner of the hand, Fitts-senpai was there.

The one rubbing my head was Fitts-senpai.

Fitts-senpai's hand was warm.

And then it was slender and delicate to the point where you wouldn't think he's a man.

Without thinking I grabbed that hand.

"Ah, Rudeus-kun, you're awake? I was worried, you suddenly came tumbling down from above."

"...I saw a terrible dream. It was a dream where I was about to be killed by a woman wearing a white mask."

"Umm.."

Fitts-senpai made a troubled face.

What is it?

In the first place, where is this?

It's not my room in the dorm.

In the first place, it's not the dorm.

But I've seen it before...

Behind Fitts-senpai beds were lined up.

That's right, this is the medical affairs room.

While lifting up my body I circled my neck.

There's no one in the medical office.

It's just Fitts-senpai and I.

No, there's the healer that is stationed here as well.

After turning my head around even further...

"Uooh???!"

On the opposite side of the bed.

I looked at the person sitting there.

It was a woman wearing a white mask.

Unintentionally, I fell off the bed.

And then that guy let out a sigh and glared at me.

"How rude!? Why are you that afraid? Didn't I save you last time? Ah, you must not remember since you were dead."

Since I was dead last time.

After all. There's no mistake this guy is the one from that time.

The one standing beside Orsted.

"O..Ors..Orsted is!?"

"He's not here. He's a busy person."

The masked woman said it without care.

He's not here.

Orsted is not here.

Really?

No, I can't help it even if it's a lie.

I see, he's not here huh.

"Don't worry. He won't target you for a bit longer."

"A bit longer, meaning if he has time again he might come to kill me?"

"I don't think he has such plans though... But, there is that sort of possibility. It depends on you."

It doesn't seem like it will happen anytime soon.

The instant I understood that, I felt blatantly relieved.

I sure am a selfish guy.

After seeing my state Fitts-senpai was scratching the back of his ear and asked the masked woman.

"Umm, I can't understand the conversation, but is it okay for me to ask for an explanation? For starters, what kind of relation do you have with Rudeus-kun?"

"We have no relation."

The masked woman flatly responded to Fitts-senpai like that.

I understood that Fitts-senpai was openly displeased.

"But, it's the first time I've seen Rudeus-kun in this much of a panic. Didn't you do something?"

Fitts-senpai's tone of voice when saying that was strong.

He must be trying to protect this failure of a kohai.

Thank you, thank you.

"The last time we met, he was severely beaten by the Dragon God, so he's probably remembering that."

"Dragon God!? Of the Seven Great World Powers?"

"That's right."

"You are the Dragon God?"

"How could that be, before I just traveled together with him."

The masked woman declared that in a tone like she couldn't care less while shouldering her hair.

I just realized it, but what she was wearing was this school's uniform.

"In any case, I didn't think we would be reunited here."

The gaze coming from beneath the mask was strong.

"However, I guess since we triggered the flag by meeting at 'Red Dragon's Lower Jaw', we would be reunited at this school. It must be that sort of fated route."

She took out a single piece of paper from her chest pocket.

"I have three things to ask you. Answer honestly."

That tone was one of a Yes or No.

I swallowed and nodded.

"First. Do you have any recollection of this?"

After receiving the paper she handed over.

There was,

『Shinohara Akihito

Kuroki Seiji』

Is how it was written.

In... Japanese.

I quickly realized it was a person's name.

And simultaneously.

The feelings of "after all" sprouted.

She is after all.

"Second, do you understand these words? Third, which are you?"

This question was in Japanese as well.

After coming this far it's settled.

She's the same sort of existence as I.

However, I thought about it.

This paper.

This name.

....I have no recollection at all.

However, I was a bit perplexed, but I had the resolve.

I slowly responded.

In Japanese.

『Neither. I don't know this name.』

『I see, you understand the words right.』

"Eh? What language? Rudeus-kun?"

Fitts-senpai peeked at the paper and said in a hurried voice.

"It's nothing, we were just from the same home town."

"Home town? There's no way that can be the case!"

Fitts-senpai denied it.

I don't know what he was denying though...

Right now rather than that.

『Then, you are the same as well?』

I asked timidly.

She nodded.

『That's right, by the time I realized it I was suddenly thrown into this world as well.』

While saying that, she removed her white mask.

In that instant, my memory completely was hooked.

A memory of my previous life.

My last moments.

The pair that were having a fight.

One of those people.

The girl.

There was a girl with the exact same face as that.

Simultaneously, doubts started to rise to the surface.

The exact same face.

Even though 15 years have passed since then, there is the girl with the same exact face from that time.

And then, just a bit, I felt something was off.

Strange.

Why even though 15 years have passed... does she still have the same face?

No, in the first place, why does she have the same face?

If she was reincarnated, it would only be natural for her face to be different.

My doubts.

The answer to those were soon after put into words by her.

『It's the so called 'trip'. I tripped into this worthless world.』

Trip.

This implication is a bit different from reincarnation.

I was the so called reincarnated individual.

My body is different. I was born into this world with just my memories.

Trip is different.

Trip is the so called Warp.

Age and body remain the same when they come to this world.

She is... different from me?

『My name is Nanahoshi Shizuka. A Japanese. I've been calling myself by the false name Silent Seven Star recently.』

Doubts and confusion.

The inside of my head was becoming a mess.

In regards to the me who wasn't saying anything, she asked even more.

『In any case you, where were you born? America? Or somewhere in Europe. You're Caucasian right? But you understand Japanese. Could it be you're a half? A foreigner living in Japan for example.』

It wasn't just three, that wasn't what I was doubting.

I didn't respond.

I didn't respond, but she continued the conversation.

『In any case, with this one step, I can make some progress in the situation. After all it was the correct answer to have him leave you alive. Since the point where Orsted said he didn't know you I somehow had the feeling it was like that...』

Nanahoshi just kept talking somewhat in excitement.

Without minding my confusion.

『I look forward to working with you from here on, umm, tell me your name?』

『Ru..Rudeus. Rudeus Greyrat.』

『That's your false name from here right? What's your real name?』

I didn't want to speak of my real name from my previous life.

For that sake I kept silent.

And then, Nanahoshi seemed like she understood and nodded.

『Ah, I get it. You're being cautious. I understand that. Those feelings. That sort of thing happened after all. However, don't worry. I'm an ally.』

『...』

『In any case, to think there were other people that came here other than me... This is the first time I've met an 'Earthling' since I came to this world. It's somehow refreshing.』

Nanahoshi took hold of my hand.

Fitts-senpai's brow dropped.

And then Nanahoshi said it.

In a happy tone.

『For the sake of returning to our previous world, let's work together.』

For the sake of returning to our previous world.

Such words put my thoughts that were in a mess into order in an instant.

The words that came out were just one line.

It's "No."

I quickly shook off my hand and said it.

『I don't want to return to my previous world.』

『Eh???』

Nanahoshi was lost for words.

"Rudeus you and Silent as well?? Talk in words I can understand??"

And then there's Fitts-senpai that doesn't understand Japanese.

In the medical office there was somehow a delicate atmosphere floating around.

Nanahoshi Shizuka.

If it were to be written in Kanji then it's Seven Stars Quiet Fragrance.

She experienced a trip.

A trip is in other words, a teleported individual.

If I who died and then was reborn in this world as a baby am considered a reincarnated individual, then she would be, that's right something like a person wandering astray, that kind of feeling.

After piecing that together, I decided to be open about the fact that I was a reincarnated person.

I am a reincarnated person and not someone who tripped.

I just stated my cause of death as an accidental death.

However, in regards to the circumstances, I kept them hidden.

My appearance in my previous life was a terrible thing.

If she were to remember I'm sure she would look at me with eyes of prejudice.

Since the way people appear is an important thing after all.

Well, it's also a possibility that it was my fault Nanahoshi tripped.

I'd rather not have that pointed out as well.

I listened to Nanahoshi's story.

In nostalgic Japanese.

Since our relationship is still one of not knowing each other, Fitts-senpai was with us as well.

However, the language we were having the conversation in was Japanese.

I think that Fitts-senpai spent the time rather bored.

I'm really sorry about it.

Soon after we started talking she declared this.

『I have no interest in this world. I have no intention of using my knowledge from our previous world to bring prosperity like some worthless manga or light novel. Just for my own sake. I intend to put all of my effort for the sake of getting myself back to the previous world.』

That sort of thinking was completely in contrast with my way of thinking to go on living in this world.

After hearing her say worthless, worthless over and over as expected even I would be a bit annoyed over it.

However, it's not as if I don't understand.

I'm sure she couldn't, "become familiar".

Since she has no place to belong, she has no interest. It's not as if I can't understand the feelings of wanting to cut ties with what's worthless.

Therefore, in regards to that matter, I have no intention of correcting her on her way of thinking.

However, Nanahoshi was being cautious of me.

I'm sure my uncooperative conduct at the start was a bit bad.

Most likely she's keeping secret the things that she feels.

Naturally I'm sure.

What are you going to do by completely trusting in an opponent who you don't know if they are an enemy or an ally?

Even I'm being cautious of Nanahoshi.

Even though I say that, I think I might have made a bit of a mistake.

If there I hadn't run away after seeing her face and afterwards said, "I'm planning to remain in this world, but I'll help in searching for a method to return." then I'm sure she would have slackened her guard a bit.

Well, there's no point in talking about something that's already past.

It seems by the time Nanahoshi realized it she was in Asura Kingdom.

In a grassland with nothing around, it seems she only understood it was Asura Kingdom sometime after.

Without anything, no one was in her surroundings, just around the time she was troubled not knowing what she should do, Orsted appeared and it seems he sheltered her.

『Why Orsted?』

『...Who knows, just, it doesn't seem like he was the one who summoned me.』

It seems she studied a number of things in regards to this world in Asura Kingdom.

Starting with language, the existence of magic, currency, customs for living, etc...

In that regard, she was the same as me.

Amazing as it is, she seems to have mastered the human language in roughly a year.

Since Orsted holds the curse that makes him hated, I'm sure there was a necessary urgency for her to learn it.

If they're spurred on by necessity, anyone can learn things pretty fast.

Another year later, she passed time in Asura Kingdom.

During that time, it seems she made various techniques for cooking, clothing, and instruction while earning money.

Making use of those concessions, she created a structure that earns her an income.

The fact that she had the backing of one of the Seven Great World Powers, the Dragon God, became something widely known and she made use of that credibility and her own confidence in speech to establish trade routes.

It seems she currently already has enough assets to play around for the rest of her life.

That's pretty amazing.

She learned her language and even created a good foundation with money.

And all of that was nothing more than a stepping stone in order to return to our previous world.

Being dragged around by Orsted, she collected various information for the sake of returning to the previous world, and then she thought that two of her acquaintances may have tripped to this world as well, so she spent around one year traveling the world.

It seems that Orsted has many enemies so he ended up fighting here and there.

Orsted is strong, so most of his opponents are defeated in a single attack.

My fight was one of those, but since only I was somehow in a different situation, it seems she advised that I be left alive.

In regards to that, I honestly said words of thanks to her.

Putting aside the cause or process, if it hadn't been for the words Nanahoshi said I would have been dead after all.

『In any case, why is Orsted-san in a dispute with the Human God [Hitogami]? Since it was all so sudden I was surprised.』

『I don't know the details either. But, he did say he held a grudge against him. Also, if he leaves alone the apostles of the Human God, then they usually become powerful, so he usually finishes them off early on.』

I'd prefer if he didn't suddenly attack me over a personal grudge.

Also, I'm not an apostle of the Human God.

Recently I've been doing whatever he says, but I only ever meet him once per year or so.

It's not like our relationship is so intimate that I'd be called an apostle.

In any case, she traveled around the world and there she met a variety of people.

Orsted is someone who is hated, but the Dragon God name has value to it and can be used, with just a single letter written by him, it seems renowned magicians, knight leaders, and such will want to meet you.

『You traveled throughout the world in one year...?』

I got caught on that part.

It took me two or three years to go around the world once.

『Yeah, using a certain special method.』

『What kind of method is that?』

『That's right, if I were to put it in simple terms, it would be something like a warp device.』

Door of Trip huh.

『I believe they were called, 'Teleport Magic Circles' in this world. Do you know?』

『I've heard of just the name.』

When was it that I heard about it?

If I remember, it was during the time I was coming back from Magic Continent.

I heard about it from Ruijerd. How nostalgic.

『I had heard that Teleport Magic Circles already don't exist anymore?』

『It seems there are still ruins remaining, created during the time of the Human-Demon war.』

『Oh~, ruins. Where are they?』

『I've been forbidden from saying that so I can't tell you. Since they seem to be a taboo in this world, so I shouldn't really tell anyone.』

『..I see.』

『Although, since I was just following along as we went around, I don't really remember as well.』

It seems that is the case.

Even though she went all around the world, it was just walking from one teleport magic circle to the next teleport magic circle.

The fact that she doesn't remember may not be a lie.

If you were to be lead around warping all over the place without a map, there's no way to know your precise location.

If possible, I'd like to know about something as convenient as that for once.

Since I never know when or what might happen next time.

Turning back our conversation.

Nanahoshi was unable to meet the people she was searching for.

However, she met a variety of people.

Among those, a certain individual said something like this.

[Haven't you been summoned to this world by someone's hands?]

『Who was the person that said that?』

『I can't say. I was told not to tell anyone that we met.』

『Why?』

『If they were to know that I was an acquaintance of his, then some troublesome guys would come visit. If you don't want to be involved in something troublesome then keep my name hidden.' is how he said it.』

That person can't say his name.

However, it seems that person is a world authority on Summoning techniques.

But it seems even among what that person knows, there's nothing about techniques that can summon a person from another world.

In the first place, putting aside summoning from another world, you can't summon people in general.

Anyhow, she started to investigate into summoning magic and made the Magic University into her base.

After contributing a large amount of the money she saved up, she bought B rank from the Magic Guild and the status enough to become a Special Student.

Furthermore, making use of her connections with Asura Kingdom she introduced school uniforms and such.

Along with a review over the Education System, and remodeling the tools used for education.

In a flash she rose up to A rank within the magic guild.

Furthermore if she would have provided all of the knowledge she has there was talk about reaching S rank status supposedly.

However, she declined that.

『I'll say it once more, but I haven't even once thought that I wanted to get along well or become a powerful person in this world.』

Therefore, she only makes things that she feels are necessary for herself, and doesn't offer them out.

She declared that.

I was a bit discontent with that.

Making the world into a more convenient place isn't a bad thing is it?

After feeling that sort of atmosphere from me.

Nanahoshi sighed and took a breath then said this.

『You know, we're a foreign body to this world. If you do anything that changes history too much, you might be eliminated from the world.』

『Eliminated from the world? What is that?』

『Haven't you read any SF? In other words, it's a power that attempts to return the world to its natural state.』

A power that attempts to return history to it's original nature.

Come to think of it, I think I read a manga sort of like that in the past.

Was it the Principle of Causality?

『..Such a thing, does it really exist?』

『I don't know, but I think it's better to proceed with caution.』

She said it like that.

Those sorts of things, I think they're more for people who time slip into the past and not really related to us who end up as people in another world though..

..Well it's fine.

Everyone is free to act as they please.

After creating an environment where no one would interfere, she started to research Summoning.

The reason why she made a false name is because guys who know of the name Nanahoshi might come around for a visit supposedly.

In any case, Silent. Seven Star.

I think it would have been fine for her to twist it a bit more...

Ah, she might have wanted to leave it so the remaining two would understand if they hear it I guess...

Rather, are there really two others?

I haven't really heard of any names other than Nanahoshi though...

Research into Summoning magic.

For that there was a necessity to learn the foundations of magic circles.

The Summoning magic in this world fundamentally makes use of magic circles.

If we were to describe it like this, Attack and Healing magic use kinetic energy from magic power channeling it using incantations, and then Summoning and Barriers would make use of static magic power channeling it using magic circles.

After reading the literature she seems to have understood what kind of thing a magic circle is.

Without asking a teacher, by just reading books and past records, it seems she learned the knowledge on her own.

『The way of thinking of the people in this world is coagulating. They seem to think there's nothing they can do about some things that are above themselves, but since I'm doing something that no one else has tried until now, it's something that I can't be taught about.』

Even if you say something like that, what about me who was nothing but taught by people?

Well, up until now I've never tried to do anything that no one else has done, so it's fine though.

『Besides, we don't have any magic power right? Therefore, even if we were to speak about the prerequisite of magic power it would just trouble us right.』

『...Eh?』

A weird voice came out even for me.

What.

There's no magic power?

『What's wrong? Did I say something strange?』

『I have magic power. I can use magic after all. Just the other day I was even told I have top class magic power in the world.』

After I said that she held onto her mask.

I couldn't tell her expression because of the mask, but I could perceive her movements.

『...I see, since you're reincarnated, I wonder if it's different. My aggregate magic power is.. zero it seems.』

Aggregate amount of magic power zero.

That would mean she can't use any magic at all.

『Incidentally, it seems that all things in this world possess magic power. Even the corpses lying around over there. Since I came from a world without magic, I thought that would be natural though..』

Even the corpses lying around have magic power.

Is that how it is? It's the first time I've heard that.

However, if that's how it is then having absolutely no magic power should be considerably severe.

『Also, that's right, this might not apply to you as well.』

After saying that she removed the mask.

It's the nostalgic face of a Japanese person.

A beautiful girl, not quite going that far, but a bit above average.

Though after giving it some thought, since I came to this world, I've really seen a lot of beautiful faces.

Unexpectedly, Nanahoshi might be first or second among her class, a face with that sort of level.

『Since I came to this world five years have already passed, but I didn't grow any older.』

Eternal youth.

Five years.

Her age should be about 16 or 17 years.

『That is quite enviable isn't it?』

After I said that her face grimaced.

A sarcastic laugh and then she returned the mask.

『...Well, I'm sure it's better than growing old in an unknown land.』

Come to think of it, the version of me that comes out in my dreams with Human God [Hitogami] doesn't grow old either.

Just as in my previous life.

I wonder if people from another world fundamentally don't grow old.

『I don't know what kind of principle it's working on but it's quite screwed up isn't it.』

『I normally grow older though...』

『...I see. I wonder if it's an issue with the body. Let's investigate the next time we have a chance. It might provide some kind of clue.』

After Nanahoshi said that she wrote something on the note in her hand.

I wonder if she's writing down things she realized or she wants to investigate later.

Since I often forget about things that I only give thought, I should try imitating her.

『Then, let's turn back our conversation.』

She has learned about magic circles.

It seems that a magic circle is when you turn a magic crystal into a fine powder and then after mixing it with a certain set of ingredients you turn it into a kind of paint that you use to draw.

Since the paint works as an adhesive and merges into most things, it seems it won't simply disappear.

Then when you let magic power flow through the paint it amplifies that power, then it displays the effects corresponding to the shape of the magic circle.

It seems that fundamentally the paint will evaporate after one use.

Furthermore, it seems that the type of ingredients required for the paint depend on the magic being used.

For the most part, it seems that in order to use King class or greater large scale magic you need a special kind of paint, but in order to actually prepare it you would need enough money comparable to a nations budget.

『Then, do the teleport magic circles in the ruins disappear after a single use?』

『Those aren't written in that kind of paint, so it's different.』

It seems that is the case.

Magic circles that use paint are simply the current standard.

It seems that magic circles in the golden age era took on a larger variety of shapes.

Currently those methods are still around, for example, such a method as carving a magic circle directly into a stone and then letting magic power flow through it.

According to Nanahoshi she can't use it so she hasn't investigated very deeply into it, but during the time when they make magic tools such techniques are used.

『Rather, wouldn't that be better as the foundation?』

『I can't use it, so it doesn't matter at all.』

How self-centered.

When it comes to magic circles, as long as you have the shape, paint, and magic power, most magic can be materialized.

However, there is a single problem.

Since the "shape" of magic circles is generally passed down through oral instruction, the majority of them have already been lost it seems.

Now there are no people who exist that create new magic circles.

A certain mural on some ruins in the wastelands or on a forgotten scroll deep in the treasury of a king from ancient times.

Unless you transcribe it from such places, new magic circles won't be created.

But, Nanahoshi is overturning that situation.

She's investigating the laws behind magic circles.

She said that by writing a large amount of magic circles, and repeating the experiments, she has already succeeded in developing a number of peculiar magic effects.

It's quite amazing.

By all means I'd like for her to teach me as well.

Just as I was thinking that, she said it to nail the matter down.

『However, the things that I've investigated, aren't things I would speak of readily.』

Why not, is what I was thinking though?

She continued speaking while pressing for an answer.

『Let's make a trade.』

And.

It seems that from here on out is the real issue.

『I have no magic power and I hold no techniques for the sake of fighting. I probably have eternal youth but I'm not immortal.』

『Eh?』

『I hate this world. There's no sense of reality, the food is bad. The morality is strange, it's inconvenient.....I'm sure you know but there's no such thing as shampoo in this world? Besides, I have people I've left behind in the previous world. That's why I want to return. What about you?』

After being asked I replied immediately.

『I like this world. I have a lot of acquaintances here, I don't want to return.』

『I see, don't you have any family remaining in the other world?』

『I have no regrets at all.』

I don't even want to remember things from my previous life.

I decided to live in this world.

That was 15 years ago.

In that time a lot of things have happened.

There were good things and bad things as well.

However, it was reasonably fulfilling.

Even if you told me to return at this point, I would just resist with all my power.

『I see, it was a peaceful death.』

Nanahoshi seemed to have understood it on her own terms.

I'll say it again but, I haven't told her that she was the person who I jumped in front of at that time.

I did say that the cause of death was an accident, but I've kept hidden the specific details.

『Our objectives are different. However, we mutually have things we want. Therefore, let's make a trade.』

『Is there something that I have that Nanahoshi-san wants?』

『Just now didn't you say it yourself? That you have top class magic power.』

You want magic power.

I see now.

However, it seems like she has a large number of magic crystals in her research room.

I wonder if that means they aren't enough.

『I want you to help with my experiments. And then I'll teach you things that you want to know. If it's something that I don't know then I'll investigate it. Since I have quite a few connections, I have confidence in investigating things. If there's anything else I'll help out as well.』

『In other words, let's go with a give and take relationship, you mean?』

『That's right. It's good that you're quick to understand.』

She seems to be smart, so I think it would be fine even if I didn't help.

Is what I was thinking though.

However, after all since it's a person from the same world, there must be some things she wants to try.

She did say that it was promising to meet with another earthling as well.

『I understand, then let's cooperate.』

『I see, thank you. Hearing those words is a big help. I'm just saying it ahead of time, but afterwards don't come out saying you want to stop.』

『Men don't go back on their words.』

『..Hearing that in Japanese is somehow a little moving.』

『If it's on this side, then no one understands the joke material.』

Nanahoshi said, "Well then", and sat on the chair.

She took some rings out of her pocket and put them on.

Three even.

I wonder what she's doing.

After a single cough to clear her throat.

『Then, to start things off is there anything you want to know? I've heard that you are investigating things related to the teleport incident.』

『Umm, who did you hear that from?』

She sent a fleeting gaze towards a slightly sullen Fitts-senpai who was unable to join our conversation.

I see now, during the time when I was unconscious she must have talked with him for a bit.

"Umm, what? What's going on?"

Suddenly having the gazes aimed at him, he tilted his head with a worried face.

"After this, we would like to hear about that incident. Nanahoshi-san from here on please use human language."

"I understand."

Fitts-senpai sat down next to me.

Nanahoshi faced us.

From here on wasn't in Japanese but in human language.

"I don't know anything about what created that incident. However, five years ago, it's just about the time that I came to this world."

Nanahoshi was saying in a way as if it was hard to talk about.

Five years ago, Asura Kingdom.

By this point, even with how dense I am, I could predict it.

I'm sure she heard as well, that I was teleported to a different location from Fitts-senpai.

"In other words?"

"Most likely that incident was a reaction that occurred at the time when I came to this world. In other words..."

There Nanahoshi cut off her words for a moment.

And then said it.

"In other words, that would mean I was the cause of it."

After all huh.

It was an answer I had already guessed halfway through.

The fact that Summoning and the Teleport are really similar.

And then, the fact that Nanahoshi was summoned.

No matter how much of an idiot I am, if you gather together this many conditions then I'll understand.

Rather, it's almost to the point that I feel relieved I'm not the cause.

But, that wasn't the case for Fitts-senpai.

"You were???!"

He yelled in a loud voice which I've never normally heard, faced Nanahoshi and raised his hand.

"..That!!!?"

Nanahoshi raised the hand she had put the rings on.

The ring lit up.

Fitts-senpai's magic didn't work.

What is that ring?

"I..We... How much do you think we suffered because of that disaster! Father and mother??! It was your fault!"

The instant he realized the magic wasn't coming out, Fitts-senpai leaped towards Nanahoshi.

However, after the second ring lit up and that fist made a sound as if it hit something in mid-air.

That ring, it's a magic tool huh.

"Hey! Rudeus Greyrat, stop just watching and help me out here!"

Nanahoshi's impatient voice.

Fitts-senpai who was breathing heavily yet still throwing his fists out.

I grabbed onto his hand.

"Fitts-senpai, please calm down."

"How could I calm down with this? This person was the cause, she said it herself! How can you stay that calm! Even you, even you went through a lot of trouble!"

Fitts-senpai was agitated way beyond what I've ever seen before.

Normally he always has a laid back attitude, but after all it seems he lost an important person in the teleport incident.

After five years have passed he may have cleared it up to some extent though if you put the perpetrator who caused it in front of his eyes, there's no way he could remain calm.

However, according to the story I heard, the one who caused that incident wasn't Nanahoshi.

In my previous life, I think I was present in the instant she was teleported.

In other words, you could say she as well was just dragged into it.

Ah, I see now.

Since we had the talk about those parts in Japanese.

In other words, Fitts-senpai didn't hear it.

It's not strange that he's mistaken.

"Sorry about that. The explanation wasn't enough. It doesn't seem that she came because she wanted to. In other words, she's a victim."

"Victim!? Is..is that true?"

Fitts-senpai was still breathing in stance.

However, it seems he believed my words, took a deep breath and sat on the chair.

"I'm sorry. It was a bit thoughtless of a way to put it. I'm sorry about that."

"No, it's fine, I'm sorry as well, it was so sudden."

I guess Nanahoshi put on the rings because she considered the possibility that I might attack her in a frenzy.

She's unexpectedly stubborn.

Rather, that seems like quite a convenient ring.

I wonder if it's for means of self-defense.

I want one myself.

"In any case, in regards to that incident, I don't really understand it myself. In that incident I was summoned, but by who, or with what objective, and then why that disaster happened. Those kinds of things, no one knows."

"Orsted..-san, didn't say anything about it?"

"Yeah, he didn't say anything other than this was the first time."

I see, you don't know.

Well, if these guys who call themselves Gods don't know then I'm sure it won't so simply be explained.

I do have somewhat of a feeling like the Human God [Hitogami] might have said Orsted caused it but...

Well, since it seems Orsted has that curse in operation which makes people hate him, then Hitogami as well might hate Orsted because of that curse.

Though Orsted also seems to have some personal grudge, those two don't get along with each other.

Unexpectedly, Hitogami might have some prejudice when he said it.

If I'm to completely believe in Nanahoshi's story then, I can't really imagine that Orsted caused it.

Even though she was summoned, for example, he seems to be entirely supporting the fact that she wants to return, I don't get the meaning.

"Then, why did you say you were the cause?"

"If afterwards you were to point it out you wouldn't like it right. That's why I said it ahead of time. That most likely I'm the cause.

"I see now."

Rather than hiding it she says it ahead of time herself.

And then, she corrects it by actually saying that's wrong.

If you were to learn about it after I guess it would be easier to calm down.

It's a bit hard to hear.

Although, we should go with it while taking into consideration the possibility that Nanahoshi or Orsted are lying.

"However, I see, you don't know at all huh."

"I don't know. However, I have prospects with my research."

"That you'll understand the truth behind the teleport incident if you advance your research?"

"At the very least, I'll be able to attach a theoretical explanation to it."

She isn't going to assert that she'll know huh.

Rather, this is more believable.

"For that reason I need a large amount of magic power."

"I see now, then my existence is like a ferrying ship."

"A ferrying ship? Fufu, I guess, that would be right."

{ C-Editor's note: A ferrying ship is an expression meaning to get what you need just when you need it. }

Fitts-senpai was pouting over our conversation.

I wonder if he still doubts Nanahoshi.

Well, I'll make sure to slowly explain it to him later.

In any case, I never could have imagined that gentle Fitts-senpai would lose it that much.

He did say there was one acquaintance of his that he found but... I see, both his mother and father died as well...

It seems like it would be better to talk again after things calm down a bit.

"I understand. Nanahoshi-san. For today I haven't completely sorted things myself, another day, we'll come back to ask again. The specific details on what you need help with at that time."

"I get it. We'll do it then."

We exchanged some final short words, I lead Fitts-senpai and left that place.

After I told Fitts-senpai about the circumstances surrounding Nanahoshi from the start he calmed down a bit.

She was forcefully brought into this world and she's desperate to return.

After telling him that, Fitts-senpai's anger seemed to subside.

However, after the final words, he asked like this.

"And then, Rudeus-kun, how do you feel about her?"

How do I feel huh.

This is, absolutely not about her face I'm sure.

It should be talk about whether I believe or don't believe in her.

Since I came here by reincarnating, I can completely accept her story.

Still, to Fitts-senpai who was born and raised in this world, it might be a completely unbelievable story so suddenly.

However, judging from Nanahoshi's tone it just felt like she really didn't care at all for this world.

Almost as if she just quickly wanted to get things taken care of and return to her home.

She's different from me, ever since she came to this world she's continued to succeed.

There are various things being thought lightly of. She might have eternal life.

She wasn't boasting about her troubles but...

I don't really like a bit of it.

"Honestly, there are parts that I don't really like, but for now I believe in her."

"..I see, you don't like... Yeah, then it's fine."

Fitts-senpai made a bitter smile.

If here I had said I completely believed in Nanahoshi, I wonder if I would have received a warning of, "you should be more cautious."

We were the ones to intrude upon her, so I don't think there's much concern about her trying to deceive us but...

Well, it was just that unrealistic story after all.

It wouldn't be surprising to be worried about me if I were to readily believe in it.

"You were worried about me right senpai, thank you very much."

"Eh!!? N..No, it wasn't really.. worry..Yeah?? You..you're very welcome."

Fitts-senpai became flustered.

He finally seemed to relax.

—

In any case, just like this Nanahoshi and I started a work relationship.

There are still many things I'd like to ask, but there's no reason to be impatient.

It's fine if I just hear about them one at a time.

Almost a year has passed since I entered the Magic University.

I've turned 16 years old.

Since there are no celebrations other than at five, ten, and fifteen years old in this world, I can't remember when my birthday was at all.

If you look at your adventurer card everyday you could figure it out but it's not something you look at everyday.

Well, age really doesn't matter at all.

Since I met Nanahoshi, there's been a change in the flow of my daily life.

First, my morning training.

This is about the same as always.

However, sometimes when I'm swinging my sword occasionally Badigadi will appear.

He will generally just remain quiet and watch.

It's not like he particularly goes out of his way to stick to my training, or that he was giving me any specific advice, he would just sit there with his six arms crossed nodding to himself.

I wonder what he's coming to agreement with.

He doesn't particularly say anything.

If he were to open his mouth he might let out a loud laugh in the early morning and bother the neighborhood, so I don't ask either.

I don't know what he thinks.

He is a guy who gives off a good feeling, but I don't know what he's thinking about.

For the most part he is a Demon King. I have a feeling that it would be bad if he ever got into a bad mood.

However, one day, Badigadi opened his mouth.

"Humu, it's truly an interesting training, but is there some kind of meaning to it?"

He asked me if there was any meaning to it.

I felt a bit of something weigh down on my heart.

"It shouldn't be something pointless."

After I refuted him like that.

"You have a pointlessly large amount of magic, therefore training to wear Fighting Spirit would make such training meaningless."

Is how he responded.

Fighting Spirit?

It's Fighting Spirit.

After thinking about it I've heard people talk about this Fighting Spirit occasionally.

However, I have no idea how you wear it, those sorts of points are kind of vague.

It's a good opportunity. I'll ask and see.

"What is Fighting Spirit?"

"Fighting Spirit is in other words magic power!"

According to Badigadi.

Fighting Spirit is a technique where you use the magic power residing in your body and explosively increase your physical ability.

In other words Body Reinforcement.

That much was just as I had imagined.

"How do you wear it?"

"Wrap each part of your body in magic power one at a time, apply it there and harden it!"

"Oh."

I received some splendid advice.

I guess this is the so called Demon King's wisdom.

With this I should be able to become stronger.

I should be able to become an existence that's one step higher.

Since that's the case, I started to release magic power almost like Dragon ball and try it, almost as if it was Nen power I tried to gather the flow surrounding my body with my sense, and I tried a variety of things, but there was no difference in my physical ability.

{ C-Editor's note: 'Dragon ball' and 'Nen' are references to the Dragon Ball and Hunter x Hunter manga and anime series respectively. }

I just felt like I could get stronger.

"I guess you are that then! You have no talent!"

In an instant he explained the reason I couldn't do it.

Normally, the thing known as Fighting Spirit, the more you train your body you'll naturally understand how to wear it is how it goes.

I believe I've proceeded with the intention of doing a reasonable amount of training, but even now I have yet to wear Fighting Spirit.

Therefore, I have no talent.

It seems there are occasionally such guys.

No matter how much they train, guys who can't wear Fighting Spirit.

"Fuhahahaha! However, you shouldn't have a need for it! Even that Laplace never wore Fighting Spirit, but he was strong!"

Whenever Badigadi makes comparisons to me, the name Laplace often comes up.

I guess there is the common point in that we both possessed a vast amount of magic power.

"Badi-sama have you met Laplace before?"

"Humu, he annihilated most of my body in a single attack, it took a considerable amount of time to revive! I thought I was going to die that time! Fuhahahahaha!"

I wonder if that's something to brag about.

Well, he did fight against an amazing opponent and lived, I guess that's plenty to brag about.

According to Badigadi.

Laplace was a suspicious guy with a lot of mysteries to him, but he was skillful in ways to use magic power supposedly.

"I wonder if I can be strong if I were to fight like Laplace as well."

"You should stop with that, if you were to use magic power like that guy, your body would break apart and scatter. In the first place, for a human to have that much magic power residing in their body is already abnormal in itself!"

Powerful magic power will destroy your body.

I somehow or other understand things like that.

The operation of manipulating magic power is similar to the operation of trying to stretch your arm to its limit.

If you were to try and stretch it, bent in reverse, naturally your arm would break.

The one known as Laplace possessed a body and techniques that balanced out his enormous magic power.

I don't hold the body or the techniques.

With a human body, no matter how much I train I won't become like Laplace.

Is what seems to be the case.

"In the first place, what do you plan to do after you become stronger?"

"Even if you were to ask 'What?'"

Since I was already on the verge of death once, I think it's only natural that I want to avoid it happening again.

"I have known of any number of men that sought after strength and fame, but none of them were any good. This is about my nephew, but he's pretty stubborn you know. He's become considerably calm now, but he used to say he would strive to be the world's strongest hero until he dies. Even though there's many number of things more important than that."

"Important things? For example."

"For example women! If you find one yourself I'm sure you'll understand! Fuhahahaha!"

And then Badi made a triumphant look and said that.

Even in manga in my previous life those who seek nothing but strength are all generally no good.

I don't really have the intention of seeking that much strength.

In this world as well, the strong guys generally have a larger image, but it's not as if strength is justice after all.

Rather than pursuing strength, pursue women.

I can understand that enjoyable way of thinking.

However, I don't know what to do in my case since I can't desire for them due to my illness.

"Demon King-sama."

"What is it?"

"Do you know the way to fix impotency?"

"".....No clue."

It seems that in my regard, the Demon King's wisdom isn't very useful.

After having breakfast and heading to class.

Recently, I've been learning about Detoxification magic in the morning.

Intermediate Detoxification magic.

With Detoxification magic, the large majority of conditions can be cured using just Elementary level.

However, particular illnesses, poison produced by powerful monsters, or diseases that have reached an advanced stage, you need a pinpoint incantation and a massive amount of magic power.

In order to use Detoxification magic above the Intermediate level you learn such pinpoint techniques.

Those incantations are also very long.

They're already several times longer than the incantations for attack magic at the intermediate level.

There's a story that some important person from the past shortened the long incantations into their current state, but it seems that didn't apply to detoxification magic above intermediate level.

There are a number of categories as well.

For intermediate level you have to learn over 50 incantations.

Among those there's even magic where you create poison.

Poison is medicine, is something that's commonly said.

Advanced level has over 100 incantations.

After you make it this far, you really can't continue at it with a half-assed memorization ability.

When you get to the Saint class or above the necessity for memorization gradually decreases, but in exchange the consumed magic power increases.

Also, King class and greater are being researched by many countries and is generally kept hidden.

There are countries that create poison which can't be healed with healing magic and then techniques are made to try and fix that.

I guess it means that every world has its own game of tag with viruses and vaccines.

Incidentally, the God class Detoxification magic is a single magic that cures a certain strange disease supposedly.

If I remember correctly, it was called something like Magic Stone Disease.

It seems to be a disease where all of the magic power in your body gradually turns you into Magic Stone.

Historically it's said that there was only ever one person to use it.

In regards to it's incantation words, it seems that it's kept carefully in storage in the Great Church of Milishion.

Incidentally, going from Intermediate, Advanced, Saint class the more the rank goes up the longer the incantation gets.

When it gets to King class I imagine it's at the level where you'd have to read an entire book.

No matter how high this bodies memorization ability is as expected it would take quite a bit of time to memorize something like that.

Not having any choice but to memorize scriptures, the monks and priests of every world sure have it difficult.

Well, if it's me then I would just carry a book around with the incantation techniques written down.

It could be possible that if I learn Detoxification magic, my illness could be cured.

I took this class while thinking that, but after asking the teacher at the very least up to Advanced level there's no such technique that exists to cure ED.

Obviously, I guess.

This is something spiritual after all.

Lunch.

Up until now I've always eaten outside, but it's starting to get a bit cold out here.

Therefore, I decided to create a building.

I used earth magic and created a roof and walls to surround my table.

In the center of the table I created a hole and started a fire there.

After opening an air hole in the room, just like that a Kamakura was completed.

{ C-Editor's note: In Japan, a kamakura is a small hut made out of snow. }

Thanks to the fire the stone table warmed up a good bit.

And then after going that far, Vice Principal Jinas came along and got angry.

That if I'm going to the point of creating a building outside I should just eat inside.

It can't be helped so I ended up eating on the first floor.

I thought Zanoba would be against it, but surprisingly he didn't say anything.

"Since Julie can't sit on the third floor."

It seems there are no chairs for those with the social status of slaves on the third floor.

Of course that's a local rule.

Zanoba doesn't treat Julie as a slave.

To the very end he treats her as a younger disciple or pupil.

Even though I say that, since her position is still lower than his, you can still see various scenes of her being ordered around.

The treatment of slaves really does come in a variety of ways.

I really don't know if Zanoba's treatment is good or bad.

However, compared to someone who is blatantly treated as a slave, it shouldn't feel as bad.

When we went into the dining hall for some reason the crowds of people split.

"He..hey, it's Rudeus?"

"Isn't he amazing, he really put the squeeze on all of the Special Students all by himself."

"I saw the time when he defeated the Demon King, a single hit, it was a single hit.."

I heard the rumors being whispered around.

I don't remember putting the squeeze on everyone, and after I hit the Demon King with a single hit I was knocked unconscious with three more.

However it isn't really a bad feeling.

I don't really want to get too full of myself though...

The split in the crowd continued down to a certain table deep inside.

"Fuhahahahaha! As expected even you aren't good with the cold."

For some reason Badigadi was sitting there drinking alcohol, which doesn't even exist on the school menu.

Since his skin is black it had changed into a dark brown color.

I wonder if he's drunk.

That guy's muscle is mystery meat.

The surrounding students were giving off a feeling like they wanted me to hurry and sit as they watched.

I wonder if this means they want me to eat here every time I use this place.

Well, there's no problems if that's the case.

Incidentally, Cliff and Elinalise are on the second floor.

There was once a time when I saw that spectacle, truly they are an idiotic couple.

They eat while feeding each other with an "ahhhn~" and don't care about people watching while they kiss.

Since I feel empty when I see that, I try my best not to approach them.

"Master, what Demon King-sama is drinking looks very delicious."

"Fuhahahahah! As expected of a dwarf! To understand how great this alcohol is with just a glance! That's right, this is a rare gem that a man was hiding in the hair on his head!"

Julie said something like that while pulling on Zanoba's cuff.

Speaking of hair balls on the head I wonder if it's about Principal Georg.

I had heard that the dwarves like alcohol, but I wonder if that's the case for Julie as well.

However, isn't she way too young even if that's the case.

But, it seems I was the only one thinking that way.

"Humu, Demon King-sama, would it be okay to take one?"

"Of course. Drinking alcohol alone is boring after all! Fuhahahaha!"

After Zanoba asked, he took a cup for Julie and she started to drink it.

I wonder if that's alright.

As expected I wonder if she isn't too young?

If we were to say it will be fine if we just use Detoxification later then that is true but...

Well, I drank a little bit when I was seven years old in this world, I can't really talk about other people.

"Now, then I'll have one cup as well."

"Stop that since you have classes."

"If Shisho is saying so, Badi-sama, I'm very sorry about this."

"Fuhahahaha! Unable to drink alcohol freely, students sure have it difficult!"

While they were having such a conversation, lunch ended.

Me? I didn't drink anything.

After lunch is over there are more classes.

I'm learning Advanced class healing magic.

In the fifth years' classroom.

Unexpectedly, this is the same classroom as Pursena.

If you were to ask what's so unexpected about it, it's that Pursena is alone.

Rinia is taking a different class.

It seems like Pursena mainly pursued healing magic as her field while Rinia pursued attack magic as hers.

Normally Pursena is completely lazy.

However, during classes she takes them seriously while chewing away at dried meat.

Although as a special student, moreover feared as an ex-delinquent, recently she's been alone.

It seems she was troubled being unable to make a two person group during practical skills classes.

Which is why she was quite thankful for my existence.

"If it's to boss, then I could hand over my precious thing nano."

And then it was to the point where she handed over her half eaten dried meat.

I gratefully accepted that and started tasting it, well, licking it.

Pursena was making an amazingly disgusted face.

Even though you said you would give it to me...

Speaking of Rinia, recently, she's come to ask me a variety of things about attack magic.

The majority of it seems to be things she doesn't know about melded magic.

It seems that the case where attack magicians get stuck is generally regarding melded magic.

I didn't get the impression that Sylphy was ever stuck, but I guess this could be the difference in the hard headedness between an adult and a child as well.

Today it was regarding melded magic of fire and water.

How nostalgic.

Evaporation and condensation, I gave an explanation about the "mechanisms of rain" regarding fusion and mutual change.

But, Rinia just tilted her head.

As the water in the ocean evaporates it turns into clouds, inside of the clouds raindrops form, and eventually they fall down.

If you can understand that much, then you can apply it some extent, but I received the doubt of, "If the entire ocean turned into rain, wouldn't the ocean disappear nya."

After teaching her, "After the rain comes down it flows back into the ocean again so the amount remains the same.", she made a triumphant face and returned with, "That's a lie nya, after all the water in the Great Forest just soaks into the ground nya."

From there I continued to explain, "the water that gets absorbed into the ground is either sucked up by trees or else enters the underground water flow.." and then she tilted her head again.

Even though I say that, it's not as if she doesn't understand to the extent of Ghyslaine, I'm sure she'll get it eventually.

Speaking of attack magic, I was able to learn Saint class magic of the Earth attribute.

[Sand Storm].

It's an upper class version of the Advanced magic, [Dust Storm].

Judging from the sound of it I didn't think it would be anything great, but after I actually tried using it, a tremendous amount of sand and strong winds covered the entire vicinity.

My field of vision was sealed off and even breathing became difficult.

Even after the effective time ended, the easily crumbling sand remained over the range of the magic.

If the Saint class water magic, [Cumulonimbus] creates a storm of wind, thunder, and rain, then [Sandstorm] is magic that creates a storm of wind and sand.

It seems that among Saint class magic, many of them make use of weather effects.

The teacher who taught it to me said, "There could be damage to the crops, so don't use it in the town."

I guess saying that in preparation for the time you teach Saint class magic is a custom.

In any case, with this I can use Saint class earth magic as well.

Dossei.

Just joking.

{ C-Editor's note: 'Do' means soil in Japanese and dossei means dishonest or unreliable so it is unclear what the joke or pun is here. }

In regards to the other two attributes, if I have time I'll try to find a teacher that will teach me them.

Incidentally, that Earth Saint class teacher said, "I couldn't have imagined that you didn't already know the Saint class magic."

According to Badigadi, my chantless magic attacks are already pushing the limits of King class, it seems they assumed it was only natural I had already learned Saint class.

That Demon King-sama told me that the Rock Bullet I fired off had power equal to Emperor class magic.

It seems that he's never seen any magician who uses magic with that much pinpoint destructive power other than Laplace.

Then I asked if it would be fine to call myself an Earth Emperor class magician and I was told that calling myself that is at my own convenience.

Since it was said in a way that had some kind of hidden implication, I decided not to do it.

Nothing good has come from being talked about as amazing without reason after all.

Around the time of early afternoon I head towards Nanahoshi's research room.

Her research room is spacious.

Soon after entering, you get the impression of things jumbled about similar to a storage room.

After heading to the room next door to the storage room.

There is an experiment room that is covered in something like tile.

Furthermore if you head further to the next door of the classroom, it's Nanahoshi's bedroom.

It seems a certain corner in her bedroom has turned into something like a food warehouse.

I wonder if things like mice and cockroaches come out from keeping food in the same place that she sleeps.

I understand it just from glancing at the features of the room, but she has the talent to become a hikikomori.

Since I'm the one saying it, there's no mistake.

Incidentally, entry into her bedroom has been forbidden.

Fundamentally what we do is experiments relating to Summoning magic.

In the experiment room I pour my magic power into original magic circles she's drawn.

It's not that much work, but it's repeated endlessly.

It's because we're taking the approach, "they're most likely magic circles that are failures."

No matter how much money she has saved up, it's not like she has an infinite stockpile of magic crystals on hand, also, there's a limit to how many magic crystals there are on the market, if she buys them all out she might end up attracting the resentment of various groups.

Since that's the case, there were many experiments where she was hesitating to try it seems.

I just kept continuing to pour my magic power into magic circles.

Generally nothing came out. The paint would disappear and just the rough draft would be remaining.

But, occasionally an immense amount of magic power ends up being sucked up and then some strange thing comes out.

For example a dirty black feather or a bug's leg.

When I ask if we've succeeded, she returns with obviously it's a failure.

However, since I don't know what is going on, a bit of stress builds up.

"Rather, what exactly are you trying to do with these experiments?"

"It's for the sake of trying to summon a person from our world.. they're experiments for the sake of understanding the theory behind it, the very first of first of first phases."

If she were to complete a magic circle for the sake of summoning people, can she make a magic circle in reverse that sends them back? She doesn't seem to know for sure.

Even though I say that, this is the very first of first of first steps, huh.

It seems like there's still a long ways to go.

However, even this is fine.

"Summoning a person you say, if you do the same thing, wouldn't that disaster happen again?"

"Of course, I don't have any intention of causing a disaster. However, if I can get proof of another two theories, I can make a hypothesis on the reason why that disaster occurred."

Is what seems to be the case.

"Failures follow along with experiments, since there's such words out there, please don't think too lightly of it. There were a considerable amount of deaths in that disaster."

"If you're going to say that then it's 'with life'. Even if you didn't say it I already know that. That's why, just like this I'm fortifying my foundations currently."

So this was fortifying the foundations.

I don't really get it.

Since this is the case it might be good for me to learn summoning techniques as well.

"I would like to learn about summoning magic as well is that fine?"

"Summoning techniques are my life line you know. I won't readily teach it."

"Didn't you say you would teach me anything?"

After saying that, Nanahoshi went "cheh" and clicked with her tongue.

"After this current experiment ends, I'll answer one of your questions."

"One? I don't think that matches up very well."

"After all of the experiments end, when I return, I'll gather together all of the experiment results, information, and connections and give them to you, therefore, endure it for a bit for now."

It seems Nanahoshi is irritated.

Well, I guess I'm being a bit selfish asking for something when there's been no result yet.

Just as I was thinking that, she gave me a single book.

It's the book called, [Shigu's Summoning Techniques].

"If you want to know about it that much, research it yourself."

I feel like I've seen it somewhere before, but I have no memory of reading it.

{ C-Editor's note: That is the book he was going to buy when he was still teaching Eris. It was priced at 10 Asura gold coins ($10,000). When he came back to buy the book it had already been sold. }

I'll gratefully take the time to read it.

The experiments for the time being are that kind of feeling.

It seems Nanahoshi is trying out thousands of different magic circle patterns in order to hit on a success and figure the laws behind them.

It's an operation that will take a while.

I stopped going to the library.

However, Fitts-senpai occasionally joins in on the experiments.

After seeing him, I came to understand that the operation I'm doing is rigorous.

After all, when he goes through only about 20 scrolls his magic power is exhausted.

"Rudeus-kun, this, just one of these consumes about the same amount of magic power as an Advanced spell."

Were Fitts-senpai's remarks on it.

Fitts-senpai is a chantless magic user, but it seems his aggregate amount of magic power isn't all that high.

No, it seems to be considerably large if you compare it to the average person's level, but after all I really am an abnormality.

I'd really like someone to give me some kind of numerical value.

However, if Fitts-senpai who is one with proven real ability does it, it's this much.

I don't know what kind of magic circles Nanahoshi is drawing, but I guess that means that summoning magic uses up that idiotic of an amount of magic power.

Unlike attack magic, it doesn't seem to be something that can be used a number of times in battle, so it's not strange for it to be few times.

However, even the scrolls that ends up clearly being failures cause Fitts-senpai's magic power to be exhausted.

No, precisely because we're trying to summon from another world should be why it consumes that much magic power.

"Sorry, since I have the matters as a guard, I can't help anymore with this... if I don't leave magic power remaining for the time something happens..."

"It can't be helped I guess."

Fitts-senpai seems gloomy recently.

It seems his feelings are a bit hurt.

In regards to magic, I'm sure he had a bit of pride in it.

Everyone has some pride.

"..."

Nanahoshi didn't talk down to Fitts-senpai.

It seems Fitts-senpai isn't very good with Nanahoshi as well.

"I'm... useless aren't I."

Fitts-senpai said it in a really lonely way, but I shook my head.

"There's no way that's the case."

"I wonder?"

"Yeah, just having Fitts-senpai here is reassuring."

During this past year, I've depended on Fitts-senpai a considerable amount.

After this much time, there's no way I would want to say, "you're useless, so goodbye."

If Fitts-senpai feels it's impossible no matter what, then I won't try to restrain him, but if he withdraws because he's lacking in strength, then I want to say "wait."

"It's fine if it's just when you have time, please come again. Aren't we friends that have researched it together up until now. Let's continue to close in on the truth together."

"...I see, thank you."

Fitts-senpai said that and laughed bashfully.

I'm really weak to this smile.

I think Fitts-senpai is around 13 years old right now, but after a few more years pass I wonder if he'll become a handsome man that makes women cry.

No well, how do I put it.

Frankly, recently I've only been able to see Fitts-senpai as a woman though.

I wonder if my eyes are going strange.

Could it be that I've already awoken to that path?

Since the sun was setting, I returned to the dorms with Fitts-senpai.

We separated in front of the female dorms.

"Ah, that's right, Rudeus-kun."

"What is it?"

"I think it would be fine for you to take the main path back?"

While saying that, Fitts-senpai pointed towards the path in front of him.

Soon after entering this school, I was stuck with the false charge of being an underwear thief by going down that path.

Ever since that day, I don't go near that path.

"You must be joking by saying that. If I try walking down there again, they'll just scream with a 'kya~' again right?"

"Nfufu, you've become considerably popular in the female dorm you know."

"Eh? Seriously? Kind of like the Super Popular Prince of Tennis?"

"Tenni???"

Fitts-senpai made a face of confusion.

"Umm, you know, they say you're a gentleman who disciplines the bad guys, but you don't put your hands on normal students. After all, even though you're strong enough to defeat the Demon King who defeated all of the Beast Race warriors in a single hit, even after you were surrounded and threatened like that, you didn't do anything in return."

Don't lie...

Just the other day I heard some rumors.

I was listening properly.

I shouldn't have any popularity.

Seriously none.

"Fufu, at first they were all afraid, but Rinia and Pursena went around saying it. Boss is a tolerant gentleman therefore he won't go around putting his hands on weaklings nya, like that."

While Fitts-senpai was saying that, he put his hands around his ears imitating Rinia.

How do I put it.

Ah.

Cute.

I feel like something around the top of my hips is going to descend.

"And then, it seems like everyone finally realized Rudeus-kun's charm. Even though your outfit is a bit poor looking, after taking a close look your face isn't bad, your silhouette is amazing, and that even though you're strong you're not selfish is good."

Oh~?

Those two, somehow, they really say some good things huh.

According to the story, it seems they're keeping quiet about my impotency as well.

I guess I should treat Pursena to some expensive meat.

I wonder what Rinia would like. I'm sure it would be position, fame, or money.

"There are still people who are afraid though, Goriade-san for example."

"Ah, I'm sure there's no helping it with her. She was leading the group that time after all. The other day it seems we got a bit too caught up with something as well."

"I see. Rinia and Pursena as well, every time they see Goriade-san they go to pick a fight with her about that day."

They go to pick a fight.

In response to those words, I remembered the image of a trembling Gorilla from the other day.

It's the scene of bullying.

"Fitts-senpai won't stop them?"

"I won't stop them. After all, that was Goriade-san's fault, she was just selfishly finding faults to make Rudeus-kun into the bad person. It's good medicine."

Fitts-senpai as well is considerably heartless.

However, bullying isn't good.

"Since I'm sure she didn't have any ill intent, please don't drive her too far into the corner... Will you please convey that to Rinia and Pursena as well?"

My tone of voice stiffened up a bit.

Fitts-senpai went into a panic and put up the palm of his hand facing me.

"Ah, that's wrong. It's not like I'm specifically driving her into a corner. How do I put it, kind of peacefully, it has a kind of feeling where Goriade-san as well is like, 'Really, please let me go on that already.'"

I wonder if Goriade-san really had that kind of friendly, touchy character.

There's a paper thin difference between bullying and touchiness, so it's better to be careful around there as it's dangerous.

"I see, it's fine as long as it remains within the scope of joking around but... in any case since I'm not really bothered over it, Fitts-senpai as well please make sure it doesn't go too far."

"Rudeus-kun sure is kind. Yeah. I'll convey that along to Goriade-san as well."

It's fine for you to not convey that to Goriade-san.

I'll be troubled with the disposal if she ends up sending panties or something as a sign of gratitude after all.

"Eh~?"

While Fitts-senpai was bashfully laughing as he went down the path.

I remained in that place.

After he walked about three steps, Fitts-senpai turned around.

"Umm, since that's the case, it's alright you know?"

"No, since I've already got my long-awaited good image attached, I'll avoid walking through as if I belong there."

I said that while making my game face.

"I...I see? That's just like Rudeus-kun."

Fitts-senpai stuttered while trying to hold his lips together.

I wonder if he's laughing.

After all I wonder if it's better if I don't use my game face.

Many months and years ago I was told that my laughing face is creepy.

Hypermetric.

"Yeah. See you next time, Rudeus-kun."

"Yes, we'll meet again."

And then, I separated with Fitts-senpai.

After dinner I teach Julie magic in Zanoba's room.

Julie is diligent and clever. She absorbs things almost like a sponge.

She's skillful with her hands as well. Anything she can't do with magic, she manages with her hands.

Putting it like this might not be a good way of saying it, but she was a good purchase.

Certainly, someone like her is a lucky find among slaves I'm sure.

Even though I say that, it's still the first year.

She's still completely lacking in the amount of magic power and her precision is nowhere close as well.

Even if I say she's skilled with her hands as well, the clumsiness of being a beginner with carving tools still remains.

I'm sure there's a necessity to look at it over the long term.

While I was instructing her, I worked on making my own doll.

Recently, I've started making a "1/8 Fitts-senpai".

Even though I say that, since Fitts-senpai is always wearing baggy clothes, I don't know how his body line looks.

Since the elves have almost no body fat, I think he should be pretty thin but...

The problem is whether to make it attached or removable.

Though it's fine as long as I don't make it so the clothes can be taken off.

However, I'm wavering.

In my brain I don't want it to be attached, but if the person himself were to see it he might get angry.

If I were to complete it, I would want to show it to him as well. I'm lost on what to do...

"If you want, I can forcefully strip him of his clothes?"

"Please stop that."

In regards to my hesitation over it, Zanoba came out saying something like that, but it's rejected.

Incidentally, speaking of what Zanoba is doing, under my direction, he's continuing work on creation of the Red Dragon figurine.

Since each of the parts of the Red Dragon are large, it's oriented towards Zanoba.

Although, since Zanoba is clumsy with his fingers as usual, the progress is slow.

It's fine to do it slowly.

Before I go to sleep, I read [Shigu's Summoning Techniques].

It's a story about how a witch named Shigu summoned one magic beast after another.

And then, in the end she used a large quantity of offerings and a tremendous amount of magic power to summon a magic beast stronger than herself, and was eaten alive.

Her disciples lamented in grief and swore in their hearts to never summon a magic beast beyond their own ability.

It seems to be intended as a moral instruction, similar to a fairy-tale.

It was good for getting the image that if an amateur with an excessive amount of magic power like me tries to use too much to summon a magic beast, there's the possibility that I might summon a dangerous one that can't be controlled.

If I were to learn it, then it has that sort of merit. The demerit would be that I need to precisely keep it held down I'm sure.

However, there wasn't any specific detail on the method or magic circles for summoning written down in the book.

I wonder what she was telling me to research with this.

—

Just like this, my every day life continues.

I still haven't found the method to cure my illness.

While I haven't found it, I do feel like I've reached the next step towards it.

Or else, maybe I should desperately try to explore for a solution in a greater variety of directions without being too optimistic.

Just as I was thinking something like that on a certain day.

I started to head towards solving all of my troubles at once.

The Holy Land of Swords. It had no other name. A harsh land that was covered in snow all year round.

In his final years, the first generation Sword God built a school here to teach his disciples the sword. To swordsmen it was a place they would go, and then eventually leave. As long as you were a swordsman, no matter who you were, it was somewhere you should visit at least once. This was the Holy Land of Swords.

Gathered at this Holy Land of Swords were young swordsmen in the making, all with promising futures. Though they were teens, they had talent in the sword that you could see at a glance. They were young geniuses.

At the Holy Land of Swords, there were three swordsmen who had outstanding talent.

The first was the eldest daughter of the Sword God. Nina Farion. Though she was now 18 years old, by the time she had reached 16 she had already been regarded as a Sword Saint with talent. People would say that she'd be a Sword King around the time she turned 20, and by 25, she would undoubtedly be a Sword Emperor. The people around her felt that she was the most promising one.

Next was Nina's cousin. Jino Britts. He was the second son of the Britts family; a branch family to the Sword God Style's main house, the Farion family. He was now 14. As someone who received the title Sword Saint at 12 years of age, he was the youngest Sword Saint. He was such a genius that though he was now a step behind Nina, people didn't know if this would stay the same in the future.

Finally, Eris Greyrat. She was now 17 years old. She was a mad dog who frightened everyone who saw her, and those who bit her would be mercilessly beaten down. She who had come along two years ago as Sword King Ghyslaine's disciple would never compromise when it came to her actions. Each day she would tackle her training with a do-or-die attitude, and she'd abuse her body until it surpassed that abuse.

Her debut at the Holy Land of Sword was striking. It was vivid enough that even now, several years later, it was still a topic of conversation.

— Approximately 2 years ago —

The location was the Holy Land of Swords. Brought here by Ghyslaine, Eris showed herself before the Sword God. The ones encircling them were the best pupils of the Sword God Style, not one of them below Sword Saint. Among them were Nina and Jino.

Though Eris was before the Sword God, she neither got down on one knee, nor lowered her head.

"I have no use for a small fry like you!"

Of all things, she declared this to the one who was presently the strongest swordsman, Sword God Gull Farion. The Sword Saints around her became riled up.

"Wha-! YOU, to Shishou-!"

"Kneel down! Do you know nothing of the Sword God Style's manners!?"

"What have you been teaching her, Ghyslaine-dono!?"

"Sit."

With just one word, the Sword God silenced the Sword Saints.

That this young and arrogant dog would be cut down by the Sword God's hands; everyone there thought that. No one who had said such arrogant words to the Sword God had left here alive. They were reckless enough words that even the arrogant Ghyslaine's tails and ears were standing straight up.

However, the Sword God merely grinned. While smiling, he asked,

"You have good eyes, huh. Just who is it that you want to cut down?"

Who was it that she wanted to cut down? Having been asked that, Eris replied frankly.

"The Dragon God! The Dragon God Orsted!"

Everyone here had heard the name 'Dragon God'. However, they didn't know the name 'Orsted'. The people there that knew the name were limited to Eris and one other.

"Haahhahaaa! I see, if you compare me to Orsted then I'm certainly a small fry! I see, I see, so it's him that you want to cut down! So there was someone besides me who wanted to cut him down!"

The Sword God energetically slapped his knee while cheerfully laughing. Everyone there gulped at the strange scene. That Sword God was laughing. Arrogant words were thrown at him, he was called a small fry, but he was laughing. It was something impossible.

However, only the Sword God knew. To plan on killing Dragon God Orsted. It meant, in other words, to aim to become the strongest.

"But you know,"

The laughter suddenly stopped. A complete silence returned to the area.

"It's easy just to say it. Can you do it?"

"I will."

Eris declared it as if it was natural. There was neither fighting spirit, nor hesitation. She had eyes with not a single hesitation. The Sword God raised the edges of his mouth.

"Alright. Let's see your sword. Jino, be her opponent."

"Eh!? Y-, yes!"

Called by his uncle, Jino Brits stood up. Of about the same age as him, a girl. Making his uncle laugh with empty words; a disagreeable girl. He wanted to give her a scare.

"He's our youngest one. Though he's younger than you and still naive, he's pretty good, you know."

Eris and Jino received the wooden swords tossed over by the other Sword Saints.

"Then in the center."

"Uraaaaaaaa!"

The moment she received the wooden sword, Eris struck Jino. Jino couldn't even respond. With a single strike to the wrist, he dropped the sword, and before he could even surrender, no, without even realizing what had happened, he was cut down by the sword. A perfect killing intent. Jino saw an illusion of being cut down with a real sword, and fainted.

"Wha-!?"

Everyone there was dumbfounded. As if they'd accept something so ridiculous. At the very least they should've faced each other in the middle, right? To start with, Jino wasn't even facing Eris at the time. She was a coward. So thought the Sword Saints. Since the boy that she saw as her younger brother was taken down by a sneak attack, of course Nina was the same.

The ones who didn't think so were four people; the two Sword Emperors, the Sword King, and finally the Sword God.

"See? Naive, right?"

"He really was, huh."

Eris' short hair swayed and she was already taking note of the movements of everyone there. So that it would be fine even if anyone attacked, at any time. Without any useless movements, she looked over her surroundings in contempt.

The Sword God didn't criticize Eris. He merely judged that the beaten and unconscious Jino was naive. It was his fault for letting down his guard when the two of them were holding swords; he was stupid for not considering the possibility of being suddenly attacked. This was what the Sword God had implied.

"Alright, next is Nina. You're up. This time start after you face each other in the center. Though surprise attacks are good too, this time show me your sword after I give you the signal."

At those words, one of the Sword Saints turned to Nina and tossed her a wooden sword. The instant she caught it, Nina did a double take at the Sword Saint. It was a little heavy. It was a wooden sword with metal inside.

"..."

The one who had thrown it nodded. Seeing that, Nina trembled once and then returned the nod. She would kill this insolent girl. Even Nina was a Sword Saint. It wasn't as though she hadn't killed someone with her sword before. Though it was a little cowardly... Eris was the one who was rude just now. Considering Jino's humiliation, she deserved to be paid back with certain death.

The two lined up in the center and took their stances.

"Begin!"

At the Sword Saint's signal, Nina swung her sword. It was one of the forms in the Sword God Style that she had practiced countless times, and with this she would knock down the red-haired girl. That single swing of hers was filled with fighting spirit.

The swords collided. In that instant, with a dry sound, Eris' sword was smashed to pieces.

Nina was convinced of her victory. Now she would just swing into Eris' temple without mercy. So she thought.

That moment, Nina's face was hit. Next her chin was hit. While she was stumbling, she was sent flying with a kick, and then mounted. Before she realized, her two arms were checked by Eris' legs.

When she looked up, she saw a bloodthirsty devil with its fist raised.

"S-, stop! St-, stop it!"

When these words were spoken, Nina had already been hit several times. Blood ran from her nose, her teeth were broken, and she had fainted. A pool of steaming liquid that was streaming from her crotch now spread across the ground.

Eris slowly stood up, and then she picked up the iron-cored wooden sword that Nina had been using. She then snorted. She kicked Nina over to where Jino was laying unconscious.

"Does this place have nothing but naive people?"

"Y-... You bastard!"

The swordsmen flew into a rage. Shouts of 'coward' and other abuse could be heard. However, those who were Sword King and above, on the contrary, overlooked those swordsmen indifferently. They understood who was in the right.

"My bad, my bad. I misread you a little, huh. I'll be your opponent."

However, when the Sword God stood up, the two Sword Emperors' expressions showed a little surprise.

"There's no need for Shishou to do it personally."

"Ghyslaine, she's your... 'disciple', wasn't it? In that case, I'll go."

Ignoring her words, he grasped his own sword. He was serious.

Seeing this, Eris strongly kicked off the ground. She leapt backwards to where she had left her sword. Then she immediately removed the scabbard from the partner that she had gone on many journeys with.

"Don't panic, I'll properly give you a handicap after all... Oh, that's a good sword you have. It's one of Yulian's, right?"

"I don't know. It's something I got from the Migurd clan, you see."

"Ah, I see. ...This guy here is also one of Yulian's works."

While saying this, the Sword God slowly drew his sword. It was a sword with a sparkling golden blade. It was one of the Sword God's seven swords. It was one of the 48 swords that the Demon Realm's craftsman, Yulian Jalisco created, from the bones of King Ryuuou. The demon sword 『Windpipe(Nodobue)』.

The Sword God held the demon sword loosely in his hand. The Sword Saints all held their breaths. It was rare to see the Sword God get serious outside of training the Sword Emperors.

And then the Sword God light-heartedly muttered,

"Alright. I'm coming."

In an instant, Eris was blown away. Her body flew outside, smashing down the gate in the process, and smacked into a pile of snow.

Before anyone had noticed, the Sword God was already standing still in the terminal position of a strike; no one had seen the motion at all.

"Amazing!"

"Amazing!"

"You were truly amazing!"

The surrounding swordsmen unanimously praised the swing of his sword. It wasn't the power of the demon sword; the fighting spirit. The Sword God had blown Eris away. That insolent person had died. Everyone thought as much. However, Eris hadn't died.

"Uu... Guu...!"

Raising a groan, she struggled weakly in the snow. Though she received an attack from the Sword God, she was alive? Nay, the Sword God had gone easy on her. However, there was no need for the Sword God to get serious on a stray dog like her. Afterwards it'd be fine just to excommunicate her from the Sword God Style, and throw her out into the snow. However, the Sword God spoke words completely contrary to the expectations of the Sword Saints.

"Ghyslaine, treat Eris. From today onwards, she's a Sword Saint. Starting from tomorrow, the great me will teach her the sword."

The grinning swordsmen froze in place. 'teach her the sword' meant, in other words, that she would become the Sword God's direct pupil. It was something that hadn't happened since Ghyslaine; she was the best pupil, amongst the best pupils.

"Ridiculous! The title Sword Saint is something that isn't given to anyone but those who have learned the 『Longsword of Light』! To teach a brat who's the same as a barbarian is...!"

The Sword God raised his sword towards the man who had spoken and cut off his words.

"Didn't she just defeat two of the people who had learned the 『Longsword of Light』?"

"H-, however..."

"A 『Sword God』 isn't something that you can become simply by memorizing a skill or something, you know? Even though someone special like me didn't get special treatment, why is there a need to treat Sword Saints that way?"

"...I've spoken inexcusably."

The swordsmen didn't say anything more. They had noticed that their feelings were those of jealousy. The Sword Saints understood that jealousy was something that would dull their swords.

But they misunderstood. The Sword God advocated swordsmanship based on desire. According to this, the majority of those with dirty emotions like jealousy would have their swords sharpened instead.

However, the Sword God didn't intend on spoon-feeding such important things. He believed that if they were the type who couldn't realize this themselves, then it was pointless even if you told them.

Like that, whilst creating a striking impression, Eris became a Sword Saint.

Nina hated Eris. She had been knocked out in front of a large group of people, and made to wet herself after all. Humiliation. Right, she was humiliated.

The sudden appearance of that barbarian... When her sword was broken, she started hitting her opponent instead; she clearly had the attitude of a bad child. She was unsuitable for the title 'Saint'; at least within the Sword God Style. That was what everyone had been saying.

For nearly two years, the words directed at her had no effect. She was completely left out by Jino and the people around his age.

However, everyday Eris would do nothing but continue her training with either the Sword God or Ghyslaine. When she slept she'd be in Ghyslaine's room. There was no contact between them, and she had no need to converse with Nina and the rest.

Speaking of conversations, at most they'd exchange a few quarrelsome words during the day of the month that all pupils practiced together. In regards to that practice, Eris and Nina's abilities rivaled each other. Nina thought that she had won more often. Dropping your sword or breaking your sword counted as defeat, and as long as such rules were in place, she wouldn't fall behind, Nina thought. Though that was part of her "naivety", this wasn't something that she would come to realize until a later time.

A rivalry. That was how it was seen from outside, but to Eris it was as clear as writing that Nina and her lot had no fangs.

On a certain day... Nina was chatting with some girls around her age. As befitting of young girls, they were talking about things like who was cool among the other students, or how had their first time with the person they were dating been. They talked about those kind of topics.

Because Nina had been training earnestly in the sword since she was born, she wasn't good with topics like this. She thought that they would continue to be irrelevant. If you asked her about men that she was close to, the only one who came to mind was her 4 years younger cousin, Jino, but they were raised together like siblings so she couldn't think of him like that. As a result, she lived only for the sword. For if she didn't, she would be left behind by Eris. She was thinking that she would hate to lose to Eris.

The one who happened to pass by there was Eris. There was steam rising from her whole body. Even when Nina had been chatting with these girls, Eris had been training. When Nina considered this, she lost her cool a little.

As a result, she said,

"Hmph, still training even at this hour, huh! You'll probably never get a man your whole life, huh! It's fine if you want to stay a virgin forever and live for nothing but the sword!"

Even though she herself was inexperienced, she said something like that. However, because it was something that she was worried about herself, and something that hurt her as well, she assumed that Eris would also be hurt by it.

"Hu...!"

However, Eris snorted with laughter. In the face of that triumphant expression, Nina winced.

"Wh-, what?"

"Sorry, but I'm not a virgin."

That she was a little proud about it, and that she was blushing a little as well.

That was what everyone was thinking.

"Eh...!? That's a lie, right? Eh? Who? With who?"

Nina couldn't hide the unrest in her heart at all. While unsightly and flustered, she started questioning Eris.

"Someone I grew up together with."

Though Eris was usually taciturn, when it came to that man, she continued to talk about one thing after another. About how they had grown up together since they were young, about how they traveled from the Magic Continent to their hometown, about how when they met the Dragon God that man managed to land a hit, and then, about how she had her first time with that man. About how it was for his sake that she wanted to become stronger.

It was a love story that detailed the events from when she fell in love with him as a girl, until that love was fulfilled.

Nina was in complete shock. She had lost, she thought. She had completely lost.

Their swordsmanship was on par. However, she lost in age. Furthermore, the other girl had a man.

The only thing left that Nina could do was deny that man's existence.

"Y-, you're lying! This is something Otou-san said! That the Dragon God wears something called 『Dragon Holy Fighting Spirit』 so half-assed techniques can't wound him! You're just making stuff up! That person actually doesn't exist, right!? Admit that it's a lie. It's still not too late to say so, you know?"

"It's not a lie. Rudeus isn't half-assed! ...But, right now I'm not suitable for Rudeus. I have to get stronger."

Eris said that at the end, and firmly clenched her fists. Her eyes carried flames of determination, and ignoring Nina and the rest, she returned to the 『Space of Martial Training』 training place that she had come from.

Dumbfounded, Nina watched her walk away. The one person she thought would absolutely never beat her in this had already surpassed her. Nina was dizzy from the reality of this.

Though she hadn't had one yet, that barbarian had a lover. As if Nina could bear with such a thing. She decided that it was definitely a lie. That Rudeus person or whatever was imaginary, she thought.

On one of her free days, she headed towards an information broker and gathered information on Rudeus.

'Well, it won't be easy; he's fictional after all' she thought.

Contrary to her wishes, she immediately managed to find some.

Rudeus Greyrat. Born in Buina village of the Fedoa region of the Kingdom of Asura. At 3, he became the pupil of the (Water Saint Ranked at the time) Water King Ranked magician, Roxy Migurdia. At 5 he became a Water Saint Ranked magician. At 7 he became the home tutor of the Stronghold City Roa's mayor's daughter, Eris Boreas Greyrat. After that, his location became unknown due to the Teleportation Incident. However, lately he was in the northern parts of the Central Continent and made a name as the adventurer 『Rudeus of the Quagmire』. He was now a Special Student at the Magic University and staying at Sharia, the capital city of the Kingdom of Ranoa. He was admired by certain types of adventurers, and there was also a rumor about him single-handedly slaying a stray dragon.

He was real. He wasn't just some prince from Eris' delusions.

While yielding to this, Nina thought to herself that he wasn't a big deal. Though everything up until age 7 was amazing, in the end he was just an adventurer. He hadn't even become Water King Ranked, he had a lame name like Quagmire, and he was talented as a child, that's all. There was no mistaking it. So thought Nina.

Then she thought of something bad.

'If I defeated this Rudeus, made him into a slave and brought him here, what kind of face would Eris make, I wonder?' she thought.

No time like the present. Nina prepared for a journey that very same day, and demonstrating the impatience inherited from her father, she jumped on a horse. Like that, she began her trip to the Kingdom of Ranoa. Though it was still winter, Ranoa was very close by. With one of the fine horses raised in the Holy Land of Swords, you wouldn't even need 2 months to get there. She was impatient.

After easily finishing her journey in a month, she arrived at the Magic University. There she was shocked.

Nina had honestly made light of magicians.

'Without any decent training, they were a bunch that did nothing but mumble some vague chants or something, thinking they could get stronger that way.' she thought.

However, walking down the road were muscular men. For some reason there were a lot of Beast People, and people dressed like warriors. Though there were also those in robes, and those in cute uniforms, the overwhelming majority had robust bodies. Nina was ashamed of her ignorance of the world; her view of magicians had been narrow until she was as old as 18.

At any rate, Nina called out to a nearby young man. He was well-built and was a Beast Race who definitely appeared to be a warrior. She tried asking him about Rudeus' whereabouts. When she did, he replied that he was heading to Rudeus as well. Thinking 'this is perfect', Nina followed him.

They arrived at a uniformed youth. He was said to be Rudeus.

He was just as Nina had imagined. Though he had trained his body, she couldn't feel any ambition from him. Though his face wasn't bad, he had an unconfident expression, and he had no appeal as a man. He was perfect for Eris.

'Right, time to beat him down...' but the instant she thought this, the young Beast Man raised his voice.

"I assume that you are the lone horseman who defeated a stray dragon, A-Ranked adventurer Rudeus of the 『Quagmire』! I challenge you to a customary courtship duel!"

Nina was shocked. The man had suddenly challenged Rudeus to a duel.

"No, I have piano lessons so..."

Though it was unmanly, Rudeus immediately rejected him. However, with this or that reason, the man ended up in front of Rudeus and because there was no use talking, he attacked.

Nina thought that in the next instant, Rudeus would be cut to pieces. Though he wasn't as skilled as she was, Nina could still see that the young Beast Man was quite strong. And Rudeus was a magician. The common sense of a swordsman dictated that as long as you closed the distance, a magician was weak. At this distance there was nothing a magician could do.

However, the result was the opposite. In the blink of an eye, Rudeus had defeated the young man. It might have been within three seconds. It was truly an instant.

Then without paying another glance at the dumbfounded Nina, he quickly went away.

And then, after Nina somehow managed to compose herself again, once again she asked about for Rudeus' whereabouts. She then found out that he was at the library. When she headed towards it, she found a huge line of Beast People lined up in front of the building. Thinking that it had nothing to do with her, she made to enter the library when,

"Are you here to duel Rudeus?"

She was asked this by a young Beast Man.

"Y-, yeah. That's right."

She replied as such without thinking.

"Then get to the back of the line! Don't cut in!"

He became angry. According to what she had heard, the people in this line were all here to duel Rudeus. There were 30 people. While trembling in trepidation at the reality of this, she quietly waited in line. When she did, the Beast Man who was in front said "It's a pity, huh?". She had no idea what was going on. She just waited like that, and it became afternoon.

Then 'he' appeared.

A demon with pitch black skin, like a lump of muscle. With a very self-important attitude, he overlooked the surroundings.

"Hohh, is this a line for an attraction or something!?"

"It's the queue for dueling Rudeus Greyrat!"

"What! There are this many of you!? Fuhahahaha! Rudeus is a pretty popular guy, isn't he!? I don't mind waiting, but isn't there any way I can get further ahead!?"

The people around became angry at the man who boldly declared this. They had lined up and waited for their turn. Nina was indignant as well. Even she who had come here after a long journey was waiting for her turn.

'Stop acting so conceited and get in line!' she thought.

Then, a certain idiot said it. He said what he shouldn't have said.

"If you wanna get ahead no matter what, then how about you do so after beating down everyone in front of you!?"

"Fuhahahaha! That's fine! I'm good with it! Well then, all of you come at once! In deference to the guts you have for challenging me, I'll let you attack first!"

At that excessive haughtiness, everyone there became mad with rage.

"What did you say!?"

"Don't get too carried away!"

Then thinking to let this guy know his place, they attacked. Before she knew what was going on, Nina was participating in the attack as well.

Then, she lost.

Though Nina was attacking as well, the demon stayed composed. Their swords couldn't pierce that black skin. After letting loose her blood-lust she finally wounded him with her Longsword of Light, but he healed in an instant.

"I am the Demon King Badigadi! Fuhahahaha! If you can defeat me I'll grant you a hero's title!"

Nina ought to have been putting up a good fight. However, her attack power was too low, and after her tactics failed to strike home multiple times, she was caught, defeated, and her beloved sword was bent.

Then came the terror, and the chaos.

'Why am I doing something like fighting a Demon King here?'

'To begin with, why is a Demon King of the Magic Continent at a place like this?'

That was what everyone there was wondering.

A little while after Nina was beaten, everyone else was as well. Miraculously, though there were injured people, no one had died. He had held back. When she realized this, tears fell onto Nina's fists. However, though it was mortifying, she had already lost her sword and there was nothing left that she could do.

"...The heck is this?"

Around the time everyone had been defeated, Rudeus appeared from inside the library. After saying this and that, he moved locations.

While frowning due to the pain in her body, Nina followed them.

They arrived at a large field. Rudeus and the Demon King continued to glare at each other. Seemingly having some sort of conversation, sometimes the Demon King's loud laughter could be heard. However, Nina couldn't tell what they were talking about. The duel began when a terrifyingly fast youth brought a staff to Rudeus.

The duel between Rudeus and the Demon King.

Nina watched the duel from beginning to end. Rudeus received the staff, and unsealed it. After some brief words, he pointed his staff at the Demon King, and in that moment,

The Demon King's torso was shot off.

An opponent that she was helpless against was defeated in one blow. In the face of that reality, Nina was purely dumbfounded. She couldn't remember what happened afterwards very well.

———

Nina returned to the Holy Land of Swords. Now that she knew the level of strength that Eris wanted to reach, Nina was shocked. While shocked, the gaze that she turned on the endeavoring Eris had somewhat softened.

Then, since that time, Nina turned over a new leaf. She renewed the effort she had put in up until now, and to deal with cases where her sword broke again, she now carried two swords. She stopped looking down on attacks from Eris' fists, and distanced herself from the trivial acquaintances from her age group.

After that, she became a true rival to Eris but... That's another story.

——

Incidentally, upon hearing about the news of the Demon King's attack, the Sword God had grabbed his sword with great enthusiasm written on his face, but hearing Nina's story, he looked disappointed and returned his sword to its sheath.

Mushoku Tensei: Isekai Ittara Honki Dasu - Volume 9

Let's talk about a certain young girl.

The young girl was born as the only daughter of a poor hunter and lived in a remote region of the Asura Kingdom.

Her father was a half-blood elf.

Her mother was a human with just a bit of beast race blood mixed in and was once a slave to an Asura noble.

Both of them were kind and raised the young girl, pouring their love onto her.

From a glance, you would see nothing but a happy child.

However, her hair was emerald green.

Her hair was putting her life out of order.

Emerald green hair.

According to one passage, the closer a Demon race's hair is to green the more violent it is said to be.

Once upon a time, a race that shook all other races with fear — the Superd Race — had green hair as well.

And then, there's a theory that the one who led the Superd race — the Demon God Laplace — had green hair as well.

The young girl wasn't a Demon Race.

However, a head full of emerald green hair made people afraid.

A detested color.

Even though that's the case, a young girl is still a young girl.

The past is the past.

The abundant Asura is far from the Magic Continent, there are few with radical ideas of rejecting the Demon Race.

The young girl's hair and both of her parents were completely unrelated to the Demon Race. The green hair was due to a mutation.

First they were surprised and looked at it with eyes of wonder, and then they gradually accepted it.

But, the ones that accepted it were limited to just the adults.

After the young girl began to walk around outside alone, she was attacked.

She was ostracized and had mud balls thrown at her while being called an evil Demon Race because of her emerald green hair.

The young girl always passed her time in constant fear and occasionally cried.

She didn't understand why children of her age would always try to hurt her.

Her mother looked upon her with pity. She cut her daughter's hair short and stitched pants that made running away easier.

Her father talked with the parents of the other children, petitioning for them to not target his daughter.

However, it couldn't resolve the fundamental problem.

Every time the young girl journeyed outside, she was targeted.

To the children, it was just a game.

Beating up the lone child with a different colored hair.

Gathering their strength together to defeat the demon. It was that sort of game.

However, that wasn't the case for the young girl.

The children came after her holding evil intent, throwing mud balls and occasionally stones.

If she were to run, they would pursue and catch up to her.

If she tried to resist, she would be hit, kicked, and subjected to painful things.

The adults warned them.

For a period of time the attacks stopped, but soon after they began again in places where the adults couldn't see.

The young girl felt hopeless in the world.

She thought that other than her parents, she had no other friends.

She couldn't change the color of her hair.

She couldn't do anything.

She had no choice but to live with her head hung low, trying not to stand out.

Then a single young boy saved this young girl.

He was the same age as the young girl.

After seeing the girl being hit with mud balls, he came running at full speed, boldly challenged opponents that were double his own size and dispersed them.

That wasn't all. He called out to the young girl with a kind voice.

Warm water came out from his hands and cleansed the young girl.

He came to her assistance of all things.

To the young girl, this was an event on the level of a miracle.

There was an upheaval in the young girl's daily life.

The young boy protected the young girl from evil intent.

And then the bullying stopped.

The young boy granted power to the young girl.

He taught her the miracle known as magic.

The young boy was the same age as the young girl yet he knew everything.

He taught her everything she wanted to know.

Letters, magic, natural phenomenon, math...

To the young girl, the young boy was an existence almost like God.

The young girl would always act together with the young boy.

She quickly came to love him.

Even at her young age, she thought of marriage. She knew of such words as bride, and secretly made the determination that "In the future I'm going to be his bride and marry him."

After that, a variety of things happened, and it become a bit awkward.

However, she still loved him.

She thought she would forever be protected by him.

And then, they separated.

They were forced to separate.

The young boy was beaten by his own father and sold to far away nobles.

The young girl thought: if I don't save him; if I don't bring him back...

However, she was stopped by her father.

What her father specifically said at that time, the young girl couldn't remember clearly.

Supposedly the young boy had left on a journey for the sake of becoming stronger.

It's no good if you don't give it your best in order to not lose to him as well.

Something along those lines was said.

The only thing that remained in her ears were just the final words.

"Does Sylphy want to keep on being only protected by him forever?"

She remembers just that line.

She also remembers thinking that it wasn't the case.

She remembers thinking that just being protected was no good.

If a time like today comes again, she can't just afford to watch in silence.

"I understand. I'll get strong enough in order to save Rudi!"

That day the young girl changed.

The young girl started actively training herself.

She did the same things that the young boy did everyday on her own.

Building up her physical strength by running and training her body by swinging a stick.

Everyday she used magic and sharpened the sensation.

Even without the young boy, the young girl knew what she should do.

Parallel to that she thought about the destination of the young boy.

Within the young girl's knowledge and range of activity, she didn't know the young boy's destination.

She couldn't even predict it.

During times like these, what would the young boy do?

What would he say?

If you don't know it's fine if you ask, is what the young boy said.

The young girl followed that and decided to ask.

She went to ask a person who would know the location of the young boy.

The young girl proceeded to the cleric's office of the village.

It was the place where the mother of the young boy was working.

There, she asked the mother about his location.

Naturally, the mother made a mischievous smile and deceived the young girl.

The young girl started helping out at the doctor's office.

It wasn't an action that she thought deeply about.

Just, if she got along better with her then she might be told his location. It is what she thought somewhere in her heart.

The fact that her father said, "That sort of thing happened, but it's not good if you don't get along with his family." was another one of the reasons as well.

The mother of the young boy would never spill the location of the young boy.

The young girl thought about various means to hear it, but each time she was deceived with a small laugh and a grin, "If you want to meet Rudi, you'll need to give it your best some more."

She was getting nowhere.

And then the young girl thought.

Of course, the young girl didn't understand the words getting nowhere.

In any case, she thought that if she continued like this there was no meaning to it.

Which is why, she decided to get close to the maid at the young boy's house.

The young boy also had a father, but she was bad with him.

Since she saw the scene where the young boy was beaten.

He was an opponent she didn't know about, and it wasn't that she hated him, but she hesitated to talk to him because she thought she might be beaten as well.

The maid was devoted.

She was devoted towards the young boy.

"I'm sure in the future Rudeus-sama will be invited into a position similar to that of the Royal Family. If you are to become the wife of Rudeus-sama, you have no choice but to learn etiquette so that you are able to act normally in society."

After being told that, half forcefully, she started getting instructed on manners and etiquette.

Even though that was the case, after being told that it was for the young boy's sake, the young girl wouldn't say no to it.

The way to walk in the royal court, the method to fit in a dress, manner of speaking, the methods to greet, and etc..

She really had doubts about whether this kind of thing was necessary.

However, the young girl was honest and had good memory.

However, in regards to the vital location of the young boy, the maid would never let it out of her mouth.

Just like this, it continued until her 10th birthday.

The only one that congratulated her on her 10th birthday was her mother.

Recently the monsters in the forest had been active, so her father had to remain on lookout.

Since her father is a hunter and was familiar with the forest, he had to hunt when it came down to it.

"Do you really have to go that far on her 10th birthday?"

Is how her mother asked the father.

However, the young girl thought it couldn't be helped and gave up.

At any rate, it was the same at the time of her 5th birthday as well.

The birthday present she received from her mother was a white one piece dress.

For the sake of this day, her father saved up some money and bought some cloth. Then her mother would stitch it for her.

Immediately after putting it on her mother said, "It suits you. You look beautiful." and praised her.

The young girl said, "eh~", while laughing bashfully, thinking that she wanted to show it to the young boy as well.

And then simultaneously, she started to worry about what the young boy was doing.

She wondered if he wasn't inconvenienced in an unknown place.

And she wondered if he was congratulated on his 10th birthday.

She thought [I want to send him something as well.]

However, she couldn't think of anything that he would want.

After asking her mother, "If it's something like that then anything works." was said.

The next day when her father returned, she asked and received the suggestion, "Then, it would be good if you sent him a good luck charm that is handed down in our family."

She was told that if a pendant was carved from wood and was kept on their body then good things will happen.

Her father always kept one somewhere on his body as well.

It seems like it was something given to her father when he became independent from his grandmother, a female elf.

After hearing that the young girl felt that it was a good choice.

Everyday the young girl gave it her best to carve the wood.

It was her first attempt at wood carving. The young girl was by no means skillful.

However, she gave it her best effort, carving everyday.

And then she finally completed it.

It was clumsy, but it had somehow taken shape.

And then a problem rose to the surface.

It's fine that she made it, but she had no method of handing it over to him.

After worrying over it, the young boy's maid made a suggestion.

"If that's the case, I'll mix it in with the goods being sent."

She decided for that would be done.

The young girl told the maid countless times, "It's a precious item so absolutely make sure it's sent, okay."

The maid acknowledged that, since it was a precious item it would absolutely be delivered.

And she agreed to it.

A short while after that.

The teleport happened.

The young girl was teleported into the sky.

"Eh!!?"

She was at a frightening height.

For a moment she thought it was a dream.

The sensation of gradually falling.

The sensation of suffocating from the wind pressure.

Piercing through the clouds.

And then terror.

Her entire body was telling her that it wasn't a dream.

"Hiii~"

The young girl heard a scream coming from deep within her throat.

The scream confirmed the fact that this situation was real.

She didn't know why.

However, she was falling from the sky.

If I don't do something.

If I don't do something.

I'll die.

Die.

Without a doubt die.

No matter how young the young girl was, she clearly understood the fact that she would die if she fell from such a height.

She used all of her magic power.

She knew that the ground was gradually getting closer.

The young girl raised the wind.

Aimed directly below herself in order to fall onto it.

She thought that her velocity would fall a bit.

However, she accelerated back to her previous velocity.

Wind was no good.

What should I do in this situation?

What did the young boy say?

Remember, remember.

Didn't the young boy say anything?

What to do at a time when you're falling from a high place.

Soften the impact.

Something soft.

That's right. Engulf yourself in something soft.

But exactly how soft?

What should I create?

I don't know, I don't know, I don't know!

While half in frenzy, the young girl did everything she could think of.

Creating water, creating wind, creating earth, creating fire.

In any case, to slow down her fall and avoid crashing into the ground.

She did everything she could.

However, she fell.

She crashed.

Miraculously the young girl survived.

She didn't know how.

She wasn't unharmed.

Her entire body was damaged, covered in bruises, smeared with dirt, and both legs were fractured.

It was a miserable state, but the young girl survived.

She didn't know what was good.

However, her velocity dropped.

She survived the fall from a high altitude and her injuries were only to the degree of a fracture.

However, the suffering continued.

"ugo..aaa!"

In the place she fell, there was a monster right before her eyes.

It was a wild boar with four arms, walking on two legs.

The young girl knew about this monster.

She was told by her father that if she were to ever encounter it, absolutely never get close to it, do not make a sound, and wait for it to pass by.

If you get noticed by it, then use magic to escape as fast as you can.

She was told to do that against this opponent.

The name was said to be Terminate Boar.

The young girl had many things she didn't know, but she knew that the Terminate Boar was a monster that rarely ever appears.

Occasionally it comes out from the forest and attacks people with the E rank monster, Assault Dog, accompanying it.

They are some of the most dangerous monsters in Asura; domestically.

Unusual for Asura Kingdom, it is a monster worthy of C rank.

The danger of it rises up from C rank to B rank if it is accompanied by Assault Dogs.

Even individually it is at least a strong D rank.

That is the Terminate Boar.

"Kyaaaa???!"

Half in a frenzy, the young girl let out a scream and started firing magic at the Terminate Boar.

Intermediate Magic, [Icicle Breaker].

She wasn't holding back at all.

She was attacking it with her greatest spell from the start and to her utmost limits.

It was a single hit.

The Terminate Boar was frozen, shattered, and scattered.

"Ha..ha..agu!!"

In an attempt to stand up in one breath, she realized that both of her legs were broken.

The young girl used healing magic and immediately healed them.

While assisting in healing people, she discovered that healing magic was one of her strong points.

However, it wasn't as if she was used to the pain.

She used the magic with a half tear-stained face.

"...Ha..ha."

Standing up.

An intense headache started up.

Her consciousness was getting dim and she felt faint.

If the young girl's mental state had been normal she would have realized that it was because she was out of magic power.

Suppressing the descent and attacking the monster with magic.

All of it was done without restraint, using her greatest spells.

That is why, the young girl's magic power was exhausted.

"Ar...are we saved??? Yo...you, where did you come from? What is your name?"

She heard a voice from behind her.

With her head in pain and her vision growing hazy.

While suppressing those feelings, the young girl turned around.

There was a girl.

She had golden hair and a beautiful face that almost gave off the impression of it being transparent.

The girl was wearing a pure white one piece with detailed embroidery. It was likely made of materials 1,000 times more expensive than what the young girl had received for her birthday.

On her side there was a boy whose arm was injured and leaning against a wall. Next to the boy was a man covered in a bloodied robe and on the verge of death.

"Sylphiette.."

The young girl said that and fainted.

—

This is how Sylphy encountered Asura Kingdom's Second Princess Ariel Anemoi Asura.

『The Kingdom of Asura's Imperial City's Royal Palace – Silver Palace.

In the Garden of Plants where the blossoming white flowers were collected.

Also known as, the White Lilies Garden.

It was there that the monster suddenly appeared.

It was there, before the eyes of the second princess Ariel, who was taking a stroll in the white Lilies Garden.

The monster, Terminate Boar, instantly killed the guard of the princess, Guardian Magician Derrick Redbat.

The monster oriented its evil tusk towards the princess.

The monster was defeated by the hands of the Guardian Knight Luke, and the princess was able to escape her predicament.

Admirably, Luke protected the princess' life with his own body.』

A monster appearing in the Royal Palace was an unprecedented incident.

Such a thing happening was talked about by the Nobles in the Royal Palace.

The existence of Sylphy was concealed with help from the nobles of the Second Princess Faction.

Lord Liston alone of the Second Princess Faction declared the following:

[Someone had to have secretly smuggled in a Terminate Boar into the Royal Palace and released it at the best timing- when the princess would be walking in the garden.

This must be a plot belonging to the Second Princess's Opposition Faction.

The only person that could feasibly do this, Lord August, is in charge of the Royal Palace's defense.

It is known that Lord August is the leader of the First Prince Faction.

So without a doubt, this plot must be an act on behalf of the First Prince Faction.]

Due to the rash actions of Lord Liston, this caused the second princess faction to be cornered, and began its tentative collapse.

Sylphy was cordially nursed to health.

She, who came flying down from the heavens, was the one who saved the princess.

It is a matter of course to well receive the hero who saved the princess in a pinch.

Contrary to some opinions, there were voices that regarded her as dangerous as well.

Suddenly appearing and killing the Terminate Boar with a single blow.

Also able to use chantless magic, for which the only known user was the master of the Magic Academy.

It's suspicious.

So all the nobles who knew of her concealed her existence and decided to keep the questioning in-house.

Among those questions asked were:

[Wouldn't it have been better to have disposed of her while she was unconscious?]

When this opinion came out, the second princess Ariel Anemoi Asura stated clearly:

[Does it matter what her true identity is? She is the benefactor who saved my life. I will not forgive any rudeness in this matter.]

Then, to these words, Guardian Knight Luke also agreed:

[I also feel this way. Suppose for a moment that this girl was sent to harm the princess, then she certainly wouldn't have had a reason to stop the monster's attack.]

It's clear that if Sylphy didn't appear at that time, the Princess and Luke would both be dead.

If Sylphy was a man, Luke might have changed his opinion on the matter.

Although breast size was nothing more than a hobby of his, the reason was because she was a beautiful girl with a pretty face, and that improved her impression on that of Luke, a ladies' man.

[If the Princess says so.]

[Luke even made a good point.]

[We shouldn't go that route.]

The result of the discussion, they would do an interrogation, but even in the case that she is concluded to be an enemy she would be overlooked.

And so the debate came to a conclusion.

The moment Sylphy woke up, she thought she was in a dream.

The bed was too luxurious.

The clothes worn by the people were too luxurious.

The room was too luxurious.

'I don't know the reason why I'm in such an amazingly luxurious place.'

[Yo, good morning.]

One of them spoke.

The one with the dressings of a Knight, who seemed just a little bit older.

Then Sylphy opened her mouth.

For just a moment, he resembled Rudeus.

[My name is Luke. Luke Notus Greyrat. And yours is?]

His soft smiling face made one feel relieved.

Every noble girl had surrendered themselves to his childish smile.

While there were some who could resist, they found they could not speak.

He was possessed by such pride.

[...!]

Sylphy, in order to protect her foolish self, curled her body up into the fetal position.

Even though he looks like Rudeus, she disliked other children of the same age.

Still to this day, there were children in Buina village who glanced at her with hostility.

[Oh, what's this? What's the matter?]

Seeing the excessively frightened Sylphy, the boy became agitated.

It seems that it was the first time he had experienced being rejected.

Watching this play out, the surrounding nobles laughed.

[Ha ha ha! It seems she's not the type to fall for a lady-killer like you!]

[We left care of this to you because you are said to be the most skillful in handling young ladies....]

[You are still too young for something like this, give it up already!]

The surrounding adults said such things towards Luke, trying to make him quit.

However, Luke obstinately stood his ground.

[Please wait. From here, it starts from here!]

He was possessed of only a single word in regards to a woman.

It was his 'pride'.

[I am sorry, have I given you a reason to be afraid?

Still, if you will allow me to, I would like to express my gratitude.

You of the beautiful white-washed hair, I am truly thankful that you have saved my life.]

Sylphy wondered what in the world he meant by white-washed hair?

Who is this boy?

While confused, she saw the side of the bed.

There was a dresser placed there.

It is said in this world that a [mirror] is extremely expensive, however...

[...]

At first glance, Sylphy did not realize that she was seeing herself.

With the girl sitting up alone, on the bed, there was something strange.

Their eyes meet.

When she moves her hand, the girl's hand moves too.

She immediately came to realize that it was the same thing as what was being reflected in the surface of the water.

Sylphy was surprised.

[...Eh?]

The hair of Sylphy had become pure-white.

[W, white?]

While Sylphy was confused, Luke continued to talk kindly.

Luke bowed his head, and praised the white hair of Sylphy in flowery words that she didn't quite understand.

[Yes. Your hair is like the first snow that falls in the late autumn.]

Those words which would set one's teeth on edge do not reach the heart of Sylphy.

Sylphy was earnestly confused.

Her hair should have been green.

Though there was no mirror then, she had seen the hair left on her comb before.

Nevertheless she wondered why it had whitened.

While it was a happy thing for sure, she didn't understand the meaning behind it.

[W, why... is it?]

How did it become this way?

Where am I, anyway?

Why am I even here?

And for that matter, how did I even get here?

Sylphy truly could not comprehend, so she only sounded pitiable when she finally spoke.

Afterwards, the questioning started.

The nobles conducted the questions.

Luke, who was no longer necessary to keep her company, with a shocked face stepped aside.

[Where did you come from?]

[Whose underling are you?]

[Whom did you learn magic from?]

Sylphy did not understand the situation.

Why? Why am I here? Why am I surrounded by all these people with scary faces?

However, since she was asked, she replied honestly.

I, who hail from Fedoa Region, am the only daughter of a hunter in Buina Village, and learned magic from my friend, Rudi.

And before I knew it, I was in the air.

Somehow, I came down near the place that monster was at, and then I used the magic I knew to defeat it.

I have no idea how or why any of this happened.

So I answered honestly.

The nobles who heard, looked at her doubtfully.

A village with a child magician.

Suddenly realizing they are in the air.

Suddenly realizing there is a monster.

It was not a believable story.

Still this matter, a wandering magician who tries to carry favor with the princess, did a performance of defeating the Terminate Boar to show their power.

It was easy to understand why they had complaints.

There wasn't one reason to believe in anything Sylphy said.

The nobles of the Second Princess Faction talked about this and that for a while.

[Come to think about it, there is a story like that....]

Amongst themselves, one noble recounted the rumor he had heard.

[There was a noble of Boreas who employed a tutor. They could use the chantless magic as well. He was a young genius who was able to use saint class magic at an early age. Is not, perhaps, this person that so-called genius?]

It is Rudeus.

To the Imperial City, only faint rumors of Rudeus had yet been transmitted.

It is because of the pressure on information Sauros exerted.

However, when Sauros was a bit moved by the sake, he was boasting about a boy who was like a son to him.

A story of a genius boy, who defeated the minions of the senior minister.

{ C-Editor's note: Referring to the defeat of the kidnappers of Eris. }

A genius boy, whose superiority the Sword King Ghyslaine acknowledged.

A genius boy, who managed the Boreas' violent daughter.

A genius boy, with a tasteless hobby.

It was nothing more than an unlikely rumor.

Therefore, the nobles treated it as only idle talk.

However, Sylphy was able to actually use the chantless magic.

Where it was able to fit in, the truth of the rumor began to take form.

[Ah, but sadly, that is the story of a boy!]

[The main point would be that wouldn't it be strange for them to be in the Imperial Capital?]

The nobles puzzled over this.

They questioned Sylphy again.

Asking leading questions.

[Perhaps your real name is that of the one called 'Rudeus,' isn't that right?]

[D, different! It's different, Rudeus that is, Rudi... umm, is the person who taught me magic.]

Sylphy, down to the tiny details, told them about how the boy called Rudeus Greyrat was the one who taught her magic.

How Rudi is very wise and how Rudi taught her various things.

That story had very much astonished the nobles.

If the story is really true then, that genius boy does exist, and before leaving the village, he had arranged to leave an apprentice.

It is not an ordinary apprentice.

It is an user of chantless magic.

Surely this is an ominous circumstance.

Well, if any of the stories are true.

With the information manipulation by Sauros, the case and circumstances of whether the person was a boy or girl can be changed.

However, the fact that this girl is a user of chantless magic is a reality.

Users of chantless magic are a rarity.

If Sylphiette said that she was not that genius boy in question, then the probability that she is his disciple remains high.

The real name of that genius is Rudeus Greyrat.

When the full name was spoken, a [Hm?] was uttered and many nobles were puzzled.

What is Greyrat? Why is it the name of the Upper Nobility who protect all the sides of the Asura Kingdom.

The name of Greyrat is not unusual to any degree in this country.

It is known as a family with a fondness for women.

To hear that a lower noble's daughter or maid has conceived a child in order to become a mistress is not an uncommon thing to hear.

And, thus, it is allowed for those mistresses to call themselves Greyrat.

They decided that the names of the four protected sides they would be called by would be:

Notus
Boreas
Euros
Zephyrus
There are many people who introduce themselves in Asura Kingdom as Greyrat.

However, though an ordinary name, the talk becomes different when it's about a genius.

For nobles who wish to be established, they need to have blood relations with one of the four main branches of Greyrat, no doubt he had been working towards that end.

That he started out with the Boreas, by being hired through Philip, Sauros' so-called illegitimate child, was also guessed at.

At least, something like a betrothal to Boreas' shrew-like daughter could make it so he could claim the name.

Luke says that none of his family, brothers or anyone has a boy with that name.

[It will be necessary to examine it more in detail.]

Nobles very much loved thinking of things to do with power struggles.

If Rudeus chose someone other than Notus, plans would be crafted to sabotage him.

However if he chose Notus, there were a chance he could be enlisted as an ally.

And so, their talks deviated from the original purpose of validating the identity of Sylphy.

To them, the possibility of a power struggle was of far more importance than anything trivial, like the true nature of Sylphy after all.

One week later.

News about the disappearance of Fedoa Region had made it to the Imperial City.

It was a prompt report.

On the day of the Metastasis Event, there was a knight who was just barely outside the range of effect by chance.

They reported on the situation at the nearest town.

A second knight succeeded the first, continuing on a horse without rest for a day, and relayed the information to the next big city.

From there, alternative means such as a carrier pigeon were employed to spread the word to the Imperial City.

The king received word of this, and appointed the Asura Magic Division to investigate.

It had been one week until news had come to the Imperial City.

Meanwhile reports had come out of people and monsters suddenly appearing all over the place.

Even with all the reports, the cause was dealt with as an incomprehensible and mysterious event.

However by way of this report, it was made clear that it was a large-scale metastasis event.

Information on the calamity had spread to the Imperial Capital in the twinkling of an eye.

Naturally such information reached the ear of Sylphy.

Mother and Father, she had no idea where her family was.

Everyone was missing.

[What....this....?]

After hearing of such a story, this common girl was completely stunned.

She did not comprehend what had happened enough to react sufficiently.

Or probably even how to react at all.

What happened?

The nobles also wavered on how to deal with Sylphy.

When the answers emerged as to how Sylphy and the monster had abruptly showed up, it was attributed to the large-scale metastasis.

Any doubt that she was a spy had faded away.

And going by her claims, the possibility that she was the child of a lowly hunter became high.

Hunter.

No matter how much the princess herself was helped, it remains that a hunter is a person at the lowest point of commoner status.

And those of the inner palace will not let a fact like that pass by them.

However even if you were to go home, there was no house left to go home to.

[Well, well, we're in a troubling situation it seems.]

[The Royal Palace doesn't handle social differences very well at all, and it seems there is no home to send you back to, either.]

[Is there someone who can receive custody of you, I wonder?]

If this person was an user of chantless magic, then they would be helpful in one way or another.

Mentioning it further, an Elf with white hair is a curiosity, and if they were to reach adulthood they would undoubtedly be useful for carrying out various duties...

And with a lewd smile, the nobles check with each other that they've arrived at the same mutual thought.

Then suddenly among those thoughts, the second princess dropped a bombshell with her speech.

[Since the house of Sylphiette has gone and vanished,

Then it's fine that she lives together with myself in this castle.

Shall we become good friends?]

The second princess was exceedingly pleased with Sylphy.

Of course, the fact that Sylphy had saved her wasn't the only reason.

When it comes to being the princess, it's only natural that she helps others.

Sylphy's incomplete knowledge on etiquette was an issue.

Though it seemed to be normal, her words were considered to be a little impolite, and her behavior also was thought to be a little impolite.

If the conversational partner was a noble, then she would be walking a thin line on tolerable speech.

If the conversational partner was a royal, then there wasn't a line there that would have been tolerable to walk.

The second princess accepted it as ["Informal speech"] and ["Friendly"].

[Um, Ojou-sama. Isn't there a too big difference between our status?]

[So? If it will hurry our friendship along... then, how about my guard. Won't you please serve me as a guard then?

Presently, my guard consists solely of Luke, my Guardian Knight. The seat of the Guardian Magician has recently become vacant.]

[Eh? But, I, don't have anything like a strong power...]

[Saying you aren't powerful... kusukusu, how modest you are!]

Of course, the nobles opposed such a thing.

Even with the effectiveness with the event.

Even with the ability to use chantless magic.

Even with the saving of the princess.

Sylphy in the end is still a commoner's child.

And in addition to that, now there is no longer a way to clear up her familial origin.

Though the claim is that of a hunter's child, there is no evidence of it.

On the contrary, having lived in a farm village, somehow high etiquette was known.

To put it bluntly, her true character cannot be known at this time.

These words were only for the sake of appearance.

This useful child was too valuable to be the princess' new toy, or so it was thought.

Ariel however flat out rejected their opinions.

[Sylphy is the benefactor who saved my life.

And is now a friend!

Who gives a damn about the fact she is a commoner!?

I will not forgive rude behavior!]

At these words, Luke made a bitter face.

Part of his duties as a Guardian Knight, included getting rid of bad insects who would get close to the princess.

As for whether or not Sylphy was an useful insect or a harmful insect he did not yet know, and yet it was still the job of Luke to protect the princess even from insects whose true nature was not yet known.

He also expressed gratitude to Sylphy.

His life had been saved.

The actuality of the thanks was in the appreciation of the fact that only one person had died.

To be granted revenge against the colleague Guardian Magician Derrick, those feelings were a plus.

From the start, Luke had long thought the Guardian Magician Derrick to be a disgusting guy.

Though a little bit of time had changed those thoughts.

While Derrick was a magician, he had sacrificed his body to stop the assault of the Terminate Boar.

That was a man of proud character.

If not for him, and the appearance of Sylphy, the princess would have only had death to look forward to.

And also if Sylphy had not appeared, Luke would also have died.

Anyhow because bringing weapons into the garden was forbidden, Luke was swordless.

If there had been a sword, then at least if Luke was not able to win, he still would have been able to let the princess escape...

Because of such circumstances, Luke had a favorable regard towards Sylphy.

Be that as it may, by all rights, the splendid position of the Princess' Guardian Magician has been filled for generations by upper nobility.

To allow an unsophisticated girl to suddenly be ushered into that role is a difficult thing to accept.

It is completely possible for the children of the upper nobility like himself to completely despise this one.

[Whatever the decision is, I will obey it.]

Therefore, Luke said that even if he didn't approve of it, he would not oppose the decision, and closes his eyes in a noncommittal manner.

This matter caused a bit of a fluster among the nobles.

Setting aside their own desires.

Even if the princess is pleased with Sylphy,

Sylphy might not hold the same feelings towards the princess.

The hunter's daughter, a victim swallowed up by the metastasis.

Even with that fact, from there on there would be friction with the princess.

For example, the others of the first prince faction were likely to take advantage of her.

When considered, by no means would Sylphy be permitted to be near the side of the princess.

The reason being, that all Asura nobles are malicious.

Supposing, if Sylphy was just a 'Village Daughter' having no power at all.

And in addition to that somehow it was allowed.

However, the existence of Sylphy had exceeded the category of 'Village Daughter.'

Having intermediate class chantless magic, even if there were some crude bits of commoner, she also understood the importance of etiquette.

Her existence was a mystery indeed.

[I wonder, where in the world did you learn etiquette at?]

[Umm, In my village, I had been accepting instruction from a kind person called 'Lilia-san.']

'Lilia.'

The moment that name appeared, Ariel's impression improved further.

[Lilia! I remember her. When I was a child, oneself was presented with a person which defended myself, she was a Maid of the Imperial Guard!]

And then the impressions of the nobles worsened further.

The imperial guard maid of the inner palace, the story of her becoming unable to work due to injuries, and the story of her dismissal had been heard before.

Mostly it was slips of the tongue that talked about 'secretly dealing' with someone who knew secrets from the Inner Palace.

Lilia had escaped to the Fedoa Region.

[Umm, Lilia-san, ah, she served Rudi's father, whose name is Paul.]

[Paul, you said?]

The new name appeared.

Paul Notus Greyrat

If one speaks of Paul, it is known he is a man famous for being a bad boy of the Notus family.

There were rumors that he held a grudge against the former head of the family as well.

A maid of the inner palace, taken in by the absconded son of upper nobility, instilling etiquette in the user of chantless magic.

This was too good to just be left to chance.

To the nobles, who are absorbed in schemes, it was no longer possible to think of this as fiction.

Investigating further was pointless, since Fedoa Region had already disappeared.

It was difficult to ascertain the truth of the matter.

[Now what should we do...?]

[Hmph.]

The nobles worried.

Ariel rarely says selfish things.

And it was true that the seat of the Guardian Magician was open.

Although Sylphy was originally a commoner, she had certifiable skill as a Magician, and knows etiquette even though it is imperfect.

The ability is not bad.

And because it is not bad, there must be vigilance.

One of the Greyrats belongs to the second princess faction.

The one who is called "Luke" and is symbolically the Guardian Knight.

For Ariel, the Notus, are an ally.

However Paul Greyrat is a man who threw away his title after some discord with his parents.

If they are an enemy of the Notus, then consequently there is the possibility that they are an enemy of Ariel as well.

Was Sylphy not aware of that when she gave the name of Paul?

What was the meaning of that?

If she wanted to receive the trust of Ariel, she should not have given out the name of Paul.

That's something she should have understood.

Then, because she gave that name out, does it imply that they are not an enemy?

However if that's the case in doing so, then who in the world is the mastermind that is pulling the strings of this girl?

At least, there is no mistaking that they are indeed an enemy of Notus.

However the people who want to be hostile to the large noble family of Greyrat are few indeed.

Saying and doing, it seems all the Greyrat are identical in that.

And so they hit upon something.

Of the similar Greyrat, there was one person unfriendly with Philemon who was the current family head.

It was Sauros Boreas Greyrat.

Sauros was always backbiting and criticizing that Paul should have become the family head, and not Philemon.

However he was not the type of person who would involve such a young girl in politics.

If that's the case then there is another one.

Philip Boreas Greyrat.

If it is him then, he would crush the second princess whom Notus supports, someone like him could definitely wind his hand around the strings of this young girl.

Sauros and Philip, and even Rudeus, they are all missing when the Fedoa territory disappeared.

Supposing, that they were the ones to cause the Metastasis Event, under this guise, it was possible to have something moving in the shadows even now.

Their first approach might just be a girl named Sylphiette.

If it's the case that Sauros isn't taking part, then the ringleader is Philip, for the sake of entrapping James who is to be the next family head, there is the possibility he may be acting to that end.

For the Boreas to usurp the seat of the next family head, it revolves around the supportive position of the second princess, and instead they try to become the support instead or something like that.

If that's the case, then the Sylphy who has been sent, can be considered an ally.

In either case.

The person pulling the strings is either Sauros, or Philip.

So the nobles concluded.

The groundless suspicion was complete.

Then a certain noble had a shocking idea.

[I know, how about shaking things up by making it look like she's the genius boy Rudeus himself?]

If Sauros moves, it is likely that Rudeus would be with them.

If the rumors are true, then the ability Rudeus is said to have is tremendous.

It's highly likely that Sauros and company are keeping Rudeus on hand as a trump card.

Hiding as much of his existence now, for the sake of adorning his future sensational debut.

When they appear, Rudeus, as a person with a legitimate blood relationship to Notus, comes out in the absence of those who were too afraid to act.

As a powerful piece who then takes part in backing the first prince whom Boreas supports.

Sylphy is assumed to be the person whom they sent.

If we reveal her as Rudeus, it may be possible to hinder their plans.

If we do some shaking, it may be possible to have them expose themselves.

To this, other nobles expressed concern.

[Wouldn't we be exposed immediately?]

[It may be better to conceal this one's social position by disguising her as a man. Be ready to evade any questions about him as much as possible.]

[But what if she's actually a spy they sent to probe us?]

[Like hell they will send someone that stands out as a chantless magician as a spy!]

[On the contrary, they might assume we would value her.]

[Either way, it will be easy to leak false information and draw them in.]

One by one the anxiety was crushed,

The nobles began to think that even a worthless plan like this was a good idea.

[Indeed, if she is a spy then the fake information leaked will cause unrest in the enemy camp. And if they are unrelated, then we have gained a strong Guardian Magician without having done any work. And should they instead try and curry favor with us, we'll go along with it.]

[But that's not all. She also resembles the princess in height. So we can tailor her to be a body double. If I remember correctly, we have such a Magic Item.]

[Oh, a manly form should be made to leave on a regular basis, since there are suspicious people usually nearby, it will not be thought that it takes the shape of the Guardian Magician.]

[As expected, the Lord is a clever one!]

And then.

The Second Princess' Guardian Magician [Fitts] was formed.

The Chantless Magic-using, Mysterious Genius Boy.

Because his face has been hidden with sunglasses, no one could perceive his true identity.

And the name is strongly associated to the 'Fitt'oa territory.

There was also a part that alluded to the genius boy who had been serving the Boreas family as well.

However, there is nobody who would understand the true nature and breeding of this one.

He should seldom speak, and when he must it should only be for a short while,

And any distinctions on it's actual gender should be difficult to identify.

Such a boy was born.

Sylphy had no say in this matter.

With the guarantee of one person on the promised arrangement of being able to search for information on the metastasis event, Sylphy was granted no right to veto, and also given no choice.

Although she had nowhere to go either, she was coerced into becoming [Fitts].

Pawn of the political power struggle.

Thus, at any rate.

Sylphy became the guard [Fitts] to Ariel.

—Supplemental—

Sylphy's hair had become white due to the effect of the metastasis transition itself, as well as exhausting all the magical power she had, and being in a state of absolute terror before and after the fall.

Sylphy's life suddenly changed.

She went from living life as an ordinary village girl, to living life as a Royal Guard.

The first order of business was a complete overhaul of her wardrobe.

Received from the Guardian Magician who died, were a cloak, boots and gloves.

[Gale Boots] which allowed the wearer to run several times faster than normal.

[Cloak of Perpetual Warmth] that regulated the body temperature, preventing sudden illness.

[Overwhelming Gloves] halving all impact damage received near the palm.

All of these articles were [Magic Items].

A special undergarment was newly ordered for Sylphy.

[Bustier of the Steel-threaded Silkworm].

It is made with fibers that resist most blades, however it cannot withstand an attack by someone using skills of the Sword God style, rather it's more for preventing wounds from the level of a thrown dagger.

In addition, a Magic Tool that changes color and orients in the direction of a certain person when an impending crisis to them approaches.

[Sunglasses of the Rescuer].

While allowing the face to remain hidden, it allows perception of the crisis state of the princess instantaneously.

This is a full set of the rarest of equipments.

If an adventurer saw it, they might become stricken with jealousy and try to take it for themselves.

There was also the opinion of giving Sylphy a certain wand, but Sylphy refused it.

The wand she was using presently, was the beginner's wand she had received from Rudeus.

It was her sole property.

And so she desperately did not want to part with it.

It was after all the wand that felled the Terminate Boar in one shot.

No one was going to force the issue.

Even her eating habits had changed drastically.

In Buina village, the staple food was something akin to a crusty brown bread and vegetable soup.

And the main dish would be the rabbit or bird her father had fetched.

These were the kinds of meals that Sylphy knew.

But even though Sylphy was from a poor family in Buina Village, because it was part of the bountiful Asura Kingdom, there were no cases of hunger or starvation to worry about.

But now the meals had changed to that of the grand feasts of the Imperial Court of Asura Kingdom!

A thick, rich and hearty soup served with tender white bread.

Meat and fish covered in abundant spices and slow-cooked for a long time.

Salad made with fresh raw vegetables, and then followed up with a dessert.

It was all far too luxurious for Sylphy.

Although even if it was such a luxurious dish, her job as a guard made it required for her to eat until the very end, she had to retire after seeing exactly how much those of the upper level nobility could eat.

The similar yet lower ranking guard, was Luke.

However, the difference in the quality of meals here compared to those of Buina village was like the difference between Heaven and Earth.

For Sylphy, living everyday in the palace was like living in a dream.

Her only dissatisfaction was the lack of freedom and personal time.

Still, she kept strengthening her body, and managed to find the time to keep practicing magic.

Of course, she was concerned with what happened to Rudeus and Buina Village.

Although information was being collected, the feudal lord James Boreas Greyrat had fled in an effort to save his own neck, so the search hardly advanced at all.

The Minister Darius, however, made a move by helping a person named Alphonse, who at one point was a butler of Sauros', to establish a refugee camp. The outlook there, however, was grim.

Sylphy insisted that she would go to take a look, even travelling by her own feet if necessary, but that was rejected.

She was told she just had to wait, while properly doing her job as a guard.

Sylphy continued to perform the guard work, as she was told.

At first, it was a string of continual failures.

Especially when making public appearances.

No matter how much etiquette she absorbed, not everything was perfectly understood.

She failed her table manners, she failed in greeting others in the hallways, and she failed in the various ceremonies she was required to attend.

Her failures became the targets of scorn and antagonism towards the second princess.

[Even if they are said to be the genius boy, apparently that genius doesn't extend into using manners properly.]

Even if it wasn't the full truth, the malice could be heard.

Sylphy recalled the time she had been bullied.

It almost made her legs lock up in fear.

However, she didn't cower away.

Because despite everything being said, none of the scorn was directed at Sylphy herself.

No, it was being directed towards Rudeus.

For Sylphy, that wasn't something she could possibly endure.

If it was Rudeus, if Rudeus was in this situation, he would probably endure it though.

If Rudeus could do it, it was imperative that she was also able to do it if she ever wanted to stand equal to him.

And while thinking that, a passionate feeling gushed out from inside Sylphy's chest.

Afterwards, she took care to ensure that similar mistakes never occurred again, and had moved about with meticulous care.

For the things she had not already learned, immediately after learning it, she practiced it over and over.

The first thing was changing the way she referred to herself as, to 'Boku', then she did her best imitation of Rudeus, and came to behave in the ways of a man.

{ C-Editor's note: In Japanese, 'Boku', is the boyish/male way of saying 'I' as opposed to the female way 'Atashi'. This is lost in the English translation of the story since there is no such distinction in the English language. }

Luke had reacted to such an action favorably though.

He is a ladies' man, as admitted pridefully by himself and others.

Sylphy had observed how good he was at making women fall for him, "analyze their preferences" being his motto.

Because she had observed him properly, she had found that he did have some good parts to him.

Particularly, it's his special ability.

And it is entirely limited to conversing with women.

Luke had seen the desperation that plagued Sylphy.

Watching the earnestness of effort, something that was rarely, if ever, seen in noble women.

To keep her sights on nothing but one point, and to eagerly overtake the point that she continually aimed for.

For Luke, watching Sylphy make such an effort day after day, naturally had come around to supporting her.

Secretly supplementing the parts he knew that she was lacking, and stealthily teaching her the parts that she did not know at all, he had become a shadow of support for her.

A shadow only.

Because around here, there was a reason he was popular.

And Sylphy had noticed it.

However, Sylphy did not fall in love with Luke.

In her heart there was no crevice filled with anything other than thoughts of Rudeus.

And Luke also seemed to have no interest in the 'chopping board' characteristics particular to the Long Ear Tribe (Elves).

Instead, a strange friendship began to bud between these two people.

Luke himself had few friends.

He was born into the house of Notus, and was quickly entered into the Second Princess Faction. Being close in age, and partly being forced into it, he was appointed as her Guardian Knight, and had spent every day training for the duties that accompanied it.

There was nobody who he could call his equal, just a person to look up at or down upon.

This was even the case with former Guardian Magician Derrick. When after considering the age difference and experiences, it was not easy at all to say they were even close to being equal.

Only Sylphy was an understanding existence that could finally be called equal to Luke.

Perhaps to him, she could have been the only one worthy enough to be called his friend.

While getting along well with Luke behind the scenes, Sylphy and Ariel also continued to deepen their bonds of friendship.

However, the opening act never ends smoothly.

At that time in her life, Ariel was an extreme sadist.

She was a girl who felt a particular excitement tormenting others.

The likely cause of this was something that lingered behind after all the times she had nearly been assassinated.

At first, Ariel did small things, like ordering the maid of one of her guards to perform cleaning duties while stark naked, while others included Ariel herself severely beating an errand boy with a horse crop.

Perhaps you could call it a "love of bullying the weak".

Of course while her proclivities were concealed as much as possible, they were already established as a well known fact in the imperial court.

At first, Ariel only targeted those who were weak, but gradually over time she lost interest in weak people, and instead came to be attracted to those she considered to be [Strong People].

By accomplishing the task of making a [Strong Person] prostrate and submit to her authority and position.

It came to be that doing such things stimulated the princess.

Luke was no good as a target.

He never tried to show Ariel any of his strong parts.

Omitting of course, the origin of Luke's feelings towards Ariel.

Also, there was Sylphy's predecessor, the Guardian Magician Derrick.

That one never showed strength towards their Master, Ariel.

Nothing but obedience was shown.

Mental Strength and a Rebellious Spirit, men who didn't try and show these things were not at all of Ariel's 'taste.'

Most likely they were able to accomplish their job as Ariel's guard because none of them had anything that matched her 'taste.'

And then what about Sylphy?

She felled the Terminate Boar with one shot using chantless magic, and while in a strange place, surrounded with strange company, she remained determined to do her best to learn strange manners?

'Tasty.'

Even if she was skilled in magic,

Even if she was of a younger age,

Even if she had white hair,

Even if she had long ears,

Even if she was diligent,

And even if it seemed like there was a man she desired.

All of it was to Ariel's 'taste'.

At first, Ariel endured the nagging 'desire.'

It was because Sylphy saved her.

Ariel owed Sylphy her life.

She still remembered the fear the Terminate Boar instilled when it appeared before her.

If Derrick hadn't pushed her away, Ariel's head most likely would have exploded and her brains splattered everywhere.

If Luke hadn't protected her, Ariel's stomach and chest would likely have been torn apart.

Neither Luke nor Herself would be alive if not for Sylphy.

The Terminate Boar is different from a Goblin.

It doesn't lay it eyes on a woman and consider violating her.

It only rips the body apart as it feeds on it.

Ariel's life had been saved, and as a respectful member of the Imperial Royal Family of Asura, repaying such a favor was surely necessary.

However, such thoughts, began to gradually fade away.

The Sylphy who eats delicious meals everyday.

The Sylphy who lives and works hard every day.

Towards that Sylphy, Ariel speaks words of gratitude to the first time before preparing to eat such a 'tasty' meal.

Such a wicked happiness could be seen in the eyes of the princess.

Of course, Sylphy being Sylphy, naturally she worried over her parents and Rudeus.

But, at the same time, she knew Sylphy also recognized that she was now under the [Patronage of Ariel].

So a bit of that attitude had emerged in her daily life.

Seeing such an attitude, Ariel considered what to do.

(It's a good thing, right?)

(I don't need to endure it anymore, right?)

Such a misunderstanding had led Ariel into planning the brutal assault.

On a certain evening, Ariel went to Sylphy's bedroom, wielding the Asura Kingdom Purveyor's Royal Dildo, and attacked!

It was to be a night of dazzling pink!

After all, there was no one who ever defied the Royal partner!

So the virtue of Sylphy was about to be in a precarious position.

Counter to the Princess' expectations, Sylphy fought back.

With blood-red eyes, she rushed straight at Ariel and fought back.

In a half-dazed state, she retaliated.

Sylphy threw aside all the manners and etiquette she had learned up until now.

Sylphy did not have any deep feelings of respect towards the imperial family.

And once, from Lilia, she had learned a bit of the 'night workings' that went on in the imperial palace...

Sylphy recognized the rape attempt on herself for what it was.

Of course, there was gratitude towards Ariel.

But this and that were two different stories,

Sylphy with her powerful magic, had inflicted a wound on Ariel that nearly killed her.

If, at that time, Sylphy couldn't use healing magic, it would have become a serious problem.

Actually, it had become a problem.

Luke, who heard the screams of Sylphy had rushed to the room.

And there he saw the scene, a tattered Ariel, and a Sylphy performing recovery on her.

Ariel, the second princess who he was sworn to protect, had been wrecked.

Luke, realizing the situation in a moment, knew that Ariel's bad habit had once again appeared.

And at the same time he also thought the situation was a bit distasteful.

Just by himself, it's impossible to cover these incidents up every single time.

However if Ariel orders it, he will let fall the head of Sylphy.

This he understood intuitively.

Luke shook.

Does he kill his only friend to protect himself, or does he defend this friend who came from unworthy roots instead?

However, that troublesome and groundless pondering was over in a moment.

[Being tormented, it is surprisingly pleasant...]

Ariel, it seems, had just awakened to a new proclivity.

The Royals and Nobles of Asura, every single one of them has a strange proclivity.

Masochism is no exception.

Therefore, this one incident was treated as if it was a 'play.'

[The Victim, Ariel] had covered for [The Assailant, Sylphy] as expected, since it was the only reasonable course of action to take.

However the business of Ariel ever trying to continue her earlier failed attack on Sylphy never came to be.

Ill feelings and reasons to evade company would be normal after that.

Mysteriously though, Sylphy in a sudden twist that day, instead came to feel a sense of trust from Ariel.

She who was avoided by those of the same age, it was a special boy named Rudeus who became her only friend.

Also, Sylphy who was of a young age then, and who's secondary gender characteristics had not yet developed, had a weak sense of danger, and who had problems making strong personal connections.

It's possible she was misled and directed defenselessly into the arms of someone with goodwill.

Even though the reason was distorted, the thread of friendship was tied firmly between Ariel and Sylphy.

Thereafter, little by little, Sylphy and Ariel began to deepen their friendship.

One year had passed from the Metastasis Event, and circumstances would change.

No, circumstances had already changed.

In a place Sylphy couldn't know, and for a long time after the Metastasis.

This was the beginning of Lord Liston's thoughtless words.

He, who was taking advantage of the opportune chance, spread it around the nobility that it was likely the doings of the first prince.

At least, that was the reason given, who could think that a demon would appear in the royal palace if it wasn't guided in by someone?

And so, he laid the blame sufficiently well on the other party.

Even devising ways to treat innocent people as criminals.

However, when the story no longer required there to be a person to have led such a monster inside, the situation drastically changed.

To this person who was using the abhorrent natural disaster, contempt was shown.

This was an act most nobles have done.

However, Lord Liston mistook his opportunity.

Before the matter was settled as being a natural disaster, the fact of the other party having attacked had been delivered.

A chance was then shown.

First on the list of the prince group, High Minster Darius harshly criticized Lord Liston at just the right moment.

Lord Liston's authority sharply fell.

Since most of his territory was lost, he had then become a middle class noble.

With his loss, the Second Princess Faction, who even at their strongest was still weak, had received a further attack.

High Minister Darius severely weakened the nobles of the second princess Ariel's faction.

Influential nobles, in succession, had lost power, or betrayed the princess, causing the immediate collapse of the second princess faction.

By losing a person of influential backing, the reality for Ariel, was that the road to the crown was also becoming lost to her.

However, Ariel's charisma was extremely high.

Her popularity among the people was also high. If she lived, it was expected that she would become an obstacle in the future.

Darius advised the First Prince on this matter, and had sent an assassin to put an end to Ariel.

The influential nobles had been suppressed, so there were no longer any soldiers left to protect her.

The elder brother assassinates the younger sister.

To gain the throne of Asura Kingdom, it must be won in such a race to power.

Even the present king had done something similar to assume the throne.

The princess faction has no defensive strength.

And there is no way to stay an assassination by political means either.

Ariel's life was now in a precarious situation.

But, the assassination was prevented, by the hand of Sylphy alone.

She had managed to turn the tables on the assassin.

It was a desperate struggle.

If she was not the apprentice of Rudeus.

If she didn't know how to use high-speed movement by shockwave through the usage of chantless melded magic.

If she didn't see up close what Rudeus was doing, and ask for what reason it was being done.

If she didn't hear the theories and reasons behind it, and mimic it herself.

And if the enemy hadn't underestimated her because she was a child.

Sylphy would probably have lost her life to the attack she received.

The result however, was that Sylphy had survived.

Due to the poison the assassin used, she wandered between the worlds of life and death for 3 days, and fortunately for her, there were no traces of disabling after-affects.

As a result, the name of [Fitts] who was once known as Sylphy, had become known widely in the Royal Palace.

The rumors of the genius boy had been heard, 'was he a fake?', it's possible they thought he was a counterfeit.

To begin with, the positions of Guardian Knight and Guardian Magician have been a tradition of the royal family passed down since olden times, the position is usually filled by spare children of powerful nobility as offerings.

When an assassin is sent, they die bravely in their protection of the royal family.

The noble parents grieve exaggeratedly about how brave their child's death was.

The royal family acknowledges it by sending a medal of honor as recompense to the family, and in this way, Noble and Royal bonds are deepened.

Their very existence amounted to only such a thing.

You could call it a sacrificial pawn, a display piece.

However Sylphy was quite different.

Although her actual fighting experience was lacking, she was by far a talented magician.

To hear the report of the repelled assassin, Darius had revealed his concern.

The assassin whom he released on her possessed that much skill after all.

The first prince faction became cautious.

And Ariel's group feared it.

Thinking they would be killed sooner or later if they remained in the royal palace.

They had only a few allies remaining.

Just the several servants who were at hand, and one remaining influential noble.

An assassin had brazenly shown up in the room of the imperial family, yet no one was blamed for it.

However, the issue was more that such a matter was not even questioned.

The leading noble of the Ariel Faction, Philemon Notus Greyrat, summed up the pressing state of affairs.

[Please escape, Ariel-sama. Only death awaits you here.]

[You are saying I should run away?]

[Darius is friendly with me, so I will enter into the first prince faction, and weaken their power from within.

Ariel-sama then gathers her power in the lands of a foreign country, creates alliances, then returns when she sees the opportunity, and by then I should be reconstituted and ready for action.]

Philemon was a clever man.

For him, the ending where Ariel is king, is the most profitable one.

While he had pretended to gain favor with Darius so that Notus did not fall even if Ariel died, he had taken steps to ready a hand to be played for either situation's outcome.

Following that advice, refuge was to be taken far away in a foreign land.

And there she would gather her strength and bide her time.

Ariel did not know of such things.

But it was clear that she would be killed the way things were going.

There were many places where she could go to study abroad.

Some were large countries such as Dragon King Kingdom or the Holy Land of Milis that were included as candidates.

However, Ariel chose the north.

The Magic City Sharia, of the Ranoa Kingdom was the destination.

To the Magic Academy the [Magic Triumvirate] was so proud of.

In other countries, the number of allies she would be able to borrow power from for a dispute against Asura would be insufficient.

Nobody would want to back a quarrel against a monster nation that had an abundance in funding.

However, if the Academy gathered all races from all countries of the world, it would soon become known as the 2nd Princess' foothold of restoration.

Ariel had not yet given up.

Ariel was alive.

And also the path to becoming king.

It was not just nobles' idle talk.

She who was born to the Asura Royal family, had understood her destiny.

[Sylphy, my apologies.]

Ariel was aware there was no reason for Sylphy to accompany her on this journey.

She had already cleared away almost all distrust she may have had of Sylphy.

Paul's name was now associated with the Fedoa Territory Search Party, and was confirmed to be unrelated to the Metastasis event.

Sauros nonchalantly turned up at the Imperial Palace unaware of what had happened, and had been executed by the schemes of Philemon and the second prince faction.

At this point, the whereabouts of Philip and Rudeus were unknown.

And only looking at Sauros' excuses and her dedication regarding the assassin, Sylphy was found to be innocent.

Merely, another victim of the Metastasis event.

[...Now that it's become like this, while I think that it's only right of me to release you, I humbly ask this of you instead, 'Please protect me. There is no one else I can rely upon but you.']

[I also beg this of you, my sword is not yet sharp. And I have no confidence that I can protect Ariel-sama by myself.]

{ C-Editor's note: Not yet sharp meaning he is not yet skilled/mature. }

Ariel and Luke, bowed their heads to Sylphy whose social position was far lower than their own.

Sylphy, who wanted to search for her family and Rudeus on her own two feet.

However, in this one year, Sylphy had come to think of them as friends.

Friends with some peculiarities that tended to stand out, and whose relations with her were a bit different than that of Rudeus'.

Sylphy felt strongly that 'A friend is a friend.'

And for Sylphy, the number of friends she had was easily counted on one hand.

[I understand. I will continue to protect Ariel-sama.]

Sylphy, at that moment, may have possibly become the princess' Guardian Magician in the truest literal sense.

They had left the Asura Kingdom under the guise of studying abroad.

Their current state, out of fear of assassination, appeared to be nothing more than throwing aside everything and fleeing from the country immediately.

Though that was but half the truth.

Inevitably, the first prince had sent a pursuit party after them.

He was aware of the risk a still-living Ariel possessed.

Her charisma might allow her to captivate the Magic Guild.

Furthermore, there were also the children of other Asura Nobles attending the Academy.

She might give them, the seconds who couldn't carry the next generation, or the thirds whose heart could be swayed, the way to become the head of their houses, since there were many ways it could be done by assisting Ariel.

In addition, there were many various nobles and royalty to be found in other countries and tribes.

If Ariel, who has extremely high charisma, were to return after attaining strong ties with foreign countries...

The first prince faction thought that it would be best to make this attack somewhat excessive.

The pursuit of the princess' party continued even after they left the borders of the Asura Kindgom.

There were 15 nobles which comprised this party. And whenever one was alone, they always lost their lives in their surprise attack.

In particular, the surprise attack at the [Red Dragon's Upper Jaw] was thoroughly severe.

About ten swordsmen, a Magician for support, and a Healer that laid in wait.

All of the previous surprise attacks were in preparation for this ambush.

This sure-kill formation, however, was crushed entirely by the hand of Sylphy.

The chantless magic combat techniques that Rudeus had thought up were highly effective here.

Though Sylphy was in the ceremonial position of Guardian Magician, she had never neglected strengthening her body.

And she had even learned how to swing a sword from Luke, when he could spare the time to teach.

And though it was just a thin layer, her body had recently begun to wear Fighting Spirit.

All of the attacks had stopped when Ariel's party had crossed over the [Red Dragon's Upper Jaw].

Excluding Sylphy and Luke, the number of Ariel's noble servants had been reduced to merely two others.

The first prince faction didn't have the nerve to send an assassin into a country where they couldn't keep a close eye on things.

The sure-kill formation had been destroyed, and for an opponent they couldn't kill within their own borders, there was little confidence in finishing the job in another country's.

This was a mistake on the part of the first prince faction.

If the attack was repeated two or three more times, the probability of Ariel dying would likely be very high.

If her servants hadn't been risking their lives to protect the princess, it could not be expected that Sylphy alone would be able to manage that duty.

However, the first call of the prince's lack of judgement on this matter, was no doubt owing to the combat prowess of Sylphy.

After the ordeal they made it to Ranoa Kingdom.

Five people unaccustomed to traveling to a foreign country.

Only two servants remained.

Elmore Bluewolf.

Kleene Elrond.

Both of them were young ladies.

The middle-aged servants who knew the fundamentals of the journey had already died.

There was bad planning, delayed traveling time, and the matter of it becoming winter en-route.

The dangerous pursuit party, and the villager's complacency began to wear thin the patience of the group, and almost led to disaster.

They probably were seen as a delicious morsel to a monster or bandit.

Along the way they were attacked many more times.

However every attack was repelled.

Many more difficulties as well waited for them.

When they got to Magic City Sharia, and were met with many further complications, they felt the bonds between themselves had strengthened.

They were comrades.

Sylphy had entered the Magic Academy.

Both the Magic Academy and the Magic Guild welcomed the Asura Royal Family, and promised to handle them as [Special Students].

However, Ariel refused.

She wished to be treated as and mixed in with the general students until the very end, so in this way she arranged to be able to acquire a sufficient amount of interaction with other students.

Ariel's calculations were elaborate.

How should she gain power while in these lands?

If she were to just be satisfied using the name of Asura Royalty, she would not be able to accomplish such a great feat.

Like a game of chess, she must use her pieces effectively.

First of all, as Ariel's [Might], Sylphy was best shown off in the position of guard.

Luke, also a guard, though without any real power, was better placed in the position to show generosity and gentleness, kept closely on hand.

Ariel herself would take the position as a [Symbol of Admiration.]

And she decided that her two Servants, Kleene and Elmore would devote themselves to the work that could only be done in the shadows.

Sylphy was able to continue with her disguise unchanged.

When guarding Ariel, she would conveniently dress in clothes suitable for a woman.

However, the best way to show [Might] would be to emphasize it by [Mystery].

An unseen face, and an unspoken opinion, was it a boy? Was it a girl? Who knows?

An extremely strong guard who used chantless magic.

The fact alone that this person was guarding the princess, was all that was important.

It made the existence of the princess even more grand.

Also, if you don't understand your opponent's true nature, then there will be hesitation when it came to starting trouble with them.

The main duty of the two servants was information gathering.

Mixing with the general students, detailed rumor collection, and manipulating information.

The job was really that of a covert operative.

Those girls, who would casually contact Luke at times while pretending to be his groupies, would then relay information.

Regular information included various things about the Fedoa search party, personal information about enrolled students of the Academy, the Asura Kingdom situation reports, and information about nearby influential adventurers.

Luke's job was to act the part of the fool, and receive the information naturally.

As a familiar face, continually posing as a sociable person.

Although since Luke was originally a "ladies' man", his posturing would be less of an act.

In an unknown land, unacquainted with people of differing cultures, suddenly rising to power through associations.

Failure cannot be allowed to happen here.

Ariel gradually wasted away.

In the situation in which failure must not be allowed to happen, without any kind of relaxation, continuously playing the part of a symbol.

With no relaxation time, her great spirit had been whittled away.

Still, she did somehow manage it for the first several months.

Sylphy had become Ariel's confidante because it would help alleviate the stress her body had accumulated.

However, certain information had arrived.

The updated death roster of Fedoa Territory...

In other words, it was information on the death of Sylphy's parents.

From this, even Sylphy was closed off and in low spirits as could be expected.

Sylphy, having desperately made it this far, hearing about her parent's deaths took a heavy toll.

Her one hope had been destroyed in an instant.

Brooding, seclusion, the situation did not allow for it.

Ariel wasted away.

Syphy was worn out.

And the two servants who couldn't become used to their new way of life, it was hardly a situation where there could be worry about another person.

Only Luke seemed to be fine.

Because he had the optimistic and undaunted characteristic unique to the Greyrat house, he always seemed to be in the same state no matter where he was.

The stability of his mind was likely helped by his so-called Upper Asura Nobles "lady-fishing" circumstances.

Luke wondered if there wasn't some way he couldn't be helping with the current situation.

However, in his knowledge, if a woman was depressed, the only solution was to comfort her in his arms.

Apart from the two servants, he had no intention of 'holding' Ariel nor Sylphy.

For Luke, these two people had leapt over the category of love interest into that of a special existence.

He was troubled.

He wondered if there was anything he could do.

Then he suddenly remembered.

At one time, there was the example of the genius boy who gave lessons to the brutal monkey of the Boreas house, [being the seventh or tenth day of every month, he created a thing called a holiday, and quieted the anger of the monkey.]

Even to a certain man with habits of debauchery, it was especially important to have a little bit of something like a breather.

Once every ten days they would be allowed to cut loose and go wild.

Because of that, he proposed venting stress in such a way.

Ariel, though she was worried about it's effectiveness, agreed to it.

Sylphy, also desiring some alone time, also agreed to it.

However there was one concern.

Ariel's existence must become that of a symbol.

And such an existence, if she were to be found cutting loose in the town once every several days, what would other people think of that?

Ariel must be a symbol.

She must not be allowed to appear the same as any girl around here.

Everything that took great pains to begin building up absolutely must not be destroyed now.

But such anxiety was easily solved by the existence of a certain magic tool.

A magic tool that allows the user to take the shape of another.

This magic tool took the form of two rings: a green ring, and a red ring.

The person wearing the green ring would become identical in facial features and hair color to the person wearing the red ring.

This magic tool was a secret treasure passed down in the Asura Kingdom family from generation to generation.

This magic tool was meant to be worn by the body-double of the Asura Kingdom.

For Ariel and Sylphy, at times when they would go on holiday, this tool was used to disguise Ariel, so any assailant's eyes would be deceived.

Using this magic tool, height and build, voice, even the eye color was unchanged.

If observed well, or if one was heard conversing in it's form, they can easily become exposed.

However it was satisfactory enough.

Using this, Ariel changed herself into Sylphy.

Sylphy always had a reason to wear sunglasses, and furthermore lived a life where she hardly spoke.

And also, since all of her magic was done chantless, it was convenient.

There was no real height difference between Ariel and Sylphy.

It was really quite convenient.

Using this, Ariel became [Fitts].

And as [Fitts], it became possible for Ariel to move about the whole town.

During this time, it was necessary that Sylphy be in a rather deserted place.

As for the location, she chose the quiet library.

She planned to examine the event that had killed her parents.

And so, this was the way in which Sylphy and company led their lives at the Magic Academy.

The past few years since I've started school have gone by without any problems.

When I say no problems, I mean problems which put my life at risk.

Dueling with Rinia and Pursena, Ariel-sama walking down streets disguised as me and being surrounded by thugs...

Small stuff like that happened, but nothing life threatening.

Things were going the way Ariel-sama wanted.

In the last few years, Ariel-sama has increased her followers as well.

However, after entering the third year...

We obtained certain information.

The information is about a person called "Rudeus of the Quagmire".

Rudeus.

So, I finally found some information on Rudi.

At a young age he was already an A-Rank adventurer, and in just a few years his name spread to the [Magic Triumvirate] .

His specialty is earth magic.

His strength level is not determined, but he can create a huge quagmire with voiceless incantation.

When I heard about quagmire magic, I was convinced that it was Rudi.

When I think about it, the first time we met he was using mud.

Since Rudi is a water magician, thinking that he is good with water magic would be normal, but, whether it's using quagmire or a fast-moving shock wave, he liked using different kinds of magic like that.

I spoke to Ariel-sama about this.

"Rudeus of the Quagmire" is the person who taught me how to use magic, and, he is the person who has been missing for a long time.

"If he is the real deal, I would certainly like to borrow his power ..."

I think that Ariel-sama was skeptical about Rudi.

Since the information on "Rudeus of the Quagmire" was indeed dubious.

Rudeus Greyrat.

He was from Asura kingdom, Fedoa Region, Buina village.

At the age of 3 he became an apprentice to the (Water-Saint ranked at the time) Water-King class magician Roxy Migurudia.

At the age of 5 he became a Water-Saint Magician.

At the age of 7 he became the tutor for the daughter of the lord of Fedoa, Eris Boreas Greyrat.

As the story goes, the trouble maker and violent daughter of the lord was properly disciplined and educated by him.

At that time when the Fedoa Region Metastasis Event happened he went missing...

In the past, even if I heard this much I wouldn't think it's particularly a great thing.

But now that I have lived in the Asura Kingdom and studied at the Magic University, I can say this with confidence.

If I didn't know him I would have thought that this kind of personal history is a fake.

It's fictional.

But, I know.

Rudi respected Roxy-sensei as his shisho.

Though I never saw Roxy myself.

But, I know that Roxy-san was in Buina village.

And, Roxy-san gave Rudi a wand.

And when we were separated at the age of 7, he became a home tutor, this matches as well.

"There is no mistake, it's Rudi."

"Sylphy, if you say so, I would like to believe it ....."

"However, since it is just a rumor, actually... I am dubious anyhow."

Luke and Ariel-sama were skeptical.

However for now they believed it, not that I can do anything about it.

Even for me who knew Rudi, I still doubt the credibility of this information.

"However, will such a great person lend us a hand, isn't he a member of the Boreas family?"

Honestly, I'm not familiar with how political power struggles are in the Asura kingdom.

I just have 1 year of experience in this matter.

However, with respect to Greyrat, even I have heard about them.

Boreas was allied with the first prince.

Eurus and Zephyrus were allies of the second prince.

Notus was our ally, but was now in the first Prince faction.

In other words, Boreas is an enemy.

And, even Rudi who was a tutor of Boreas, might be an enemy as well.

However, Boreas and Rudi ought to have cut their ties with each other a long time ago already.

If it was not like that, he could not be an adventurer in the north.

"If I ask him, I am sure..."

Even though I am saying it, I myself have no confidence.

Luke started laughing at such words lacking confidence.

"With your breast size, there is no way a man from Notus would bow to you."

I cover up my breast Puku~tsu.. when Luke says that.

Luke is always like this.

Always talking about breasts.

Women's breasts.

Women with no breasts are not women.

I do not feel the charm of a woman from you.

There is no helping it; small breasts are a trait of us Elves.

But Luke is not just bad-mouthing.

In the end, he always says this.

Since you are not a woman I can be your friend.

Saying we are friends makes me happy, but knowing I have no charm as a woman is troubling.

Well, of course compared to Ariel-sama my breasts aren't good ...

"I don't mean it like that."

"Then what do you mean, don't tell me you are going to reveal your identity to him?"

"Oh I see..."

I am Fitts, [Silent Fitts.]

And I cannot let him know my identity.

What should I do?

"Isn't it good enough Sylphy? The one you were looking for has been found."

Suddenly, Ariel-sama says that with a smile.

Ariel-sama is always kind.

Sometimes she is strict, and there are also times when she does bad things, but she is a kind person.

Something very surprising came out of this Ariel-sama's mouth.

"As a special case, you can reveal your identity to that Rudeus-san."

"What?"

Reveal my identity.

"But... what if doing that causes the plan to fail?"

I do know my role very well.

I'm a mystery.

I am an unidentified [symbol of power].

In these past few years, I figured that I won't lose to those run-of-the-mill magicians.

It is thanks to the training with Rudi.

I am not as good as the God or King-Rank magicians, but I should be around the Saint-Rank at least.

Though I can't replace the other Princes or King-rank magicians whose support the princess needs.

But, I am aware that I am the most powerful ally that the princess has at the moment.

"I had Sylphy do her best up until now, I have to at least let you have your reunion right..."

"But."

"And if the plan fails because of that, then we will think about it then."

Ariel-sama after saying that and clapping her hand said,

"And, if it comes down to ensnaring him, a childhood friend has a better chance in talking him into it, right?"

"..... Thank you, Ariel-sama."

I thanked her honestly.

Though I saw her scheming something, but it's the usual.

After seeing my growth, what would Rudi say?

I am looking forward to it.

The plot to get Rudi to school went smoothly.

Leaking the information to the Vice Principal Jinas, he would without a doubt make a move to invite him into the university.

A few months later, the day that I looked forward to came.

During battle practice at the training field, Vice Principal Jinas brought a person with himself.

I almost raised my voice from joy.

Rudi.

It's Rudi!

No doubt about it.

He looks different from back in the days, he looks a bit gloomy, but there is no doubt.

There is no way I would mistake Rudi with someone else.

'What to do, he has become so cool.'

Though he still has traces of the young boy in my memory, he has become a man.

His demeanor is sharp, he has trained his body well, this much I can understand from how he moves.

His robe is worn-out, but that's proof of how hard he has been working.

Even though I am seeing it from a distance, I can say that his wand is a good one and has been used a lot.

Walking while vigilantly being aware of his surroundings is just like how he was before.

(Oh my God, ... I was thinking of marrying to someone like that.)

When I think about it, somehow my body gets hot.

"Rud ...?"

As I became emotional by seeing Rudi, I was about to call his name out.

Immediately after, I was frozen.

From behind Rudi, some insanely beautiful woman came as well.

(Ara... is she Rudi's wife?)

The woman was an Elf.

Somehow she had an air about her like my dad.

Dignified features and giving off a noble impression.

And, such a person was clinging to Rudi.

It was like she is pushing Rudi, but he wasn't bothered by it at all.

(... ara? ... ara?)

While confused, I lost the opportunity to rush over to Rudi.

After that, I was called to be Rudi's examiner.

It was a test to see whether Rudi can use voiceless incantation or not.

By that time, I was also able to pull myself together somehow.

If it's that cool Rudi, having a woman that amazing wouldn't be strange at all, is what I was thinking.

Yeah.

Whether he is married or not, does not matter.

Because we are friends.

No problem at all.

I'll give them my blessing.

Well, before that, let's rejoice that both of us are safe and sound.

While I was saying so to myself, I heard Rudi speaking ...

"Nice to meet you, my name is Rudeus Greyrat."

"....."

First, Time meeting?

What?

..... Eh.

ara... ara?

It's a lie.

Hey, wait ....

..... You have forgotten?

"If everything goes well, this term I'll be your Kohai, so please grant me your guidance"

"Eee .....?"

When I was totally puzzled, I remembered that I have sunglasses on, my hair color changed to white, and I'm dressed like a boy.

Not even considering that, it's also been 8 years since we have been separated.

I have grown up and changed so much, not recognizing me on the first meeting isn't all that strange.

I was thinking too selfishly on my own.

I was thinking since I recognized him, he should recognize me as well.

I was getting ahead of myself.

So, I just need to remove my sunglasses and introduce myself.

I have obtained permission from princess Ariel.

It would be hard in a place like this, I'll call him to an isolated place and introduce myself.

However, I was thinking.

Forced to think like this.

(That Rudi won't remember someone like me anymore)

Just thinking like that once was enough for me to be unable to remove my sunglasses.

Removing my sunglasses, and introducing myself, then hearing 'Sorry, who are you again?'.

When I thought that, I couldn't do it anymore.

"That is... Oh, yes"

When I see Rudi I would say this, was what I thought, but I forgot all of it.

I didn't know what to say anymore.

While I was thinking about those things the exam began.

I lost.

I was completely defeated. His magic was too unpredictable. While a technique I had no idea about sealed my magic, an incredible Rock Bullet grazed my cheek.

Though if I think about it, I have seen it before.

He was going easy on me.

It wasn't on the level of how much I have grown.

Rudi, was way more ahead of me.

"I... just now..... How did you do that?"

I was barely able to say just that.

"It's called Ran Ma[Disturb Magic]. Don't you know it?"

I don't know.

I've never heard of it either.

Perhaps, it would be a magic unique to a certain race.

Even if you ask in the magic university no one knows about that magic.

(Rudi is great)

Again, I thought so.

That deepened my respect for him again.

As I thought, he has grown yet again.

So much that someone like me can't be compared to him.

When I was thinking this he bowed.

"Thank you senpai, you let a new student win against you."

"What?"

I was puzzled.

I don't get what he means.

I could not do anything. Rudi has to know that as well.

Yet to have let him win?

I grabbed the hand that Rudi stretched out to me in confusion.

It was not the hand of a magician.

It was the hand of a swordsman.

It was the hand of a person that worked hard.

It was the hand of those who have held a sword way longer than even Luke.

But he is not even a swordsman.

Even though I was confused, when I held his hand, my heart started beating doki-doki.

Rudi's warmth was being transferred to me, I kinda felt happy about it.

However, Rudi has baffled me even further.

"As thanks for today, I'll repay the favor later on."

Thank you, I wonder why he thanked me.

I don't get it.

Don't get it at all.

I don't get it, but I thought it means that we will meet later.

Feeling my face getting red, I nod in agreement.

And when Rudi left, I remembered stuff that I did not want to remember, I cried.

— Ariel Perspective —

When I got back to the student council room, Sylphy was crying.

"..... did you say your greetings?"

At first I thought that she was worrying over the woman Rudeus brought with him.

By the way, the woman who came with him was an S-rank adventurer in his party.

I figured that she has a deep relation to Rudeus.

However, Sylphy's heart does not seem sunny.

But it seems to be a different problem.

"Rudi... won't remember someone like me anymore"

"Sylphy....."

I was puzzled.

This is the first time something like this happened.

The girl named Sylphyiette should have been a stronger child than this.

Stout-hearted, single-minded and straight forward kinda girl.

Such a girl is crying on my lap.

The girl who didn't even cry when she found out that her parents died after the Metastasis Event, is crying right now.

Just from thinking that shabby robed boy does not remember her, she has become like this.

When I look at her like this, my sadistic heart is aching.

It's forbidden.

I do not want to be hated by Sylphiette.

I want us to be friends.

However, that boy.

Rudeus Greyrat.

He should be the same age as Sylphy, has he matured so much?

To be honest he was different from the image I had of him based on Sylphy's description of him.

My first impression is a "shabby man".

He could buy another cheap robe instead of wearing that shabby one.

A humble attitude to the point of it being unnatural, looks suspicious and a face with no apparent self-confidence.

Anyway I didn't feel the charm of a boy from him.

Also whether I hit on him or he flirts with me I don't think I would feel any excitement.

In that regard Luke is far better.

Luke is a man who cheats and is clumsy but has far more sex-appeal than him.

Though since we are in a master-servant relationship, we won't touch each other.

However, that boy.

Rudeus Greyrat.

He is unattractive.

Such a man made my Sylphy cry.

Be as it may, that's something I cannot forgive...

"Did he really forget? Did you show him your face and tell him your name?"

Was what Luke said.

As for Rudeus he seems to have some idea as well.

"What if I did that and he doesn't remember, then what should I do?"

"At that time, it cannot be helped."

"Don't go 'It cannot be helped' on me."

Sylphy says that with a pathetic voice.

Luke sighs while going Yare-Yare.

{ C-Editor's note: Yare Yare is a common Japanese expression used to show disappointment or frustration. }

Luke is a full-fledged swordsman, but his skills are mediocre.

He is serious about his job as a bodyguard.

In regard to anything else he is air-headed.

Especially when it comes to women, he says you have to do as much as you can, and it's his catch phrase.

It is the manliness of the Greyrat house.

But even he has something that he is good at.

To observe and read the hearts of women.

From a variety of information, he sees the person's inner thoughts.

It seems to be "an observing eye that should differentiate between good and bad (in regard to women)" inherited by the Greyrat household.

It's a household like that.

Such a womanizing man has deep respect for Sylphy.

And that is not as a woman, but as a colleague and as a comrade-in-arms.

That's the prodigal son of the Notus-Greyrat house.

That man who believes when looking at a woman it's okay to do whatever you like.

He has respect for a girl like Sylphy.

Sylphy is that much of a woman.

I also know that.

In the fight against pursuers and assassins, I also look up to Sylphy, who has saved us from those crises.

She is a hardworking girl.

Just a bit ago I heard how Luke thinks about Rudeus.

Luke says that Rudeus cannot be trusted.

It seems to be due to the rumors about Rudeus.

For a man such as Rudeus, besides Sylphy's description, we just heard rumors.

According to the rumor, even though he is so strong, he never gets angry and never picks a fight.

There is no bad rumor about him at all.

When I hear this, I take him to be a character from a story.

According to Luke's theory, a person with only good rumors about him is worse than a person with bad rumors about him.

Luke suspects that he manipulated the rumors.

For example, the information that came in the other day said that "Rudeus of the Quagmire exterminated a stray dragon alone."

Exterminate a stray dragon alone.

There is no way that you can do it.

Luke said, "It's at most a rumor, there is no way to confirm that".

Perhaps, it was an extermination by a small group.

To take credit of that for himself...

Of course, if you want to say he is strong, then he is.

Probably in some way he used magic items to defeat Sylphy.

He is definitely stronger than a run-of-the-mill magician.

Or, maybe, it is possible for him to get rid of a stray dragon alone.

However, even if he defeated a stray dragon, this rumor is weird.

To begin with, in a short span of time of 2 years, spreading the rumors to [Magic Triumvirate] won't be possible unless you do it intentionally.

Intentionally manipulating the information and only spreading good rumors.

Such a cunning man.

That's how Luke saw Rudeus.

We won't know when such a man would betray us, so he can't be trusted.

"I'm against having him in our group. Ariel-sama."

"Well, I think so as well. Though there is no doubt he is strong..."

Sylphy was puzzled by this decision.

"Eee?"

She defended him.

Not being able to remember me has nothing to do with his power and ability.

Rudeus has become amazingly strong.

And, also that weird Ran Ma magic.

That surely is some race's unique magic ability.

By using it, all magicians become powerless.

As an ally there is no one more reliable.

However, this is not the case.

I already thought he was shady.

Apparently, Sylphy seems to be blinded by her reunion with her childhood friend...

After that, we allowed our emotions to get in the way of our judgment, the one who was Sylphy's heart's support, is without a doubt that Rudeus.

Will it be possible to forget about that?

In the last few months, how much did Sylphy wait with excitement for this day?

I was expecting a more touching reunion for those two.

After the Metastasis Event and being separated for so long, I was expecting a happy ending.

What's this, really...

Of course Sylphy is cross-dressing, but an elf with white hair isn't all that common for him not to remember.

And not to mention that humble attitude after winning against Sylphy.

Is he lumping my Sylphy with those run-of-the-mill magicians?

That is how I thought.

As for Sylphy.

Even though she had lost that pathetically, why is she looking so happy?

I feel a strong jealousy.

"Now, I remember the indignation to the man called Rudeus."

"I too. Whether he forgot Sylphy or not, just because he is strong, I am not teaming up with a man who might betray me at any moment."

Luke as well confirmed my words.

And, Sylphy said.

"... what is this, the two of you teaming up and bad-mouthing Rudi."

Sylphy did not seem convinced, but the strategy to bring Rudeus on board has been temporarily put on hold.

So we decided to wait and see for a while.

Excessive contact with him is forbidden.

However, Sylphy can interact with him on a personal level.

Even if he is such a shady guy, he is still Sylphy's friend.

Sylphy, regardless of what happened, seems happy.

And it is possible that our first impression of him was bad and he is as good a guy as the rumor says.

Let's keep a connection for now.

"Of course, if Sylphy wants to reveal her identity, I do not mind."

There is a risk to him knowing Sylphy's identity.

But so long as that would let us know if he is as the rumor says, it will be a cheap price.

— Sylphy Perspective —

Then a month later.

I saw Rudi at the entrance ceremony.

Compared to the entrance examination, now it was like he's shining in his uniform.

Our eyes met, I was very nervous.

That said, he is a special student.

Now that he is here I thought the opportunity to meet with him and spend time together would not be that much.

At the meeting a month ago, we decided on not having excessive contact with Rudi.

After that a lot of things were said, but in the end it seems those two do not like Rudi.

I have no idea why they are like that.

Maybe I am weird.

But they told me I can get along with him on a personal level.

Excessive contact is not good, but it is okay to be friends.

How much is good, how much is not.

I think that even being able to have this much is due to Ariel-sama's kindness.

Well even that is good enough.

Just being able to talk to Rudi is enough for me.

But ..... I wonder how I can speak with him.

And, while I am thinking about such things, Ariel-sama is attending classes.

Since Ariel-sama is charismatic, she needs to maintain her grades.

The Melded magic class she was taking was very different from what I was taught.

Rudi seems to have learned it from Roxy-san, but even though they are teaching the same thing here in magic university it seems very difficult.

Since I was taught by Rudi I can understand them very quickly.

But, Luke and princess Ariel are having a hard time learning it.

Also, in order to support Ariel-sama as much as possible, I am teaching them a lot of stuff

But, even though I am teaching using Rudi's method, they don't seem to understand very well.

"Fitts, will you bring the documents for the next class?"

Obeying Ariel-sama, I go to the library.

The library is outside of the school building.

There isn't much time before the next class begins.

I have to hurry.

And because I've been here for three years I know where to look for material in the library.

After thinking for a little while I remembered where the materials for today's class are.

I picked them out one after the other.

Like this I'll be able to go back to class fast.

'Ah!'

When I saw the person in front of the bookshelf I leaked that sound.

Rudi was there.

I was surprised.

I thought we would see each other but I didn't expect to see him here.

"....."

(Na, ... what to say?)

While I was panicking Rudi noticed me.

The next moment, Rudi made a deep bow.

"I am sorry about the other day; it was through my thoughtless actions then that I may have caused Senpai to lose face. I am truly sorry for what I have done. I was thinking about getting a cake to give to you when I properly introduced myself and apologized, but since I just became a new student I've been busy doing this or that..."

"Uea!? ...I, It's fine, raise your head."

Apparently, Rudi thinks he has offended me.

I was surprised.

So those words at the admission day meant this.

But now that he said it.

When I think about it, my reputation could have been destroyed.

I see.

For sure.

It would be like that.

So, that's why Ariel-sama and Luke were in a bad mood as well.

I knew from the beginning that I could not win against Rudi.

Well, though I didn't think that it would be this overwhelming of a defeat.

But for those two, me losing wasn't enjoyable I guess.

No, such a thing is okay. Let us put it aside for now.

"Rude...eh, Rudeus-kun? For what reason are you here?"

"Doing a little bit of research."

"About what?"

"Metastasis Events."

When I heard those words, I thought.

I thought maybe Rudi was thinking along the same line as I am.

"The Metastasis Event? Why?"

"I was also a resident of Fedoa Territory in the Asura Kingdom. Because of that incident I was sent to the Magic Continent."

"The Magic Continent!?"

I was even more surprised.

I have heard stories about the Magic Continent.

It's a harsh land in which Monsters are all C-rank or stronger.

Some people go there to do warrior training, but most of them don't come back.

So, if someone was teleported there, their chance of survival was mostly zero.

Rudi, managed to come back from there.

"Yeah, it took as long as three years, but I managed to come back. During that time I managed to find my family, but there is still one person I haven't found yet. But there is a good chance, if I examine this in detail, I may find a lead, right?"

"Do you mean..., for the sake of that one person you came to this school?"

"That's right."

When I heard those words, I reaffirmed Rudeus' greatness.

"I see, you really are amazing after all."

Even though coming back from Magic Continent took 3 years, instead of relaxing, he started to search for another person.

Even though just that is pretty amazing, since he received an invitation from Magic University he decided to research the incident as well.

You could not find such a person anywhere else.

If it were me, coming back after 3 years which is amazing, I would be resting at the refugee camp.

"So, what is senpai doing here?"

Hearing those words I came back to myself.

I was in the middle of transferring the materials for the class.

Ariel-sama is waiting.

I want to talk to Rudi more, but I cannot afford to leave Ariel-sama alone either.

"Aaaaaah! That's right! I was supposed to be bringing these materials somewhere. I've got to run. Rudeus-kun, see you later!"

"Ah, sure, later!"

While I was leaving, I remembered this library is big and has a lot of books, but there are only a few materials regarding metastasis.

Even for Rudi, finding material regarding the Metastasis Event would take a lot of time.

"Oh, that's right.... If it's about Metastasis, then a book by Animas called [Investigation Records of the Metastasis Labyrinth] is a good story you should read, It is in narrative form, but because it is written in an easy-to-understand way it would be good to start from there."

I decided to recommend that book, because it helped me to understand the Metastasis better.

If it is that, you'll understand the Metastasis because it's written so even a child can understand it.

Though there were pages missing.

That made me feel that I did a bit of a good thing and left the library.

That evening.

I was washing underwear.

It is Ariel-sama's underwear.

Washing Ariel-sama's clothes is part of my duties.

Though I say that, there is a reason for it.

Ariel-sama's underwear is made from very expensive fabric.

Moreover, since it's an Asura Kingdom Royalty's underwear, it has extra value.

In short, selling it would fetch a very high price.

In fact, when she first enrolled and had her underwear taken for laundry it was stolen and sold.

Four out of five pieces were stolen, and out of those four, three of them were sold.

The remaining one was probably kept by the culprit for personal use.

And the female students, with no way to counteract such incidents, were nervously saying "I can't believe it".

Since Ariel-sama was born and raised in Asura Kingdom and I have lived there it wasn't that surprising for us.

Since in Asura Kingdom there were a lot more weird people.

But, uncomfortable things are still uncomfortable.

So, since then, washing Ariel-sama's clothing became my duty.

Ariel-sama making me do that was a bit confusing, but since I could wash them along with my own clothes it was okay in the end.

By the way, to hide my gender, my underwear is just like Ariel-sama's. Though it is in a different color.

So to hide it, I usually do the underwear laundry at night and as I was trying to put them on a string to air them one by one ....

"ara ...?"

Suddenly, looking under the veranda, I was surprised.

Wow, even though it's after curfew there was a boy walking there.

Based on the dormitory's rules, at this time boys can't walk on this road.

There was the underwear thief case as well, though it's not yet the time, the mating season will come as well...

And yet, why is a boy.....

Even though it is a shortcut, at this hour the girls on guard duty will surround him soon.

Is it good to report this to the girls on guard?

Whoever discovers the intruder first has the responsibility to warn the others.

No, but I ..... can't really let them hear my voice all that much.

(Oh, ara, by any chance...)

I recognized that person is Rudi.

(W, why?)

Unintentionally, my hand slipped.

The panties in my hand fell, and dropped toward Rudi's head.

The moment Rudi notices, he catches the pants with incredible speed.

(Wa, that fast ...!)

And I wonder if it is because he was always on guard for the past few years.

The movement just now, I feel it's the result of the time he spent on the Magic Continent.

Rudi seems to have noticed that what he is holding in his hand is panties.

And he looked up and found me, and figured he caught the pants I dropped.

Different from the movement of his hand from before, he has a carefree behavior.

(I see, he just enrolled here today so he does not know the rules!)

Rudi is a special student, special students do not have roommates.

Since the special students are exempt from attending things like explanation of dormitory rules and all it's not so strange that he does not know the rules.

I have to tell him.

If you stand there while holding panties in your hand you will with no doubt be mistaken for an underwear thief.

"Kya~a~a~a~a!"

My worries soon became reality.

Suddenly a female student started screaming.

The girls on guard duty who lived on the first floor came out.

Rudi was surrounded in no time.

(... But, if it's Rudi, he can resolve it somehow?)

Since I thought that way I was waiting optimistically and watching.

I wanted to know what Rudi would do in a situation like this.

After all, like when he was in Buina village, will he beat them up?

Or will he get out by saying something convenient.

Threaten them with magic, or use magic to run away.

..... Rudi did nothing.

He seems to have his hand caught by Goriade-san and is troubled.

That looked like when I was being bullied in Buina village.

My head cooled down suddenly.

(What am I doing?)

I jumped out from the veranda in a hurry.

Went down the stairs and ran until I reached the crowd.

"Hee~h, what have we here, aren't you a bold one, to steal underwear at this time? What ... cat got your tongue? Do you think you can win against this many people?"

Since it was dark and visibility was low, it seems that no one has noticed that Rudi was holding his foot using earth magic.

As to why he did that, I have no idea, why would Rudi's feet be trembling...

I realized, incidentally.

I realized.

I was reminded of the past.

Come to think of it, when Rudi drove away Sumar and his gang in the village his feet were trembling.

When confronting girls, Rudi was a little jerky.

Also when he said "Sylphy has been cold lately" he was trembling.

I see, Rudi thought he was hated by me so he was scared.

Like any other normal boy.

(Ah ...)

I noticed.

I've been viewing Rudi as special.

It was the feeling of looking at an older person.

But, Rudi's the same age as me.

(Sylphy, Is it always okay just to be protected by him?)

At the end I remembered my father's words.

And since I remembered, I vowed to myself that I would rescue Rudi.

I'll help, Rudi.

I swore so.

Even if something happens, I'll help Rudi.

I swore so.

Isn't that the reason I was giving it my all?

Above all, isn't the cause of this time's incident me?

"Wait, it's a misunderstanding, wait."

I put myself between them.

And I defended Rudi desperately.

Since I came to this school, it's probably the first time I talked to anyone else beside Ariel-sama.

I've been silent to that extent.

However, the female student who was holding Rudi's hand was stubborn.

Stubbornly trying to condemn Rudi.

Even though Rudi hadn't done anything wrong.

"Fu~n, Since Silent Fitts says this much, it's probably the truth, but him breaking the dormitory's rules is the truth as well. To set an example I'll have him punished..."

Set an example.

The moment I heard those words, something snapped in me.

Someone who knows nothing is going to be punished as an example just to warn others.

It was not something to be forgiven.

Before realizing it I was holding my wand.

I was about to use magic at any moment.

"I am saying he didn't do anything wrong. That's enough, let his hand go..."

"Fi.., Fitts-sama .....?"

"Or does everyone here want to go to nurse's office?"

These threatening words are what I learned from Luke when we were still in Asura Kingdom.

He said sometimes bluffing is necessary so I have been training to the best of my ability.

On the journey to Ranoa from Asura, I used it several times against thieves and thugs.

I have always been teased by Luke, being told I was childish but it seems to have worked this time.

"Tch~ I get it ....."

Goriade released Rudi's arm.

And without saying anything more left that place.

With her disappearance the rest of the girls went back to their rooms as well.

Finally I take a breath.

"Phew... it's because Goriade-san never listens to other people."

I remember her everyday words and actions.

She is not a bad person though.

However since she is from the Beast Race, she takes protecting her territory seriously.

She has no flexibility.

Before saying those things, I better apologize.

When you get down to it, this all happened because of me.

"Sorry, since I dropped the underwear something like this happened."

If my hand didn't slip it would not have turned into something this serious.

Even Goriade would not have taken excessive action.

Probably.

"No, Fitts-senpai does not need to apologize, you helped me out."

From Rudi's answer I got a bad feeling.

Somehow, it feels like it was hard for Rudi to talk to me.

When I look at him, I see his look has changed.

I noticed now.

(... I, Rudi has been wary of me until now.)

I thought it was weird from the beginning.

Coming to bow profusely .....

Huh so it's like that.

If you think about it, I am "Silent Fitts".

So he naturally would be wary of me.

It's normal for Rudi to be on guard.

(I'm glad somehow .....)

Just now Rudi's wariness toward me vanished.

Though I made a mistake, I am finally one step closer to Rudi now.

Then, I was explaining the dormitory's rule that when it gets dark you cannot walk on this road.

After all Rudi didn't know and was relieved to figure out why this happened.

"Senpai, thank you very much."

Said Rudi while bowing at the end.

It was kind of a strange feeling.

Long ago when I had been bullied, our positions were reversed.

At that time, I..... I wonder how I said thank you.

When I imagined it I somehow end up smiling.

"Oh, Rudeus for you to be apologizing feels weird."

"Eh? Why would you feel that way?"

Of course that's because at first...

I would need to reveal my identity but I am hesitant.

Again my anxiety increased.

In this atmosphere right now if he says "Sorry I don't remember"...

I tell myself.

Honestly, even if he does not remember, isn't it still good.

By meeting him as I am and helping him on his way like this.

Forgetting the past, and getting along with him as we are.

So, I said.

"Secret."

Rudi had a confused expression.

I went back to the dorm.

Of course, I took back the underwear.

Though as Rudi caught it before it could hit the ground it's not dirty, but after all Rudi is a boy.

It's not like I think of Rudi as being dirty or anything, but I have a feeling that having Ariel-sama wearing underwear which has been touched by a boy isn't a good thing.

"Should I re-wash it after all ..... I think that would be better ....."

After turning on the light I froze, it was my panties.

Rudi had touched my panties. I was in agony due to embarrassment.

One month later.

I was supposed to begin helping Rudi with the Metastasis Event research on days when Princess Ariel was on holiday.

It was a month later.

What if he rejects me, or what if I'm dead weight? After all, it would hurt me a lot.

But Rudi gave me a warm welcome.

It's probably because of that incident, he's letting his guard down around me.

I think that it isn't fair to Rudi, but I am happy that I dropped the underwear, though it was embarrassing.

When I think about it, I did take a step forward. It was a big step for me.

—

And while not grasping any of the many chances to reveal my identity, I failed to take any more steps forward.

And just like that, a year had passed.

It's winter.

The entirety of this Magic City Sharia in the Kingdom of Ranoa is covered in snow.

Although the Magic University is currently being cleared, it is still dyed in pure white.

The roads between buildings are clear, but to get to places such as the back of the school building you have to clear it yourself.

It's that kind of season.

At that time, I received a letter.

The sender was [Soldat Heckler].

He's an S-ranked adventurer and the leader of the [Stepped Leader] party.

During my time as an adventurer, I would join them from time to time.

He's a capable adventurer.

I'll take a look at the contents.

"Hmm."

According to the letter, Soldat and his party are coming to this town.

It seems that there is a clan meeting.

It seems that the clan [Thunderbolt], which [Stepped Leader] is attached to, gathers in this town every few years.

The purpose of the meeting seems to be to plan the clan's future course of action.

For 2-3 months during winter, they decide their future plans after careful discussion.

It's a necessary event for a clan of this size.

Since Soldat's party is S-rank, he is one of the executives.

Thus, his absence wouldn't be permissible, and he had to come all the way to Ranoa.

Soldat and the clan leader have a bad relationship, so honestly he didn't want to come.

The next few months will be quite tedious.

While thinking that, he suddenly remembered me.

"Come to think of it, [Quagmire] is in this city as well," he thought.

No time like the present.

Soldat decided to take this opportunity to meet me for the first time in a while and get a bite to eat, so he sent me the letter.

Certainly, I had a decent relationship with Soldat.

However, it was not to the extent which after separating he would go out of his way and send a letter just for meeting and eating out.

I've always tried to be generous and good-natured, but I'm probably not the type of person that one would go to such lengths to meet.

If that's the case, his goal is probably Elinalise-san.

No choice, I'll have to bring her with me.

And then I'll show her being all lovey-dovey with Cliff, and make him have mixed feelings.

Thinking that, I told Nanahoshi that I'll be taking a break from assisting her experiments on next month's day off.

I tried inviting Fitts-senpai as well, but he said with a sad face that he can't come on that day.

"Well, that day I must go out in the afternoon... as Ariel-sama's bodyguard."

It's part of being a bodyguard.

Even when the rest of the world has a day off, he can't always take one himself.

Rather, when everyone has a day off he is extra busy.

It's like he is a corporate slave.

Oh wait, saying he is a corporate slave is rude to Fitts-senpai.

Let me rephrase it as hard working.

Anyway, since our plans do not match, there's nothing to be done.

I decided to take Cliff and Elinalise, and go to the Adventurer's guild.

We walked to the Adventurer's Guild.

Although the snow is being shovelled, the packed-down snow dyed the streets in white.

Since the snow storms strengthen at night, no matter how much you remove the snow you can't keep up.

Creating an underground drainage system to remove the snow using modern technology would be a very profitable business in this situation.

"Hey, Rudeus, are you listening?"

"Yes yes, I am listening."

Cliff has been proudly talking about the current situation for a while now.

He seems to have recently started researching curses.

It's for the sake of breaking Elinalise's curse.

Curses have been around since ancient times and research has been continuing until now, but it's not something that can be removed so easily.

It seems that there have been practically no results in this past half year.

"Didn't you say there have been no results?"

"I'm a genius, so I'm sure I'll be able to do it sooner or later!"

Cliff said that while brimming with confidence.

What an incredible person.

I know I have places where I won't succeed no matter how much effort I put in, so I can't try that hard.

Diving head first in a field long deemed impossible, that's the mark of a genius.

For me, I lack that talent.

"Hey Rudeus, if you know anything regarding curses can you tell me?"

"Hmmm..."

After being asked that I start thinking.

Curses, huh?

I heard that keyword a few times when travelling here from the Magic Continent.

"Let me see."

Okay, let's see, where did I hear that?

Curse, curse.

Trying to remember about curses causes me to freeze up, probably because Orsted has a curse.

That's what I heard from Hitogami.

...Come to think of it, he also said that Laplace had a curse as well.

He transferred that curse to spears and caused the history of persecution of the Superd Tribe.

"Laplace once placed his own curse on a tool and transferred it to another race."

"A tool?"

"Yeah, the spears that the Superd Tribe used in the Laplace campaign. Thanks to that the Superd warriors went mad and their tribe ended up being persecuted..."

When I said that, Cliff looked at me with wide eyes.

"The Superd Tribe!? Is that true!?"

"Beats me, I just heard it from someone else, so I don't know whether or not it's true..."

Who told me about this?

Hitogami again?

Well, I can probably trust him on that.

There's no reason for him to have lied about that, after all.

"But, I see... curses can be placed onto tools?"

After hearing what I said, Cliff placed his hand on his chin and thought.

"I don't know how it was done, though."

"No, knowing it has been done before is a huge step forward."

Has anyone else tried to transfer curses since Laplace?

Well, he's the Demon God, so what he's done might be considered evil.

Maybe it's deemed taboo?

Now that I think about it, miko's power is like a curse as well.

Transferring their powers with tools and using it would be convenient, I wonder why no one has tried it.

"I wonder if no one considered trying to transfer miko abilities..."

"Hm? Why did you mention mikos?"

Cliff was puzzled.

Eh?

Is there something strange about it?

"No, I mean, aren't they the same? Both have unnatural flow of magic from birth, and have a unique ability. It's just a matter of that ability being positive or negative."

"... It's my first time hearing this."

Elinalise was looking at me with a surprised face as well.

It seems to be their first time hearing this.

That's unexpected, they didn't know this?

But I'm pretty sure someone told it to me matter-of-factly...

Oh, this is also from Hitogami.

All of this was from him.

That bastard, telling me things that nobody knows as if it were common sense.

"But, I see... That's right, a tool... Certainly... Maybe if I..."

After hearing me out, Cliff starts mumbling as if he came across a clue.

I think it's better not to take it too seriously.

However, does the word "curse" have any relation to the word [God]?

Human God, Dragon God, Demon God.

Also Miko.

They might be connected, but maybe not.

"Thank you Rudeus-kun, thanks to you, I think I figured something out."

Cliff said that with a radiant face.

While you're at it, I'd like this curse-like illness of mine removed as well.

Soldat and the party smiled the moment they saw my face.

They were more welcoming than I expected.

I wonder if they weren't really after Elinalise.

We went to a nearby store and ate together.

When they heard about Cliff and Elinalise's relationship they were surprised.

They joked around saying things like "A bitch like you getting married, what kind of joke is this?" and infuriated Cliff.

When they laughed off Cliff's attitude, his anger surpassed fury and nearly reached ecstasy.

He probably won't calm down for a while.

Or so I thought, but Elinalise calmed him down easily and changed the topic of the conversation.

I guess I should say as expected of Elinalise.

No matter the situation, controlling hate is her speciality.

Come to think of it, I have never seen her getting angry nor crying.

I've seen her get irritated several times, but I've never seen her clearly being angry.

As for things she clearly said she hates, there was only Paul.

What in the hell did that guy do?

Then shifted to the matter of my clothes.

Today, I came wearing my uniform.

"Hey Quagmire, if you are dressed like that, people will think you're like all those other rookies, you know?"

It seems there are students of the Magic University that wear robes over their uniforms and come to the guild as adventurers.

They're generally all F or E rank and don't seem like they would get involved with Soldat and his group, but there are occasionally those that ask to be let into Thunderbolt.

"Then how about I act like a rookie and carry the baggage again?"

"Then we get our asses saved by you again? Give me a break."

When I first met Soldat and the gang, they really looked down on me and invited me as the baggage carrier.

That's a nostalgic subject.

Then the topic switched from reminiscences to tales of adventure.

Although Cliff was angry for a while, listening to the adventure stories gradually made his eyes sparkle.

That reminds me, Cliff once told me he looked up to adventurers.

He's usually impertinent, but that aspect is fitting of his age.

We finished eating and began to discuss what to do next, when a messenger from the clan came to Soldat.

"Soldat-san, we are having another meeting."

"Not again, we just had one this morning!"

"There is no helping it, this time the leader is very enthusiastic."

Apparently, there's an emergency meeting of the party leaders.

"I thought I'd be able to hang out with Quagmire for today, but there is no helping it. Quagmire..... sorry, but we'll meet another day."

"Yeah, please invite me again."

Soldat left with an exaggerated nod.

Well, what to do now.

Since the main party left, it looks like we'll be disbanding.

Since it was just 2 in the afternoon, even if we go back there is much time left.

"What should we do?"

"Let's see..... I was thinking about teaching Cliff the fundamentals of being an adventurer."

"I see."

After our earlier conversation, Elinalise wants to show off her Adventurer skills to Cliff.

"Oh, that's a good idea, teaching a rookie."

"Is it okay if we go as well?"

Stepped Leader's other members expressed interest.

Things seem to be heading towards teaching Cliff what it means to be an adventurer.

They plan on accepting an A-rank subjugation mission to let Cliff gain some experience.

Cliff seemed to be a little sullen since they are looking down on him, but he seems to be much more excited than angry.

"What will you do, Rudeus?"

"I will..... pass this time, sorry."

It would be nice to teach Cliff what to do in a party with multiple magicians, but I'm sure he doesn't want someone younger than him ordering him around.

He'll be more obedient with only older people around him.

For that matter, I'm not going to take a request which will take a few days to complete.

If I don't leave behind any message, I am sure Nanahoshi would get pissed as well.

She might be experiencing life as a shut-in but she seems to miss being around others, and her mood will sour if I skip out.

If you're a shut-in, I think you should take pride in your solitude.

Well, she seems to miss Japan a lot, so I can understand how she wants someone to talk to in Japanese.

Though as someone who decided to live on in this world, I want to tell her to get out more.

"Yes, well, please let the others know that we are going then."

"You as well, Elinalise-san... there's a rookie with you, so be careful not to go to anywhere too dangerous."

"We aren't like you, we won't pick fights with dragons or Demon Kings."

It's not like I want to pick fights with them, though.

Well, whatever.

I parted with the others, and headed home on my own.

I left the Adventurer's District and headed to the square in the middle of town.

When I got there, the smell of grilled meat drifted over to me.

When I looked over, I saw a few merchants had put up stalls even though the snow was piled up.

It must be difficult, working in this freezing weather.

However, I've got some free time.

Even if I go home, there's nothing to do but study, train, or make figurines.

It might have been better if I didn't restrain myself and went with Cliff and the rest.

"Since I've come out all this way, I should walk around town a bit."

I muttered that to myself and headed toward the Business District.

My objective is not shopping, but I might find something interesting.

Also, after that discussion with Cliff, I got interested in magic items and magic tools as well.

The cursed spears that Laplace made are one kind of magic tool, as well.

Until now all of them being sold were too expensive, and I didn't really feel that I wanted any.

But Fitts-senpai is also using magic items.

Nanahoshi seems to have some useful ones as well.

Since the Magic Guild headquarters is in this city, I might find something interesting after all.

I don't feel like buying anything...

But I'll at least do some window shopping.

By the way, I was also confused the first time I heard about Magic Items and magic tools.

They're two entirely different things.

The differences between the two are as follows:

Magic Tools:

It has a magic circle carved somewhere on it and when the user chants his mana flows through it and activates the magic. As long as the user still has mana left, it can be used repeatedly. Artificially made.

Magic Items:

Items that have been infused with mana and gained special abilitites. Performing the correct action activates its effect. It can only be used a certain number of times per day, but the mana recovers over time.

Summing it up roughly,

Magic tools can be used repeatedly, but they consume the user's mana.

Magic items have a limit to their number of uses per day, but don't use up the user's mana.

That's about it.

Magic Items, which have a limited number of daily uses but don't consume the user's mana or require a chant to activate, are considered more useful.

However, they're mostly gathered from labyrinths, so the effects tend to be rather random.

As a result, magic items with useful effects are extremely expensive.

The boots and such that Fitts-senpai wears probably cost more than my entire net worth.

By the way, some demon swords, although they are man-made, have traits of magic items.

In my case, I have more mana than I could possibly use, so there's no problem with using magic tools.

I'll probably even be fine using magic tools that consume too much mana to be considered useful.

Even such items that seem defective could possibly be found here in the Magic Capital Sharia, the territory of the Magic Guild.

"Hn?"

Suddenly I found some familiar faces.

It's Luke and Fitts-senpai.

They were happily talking in front of a clothing store.

Fitts-senpai is looking at the store's display with a happy face.

Luke has a wry smile.

In his hands is a large bag.

It's as if they are on a date.

I heard about him going out.

But is it a good idea for those two to be out here by themselves?

What about guarding the princess...

Well, I suppose I should at least say hello.

"Good morning! What a coincidence to meet you two in a place like this."

"You...!"

When he heard my voice, Luke's face went stiff.

As usual, it seems like he doesn't like me.

I've tried to help them save face, but...

Well, recently I've become a little too famous.

He might not have found that amusing.

Well, so long as I can get along with Fitts-senpai, all is good.

"Oh...?"

Fitts-senpai seems to have a different air around him today.

I wonder why that is.

Maybe it is because he is dressed slightly different?

No, it's more like he's an entirely different person...

"Hey, Fitts-senpai, you seem a bit different today."

When I say that, Fitts-senpai looks at me in shock.

Hmm.

What could be different?

How do I put it, his demeanour?

When I looked at Fitts-senpai, he turned his face away from me.

At the same time, Luke steps up in front of him.

"Rudeus, what's up, what are you doing here?"

He is standing like he wants to hide Fitts-senpai behind him.

His tone is calm.

His gaze is strong, but it's not to the point it could be called glaring.

However, his voice is stiff.

Maybe I saw them in a bad place?

Don't tell me they're actually on a date?

Maybe Luke's sweet tongue is effective even on men, and he is taking advantage of the naïve Fitts-senpai.

Since they are the princess' guards, it would be bad if their homosexual tendencies were revealed so they're meeting in secret.

Though it's a joke, even thinking about it is shocking me.

Why is that?

"No, nothing really, I just saw you and thought I should at least say hello... Fitts-senpai?"

From earlier, Fitts-senpai has been trying not to look at me.

... Eh?

Is he avoiding me?

Why?

Did I do something?

"Thank you for your consideration. Fitts doesn't talk when working as the princess' guard. I hope you understand."

It seems like Luke is trying to chase me away.

... It looks like I came at a bad time after all.

But not saying even a word? What is going on?

"..."

Fitts-senpai is not looking toward me.

No, he is looking, but he's furrowing his eyebrows with a negative feeling.

'Won't he leave already' is the feeling I get.

It's too obvious.

If he is going this far, even I notice.

I am being rejected.

"What's the matter?"

"No, it's nothing. Sorry for bothering you."

I left the place.

I think I looked calm, at least on the surface.

However, on the inside, I was shocked to the point that my mind went blank.

I am not in the mood for shopping anymore.

I'll just head home.

The slightly dirty white road continues before me.

It's starting to snow.

It's cold.

I returned to the magic university.

Why was Fitts-senpai avoiding me?

I do not know.

I do not know even when I think about it.

I don't remember doing anything to be hated for.

Maybe I should go consult someone regarding how I am feeling right now... No, I just want to complain to somebody.

If I'm not mistaken, Zanoba left for the Magic Guild for research on mikos. Julie probably went with him.

Rinia and Pursena... they don't seem like they'd listen to me seriously. They'd probably just make fun of me.

Elinalise and I just separated earlier.

Badigadi also does not seem to be at school today.

Nanahoshi... is very busy, so I doubt she will listen to my complaints.

I can't think of anyone else.

I don't have many friends.

So just like that I decided to go to the library.

At times like this, it is best to spend time quietly reading whatever book you find.

I wonder if there are any refreshing books?

Maybe an epic, or a hero story.

I wonder if there are any books about Badigadi or Kishirika.

If it's about them, I'm sure it would be refreshing.

While thinking about such things, I enter the library.

I greet the guard with my eyes.

We never talked to each other, but he remembers my face now.

At the entrance snow fell on me, so I dried my clothes using voiceless incantation.

I enter and headed toward my usual seat.

Today as well, the library is empty.

There are not many students in this world who would spend their holiday in a library.

The literacy rate is low, too.

"... Huh?"

Fitts-senpai is here.

He was reading a book and looked totally bored.

He's at the seats we usually use.

"Oh, Rudeus-kun."

When he noticed me standing there, he gave me his usual shy smile.

"Welcome back, that was fast, did you meet your friends already?"

"Y-, Yeah"

I sat in front of him, and looked at his face seriously.

It's as usual.

It's the usual clothes and air that he has.

Something's not right.

From where we met, I came back here directly, on the shortest route.

Yet he was already here when I arrived.

It's strange.

"What is it? Do I have something on my face?"

Fitts-senpai says this and touches his face.

However, this atmosphere.

I wonder if it's because of the rejection I felt earlier.

I feel that this Fitts-senpai has accepted me totally.

There is no wariness at all.

It's different from earlier.

Completely different.

"Why did you ignore me before?"

When I say that Fitts-sempai's smile froze.

Then, he makes the most serious face he can.

"Actually, when I escort Ariel-sama, I won't talk. I'm [Silent Fitts], after all. Since my voice is like a kid, I would be underestimated, so when I'm around others... especially when I am guarding Ariel-sama, I don't say a word."

"I see, but I didn't see Ariel-hime anywhere."

"She was in a nearby shop, one that we can trust. We aren't the only ones guarding her. The other guards were with her while we were watching over them from afar, it was that sort of formation. Oh, don't tell this to anyone else, though."

Fitts-senpai explains it like that without stammering.

As if he had prepared this answer beforehand.

No, he did prepare it before hand.

"So it's like that, I am sorry for talking to you at such a time."

"No, it's fine. I'm also sorry for not being able to talk with you."

I think I've got it figured out.

Probably.

I'm not sure, but Ariel-sama is probably using some method to disguise herself as Fitts-senpai.

She's probably using either a magic tool or a magic item.

Him being silent is because they can't change the voice.

Possibly, they can't change the eye color either.

That's why Fitts-senpai is always hiding his eyes. He wants to decrease the chance of people seeing through the princess' disguise...

When I think like that, it all makes sense.

The reason I was being avoided earlier is because coming into contact with me without preparations would blow their cover.

It's not because Fitts-senpai hates me.

Yes, I'm sure that's how it is.

I've never done anything to be hated for.

Let's go with that.

"Oh, so it was like that. I thought I was hated by Fitts-senpai so I got worried."

"Ahaha... There is no way I would hate you..."

Fitts-senpai scratched the back of his ear.

That action is characteristic of him, but recently when I see it my heart starts pounding.

Why is someone so cute a boy?

... Is he even a boy?

It bothers me.

I'm bothered about Fitts-senpai.

I am interested in Fitts-senpai.

As always, I see him once every 10 days.

Not that there is anything specific to talk about.

But, no matter what, it has caught my attention.

I am interested in his casual gestures.

Like how he scratches behind his ears or how he stretches when he finishes his job.

Like how he smells when he suddenly passes by in front of me.

Right, there is his smile as well.

That smile just bothers me, like I've seen it before.

The days when we don't see each other are the same, I suddenly catch myself searching for him in the crowd.

In fact, I see him in the crowd a lot.

It's him and Ariel-hime, they are famous in the school.

Beside being part of the student council he is one of the best students in the school as well.

Fitts-senpai is one of the most respected people in the school.

He is called [Silent Fitts] because he rarely talks.

As an escort of the princess, he has top class ability even in the magic university.

It would be a matter of fact to respect him.

I've been chasing him with my eyes.

Even I know what this condition is called.

It's called love.

I have fallen in love with a man.

No, I wonder if he's really a man.

That's it.

That is the question.

Is Fitts-senpai a man or a woman?

Depending on the answer to that, I would know whether I am homosexual or straight.

Since it seems to be the cure for my illness, I don't really care which one he is.

Either man or woman is okay, but I'd prefer woman.

So, I began to collect information.

The quickest way is to ask the person himself.

But, that's a last resort, since it's possible that he's sensitive to having a womanly face.

First of all, I went to the staff room.

There should be some information in the faculty room.

The truth is probably written on the list.

Even if they can't give away the students' personal information, they might tell me his gender.

With those thoughts in mind, I head to the faculty building.

Of the teachers present, I find the one in charge of Fitts-senpai's class.

"I'd like to ask you about Fitts-senpai's gender."

"I can't talk about him."

"Isn't there any way..."

The teacher looks nervous.

Apparently, I seem to be feared.

I figured that the students were afraid of me, but not so much that even the teachers were scared of me as well.

No, actually, it's convenient.

"If you don't talk, my thick, hard Stone Cannon may make a mess of your ass."

"Ah...! Why... you."

"Or you might get caught in another prank pulled by mischievous students. Or would a water prank be more to your liking?"

".... Please, I'm sorry!"

The teacher was very stubborn.

He didn't give in to the threats.

"I'm just kidding!"

I gave up on him and went to see Vice Principal Jinas.

If people on the bottom won't talk, I should just move up from there.

At the end of the faculty building.

Jinas was drowning in documents.

Well it's a very big school after all.

There is so much work even for the Vice Principal.

Disturbing him is bad, so I'll try to finish it fast.

"Jinas-sensei."

"Rudeus-san..."

"You seem really busy."

"No, no, thanks to Rudeus-san taking care of the trouble making children, my job has decreased a lot."

Trouble makers.

Who does he mean?

Maybe Badigadi?

Or Zanoba?

No matter how you look at them they are not children.

"What may I help you with?"

"Yes, actually I wanted to hear about Fitts-senpai."

When I say that, Jinas's eyebrow jumps up suddenly.

"I am sorry, regarding them I am under pressure from higher ups so..."

"Is that so."

Forget them and answer my question damn it.

I wanted to say that, but after seeing his tired face I decided not to.

Schools have a lot of these things as well.

Like getting funds for allowing the 2nd Princess in the school....

"At the very least, can you tell me his gender?"

"Uh-huh..... gender you mean....."

Jinas made a bitter smile.

As always, he is man of bitter smiles.

He waited for a minute.

Not doing anything and waiting for a minute made it feel long.

"He is a boy....."

Jinas answered so eventually.

In the end, I couldn't figure out whether Fitts-senpai was a man or a woman.

Jinas said he is a "man", but he is under pressure and he hesitated when saying that, so there is the possibility that he lied.

However, Jinas called them the equivalent of "Karera", but if we considered Ariel-hime and Fitts-sempai to be woman and Luke the only man, he should have called them "Kanojora".

{ C-Editor's note: In Japanese, Karera = they (the majority are men); Kanojora = they (the majority are women). }

No, this is just playing with words, it's not to the level of being a valid reason.

"Sigh."

By the time I came back to myself, I was in the library.

And was sitting at the seat where we usually do our research and sighing.

"Huh....."

Am I afraid of finding out his gender?

If he was a woman, would I be confessing to her?

Confession?

Say "I love you"?

Me?

I think that's important... but.

I feel something is not right.

I feel it's not like that.

Even if I do confess, then what?

With my body the way it is now, what do I want to do?

My son's lack of reaction isn't because I am out of juice.

My head is filled with worldly desires, but I can't do anything about it, I'll reach my limit eventually, it's just too hard.

Yeah.

I will not deceive myself with vague words like love and like.

I want to do it with Fitts-senpai.

Doing stuff like this and that. Nah, not even going that far is good enough.

"......so long as my son's power generator works again."

And, at that time.

I was hit on the shoulder with a pop.

I turned around and Fitts-senpai was there.

"What do you want to do?"

Fitts-senpai saw me and sneaked up on me.

"Uo?"

I stand up in surprise and the seat gets caught between my legs.

"Whoa, that was dangerous!"

Fitts-senpai stretches his hand in order to help me.

I grab his hand, but with Fitts-senpai's strength, he can't support my weight.

"Wow!"

We get tangled together with the chair and table while falling.

By the time I noticed, we had fallen, and I was on top of Fitts-senpai. I fell while hugging him.

"....."

"....."

My face was very close to Fitts-senpai though he had his sunglasses on so I couldn't tell his expression, but I could see his small lips.

He was light, but had the weight of a solid person.

And I started to feel his warmth.

A gentle and stimulating fragrance enters my nose.

This is Fitts-senpai's fragrance, the fragrance I've been longing for the whole day.

My hands move to Fitts-senpai's waist and hip.

It's a thin waist.

I can't believe this is a man's waist.

The ass is a bit thin for a woman, but it's soft.

I can't think of him as a man.

Just by touching this, my bad boy is throbbing.

Oh.

"Oh, s-sorry-"

Fitts-senpai stood up with a red face while apologizing.

"I..... Fitts-senpai is a girl after all....."

Fitts-senpai had a flabbergasted expression.

And his mouth was flapping without a sound.

In the end, he shook his head.

"You are wrong..... I'm a boy!"

Fitts-senpai rose up, turned around and started running, he was like the wind.

"....."

Beside the table, several books had fallen, he might have come to take these materials for his class.

Fitts-senpai was a woman, he was a woman, it was an important point, but more important than that was.

"It's standing up....."

After 3 years of inactivity, it's finally standing up.

With just a touch, my son who was sleeping for the past 3 years woke up. Just to test it, I touch it with my right hand and yes... it got its feeling's back.

"I see....."

At this time, I finally understood what Hitogami meant.

Well, certainly, doing research in the library.

"But Fitts-senpai was hiding it"

I knew from the start he was hiding something.

She cross-dressed and protected the princess.

She was definitely hiding something.

She probably has a reason for this.

But I can't dig any deeper into her reasons. If I do, it would annoy her.

Although she went to the trouble to cross-dress... if it's found out because of me, it would be troublesome.

I like Fitts-senpai.

The one I love has some reason to hide their gender.

Should I reveal Fitts-senpai's identity just because my worldly desires that have been repressed for the past few years are about to erupt? Nah, what I should be doing is protecting Fitts-senpai's secret, not revealing it.

I have to keep her secret.

I need to read the mood.

The hell, if I don't do that I'll likely say something like, "I'll keep silent so come to my room tonight".

Saying something like that to Fitts-senpai who has been taking care of me so far.

But seeing that Fitts-senpai taking his clothes off in front of me while saying "I didn't think you were this kind of person..." just imagining him in underwear.

I wonder if it's white?

No, no, no.

This is not good, not good.

That's no good.

Haven't I been saved by him .... no, her a number of times.

To repay her like this is unforgivable.

Either way, I am not that kind of person.

I'm a gentleman.

Alright, I'll treat her as a boy to the best of my ability.

And when she is likely to be found out, I'll help her no matter what.

Yes, just like how she saved me on enrollment day.

Surely, even at that time, it would have been dangerous.

Talking about the dorm rules and defending me, she put her position in danger.

But, she helped me.

I do not know why, but she helped me anyway.

Once a similar situation occurs, then it's time for my turn.

I'll help, Fitts-sempai.

"Wait a minute, if she is a woman....."

After thinking that far.

Suddenly, I remembered.

Until now, thinking Fitts-senpai was a boy I did so many sexual harassment things in front of her.

For example, such as the sexual harassment remarks in the slave market.

Such as the sexual harassment remark when I kidnapped Pursena and Rinia.

Such as the sexual harassment remarks made when she was holding my wand.

I was in despair.....

When I finished thinking it over, my son had gone back to being a hikikomori.

Even rubbing it had no effect.

It's better than the past 2-3 years in which he would not even react to anything, at least he stood up this time.

Apparently, he seems to be far from a complete recovery.

Well it's better than nothing.

Let's head back to my room and take it slowly.

Yeah, let's start by remembering the feeling from just now.

— Ariel's Perspective —

Again, Sylphy came back crying.

"I said I am a boy, ughu... though it was my chance, even though Rudi took the initiative to ask me..."

".....That's rough."

Well, how many times have I calmed her down while saying that.

Every time something happens, Sylphy comes to me crying.

But to me, it's like she was bragging about her lover.

One time it was, she went to the slave market with Rudi and he showed her his manliness, it was the first time she saw a man totally naked, she even got along with Zanoba-ouji of Shirone Kingdom.

Another time, she reported that Rudi was angry at Pursena and Rinia saying even if you win a duel you can't go breaking other peoples' stuff...

Another time, she was saying that Rudi asked her to help with research while sighing.

The other time, when Rudi asked her about love counseling, she was afraid that he might have fallen in love with someone else and had said some high handed things to him.

Another time she said, I was allowed to look at Rudi's staff, the magic stone in it was so big, I bet it's very expensive.

And she said that she was allowed to transport it to him with an excited expression.

The other time, she was talking about how cool Rudi was in his fight against Badi-sama.

Sometimes, she said with a sad face, Rudi was doing research with the "Silent"-san [Nanahoshi].

And today, she came crying about lying to Rudi about her gender and then running away.

(Sigh ...I wish she would just reveal her identity to him already)

By this time, I had my own impression of him as well. At first I thought he was just a scaredy-cat, but I now know that's just his front, and he is very strong.

He had Shirone Kingdom's miko Zanoba as his underling...

He managed to tame the 2 princesses from the Beast Race, Rinia and Pursena...

As well as getting along with Cliff, the grandson of the pope of Milis Kingdom...

He had Badigadi-sama as his acquaintance and all that is without mentioning the cooperation from the grumpy "Silent" who even refused to cooperate with me.

And all the Special Students who I was planning to have on my team, those were isolated people, are now his allies.

If he was a scaredy-cat, he wouldn't have been able to do this.

Regarding the talk we had about "The rumors being strangely clean", now I have no doubt they were all correct...

His magic blew up the Demon King Badigadi.... Blew him up!

The existence that I could only stand in fear and watch, unable to do anything about, he blew him up with one move.

He is too strong.

Well after seeing that, I believe he could beat one or two stray dragons by himself.

Even though he has such strength, he is extremely good-natured.

Even when he was threatened by female students and was falsely accused of being an underwear thief, he did not get angry.

Since he came to this school, the only time he got angry was regarding the matter of Rinia and Pursena.

As to what he did, I heard he kept them captive for a day and doodled on their faces.

However, even those Rinia and Pursena were totally frightened and became obedient.

Surely, they received his anger up close and personal.

The anger of someone who beat that Demon King with a single blow.

Of course, even they didn't spread bad rumors about Rudeus.

I mean, they were so afraid that they wouldn't spread such rumors.

Rudeus had been careful not to make a mistake, and had been living while he was hiding his power.

Even though he has that much power, and he can do anything he likes.

I don't know why he lives like this, but no matter how much I think, I get the feeling that he is planning something bad no matter what.

But, according to Sylphy, he is not a bad person.

I met him for the first time when he was dueling Fitts, I felt he was a warm person.

Though his appearance was suspicious, he was a friendly person.

Having been beaten with one attack, Sylphy was a bit on guard at first, but after that I don't see any change in his attitude.

So I think it's good to have a connection with him and through him, all the Special Students.

Maybe it's time to bow my head fair and square and ask for his cooperation.

But..... I should admit it.

I'm afraid of him.

I am scared.

I wonder, is it because Sylphy is strong that she is not afraid of him?

Or maybe it's because she saw his true nature? After seeing Sylphy's happy face, I would feel bad about getting Rudeus tangled in my struggle for power.

I want Sylphy to be happy.

It does not seem likely for me to be able to grasp happiness, but she is just a child who got tangled up in my struggle for power.

She has no responsibility as a noble, nor like Luke who has sworn loyalty to me.

She is just helping me out of friendship.

She has no need to go as far as to lie in her blood for my sake.

She better leave at some point and have a happy life as a girl.

Sylphy may not accept it.

She, being aware of her position as my ally, did her best, but her love for Rudeus might be a good opportunity.

Me behaving like this is probably because Rudeus would be a very good ally to have.

It would be good to leave Sylphy's life, my friend's life, in his hands.

Forgetting Sylphy is a minus, but let's leave it at that.

Well, the problem is Sylphy's love, I don't know how much she loves him, but seeing no progress is very irritating.

Even after a year of spending time together, it has not progressed at all, that kind of love is the problem.

Dense Rudeus and awkward Sylphy.

It's very frustrating to watch these two.

I thought Sylphy was more impatient.

Sylphy does not seem to be aware, but it's not unthinkable for Rudeus to go out with anyone else at anytime.

For example, Pursena and Rinia.

Though they don't seem to be conscious of Rudeus for now, who knows what might happen in 1-2 more years.

And there is "Silent" as well.

That grumpy masked woman is helping Rudeus with research.

Based on Sylphy's story, they don't have that kind of relationship at the moment, but being together for a long time, who knows what might happen.

While Sylphy is dilly-dallying, Rudeus might be taken by someone else...

No, he will be taken.

At the least, there is no reason for him to refrain because of Fitts, since he only asked [Are you a woman?] to the cross-dressing Fitts. It does not mean anything.

Hmm.

But that means, he at least noticed that Fitts is a woman.

I thought he was a dense person, but there is the possibility that he was aware and kept it to himself.

No, it is possible that he knew our situation and kept it to himself to not cause us any problems.

Assuming that's the situation, then is it my fault?

Am I the one getting in the way of Sylphy's love?

(Right, I need to... stop holding her back.)

Then, I need to support her love.

The day after I found out Fitts-senpai was a girl, I was on my bed in the dormitory with a tired body.

I was keeping my pal company after he woke up from his slumber the whole night.

But my pal is treating me like nothing had happened at all.

My head is already filled with Fitts-senpai, but my pal is playing dumb.

I figured with what has already happened, my pal would be cured, but he still seems to be in a bad mood.

Or maybe just the memory is not enough.

Or, maybe it needs the smell, or the feeling [of the touch], or the voice.

I am sure that Fitts-senpai is the key to curing my ED.

Hitogami told the truth.

It's just that I didn't notice the therapy was right in front of my eyes all along.

That said, I wonder how I should proceed with the treatment from now on.

I don't want to reveal Fitts-senpai's identity.

Neither do I want to make a plan that would make Fitts-senpai hate me.

ED treatment or Fitts-senpai's trust?

If I didn't notice he was a she for the next 6 months, I probably would have asked her to help me with the ED treatment without knowing anything.

However, now, my feeling of love towards her has grown so much.

Now that it became like this, I'll avoid being driven by my libido like in the case with Eris, and avoid being dumped again.

Naturally, that's what I thought.

"......What happens will happen."

A man trying to get the cross-dressing bodyguard of the princess to help him with his ED treatment.

Well, this setting is strangely amusing.

Thanks for the twist, Hitogami.

I started laughing nihilistically and left the bed.

After stretching, I yawned. I guess that's what happens when you don't sleep enough.

"Yawn....."

I went to the tub with hot water to wash my face, and there I see a reflection of an above average boy with a good feeling to his face.

Going by the standards of my original world, it's definitely not a bad face.

Paul's delinquent-like teasing/joking face, with traces of Zenith's gentle face.

Though it's not bad, it's a little different from this world's idea of 『beauty』.

No matter how many times I look at it, I can't accept it as my own face, but I'm used to it by now.

Just not being worse than my previous life's face is satisfactory.

But, I wonder if this face is to Fitts-senpai's taste.

Nah, stop it. Even if I know the answer, I can't do anything about that.

He is a man. I won't do anything.

That's what I decided.

I washed my face and noticed something around my chin that was not there before.

I tried to touch it with my fingers.

I tried touching it and then pulled at it. My skin moved with it. It's a beard.

One single hair, like lanugo on a newborn, is growing there.

"......I reached that age, ha?"

Secondary growth characteristics here are not very different from my world.

I probably hadn't grown a beard earlier because Paul isn't the hairy type.

I don't know much about how the other races grow, I wonder how Fitts-senpai is growing.

I heard that the growth rate of the Elves is slow compared to humans.

I wonder if she has hair growing down there yet. Well regarding the Elves, I can ask Elinalise-san.

N..... a-ra?

Something is weird.

I think I remembered something.

"What was it..... a-ra?"

Something. I have forgotten something.

However, I do not remember.

While not being able to remember, I shaved my beard.

Two whole days have passed.

I had no contact with Fitts-senpai.

I also don't want to do anything suspicious like searching for him.

Just act normally. Everything is normal.

On the morning of the third day.

In the hallway of the boy's dormitory, Luke was waiting.

I didn't panic.

I had thought that there would be some kind of reaction.

"Good morning Luke-senpai, it's rare to see you at this time."

I said trying to look as carefree as possible, but he was looking sullen.

"I want to talk to you regarding Fitts."

As I thought.

However, with respect to this matter, I also had an answer ready.

"I do not know anything."

"Ha~~h, what do you not know?"

Based on Luke's tone of voice, it's obvious he wants to talk about what happened with Fitts-senpai few days ago.

He was probably trying to figure out whether I knew Fitts-senpai's gender for sure or not.

Having touched Fitts-senpai, I know he is a she, but she never said it herself.

It's not like I fondled her breasts or anything either.

Maybe they still want to hide it, is what I thought.

If it goes in that direction, I have no objection either.

However, I wonder if knowing Fitts-senpai's secret is that bad of a thing.

Well, maybe it has something to do with me being a Greyrat.

But, I already cut my ties with the Boreas family when I was dumped by Eris.

No, maybe it has something to do with Paul?

Either way, here, I have to say it clearly.

"Luke-senpai, I have no intention of becoming your group's enemy. As for Fitts-senpai's identity, I'll keep it a secret."

"...You're going to pretend that you don't know anything?"

"Yeah, I have already cut my ties with both the Boreas and Notus families as well."

Luke's handsome face was colored by surprise.

Did I say something bad?

Saying I have no ties to Boreas and Notus wasn't a bad thing right?

"So, it's like that."

"Sorry to bother you..."

I left after saying that to Luke.

That day.

After class finished, I went to help with Nanahoshi's research.

"Oh, Rudeus-kun....."

In front of Nanahoshi's room, Fitts-senpai was waiting.

If memory serves me right, the day that Fitts-senpai was able to help was to be 4 days after today.

And today wasn't an off day either.

Yet, Fitts-senpai was here.

Not as the princess' bodyguard.

So, he came to help with the experiment?

The reason is probably the event from a few days ago.

Physical contact with Fitts-senpai as well as the event with Luke-senpai.

Of course, I said I had no intention of becoming Fitts-senpai or Ariel-hime's enemy.

However, they have no reason to believe it.

Rather, they would have expected me to become their enemy. That's what it means, knowing someone's secret.

Then, is Fitts-senpai here to keep an eye on me?.

Or, he may have come to confirm the truth about my conversation with Luke.

Fu—, I'm very sharp today.

"....."

"....."

"What? Did you guys get in a fight or something?"

Nanahoshi asked, as she saw me and Fitts-senpai being silent and fidgeting.

"Nah, we didn't get into a fight!"

Fitts-senpai said, acting overly suspiciously.

Panicking Fitts-senpai is cute as well.

But as I thought, they doubt me.

What should I do in this situation to gain their trust?

Should I pay tribute to Princess Ariel? I wonder what would be good.

Maybe I should bring her some cake? But it might backfire, since they seem to be totally wary of me.

"Whatever, just don't get me involved."

Nanahoshi sounded like she was stuttering. It's obvious since she hated this world and prefers not to get involved in it at all.

She doesn't want to be tangled in Fitts-senpai's and my problem, especially since Fitts-senpai had ties to Asura Kingdom.

However, the way she said it might cause problems with other people....

But come to think of it, she's not talking with anyone besides me. So there is no problem.

Well, if you do not want to be involved with this world, it should be okay.

It's not a problem that I can poke my nose in.

I don't want to interfere with someone who already has a clear goal and is striving towards it.

However, I can say that since she is just drawing magic circles all the day, her communication skills were dropping.

"....."

"....."

"Tch....."

The experiments that were usually carried out while I talked with Fitts-senpai or Nanahoshi were being done in silence today.

From time to time, I heard Nanahoshi clicking her tongue.

Nanahoshi's experiment was finished in that awkward atmosphere.

"Good work....."

Nanahoshi's tired voice announced that the experiment had finished.

Today as well, there were no results.

As I thought, on the way back from the experiment, there was no conversation between me and Fitts-senpai.

I wanted to start a conversation and act normally, but what should I talk about?

I have a feeling that if I open my mouth, something like "let me see your boobs" will come out of it.

While I failed think of a single topic, we reached the women's dormitory.

"....."

As we got closer, it looked like there was a disturbance.

I saw a crowd in front of the entrance.

"Did something happen?"

".....N, ...Cho..., I have to take a look..."

Fitts-senpai said, and ran away quickly. She looked impatient.

She might have been feeling uncomfortable.

I'm waiting at the same spot when, after a while, Fitts-senpai came back, half running.

"What was it?"

"It seems that there has been a fight, un..., and they fought using magic, u..., and there are holes in the walkway and the ceiling, so the rooms on the top floor are unusable."

It was awfully monotone.

So I took it to mean that the one of the people who fought was Ariel.

She did not look like someone who would pick a fight, but maybe something happened.

"I see... that's very troublesome."

"Yeah, so you see, it seems Ariel-sama's room is unusable. Since I was living in her room as a bodyguard and slept there, ne..."

"Ho...?"

This explanation smells fishy.

"Ariel-sama is staying in the house of one of the nobles in the city for tonight, but since that noble hates Elves I am not allowed in the house, ne... "

"Ho...?"

Fitts-senpai is very bad at acting.

From her completely monotone voice, and the setting of this story, I wonder what she is hiding. No, wait. She doesn't have a room to stay in?

"So, it seems the guys in charge of repairs will come in tomorrow, but I have no place to stay for tonight."

"Oh, that's not good. Shall I go and fix it? Since it's just fixing holes, I have enough experience and should be able to do it."

I try to propose a plan like that.

In my adventurer days, I had fixed several roofs and walls so I definitely have the experience.

Make bricks with earth magic and assemble them using earth magic and mortar.

Since I know how to do it, I can at least fix Fitts-senpai's room in an hour or so. Not that I have any ulterior motives like wanting to look inside Fitts-senpai's room.

"Ue~e...?"

Fitts-senpai's face twitched.

"You see, un..., I mean..., the third floor needs to be repaired with anti-magic bricks, and they arrive tomorrow, so it can't be done tonight."

"Is that so?"

Did she... just make that up on the spot?

Yeah.

It's weird for anti-magic brick to be broken with magic.

It sounds like a joke.

Rather, after I asked how that happened, he came up with the excuse "The anti-magic bricks were probably weakened by rain".

I am too sharp today.

"And there is no way they would let a boy stay in the girls' dormitory, right?"

"That's... right."

I don't know what to think about this, but let's shelve it for now, as there are circumstances.

For now, let's say it would be troublesome for me to enter the girls' dormitory.

"Well, you see..., Ru..., Rudeus-kun is living in his room alone, right?"

"Yeah."

A probing gaze.

What answer would be correct for this question?

"Now that it's like this, would you like to stay in my room? The bed above me is always empty anyways."

Since we are pretending Fitts-senpai is a boy, I'll treat her as a boy.

So, I propose this suggestion in consideration of that fact.

A Kouhai having his Senpai stay over in his room. It was something like that.

There are no ulterior motives of any kind, like attacking her in her sleep, nothing erotic like that.

It will only be to the degree of smelling the blanket Fitts-senpai uses tonight.

But, I am sure Fitts-senpai will refuse. Staying in a boy's room is probably bad, no matter how you think about it.

Well, lending my room to Fitts-senpai and me staying in Zanoba's room would be the best option.

Her scent will still remain.

"It's ok!? Really...? Then I'll be in your care for tonight!"

Contrary to my expectations, Fitts-senpai agreed with a happy face.

Huh?

I am puzzled.

Immediately after that, I realized.

It's monitoring.

Tonight, Fitts-senpai is going to keep an eye on me.

It's possible that something else besides that event yesterday happened to Ariel-hime and that I'm now being treated as a suspect.

So, in order to stop me from doing anything, they will have Fitts-senpai keep an eye on me.

That kind of arrangement is possible as well.

Thinking about it, that might be the reason why she came to help with Nanahoshi's experiment on a day she usually would not.

If I think like that, though I don't know what happened to Ariel-hime, letting them watch me for tonight shouldn't a problem.

"Well, I'd better fetch a change of clothes and a pillow."

While saying that, Fitts-senpai went back into her dorm.

.....My room, isn't messy, right?

I led Fitts-senpai back to the boys' dorm.

Fitts-senpai entered the room filled with tension.

"Please, have some tea."

"Oh, tha-thank you..... yeah."

Fitts-senpai said with a red face.

"I'll be leaving to teach Zanoba and Julie magic.... Would you like to come as well?"

"I..., no..., I'll stay in the room. I don't want to get in your way."

"I see. Though... if it's Fitts-senpai, I doubt Zanoba will have any objections."

Isn't he here to watch me?

No, it might be because he wants to search the room.

Well, I don't mind him searching my room. Since I don't have anything that would cause trouble for me if he finds it.

Some laundry has piled up, but it's not anything troublesome.

"Then, I'll be going."

I head to Zanoba's room.

While teaching earth magic to Julie and building the Red Dragon figure with Zanoba, my mind started wondering.

I'm thinking about Fitts-senpai.

With that said, I'd get excited having the girl I love in my room.

But no matter how I think about it, the scenario is that I don't know about Fitts-senpai's gender.

In other words, Fitts-senpai is staying in my room as a boy.

In order to monitor me.

He is alert.

I told Luke that I have no enmity towards them, but he probably considered it lip-service.

And, apparently I had greatly changed the balance of power in the school this past year.

I've been in contact with people like Rinia, Pursena, Badigadi, and Nanahoshi, they are all strong and influential.

Looking at it from outside, it probably looks like I have them in tow.

Well, it's possible that Ariel-hime is seeing the situation as me having all the powerful and influential people in the school under my control.

While it's a truly just suspicion... especially considering meeting Ariel-hime in the city and the event regarding Fitts-senpai's gender.

No wonder she would think I was suspicious.

Of course, I am not going to rule over this school, neither am I going to do anything to Ariel-hime.

When I think about the best way to prove it, the best way seems to be to not do anything suspicious in front of Fitts-senpai.

Let's act natural. I won't make a mistake tonight.

For example, peeping at Fitts-senpai changing while making it look like an accident.

While it's not on purpose, he would probably think it was on purpose.

Such a love-comedy turn of event is possible, but I bet it's best to avoid such behavior.

Other things that might happen, oh... the toilet and bathing.

The toilet here has a lock, so just locking it should be enough, but what to do about the bath? I'll use Zanoba's for tonight.

As for hot water for the bath, you can either get it from the first floor or just create it yourself.

Since it's Fitts-senpai, he shouldn't have any problem with doing it himself.

Since he is taking a bath in someone else's room he will probably be wary, so I prepared some towels beforehand.

There is a chance that when I get back, I'll run into him changing clothes.

Not knocking and opening the door suddenly and seeing Fitts-senpai's white skin.

I am sure she will scream with a short "Kyaa~a" and try hiding her breasts.

I, of course, will pretend not to notice and get close to her while saying "Shall I wash your back?"

Then saying "Ah, my hand slipped" and go rock climbing on her boobs.

And then again pretending not to notice saying, "Senpai, your chest is muscular" and keep rubbing it.

I'm sure my son will raise his head with this much ero-stimulation.

No.

That's no good.

I shouldn't do something like that.

But when I go back, there is a pretty high possibility of running into him changing.

At least, that is what was written on the love-comedy novel that I was reading before I died.

Therefore, for sure, I will knock before opening the door.

It's not important that it is my own room. Since there are people in it, knocking is a must.

It's as essential as a baseball player undergoing grueling training for the National Tournament.

I'll knock it 100 times, hit on the door, and hit it.

{ C-Editor's note: Knocking on the door 100 times would be as grueling as the training Japanese high school baseball players under go trying to hit a baseball 100 times in perparation for their National Tournament. }

Tonight, I won't make any mistakes.

I won't give into my desire and strip Fitts-senpai or attack her while she is sleeping. I absolutely won't.

I won't even make those mental mistakes.

Fitts-senpai would be spending a comfortable night.

— Sylphy's Perspective —

Since Rudi left the room, a long time has passed.

Indeed, his lesson with Zanoba and Julie-chan should be until it's just before lights are out.

I envy those two.

In the past, I would spend the whole day learning magic from Rudi.

How nostalgic.

If I could, I'd like to go back to those times.

What am I imagining while in my underwear?

Woman's panties and skin-tight corsets, sexy ones.

Rather than the uninteresting usual one, Ariel-sama gave me one of her more erotic ones.

Though it's a bit baggy around the chest, but Ariel-sama said that's "perfect.'

I don't get it.

I am not wearing my sunglasses either. Without it, I won't know if Ariel-sama is under attack, but it can't be helped.

Let's believe in Luke for now. Today, her other two attendants are there too, and attacks in school rarely happens...

By the way, when I asked why I should dress like this, they said because that's part of the strategy.

Ariel-sama said.

"Listen well, Sylphy. Rudeus-kun figured out you are a girl and he seems to be interested in you. So, basically, it's like when a man's certain part stands to attention, that kind of situation, get it?"

Even if you said that, I find it hard to believe. Even now I don't have any impression of Rudi thinking of me in that way.

I thought it was just my unrequited love.

"If it's a girl he is interested in, he will surely invite her to his room, right Luke?"

"No doubt, if it was me I would definitely do that."

Luke nodded significantly from experience.

I, believing those words, took action. It went well so far, just as they had planned.

"Well, if it goes as it should, taking being invited into his room as his acknowledgment, we should be able to pledge our love together."

A pledge of love with Rudi tonight.

Thinking of that, even I can tell that my face is red from ear to ear.

I'm sure it is different from what Ariel-sama said.

I believe it's just as Lilia-san taught me, hot, painful, and expressionless.

"But, Rudeus is pretending to not have noticed he is a she, right? Luke?"

"There is no mistaking it, he said it clearly."

After all, when he touched my ass, he figured that I am a woman.

But, it seems that Rudi is trying to hide it.

"He is a useless guy. As useless as he is, I believe even when it becomes nighttime he won't lay a hand on her."

"And if he does lay a hand on me?"

"In that case, the plan has succeeded and you can enjoy yourself. Tell him that you're a woman and that it's just a secret between the two of you, right Luke?"

Luke agreed with Ariel-sama.

"Ok, so go ahead with that."

I was convinced like that.

If Luke with all his experiences is saying it, then there is no doubt.

"Listen well, Sylphy. Rudeus is a dense and useless guy. So, don't let this chance get away. If he feels you are resisting or doesn't want to do it, he will probably wash his hands of you. Then, it might take 6 months to a year to get to this point again. This is a once in a lifetime chance for you."

Hearing Ariel-sama say he was useless made me irritated.

But, after all, Rudi is a gentleman. He won't come attacking from the get go. When I think about it that way, my irritation subsides.

"Well, Sylphy, you have to grab that 1 in a million chance with your own hands."

"Is that so?"

"Yes. The reason Rudeus isn't attacking you is "I am protecting Fitts-senpai's secret" so if you tell him your secret he should take it as 'attacking me is okay'."

However, Ariel-sama continues.

"I don't know why, but he does not like to get involved with us, so even hearing it from your mouth he might go, 'Let's pretend I didn't hear anything'."

And Luke agreed with a big nod.

If the experienced Luke agrees then there is no mistaking it.

"Well, what should I do then?"

When I ask, Ariel-sama nods.

"First, you will present him with evidence."

"Evidence?"

"Yes, evidence. When he goes for the toilet or something, you will take off your clothes, act like you just remembered to change your clothes... "

This was Ariel-sama and Luke's plan.

First, by revealing my underwear to him, no matter how dense Rudeus is, he can't feign ignorance.

I'll describe the situation while still in my underwear and tell him that I am the Sylphiette from Buina Village.

The girl he likes is in her underwear, add to that, she is his childhood friend as well, using that momentum I confess my love and then he can't reject me and just like that we'll go to bed.

Regarding the relation between men and women, I heard from Lilia-san, but to be honest, since it's my first time I have no confidence.

Though I am sure it's way different from what Ariel-sama did.

When Luke sees me like this he said.

"Just go with the flow. The boy takes care of the rest of it. In this situation, girls just shouldn't reject the boys and say 'it's fine; I love you; it feels good'. Any of those would do."

"Luke..... that is a little....."

Hearing the experienced Luke's words, Ariel-sama has a strange expression. As far as I know, Ariel-sama has no experience with boys either.

Let's believe in Luke, though thinking that Rudi would behave like Luke is kind of unpleasant.

I mean, Luke's image of a perfect girl is like a doll. Rudi seems to like dolls as well but... um.

That said, I have no one else to rely on, so I'll go along with that plan.

After Rudi left the room, I use the bath and towel he prepared to wash my body then change my underwear.

I check in the mirror to see whether everything looks fine or not.

Incidentally, using the rest of the hot water I did Rudi's laundry.

Leaving so much dirty laundry, Rudi is a boy as well after all.

I sit on the edge of the bed in my underwear, now everything is ready.

Ariel-sama asked [Won't going naked to begin with be better?], but Luke rejected it saying that's counter-productive.

I don't get it at all.

"Achoo...!"

I wait while sneezing, I am waiting patiently, staring at a place on the floor.

If I don't do this, then Rudi's pants or Rudi's treasure altar which he never let me see comes into my view and I would get curious.

So, trying to avoid them, I stare at the floor and imagine what comes next.

When Rudi gets back, he will be surprised, seeing me like this.

Then I'll introduce myself as Sylphiette... if I introduce myself as Sylphiette... would he be disappointed?

It should be fine.

Apparently, Rudi seems to love Fitts.

Love is a two-way feeling, so, if we feel like this about each other, it should be okay.

It's all right, yeah. All right. Yeah.

(Dad, mom. Tonight, I will become an adult)

Knock, Knock.....

"Tsu...!"

And, at that time, there was a knock on the door.

A Knock.

It's a knock.

No one knocks on their own room's door.

I forgot, but Rudi has made a wide circle of friends in the past year.

Who decided that no one would drop by to visit?

In a hurry, I pick up my clothes and put them back on.

I am going to reveal my identity only to Rudi. So after wearing my sunglasses, I open the door from the inside.

"I'm sorry, Rudeus-kun..... Rudeus-kun isn't here... Eh?"

"I am back."

It was Rudi.

He was on the other side of the door.

"Eh? Why did you knock?"

"Before entering a place where a person is, it is courteous to knock."

That's right, it's right.

But, it is, but... Rudi....

Auuu.....

I messed up the plan from the start.

Our strategy, was a failure.

That night, I was worrying endlessly.

The location is the bunk bed's upper bed.

I felt my body heating up just from knowing that Rudi was lying right below me.

After that, I tried to show my underwear to Rudi, but it was all in vain.

I think he is on guard, since there is strangely no opening to show him, and I couldn't reveal my identity.

I can't really tell whether Rudi was sharp or dull.

From his actions, I got the feeling that he is trying to make me comfortable.

Ugh....

Well.

The first strategy failed.

But, I have a second strategy!

This was proposed by Luke, as a last resort.

"If the first strategy fails, move to the next one."

"Next strategy?"

Luke nodded gravely and said.

"Night crawling."

Luke says that, night crawling, is an etiquette from the southern part of the continent.

A woman sneaks into the bed of the man she wants to take the heart of and ends up in a man-woman relationship with him.

When I ask why they would do such a thing, he answered with 'I have no idea'.

But, it has been added, and is just good manners to represent the strength of feelings.

"To show the weight of one's love, this is a very good etiquette."

"If by doing that he thinks I am a shameless girl, then what should I do?"

The things I learned from Lilia-san were way more modest.

Such things like showing them the thighs, or entwining the little finger.

In the hot days, loosening the area around the chest, but only to the level that it makes the opponent attack you.

To the point that the master won't think of you as a pervert, is what Lilia-san said.

"What's bad if he sees you that way?"

"I don't want to. At least not for the first time."

"Compared to how he sees you for the first time, it's better to consider how he sees you for the last time."

I don't want it.

And, I said so.

I said it so certainly.

I don't want Rudi to think of me as a pervert even for a moment.

But, I'm wavering now.

I just lost my chance.

"It's simple, just take off all of your clothes and slip into his bed, rub your chest against him and whisper 'take me' in his ears."

The hell it's simple.

What would I do if he won't embrace me?

I would be too miserable.

In the first place, I don't have much of a chest to rub.

"You might feel miserable, but either way at least you took a step forward."

Luke is too positive.

I know.

Though Luke is always playing around with women, there are some even he can't seduce.

Or rather, those women treat him like a snake.

What if... what if I become hated by Rudi?

"It's because of that attitude that you haven't made any progress in a year. You can't turn 'like' to love' without risking 'hate'."

It was very compelling.

I wonder if it is the Greyrat's family motto.

Then again, I am hesitant. Yet, while hesitating, I remove my man-style pajamas.

Because it was hot.

Yeah, it's so hot.

Even though it's winter, this room is warm.

Probably Rudi is being considerate and heating the room, but I am wondering how and what could you do to keep the room warm until morning.

What should I do? Should I go into his bed? Or, should I stop? Oh I know, how about I wait in my underwear until morning?

That said, let's do it.

It's good.

This means that I won't have to do the night-crawling thing as well.

It's morning, lets wait for the morning.

If Rudi happens to wake up in the middle of the night that would be good too....

While thinking like that, the night goes on.

— Rudeus's Perspective —

Morning, I woke up.

Fitts-senpai was moving a lot in the middle of the night, coming down from the bed and going up again.

There are signs that he stood beside the bed and stared at me as well.

Though I faced the wall and pretended to be asleep all night long.

I had to be alert, Fitts-senpai's mission might have changed to get rid of me in the middle of the night.

But, I do trust him after all.

"....."

Since I didn't move my body and was awake all night long, my body is fatigued.

I wonder how long I got to sleep. I don't think it was even two hours.

Aching all over, I turn to look at the center of the room. Fitts-senpai is standing there.

"Good morning"

"Oh, Rudeus-kun, good morning, you woke up early."

"We are both awake early."

Fitts-senpai was there, wearing his uniform, and as usual, his sunglasses.

I can't tell from his expression, but I bet he is tired.

He probably didn't get a wink of sleep. Good job. Maybe I should have woke up at least once and made some tea for him?

As always, I wash my face and wear my trainers.

"So, I'm going to do my daily routine training."

"So, then, I'll go back to Ariel-sama."

Then, I separated from Fitts-senpai.

—

When Ariel heard the plan failed, she thought [That brave Sylphy, why is it that when it comes to that boy she gets so useless?] and started to think about the next plan.

Evening.

In the student council room, Ariel was quietly thinking about the strategy.

Thinking that some amount of drastic measures were necessary and even though she actually went to the point of destroying the dorm as a camouflage, for it to still end in failure.

Sylphy was waiting for Ariel's words with a meek face.

"You didn't do the yobai [Night Crawling]?"

{ C-Editor's note: Yobai is an ancient Japanese custom where young unmarried men would silently enter houses to have sex with young unmarried women. }

"There's no way I could do that!!"

Sylphy yelled in response to Luke's words.

It's a secret that she hesitated over it considerably and then was too afraid in the end.

Luke shrugged his shoulders with a sigh after being yelled at.

It seems he knew that it would end up like this.

"....Luke, what do you think?"

"About what?"

"About Rudeus' actions."

Ariel was thinking.

All of the preparations should have been in place.

However, they failed.

"I don't think it was by chance."

"I'm sure."

Even if it came to light that we were feigning the accident you can feel the intention that it was a necessity to prevent it before it happens.

We did say it is in part because Sylphy is dense, but that's not all.

I can feel an intent behind his actions.

In the first place, for that much of a master to not wake up or make any reaction in response to her getting up and laying down on the bed all night long, is something that can't happen.

I wonder why he didn't say anything.

(After all, is it my fault?)

Rudeus declared that he didn't want any hostility between Ariel and himself.

I don't understand the reason though...

It could be that in his eyes, Ariel looks powerful.

Similar to how Ariel is more cautious and afraid of Rudeus than necessary.

(I have no intention of any hostility with Rudeus Greyrat as well. Mutual love isn't it.)

After making a joke that can't be laughed at in her heart, Ariel let out a sigh.

"After all, it seems like the best method we can do is somehow or other get him to remember the person known as Sylphiette."

"....Now, at this point? I'm sure the other side has already forgotten."

After hearing Luke's words, Ariel gave it some thought.

Certainly, the probability that he's forgotten is high.

The time when Rudeus and Sylphy separated was eight years ago.

If there's eight years, then people can start to forget about people.

At the very least, it seems this past year, Sylphy hadn't heard the words "Sylphy" from Rudeus' mouth.

If that's the case, then the probability that he'd forgotten the very existence of the one known as Sylphiette is high.

I wonder what can be done to make him remember.

Ariel used herself as a precedent and tried thinking about it.

Even I don't think I can remember the names of maids that attended to me eight years ago.

However, there are several that I can remember.

For example, Lilia.

She was already gone by the time I reached the age of matter and mind, but I remember well how she fought before my eyes for my sake.

"Sylphy, do you have some kind of memories between you and him?"

"Memories?"

"Right, people remember other people through ability and memories. That's why, nobles open parties at every matter and introduce other people there. Piling up words of flattery, dancing for the first time with difficult dance moves. Trying to leave at least a bit of an impression... Since there are a lot of nobles, just having only met them, it's easy to forget them soon after."

Sylphy's ability is easy to remember.

Using chantless magic, even across the world there's only a handful of individuals.

People who can use it at Sylphy's and Rudeus' age are almost none.

However, even then Rudeus couldn't remember it.

Why, I wonder.

This was something that Ariel and the others could never come to a conclusion about; first is that in regards to his previous life, he lived the life of a loser.

He had the awareness that because it was something he could do, any number of other people could easily do it as well.

Another one was because of the existences known as Ruijerd, Kishirika, Orsted, and Badigadi.

After meeting overwhelmingly strong people like this, he ended up coming to possess a recognition that there are countless people in the world more amazing than himself.

And concluded that there are a reasonable number of chantless magic users out there.

And finally there's Ariel's existence.

Rather than some average person out there using chantless magic.

The guard of a princess used chantless magic.

That fact, caused his recognition to come to an incorrect conclusion.

If it's the guard of a princess, then I'm sure they can do that much.

"Memories...? Umm, I did tell the story about how I was bullied right."

"Yeah, I did hear about how you were bullied over the color of your hair."

Incidentally.

Sylphy never informed them that her previous hair color was green.

She thought if they were to know that it was green, the princess and Luke might look at her with strange eyes.

It's not as if she doesn't trust them.

Just, she was afraid.

Therefore, she said her hair was white from the time she was born.

She'd continued to say it like that.

It's difficult to correct a lie once it's been told; blessed as it is, her hair that had turned white, never returned to it's previous color.

"I met with Rudi at the time when he saved me, it's the number one memory to me."

"....I guess so."

Ariel thought about it.

Having hoodlums attack Sylphy, and Rudeus will save her from that.

Such a strategy.

For a period of time, it was a hand Luke played out often.

He has the know-how.

Nevertheless, there's a problem.

Sylphy is strong.

Right now she's turned into this miserable state, but when it comes to battle her judgement is fast and precise.

Most likely, if it was any hoodlum around here or there, she might kill them.

Rudeus as well, in regards to [Fitts]'s strength, he should recognize it to some extent.

Such a paid hand that could drive that Sylphy into a corner.

I wonder if there is one.

...There is.

Currently, there's an adventurer group that's strong in fights, the clan [Thunderbolt], in this town.

If you pile up enough money to pay them, then hiring them is possible I'm sure.

However, I've heard rumors of their friendship with Rudeus.

Such a rumor that [Rudeus of the Quagmire] and [Electric Precursor Soldat of Stepped Leader] were having tea in a cafe.

There was a story that [Elinalise of the Dragonroad] and [Cliff Grimoire] were there as well.

Therefore, hiring clan [Thunderbolt] is rejected.

Also for example, even if they were to hire some adventurer completely unrelated as well.

Most likely, the reputation of the adventurer [Rudeus of the Quagmire] is vaster than Ariel thinks.

Even if she intends to pick an unrelated adventurer, there's the possibility that they might have a connection through some unknown channel.

If it comes down to that, without even thinking about it, the story would become complicated.

It could be that a casualty comes out of it.

Ariel has no intention of causing any casualties.

Hiring some of the rough guys hanging around there that aren't adventurers to attack is one possible hand as well.

However, if they're too weak of an opponent, that itself might cause Rudeus to feel disappointed in Sylphy.

That is fine if it creates a connection with the feeling of "I will protect you", but in regards to the reliable senpai image that Sylphy built up of herself.

The probability that it would have a reverse effect is high.

She should avoid things that might lower Sylphy's stock as much as possible.

Let's go with that kind of policy.

Then, having her attacked by some hoodlums is rejected.

"Aren't there any other memories?"

"Umm... there's one more."

While remembering Sylphy's face turned red.

"In the beginning Rudi thought I was a boy, but when we were practicing magic it started raining. It came down to where we were going to enter the bath at Rudi's house, but Rudi...umm, forcefully tried to strip me.."

After saying it up to there, Sylphy looked towards Luke.

After receiving that glance, Luke stayed quiet and covered his ears.

He's a man who can read the mood.

"Th..that is.. he pulled down my panties as well... th..then, umm, it was seen, at least, that I was a girl, he found out."

After that Rudeus was down for a short while until Sylphy talked to him.

Incidentally, the talk after that Ariel had already heard previously.

Therefore, Ariel nodded with an I see now.

I'm sure the reason why Rudeus doesn't try to expose [Fitts]'s true identity is because he has such a past.

Even if he doesn't remember things about Sylphy, I'm sure he unconsciously remembers that nothing good will come from forcefully exposing someone's true identity.

Simultaneously, I thought that there's nothing else than this.

We'll create the same situation and have him strip Sylphy by his own hands.

"I understand. Then, let's go with that."

A king's word is more than another man's oath.

"Luke, remove your hands from your ears. I'll talk about the strategy from here on out."

However, there Ariel suddenly remembered.

The degree to which Sylphy is cowardly.

If we don't do something about this, I'm sure it'll end with the same result.

"Before that I want to confirm one thing."

"Wa, yes?"

"Sylphy, what do you want to become with Rudeus?"

After being asked, Sylphy thought about it.

How does she want to become with Rudeus.

What does she want to do.

She feels she wants to be together.

She possess love for him.

She always liked him.

She always had specific delusions.

Right for example.

The lifestyle after marrying Rudi.

The house that comes out in her imagination is the house Rudi lived at in Buina village.

They're living in a house similar to that.

They sleep in the same bed.

When she wakes up in the morning, Rudi is sleeping next to her.

Rudi says good morning and gives her a kiss.

Rudi changes soon after and goes to do his morning training.

She makes food downstairs.

It's the wife's job to make breakfast.

It's fine if breakfast isn't all that extravagant.

However, since Rudi is a person who eats steadily, it's better to make a good quantity.

Around the time breakfast is done, Rudi returns home.

And then, they eat breakfast and he says it's delicious again today... or he might not.

Just, Rudi will become totally absorbed in eating it and Sylphy will watch over that smiling.

If she hears the voice for seconds, Sylphy will serve it.

After breakfast ends Rudi will go to work.

She sees him off after giving him an obento.

Sylphy as well heads off to the place where princess Ariel is.

Both working, similar to Rudi's parents.

She doesn't seem to have made any assumptions as to what Rudeus' job would be, but for a delusion that kind of thing is just within the margin of error.

After Sylphy's job ends and she returns home she plans to ambush Rudi in the entry hall.

Rudi discovers Sylphy, makes a strained laugh and wipes away the snow piling up on his shoulders then embraces her.

The two then enter the house and light up the fireplace.

The bath preparations end soon after.

After cleansing her body she prepares dinner.

During preparations, Rudi is in front of the fireplace, maybe creating a doll.

They eat dinner together.

Different than breakfast, Rudi is talkative.

Something happened at work today, such things happen.

All of it is something amazing beyond what Sylphy can imagine, Sylphy honestly says it's amazing while giggling.

After dinner ends, they get comfortable together on the sofa in front of the fireplace.

Sylphy closely snuggles up to Rudi, Rudi's arms are wrapped around Sylphy's shoulders.

There are some days where they chat and some where they say nothing as well.

Just, for a short time their gazes meet.

Their faces gradually get closer.

And then an easily imagined silhouette.

Rudi puts out the fire in the fireplace, picks up Sylphy and carries her towards the bedroom.

(Rudi occasionally says indecent things so he might ask, "how many children would be good?" Then I would become indecent as well and answer, "Oh Rudi~, how many do you want me to have?" Rudi chuckles and answers, "a lot I wonder", while taking my clothes off... then I giggle as well and say, "then, let's do it a lot"..as if that would happen!)

"...As if that would happen!"

"[Cough]."

"Ha!!"

After Ariel's cough the delusions were aborted.

Sylphy was bright red as she played with her ears and hid her face.

After Ariel saw that look, she quietly said it.

"That delusion... please try replacing yourself with another woman and think about it."

In the delusion the one who took her place as the wife becomes Nanahoshi.

Sylphy has entered into the position of peeking in on their love affair from the window of the house next door.

Rudi and Nanahoshi realize Sylphy is looking, suddenly laugh then close the curtains.

"You don't like that right?"

"I... I don't like it!"

"Very good."

Ariel seriously nodded and said it.

"Sylphy, this strategy depends on the effort you put into it."

"Wa, yes!"

Ariel thought, this might still not be enough.

And then she let out an explosive statement.

"Cowardly failures like last night won't be forgiven. If you repeat the same thing, we will never help you again. No, that still isn't enough is it. In my name as Asura Kingdom Second Princess, Ariel Anemoi Asura, hereafter I will forbid any contact with Rudeus Greyrat."

Naturally, it's just a means.

However those words made Sylphy swallow deeply.

After Ariel confirmed that, she added one more line.

"Do it seriously."

"Wah, yes."

"Very good."

Ariel nodded seriously again.

And then she conveyed the outline of the strategy.

—Sylphy's Point of View—

We're carrying out the strategy.

The time is lunch break.

It's time for lunch.

The first floor of the dining hall.

There all of the rising adventurer students and the Magic Race students crowded together.

The noble people look at them like fools.

Most are prejudiced.

Ariel-sama said prejudice is worthless.

And 400 years prior exactly what race was being cornered by that foolish opponent?

Though for Ariel-sama who looked at Rudi with eyes of prejudice it doesn't really have very much power of persuasion.

Rudi is at the farthest table on this first floor.

There a number of others are having a friendly chat.

Rudi, Zanoba-kun, and Badi-sama.

Julie-chan is at the end as well, she's holding a cup with her small hands and sipping it as she looks at the other three.

"In other words what kind of requirements does Badi-sama think are necessary for a doll?"

"More lovely than the real thing and then above all an eros that fascinates all who see it is essential!"

"Eros! As expected of Badi-sama's keen insight. Now, now, another cup."

Badi-sama's skin was dying a dark brown color, he's drinking alcohol quite comfortably.

Rudi and Zanoba-kun were grinning as they laughed, there's alcohol in their cups as well.

Strange, even though there's not supposed to be any alcohol in this dining hall.

Unless they went outside to purchase it, they shouldn't sell it.

"By the way Badi-sama, if I were to say that I wanted to make a doll of Kishirika-sama, what would you do? And I mean a completely erotic kind."

"Of my fiancee huh? However, I doubt you know what Kishirika looks like in her perfect body."

"That's exactly why. After she reaches her perfect form, she won't return to her previous form right? For this reason, we need to leave behind her current charming appearance."

"You make a good point. However she is thoughtless, so she occasionally dies quickly after all. Even if you didn't leave behind her current appearance it would probably be fine."

"If you lined up Kishirika-sama at a variety of different ages, the Demon King's castle would become gorgeous I'm sure."

"You are of the human race, it's impossible for you to see Kishirika at a variety of ages."

"That's right, that's the point. In order to see Kishirika-sama simultaneously at a variety of ages, there's the necessity to bring life to my doll creation techniques, for that sake I need Badi-sama's cooperation, gehehehe."

"Fuhahahahaha! Even though you have that much power the way you solicit almost like a merchant is amusing! That approach, I'll buy into it! Excellent, excellent, say what you desire, money, or people?"

"No-no, just, when the time comes to it I'd like you to give me your backing??"

Rudi was making a mischievous smile as he laughed.

It was an amazingly bad face.

Since the past Rudi hasn't laughed all that much, but when he laughs it ends up becoming that sort of face.

He really hasn't changed since the past.

In the royal palace as well, there were people who laughed with that kind of face.

If I remember correctly, it was High Minister Darius.

The perpetrator who cornered us.

He's an opponent we can't forgive.

However, maybe it's because Rudi laughs in that sort manner, but I'm alright with the smile itself.

I think of it as a characteristic of a clever person.

I heard that Rudi and Zanoba-kun were asking for permission to create a doll with earth magic.

I don't really understand very well how good they are, but I know that it's something at an exceedingly advanced level.

The time when they showed me the Red Dragon statue that was still midway in production, I honestly thought it was amazing.

They're giving a dwarf gifted education and it seems they're even dragging a Demon King-sama in on top of that.

It seems they're taking it seriously.

As a fellow user of the same chantless magic, I'd like to be included as an ally as well, but since I have to be Ariel-sama's escort it's an impossible talk.

"Rudeus-kun."

"Ah, Fitts-senpai."

After I called out to him, Rudi made a happy face.

Recently, even though I've taken nothing but weird actions, it seems he isn't cautious at all.

After all Rudi is dense.

However, the fact that he isn't cautious is proof that he trusts me right.

It makes me happy.

"What's going on?"

"Umm."

Zanoba-kun and Demon King-sama's gazes were stabbing into me.

Hmmn...

"Here is a bit, let's change locations."

"I understand. Then Zanoba. Please proceed with our talk."

"Ha... please leave the trivial parts after this to me."

Rudi and Zanoba-kun sure get along well.

I'm jealous.

In the past I was in that position though.

I'm jealous...

While thinking that, I took Rudi outside of the dining hall.

We moved to an unpopular place and I started with the main point.

"Then, what is it?"

Rudi's face became serious.

It was a sharp face.

...As I thought he's cool.

"Umm, to tell you the truth, I have a favor I'd like to ask your help with."

"I understand. Please leave it to me as if you're riding on a large boat."

Before I even said anything, Rudi struck his chest and accepted it.

"Please wait a second, I haven't said the contents yet."

"Unless it's something huge I won't refuse it."

How reliable...

It makes me feel kind of bad deceiving Rudi like this.

Even though it's already painful being unable to speak of my identity as it is...

"To tell you the truth, I told you that Ariel-sama, stayed over a noble's place the other day right. It seems that the person has hired an amazingly strong bodyguard."

"You want me to beat that guy down?"

"Tha..that's wrong!"

"I see. That's great. I'm not very good with matters of disputes."

Not very good with matters of disputes, you say that well...

Could it be that just now, that was a Rudi-like joke?

I wonder if it would have been better if I laughed?

No-no, right now rather than that I need to continue talking.

"It seems that Ariel-sama was mortified over his bragging about that person. So she returned with [Our Fitts is amazing.]"

"Ho, and then."

"The other noble said [My bodyguard can go deep into the Forest of Hail with a four man party and get the flower that only grows there.] but.."

After that, Rudi put his hand on chin like he suddenly started thinking.

"Speaking of a flower that only grows deep within the Forest of Hail, it would be [Freeze Fringed] right. The petals work as a strong medicine, but it's famous for only blooming in the middle of winter."

Oh, as expected of Rudi.

He knows it well.

I'm glad I properly investigated something that actually exists.

"The Forest of Hail is dangerous in the winter, but if there's four adventurers over A rank, it's not really anything to brag about. If you proceed carefully, you can do it without any trouble, pick up the flower and then return I'm sure."

After saying that much, Rudi started to name the monsters that appear in the Forest of Hail one after another.

Snow Hornet, White Cougar, Mustard Treant...

He smoothly says it well.

I wonder if he has them all memorized.

"Umm, and then you know, Ariel-sama as well couldn't fall back from there, [If it's Fitts then he could pick it with an even smaller party!] and said that."

"I see now, it's that sort of thing."

Rudi nodded as he seemed to understand it.

"If I ask an adventurer aquaintance of mine, I'm sure I can get him to hand it over for cheap. If you were to say you went and picked it yourself, the other side should believe it as well."

And said that.

"Wai!! Rudeus-kun, that's no good! It's a scene where I have no choice but to show my power!?"

"Even if you say power, it comes in various forms. Connections between people are a power as well. It's Connection Power. My face is well known among the adventurer guys and Fitts-senpai knows my face. Thanks to Fitts-senpai's connection, the connection from person to person becomes a power. Using people to get your hands on something. That as well is a way of showing your power."

Tha..that's sophistry.

What is he talking about suddenly.

"That's no good. If it's exposed then it'll become an embarrassment for Ariel-sama."

"I see. Well then, shall we go pick it?"

Rudi said it readily.

Even though he's talking about entering the forest, it seems he's not enthusiastic at all.

As expected.

And just as I was thinking that, I froze at the next words.

"I'll gather up some of my aquaintances who have openings in their schedule, so please wait about three days. I'm sure about 10 people should be plenty. Right now, the members of [Stepped Leader] are in this town, so I can gather them together quickly."

No, wait.

That is strange.

"No, wait just a second Rudeus-kun! Ariel-sama said [With even fewer] though!? What are you going to do by gathering up 10 people!"

"Please rest assured. Those guys will have 'just coincidentally entered the forest in the same period as us.' Among them there will be members who have accepted monster subjugation jobs and guys who run around gathering materials as well, they might end up hunting every monster on the way though. There will be no guys there to harvest the flower, only Fitts-senpai alone."

Uwuuu~~nn.

I wonder if this is the wisdom of adventurers.

No, Rudi has been an adventurer for a number of years, he should know how frightening the forest can be.

He must be thinking if it's an amateur like me that will be entering, he's a bit worried.

Yeah, it's that without a doubt.

"E..even without such people, if it was just Rudeus-kun and I, wouldn't it be easy?"

"....Could it be, Fitts-senpai it's that. You want to ask me to be your escort?"

Isn't that what I've been saying since the start...or I didn't say it did I.

"Yeah! Right, that's it. I can only rely on Rudeus-kun."

After saying that, Rudi whispered a single word of "Hmm" and put his hand on his chin.

After a short while of thinking he nodded.

"I've depended on Fitts-senpai for a variety of things. I won't tell you not to depend on me. That job, I will humbly accept and take it on."

"Th..thank you Rudeus-kun! I was uneasy about entering the forest alone!"

There were a variety of dangerous places, but for the time being I've broken through the first barrier.

However, even after just hearing a bit of the story from me, it's amazing how he keeps coming up with ideas one after another.

As I thought Rudi is amazing.

The strategy proceeded to the second stage.

Rudi and I entered the Forest of Hail.

The Forest of Hail is a place three days or so North of the Magic City Sharia.

The end of the forest just like that touches the national border of Basheranto.

In comparison to I who was just wearing normal travelling clothes, Rudi was in full equipment.

A large knapsack, it seems that staple food and some other stuff is packed in for the worst case.

Since it's Rudi, I thought he would go in empty-handed and return like that.

After saying that [You shouldn't underestimate the forest. There are monsters that can avoid my Rock Bullet after seeing it.] is how he responded.

After saying there's no way that's the case and hearing the details, it seems in the forests on Magic Continent monsters like that are all over the place.

I thought it was a joke, but Rudi's eyes were serious.

In the Forest of Hail among the monsters that appear, at most they're B rank monsters.

If it's that much, then even I could deal with them.

Is what I was thinking but...

"Sorry. It seems like I left all the preparations to you."

"No-no, if I think about it like an escort job, it's only natural."

If he's treating as if it sounds like that, then I wonder if he's going to take a job fee.

"Umm, a job fee or that sort of thing, would it be better if I paid something like that?"

"No way. This is something I'm doing out of good intention, so please don't mind it."

Rudi awfully emphasised the part where he said "good intention."

"It's not like I can't pay Rudeus-kun something like a job fee you know."

Even though it's low, I do get a salary from Ariel-sama.

Since I have nothing to use it on, it's saved up.

I should have enough to employ Rudi myself.

Ah, but Rudi has true strength over King class, I.. I wonder if I'll have enough?

"Fu..I'm expensive you know."

"Ex..expensive you say, that..might be the case, but??"

After hearing Rudi's words I wasn't thinking about money, but I remembered the slave market.

In my head a nude Rudi was climbing up onto the show stage.

Buy...Rudi with money...

The area around my abdomen tightened up and seemed to call for something.

I knew that my face was getting hot from embarrassment.

"In..in any case, let's hurry ahead!"

"Yes."

We entered the Forest of Hail.

The Forest of Hail might look the same as a normal forest at a glance.

A variety of large trees are covered in snow, the same as a forest you can find anywhere.

In this forest hail falls at fixed periods.

It's a land where there's a magic power-like abnormality.

In just this entire region, when you step on the snow, it makes a crunching sound.

"The flower blooms on a cliff. Since we'll be heading in a straight line to there while melting the snow, please follow along while being vigilant of our surroundings."

While melting the snow.

Rudi said it like it was nothing and started to move forward.

I wanted to try it as well, but it was no good.

If it's just in my surroundings then it's probably an application of fire magic, but to reach the level of creating a path continuously is difficult.

It's not like I can't do it, but it uses too much magic power.

The way Rudi uses magic power is extravagant.

I continued down the path as even the snow on my shoulders melted.

I thought that monsters might find us from the steam rising when it melts, but Rudi was dispersing the steam as well.

After I asked how he was doing it, he said if you adjust the temperature right then you can just melt the snow without releasing any steam.

I wonder how much you would need to practice in order to figure that out.

(Rather than that, it's time to start the plan.)

So I took a single deep breath and pointed at the staff Rudi had in his hand.

"That staff, the other day I held onto it, but it's amazing. I've only ever seen magic stones with a color attached in the royal palace."

"During my 10th birthday, I received it from the Ojou-sama I was working as a home teacher for."

After saying that Rudi made a bit of a lonely face.

Come to think of it, I haven't heard him talk very much about the Ojou-sama that he taught.

It doesn't feel like Rudi has talked about it very much.

According to the information, I think she was an extremely violent person...

I wonder if he has some kind of bad memories.

"That staff, is it fine for me to hold it for a bit? Since I only have a staff aimed at beginners, I've always longed for something like that."

"Is that so. Since you're an Ojou-sama's escort then I'd think you would be given a better staff to hold onto though."

"Since I used chantless magic I'm sure they were thinking I didn't need a staff, they're stingy right."

Of course, I don't think Ariel-sama is stingy.

This wand is something I received from Rudi so I treat it preciously.

Since it's the same as a wand you can find anywhere, Rudi doesn't seem to have realized it.

"By all means, grasp it and try it out. How is it, the thickness?"

Rudi came out asking that while smiling.

I wonder what it is.

Is there something amusing?

While holding doubts I tightly grasped the staff.

Since my hands are small, I felt like it was a bit hard to hold.

"It's thick, I wonder if it was assumed you would hold it with both of your hands."

"...I'm sure they were making assumptions based on after I grow up."

"Hnn."

While smiling Rudi continued to proceed with melting the snow.

I followed after while holding the staff.

Alright, for the time being the plan has succeeded.

And next is...

I took the ring on my little finger and brought it close to my mouth.

And then in a small voice I declared the keyword.

"Red Tower."

After that, the gem in the ring changed colors from blue to red.

This ring is one of the Magic Tools Ariel-sama always wears.

If you say the keyword then the color changes.

Simultaneously, another ring a long distance away will have its color change as well.

It's a magic tool that only does that.

Though the effect won't work if it's too far away.

This time, the other ring is being held by some people we've left on standby outside of the forest in advance.

(I wonder if it's alright..)

I waited a bit while glancing towards at the sky.

Contrary to my uneasiness, suddenly the sky started to become cloudy.

Alright.

It went well.

"Hnn?"

Rudi quickly realized it.

After looking up at the sky he whispered it.

"...Rain clouds huh. How unusual."

In the winter of the northern lands it almost never rains.

Because of that reason, the equipment used against the cold in this area are weak to rain.

The furs of the Snow Hedgehog that we're wearing as protection against the cold don't actually melt the snow, but work to remove it.

Therefore, equipment for protection against the cold are extraordinarily useful, but the fact that they soak water easily is a fault.

After water soaks into it, just from the blowing of the cold winter wind, it will become frozen solid.

"Fitts-senpai, it seems like it will rain."

In the case where rain falls in the middle of winter, you create a roof in that place and endure it, or else taking shelter in a cave is desirable.

Rather than making a refuge with magic, I've heard that finding a cave is comparatively safe.

Even though earth magic is a specialty of Rudi, I'm sure he would think of it as a pain to continue casting magic until the rain stops.

That's why I'll make the suggestion.

"That's right, according to the map ahead of here is..."

Since there's a cave we should take shelter from the rain.

And just as I was about to say that, Rudi shook his head.

"No, since I can quickly disperse them."

After saying that he raised his hand.

(This is bad!)

In this instant I realized the blunder.

Rudi is a Water Saint class magician.

Manipulating the weather is his forte.

I heard that Ariel-sama hired two Advanced water technique users, but if Rudi is the one doing it, the clouds will scatter in no time at all.

What to do, what to do.

If it doesn't rain here then the plan is all for nothing.

I started to pack magic power into the staff in my two hands.

I could feel amazing power.

Wi...with this I might be able to do it.

"Hnnn?"

Rudi tilted his head while raising his hand.

Most likely, since the clouds weren't scattering like he planned, he might think it's strange.

Naturally, right now I'm interfering with that after all.

The reason why Rudi didn't get serious is probably thanks to the staff.

My ability to control weather should rival Rudi.

Since that's the case, I have the advantage thanks to the part of the advanced class magicians outside of the forest.

I continued to pack magic power into the staff with feeling as if I were praying.

The rain clouds gathering in the sky continued to grow.

Just as I was taught by Rudi.

Gathering the moisture, making the cloud, then cooling that down, and drop it!

"Hnmu??"

Rudi's eyebrows dropped.

In the next instant, cold rain started to fall.

"...I'm very sorry Fitts-senpai, it seems today my condition is a bit bad."

Rudi said it with a face as if he received a bit of a shock.

"It..it's fine. It's because I didn't give back your staff, probably."

"Even without my staff, normally I would have been able to disperse rain clouds like that. Recently, maybe because I haven't used it very often, I've dulled... or else...?"

Rudi looked at the palms of my hands while grumbling something.

It seems he realized that rain cloud was something intentionally made.

However, I'm sure he didn't think to expect he would be obstructed from dispersing it.

"Well, we can't help something that's already started to fall. If I remember correctly, there's a cave up ahead, let's take refuge there."

"Tha..that's right!"

After largely nodding to Rudi's words, we resumed moving.

The Snow Hedgehog furs were soaking in the moisture and in no time at all stealing our body heat.

Just as planned.

"It's there isn't it."

Just like this, we arrived at the cave while dripping wet.

In terms of depth it was only about 10 meters, a small cave.

The land of purpose.

I thought that something was going on.

Fitts-senpai who had hired me was acting strange.

There was that abnormal weather event as well.

I got the feeling that the movements of the clouds were way too fast even for rain to fall.

Showers almost never fall in the winter.

There's the possibility that someone used magic.

No, but what did they intend to do by making it rain?

Maybe being a hindrance.

Who would?

That noble who princess Ariel was said to have stayed with?

For what reason?

Do they intend to try and assassinate Ariel?

Maybe they think Fitts-senpai is a hindrance for that sake.

No, if that were the case then they wouldn't make rain fall, some other kind of thing would have been better, spears for example.

I wonder if Fitts-senpai has realized it.

It seems like she hasn't realized it, but she's still strangely calm.

I guess it means that this amount of hindrance was within her expectations.

No, then, she would have said we might be obstructed from the start.

Or else maybe she wants to assassinate me.

If that's the case then the other day, she would have done it at the time when she came to my room.

I wonder what's going on.

While worrying I prepared the fire to try and dry out our wet clothes faster.

I thought something like this might happen so I already had prepared some firewood for the sake of a fire.

It's possible to maintain a fire with just fire magic, but if you have firewood it's more comfortable.

During the time when a monster might appear, it wouldn't be good if you had to light the fire again.

At night you would lose the light as well.

I placed the firewood and started the fire.

After confirming that the fire was stable, I took off my winter clothes.

The winter clothes were soaking wet, the exterior was frozen.

Underneath the winter clothes I was wearing my usual grey robe, but this was soaked as well.

Just going off by the sensation, but I'm sure it's soaked all the way to my underwear.

For the time being, my underwear are fine since I have a change of clothes, but I need to dry my robe and the winter clothes first.

I used wind magic and water techniques to evaporate it in an instant.

Just, if you try to remove all the moisture from it, the cloth will be damaged, so it's done in moderation.

I made a clothes drying rack with earth magic and hung it there to dry.

The same with the clothes I was wearing underneath my robe.

I had gotten down to my underwear, so I went to the fire to warm up my body.

It's still cold.

I used earth magic to create a wall and sealed off the entrance of the cave.

If I completely sealed it off we might suffer from carbon monoxide poisoning, so I created a crevice in the ceiling.

Now then, what to do about my underwear.

As expected it's not like I can strip them off in front of Fitts-senpai.

And then I suddenly looked at her.

"Wuu.."

Fitts-senpai was trembling while holding her own shoulders.

She had removed her winter clothes, but she was still wearing the mantle and things below that.

If it continues like that she'll catch a cold.

"Dry it?"

Wouldn't it be better to dry it off?

Is how I asked but I shut my mouth.

Fitts-senpai is a female that looks like a boy.

Not to mention, she's hiding her identity.

It's not like she can just strip in front of me.

However, continuing like this is no good.

I wonder what can be done.

Hmm.

"Fitts-senpai."

"Wh..what is it!?"

She responded with a somewhat loud voice.

It seems Fitts-senpai has realized the current situation as well.

She has no choice other than to strip, but she can't just strip, that kind of situation.

Therefore, she's cautious about being exposed.

This is no good.

I should read the mood.

"In the past I heard from a girl acquaintance of mine, that it's a taboo for other races to see elves naked. I'll turn my back and keep my eyes shut, so during that time please use magic to dry your clothes."

"Eh!!?"

Fitts-senpai made a surprised voice.

I'm sure. I've never heard a story of such a taboo.

If there were such a taboo out there, then Elinalise's existence itself would be a taboo. A walking taboo.

However, if I show it like this, that I have mistaken knowledge, then I think it should work in Fitts-senpai's favor.

I slowly turned and faced the other way then closed my eyes.

And then listened closely.

At least, I want to imagine Fitts-senpai stripping behind me, I'll enjoy just the sound.

"...."

"..."

However, there was no sound at all.

Even though she's wet, if she were to take off her clothes, and then use chantless magic to dry them off, there should be at least a little bit of sound.

Strange.

Could it be, Fitts-senpai can change clothes without making any sound?

Come to think of it, during my elementary school days, there were females who could change into swimsuits with clothes on. They sure are skillful.

During my elementary school days, I had no interest in them changing their clothes.

Both men and women changed in the same classroom.

If I think about it, it was a splendid period.

After the spread of the internet, I found the method they changed with at that time on the net, and thought "I see now".

I have interest in such unique changing methods.

A scholastic interest.

That's right, this is learning.

It's intellectual curiosity.

It's absolutely not an erotic...purpose.

If Fitts-senpai doesn't change her clothes, then she might freeze after all.

After thinking that, I slowly~ turn around.

My eyes completely met with Fitts-senpai.

Even though she's wearing sunglasses, somehow I knew our eyes met.

I didn't turn my eyes away.

It's because Fitts-senpai was turning deep blue.

"Fitts-senpai!"

With a deep blue face she was holding both of her shoulders and trembling.

Even just from looking, I could tell that Fitts-senpai's body heat was completely stolen.

The atmospheric temperature in the winter forest of the northern lands is most likely below freezing.

If you walk around in that then your body heat will quickly be lost.

Even I am actually cold.

The temperature in the cave is going up a bit, but since she's continuing to wear those wet clothes, it's like being covered in cold water.

It won't stop at just a cold.

"Please at least change. Since that's the case would you like me to create a changing room? No, I will, I'll go outside of the cave, let's go with that. That's fine."

"Wait."

Just as I was about to go outside of the cave, Fitts-senpai held me back.

She continued to look at me while trembling.

And then while continuing to tremble she slowly walked in front of me.

Carefully looking over me.

"...."

"..."

Carefully, while trembling.

It seems like she wants to say something.

What is it.

What does Fitts-senpai want to say?

No, what does she want me to do.

"You..you'll catch a cold??"

"Yeah. Tha..that's right."

She responded to my question with a trembling voice.

I was confused.

I couldn't read Fitts-senpai's thoughts.

"If you don't take your clothes off, it will be dangerous. If your body temperature lowers, people die you know?"

"Yeah...I might die, if it continues like this.."

While saying that Fitts-senpai didn't make any movements towards taking off her clothes.

Ah no, she would be troubled if she stripped in front of me.

I don't know, Fitts-senpai is a man.

He's absolutely not a woman, that's the case.

If I don't close my eyes.

"I can't take them off myself. Take them off for me."

.....

.....

...

What is this person saying.

"...If you can't take them off yourself, then I have no choice other than to remove them."

...What am I saying.

Ah, no good.

My hands are stretching towards Fitts-senpai on their own.

First I touch her shoulders.

They're cold.

And slender.

Without a doubt it's the shoulder of a female.

Slender, a shoulder almost like it might break.

And then I'm a man.

Man and woman.

There's the same common sense in this world that you shouldn't carelessly expose your flesh.

"To...to be honest, I know that Fitts-senpai is a woman."

"Yeah. But, if you don't take them off I might die."

"Ye..yeah."

What does this mean.

I can't read her thinking.

What is Fitts-senpai planning.

Could it be, this is a blackmail scheme.

For example after I strip her, some scary people will come out from somewhere, and suddenly tell me indifferently, [You've come to find out matters of absolute secrecy of the Asura Kingdom!] and then take me off to some experiment room and dissect me.

It's not something that I can say when right now I'm truly about to dissect Fitts-senpai though.

My hands were moving on their own, I took off Fitts-senpai's coat.

After removing the coat made of a thick material on top, a dripping wet white shirt appeared.

It's a white shirt.

While the white cloth was a bit thick, it was transparent.

Fitts-senpai's underwear entered my vision.

What was wrapping her chest wasn't a bra.

It was some kind of underwear that went from just above her belly button to just before her shoulders covering her chest.

What was it again, I can't remember the name.

She's unexpectedly adult.

When what it's wrapping is a bit lacking and chaste like this, it's not really all that adult.

However, just like this, when it's clinging to skin from being wet and you look at it, it's certainly there.

The two mountains that men seek out, the outline of her breasts.

"Fitts-senpai?"

"What's wrong, Rudi?"

Rudi, calling me by such a nostalgic name.

It feels like it's calling out to something within me.

This situation, somewhere, I feel like I've experienced it somewhere.

"Pl..please excuse me."

"Yeah."

Fitts-senpai's face was bright red.

Red all the way to her ears.

I feel like I've seen these ears that have turned red somewhere before as well.

After removing the white shirt, pure white skin was exposed.

Thin shoulders that seem like they might break.

Lacking in both muscle and fat and the nape of the neck that was slender all around.

Seeing something like that in close proximity, touching it with my hands.

My sword that has been miserable recently, almost like a knight's sword being offered up in ritual, is facing upwards.

Fitts-senpai has something.

She has something that can cheer me up.

Something I don't know what.

Just, I feel so excited that I'm about to push her down right now.

"Ha...ha.."

While trying to hold back that excitement, I put my hands on Fitts-senpai's belt.

I loosened the belt while making a clicking noise, then put my hands on the cuff of her pants.

Suddenly, I remembered something.

Come to think of it, something like this happened in the past.

Around the time I was five or six years old.

This sort of thing happened.

After pulling the wet pants down, pure white panties appeared.

The difference from that time, is that I didn't remove the panties together.

However, after all underwear that has been soaked becomes transparent so you can see what's below.

Could it be, I've stumbled upon a barren zone?

"..[Gulp]."

Fitts-senpai silently removed her leg from the pants and sat down in front of me.

It was the so called girls sitting style.

I sat in seiza directly in front of that.

The floor of the cave was rugged and my lower legs were in pain.

"Rudi."

I could understand that Fitts-senpai's gaze was looking a bit below.

It's the tent that just started construction some time ago.

After all Fitts-senpai's body contributes greatly to the construction of my tent.

"There's still one remaining."

The words of one.

I understood that it was not referring to her panties.

After coming this far I understood it.

I put my hands on her sunglasses.

"?"

Take them off.

And then there was after all.

A face I have a recollection of was there.

It was the face that I once thought would become the face of a bishonen when it grows up.

It was a beautiful face, that I thought as long as I could remain together with it, I wouldn't mind being treated as leftovers.

And then that face was far more sweet than I imagined at the time.

With her youthfulness still remaining, it was a face that you couldn't call anything but sweet.

With sharp eyes, a high nose, small lips.

The power of the genes of an Elf.

She looks similar to Elinalise as well, but she has the easily friendly characteristic of a half or a quarter.

"Umm, Fitts-senpai."

"What is it, Rudi?"

And the way she was leaning her head as she asked with her face bright red was the same as always.

I wonder why I didn't realize until now of all times.

Hair, that's right.

It's because her hair color is different.

Her hair color was supposed to be green.

Now it's pure white.

No, something like hair color you can change all you want.

Bleaching isn't really all that difficult.

"Could it be that, Fitts-senpai's real name might be something like Sylphiette?"

".....Yeah."

Fitts-senpai, No, Sylphy...

Nodded shyly and smiled.

"Yeah..Yeah.."

That smile quickly changed into a tear-stained face.

Before that completely changed into a crying face she moved to embrace me.

"At last, you've said it..."

After whispering that, Sylphy's skin was cold.

A short while passed.

I couldn't hide my confusion, but I felt like I was finally convinced of everything.

"Uu...gusu..."

Sylphy was sniffling away and crying while embracing me.

It's similar to that time.

She's a crybaby the same as always.

And then, soft as always.

Thin, without seeming like she has any fat, but when you hold her tightly she's soft.

Could it be that she's using some kind of softening agent?

"I...I was...always, always waiting. In Buina vilage, I was always, trying my best."

I had heard about how Sylphy was giving it her best while I was working as a home teacher from Paul.

I silently caressed her head.

And then Sylphy tightened her embrace on me even more.

And then she raised her face.

Her face was all sticky from the tears and her running nose.

I didn't know what would be good to say after seeing that.

"?"

Just, Sylphy was different.

After she looked at me she opened her mouth.

"I've always liked you since the past..."

My face went blank and I became aware of it.

"I liked Rudi. Now I like you more. Please don't leave me anymore. I want to be with you forever."

The inside of my head went pure white.

I was surprised after being told Sylphy liked me.

Sylphy was always stuck close to me since the past.

It could be said that I acted in such a way to induce that.

However, now it's different.

At the very least this past year.

I've watched Fitts-senpai.

I've watched her as a person I respect.

At least, Fitts-senpai was standing as an independent person.

Could there possibly be some dependency still remaining towards me?

However, at least, I've depended on Fitts-senpai.

She has knowledge, a person who I've depended on and has thought about a variety of things for my sake.

Speaking of "Silent Fitts", he's a serious person that princess Ariel can trust.

Right now I.

Being confessed to by such a person.

My chest became hot.

In the furthest regions of confusion, I still hadn't settled down with Sylphy=Fitts-senpai.

I had become so full of happy feelings as if I wanted to dance.

In that instant, I suddenly remembered Eris.

Come to think of it, did I ever tell her that I liked her.

I said I would become her family.

However, that was something she suggested.

I wonder if I ever said anything to her from my side.

What do I think about Fitts-senpai... No, what do I think about Sylphy.

It's no good if I don't think about that even more.

However if I don't say it here.

She might disappear again.

"I like you as well."

And.

I grabbed onto Sylphy's shoulder and separated us.

I thought she would resist, but she was frail.

Sylphy's face had become pretty bad covered in tears and snot.

I gently caressed her head and raised her face.

"Nn.."

Sylphy's lips were soft.

There was a bit of, just a bit of snot, but that was unrelated.

After the kiss ended, Sylphy had stopped crying.

With a red face she was looking at me with a blank expression.

"?"

I lost my words.

Words were already unnecessary.

I'll ascertain it with words of love.

Next is that.

Love, that which follows love is H, ecchi comes next.

{ C-Editor's note: In Japanese manga and anime, the letter H stands for the word ecchi which means lewd or perverted. }

I think I'm acting pretty self-interested right, but something that's been repressed for two years is on the verge of explosion.

Sylphy isn't resisting either.

Underneath the blanket I prepared for camping use, an eggplant had become horizontal.

It could be that she had this sort of intention from the start.

This job as well, was for the sake of revealing her identity in a place with no one around.

No, let's stop with the unrefined thoughts.

Now at any rate, it won't be good if I don't proceed without making the same mistakes as before.

"...Sylphy, it's your first time right?"

"Eh? Ah, yeah. Yes. It's my first... is that no good?"

"It's not no good."

Rather, it's good.

But, however.

However you know, if I were to fail here, it might end up like last time.

I pass on things happening like with Eris again.

I can't afford to fail here.

I can't fail.

I carefully, carefully stretched out my hand to Sylphy.

"...."

"...Umm, Rudi?"

After I realized it, my tent had collapsed.

About an hour passed.

The rain had stopped.

Because we had kept embracing each other for a long period, our bodies were warmed up.

Our clothes seemed like they were almost dry, but I was on the verge of crying.

I received a shock from being useless at the most essential time.

This shock is severe no matter how many times or when I experience it.

This time it's not a woman I've paid in a brothel or some passing adventurer.

It's an especially harsh feeling.

It seems Sylphy received a shock as well.

Even so it seems the shock Sylphy had was a bit less.

While jesting a bit, continuing with a bitter smile, she was depreciating her own body.

"It's not Rudi's fault. I, look, my chest is small, and I have no charm.."

"No, Sylphy's body is very charming. I'm very sorry. It's been like this since three years ago."

"Ru..Rudi?"

I started to talk about myself.

I talked about everything.

I faced my first experience three years ago, since then, the fact that I had become useless.

And then, for the sake of searching for a method to cure that, I came to the Magic University.

In the end I was unable to find it and it came down to today.

"I've caused Sylphy to feel ashamed. I'm very sorry."

I prostrated myself.

There's no way there's a problem with Sylphy's body.

Rather it's a huge stimulation.

Certainly her chest is small, but with her slender limbs, and thin hips.

It's not like the balance is bad.

It was like you pulled the image of a shojo straight out just like that, from directly in the center of my strike zone.

In the first place, during these past three years, the only one who has allowed me to stand up is just Sylphy.

There's no way I could have any dissatisfaction with her.

It's just that I'm cowardly.

"Ru..Rudi, don't say something like that. It's not a shame, go back to how you were."

Sylphy let out a pitiful voice.

I myself feel a pretty pitiful mood coming on.

"I really want to return to how I was very much as well, but nothing can be done about this."

"Not like that, your tone, stop with the honorifics."

Sylphy's tears started to flow again.

I panicked and wiped those tears.

"Sorry. I was just a bit upset."

I'm full of apologies.

Here recently I've used nothing but honorifics so I can't help it.

That's why, I end up using them going with the flow.

"...But, I always used honorifics up until now, isn't it fine?"

"It's fine but... Rudi's honorifics, you can feel a sense of distance from hearing them."

Is that how it is?

It's the first time I've heard that.

Could it be that, Eris and Ruijerd felt something like that as well?

Possibly Zanoba as well... come to think of it, that guy hasn't used very many honorifics at all.

"From here on out, honorifics are prohibited."

"Yes."

"Honorifics again."

"That much should be fine right?"

"Fufu..I guess so."

With that conversation somehow or other the atmosphere got better.

However, it's been quite a while since I stopped with the honorifics.

Thinking about it, I feel like I've always used honorifics since I came to this world.

After that, neither of us talked, we just sat snuggled up to each other.

While listening to the crackling sound of the burning fire.

Together in our underwear.

If I turn my neck around a bit, I can look over Sylphy's collarbone.

If I look at her slightly wet underwear from above, I can see a cherry blossom colored, beautiful something flickering in the light.

From that position.

In the middle of that I suddenly opened my mouth.

There was something I needed to ask.

"Come to think of it, why is Sylphy dressing as a man... No, what happened after the teleport?"

The reason why she was acting as a guard for princess Ariel.

The reason why her hair turned white.

The reason why she's hiding her identity.

I didn't know if it was fine for me to ask.

I need to at least try asking I'm sure.

"Yeah, umm, I wonder where I should start talking from..."

Sylphy started to tell me about it bit by bit.

Starting from the training she did in Buina village.

How she tried to learn my location from Zenith and Lilia and in reverse ended up being taught in healing magic and etiquette.

How she made a pendant for my sake.

"That means, this pendant was something handmade by Sylphy?"

"That pendant, how do you have it?"

The pendant was hidden within my clothes.

I didn't like how Elinalise teased me that we matched after all.

Though since we took off our clothes it's been exposed now.

"Lilia was holding onto it. But, she never said anything about Sylphy."

"I'm sure she thought I might be dead, so she kept quiet."

"I see now."

That is like how Lilia might try to be careful.

After hearing it's an article of the deceased, whether it's good or bad, you can understand the decision.

"Umm, is it fine for me to continue the story?"

"Sorry-sorry, please do."

Things that happened after the teleport, there's truly no way to call it other than full of ups and downs.

Thrown into the sky, falling, and then a monster was there.

Coincidentally saving the Ojou-sama, then becoming a guard.

Before she realized it her hair had become pure white.

Starting a painful life in a place where the sense of values were completely different.

Being targeted by assassins in a political dispute, being pursued by the king.

Going on a journey with only those who weren't used to travel, occasionally being deceived, falling into a predicament.

And then, while in the middle of a comeback attempt at Magic University.

I appeared.

"Even though we can say it can't be helped since I was in disguise [It's nice to meet you.] being told that was a shock you know."

"Sorry. But, even Sylphy, if you had told me sooner, even I would have realized it."

"Ah..Th..that's right isn't it.. So..sorry, that I didn't say it.. I'm sorry about that.. I'm very sorry.."

Sylphy continued to spill large drops of tears.

In regards to this matter, I'm sure she worried about a variety of things as well.

I understood from the talk just now that it was absolutely not that she didn't say it because she had some kind of evil intent.

I have no intention to blame her.

"From my side as well, that I didn't come around even after a year, I'm very sorry."

Well, according to the story, it seems like she was trying to hide her identity as well and it seems Sylphy thought I completely forgot about her.

If the case were to have been where I had forgotten about her, it would have simply resulted in her spreading her identity around.

I was originally a person from the Boreas after all, there was the possibility that I was an enemy.

I'm sure not saying it was the correct answer.

And then, I think that during this past year I haven't shown a behavior of searching for Sylphy.

If she didn't think that I was worried about her then it can't be helped if she couldn't break the ice.

That's right, it couldn't be helped.

A variety of circumstances were being a hindrance.

In the end just like this, she revealed her identity after all, so I think that's fine.

I embraced her shoulder.

Sylphy leaned her head on my shoulder.

Her shoulders are cold, if I don't get closer to them and warm them up.

"And then, I wasn't able to gather my courage, but, somewhere in my heart I thought that keeping our current relationship would be fine to hope for."

"Well, it wasn't a bad relationship after all."

Recently it seems her impatience had come out.

There's a gathering of bishojo in my surroundings.

It seems that she thought if she doesn't do anything I might get taken away.

Since I'm in the ED state, there was no need for that worry.

No, for example if Nanahoshi had found me a medical treatment drug or something, I would have been grateful towards her, and finally might have been swayed towards her.

And then, Sylphy carried out a variety of strategies.

It seems that when she stayed over for the night the other day as well was one of those.

Though it seems it ended in failure because I was too dense.

"Rudi is really dense you know."

"I have absolutely no words to retort that with."

In the past I did swear in my heart to become the dense type though.

I can't laugh if I'm already a dense type protagonist.

Unexpectedly, if it gets mixed up with a variety of other circumstances, being faced with love, it's hard to realize.

If I had been a bit more connected with my sexual desire, I might have realized it though...

Unexpectedly, all of the dense type protagonists out there might have ED as well.

"Then, this time I beautifully got caught in that plan is what you're saying."

"So, sorry, it ended up in a shape kind of like I was deceiving you."

"No, I'm sure it wouldn't have been any good if you hadn't gone this far in my case."

If it had continued like that I'm sure I would have continued to tell myself that Fitts-senpai is a man forever.

In the first place, it's suspicious whether I even remembered things about Sylphy.

"Come to think of it, does princess Ariel know about this matter?"

"She knows. Rather, Ariel-sama was the one thinking up the strategies."

"I see."

So my worries were unnecessary as well huh.

If it was Sylphy acting on her own judgement, then after all I think it would have been better if she didn't know about it.

Even though I say that, after all I guess it would be better for the existence known as [Fitts] to remain as [Fitts].

"But, Ariel-sama worried over it considerably. [I can't understand Rudeus Greyrat's objective. I wonder what that guy is thinking.] like that. By no means, that, it seems that she couldn't have imagined that you came here for the sake of curing that."

There was those sorts of rumors, but it seems that she didn't believe them.

Reality is stranger than fiction.

"However, since it's come down to it, would it be better for me to enter as one affiliated with princess Ariel I wonder?"

I don't want to get involved with political disputes to the best of my ability though.

However, if I were to be asked to lend my power to Sylphy, no matter how poor of an ability it would be I would lend my power.

"When it comes to me, I'd like for you to lend us your power, but, Rudi, you don't want to get involved with Asura Kingdom right? In that case, it's fine for you not to overdo it."

Sylphy said that and bashfully smiled.

When she doesn't have the sunglasses on, her adorableness increases 100 times over.

Since that's the case, it's hitting up my nether regions.

Since I couldn't resist it, I licked her ear.

"Hi...ah!?

"Ah, excuse me."

She raised her voice in surprise and my nether regions quickly cooled down.

Somehow, I can't seem to control it.

However, after all I'm relieved that there was a reaction.

I can say that it's proceeding favorably towards recovery.

It's thanks to Sylphy.

"Thank you, Sylphy."

"Eh? for what..?"

Sylphy leaned her head.

We couldn't do it until the end, but this is fine for now.

I felt that way.

—Sylphy's Perspective—

It was noon, three days after we returned to the Magic City Sharia.

During those three days, I talked to Rudi about a variety of things.

The majority of the things that Rudi has done until now.

Because Rudi was thrown away by the Ojou-sama named Eris, it seems he bears a wound in his heart.

Since then, supposedly he's ended up with that sort of feeling.

I've heard a little bit of talk about the person named Eris Boreas Greyrat in the royal palace.

It seems she's an uncontrollably violent child and she's a girl so reckless you wouldn't be able to think she's a human.

After hearing about her from Rudi, she sounds a bit better than the image I have of her though...

But, after she made it from Magic Continent to Asura Kingdom being protected, and then saying "I don't balance out with you", there's no way that's the case.

If I ever meet her I'll absolutely give a word of complaint.

After I said that to Rudi, with a pale face, I was told it would be better not to do it.

It seems that Eris is really a strong girl.

In my regard I found it a bit un-amusing.

But...

Still, thanks to it becoming like that, I was able to reunite with Rudi.

It's not all bad things.

...Huh?

Didn't Rudi say he came here to investigate the teleport incident?

....Well, it's fine for him to have two objectives.

We came up to the school gate of the Magic University.

I had already returned to my usual appearance.

The appearance of [Fitts].

"Umm, for the time being, I'm going to where Ariel-sama is to report."

"Yes. Ummm... from here on out as well, I'm in your care."

While making a bitter smile Rudi lowered his head.

After hearing the words "I'm in your care."

And thinking about the meaning of those words.

I could feel myself getting red all the way to my ears.

My face is hot.

"Ah, yeah. Me..me as well, please take good care of me."

With this we're officially going out.

...Is what I think is fine to say right.

I'm happy.

My heart feels light.

I guess this is what it feels like to soar.

Since I have to report to Ariel-sama, I head towards the student council room.

Since it's lunch break right now, Ariel-sama should be in the student council room.

I think about various things while walking.

The things I want to do with Rudi are various.

For example, going to town together to shop.

Ah, but since I have to remain in the appearance of a boy, people might look at Rudi with weird eyes.

Bu..but, that's unrelated isn't it.

Yeah, as long as you have love.

However, speaking of men, when it comes to ascertaining their love they desire your body right.

That's right, Luke said it.

If there's no connection between your bodies, one day your hearts will separate as well.

But, it seems like my body was no good for Rudi after all...

Wh..what should I do.

After seeing Sylphy who returned with a stiff face, Ariel sighed.

(I guess it was still no good after all.)

After all, I guess we were overdoing it this time, Ariel was reflecting on it.

During the time when I was thinking about it, I thought it was a perfect strategy, but if I think really really well it seems like an impossible story.

Who would, even under the danger of freezing to death, forcefully strip someone else's clothes off I wonder.

Well then, what to do now.

According to the promise she would be prohibited from meeting Rudeus though.

That was just a means to make sure she wouldn't self destruct.

I think there should be some method or another to do it, but I can't think of the method.

"Sylphy, for the time being please calm down and make the report."

Luke entered as the timely help when Ariel was hesitating.

First we need to listen to the story.

"Ah, yeah. As a matter of fact, the plan that Ariel-sama thought of making worked well."

Ariel was surprised over those words.

However, she didn't let that out in her voice.

As royalty she had received training in order to keep her inner thoughts from showing.

"I see. In any case, your expression doesn't seem to match that though?"

"Yeah, it's about that though."

"Excuse me, hearing the reason after is fine, so first start with the report."

"Ah, yes."

Ariel calmly listened to the report from Sylphy.

How she carried out everything according to the plan.

The two entered the cave and how everything went according to schedule.

They conveyed their feelings to each other in front of the fire.

While talking about that Sylphy seemed absolutely happy and that threw Ariel's heart into confusion.

Then what was no good about it?

Ariel's confusion was finally released when she heard about the occurrence of the problem that came up at the very end.

"And then Rudi was, that is, feeling down. It seems the reason he came to the Magic University as well was to look for a treatment method for that."

"What did you say!?"

"Eh? No, that's why, umm, he came here for a cure to his impotency."

"No, excuse me, I lost myself a bit there."

Ariel was surprised.

She unintentionally let her voice out.

She had heard that there were such rumors out there.

However, she never could have imagined that was really the case.

What did he think could be done about that, by entering the Magic University?

Even though this is a place where people learn magic, it's not a place to cure an illness.

"I see. In any case, to be useless when the time comes down to it. It seems like I underestimated the man known as Rudeus a bit. I did think he was dense, but I never thought he was a man who would shame a woman who gathers her courage."

Ariel said that for the sake of keeping her heart peaceful.

It wasn't her true intention.

I'm sure Sylphy feels offended.

In order to apologize for that and calm her, she tried to protect her heart.

It was just that much.

However, that would end in failure.

"Ariel-sama, that is saying too much."

The one who said it in a aggravated tone was Luke who had remained silent until now.

"Men occasionally have times when there's nothing they can do about it. It's not like Rudeus didn't embrace Sylphy because he doesn't like her. Rather, in my opinion, I can finally comprehend the reason why he was so quiet up until now."

Luke is a laid back man, but he never carelessly makes comments towards Ariel.

Occasionally there are times when he gives good advice, but he's not the type to deny something head on.

As a lady-killer, that he's a man who is sweet to women is a part of it as well.

That is, even more so in regards to Ariel for him to use this much of a strong tone and manner of speaking, it's something that never happened until now.

Ariel received that almost like receiving the impact from being hit.

"Lu..Luke???"

"Sylphy, please wait a bit, I have something to give you. Ariel-sama, please excuse me."

After Luke said that he left the student council room with a quick pace.

While continuing to see his back off Ariel raised her eyebrows.

"I'm very sorry about that, it was an improper use of words."

"No, it's fine. But, for Luke to say something like that, it's unusual."

Sylphy is surprised over Luke's behavior as well.

After all, it seems there's various things between men and women.

"However, if it comes down to that then it's very troubling."

"Yeah. What should I do Ariel-sama?"

Ariel was coming to a bit of a misunderstanding at this time.

Rather than trying to succeed with the sex, Sylphy was worried about their bonds becoming loose because of that.

However, Ariel thought about it like this.

(Sylphy, so you want to do it with Rudeus that much?)

If, Ariel had really understood Sylphy's feelings then.

It could be said that she might not have said something like that.

However, Ariel's thoughts were slipping into a bit of a different direction.

What she was trying to remember were the ways she was taught to cure impotency in Asura Kingdom.

Among royalty, in the case where you marry into some place, you have no choice other than to have children.

Then it was a method to deal with the case if your partner was impotent, she was remembering it.

Anyway since it was from a time when she was still young and Ariel wasn't listening to it seriously, but there were a number of memories still remaining.

"How about having him drink alcohol."

The impetus of alcohol.

And then Sylphy did as Sylphy does and remembered the things from the other day.

Rudi's appearance when he was having a drinking bout with Zanoba and the others in the dining hall.

That time, Rudi hadn't been drinking, but Badigadi was in good humor.

"I see now, I'll try it and see."

Two women with no experience.

They started to make a plan to use the momentum of alcohol in order to push down a single man.

Third phase, No, fourth phase of the plan.

It's a plan to get Rudeus drunk and all at once draw him into that mood.

It's a sloppy plan as usual. After all it's something a superficially knowledgeable SM princess thought up.

{ C-Editor's note: SM refers to S&M or sadomasochism. }

"...Then, say it's hot and expose a bit of the area around your shoulders."

"Will it work with that?"

"I'm sure it'll be alright. Since Sylphy is cute. As long as there's the trigger, after that it would be good to have some kind of decisive line to say."

By the time Luke returned, he heard some extent of the aim of that plan.

For several seconds he silently listened to the idiotic meeting behind his two allies.

Where's the idiot who would say it's hot in winter and show their skin, is what he was thinking, but he didn't retort it.

He did retort on a more fundamental point.

"With Sylphy's body, seduction is impossible."

"Uuu..."

Sylphy lost her words.

Ariel sent a threatening gaze.

"What is it Luke, that way of talking, she's troubled over it."

"...Ariel-sama, among the Notos Greyrat blood relatives there's been a tendency for attraction towards females with large chests for generations. In reality, I can't even feel even a small bit of attraction towards Sylphy."

Notos Greyrat love huge breasts.

You could say this is common knowledge among the nobles of Asura Kingdom.

There are others like, "Boreas loves beasts" that are known though.

In any case, it's common knowledge.

"Th..then, are you saying that it's pointless for me to try and seduce him?"

"Yeah, it's pointless."

After being told it was pointless, as expected even Sylphy would feel a bit hurt.

If she's told it normally it doesn't bother her at all, but right now is a time when she doesn't have any faith in her own charm at all.

"However."

Then Luke passed the small bottle in his hands to Sylphy.

It was a small bottle, the size that fits in the palm of your hand.

"If you have him drink this then it'll be alright."

Sylphy made a confused face and looked at the small bottle.

Ariel took a peek at it as well.

"Luke, what is this?"

"An aphrodisiac."

"Aphrodisiac!?"

Luke deeply nodded.

"In the past, it's something that was made in Fedoa region. It's something made from the petals of the Batirusu flower and the town mayor of Roa had a monopoly on the purification method. Currently since it's not in production and because the formula is a mystery, it's rare. Its cost is said to exceed 100 gold coins on the high end."

Incidentally, during the time when Luke purchased a single bottle it was 15 Asura Gold Coins.

He bought five of those and among them used two for times when he was in bad condition.

The effect is guaranteed.

"I thought to use it as a treasure fund if the time ever came to it, but Sylphy, I'll give it to you."

"Luke, this kind of expensive thing...is it fine?"

"Of course."

Luke nodded, and told Sylphy about a number of points to be cautious on.

If you use it, then the man will lose their distinction.

If you think you can't keep up with your partner's pace then you drink it as well.

Most likely, just like that you'll be able to experience a sweet first experience just like you imagine it.

"Luke..Thank you."

"It's no problem. I've had my life saved by you a number of times after all."

Sylphy and Luke.

There was a strange friendship between them.

And then, there was a single person who wanted to enter as allies with them.

"The two of you sure do get along together well. Then I as well."

While making a beautiful smile as if she were the goddess of love Ariel handed Sylphy some money.

It was Asura gold coins.

The amount was only two coins, but if you have just this much, you can buy most things in this city.

"Th..this is Ariel-sama's money right?"

"That's right. It's my portion for this month."

Ariel and the others have performed fund raising since coming to the Magic University, so they have a considerable amount of money.

But, that is capital for actions hereafter.

The money that each individual can use for themselves is also separate.

Ariel realized that her own and Luke's sense for money was twisted so she put a restriction on it.

"If we've come this far, this is the only thing I have left to grant to you."

"No, I'm very sorry for troubling you, Ariel-sama."

"Fu...as expected of Ariel-sama."

The three were drunk on themselves.

Intoxicated by their unity.

Youth is that sort of thing.

And then, their enemy is just a single person.

It's Rudeus Greyrat.

"Then, I'll carry it out."

Sylphy left the student council room with the face of a warrior.

Her aim was the commerce district of the city.

The liquor store.

"Well then, shall we go as well?"

"Yes."

After seeing off Sylphy, the two left the student council room.

Lunch break had already long since ended.

—Sylphy's Point of View—

The time proceeded to night.

I bought two of what I believe to be this country's highest grade strong alcohol.

I don't understand the types of alcohol very well.

I've never drank any.

I don't know Rudi's tastes either.

However, I had the confidence that the most expensive kind would be alright.

I took the opportunity to buy some underwear as well.

It's brand new.

I don't know Rudi's tastes.

This wasn't just expensive, I chose a cute one.

It's a bit different from Ariel-sama's preference, it's the kind I like.

I knew the shop assistant-san made a surprised face.

It's not because a person who has the appearance of a man came to buy underwear for a woman, it's because it's a different preference than usual.

Since Ariel-sama comes to buy it in the appearance of "Fitts" after all.

Therefore, the upper part isn't the usual "Basque of Steel Silkworm Thread."

And then inside the pocket of my uniform, that aphrodisiac is included.

"Alright."

It's perfect.

"Su~...Wa~..."

A deep breath.

(Mother and Father in heaven, finally today Sylphiette is going to become an adult.)

After gathering my resolve I knock on the door.

Around this time, Rudi might have already gone to Zanoba-kun's place.

No, if I remember correctly he said he was going to rest for today since we just returned from the journey.

Okay, okay.

"Yes..oh, Sylphy..Fitts-senpai. Please, come inside."

Rudi opened the door and after seeing my face he was surprised.

Just as I was told I entered Rudi's room.

I closed the door behind me and locked it.

"What is it?"

After entering the room, Rudi asked me with a gentle tone in his voice.

Since he's tired from the journey for today, he plans to take it slow and easy, I think that was how it was supposed to be.

"Umm, I've come over to stay the night."

"....Ah, ye, yeah. Well, sit down."

It seemed like Rudi wanted to say something, but he swallowed his words and offered me a seat.

A bit dispirited, he was making a bit of a disappointed face.

I wonder if I intruded on something?

It's alright isn't it?

I sat down on the chair and took off my sunglasses.

After that I took the two bottles of alcohol from my bag and put them on top of the table.

In regards to snacks, I made a bit of trifling cooking and brought it along.

I seasoned, salted, and fried a variety of different nuts.

Just in case it occurs that they don't match with Rudi's tastes I brought some smoked meat as well.

"That is?"

"Umm, look, for the time being, that is, I thought we should celebrate our reunion."

"..Ah, I see. If we don't do something like that..."

Rudi was scratching his cheek and sat on a chair himself.

And then at this point I realized that there were no cups.

Oh no!

It's not like we can just drink it straight from the bottle.

What should I do, should I return to get some...

"It's fine, I have something like cups."

It seems it was showing on my face.

Rudi made a bitter smile and picked up some cups from a shelf on the side of the room.

They were grey cups. The surface is smooth.

I guess the material would be stone. They're just a bit heavy.

Excluding the weight, it looks like something that wouldn't be strange for the nobles of Asura to be using.

"It's an expensive cup isn't it."

"It's a cup I made. With earth magic. The cost is priceless."

"Ah, is that how it is. He~, that's amazing."

So it's Rudi's own work, then I can understand it.

While thinking that, I broke the seal on the alcohol and poured the contents.

It was pretty amber colored liquid that filled the cup.

Rudi narrowed his eyes as he watched that.

"It seems like considerably strong alcohol."

"Yeah. I don't know very much about alcohol, but I bought the expensive kind."

"Is that alright?"

"Hn? Yeah, it's aright. Since today is a celebration."

I'm sure he's worried about the price.

I'll stay quiet about how I received money from Ariel-sama.

Rudi is always mindful over those sorts of things after all.

After pouring the alcohol I prepared the snacks to go with them.

Alright, it's perfect.

Umm, the medicine is for a bit later in the plan was it?

"Well then, now, let's toast. To the reunion of us two from Buina Village of the Fedoa Region."

"..And then, to Sylphy and my future."

"Ch..cheers!"

Awuu.

Future he says.

Rudi occasionally says those sorts of amazingly embarrassing things...

Uuu...

I felt my face getting hot as I filled my mouth full of the alcohol from the cup.

"..!![Cough]!![Cough]!!"

I choked.

Wh..what is it this!

Painful, the inside of my mouth hurts!

"Are you alright? After all, wouldn't it be better to dilute it?"

"Dilute it?"

"When it comes to these kinds of strong alcohol, it's fine to dilute them with cold or hot water."

Is that how it is, I didn't know.

Rudi made a bitter smile while giving of an "it can't be helped" kind of feel.

"I can't help it can I, I've never drank anything like alcohol up until now you know."

"No, I'm not blaming you, just wait a bit."

While saying that Rudi poured some of the contents of my cup into his own, then poured warm water in my cup.

With chantless magic that is.

From my cup there was vapor from steam rising from it.

"Please try it."

I timidly tried to drink what was offered.

Then the way too strong scent from just now that was remaining in my mouth was washed away.

And then, a scent with a tender feeling wafted deep into my nose.

Ah, it might be delicious.

"Come to think of it, the trigger that lead to me learning magic from Rudi was hot water wasn't it."

"Was that how it was?"

"Geez, did you forget? Look, you used chantless melded magic and Rudi said something unreasonable."

How nostalgic.

Rudi used chantless and melded magic like there was nothing to it, but even now I can't do that.

Though given a time difference I can reach the same result.

Rudi is skillful.

"Yeah, that sure is nostalgic."

"Yeah."

After that, we talked about stories of the past cheerfully.

While my memories from Buina Village are all hazy.

But, when you let them out in words, any number of them end up coming out.

Those days already won't return.

Buina Village has disappeared.

That hill where we played is still there, but that tree disappeared.

Those times were good.

Without thinking about anything, playing together while practicing magic.

I was so happy that everyday went well.

Even now I still feel that way though, but the thoughts about using it in actual combat have become stronger.

While we were talking the area around my head started to feel a bit fluffy.

I wonder if this is intoxication.

"Oh, this is no good, before I forget about it."

After I said that I took out the small bottle from my pocket.

I slowly placed that on top of the table.

Rudi tilted his head.

"That is?"

"Umm, that is, it's medicine that will be effective on Rudi's that."

I worried over how to get Rudi to drink the aphrodisiac.

I thought it might be fine to secretly mix it with the alcohol, but I decided not to do it because it felt like I was deceiving Rudi.

Even though I say that, saying that I prepared an aphrodisiac, I won't really like it if he has some kind of weird misunderstanding.

That's why, I used the word medicine to refer to it.

An aphrodisiac is medicine after all, there's no mistake.

"Is that so... it looks like something I've seen somewhere."

"Ye..yeah. I'd like you to try drinking it."

After I said that Rudi laughed lonesomely.

Until now, it seems he's tried various things like this, but all of them were no good, it was a smile that said something like that.

However, he drank it without saying anything.

This sort of poisonous pink colored fluid, I wonder what he plans to do if it's poison.

That just means he trusts in me that much right?

Rudi drank about a third of the contents of the bottle all at once.

I forgot to say how much you're supposed to drink.

"This, is it alright to drink it together with alcohol?"

"Umm, he did say it was fine to mix them. Ah, also it seems to have quite the immediate effect."

While I said that I took off my coat.

With this, all that's left is just my shirt and underwear.

It's a bit chilly.

According to Luke, even without showing my shoulders, it seems this much is plenty.

"I..if it takes effect, yo..you, don't need to endure it you know."

Rudi's eyebrows moved in response.

I knew that his gaze was carefully gathering on the nape of my neck and chest.

He's looking at me.

I'm embarrassed.

Right now, I'm seducing him right. Rudi.

Uwuu..he won't think that I'm indecent right?

It'll be alright won't it.

Somehow, I'm the one that's starting to feel nervous.

Even though I'm drinking alcohol.

Even though I was supposed to be using the momentum of getting drunk.

I wonder if it's not enough.

..Al..alright.

I decided my feelings and stretched my hand to the small bottle.

"Sylphy you're drinking it as well?"

Rudi's bewildered voice.

I took a gulp of the pink fluid inside the small bottle.

It was thick and a bit bitter.

That bitterness, almost as if washing away the alcohol, I continued to drink it.

I felt like it was getting hot inside my stomach.

In order to falsify that I stretched my hand out to the nuts and nibbled at one of them.

After crunching away at three of them, I drank even more alcohol.

After one cup my vision was in the sky.

"If you drink at too quick of a pace, you might end up feeling bad."

"Yeah, but somehow, I'm a bit tense."

"I see. Well, it is your first time drinking alcohol after all."

While saying that Rudi was taking small sips of the contents of his cup.

Since his isn't diluted, it doesn't seem like he can drink it all at once.

Rudi took the alcohol bottle in his hand and poured some into my cup.

Then he diluted it with hot water.

"..."

"..."

A short while after that, together the two of us silently drank and ate.

The smoked meat was salted strongly so it wasn't very tasty, but for some reason my hand wouldn't stop.

After a short while my body started to get hot.

The area between my thighs was itching for something.

It's working.

I wonder about Rudi's side.

He looks the same as always.

He's as attractive as always.

He looks more attractive than usual.

My eyes are proceeding to the places where I don't normally look.

Like his neck and his lips.

It's somehow ecchi.

Rudi's face seems to be a bit red.

Our eyes met.

Rudi has been staring in my direction since a while ago.

"...."

He's staring at me.

I'm being watched.

Since just now our eyes keep meeting.

Am I thinking too much, it seems like Rudi's breathing has been getting a bit rough.

"Fu....Ha..."

No, this rough breathing is coming from me.

How disgraceful.

But, I guess it can't be helped since I drank the aphrodisiac.

Since a while ago my head has been all dizzy.

It can't be helped. That's right. It can't be helped.

My body is hot.

I unbuttoned the top button of my shirt and exposed my chest.

Even though it's supposed to be chilly. It's hot.

I knew that Rudi's gaze was on my hands.

I'm already not embarrassed.

I leaned my cup.

The warm alcohol fell inside, the warmth was coming to me.

After the second cup my vision went to the sky.

I stretched my hand out to the alcohol bottle.

That hand was caught.

"..Ah."

Rudi was holding onto my hand.

I felt a strong will being conveyed like he was saying he would never let go of my hand.

Of course, I have no intention of running away.

"..Sylphy."

Rudi was looking at me with strong eyes.

Rudi stood up.

With my hand still held he circled around the table, he came right next to me.

And then, with a bit of restraint he pulled on my hand.

I followed along with that without resisting and stood up.

And then said it.

"You..you can't endure it?"

"..."

Rudi nodded silently.

He put his hands around my hips and started rubbing above my butt.

He embraced me tightly.

I felt something hard press against me.

Th..the plan has succeeded.

Alright. Now should be good.

I said the decisive words that Ariel-sama thought up for the plan.

"The..then, please. Please eat me all up."

The instant I said that.

I was thrown on top of the bed and pushed down.

And then...

—Rudeus's Point of View—

I opened my eyes.

I could see the roof of the upper bunk bed.

I remember very well what happened last night.

I thought we were drinking alcohol, then I suddenly reached a level of restlessness that I couldn't endure and just like that attacked Sylphy.

I'm sure it was that the medicine Sylphy was using worked.

To think there was such a medicine out there...

However, I really do feel like I've seen it somewhere...

..Ah, I remember.

That was, the aphrodisiac being sold by the peddler in the Town of Roa.

Almost as if it was a wonder drug, my son went flying out of the room, it was almost to the point I felt like I lost myself.

I thought the last of it had already melted and evaporated.

As expected of 10 gold coins.

However.

I'm afraid to look next to me.

My reason has already been blown away, but I still firmly remembered the contents of the deed.

Sylphy was trying desperately to respond to me, but it seems it hurt.

It was her first time.

However, Sylphy bravely received me.

Even though she was clearly overdoing it, she kept repeating to me, "I'm alright", "I love you", "It feels good."

In contrast with me I was absolutely running wild.

I didn't have enough composure to be considerate of Sylphy.

Sylphy's voice whispering in my ear was arousing me, I went at her with all of my desire without a thought of restraint.

In my long life, it's the deed I've finally done twice.

I had absolutely no confidence that I could do it well.

More than the first time, it was definitely terrible.

That's right, even more than that time.

That time, Eris wasn't beside me.

".."

I slowly shifted my gaze to the side.

And then.

Our eyes met.

"Good morning, Rudi."

Sylphy was there facing me with a shy smile.

I slowly stretched out my hand.

I was checking to make sure she was really there.

I tried caressing her head.

Sylphy closed her eyes, it looked like she was comfortable being caressed.

Her hair was short but it was silky.

Just like that I moved my hand and moved from her nape to her shoulder.

It's a slender shoulder.

It seems like it might break at any time.

And then, my hand moved even further from there.

I groped her chest.

"Hi..ah! Wai, Rudi??"

Sylphy was surprised and sent a look of protest.

However, she didn't resist, with her face red she accepted it.

Sylphy's modest chest is truly with the feeling of the symbol of neediness, and there was frankly nothing to grope.

However, the characteristic of breasts their softness existed there.

For the first time in a while the bald old man appeared with his thumb standing up inside my head and said, "It's not just about the highs and lows right?"

Thank you, oppai-sennin. It's been a while.

Sylphy was certainly there.

And then, I was deeply moved by the softness of her chest and then my memorial stone was standing tall.

It was made to stand tall.

Heroically, standing tall.

I was convinced.

"I'm cured."

Unable to stand it I embraced Sylphy.

Strongly, strongly embraced her.

The tears came flowing out.

"Umm, Rudi... that is, how was it..my body wasn't strange right?"

Sylphy asked that while being bewildered.

After remembering last night, you should quickly realize that such worries are unnecessary.

"Thank you."

I just said a word of thanks.

Just, just, I had nothing to say but my thanks.

The embarrassment filled my chest and took control of it, so it seemed like I might say something weird.

For example, it was a wonderful tea party.

For example, thank you for the delicious meal.

For example, you're completely the cutest.

Right now, I didn't want to say such words while joking around.

I just silently embraced her and said my thanks.

—

Just like this, my long and harsh lifestyle of fighting against an illness reached its end.

And then, I gained an adorable lover.

I'll protect Sylphy's honor.

I think that while looking at the red stain remaining on the sheet.

Sylphy gave something extremely important to me and saved me.

I want to grant her everything she wishes.

I thought that while using a knife to cut out the portion of the sheet where the red stain remained.

However, after remembering it, Sylphy has not told me what she expects from the future.

If I'm not being overly self-conscious, then the feeling that she wants to be together with me has been conveyed.

However, she never put that into words.

It could be that she's concerned with her job as a guard for princess Ariel.

After all, it seems like there's a necessity to talk with princess Ariel for once.

The cut off piece of the sheet was placed in a small box that I made with earth magic and left in the shrine.

I put my hands together in prayer.

Finally, I feel like I've returned to being a person.

I showed my face in the once in a month homeroom.

Same as always, Nanahoshi was nowhere to be seen.

"Good morning, Shisho."

"Good morning, Grand Master."

Zanoba and Julie were lined up as they greeted me.

I just thought it, but Julie is fairly cute.

I think she was seven years old this year.

She's still far from my strike zone, but her long flowing, orange colored hair is cute.

I brush her head.

Julie looked up at me surprised, then quickly after she casted her eyes downwards, her body started trembling.

It seems she's still afraid.

Even though I don't plan to take her and eat her alive.

"Good morning, Zanoba, Julie."

After I greeted them, Zanoba tilted his head and said, "Oh?"

"Shisho, did something good happen?"

"Yes?"

So he realized it.

Zanoba was worried about it normally after all.

I'd like to report it to him soon, but saying that my ED is completely cured, how I go about saying it is difficult.

I can't speak of Sylphy's identity.

If I were to say that Fitts-senpai helped me out with it, they might come to some kind of strange misunderstanding.

While I was thinking that, I went towards my seat.

"Oh, boss, good morning nya."

"Good morning-nano, mogumogu."

Rinia and Pursena were sitting the same as always.

Rinia was sitting with those young and lustrous legs on top of the desk, Pursena had that voluptuous flesh packed tightly into her uniform as she stiffly chewed the dried meat.

Thinking back to it, I've already confirmed the growth of these two's gigantic peaks, pulled down their wet panties, and had a look at the Utopia hidden underneath haven't I.

After thinking that, somehow these two look a bit more charming...

"Nya!?"

"Fakku-nano??"

When I got near them, the two suddenly held down their noses stood up and moved away from me.

It's a bit of a shock.

Is it that, that one scent.

I've finally revived for the first time in several years.

It's a refreshing feeling like wearing new underwear for the first in three years.

Certainly, the scent of sexual excitement must be pretty intense as well.

"What should we do-nano. The boss has finally reached the end of his patience."

"Didn't you have an illness nya?"

"It's because of my charm-nano, I'm a sinful woman-nano."

"Th..then Pursena become the sacrifice nya. Leave things about our home town to me nya."

"No..actually he might be craving for Rinia."

"If..if you become the woman of the boss the world might be in your hands you know nya.. you can eat all the meat you want everyday nya."

"...It..it can't be helped, it's for the sake of protecting Rinia-nano."

It seems after they finished their conversation, Pursena came before me after gathering her resolve.

And then, she blinked her eyes all lovely-like and pushed out her chest putting emphasis on it.

"Uffun-nano, I'd like you to treat me preciously...ah ouch!!"

I chopped her.

I felt like I was being made fun of.

What do you mean Uffun.

"Well, please take a seat. I won't take you and eat you whole."

After saying that, Pursena curled up her tail while holding her head and sat next to me.

Not proceeding to a place where my hands can't reach, how unusual.

In reverse Rinia slowly walked up and sat in somewhat of a place my hands couldn't reach.

This side is being unusually cautious.

The usual distance has been reversed.

"Rudeus, what's going on? You look different than usual."

Cliff tilted his head as well.

I thought I was acting as I normally do, but I wonder if it's that different.

After all, when a man has something shaved off, he appears different on the outside.

No-no, it's not like it was my first time after all.

"How am I different?"

"Somehow... you're overflowing with self-confidence... is how you look."

After sending a glance towards Zanoba, he nodded as well.

Self-confidence.

After hearing such words, I remembered the words of the Human God [Hitogami].

You'll recover your self-confidence as a man.

So it's like this huh.

I can't really feel the difference, but I guess I look different when looking from outside huh.

"Everyone, thank you very much until now. I can't say the details, but the other day, that has been cured."

After declaring that everyone raised their voices with an "Ohhhh."

Zanoba nodded as if he was convinced of it and Cliff patted my shoulder.

Rinia and Pursena were exchanging looks, Julie tilted her head with a face like she didn't really get it.

"In any case, congratulations, isn't it."

"Right. Congratulations, Shisho."

"Congratulations-nano." "Congratulations nya."

For some reason I received an applause.

It's certainly something happy for me, but it's somehow a bit embarrassing.

It's almost like the end of the story.

As a matter of fact these congratulations I'm being told, they better not be just before I'm about to die.

"But, if boss has been cured then it's a crisis nya. The chastity of all the female students is in danger nya."

Rinia brought up such an impolite thing.

"That's rude. I'm a gentleman you know."

I won't lay my hands on anyone other than Sylphy.

And then here I once again made my determination as such.

After homeroom, I went to the staff member's room.

I need to apply for supplementary lessons for the days missed on the journey the other day.

After I went into the staff member's room, the atmosphere suddenly trembled.

After all, looking from outside, it seems like people feel something has changed.

It's a bit embarrassing almost as if everyone already knows I've done it with Sylphy.

Just as I was thinking that, Vice Principal Jinas called out to me.

"Rudeus-san, has something happened?"

"Just a problem I have been troubled over for these past three years has been resolved and I'm feeling refreshed."

"I see, that is excellent."

Vice Principal Jinas nodded.

And then made a bitter smile.

"Since it comes down to that, could it be, you're thinking of leaving this University?"

"Eh?"

I tilted my head after hearing Vice Principal Jinas's words.

However, after thinking about it.

Certainly, I've achieved my original objective for entering this University.

I did come for that sake.

Now that I've achieved that, in order to reunite with my family, wouldn't it be better to go to Begaritto...

However, in this past year, a variety of other things have happened.

I met Zanoba, purchased Julie,

Got along together with Rinia and Pursena,

And made a connection with Cliff as well.

And then Nanahoshi.

I have the feeling there was some kind of meaning to my meeting with her.

To the point where I think that the Human God [Hitogami] had me come here for the sake of encountering her.

In his regards, my reunion with Sylphy might have just been an occasion.

However, the most important one for me is Sylphy.

Now that I know she's here, I can't very well leave.

I want to be here to protect her if the time ever comes to it as well.

If it comes to being the guard of a princess, then I'm sure there will be dangerous things as well.

Even with my poor ability I want to be her strength.

However, if I remember correctly, princess Ariel is currently a fifth year student.

I wonder what she's going to do after graduation.

Well, I'm sure she'll remain here until graduation.

For the time being, I do send letters to Paul and the others at a fixed period.

I have no way of checking if they've reached them though...

However, it's been a year since then.

If I were to start moving now, the probability of differences in the situation coming up are high.

It would be amateurish to quickly change my plan when it might not provide any significant result.

...Is what the resourceful salary-man who can get over 30 new contracts in single day once said.

I should still wait for now.

"No, I don't know if I'll remain here until I graduate, but I think I'll remain enrolled for several more years."

"I see, that is excellent."

The Vice Principal made a bitter smile.

I wonder if he's happy or unhappy.

It's a bitter smile I can't really figure out.

Nanahoshi was the same as always.

She probably never had any consideration for me in the first place.

Our conversations were always minimal.

When I talk with her there are times when I can feel the generation gap in our conversation.

The other day as well, when I brought up the topic of a certain female middle school student who changed with the moon and goes out to punish evil-doers, she tilted her head and said, "What is that?"

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Sailor Moon anime series. }

It seems the recent young ones don't know the legend of the moonlight.

In our generation even if you've never seen it you should at least know the name.

However, if they aren't an otaku, I guess that also can't really be helped.

I thought that, but it seems while it's not at the level of a heavy otaku like me, she still has read some amount of manga and light novels.

Even though she's such a child, she still doesn't know.

Since that was the case, I thought maybe it could be that she didn't know the story about collecting the seven balls of the dragon and asked, but it seems she knows that one.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Dragon Ball manga and anime series. }

During the time we were in our old world Nanahoshi was 17 years old in comparison to my 34 years old.

There's a difference of two times. Presently it's even further apart.

It can't really be helped.

It's certainly a generation gap.

If I think about the broadcasting period then I guess it's only natural, but when I tried to talk to her about it in reality, she was confused.

It's because she's such a Nanahoshi.

That might be why I let my mouth slide.

"Nanahoshi-san if you were to go out with someone, what would you wish for from that partner."

Nanahoshi's hand slipped as she was writing.

And then she crumpled up the paper she was writing on into a circle and threw it away.

"What are you suddenly bringing up? Love talk?"

"Something similar."

"You know, I want to hurry up and return. Won't you please take this seriously? You're always, always talking about nothing but idle chatter, if you were to shut up and move your hands, the efficiency would go up that much you know?"

She was saying something like this, but I know Nanahoshi doesn't particularly hate idle chat.

Actually, up until now she's always worked while talking about things bit by bit unless it was something very terrible.

The fact that she's suddenly using this way of talking means.

"Nanahoshi-san is that... a person with no experience in love?"

"..Cheh!!"

She grandly clicked her tongue at me.

"Even I have a person I like. We fought, though it was just that.."

Come to think of it, I believe Nanahoshi was summoned right in the middle of a lover's quarrel wasn't she.

I guess she liked one of those two, or else, she couldn't pick either of them and it had become a reverse harem situation, though I don't really know.

Whether it be apologizing or continuing the fight, it is certain that she has to return first.

Come to think of it, I wonder if the probability is high that those two were summoned as well.

Since I haven't heard any rumors outside of Nanahoshi, I think the probability that they didn't come is high as well.

Although, if you were to be thrown into this world without magic power, for a high school student to survive without help from anyone is...

No, this isn't something I should say to her.

Possibly, Nanahoshi might have already considered something like that.

That the only reason she managed to survive this far was because her luck was good.

And then, what would have happened if her luck had been bad.

Nanahoshi bent her mouth into the character へ and responded.

"A person you like... normally you would be happy just by being together with them."

It seemed heart-breaking.

It would have been better if I hadn't asked.

It became lunch break.

I didn't go to the dining hall.

I had things to do in a different place today.

In the student council room.

If I'm going to seriously go out with Sylphy, then I can't just continue to remain silent in front of them.

They moved in order to bring Sylphy and I together.

Therefore, in some sense, the permission is already in our hands.

But, this needs to be done formally as well.

The top floor of the school building.

Furthest room inside.

That just a bit extravagant door had the letters, "Student Council Room", carved into it.

After knocking there.

"Who is it!"

It was Luke's voice.

"It's Rudeus Greyrat. I've come to talk about recent matters."

After responding like so, for an instant it went silent inside; after that I heard the sound of things somehow being hurried about.

I guess it's because I came without an appointment.

I might have done something bad.

"Wa, enter!"

It was Luke's voice.

I opened the door and entered the room.

Princess Ariel was sitting in an expensive looking chair.

She had her pretty blonde hair in a weave.

Her good looks were almost transparent.

However, her figure was average for her age I'd say.

Her muscle was the same as an average female, her chest wasn't big and wasn't small either.

Standing fixed and upright on her sides were Luke and Sylphy with her sunglasses on.

Sylphy is dignified while she's working.

Crisply dressed, how do I put it she gives off the feeling of a trusted retainer.

Her usual crybaby-like appearance is nowhere to be seen.

It's also a bit different from the other slightly childish and frank image I hold.

It's a cold-hearted impression.

I see now, certainly in order for Sylphy to maintain this image it's better for her not to say anything.

"I'm very grateful for this meeting with you. I am the one called Rudeus Greyrat."

While speaking with an expression of gratitude in the noble style I kneel before Ariel and lower my head.

I haven't properly learned etiquette towards royalty, but probably something along these lines would be good.

"This isn't the royal palace. You and I are mutually both students. Please raise your head."

I raised my head at princess Ariel's words.

However, I remained kneeling.

I can't afford to shame Sylphy after all.

In front of my lover's boss, it's better to do it properly.

"And then, what business does Rudeus-dono whose fame has roared throughout this school, come here for today?"

When you listen to Ariel's voice it feels like it numbs the area around the top of your brain.

It's a good sensation.

I guess this would be a charismatic person.

Or else, this person might be a miko as well.

There is magic that works with the voice.

It wouldn't be strange for there to be a miko who fascinates the other side with their voice.

"I'm sure you've already heard various things from Sylphy...Sylphiette but...I've come here to talk a bit about things in regards to that matter."

Ariel was wearing a bit of a serious face.

From Sylphy I've heard a bit of the princess's expectations.

Even after she was forced to make her escape to here, it seems she still hasn't given up on the crown.

For that sake, she continues to attend this school, and she's trying to win over influential allies.

"I've had Sylphy cure my illness. I've heard of your highness's collaboration with Sylphy in relation to that. Therefore, if there's some kind of opportunity where I can be of assistance to you, please call upon me."

Ariel slowly listened to those words.

And then she exchanged looks with Luke.

Luke deeply nodded and opened his mouth.

"We thought you wanted to avoid getting involved in the political strife of the Asura nobles though?"

After being asked I had an immediate reply.

"Certainly, I don't want to stick my neck in any political strife in Asura Kingdom. Someone like me would just be crushed like an insect after all. Although, if my loved one is going to be inside of that vortex, the story is different."

While saying that I look at Sylphy.

Her face is bright red.

"During a time when Sylphy is on the verge of death, if I were living nonchalantly, that is something I would not stand for after all."

"He~??"

Ariel made a surprised face.

Luke as well.

I wonder if I said something weird.

Luke opened his mouth.

"Don't you have any kind of antagonism towards the Greyrat family? Uncle... Paul, the Notos family that he eloped from or the Boreas family that worked you hard.."

"I did feel it was a bit disappointing that Sauros-sama was executed, but nothing in particular beyond that."

Hn?

Somehow right now, our conversation isn't really matching up.

Well, in regards to that, I've already put it all in order inside of me.

"After that there's just the degree of being hated by Luke-senpai."

After saying that, Luke raised his eyebrows and said it.

"That was because you're a dense bastard who doesn't understand the feelings of a woman."

"In regards to that, I have no defense."

After all, I didn't even realize Sylphy's gender for a year.

It can't be helped if I'm called dense.

The fact that I wasn't specifically trying to seek it out doesn't pass as an excuse.

Even though she's that cute, I wonder why I never realized it.

"Luke is a shitty bastard who plays around with the feelings of women after all."

The one who absent-mindedly whispered that was Sylphy.

Unexpectedly, she says some extreme things.

I wonder if she's pretending to be innocent in front of me... that sort of thing is possible I guess.

However, after thinking about it, Sylphy and Luke have always been allies these past six years.

He's spent far longer of a period with Sylphy than me.

Therefore, she has little restraint.

I'm sure familiar words will come out.

That makes me a bit jealous.

"What's this, even though you don't have even a fragment of sex appeal, putting on airs of a complete woman?"

"I properly have sex appeal, Rudi told me thank you... I have it right?"

After saying that Sylphy looked at me seeking help.

It would be fine for me to honestly reply that it's all good and well for me to enter their comic dialogue but...

However, I feel a bit too withdrawn to say that in front of Ariel.

While thinking that I send a glance towards the princess, she quietly opened her mouth.

Suddenly I noticed it but she had bread crumbs on the side of her mouth.

I guess they were in the middle of their meal.

"Both of you please be silent for a bit."

Sylphy and Luke shut their mouths.

This as well seems to be the feel of their usual exchange.

I can feel their term of service.

"Rudeus Greyrat. If I were to borrow your power, it would be extraordinarily reassuring."

"Thank you very much."

"However..."

There Ariel glanced at Sylphy.

And then declared as if she had decided something.

"I have no necessity for your power."

"Wha!! What's th..that! Ariel-sama!"

The one who raised their voice was Sylphy.

Ariel continued as if to forestall her.

"I would be troubled if you were to misunderstand, but Sylphy by no means got close to you aiming for your power."

"Yes, there's no misunderstanding regarding that."

I do feel like I had some kind of thoughts that Sylphy might have such ulterior motives though...

It's fine, this is where I should honestly listen to Ariel's words.

"I have only one thing to ask of you. Sylphy, my friend, please make her happy."

I deeply nodded.

It's something that doesn't even need to be said.

"Yes, definitely."

"You can say whatever you want in words but...first what do you intend to do?"

"...."

What do I intend to do about it, Ariel came out asking with an extremely strong tone.

I kept my mouth shut.

What do I intend to do huh, I came here because I don't know.

No, let's stop with the excuse that I won't know.

The way a man should take responsibility should be the same in all worlds.

That's right, didn't Paul say something like that as well.

In order to take responsibility, in Asura you need to prepare a house and find employment.

"As I thought, it should be marriage."

After I said that, Sylphy covered her mouth.

Luke's fixed upright posture was destroyed and he started to stagger with a face like he received a shock.

"I see. Splendid. As expected of the man I heard about from Sylphy, right, Rudeus-sama."

Ariel nodded in satisfaction and looked at Sylphy.

"Sylphiette Greyrat."

"Ha!!? Eh!? Greyrat, eh!?"

Sylphiette Greyrat.

After being called that, Sylphy was all flustered,

"If you are to be Rudeus's wife, then from now on there's no necessity for you to continue disguising yourself as a man. Become feminine."

"Eh, but..if I don't disguise myself, Ariel-sama will??"

"In exchange, Rudeus. I'd like to make use of your name. Right now, in this area, there are no people who don't know about you. If such a person as you were to accept my trusted friend Sylphy, there might be people who come out with misunderstandings at their own convenience."

I see now.

If I remain together with Sylphy, a connection between Ariel and I will be made, there will be guys who think like that is what it means.

She won't borrow my power, but she'll borrow my reputation.

Though what she's doing is mostly the same, but she sure uses interesting expressions.

"That's an easy request... in my regards, it would be fine for me to honestly assist as your follower though."

"I don't need you. Since your power is too great, it's beyond what I can handle."

I wonder if it's that strong.

Is what I was thinking, but in my regard it's a convenient development.

It seems like a pain to be stuck close to princess Ariel and forced to move around doing various things after all.

I'll just take that honestly.

"Of course, if there's a time when you need it, I permit you to use my name as well. It's not the strongest faction, but the name of the Second Princess of Asura Kingdom might prove useful to you somehow or other."

"That is appreciated."

Having the backing of important people, no matter how many you have it's a good thing.

However, this really is quite convenient for me.

I received Sylphy, but it's fine if I don't do anything.

On the contrary, if a time comes up where there's a problem, we have Ariel working as our backing.

For I who often causes problems, having Ariel's backing is extremely appreciated.

However, I wonder if it's really fine.

I wonder if she won't demand something else later.

They say good stories have a reverse side to them though...

No, if she's going to look after us, I don't really feel reluctant about at least returning that part.

"And then, Sylphiette. What do you plan to do?"

"Wa, Yes! I...I, umm, just as I have until now while serving Ariel-sama, Ru...Rudi.. No, as Rudeus's wife is how I feel I want to give it my best!"

"....I see, please become happy."

After a slightly silent embrace Ariel pushed on Sylphy's back with a [Pon].

Sylphy came over in front of me.

She was scratching the back of her ear very shyly.

Cute. I want to lick them.

No, here I need to endure it. Ariel is in our presence after all.

"Th..that..umm..Ru..Rudi.. that is, please take care of me from here on out."

"Ah, yes. Please take care of me as well."

We lowered our heads awkwardly.

Sylphy was fidgeting for a short while after that, but suddenly she looked behind her.

Just like that Ariel and Sylphy gazed at each other.

"That is... Ariel-sama, Luke, thank you for everything until now."

After taking her sunglasses off, Sylphy said that and lowered her head.

I followed after that and lowered my head.

Just like this, I gained a connection to the Ariel faction.

And then it became that I would get married to Sylphy.

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I will marry Sylphy.

Marriage.

It is something I never experienced in my previous life.

It feels a little premature for that matter.

Thus I have a great deal of anxiety.

But, more than that, the expectation as a couple is high and such a thing is allowed.

When I think that the pretty girl is to get my poisonous fang, it would be coveted.

No, of course I don't intend to do anything that Sylphy hates.

However, I was troubled.

When I think about it, I don't know much about the marriage system of this world.

At least, I have never seen such a thing as a wedding ceremony until now.

Paul didn't hold a wedding ceremony with Lilia either.

At best, it's enough to have a celebration by calling people from the village.

Asura nobles throw parties once they get married, but I've never heard of them holding something like a wedding ceremony.

However, marriage and relationship, the concept of a partnership.

But I don't understand it.

What is marriage?

What should a married man do?

What do I do?

16 years have passed since I came to this world and I don't even have such basic common sense.

Now what?

If I don't know, I will learn.

A person can learn it.

If I don't understand, I should ask.

"Are you getting married?"

At first, I decided to ask Zanoba (a 26 years old divorcee[Widower]) in time for dinner.

The place is a dining room in the dormitory.

"Over time, I gave my partner's family a domestic animal, a soldier, and food as gifts."

In the case of marriage in Shirone, it seems to be common sense that a man sends a gift to the woman's relatives.

"Since you're a prince, isn't it easy to get?"

"Yes? For anyone, even if he is a prince, it is natural that the man sends the gift."

And then Cliff's head coincidentally pops by.

"It's reversed in Milis. The family of the bride gives her a betrothal present."

It has become regular for Cliff to have dinner with us.

This is because he has few friends, so it's lonely for him.

"Oh, but that's it. Don't you lose the woman's family?"

"Instead, the man helps out when there's something going on in the bride's home."

"I see."

Be it Milis or Shirone, recognition of marriage is a strong connection between houses.

"Oh, a marriage is different for different races."

"How is it with the Elf Race?"

"".....The truth is I haven't married Liese yet. We have the promise to solve the curse, so I don't know the customs yet. Since Liese is different from the other elves she doesn't seem to be particular about such things."

We had a long discussion.

But talk of a wedding ceremony never came up.

Won't there be something called a wedding ceremony?

There isn't. Is it good that there isn't?

"Then if you're to marry someone, what do you need?"

"You're right... First is a house?"

"Umu."

Zanoba nodded at Cliff's words.

House.

A house.

"Oh? Why is it suddenly a house?"

"It's obvious. In order to get married, what are you going to do without a house."

Looking at Zanoba's face, of course he's nodding.

In this world, is it necessary to have a house to marry?

That reminds me. Did Paul come to live in Buina village upon marrying?

Was he living in the adventurer's inn until then?

When I asked, he said Philip granted him a house and a job.

"Generally girls can't enter the male dormitory, so their only options are to refrain from marriage before graduation or to leave the dorm after the marriage. Since there isn't a place to live in."

Now that you mention it that certainly seems true.

I haven't heard any stories of a couple living in a dormitory.

There is no dormitory for married people.

There aren't any concepts of long distance or commuting relationships here.

Basically, a couple lives together.

"Anyway, if the daughter is from a good place, and the other side has a house, either way you are home free. It is resourcefulness that a man prepares."

There's too much male chauvinism in Cliff's words.

But is this the common sense of this world even without our families' assistance?

It'd be reasonable that I prepare for such a thing.

Rather, she might be disillusioned with me if I'm not prepared.

"I understand. First is a house."

Cliff made a suspicious expression when he said so.

"Wait Rudeus, are you getting married?"

"Yeah, well."

"With whom?"

A question from Cliff.

Somehow it doesn't seem right to give Sylphy's name.

It will definitely be found out at some point, but should I keep it secret for a little longer?

"It's the person who cured my disease."

"Oh, I see. Name?"

"Well, let's leave that as a secret for now."

"I see..... well, if the partner is from Milis, I'm acquainted with the bishop of this town, and I'm good with informal congratulatory addresses."

"Yes."

So there seems to be a wedding ceremony-like thing in Milis.

In Japan, the wedding ceremony is regarded as particularly awful, but it isn't so here?

However, in this world, it seems to be offensive if you imitate a different sect.

I am not a follower of Milis.

Neither is Sylphy.

"Still, a house... A house will be expensive."

"Shishō, if you do not have enough money shall I lend assistance?"

"Though... I would feel ashamed that I have to depend on Zanoba for this kind of thing."

Even I want to maintain my pride as a man.

What is the market price of a house in this neighborhood anyway?

Hopefully my savings will suffice.

"Anyway, I'll check around town tomorrow. If it looks impossible, then I'll ask."

"Naturally. Rest assured, Shisho will be able to purchase the biggest house in town."

Zanoba said so and laughed.

Royalty doesn't feel any different despite being from a small country.

The next day I proceeded to the real estate agent.

Normally the local feudal lord would provide forms for citizens to rent out land and buildings.

However there is no feudal lord in the Magic City Sharia.

The Magic Triumvirate and the Magic Guild collaborate to manage the territory.

The problem that occurs in situations where there is no lord has been solved by installing a [Real Estate Broker].

Though I don't know what kind of problem was actually taking place.

I call it a [Real Estate Broker] for convenience, but the official name is [Land Management Agency] or something like that.

They buy and sell unoccupied houses, and manage vacant land and development.

It's like a so-called government office.

When I went to one of these real estate agents and said, [I want a house], the receptionist handed me a list.

The list of houses on the market was summarized in one page.

Size of the property, the size of the building, number of rooms, the price, the address, etc...

The list ranged from small houses to mansions, each property was very different.

"Um."

Honestly, I don't understand how much it cost to buy a house.

After all, I wonder about a single-room house with a garden would be good... it would be nice to have enough room to keep a dog.

Or wouldn't an apartment like a tenement house work?

Sylphy is the escort of the princess.

The house should be good, even without considering the fact that she's an escort.

However, because she's an escort, Princess Ariel might visit.

Since that's the case, it would be bad if we had a poor house.

Still, I instinctively clutch my wallet when thinking about buying a high-quality house suited for nobles.

Should I ask Zanoba for support?

No, I am hesitant to use a friend as a wallet.

Especially since I'm not looking to buy a modest house.

"Um."

I might come with Sylphy.

I wonder if I should consult with the bride about such a large expense.

No, in this world a man should purchase the house. I also want to impress the woman I like.

When I talk to Sylphy I don't want to seem like a miserable excuse for a man.

I must show my resourcefulness.

"It needs to be large, have many rooms, and the property must be cheap..."

I start scanning the list for such a property.

No matter what world you're in, buying a house will be expensive for sure.

Though it could have been considered normal for a newly-wed couple to rent a cheap apartment in my old world.

"Oh?"

And there, I found a good property.

Right at the end of the list.

The property has a single structure.

For its size it could be considered a mansion.

It is located in a corner of the town, but it isn't far from the Magic University.

It is 2-stories, and it also has a basement and a garden.

The only problem is that the house is slightly old.

The price is surprisingly cheap, less than the half price of a comparable property.

If it's this much, I can buy it and still have money left over.

"Why is this listing so cheap?"

The staff member shows a bitter smile when I asked.

"It's a fact that the mansion is haunted."

"Is it a curse?"

"Yes, around midnight you can hear sharp sounds, but even if you look for the sound you won't find anything. When you think that the house is rumbling or something and try to leave it, the next day you'll be found cruelly murdered."

Are you serious?

Well, I didn't hear the story well.

Haunted house.

And I wonder if it's evil spirits.

There are demons in this world, too.

"You didn't exorcise it?"

"A request was given to the Adventurer's Guild, but the adventurers were brutally murdered."

In short, nobody was able to succeed in exorcising it.

By the way, the subjugation rank of the request seems to be E.

I want to raise the rank, but the budget is lacking and there is also friction with the Adventurer's Guild, which seems difficult in various ways.

"Did you ask for help from the Magic Guild?"

"Yes, but they are in a difficult position to interfere with things of this nature, so we can only handle it on our own."

The real estate agent was about to give up on the haunted house.

Come to think of it, there was a similar case that happened when I was on the magical continent.

It's certainly a common thing in this world.

"If I succeed in exorcising the house, I don't suppose... that you could hand it over for free?"

This guy has a look as if he can't believe what I just asked.

Is that so.

It seems that they will sell it even if it's troublesome.

"I'm sorry, then can we proceed with a temporary contract so I can inspect the property at a later date?

"...Then, I'll ask for your name here."

Although I failed in the initial negotiations, I signed the temporary contract without minding it.

Since there was also a place for references I wrote Demon King Badigadi and Princess Ariel.

Submit.

The staff member's face paled a bit when he looked at the contract, then retreated back into the offices.

His supervisor appeared immediately.

While rubbing his hands together.

Did this happen because my name is famous?

No, mentioning Badigadi and Ariel might be the reason.

Well, whatever.

I cut in while they spoke a little and the negotiations were concluded.

Furthermore they reduced the price by half.

Well, the property was treated like a plague.

But I'm not going to complain.

A few days later.

I went to visit the haunted house.

The building itself is firm, even though it was built more than a hundred years ago.

In this world, probably because magical power dwells in everything, it may take time for it to rot.

The supports are made of solid stone and it has hardwood floors.

An intricate building made of stone and wood.

Moss and ivy are stuck to its outer walls.

However it's a beautiful thing.

I imagined it being a more terrible looking house.

"Well, Zanoba-san, Cliff-san, will we give up?"

Zanoba and Cliff stand a ways behind me.

Although I am an A-rank adventurer, I am self-conscious enough to not attempt this alone.

Therefore I asked Zanoba to lend me his strength, he is a man I can rely upon.

Zanoba can handle it even if a western doll waving a kitchen knife comes out.

Cliff also came along because he had the eyes of someone who wanted to help out his friends.

That said, he's a genius who can use advanced level Exorcism magic.

If the other party is a demon or evil spirit-based, he will certainly be helpful.

"It's a very good house. It looks a little cramped, but about this size... is this much considered reasonable?"

"Isn't this house too large to live in with only two people? If it was me, first I would buy a small house then save money. Then later, if it becomes too small, I would move."

The two opinions contrast.

I guess that means I'll take this as the middle ground.

"The price is low for a reason, now let's go."

"You are wise Shishō, more than anything."

Zanoba starts walking calmly while saying that.

He has a club in one hand.

It is a weapon that I prepared.

During subjugation requests being unarmed is bad, but this guy with his monstrous strength seems to break all of his weapons.

So I gave him a club which I made with earth magic.

It's a free weapon to break.

Cliff is in the middle.

He's clutching his staff, which seems to be expensive, and looking around restlessly.

Even if the person himself intends to be cautious, I can only see it as being scared.

I act as the rear guard and prepare for an attack from behind.

It is important that the party protects Cliff who can use healing magic.

As for me, who's the most experienced, I'm in the back to also keep a close watch on everyone.

I walked over the broken stone pavement to arrive at the entrance.

There is a cracked wooden door.

One hinge is broken.

I better repair this later.

"I don't think that there's a risk of a trap, but please be careful."

"Yes, Shishō."

While watching with my foresight eye,

Zanoba grabbed the doorknob and just broke it.

No hesitation.

"Hey, don't break it so suddenly."

"Excuse me. The door was distorted and it wouldn't open. Renovation would have been necessary anyway."

Apparently, the door that looked safe upon first glance was somehow distorted.

"Is that so? But you should say something next time."

"Yes, Shishō."

Just the answer is fine, Zanoba.

Anyway, we entered the house.

We saw the lobby immediately.

There are stairs going up to the second floor directly in front of us and there are doors on our right and left.

There is a corridor leading to the back, near the side of the stairs.

Although it's viewed as a haunted house from the outside, the inside was bright.

The house's exposure to the sun is good. It is a good place.

Does a real estate agent regularly clean? There isn't much dust piling up.

"Shishō, how should we proceed?"

"First we'll start by investigating the right side of the house, looking through all the rooms. I don't think that there are traps, but please be careful where you step because there is a possibility that the floor and ceiling have become rotten."

Zanoba nodded, and Cliff looked back.

"You, you look like the real thing, you know."

"...For the time being, I am also an A-rank adventurer after all."

"Ah, that's right."

Cliff seems to be tense or something.

That reminds me, it seemed like he went off on an adventure with Elinalise and [Stepped Leader] the other day, but I never heard any details.

How did it turn out?

"That reminds me, how did the adventure go the other day?"

"...It was harsh."

"Well, they are all S-ranked..."

It probably wasn't that harsh for every member of [Stepped Leader].

I understand that their partner is a rookie.

They might not have been very considerate of that fact since it was their intention to educate him about this and that.

However, it's another story if Cliff didn't think of it like that.

"What should I do?"

"Please attack with Exorcism magic if you find an enemy."

"I understand... What should I do if that doesn't defeat the spirit?"

"Please withdraw, Zanoba or I will handle it."

When I said that, Cliff made a face that seemed offended.

I follow up.

"Because if Cliff-senpai uses magic, the house may be damaged."

Cliff seems to be convinced when I say that.

I had better let the beginner get a hit in.

You use Exorcism magic if you find an enemy.

That's the first wave of attack.

Then I'll join in if that doesn't work.

"Zanoba. There is a possibility that a demon who uses magic is lurking, so please be careful."

"Leave it to me."

Unexpectedly Zanoba has a warrior's temperament and was not scared at all.

Reassuring.

I enter the door to the right of the lobby.

It was a large room.

The room was around the size of 20 tatami mats.

{ C-Editor's note: The Japanese way of measuring is to compare to a tatami size area, nearly 2 square meter. }

It was well lit, there was a large fireplace against the wall towards the back of the room.

I wonder if this place is the living room or the dining room?

The fireplace becomes a concern.

"Cliff-senpai, this fireplace, could it be a magic tool?"

"Here, I will know if I try to examine it."

Cliff was just about to go look around the back of the fireplace...

"Stop. There may be an enemy."

We'll stop there, I'll inspect the fireplace.

"Um."

Winters around here are cold, so heating is important.

If the fireplace is a magic tool, then the whole house will become warm.

If it isn't, then we'll consider remodeling.

No...! In the cold, Sylphy and I hugging each other naked is what will keep us warm... but a good fireplace is still hard to pass up.

"Get ready, when I start forcing air through the fireplace anything like a demon hiding inside should come flying out."

And to draw its attention, with magic I force a strong wind through the fireplace's chimney.

Nothing happens.

I listen carefully, but there isn't any sign that something is moving.

Some soot fell down from the chimney.

I wonder if I should try maintaining a fire in it at least once while we're here.

If there's a hole or something in the chimney and it starts a fire, that would be unpleasant.

Anyway, I decided to go and take a look through from the bottom.

I could see the sky from the depths of the chimney.

For the time being I light it and try to maintain the fire for a moment.

There is no sign that anything is lurking.

It should be all right.

"Cliff-senpai, thank you for waiting."

"All right."

Cliff investigated the inside of the fireplace and discovered a magic circle immediately.

As expected, since he has been examining a lot of magic tools and curses recently.

"It is usable?"

"I don't understand how the fire works, but it seems to be no problem with magic."

"Is that so, thank you."

All right.

I nodded and we moved to the next room.

Looking from the entrance, it is the room to the right.

The floor in this room is stone and there seems to be something like a stove.

Perhaps this is the kitchen.

A piece of cloth is on the ground near the stove, and when I went to pick it up I noticed it was a piece of tattered apron.

Sylphy might be willing to cook for me in a naked apron here.

If I think about that, it is something to be excited about.

Innovation, and then remorse.

We're here to get rid of the evil spirits.

It's not the situation to be getting up.

I checked the stove and anywhere else that seems like it might be a hiding place.

"All right, there is nothing unusual, next."

On the way, I look at the rooms in sequence.

I discovered a door to the basement behind the stairs.

I advance to the next room counter-clockwise.

There is nothing unusual.

There were places where the dust has piled up a little, but these rooms are so beautiful you wouldn't think of them as over a hundred years old.

Did the former residents even do repairs?

"Is this the last room?"

I finished inspecting the rooms on the ground floor.

Although I knew by looking at the floor plan, this mansion is symmetrical.

However, there was no stove in the kitchen on the other side.

That room might have been used for another purpose, not for cooking.

Maybe for laundry.

But, let's call it a kitchen for the time being.

2 kitchens.

2 large rooms.

4 small rooms.

2 toilets.

I get the impression that this house was built by renovating two smaller houses together.

The only staircase is the one near the entrance.

"The basement or the upper floor. Which place is more likely to have a demon?"

"I guess the basement."

"It will be the basement."

Unanimously it was decided that we check the basement first.

The door to the basement is attached to the back of the stairs to the upper floor.

A door which requires a key and looks like a storeroom.

The stairs leading into the basement were dark...

I light the lamps which I prepared and handed them to Zanoba and Cliff.

"I'll use my foresight eye to support from the rear. Don't part with the lamp even if you think that it's dangerous, I can't support you if I can't see."

"Wahaha, I am a Miko. There is nothing I fear."

While spitting out a reliable death flag, Zanoba goes down the stairs.

Be more careful.

There might even be an arrow that will come flying out as soon as you open a door.

We arrived at the basement.

"Hmm, there's nothing."

The basement was deserted.

Some wooden shelves were lined up side-by-side.

It feels like an empty warehouse.

I light up the dark room, but there is no sign of something lurking.

There is a little stain on the wall, but it doesn't particularly look like blood.

Towards the end of the wall board, there's just a little rot.

This is... We have to accept this for the time being.

There isn't a demon.

That was anticlimactic.

"Okay, so the upper floor is next."

We go out of the basement and head back to the lobby.

Then we carefully go up the stairs to the upper floor.

The wooden stairs don't make a sound. They're solid.

We make it upstairs and begin to inspect the rooms one by one.

The upper floor was also symmetrical.

There are two slightly larger rooms on each end which connect to the inside of their adjoining rooms.

The other rooms are six tatami side-by-side.

There are a total of 8 rooms.

4 small rooms of about six tatami.

2 rooms of about twelve tatami.

The middle room which leads to the bedroom had an area of about six tatami.

In addition, there was the balcony in the middle room, too.

"Hm."

Let's put a big bed in the bedroom.

A bed large enough to fit three people lying down.

Maybe I could combine two normal beds...

No, sleeping huddled in a small bed isn't that bad.

You'll be warm when you wake up from sleeping side by side.

Being sexually active, with Sylphy's chest to massage within arm's reach.

It isn't too bad.

Anyway, the bed is important since I use it every day.

Oops, of course it isn't limited to erotic purposes.

It's also to sleep in every day.

"Cliff-senpai."

"What is it? Did you find what it was?"

"Do you think a bigger bed is better when you use it as a couple?"

"Ah...?"

Cliff falls silent for approximately several seconds.

Thinking.

He inhales suddenly.

And sighed.

"It is. Such a 'thing' is also important, but it's rude to the other party if you are always like that."

"Yeah... Hm, is that so."

His words are persuasive for some reason.

I wonder what Elinalise would do.

As soon as they are alone in a room, Elinalise would attack Cliff with bloodshot eyes.

I can't imagine it easily.

I will take it to heart.

Oh, apart from that, is there a need to make the bed slightly bigger?

"Phew, there isn't."

I said with a sigh after looking around the last rooms.

"So, as planned, let's spend a night here."

"Yes. Thank you."

I didn't expect to see the problem when I was tentatively searching for it today.

Originally, it's a story of a guy that appears in the middle of the night.

Along with a sharp sound.

It's a creepy story.

Perhaps some kind of demon has settled down here.

I don't know of a demon ghost or any another demon.

I didn't think that it was a strong demon when I was in town, but carelessness is bad because the low rank adventurers that failed the request are now dead.

Unexpectedly, you don't know whether a homeless thief or something else has made this their headquarters either.

There's a kirikiri sound sharply picking at the entrance.

No, the door was broken. Then is it the back door?

A smell doesn't do for it.

Isn't there a line?

Um, I don't know.

Are three people enough? I should have also brought Elinalise... just to make sure.

In her experience, acquired through age, she might have known about something like this.

But to be honest, I feel like I can't put up with her in a sexual sense.

A shadow that comes creeping in when you see it in the middle of the night.

The temptation that is whispered in the ear...

[Cliff is sleeping in the other room.]

[No, it is not okay.]

I also understand that.

It's not good.

I made an announcement at the end of the second floor, from just outside the bedroom.

"I will wait here tonight. You may not show up during the day, but for the time being I'm sleeping here tonight."

"Hmm. Julie will be worried."

"I'm also worried about Liese."

The two people spoke their worries about the woman whom they each left.

Julie's a smart child.

However I understand that she's considered a slave as well.

In the corners of the male dormitory, many of the nobles like to prowl indiscriminately.

But Zanoba doesn't need to worry.

Elinalise is a woman who is lascivious.

I also know that she is popular.

She may have an affair by taking advantage of when Cliff isn't there tonight.

It will be a worry for him.

In contrast, how about my Sylphy?

She will escort the princess today.

It's as usual, nothing to worry about.

No, I said I would go out today, but I didn't say that I was going to stay out.

Possibly, she may plan to come to my room and talk a little bit before going to bed.

However, I am not there.

Sylphy might be left waiting in a cold corridor.

A voice echoes out [Rudi's late...] all alone.

I'm worried about it.

"The night will fall soon."

At Zanoba's words, I look out and see the sunset's reflection in the window.

I can't tell her before tonight.

Sylphy would have already returned to the girl's dormitory.

No, even without saying it directly, if I write something in front of the door saying I'm out tonight...

All right, let's do it, let's do it now.

Oh wait.

What will these two do while I'm out.

It is regrettable.

For the time being, I'm the leader of this party.

Well it's a little thing.

Even Sylphy will understand it, if I explain it properly later.

No, but I heard somewhere a long time ago.

The accumulation of little things will produce a big crack later on.

Damn, I have a bad feeling about this.

During such a time I'm wearing a death flag on purpose, I must dispel this bad feeling.

"Zanoba."

"What's the matter?"

"...When this request is over, I'll get married."

"Yes. It is something that should be done quickly if you want to celebrate grandly in this mansion."

Zanoba nodded while looking puzzled.

My bad.

I had a bad feeling I wouldn't make it out the front door.

I felt that it would be impossible to succeed if I said something like [Please give us your blessing.] while riding the mood here.

That... For the time being, I'll put some hard thing in my breast pocket.

And, although I thought that, I have no breast pocket.

It is not possible to suddenly stop a flying .357 magnum bullet like this.

Cliff interrupted my line of thought.

"Invite Liese and me to the celebration."

"Isn't that natural?"

"It's okay if you take me for granted, but I would feel sorry for Liese to be left out."

Because Cliff is a guy who cannot read the mood, I wonder if he's always this glum.

Pitiful guy.

I'll invite him properly.

Of course, Elinalise also.

Ah.

Nevertheless, I am a man.

I want to end this quickly and rub Sylphy's breasts.

No, I will strongly endure for now.

Because I will have many troubles later.

While I considered this, it became nighttime.

On the other hand, Sylphy heard the information that Rudeus had prepared a house for them, so at that time she was lying around and hugging a pillow while remembering her delusion.

We will take turns keeping watch at night.

Two people sleep while the other is the lookout.

If there is an abnormality, we wake up the two remaining people immediately.

It's such an arrangement.

That said, I'll wake them up by all means if there's a particular "Kirikiri" sound.

The room we are sleeping in is the same one in which the previous resident was cruelly murdered.

It's a room at the end of the hall on the upper floor.

It may be related to the place that a demon appears.

I can't really think of this kind of thing being caused by some sort of homeless thief, but if it is then it would ease my mind.

If the opponent is a human, dealing with them is easy.

There might even be a reward for catching them, which will help the wedding fund.

If the opponent is a demon, it's simpler.

Search and destroy.

It is really simple.

"Wake up Rudeus! There's a sound!"

It was Cliff who woke me up.

I sprang up immediately.

Zanoba is still sleeping.

We had rotating guard shifts for about two hours to allow each other to get a shallow sleep.

Since we don't know the exact time, we used an hourglass.

It is the second shift now.

In the middle of the night.

It's just the right time for a demon to come out.

"Please wake up Zanoba."

I briefly told Cliff and moved to the door.

And I listen carefully.

Kiri ..... Kiri .....

..... Kata ..... Kata .....

..... Kyi ..... Kyi .....

Hm, this is dangerous.

It sounds real.

It's very clear.

The sound is like a chair creaking.

Scary.

I was able to see with foresight eyes.

"Afu ~a ....."

Zanoba while rubbing his eyes, yawned greatly.

I confirm it and put my hand on the doorknob.

Then, I open the door slowly, so as not to make a noise.

I look at the hallway.

Nothing.

Just in case, I also look at the other side.

Nothing.

The top, the bottom. Nothing.

I listen carefully.

I hear nothing.

The sound has already stopped.

Zanoba got up.

"What's up?"

"There's nothing there."

We can either search inside the house or wait until there is a change in this room.

The former resident thought that he misheard the sound, left it unattended, and died.

The thing is, if we wait here... and there is some kind of threat...

No, even the previous resident, if he heard a sound that clear he would have gone to investigate.

Do I imitate him?

"I will search for the enemy."

"All right. Is the formation the same as before?"

"Oh, be careful."

"If Shishō protects the back, it would be a relief."

Zanoba has a stone club.

Cliff filled with tension, followed.

"Cliff-sempai, do you remember what to do?"

"I'll cast Exorcism magic."

"That's right. Thank you"

So it's okay.

Zanoba is the tank while Cliff uses Exorcism magic, and if that doesn't work I'll use a rock bullet.

All right.

"Zanoba, go."

A night search began.

I know where the rooms are since we examined the house once already during the day.

The search operation went smoothly.

First, I examine all the rooms upstairs.

Nothing unusual.

Then, we carefully went down to the ground floor.

We check out the rooms one by one, such as the stove or fireplace, and other places something might be hidden.

Nothing unusual.

The rooms are all beautiful.

"Shishō, only the basement is left."

"Ah."

We move to the basement.

The door behind the stairs.

The stairs to the basement.

It's dark.

There seems to be some strange sense from the basement.

It seems I'm also tense.

I could hear my heart thumping.

A single deep breath.

While paying attention at the back, we descended the stairs.

I feel like I'm descending into hell.

We arrived at the basement.

"What's up?"

"There is nothing."

Zanoba answered so.

I also tried to light up the surroundings with a lamp.

I try to look carefully at the corner.

But, there's nothing there.

However, the former resident would have examined the basement too.

It's the most suspicious place.

However, there was nothing to be found even if you look at a glance.

"For the time being, let's prepare for a surprise attack once we return to the room."

I heard the sound.

Then the enemy will come.

Alternatively, it may wait to attack until after we fall fast asleep...

Well, we can also try to pretend to be asleep until tomorrow.

We carefully leave the basement.

And go up to the second floor.

We walked to the hallway and came back to the room we waited in.

"Zanoba, please be careful when opening the door, It is also possible that it is lurking in the room where we slept."

"I understand."

Zanoba slowly reached the doorknob while grasping his stone club.

It opened.

Nothing happens.

"...."

"...seems to be all right."

Nothing.

No attack.

"Fu ~u....."

A sigh.

Let's see if it attacks the place again while we are sleeping

Or, for example, if it attacks while using the toilet.

That reminds me, I didn't examine the garden.

When tomorrow comes, I guess I should also investigate the garden.

And.

Then, suddenly.

I looked back.

There it is.

Down the hall.

Lowering its posture as if to crawl.

The upper body part peeped out from the stairs.

It tilts his head looking at me.

I wonder if it's human.

There was an eye. There was a nose. There was a mouth.

There was no hair. There were no ears.

And I didn't feel its life either.

"..."

In the dark, while the pale silhouette rose, the guy was looking at me.

For several seconds, we stared at each other.

"You-"

The moment I was about to say something.

That fellow moved.

It raised its upper body as if about to leap, then jumped to the second floor.

There were four hands.

There were also four feet.

In the dark, that person while brandishing a kind of stake in his hand, while moving four feet, without a sound, ran over here with tremendous speed.

"Uoaaa!?"

I lost my balance.

I shot a Rock Bullet at once while falling on my backside.

It crosses my mind, my concern is that it might break the house.

Hesitation weakened the power of Rock Bullet.

The Rock Bullet crushed the shoulder of the guy and it staggered.

However, the guy doesn't stop.

He raises a stake toward me.

Then I try to avoid it with foresight eye.

"Shishō!"

Zanoba jumped in front of me.

A stake was swung down swiftly into Zanoba.

The stake struck an inch from his heart.

"Zanoba!"

It didn't stick.

Zanoba's Touki stopped the stake.

Is, it's Zanoba indeed!

Nothing serious!

Zanoba grabbed the guy's face with one hand.

It thrashed its 8 limbs in a frenzy, pounding on Zanoba.

"Then our God gives grace to the Mother Earth!

I do it against the law of nature, and give the foolish person Heaven's vengeance!

[Exorcist Rate] !"

Cliff started chanting while half of his body was still inside the room.

White light shot out from his staff and hit the guy.

However that guy's movements don't stop.

It isn't a ghost?

I aimed my hand at the guy.

Rock Bullet.

Next I'll hit him in the face.

But in this position, I'll hit Zanoba.

"Zanoba, step aside, I'll use a Rock Bullet!"

"Shishō, please wait!"

Zanoba didn't move.

Even though his clothes were tattered from being continuously struck with the stake, he didn't flinch.

Why?

"It's fine, move! I'll do it!"

"Please wait! Shishō! Thank you!"

Zanoba hugged him.

As if to protect it from me.

It continued to struggle in a frenzy.

Zanoba's clothes were shredded.

Despite his superhuman strength, he revealed an uncharacteristically slender back.

For several seconds, for several minutes, as time passed.

The guy moved intensely, but gradually his movement dulls.

Eventually, it stopped moving.

"Fu ~u....."

Zanoba confirmed it, stripped off his torn clothes and tied up that guy's hands and feet.

"Shishō, first to the room."

"Ah."

I was prompted by Zanoba, and we returned to the room.

In the room, Cliff was trembling and shaking.

"I, I, wasn't running away you know. I thought the narrow hallway was becoming a hindrance."

"Well... It was a wise decision."

"R-Right?"

It wasn't convincing.

Well, I was also abruptly scared by it, and I won't say anything.

"Shishō."

"Zanoba, you survived. But it was dangerous. Because even you aren't an immortal like a Demon King..."

"Shishō its amazing, look here, please look at this."

Zanoba was very excited.

While completely ignoring my words, he had sat on the ground.

I hear a light sound unexpectedly clang-clang.

Zanoba lights it up with a lamp.

"This, this is a... doll?"

There a pale colored, wooden doll was laid out.

Four hands and four feet.

It is a strange figure, but it is a doll.

The feet were bound with cloth, when I thought that I didn't hear its footsteps. It is a black cloth.

I thought that it was a stake, but it is a broken hand.

Among the four hands, two of them were broken.

On it's face was a nose and a mouth made with minimal effort.

Something like a glass ball is fitted for the eyes.

It is inorganic too.

I met eyes with the damn thing.

To be honest. I don't want to look at it too much, it's too creepy.

Also... at some point it starts to move.

If you look at Cliff, he also seems to agree with me.

Holding his staff, he was staring at the doll vigilantly.

"Shishō, this is amazing."

Only Zanoba was different.

He seems to not be able to hide his excitement.

If it comes with a rare doll, this is it immediately.

"Zanoba, no matter how much you like a doll-"

"Shishō! This doll is moving! A doll moving!"

And, that said, I also noticed.

It is.

This doll attacked us.

"A doll that moves..."

A doll that moves.

Golem.

Automota

Maid Robo. Wa wa wa.

Such words crossed my mind.

The fear had faded in an instant.

"It certainly is amazing."

"Shishō, did you realize it at last?"

I listened to Zanoba whose tone seemed to imply "There's no way Shishō wouldn't realize it".

It was a tone that stimulated pride.

"Ah. It was nice of you to not break it. Zanoba, there's no doubt in your judgment."

"Fu fu, I noticed that this was a doll at first glance."

"Indeed, your eye for dolls has already surpassed me."

I properly praised Zanoba who had a satisfied look.

However, it is a moving doll.

If you think about it, there are moving minerals like a golem or something like that in this world.

This doll is a wood carving, but maybe its possible to move a stone figure.

Being able to move the figure itself.

Using a man-made material such as silicon, creating a doll with the skin of a person is possible.

And if it moves...

The dream spreads.

"Zanoba, what should we do. My heart is racing."

"Shishō, me too. I can barely contain tears of joy!"

First of all, let's take this doll back home.

Then examine how it moves.

Since it can't normally move, it might be like a magic tool with a magic circle carved in it.

"Hey, you guys, give me a break!"

And, he was angry suddenly.

Cliff still remains clenching his staff, while glaring.

"This isn't the time or place to talk about such a thing!"

"What do you mean [such a thing]!"

Zanoba grabbed Cliff's face, and lifted him into the air.

"Agaaaa!!"

Cliff grabbed Zanoba's arm while remaining suspended, but it won't budge.

It's been a while since I last saw this spectacle.

"A doll moved! Why don't you understand its importance!"

"Owowow! There are demons that create moving armors too you know!"

A demon.

Hearing that term, I remembered our objective.

We did not come here to catch a moving doll.

I came to obtain this house.

However, securing the house, and clearing up the mystery of the moving doll...

It's not like I can't do both.

"Zanoba, please release your hand."

"Mu, but shishō."

"Cliff-senpai's words are reasonable."

Zanoba released his grip.

Cliff is let down instantly, I cast healing magic immediately.

What a crybaby.

"Perhaps, this doll is the identity of the demon."

"Um."

"There may not be just one. Lets find and capture the rest. Maybe we'll find blueprints for the doll."

"Oh, I see, for sure!"

Zanoba with a face convinced nodded and said.

"We won't sleep tonight.

Let's thoroughly search for where this doll was hiding."

Thus, the third house search began.

There is nowhere to hide such a large doll.

The consensus was, after looking around the house twice, there wasn't such a place.

I thought there might be something in the garden we haven't accounted for, but there was nothing.

There were the doll's footprints in the snow, but that was it.

Therefore, an idea comes to mind, that there is a room hidden somewhere.

The house was made to be symmetrical.

If we go looking for a part that's not symmetrical, we might find something.

I thought so, and tried looking for a dubious place while checking the floor plan on both floors, but I couldn't find anything.

I mean, the inside of the house is too dark.

Even if there was something unusual, it may go unnoticed.

"It might be better to reexamine it at noon tomorrow."

We agree with Cliff's idea and decided to search again the next day.

Before the search, I brought the doll back to the Magic University.

If you look at the bright side, the doll that has been found is quite old.

What looked pale is originally a white paint that had started to peel off due to mold.

"Are you master's new doll?"

I thought Julie would be frightened, but there was nothing to worry about.

She is looking at it curiously.

"Do you want me to clean it?"

I heard that.

It seems she was sometimes tasked with cleaning Zanoba's newly purchased dolls.

Zanoba says [It's to deepen the appreciation of dolls] it seems the best way to clean and polish a doll is by wiping it down with compassion.

She received a good education.

"How can we get it to move again?"

"After searching the mansion, we'll examine it."

It looked like Zanoba couldn't wait to start researching this doll.

I understand that feeling.

I understand it, but I want you to calm down.

For now, the doll had been sealed in a box which I made with earth magic.

It would be bad if Julie got attacked while we are not here.

I came back to the house.

I purchased a large number of lamps to light all of the rooms.

I crushed all the possibilities that I hadn't considered when I first came.

I also examined the fireplace.

I stuck my head inside to have a thorough look.

"Hmm, did it change..."

I finished searching the fireplace while knocking down some soot and spiders' webs.

Then, I noticed the cause of my discomfort yesterday.

The floor wasn't stained with soot.

As if something had done the cleaning, everything was neatly wiped clean.

When I think back, the cloth that had been sown to the doll's feet was black.

Each and every night it might have been cleaning the house with that cloth.

No, the house would be stained by using such cloth. Black is rather...

Oh, by any chance, that cloth, was it a magic tool?

No, let's put that on hold.

Now then, upper floor, ground floor, basement.

...The basement is still suspicious.

I brought a few lamps into the basement.

Since they could use up the oxygen, I left the door open.

I considered the possibility of something being hidden in the middle of the stairs, so I examined that as well.

In the deserted space of the basement, I arranged the lamps.

[Look! It's amazing, it's bright like the afternoon] is what a person from a fairy-tale might say.

"When it's this bright, I can tell just by looking."

The edge of the basement.

The wall which was made with a wooden board.

I didn't see it clearly when we were using only one or two lamps in the dark, but with this much light I could see clearly.

The corner of the wall, it had a dark square.

It is a hidden door.

I'm sure you wouldn't be able to tell it was there in just a bit of light when it was first made, but thanks to the passage of time, the part which opens and closes got dirty, and it rose to the surface.

On the ground as well, the portion where it opens and shuts is clearly carved out.

"All right, let's enter at once!"

Cliff was excitedly moving to open the door.

In preparation for an attack, I looked ahead to the door with foresight eye.

But, Cliff stopped moving immediately.

"What is it?"

"I don't know how to open it."

Since he said so, I also took a look.

There isn't a dent that is common among things such as sliding doors, nor is there a doorknob.

Even though that's the case, it's not like we can push it open either.

"Shishō, shall I break it?"

Zanoba's proposal, but I shake my head.

Although I could repair it, I don't really want to break it.

"Hmm ....."

I look at the ground.

The trace of the door opening and closing is left there.

It is certain that it opens. The door opens on this side.

"Nothing."

And, I noticed that one trace was slightly different.

The trace which opened the door begins with the third piece of board of the left.

A piece of the dark wood door slips off.

And there a little storage drawer opened.

The ninja village that I visited on a field trip during my elementary school days.

There was a hidden door there.

I remember the feeling and try to push the left edge.

A [Giii], sound let out.

However, it does not open. Heavy.

"Zanoba, try pressing here."

"Um."

I let Zanoba push it.

And then, the door made a [kiririkiki] sort of creaking sound as it rose and opened.

The sound in the middle of the night, was this sound?

On the interior side of the hidden door there was a doorknob. Probably to make closing it from the inside easy.

"I do not think there's a trap.... but there might be something, so please be careful."

I went inside while saying so and lighted up the inside with a lamp.

The possibility of a trap or a surprise attack ended as imaginary fears.

There was a small room.

One desk, a single wooden pedestal.

That's all.

On the desk, several books and ink pots were placed.

As for the pot, the cover is broken, and the contents have evaporated.

On the pedestal side I'm not sure what words would be good to describe it.

It might be similar to a coffin.

It's like a lump of wood the size of that.

I have the feeling that the surface is dented in the form of the doll.

After looking closely, in the place where the head goes... in the part where the eyes would set there are transparent stones embedded.

I felt intuitively that the doll in question had slept here. Most likely, that doll lays down here and recharges... no, it probably supplies magic power.

"Cliff, do you know what this pedestal is?"

"No, this is the first time I've seen it."

Cliff shook his head.

I touch the pedestal timidly.

I don't think it will suddenly shut on me but...

I stretch out a hand to a certain book disregarded on a desk.

I understood that it was left unattended for a considerably long time, but, fortunately, there was no trace of being worm-eaten.

Would the doll in question do the insect extermination?

The cover had a title and a crest.

The title isn't readable.

When I open it, the text is also not readable.

If it's in letters that I can't read then that means it's either Heavenly God language, or Sea God language.

Or else it might be written in some other minor language.

But I have a feeling that I have read both the crest and the letter somewhere.

Where was it?

Was it at the Magic University Library?

I turn the page.

Then there were some figures.

The figure of a human body, it's a figure of the magic formation.

Furthermore, the human figure where there are four hands and feet appeared when I turned up a page.

"...Zanoba."

"Yes."

Zanoba who was waiting at the entrance, came towards me.

"I think, this is what was written in the doll, but what do you think?"

"I can't read it. However, perhaps this is it without doubt."

"How, show me."

After hearing such an exchange, Cliff had also stuck his head in.

While turning the pages lightly we looked through the book as a group.

The string binding together the pages is considerably old and, despite the paper, seemed like it would come loose at any moment.

A figure, an arrow, and a letter.

Even if a commentary or an explanatory note is written, I wouldn't understand it at all.

Illustrations of the parts of the arms, magic circles, indicators, and some kind of notes.

These sorts of notes are written in the margins in various ways.

"If you're simply looking at the figure, it resembles the magic formation of a magic tool."

Cliff said it alone.

"Is that so?"

"Oh, I understand it because I studied it recently, I have seen similar magic formations. Perhaps, that doll would be a magic tool."

"I see."

I try to hypothesize.

The previous former resident.

No, perhaps the first resident here, had probably studied the doll.

This magic circle might have touched upon some sort of taboo, so it was done secretly.

I think the doll was trying to protect this house, like the role of a security guard.

And the first resident half-completed it.

Going off the looks of that doll, it seems there were still a number of problems remaining, but they succeeded up to the point of making it able to move around inside of the estate and fight.

However, the first resident disappeared.

Whether he moved away with things left half finished or it was exposed and he was caught, I don't know.

It is very likely that he died of an unexpected accident, and the result of the research remains.

Probably... the doll at first might have been sleeping on this pedestal all the time.

However, it started up for some reason.

It moved around while cleaning in the house, and started to act to fight off the intruder.

Perhaps, it was programmed that if it finished cleaning, to return to this pedestal and charge.

Unfortunately I think the person who was murdered was recognized to be [an intruder] by the doll.

However, if it goes out to the garden then, it wouldn't have been surprising if someone had witnessed it, but...

No, the door of the entrance was broken like that wasn't it.

Come to think of it, in the building, only that door was broken.

The former resident might have changed it. For security or something.

Since the shape of the door is changed, it wasn't able to open it.

Originally it was programmed to patrol the garden, but it gave up because the door couldn't be opened.

However, the door was broken open when we entered.

Therefore, according to the program, it went around the garden.

And we passed each other.

After we returned to the upper floor, it caught up.

It doesn't seem strange to think that.

"Anyway, there doesn't seem to be any more dolls."

I mean that, this case is closed.

As a precaution, I further search the house carefully,

and checked on its state for a few more days.

I also don't hear the sound in the middle of the night.

It is safe.

I went to the real estate agent and finished the formal agreement to buy the property.

As for the identity of the evil spirit, we said it was an evil demon that was hiding in the basement.

A supplier becomes available from the next day and will do the repair work and cleaning.

I was asked if I wanted to buy everything including furniture from them, but I decided to go with just the bare minimum of things.

As such, it would be better to look around together with Sylphy.

That is to say, is it a Japanese-like sense?

Since there were a few parts where I wanted to help out on myself, the time when we would actually be able to move in would be about half a month later.

From now on, the smiling face of Sylphy floats on my eyes.

["You see, this is our home!"

"Kyaa, Rudi it's lovely."

"There's a large number of rooms after all, no matter how many children we have it'll be alright!"

"Thinking about the future as well, amazing, embrace me!"

"Of course honey, the bed is already prepared."

"Rudi turn me into a mess!"]

But my face shouldn't be effeminate.

...It's not a suitable face.

[Huh, Rudi were you only able to prepare a house of this level?]

Sylphy wouldn't say that. Yup, she is not that kind of selfish person.

Still, it was the product of hard work.

The house was cleared and bought in just a few days, I also got to keep the doll that was haunting it.

That doll, it's definitely a magic tool.

Normally, it might not be good if you don't submit those kinds of things to the Magic Guild.

Oh well, I don't yet belong to the magic guild, so it doesn't matter.

Since it was a part of the house I bought I'll just take ownership of it, like that.

Around the time day ended, I decided to carry out the research materials that were in the basement.

Zanoba carries the pedestal, and I carry the books.

We'll use it for the study of the moving doll in question.

"Shishō."

On the way back to the magic university.

Zanoba addressed me with a serious look.

He carried the huge pedestal over his shoulder.

It clearly wasn't made with the consideration that it would ever be carried around given its weight, it's only possible because it's Zanoba.

For the time being, it was wrapped in cloth, but when viewed from a distance, he may appear to be carrying a coffin.

"What is it?"

"The study of this moving doll. Will you entrust it to me?"

I noticed his eyes unintentionally.

Unprecedented determination was seen through the depths of his round glasses.

Zanoba said。

"My total amount of magic is small, and my hands are also clumsy.Even the red dragon figure that I'm trying to do just hinders Shisho and nothing is proceeding at all."

That's not it.

He said it easily, but I felt the weight of his troubles on his mind.

It was not something he said lightly.

"But with something like this in front of me, I think maybe I can do something. After looking at the book, I think I can understand what the writer wanted to do."

Hmm.

Is that so?

As both of them love dolls there may be something only they can understand. Even if they can't understand the language, maybe they can feel something.

"It will take me some time to understand the research. Although if Shisho does it, it will proceed more quickly."

I can't afford to spend all my time researching this doll.

It might work if I allow Zanoba.

But.

"What would you do if the doll acts violently again?"

"Even if the doll runs away temporarily, if it's me, I will be able to apprehend it without injury.

Shishō also should have seen it?"

Well, there is no problem in that respect.

And it would be a bit frightening if it began to move in the middle of the night, but perhaps if you don't charge it in this pedestal, it will not be able to move.

As expected, it's unsuitable to store it in Zanoba's room, we better borrow a research room from the Magic University.

A room with a firm door.

No, since it might have used some kind of taboo technique, it would probably be better to keep the research in a different place...?

Nanahoshi and I might also be borderline because of our study of teleportation magic, although I think that's all right.

Just in case I will ask for Nanahoshi's opinion on it, I think she's a member of A class guild.

"Please Shisho, when Shisho's plan is fulfilled, I don't want it to end with me just paying money."

"..."

However, Zanoba also has various considerations.

Although I am a little worried since he becomes singleminded when it comes to dolls.

Said the person who allowed it being the case.

"Please! Leave this study to me!"

When I fell silent, Zanoba seems to have misunderstood it.

He knelt on the spot.

He placed the pedestal down there and with both hands spread out fell to the ground on the spot.

What other choice do I possibly have with you prostrating yourself on the ground, in the snow.

"I understand. Zanoba, stand! I will leave it to you."

"Truly?!"

When I said so, Zanoba stood up with haste.

His expression beaming with joy.

As for this fellow, the change is quick.

"But, if by some chance there is a possibility that involves in the domain of a forbidden technique..."

"Is it a forbidden technique?"

"Well, for the time being, since I will borrow a laboratory from the Magic University, please study it there."

"...Thank you!"

Zanoba lowered his head greatly again.

In that motion a part of the pedestal swept past my face, barely missing the tip of my nose.

That's dangerous.

What are you going to do if you hit my head.

"You guys, try not to standout so much while you're outside."

Finally, Cliff muttered alone.

Thus, Zanoba began research on the autonomous doll, and I obtained a house.

The next step is a renovation.

The Kingdom of Ranoa, Magic City Sharia.

It's a city with many students, and in one of its corners was a house that has a certain problem. Built 100 years ago, the Rudeus Mansion. The problem that it had was that it was...

『A haunted mansion』

Though its appearance was simply that of an aged Western-styled mansion, it was overrun with moss and withered vines, and to describe it in one word, it was 'unsettling'.

The one who thought to live in this house was a client by the name of Rudeus Greyrat. He was a former A ranked adventurer, and is now a student at the Magic University. Although he bought the house because he was getting married, he was dissatisfied with the appearance.

What kind of problems did this house have?

The moment you took a step into the premises, you'd see a garden that lacked maintenance. An entrance that was broken. A ceiling and walls with various stains left about. A leaking roof. A fireplace whose functionality was questionable... It was something that brought to mind the word 'abandoned'.

"Because of some magical components it's been aging well, but as expected there's still a feeling of aging to it. As a home for newlyweds, the atmosphere is a bit much, huh?"

He wanted a nice clean home suitable for a pair of newlyweds. A single man accepted this client's request.

He was a craftsman who did renovations, 『Balda of the Great Cave』. A first class architect belonging to the Basherant Dukedom's Magic Guild. He could take care of things from the planning, all the way to the construction and was a veteran of 30 years.

With the construction techniques he learned in the Holy Kingdom of Milis as a base, he had many accomplishments, such as the Magic University's school buildings.

Though he had a few stubborn parts, he was an agreeable person and his skill was assured. He always had a hammer hanging at his waist, and if strangers had something they didn't like about their houses, he'd fix it for them; he held the spirit of a true artisan. Whether it was his disciples or buildings, he'd fix it with a strike of his hammer. Because of this, he was called 『Balda of the Hammer』.

"Yo, you've come. So you're 『Quagmire』, huh, boy? I heard you were getting married!"

The person who had come to meet the craftsman was the client this time. He was known as 『Rudeus of the Quagmire』 on the streets, and was received sociably by the craftsman.

"Yes. I'll be in your care, Balda-san."

Balda knew of the name 'Rudeus'. He had an old friend named Talhand. He had heard about Rudeus from Talhand's companion, Elinalise.

"I was fine with buying a house for marriage, but the state of it is as you see."

"For now, can I have a look around the house and inside it?"

"Please go ahead."

When he made to enter the house, the craftsman immediately frowned.

"Oi, the hell happened? The door is in horrible shape. It looks like you tried to bloody tear it off."

"Because the door didn't fit well, there was no choice but to break it."

"Honestly, kids these days freaking breaking things without a thought, don't have enough respect for items."

"Yeah, they're horrible, huh?"

The client warded off the indignant craftsman's complaints in an unaffected attitude. His attitude was almost like he wasn't the one who had broken it.

The craftsman couldn't accept this attitude. However, he endured it. After all, he had heard that 『Rudeus of the Quagmire』 was a frightening person when angered.

"What are you gonna do about the door?"

"Um, what do you mean?"

"Like the materials, or the design. If you don't give me any specifics, I'll be going with what I judge best."

"Though I don't really mind about the materials, I'd like for you to make it firm. Also, please leave a doorknocker on it as well."

"Since it's the entrance, that much is obvious."

When the craftsman entered the house, he concealed a difficult expression.

"It's pretty worn out, huh."

"I-, is that so?"

"Though the floors were done very well, at least compared to the walls and ceiling. It's almost as if the basement was the most important part, and everything else was just made as a bonus."

"Can you tell such a thing?"

"Obviously."

The craftsman's eyes could immediately tell what parts were good, and what parts were bad. The floor, the stairs, upstairs, the dining room, the kitchen, the fireplace. These places were extremely well done. You could tell that a genius craftsman had spent 100 years using construction and magical techniques to create them. However, the walls and the roof were done by hand, which was strange.

"Still, I'll fix something like this in no time."

The craftsman spoke reassuring words. Having been reassured, the client entered the large dining room.

"It's a large room, huh? The lighting isn't bad either, huh."

"How is the fireplace?"

"Show me."

It was a fireplace with questionable functionality. The craftsman's eyes lit up.

"This is a good fireplace. It's a tad old, but it'd be better not to mess around with it."

"Is that okay?"

"Look, there's a signature carved here."

The craftsman's finger was pointed towards a crest that seemed familiar.

"This is the signature of a genius Magic Director that was here until 100 years ago. His name wasn't left behind though. In the Kingdom of Asla, magic tools with this signature fetch a really high price. Even if I say that, they're all just small items. To think that he had created a fireplace like this in this house..."

"..."

What came to the client's mind was a design drawn in the diary that he'd found the other day in this house. It was very similar to the design of this fireplace. It seemed that somehow or other, the first owner of this house had created it.

"So, what are you gonna do about this big room?"

"Let's see. What do people usually do?"

"Since it's a large room, they'd put a large table in it for use during parties. They'd also prepare another one too. That way if for some reason that room couldn't be used, they'd use this one instead."

"In other words, this wouldn't normally be used?"

"Normally, that is. But for people with lifestyles like us, one room is plenty."

"Right? ...In that case, I'll leave the other room as a leisure room."

"Alright."

A leisure room. Since that was requested, the craftsman and client moved to the next room.

"There are two kitchens, huh. But the other one has no stove."

"If there isn't a stove, then you can't use it, huh."

"If there's drainage, then you can probably use it for laundry or a bath, you know."

"...Oh, a bath!?"

The craftsman went to look at the kitchen and laundry. He checked for clogging in the drainage pipes or any other such flaws, then nodded.

"There's nothing in particular to fix."

"Mister, there's one thing I'd like to discuss with you."

The client suggested something, and then the craftsman's eyes lit up.

"You've come up with something pretty interesting, haven't you? But we don't have the materials, so it might be expensive you know."

"I'll create the materials with magic."

"So you'll manage it somehow, huh? ...That's pretty good. Alright, I'll make it work somehow."

The client's idea was entrusted to the craftsman.

——

The next day. 10 of Balda's subordinates gathered and began the renovations.

——

First Part – 『The Door』

Early in the morning, a large door was brought there. It was a door cut from high grade timber. It was a solid door with a lion-styled knocker attached to it, and there was a small magic circle on the side that functions as a burglar alarm.

"The magic square isn't anything great. If you force the door open, it makes a huge sound ring throughout the house."

"Alarm clocks are the same, aren't they?"

At the craftsman's idea, the client laughed boldly.

——

Second Part – 『The Laundry』

This room underwent a huge renovation at the hands of the craftsman. The room was split into two sections.

The section further from the door had tiles laid over its stone floor, and in the corner of the room a slanted ditch was dug.

Then in the corner of the room there was a stone box. It was large enough that three people could lay down in it. There was a slight indent left at the bottom of it.

Moreover, a small window was created near the ceiling. Just what was this supposed to be?

——

Third Part – 『The Basement』

The craftsman and the client were standing in a dark basement.

"It's a good basement, huh. Like this, there basically won't be mice."

"Yes. So, it's about this concealed door but... inside this room, I want you to make something like this."

"Why something like... Ah, no, I won't say anything. Though I'm of the Milis Faith, you were different huh, Quagmire."

At the request of the client, equipment was brought into the room, and the stain on the corner of the concealed door was cleaned off.

——

Two weeks later, the renovations were finished, and it was time to show it off.

The client had brought his bride with him.

"I wonder what it is that you wanted to show me~ I'm really looking forward to it~"

"You're speaking in monotone, Sylphy. Could it be that you've secretly gathered information and already knew in advance?"

"Ehhhh? What are you talking about? I have no idea."

While flirting with the girl who was speaking in extreme monotone, the client walked through the snow.

"While we were separated, that meek and obedient Sylphy had turned into a liar. Thinking about it, it might be something to be happy about. But if you can tell such a huge lie like this, I'm worried that you'll lie again in the future."

"Uuu... But it's your fault, Rudi. You used Ariel-sama's name, and even until the end you didn't say anything about it to me."

"Sorry about that."

It seemed that their flirting wasn't going to stop.

"Since you didn't say anything, I got worried you know. I mean, since you're cool, Rudi..."

"You thought I was cheating? I'm surprised."

"No, I mean, look, I'm, you know, I'm not really, look, I'm small so..."

The moment he saw his bride's anxious expression, the client made a weird face and clung to her.

"Whaat, you're worried about your chest? Don't worry, you know, uncle(I) is someone who believes in equality, and I'm different from bastards who discriminate. Uhehe."

"By uncle, you mean... Ah-, wa-, don't suddenly rub me, I said no.... We're in front of people!"

"You're right. I'm sorry."

By the time he arrived in front of the house, the client was downtrodden like a dog who had been scolded until his tail drooped. The bride fixed the position of her sunglasses while saying "Geez." a little angrily.

"You need to pay attention to the time and place. That kind of thing is for nighttime, when we're in bed! Okay?"

"Okay, Sylphiette-san. It won't happen again."

"Ah, b-, but if it gets to the point that you can't hold back anymore... ummm, -mumble mumble-"

"Whaat? I can't hear you... Uncle's ears are pretty bad, you see."

That pair went to look at the house.

–Before– The rocks had moss growing on them and the walls had ivy. Here and there the windows would be broken and a broken door was set against the wall near the entrance. The Rudeus Mansion had an atmosphere that seemed like a witch lived there.—

–After– The mossy rocks were cleaned up nicely, and the walls had fresh white paint applied to them. The darkened roof whose original colour was unrecognizable was coated with a bright green, and at the entrance were double doors that were a dignified dark brown. The shining and golden lion at the door was like a guard dog.—

Seeing this, the bride brought a hand to her mouth.

"How is it?"

"Uhm, umm."

"I made the colour of the roof similar to the colour your hair used to be. Though it's something you might hate, it was something I quite liked after all."

"Eh? Ah, okay. Haa~..."

It was probably closer to her ideal than she had imagined. With her hand still at her mouth, the bride let out a voice of wonder and looked at the house.

"Come now, please have a look inside."

At the client's suggestion, the two of them entered. A mat for drying feet was left at the entrance. You could tell from it the client's worry and regret over this world's shoe-wearing culture.

"The right is the dining room, and the left is the living room. Which should we look at first?"

"Umm, then, the dining room?"

"The dining room then! Very well. I'm sure you'll be quite pleased with it. Please go ahead and have a look."

It was said in a tone like a certain country's car salesman, the client exuded nervousness. They entered the room.

The large room had undergone a complete makeover. First of all, there was a large, long table in there. Though there weren't any ornaments, it was a table large enough to seat 10 people. There was white wallpaper plastered to the walls, and in the corner of the room were flowers growing in a flower vase. The large fireplace was repaired, and the new red bricks were accented.

"Wahhh, it's amazing."

"We can have our meals here, or otherwise in the living room."

"What's such a long table used for?"

"You can probably use it for when you invite people over."

"Ah, I see. That's right. We'll also have guests, huh."

The bride took off her sunglasses and scratched behind her ear. With a loving expression, the client rubbed her head.

"Well then, the next room is this way. It's the living room."

At the client's suggestion, the two of them moved to the living room. It was a large, warm, and family-oriented room.

There was a sofa that was placed around the fireplace. Near the sofa, on a small table, a water jug and cup were left there. The craftsman understood the client's wish for a 'relaxing home', and you could see glimpses of his artisan's spirit in this room.

"This room is kind of, wonderful, isn't it? Can I try sitting down?"

"Of course! Mnn ahh, don't say it, the seat is a little tough. However, it seems that it'll become softer with use."

"I haven't sat down yet, you know... Or more like, Rudi, your tone has been weird for a while now."

"I'm a little nervous, you see."

The bride meekly sat on the sofa.

"It's not really that hard, is it?"

"Really? Thank goodness."

The client sat down near the bride. Like that, he wrapped his arm around her shoulders. Their faces were turned to each other. Their gazes overlapped. The bride gently closed her eyes...

The client stood the bride up.

"S-, shall we head to the next room? The next one is the kitchen. Let us have a look at this Rudeus Mansion's prided cooking facilities."

"Mm-, mmm!"

The kitchen. In addition to the furnace that was already there, a set of the newest cooking equipment were sitting in the room. The table was large enough that even if you killed a huge boar and brought it home, you could prepare it on the table. On the furnace was a commonplace, and large pot. There were also commonplace earthenware barrels and jars, for storing things.

"This place is normal."

"It's pretty normal, huh."

The client had suddenly made a serious face, and the bride nodded with a serious face. After this was the laundry. They went down the hallway and entered it. When they did, the bride tilted her head.

"Huh? It's small, huh."

There was a large bucket, and a washboard. There was also a few baskets left there. Though there would be no problems doing laundry with just this much, they were a bit bothered by it. In particular, the door that was further into the room.

"Please have a look."

The client opened that door. When he did, it was shocking. There was a large bath in there. A large bath had been created.

–Before– An empty room without even a furnace. A room a little wide for laundry, and a spartan secondary kitchen.—

–After– The floor was covered in tiles, and a large bathtub that was filled with a lot of warm water. Water flowed along the inclined grooves. A plain, stone-built room was transformed into a tasteful bath.—

"Umm... Could it be, that this is a bath?"

"As expected of Sylphy. So you knew about baths?"

"Ah, mmn. While I was in the royal palace, you know...? But this is the first time seeing such a big one. Is this what they call a hot spring?"

"Spas are a little different."

The bride couldn't contain her surprise. The client looked at her expression affectionately. From his expression, you could hear the voice of his pitch black heart; "I'm looking forward to baths -disgusting laugh-".

"It's been filled up so that I can show you, but I plan on draining it normally."

"Mn. Umm... Later on, show me how to get in, okay? Wah!"

The client embraced his bride. It seems that somehow or other, at his bride's sudden words he was overcome with emotion.

"Geez, what is it...?"

"No, I was worrying about how to get permission to bathe with you, so I unconsciously..."

"'How'? A bath is something you don't get in alone, right? Ariel-sama would always get in with an attendant, after all. That's why I have bathing experience as well. I washed Ariel-sama after all."

"...According to a certain culture, the husband and wife wash each other's bodies, you know. Did you know this?"

"So that's how it is... It's a bit embarrassing, huh? But, I'll try my best."

After having that conversation, they walked up the stairs to the second floor. The roof that seemed like it would leak had been restored and now displayed its bright wooden surface. The client immediately headed to the door further in.

"For now the only room I've prepared on the second floor is this one."

"...Ah, amazing."

After taking a step into the room, the bride widened her eyes in wonder. What her eyes flew to were the bed that was large enough to hold three people. The only thing on it was the client's favourite pillow.

"Why such a huge bed?"

"Well that's so I can eat you right up, Sylphy."

"...Ah, I see. That's right, huh? Ehehe."

Shy smiles blossomed on their faces.

And so ends the documentary-like introduction of the house to Sylphy. She's sitting on the bed, and nestled against me. She was grinning and in a good mood. I'm glad above anything that she likes it. I want to push her down, and continue doing what husbands and wives do. However, before that, there's a little something I need to discuss with her.

"Sylphy, it's been about three weeks since we decided we'd get married. Though it was short, some time has already passed."

"Ye-, yes."

Using keigo basically meant that it was an important discussion. Noticing this, Sylphy fixed her posture.

"Though we're getting married, honestly speaking, I have no idea what to do. Frankly speaking, though I bought a house, I can't help but feel that doing so was too forward."

"I-, I don't think so. I'm really happy after all. This is such a wonderful place that on the contrary, I'm wondering if someone like me is fine..."

"Is that so? It's alright as long as there are no problems then, but what I wanted to talk about was basically what we'd be doing after this."

What we'd be doing after this. When I said that, Sylphy's face turned red and for some reason started to fidget.

"Umm, how many do you want, Rudi? But my elf blood runs strong, so it might be difficult to conceive but..."

"Y-, yeah."

Those were some really arousing words. Since this isn't modern Japan, there's no aversion to having children due to economic reasons.

Mmn. I'm someone who follows his instincts. The instinct of living beings is, in other words, to reproduce. Reproducing is, in other words, making babies.

"But what are you going to do about your job as Ariel-sama's guard?"

However, the issue of Sylphy's job should've been easy to understand. Though I don't know what Ariel-sama is thinking, if Sylphy becomes pregnant she won't be able to continue as a guard. Well, if it was just that, me or someone else could replace her. My battle ability is pretty high after all. However, being a guard isn't just about battles.

"What do you mean by 'what'...?"

"Wouldn't it be difficult to do both?"

"Regarding that, I've discussed it with Ariel-sama."

It seems they've discussed it. I guess it's natural.

"We'll be in this country for another 2 years, and it's not like she'll be returning to the Kingdom of Asura the moment she graduated. She'll probably be here for another 5 years. That's why, umm..."

Sylphy doesn't seem to be planning on quitting her job as a guard. From the fact that she won't simply quit, you can feel the strength of her bonds with Ariel-sama and Luke.

If it were the old Sylphy who just depended on me, what would she have said? Would she have thrown everything else away and remained with me for the rest of her life? That would be nice in it's own way, but...

"Sorry... Thinking about it, I'm being rude to you, aren't I...? Even though you've bought us such a wonderful house, I won't really settle down because I'll be serving as Ariel-sama's guard... I'm not really qualified to be a bride like this, am I?"

With a melancholy expression, Sylphy lowered her gaze.

'The man goes to work, and the woman looks after the home.'

That kind of idea isn't really strong here. It might be because the men and women in this world don't have a large difference in strength. Even saying that, you could say that it's still an ideal here that the men work and the women stay at home.

"I might, really be no good, huh?"

Said Sylphy, with tears in her eyes. She seemed apologetic for some reason.

2 years of abstinence. Having regained my sexual desires, two, no, three years worth of white stuff erupted from me. It's been inputted into my mind that Sylphy = person that allowed me to do erotic stuff.

You could say that most of my good will towards Sylphy is sexual. This is already basically carved into me.

However, I don't think that this is bad in itself. To me, sexual desire is something important. Sylphy was the one who brought this important thing back to me, using her own body.

I'm such a massive sex beast that the Beast Race will draw away from me. If you feed someone like me an aphrodisiac, you'll be attacked. It was Sylphy's first time. Because I was so rough, I'm sure that she was scared. Even though that was the case, she completely hid it. When I woke up in the morning, she even looked at me with a smile.

Because of that, I was able to regain my confidence. If Sylphy is no good, then who on earth would be? If right now for some reason I didn't marry Sylphy, and then Sylphy was taken by some other guy... I'd probably regret it for the rest of my life. If she were taken from me... Right, Sylphy is already my belonging.

"You're mine, Sylphy."

"Fue!? Ah, yes. I'm yours, Rudi."

"So please marry me."

Thinking about it, this is the first time I've said it directly to Sylphy.

"...Yes."

While her cheeks turned red, Sylphy nodded. I let out a sigh of relief.

"I'll try my best with the house, so please don't worry about your job as a guard. It's fine just to do as you like, Sylphy."

"Mn."

"Well, if possible, I'd like to sleep with you once every few days though~ That's about all I want."

"Mn?"

My desires leaked out.

"...By sleeping, you mean 'that kind of sleeping, right?"

"No, no, of course I won't force you. When you don't want to, I'll be happy just being allowed to rub your tiny chest."

"Umm... I'll try my best? I don't plan on making you endure, you know?"

"It's not good to force yourself. You have to properly rest up after a tired day at work. I'll take care of things myself as long as you let me touch you a little before bed for example, or in the morning."

My desires are completely overflowing. No, even if I try and put on an act, it's meaningless in front of Sylphy. I was this sort of person from the beginning.

"Do you really like my boobs that much?"

"I love them."

"But Luke said that my chest has no charm at all..."

"The words of a whippersnapper like him have zero credibility."

The younger you are, the more you fuss over whether they're large or small. However, what's truly important isn't that. It's heart. Right, Oppai-sennin?

"But you know, it's not really that different to yours, Rudi?"

"No, these huge, iron-forged pecs of mine are different from that beautiful flatchest of yours. If you want, how about having a touch?"

"Ah, mn."

Saying that, I push my chest forward and Sylphy softly touches me.

"It really is completely different, huh... It's hard..."

"Hmph!"

"...Wah-!"

When I got carried away and flexed, Sylphy moved her hand away in a panic.

"Since these pecs belong to you, feel free to touch them whenever you want, okay?"

"...A-, although I'm yours, Rudi, keep in mind the time and location, okay?"

"How about now?"

"R-, right now is, um, we're in the middle of an important discussion aren't we?"

Oop, that's right. We got off topic.

"In other words I should get to the point, huh. So that our married life goes smoothly from now on, we should properly discuss what expectations we have of each other, what we're dissatisfied about, and things like that. That's basically what I want to say."

After I tried my best to summarise what I wanted to say, Sylphy nodded.

"Mn, that's right."

"For now, is there anything that you think you should say to me?"

After thinking for a while, Sylphy looks downwards. Then in a melancholy smile, she spoke.

"Don't suddenly disappear, okay?"

"...Yeah."

That's right, huh. It'd be rough if I suddenly went away somewhere.

"I've got it. I won't suddenly disappear."

We made a promise. I think I understand the pain of having someone you love disappear on you.

"..."

"..."

It seems that the important stuff is over with. There are a number of other things that we have to discuss but, we'll get through those one by one.

"...So then, can I?"

"G-, go ahead."

With a nervous expression, Sylphy pushed out her thin chest. I immediately made to rub them but... I endured it.

The same as last time, I was about to turn into a beast. This time let's prioritise treating her gently over lust.

I gently embraced Sylphy. Like that, I slowly pushed her down onto the bed.

"...A-, aren't you going to rub them?"

"That's for morning and night."

"M-, mn."

We look at each other up close. My face is reflected in Sylphy's moist eyes. She gently closed them. While caressing her head, we clumsily kissed.

That night. I raised my sluggish body and descended to the basement.

Since I had just moved in, right now there was nothing in the underground cellar. There were just a small number of shelves left around, and it was a pretty sorry state.

I walked towards the back of the room, and reached out my hand towards the concealed door that the craftsman had fixed.

–Before– A door that would creak 'kii kii' when opened. Though it was meant to be a concealed door, there were stains around it, and its existence became obvious once there was some light.—

–After– The metal parts responsible for opening and closing were new and properly oiled, so the door opened without a single sound. The cellar walls were also of new material, and noone would be able to tell that there was a door there.—

The door quietly opened to reveal a space. Quietly sitting inside was a household shrine. It was a small shrine made of unpainted wood. The altar was made of lustrous, black stone, and a holy relic was enshrined there.

That filthy workshop had been cleaned up, and transformed into a sublime, and divine space.

In the night when everything else had fallen asleep, in this newly consecrated holy ground, I offered my prayers to god.

It's been a week since the house renovations were complete. Sylphy was given 7 days off by Ariel. So that Sylphy would have a good married life, Ariel gave her some consideration. Me making use of that, and for 7 days and 7 nights, being spoiled by Sylphy, spoiling Sylphy, and passing through many sweet and sordid nights...

Is not what happened.

Since I've become the head of a household as well, there are things that I have to do.

According to the common sense of this world, after getting married and buying a house, you host a feast and invite over people you're close to. Though I don't know which countries have this as their common sense, I do know that Shirone and Milis at least have this custom. If you just buy a new house, then it's fine not to hold one, but if you're getting married and buying a house, then you must host a feast. It's what people would call a wedding reception, huh?

"For now, let's invite our acquaintances and hold a party."

"Yes."

In the living room, we're sitting on the sofa and facing each other, and our foreheads are close together. We're looking downwards at a list of the people we're going to invite to the party. There's also a piece of paper for arranging the seating arrangements.

"Still, we sure have a range of acquaintances."

For me, it's:

Elinalise, Zanoba, Julie, Cliff, Rinia, Pursena, Badigadi. Also I'm wondering what I should do about Jinas and Soldat.

For Sylphy, it's:

Ariel, Luke, and two others.

Altogether we have eleven people, give or take. If possible I would've liked to have invited Paul and the others, but there's no helping it since they aren't here. I'd sent a letter about our marriage, but who knows when it'll arrive.

"Royalty, Beast Race, Demon Race, Slave, Adventurer... There are some pretty foul-mouthed ones among them, so let's assume that problems will arise."

Since Rinia and Pursena still don't see Ariel in a very good light, we can expect that if they're face to face a dangerous situation will arise. Were this a wedding in my previous life then we could separate them and make sure they didn't meet, but no matter how big our house may be, in the end it's still just a normal house. There's not even enough room to dance.

"You think so? Ariel-sama isn't a person who would cause problems in such a situation but..."

"Be that as it may, I don't want the atmosphere to go bad and having people want to go home. If it comes down to it, should we split them into two groups...? We could isolate the problematic ones..."

"Mmmn, but since a lot of your acquaintances seem like they'll be important people in the future, Ariel-sama would be pretty happy to meet them, right?"

In my mind floats the image of a motivated Ariel wearing makeup.

'Wedding receptions are a great opportunity because normally lots of handsome guys will appear!' she says.

Nah, I know that's not how she is though.

In short, she wants to form connections with the Special Students. Ariel is also a calculating person.

"Then with Ariel-sama taking responsibility herself, the problem now is the seating order, huh?"

It seems that they can't just sit wherever. Having said that though, it's pretty hard to rank them in social importance, huh? At least Badigadi is the most important as a Demon King incumbent, but below him are Ariel, Zanoba, Rinia and Pursena. As they're all royalty, they'll all fuss over their appropriate seating.

Cliff also seems like he'll complain if he gets too low a seat but... He has undergone this kind of education. It might unexpectedly be fine. Moreover, as long as he's sitting next to Elinalise, he probably won't have any problems.

Since Julie is a slave she'd be at the end of the table, but she'd be pitiful if we separated her from Zanoba. She's still a child who isn't good with talking after all. Since she's my direct disciple, I wonder, if I can make it work somehow.

"How high, socially, are Ariel-sama's attendants?"

"Umm, they're middle-ranking nobles."

According to what Sylphy has said, they're women, but deciding where to put women and men is also difficult. Luke is the same, but it'd be better not to separate him from Ariel too much. Though I can't imagine that one of my acquaintances would be one, it'd be terrible if Ariel got assassinated after all.

"Huh? Haven't we forgotten someone?"

While Sylphy was looking at her list, she suddenly said that. Being told that, I look at my list. A person I've forgotten. Who is it, I wonder. I don't think I've forgotten anyone but... Goriade-san?

"Ah, I got it! It's Nanahoshi-san! We have to invite her too!"

Being told this, I looked down at my list. Silent Sevenstar's name really wasn't written there. Ahh, I naturally forgot. Having said that though...

"Would she... come, do you think?"

"She'll definitely come."

"Should we invite her for now?"

Though I had no intention of leaving anyone out, she seemed like she wanted to completely shut out this world after all. No, that and not inviting her are different matters. I'd better add her name to the list.

"Having only arranged it like this, what are we going to do if no one comes...?"

What came to mind was Christmas in a certain anime. Though they had happily prepared a huge cake, no one came and they went crazy. It was that kind of painful image.

{ C-Editor's note: The lonely Christmas party scene in the Kyojin no Hoshi anime series. }

"At the very least, Ariel-sama and Zanoba-kun will definitely come, you know."

Sylphy's one line completely cast aside my anxiety. Ariel's party of four, and my two disciples, Zanoba and Julie. I think that these six people would definitely come. In Zanoba's case, even if I didn't invite him, he'd probably show up on the day prostrating with limbs and forehead on the ground, congratulating me.

"After all, I think that Ariel-sama would like to deepen her bonds with you, Rudi. Also, Zanoba-kun probably understands that if he didn't come, your trust in him would collapse so... Rudi, you're pretty mindful of these kind of things, huh?"

A-A-A-As if I am. I'm the type of guy that don't give no shits 'bout the small things.

"I wonder if Rinia and Pursena would really miss it? After all, those of the Beast Race will never refuse an invitation from a superior."

"Is that how it is?"

"Mn, if for some reason they didn't come, it's fine just to teach the two of them a lesson again."

It seems that the Beast Race don't think that much is excessive. Thinking back to the time in the Great Forest as well when Gyes was performing his dogeza, it might have been that from the perspective of the Beast Race, it was a situation where it wouldn't have been odd for Ruijerd to go on a huge rampage. Even when hit by Eris, they didn't say anything back, huh. On the contrary, after I was quickly released, they still made light of me. Does that mean that at some point I was being treated as someone lower ranked? Well, I don't know how it really was, though.

"Well, since Cliff did tell me to call him as well, I wonder if he'll come."

"I kind of want Elinalise-san to come as well..." muttered Sylphy.

Elinalise. I wonder if something happened. I've never really seen the two speaking though.

"There's just something I'd like to ask her. It's nothing important though."

I wonder what it is. Could it be that she wants to ask if we've had sexual relations? With Elinalise at the very least, she won't hear anything even if she asks.

We've sort of got an idea on what to do now.

Since there'll be more than 10 people coming, suitable ingredients are required. For that reason, first of all I'll need to go shopping. Sylphy and I head to the Commerce District, side by side.

"But before that, I was thinking of getting new clothes for you, Rudi."

So suggested Sylphy, When I hear 'clothes', I look down at what I'm wearing. It's the usual grey coloured robe. Since it's daytime, there's no need for thicker clothing.

"Ummm, you see, I like it when you wear robes, but as I thought, when you wear tattered robes like that, umm, people are watching, right? Ah, or could it be that, you like those robes?"

I don't really pay attention to how I dress, and amongst adventurers there are those who are in even crappier looking getups. That's why I never really worried about it but... If I'm dressed too shabbily, Sylphy's dignity will be at risk. It wouldn't be as bad when I'm alone, but I can't embarrass Sylphy.

"Hmmm, as the first robe I bought on the Demon Continent I am sort of attached to it, but it really is a bit mangy, huh?"

As for other clothes I have, it's basically just the fur vest. Because it doesn't look like something a magician would wear, I haven't worn it in a while. It's a little lacking in dignity to be worn next to Sylphy; after all, it looks just like something a mountain bandit would wear.

"Shall we go have a look at some clothing shops? I'll leave it up to your tastes, Sylphy."

"Mn, leave it to me."

Where we arrived was an expensive looking shop. It's a place I'd never go near were I alone. It's not a place I should be visiting wearing this robe. Sylphy had already donned her glasses and become 『Fitts』.

"My, my, if it isn't Fitts. I've always been in your care."

Because Sylphy often comes here, the shop owner gives a deep bow. In other words, Ariel-sama in Fitts' appearance often comes here. He's a purveyor of the Asura royal family. I wonder if I have enough money. How scary.

"Could you please show us your robes for magicians?"

"Yes. It's this way."

Though it's a high-class store like this, it seems that they have robes for magicians. Well, I guess that's natural. You can find magicians everywhere, to say nothing of the fact that this is the Magic City Sharia as well. It's a city where even the children of nobles are becoming magicians.

The place I was guided to was a place with flashy looking robes, made of good materials...

At least that's what I thought would be the case. It wasn't anything that different. It seems that no matter the shop, robes aren't all that different from each other. These ones do have some fine embroidery though.

"Though it may be rude of me, would it be fine if I asked about what you specialize in, Sir?"

"Ah, yes. I guess water and earth then."

"In that case, what do you think of this one? It's made from the skin of the Rainforce Lizard that lives in the Great Forest. It possesses extremely high resistance to water. The design is by Fogren. They're in charge of the designs for the Ranoa royal family's magicians."

I was suddenly recommended a reptile coat... Oh, I mean a robe. Rainforce Lizards shouldn't be particularly resistant to water. I easily froze them after all.

"If it's earth, then I think this would be good. It's made from the hide of the Begaritto Continent's Big Worm(big earthworm) and even in a sandstorm you won't be hurt at all. The design is by the up-and-coming Flone. Flone is known for using their colours creatively, and though it looks like this, it's good for avoiding detection from monsters so has a lot of practical use."

The design does look like a camouflage robe. I wonder if it's just normal for high end shops to mention the name of the design as well.

I don't dislike camouflage, but this is a little off. If I was going to pick something like this, it'd be nicer to have a winter-camouflage version, huh.

"Sy-... Fitts-senpai, which do you think would be good?"

"Let's see... Isn't this one kind of nice? It's similar to the clothes you're wearing now, Rudi."

What she was holding in her hands was a robe that was a darker grey than my current one. What is this colour called? Charcoal Grey?

There are more parts to it than my current robe. There are pockets, and buttons for doing up the sleeves. Instead of a belt, there's a cord for doing it up.

"That one is produced from the hide of the Demon Continent's Lucky Rat. The design is by Kazura. They're known for having subdued designs, and are preferred by those who are a bit older."

"Mickey Mouse?"

"Lucky Rat, Sir. The Lucky Rat is a stronger variant of the Mackey Rat, and is a D-ranked monster. It's very good as clothing material and boasts strong resistance to poison and acid."

What floated through my mind was a black guy wearing red-shorts. I quickly shake my head. At this rate I'll get visitors in the night.

By the way, during my time traveling on the Demon Continent I'd seen Mackey Rats; they were huge rats of about half a meter. Since it'd a stronger variant, the Lucky Rat would probably be even bigger. When I had first seen the Mackey Rats during a request, I really shuddered. At any rate, these huge rats were running about inside a warehouse after all. There was a single Lucky Rat amongst them. I drew away from them, and Ruijerd and Eris sent me a weird look, whilst kicking them about.

"Since people do say 'Names and natures often agree.', I wonder if I should go with this one."

Putting my memories of the rats aside, I do like this robe. My bride has good taste. But hm, what worries me is the cost. Or so I was thinking as I checked it, and yep, it was a price that wasn't something you'd pay for clothing. Wow, it really is expensive. Though they may be small fry, the materials on the Demon Continent are high quality. On the Demon Continent you'd even build houses with them.

"'Names and natures'...? Though it may be rude, may I ask for your name, Sir?"

"Ah, yes. I'm Rudeus Greyrat."

"Goodness, you were a member of the Greyrat family? I do apologize. We've really been in Luke-sama's favor, so this time we'll give you a discount."

Is this way of saying 'Send Luke our regards'? No, it's a bit different huh. Is it more like 'We'll be in your care next time as well'? At any rate, getting a discount is a good thing.

"Does Luke often come here?"

"You should know as well, right, Fitts-sama?"

"Ah, mn. Umm, I meant besides the times he comes with me."

"Yes, he'll always come here with a different woman."

While Sylphy was speaking with the shopkeeper, I was led away by a shop assistant and had my measurements taken. The one in the shop was just a sample in the end, and the size of the one I bought would be tailored to me. Using a measuring tape, I had my size checked by a female shop assistant. I wonder if I can get measuring tapes in curio shops. I want to try the type of play where I take Sylphy's measurements.

"Since we have the materials, it'll be ready in approximately three days. If you leave us your address, we can deliver it to you."

While both embarrassed and happy, we give them the address of our new home.

After that we go shopping for ingredients. First of all we buy spices. After that we buy things for preserving food. Thanks to the trade routes that Nanahoshi had established, oil is cheap to obtain so we buy some. Vegetables that keep well, and frozen fish. We had left an order for meat, and would come pick it up the day before.

"Sylphy, can you cook?"

"Mn. Okaa-san and Lilia-san taught me so I can do it just fine. Ah, but I wonder if it'll be to your tastes, Rudi."

"Even if it's ashes I'll say that it's delicious."

"'Ashes'... Geez, just who do you think I tried so hard to learn it for?"

She has good taste in clothing, and she completely learned how to cook as well. Speaking of which, she said she could do the laundry and cleaning as well, didn't she? Unlike her appearance, her women-powers are surprisingly high, huh, this wife of mine?

"Because Sylphiette-san is too ideal as a bride, I have become worried about whether or not I am suitable as a man."

"Rudi, umm, you're my ideal groom as well, you know?"

"I-, if there's something that is different to your ideals, please tell me. I'll try my best to become closer to your ideal."

"In that case, be more confident and act more dignified. Rudi, you're a bit too servile, you know."

'Dignified'? If I do something like that, what am I going to do if the gods become angry at me? In this world there are guys who'll beat other people to death just for doing something that they didn't like, you know. ...No, but if your husband was the type of guy who had no self-confidence and hid away all the time in the living room reading newspapers... you'd hate it, right? Alright, shall I act with more self-confidence then? From today onward, I'm the ore-sama type.

{ C-Editor's note: Oresama is an overly self-confident and narcissistic way of referring to oneself in Japanese and would only be used jokingly. }

"Hmph. Oi Sylphy. Ya better not slack off on loving me, ya hear? Oi."

"Umm, that's a bit off but... Mn, okay. I'll give it my best."

Saying that, she clenched her fists. Geeeeez, Sylphy is so cute~ I wanna kiss her~ But I'll endure it. Sylphy doesn't like getting all lovey-dovey out in the open. If I touch or rub her here, I'll really be scolded. She might forgive me the first or second time, but if I keep doing it then that small irritation will turn into hate. I'll endure it for now. But putting my arms around her shoulder should be fine, right? No, for now I should start with her holding her hand.

Or so I was thinking, but right now I've got both my arms full with the shopping. Grrr...

"We'd better buy some platters huh? Ah, but it'd be fine if you just made them yourself, right Rudi?"

"Is it okay for the plates to be made of stone?"

"If you're the one making them, then they won't look like stone so it's fine."

So it's a problem of appearances? Well, if it's fine as long as they look good, then I'll make them so that they're shiny like mirrors. If they end up looking like Japanese earthenware or something, then they'll look shabby after all. Should I just give it my all and make them like porcelain? The colour will end up being grey or brown though.

"Is there anything else we need?"

"Umm, perhaps tea for receiving guests."

Black tea and teacups, huh? Alright then. I wonder if we should go buy a rug or something while we're at it. Perhaps we should also buy things for a guest bedroom or something.

"Should we also buy a few beds or closets for guest rooms?"

"Ah, you're right."

Because our house is large, there are a lot of things to prepare, huh? Our funds are steadily decreasing. Geez, I'm glad that I didn't blow my money on magic tools or whatever.

Financially I do have some room to breathe since the house was cheap, but if I keep spending it on this or that, one after another, I'll go broke eventually.

If I go hunting monsters for a bit I'd be able to earn money but... No, no, if I go on a subjugation request with such a casual attitude what on earth would happen if I got killed? ...I feel a bit like I understand how Paul felt when he had to return to being a knight.

"Umm, don't worry, Rudi. I'm getting income from Ariel-sama after all."

"Uuu, sorry for being so useless..."

If it comes down to it, shall I ask Soldat to let me into his party...? No, considering the number of days I'll have to be absent adventuring, the amount of money I gain isn't that much. But I might really have no choice but to find some work.

Marriage sure is tough...

That night, I lure Sylphy into the bath. On the surface, it's for the purpose of giving Sylphy a lecture about how to bathe properly. Under the surface, it's so that I can rub and wash Sylphy as much as I want. My true purpose is to flirt and mess about with Sylphy in the bath. If I was to say it like a narrator or something, it'd be

'Right now, a lovely girl is about to be ensnared by the poisonous fangs of a pervert'

or something like that. Tonight we're gonna do it! I'm gonna do it! Watch me, old man. Ah, but 'old man' would be Paul, huh? Okay, don't watch me then.

"Now then, my family's bathing rules are a bit different to those of the Asura royal family's."

First we head to the laundry/bathroom. There I give a lecture about how the clothes you change out of should go into the basket. I strip Sylphy as if natural, and then drop her folded clothes into the basket.

Sylphy's body is slim, she lacks excess fat and she's just of small build in general. Having said that though, she doesn't look malnourished. That's probably because although she's slim, she has muscle. Her waist is slim and firm, and though she's slim and small, her figure is womanly. Because of that, though she has no breasts, you can clearly tell her body belongs to a woman. Just seeing her makes my breathing go wild.

"Ahm, umm, was it necessary for you to strip me, Rudi?"

"It wasn't necessary."

"Why is your breathing getting heavier?"

"Because I'm aroused."

"I-, is it necessary for you to get aroused when you get into the bath?"

"It's not necessary."

While answering each of Sylphy's questions promptly, I quickly strip as well and enter the bathroom. There's no shower nor mirror, but there was a bucket and stool. As a joke, I left the characters ケ□リン on the bucket.

{ C-Editor's note: The characters are those of the Kerorin Bucket which is popular in Japanese bathhouses. }

"Before getting into the bath, pour warm water onto your shoulders, sit on this chair and then clean your body with this soap."

"Hey, Rudi, why does this chair have a groove in the middle of it?"

"Of course it's to make washing your body easier."

While saying this, I wet a cloth with warm water and foaming it with soap, I clean Sylphy's body. Behind her ears, the notch near her clavicle, her back, and anywhere else that's easy to get dirty. However, occasionally there are tender places that I can't use a cloth on, there's a need to use my hand to clean her instead. It's for this reason that the stool has a groove in it.

{ C-Editor's note: This kind of bath stool, found in Japanese bathhouses and brothels, are popularly known as 'pervert chairs'. }

"Umm, Rudi, you're kind of, for a while now you haven't been using the cloth, and also, only perverted places, and also you're kind of touching me 'there' but..."

"Oops, excuse me."

I was accidentally being too forward in my feelings. No good, no good, We don't have that kind of custom in our family.

"R-, Rudi, if you can't hold on then... that is... it's okay, you know?"

"That's for after we finish bathing."

Right now the bath takes precedence. We're washing ourselves. Washing.

"After you've thoroughly washed your body, afterwards is your head. Close your eyes for me."

"M-, mn."

Sylphy squeezed her eyes shut. How cute. Though I want to kiss her and push her down, I don't do so. It's fatal to even let my guard down for a moment. Phew, bathing is seriously hell.

"After wetting your hair with the warm water, apply some soap and lather. Rather than your hair, focus on cleaning your scalp where the hair grows. It's probably fine just to clean your head occasionally. Washing with soap will harm your hair after all."

So I say whilst cleaning her head. Sylphy's hair is short so it's easy to wash.

"After you're done, rinse carefully with hot water."

I create hot water with magic and wash Sylphy's hair. When I do, she starts to giggle.

"For some reason this reminded me of when we first met."

Speaking of which, I had also washed her with hot water, huh. Man, how nostalgic. To think that the boy from that time would become my bride... Life sure is full of surprises. No, by the time I had known she was a girl for a year, I'd basically decided to make her mine, huh. In that case I guess it might be called having my wish granted.

"Now then, after having finished washing your body, next is the bath. It's easy to slip so take care when entering."

Sylphy did as I said and sank into the bath. Because we had taken our time enjoying mixed bathing, the water had become lukewarm but...

"Ah, it's kind of like my arms and legs are melting. It feels so good..."

The temperature is just right. Good, good. Now that I know the temperature is fine, I wash my body. I would've actually preferred to ask Sylphy to wash it for me, but I'll endure for today. There's no need to do everything as well.

Or more like, if she did that, I'd definitely lose control. I'm going to treat her as gently as possible. I still remember that the first time I had taken an aphrodisiac and ended up like a sex beast. I won't do that kind of rape-like stuff again.

"..."

I suddenly noticed that Sylphy was staring at me. Though it seemed like she was watching to see how we were supposed to wash ourselves, it was somehow a little different. She seems to be interested in the parts she doesn't have. It's probably curiosity.

"Phew."

After I finish washing, I soak myself in the bath. I don't forget to leave the cloth on my head. Now that I'm soaking in here, I start to feel blood rushing towards my cold limbs. Baths are nice. It's the pinnacle of culture.

"By the way, it's no good to bring the washcloth from before into the bath."

"Why?"

"It'll get the bath dirty."

It's just for use in our house, and there are no bathhouses in this world so it's fine even if you don't follow this rule, but... Well, may as well. While I was thinking these things, Sylphy quietly came over and nestled against me. Grasping my hands, she placed her moist head against my shoulder.

"How long should we stay in here?"

"Until it feels like you're warmed to the core..."

I put my arm around her shoulder and embrace her. When I did, Sylphy turned around and moved her body as though she were getting on top of me. Like that, we ended up touching each other face to face. Sylphy's cherries are pressed up against my chest. No good, it seems like I won't be able to endure it.

Men endure, and women love. It wouldn't be good to apply 'juice' or 'fluid' behind her.★

"Mnhuhu, this is pretty nice for some reason, huh?"

Looking down at Sylphy I can see her slim body, her small butt, and her slender legs kicking at the surface of the water with a splash. My chest, and my shoulders can feel her splashing. Sylphy is embracing me around the neck like she's burying herself into me. Like that, she's patting and caressing me. Huhu, stroke me as much as you want. That's what I have this muscle for.

Still, though I had thought back in the day that Sylphy would become a handsome man in the future, she's really outdone my expectations by growing into a lovely, and beautiful girl. I wonder if this is the result of some kind of surefire bride-enhancing item.

It's a situation where that beautiful girl is embracing me in the nude. It seems like we'll lead to a conclusion that'll end up blocking the drain.

I reach out with my hand and caress Sylphy's back with a splash. I continue and caress her armpits and side. Mmn, she's slim.

"Rudi, that tickles."

Saying that, Sylphy begins to writhe about a little. The symbol of my lust has been pressing against her for a while now, but she hasn't voiced any complaints.

Though she gets angry when we do stuff in the open, in these kinds of settings, as though giving up her body to me, her limbs don't carry much power. She entrusts herself to me.

She looks at my eyes. I look into hers as well. Naturally, our gazes meet. With embarrassment, 'ehehe', she laughs.

"Rudi... I really love you."

Saying this, she kissed me on the cheek.

No good.

"Wawa-!"

I pick up Sylphy like a princess and abruptly get out of the bath. Though we're in the middle of bathing lessons, it's fine to end it here and teach her another time.

While still soaking wet, I run up the stairs and head straight to our bedroom.

Several days later.

Rudeus Estate. Appointed day of the Wedding Reception.

It was scheduled on a monthly holiday, the time was noon.

Jinas was showing restraint and Soldat was busy with a meeting so he refused.

It seems both were quite busy.

I thought Badigadi would be busy and not come as well, but his majesty unexpectedly had spare time and declared his participation.

Beyond that 11 more people accepted the invitations.

Right, even Nanahoshi accepted the invitation.

Sylphy was in high spirits since early morning.

"This sort of thing is the role of the wife after all, leave it to me!"

And since early morning she's been going around preparing this and that.

It seems when I wasn't looking Sylphy learned cooking as well.

It seems that she was taught generally everything that a wife needs to do.

The spare rooms on the second floor as well, were prepared for the sake of this day.

Though I say that, we just brought in a simple bed, closet, table, chairs, and some water jugs.

For the sake of the worst case where anyone feels bad.

While the preparations were steadily being made, the first ones to appear were Rinia and Pursena.

It was about two hours before the appointed time.

I wondered if these fellows mistook the time.

"In our common sense, the fastest one to the celebration place gets the prey nya."

"Right-nano, we came to be number one. It's proof of our devotion to boss-nano."

They came along carrying a large wild boar with them.

In the case of the Beast Race, at times when they plan to attend a marriage, it seems common for them to get up early in the morning and then bring the ingredients they capture then.

The earlier they get up and return to the place itself shows the scale of respect for the other side it seems.

When I asked what they do if they can't capture anything and it seems in that case they intended to buy something in the market.

I guess it's that kind of thing.

Their attire is the Magic University uniform.

I was the one that decided on this.

There's an intense difference in wealth between the invitees, if any of them puts too much fighting spirit into their appearance, the others might feel left out.

Luckily as it is, all of those attending have a uniform.

Ah, No, since only Julie doesn't have one, a new one was bought for her though.

For the period before dining starts the two were relaxing in the living room.

Entertainment is the job of the husband.

The two were outside since morning so it seems their bodies were chilly.

On the warmest sofa in front of the fireplace, Rinia and Pursena were clinging in a ball.

"Nevertheless, I couldn't have possibly imagined boss and Fitts would be getting married nya..."

"As I thought Fitts was a woman-nano. I thought that might be the case by the smell."

"Right nya. But with this I can understand it nya."

While the two were saying things like that, they were warming each other up.

Incidentally, the matter of Sylphy=Fitts, has already been informed to the invitees.

For the time being, we did say that they shouldn't reveal it too much, but it can't be helped if it's already known to some degree.

"What have you come to understand?"

While serving warm tea, I asked the two.

"That the boss's preference is for small ones."

"Even though you were scattering that much of the scent of sexual desire, the reason you never came to attack us as well, was because of a problem with preference nya."

How rude these fellows can be.

That almost makes it sound like I'm a hentai that goes around indiscriminately attacking women.

Really what rude fellows, how about I grope you.

While thinking as such not even a burp will come out.

Just yesterday, I completely left Sylphy drenched.

I left all of my desire inside of Sylphy.

Today I am a sage.

The second ones who came along, unexpectedly were Zanoba and Julie.

One hour before the start.

"Excuse me. We found a good doll on the way, unintentionally it ended up taking my attention. If Julie hadn't been here it might have been dangerous."

Zanoba saying that.

Julie was wearing the Magic University uniform.

The hobbit size.

It fits snugly, almost like a doll.

"Grand Master, for the invite today, thank you very much."

While saying that Julie lifted the hem of her skirt and politely greeted me.

How cute.

After glancing at Zanoba and he was lowering his head as well.

Just like that, with a humble tone he said it.

"Teacher Rudeus Greyrat. I'm grateful for the invitation to the celebration."

Oh.

Zanoba is being normal.

That's right. This guy, it's not like he can't particularly greet properly right.

Alright, here I'll learn from it and do it seriously as well.

"Your highness Zanoba, for today..."

"Ah, shisho. There's no need to humble yourself for me. It's just a matter of formality. Shisho the same as always, I'd prefer if you treat me carelessly."

"...I see, then rest in the room over there."

"Wawawa, Understood. Now, Julie, let's go."

What's with that, I feel lost for deciding to take it seriously.

And while I was thinking that as well, I prepared some tea.

Even if the treatment is careless, I'm the husband, they're the guests after all.

While I was thinking such I heard Rinia and Pursena's boasting voice come from the living room.

Somehow it seems, they're boasting about how they were the first here.

I could hear Zanoba's moritifed voice from being slightly late.

I'm glad it's fun more than anything.

The third one to arrive was the Ariel party.

They arrived around 30 minutes before it starts.

Ariel and Luke, as well as two female students that I feel like I've seen somewhere.

They're Princess Ariel's attendants.

Sylphy's comrades. I'll treat them equally.

"Thank you very much for the invitation this day. Since the etiquette of the common folk are somewhat distant, please forgive us for the rudeness."

The one who lowered her head while saying that was Ariel.

I certainly thought the one to lower their head would be Luke or one of the attendants, but they might have been matching up to this side.

"Since there are many races in attendance, please don't bother about matters of etiquette. Rather, I'm uneasy about this side being impolite..."

"I'm grateful. You all."

After Ariel exchanged looks and the two attendants stepped forward.

"I'm Ariel-sama's attendant, my name is Elmore Bluewolf."

"Similarly, my name is Kurine Elrond."

Putting aside their names at least their family names are easy to remember.

Blue wolf and a legendary knight huh.

My name is a grey rat.

Among the nobles of Asura Kingdom, many of their names have a combination of colors and animals I'm sure.

Since that's the case, white female deer should be the same.

In that case would it be White...deer or how did it go again?

Uma is horse and baka is fool.

In other words taking a room would be to take a hall.

A white tomorrow is waiting for me.

"Please accept these gifts."

The two handed the object in their hands to me.

A box wrapped in an expensive looking cloth.

"It's a congratulatory gift for your marriage."

"This is, thank you for your courtesy. Thank you very much."

"We chose something that would be useful in your marriage life after this. Please check inside."

Since I was prompted, I looked inside, and was lost for words.

A small bottle packed with a pink colored fluid and a wooden rod.

If I were to put it directly, it's an aphrodisiac and a large dildo.

What is this...

"I can't imagine that a man from the Greyrat's would be unable to satisfy a woman, but if there's a necessity for it, please use it."

"Wa, yes."

Ariel was composed.

I wonder if this is normal.

Luke as well, the other two were composed as well.

The culture is different...

I lead the four into the living room.

And then, Rinia and Pursena started to release a tense atmosphere.

"..."

They better not be intending to get into a fight.

No matter how much they are of the Beast Race, they shouldn't do anything to destroy the atmosphere of a celebratory gathering.

After sending such a gaze and it seems the two guessed it.

"It's been a long time, Rinia-san, Pursena-san. That time I've troubled you quite a bit."

"It's been a long time nya."

"The trouble was mutual-nano."

Ariel sat down nearby those two while letting out an airily voice.

The remaining three were all still standing.

For the time being, I sent Zanoba a wink to stop them if anything happens.

Zanoba nodded with an Humu, and it seems he somewhat misunderstood, because he stood up and lowered his head towards Ariel.

"I'm grateful to make your acquaintance Princess Ariel. The third prince of Shirone Kingdom, favorite disciple of Rudeus Greyrat, I am known as Zanoba Shirone."

"Oh my if it's Prince Zanoba. Above all it's great you're in good health. We did greet soon after you entered school, but have you forgotten?"

"Hm. Please excuse me for this. After all, I'm a miko of superhuman strength, I'm all strength so my intelligence isn't making the rounds..."

"Oh my, I've heard that you've been leaving high results in your earth magic classes lately."

"All of it is the result of my master's teachings..."

I was a bit surprised by Zanoba's high social skills as I prepared the tea.

The ones who appeared to the utmost limit 15 minutes before the start were Cliff and Elinalise.

And then Nanahoshi.

What an unusual assortment.

I thought Nanahoshi would come alone.

"We found her confused in front of the gate. She's an acquaintance right?"

"Yeah, of course. She's Silent Seven Star-san."

After saying that, Cliff looked at her with a startled face.

Somehow it seems that Cliff has never seen her.

"I...I see, you're that Silent. Hnn, I'm Cliff. I'm sure you've at least heard the name before?"

"...Yeah, I've heard the name. Just the name that is. They say you're a genius. I'm Silent."

A forced monotone exchange.

An intense sensation of pretending to know.

Probably, she doesn't know a single thing about Cliff.

Cliff seems to be in good humor though so I'm not going to say anything.

"It's good to make your acquaintance. I'm Elinalise Dragonroad. That's a lovely mask isn't it."

"Thank you. Your hairstyle is lovely as well."

Nanahoshi replied in a monotone voice.

Watching her exchanges gives me the chills.

Even though I say that, Nanahoshi doesn't want to get involved in anything troublesome as well, I'm sure she won't swallow any poison.

Honestly, I never thought Nanahoshi would come.

Just in case I passed her an invitation and she accepted that.

However, at that point in time she never said she would go.

"Getting married...? You really intend to live on this side, don't you." she just said that with an emotionless voice.

For the time being, I'll try talking to her with a whisper.

"How unusual, for you to leave that room."

"...You invited me right?"

"I guess so. Well... take it easy for today. We've prepared something like potato chips after all."

"Potato chips? You've made potato chips?"

"Thanks to you, cooking oil for food purposes was easy to get our hands on after all."

"That's amazing."

"It's not amazing right."

They're just potatoes that have been cut thinly, fried in oil, and salted.

Since the oil, salt, and potatoes are all different, the flavor is also a bit different from our previous world.

"In that case, please excuse me."

Elinalise took along Cliff and Nanahoshi and broke into the living room.

There was no hesitation in those footsteps.

Her social status being an adventurer would be the second from the bottom only above Julie.

But, it seems she's not the type to be bothered over that.

If the race is different then social status is something that doesn't really matter I guess.

The two who entered the living room were the same as always.

Cliff started with a loud voice and made the atmosphere worse and Elinalise followed through with that.

It's not like Cliff had any ill intent, but he always does a good job at saying things to throw water on the situation.

Nanahoshi was fundamentally remaining silent, but if someone went to talk to her she would reply.

She would converse as well.

I thought she was a communication impaired hikikomori, but it seems that's not the case.

After a short while, Sylphy came to report that the preparations were complete.

Now then, all that's left is just Badigadi.

If he comes too late the cooking will get cold.

And just as I was starting to worry over it Elinalise opened her mouth.

"There's no way Badigadi will come on time. For people who live in denominations of thousands of years, time is loose. It's better to think he'll end up showing a month late."

With those words, we decided to start the dinner as scheduled.

Sorry about that Badi.

The meal we had assembled in the dining room was using a buffet method.

After worrying about the seating order, in the end we just completely brushed aside the seats.

Luckily, even including the table, it's a wide room with enough space to walk around.

In case someone gets tired as well, there are chairs left prepared at the end of the room as well.

The cooking is intended as easy to eat things for a buffet.

For the time being, I distribute alcohol cups to everyone.

Since Nanahoshi declined the alcohol, I gave her fruit juice.

It seems to have become that I would make the toast.

Lined up with Sylphy I stepped forward.

The gazes were gathering.

Eleven peoples gazes.

They're by no means unpleasant looks.

But somehow it makes me a bit tense.

I had prepared a sort of cue card though.

And Sylphy was tightly holding my hand.

After looking at her face, she was smiling at me with a shy face.

She was saying in a whisper to give it my best.

I want to pull her into the bedroom right now.

"Oh my, Rudeus-you, your face is bright red. [Giggle]."

"Lize, be quiet."

Elinalise was laughing and unusually Cliff was reading the mood.

Alright.

"[Cough].

Thank you everyone for gathering together today even though I'm sure everyone is quite busy. I declare it once more formally, I Rudeus and this–"

"Fuhahahahaha! There I enter with a bang!"

I felt like my heart jumped out of my mouth.

After turning around that guy was there.

A black body and tall height.

With six arms tightly packed into his uniform.

The Immortal Demon King Badigadi has come out with a bang.

He came in from the door connected to the kitchen.

"??!"

Everyone was lost for words.

That imposing and majestic attitude.

Even Cliff swallowed his words.

I didn't know what would be good to say as well.

With that timing, isn't it almost like Badigadi and I are getting married.

Your wife is that right, that one stupid girl with the name like a tooth paste right?

"Badigadi, you're late."

The one entered the tsukkomi was Elinalise.

However Badigadi goes where the wind blows.

"Humu. Certainly I'm late. However, in regards to my race, on the occasion of a meeting between royalty, it's already decided that you enter with a timing to pull a nerve and stir things up."

"That's a lie right."

"It's not a lie. Since it's something that Kishirika decided on a whim, I think it's foolish as well though!"

Even though you think it's foolish you still do it huh.

What a random guy.

That's why you've been defeated by the human race over and over.

"For your sake I especially went out of the way to pitch in and help, I circled around to the rear entrance, I took the time to enter from the back. It's fine for you to feel grateful! Fuhahahaha!"

So he especially went out of his way to circle around.

You...curse you...

No, calm down, Badigadi is this sort of guy. You already knew that right?

"Hahahaha, I see now, thank you very much."

"Thanks are unnecessary. Now, it would be good for you to get married as much as you please before myself. Having a marriage ceremony with a Demon King in attendance, it's something that seldom happens. I've never done this sort of service after all!"

While Badigadi was saying that he sat down on the ground with a plunk.

For the time being I thought it might be good to prepare a chair or something though.

Since Magic Races often seem to sit on the floor, I guess there's no problem.

"Then, I'll restart..."

[Cough] and clearing my throat.

"Thank you very much for gathering together on this busy day. Once again I'll formally declare, I Rudeus Greyrat, and this Sylphiette are getting married. Since we're both still inexperienced, I think there are some points we could be lacking, but I'd like for us to help each other and lend a hand in our lives there. Yeah, the twelve of you gathered here, in these past few years, are people who especially helped us out personally. The days we met and the superficial points are there, but strangely I feel that you all match well with us, and I feel you are all friends. During times of trouble I will become the strength of my friends. If there's a time when you're mutually in dispute, please remember our faces, I'd like for you to let things be water under the bridge for us to save face...umm."

No good, this is a bit too stiff isn't it.

Everyone is making complicated faces.

I wonder if I made a mistake with my words.

And [pon] Badigadi hit me on the shoulder.

"It would be good to stop with words of reserved manners. You love each each other and you want all of those here to acknowledge that right?"

Oh.

That's right, that's right, just like that.

Alright.

"Well, what the. Sylphy and I can manage things as we go along. If anything happens please lend us your power. Please treat us well."

"Alright, cheers to the future of the young two!"

"Cheers!"

Before one knows, Badigadi is holding up a sake cup.

Matching up together with that, everyone raised their cups.

The meal started with a bit of alcohol being spilled.

Pursena went straight to stretching her hand towards the meat.

It's the boar meat that's been giving off steam since a while ago.

I wonder if it's a custom of the Beast race to be the first to eat the prey you caught yourself.

No that's wrong.

Rinia has taken up position in front of the fireplace, while eating the karaage look alike, the Fried Chicken.

Nanahoshi took the entire plate of potato chips and withdrew to the edge of the room to start crunching away at them.

Julie suddenly sat down next to her.

Nanahoshi was startled. Julie started eating the potato chips with an attitude of, "Please don't mind me."

The other day we had Julie taste test the potato chips.

I'm sure she's been aiming for them since that time.

Nanahoshi and Julie.

An amusing atmosphere is floating around.

Being called by that atmosphere, Badigadi dropped by.

In a panic Nanahoshi got the rings out of her pocket.

Nanahoshi you idiot.

Even though you say you don't want to get involved with anyone, you try to start with the gluttony.

Julie is fine, though Zanoba is occasionally flashing glances towards her.

I wonder what he's hesitating over and just as I was thinking that, somehow it seems he was waiting for Ariel to move.

Leading the other three, Ariel came over to Sylphy and I.

"Sylphy, Congratulations!"

"Ariel-sama...thank you very much."

Sylphy lowered her head towards Ariel with her usual shy smile.

"How does he and this house compare to Sylphy's dreams?"

"Somehow, it's more amazing than my dreams. This house, has a bath as well."

"Oh? Having a bath on the individual level isn't common even in Asura, how enviable. Sylphy, since that's the case, it would be fine to take a break from guarding for about a year or so?"

"Th...that is, umm, at the time when a child is made."

Ariel was giggling with a smile.

After that, Luke and the two attendants as well were talking about this and that with Sylphy.

I only just found out the names of the attendants, but it seems they have a deep bond with Sylphy.

So intimate that the Bluewolf girl was brought to tears.

How do I put it, it's almost like a separation party for a high school track & field club, that kind of image.

And, Luke came over to my place.

"Well, I think there's still various things lurking in the back, but please take good care of me right?"

While saying that he held out his hand towards me.

Even if you say there's still things lurking around, I have no interest in such things though.

Well, since the other side is saying I'm in your care, then I'm not reluctant.

"Yeah, I'm in your care, Luke...senpai."

"I entrust Sylphy to you."

Luke shortly said that and released his hand.

Rather, it feels more like there's things lurking around behind on Luke's side.

I wonder what it is, I have the feeling it's somewhat different from jealousy.

After Ariel moved away, Zanoba came up.

For the time being, it seems he's bothered over something like the hierarchy.

They are both royalty after all, I guess he feels things in that area need to be done properly.

"I'm here to say it once again, Shisho. Congratulations on your marriage!"

"Thank you Zanoba."

Zanoba faced Sylphy.

And then lowered his head.

"Madam. Honestly, I thought you were a man. To do something like mistake Shisho's partner as a man...please forgive my rudeness."

Sylphy shook her hands in a panic.

"Ah, No, please raise your head. Royalty shouldn't do that. Towards someone like me."

"Someone you say, you're the madam of my respected Shisho. If I were to say, the next person down below God."

"Since even Rudi made the mistake after all, it can't be helped?"

Right and suddenly it was waved towards me.

As shameful as it is, even I mistook Sylphy for a man.

It's without a doubt because I had no sexual desire.

For the time being, I nodded that was true and left it.

After Zanoba moved away, Rinia and Pursena came up.

"Is it human race manners to do greetings when people are in the middle of a meal nya?"

"It's bad manners nano."

And it was just that.

There wasn't any particular congratulations.

During the time of their fellows wedding, I'll make sure to properly ask about the way of doing it for the Beast race.

"But, if Fitts and boss are getting married, then I agree nya. It's a good thing when strong people stick together nya."

"Right-nano. If you give birth to strong children your family will be secure-nano."

I feel that it's bad manners to have such a frank conversation in the middle of a meal.

The next one after the two was Nanahoshi.

Somehow, it seems she came here running away from Badigadi.

I wonder what was done, her hair is disheveled.

And after looking at Badigadi, he's making a racket with Julie riding on his shoulders.

"...Congratulations."

"Thank you."

Nanahoshi just said that shortly and started to leave.

And then that was called to a halt by Sylphy.

"Umm, Nanahoshi-san, is it alright to ask one thing?"

"What is it?"

"Previously, Nanahoshi-san you said you were from the same place as Rudi right, that was with, what kind of meaning? Umm, Nanahoshi-san came here from another world...right?"

Sylphy said the latter part in a whisper.

Nanahoshi looked at me.

With eyes that were asking what she should do.

I felt like anything is fine really.

I don't have any intention of keeping secrets from Sylphy but...

However, if she were to know and she might make a weird face.

"...Since he was used to the language, I just misunderstood."

Nanahoshi didn't say it.

Nothing.

The last ones to come were Cliff and Elinalise.

After lining us up Cliff held something like a cross with one hand and cut us off and stated something like a simple chant.

"You two aren't Milis believers, so this is the only blessing I can do."

I'll just go with accepting the sentiment.

My God is tolerant so she shouldn't get angry.

Although, I'm a Japanese, we celebrate Christmas, but it's an ordinary occurrence not to carry out mass.

We're a race of people where the majority of people haven't even read the original text, even though we really like names like Michael and Gabriel.

Now I have a God I believe in, but I have no intention of minding the blessings of other denominations.

"Rudeus. It's great isn't it. That it's cured."

Elinalise said that while making a bit of a pouting expression.

That's right, even up until now I never actually informed her that I completely cured my ED.

"If you had informed me about it a bit faster, it would have been very well you know?"

"If I had told you I thought you might have said something like, 'I'll check to make sure if that's true or not' and then attacked me?"

"Never. I said it before didn't I. I have absolutely no intention of becoming Paul's daughter."

I see.

Then, it might have been better if I had told her about it sooner.

Among those here, I've spent the longest time associating with Elinalise after all.

Though I say that, it's at most plus a half a year or so.

"Well, but if Cliff and Sylphy hadn't been around, I might have thought of it about once."

"I as well, if Sylphy wasn't around, I might have thought about it at one point."

"Then we've done something wasteful haven't we. Well, now that it's become like this, I'll just have to think of it like there was no fate between us, and just normally associate as friends."

"Yeah, please take good care of me after this as well."

Elinalise faced Sylphy.

She started talking to Sylphy with a gentle expression.

"Sylphiette-san. Congratulations on your marriage. I wish for your happiness from the bottom of my heart...heart...congratul..congra..."

Tears started to come spilling out from Elinalise's eyes.

While she continued to overlook Sylphy she was sniffling deeply.

I was startled.

I didn't understand the reason she suddenly started crying.

Elinalise's trembling hand touched Sylphy's cheek.

Her legs were trembling so she crumbled down to her knees.

Her face was becoming disheveled, only, looking at Sylphy's face.

"I...I'm sorry about that. For me to do something like this..."

I was sure Sylphy would be surprised as well.

...And that's what I was thinking, but it wasn't the case.

She was confused, but it didn't give a feeling of surprise.

"Umm, I've been wanting to ask about it for a long time, but... could it be possible that Elinalise-san is my baa-chan?"

{ C-Editor's note: The Japanese word for grandmother is obaasan. Obaa-chan or baa-chan is a very informal and direct way of calling one's grandmother. }

"??!"

The ones startled this time wasn't just me.

Cliff as well and then Elinalise was surprised as well.

"Oto-san said it. That my obaa-chan was a comrade of Rudi's oto-san."

He said something like that.

No, but, I really don't know if there was such a connection between Paul and Rawls.

He did say he got along well together with Rawls in the middle of guarding the village though...

While they were in the middle of talking it might have come out that they actually had a relation through Elinalise, such things happening are a possibility.

The world is small.

Come to think of it, the woodcraft pendant Sylphy made and gave to me and the pendant attached to the grip of Elinalise's sword are the same aren't they.

After hearing it said, their looks are somewhat similar as well.

"Elinalise-san, as I thought, that's true right?"

"Th...that's wrong. Your obaa-sama can't be this..."

"Oto-san said it. Because of Obaa-chan they were chased out of the Great Forest and they were against his marriage with oka-san as well."

"?? !!"

"That since she might be feeling down over something like that, if I were to ever meet her she might be trying to hide her identity."

To think Elinalise and Rawls had such a past.

No but, I feel like I understand the reason they were opposed.

Even I hesitated considerably at the time when I introduced Cliff to Elinalise.

If your own daughter were to with the son of such a woman, I'm sure there are parents who would oppose it.

"That is...uu...u..."

Elinalise raised the sobbing and cried.

It seems she tried to say something, but it wouldn't turn into words.

Sylphy as well, thought she said something wrong and started to get a bit nervous.

"Cliff-senpai."

I called out to Cliff.

Cliff as well, his eyes had become black and white.

"Wh...what is it?"

"Please help Elinalise-san rest in a relevant room on the second floor."

"That, that's right I guess. I, I understand."

"Sylphy as well, we'll leave that conversation for later, for now it would be better to calm down?"

"Wa, yes."

Elinalise's hand was pulled by Cliff and looked at me with frightened eyes.

"Ru, Rudeus, I... I am like this, but that is, Rawls was a normal child. Of course, his child Sylphy as well, that's why..."

Therefore, what. Do you think I'm looking at you with eyes of prejudice now.

She has no faith in me.

Well, recently here I have been avoiding Elinalise after all.

In that area, there might have been an accumulation of various misunderstandings.

I brought my mouth close to Elinalise's ear.

"Please don't worry. I won't separate from Sylphy because of Elinalise-san."

"But."

"Rather than that, shouldn't you worry more about becoming relatives with Paul who you really hate?"

"...Fu...Rudeus. You, at a time like this you sure say amusing things don't you."

Elinalise laughed frailly.

For the present time it's some relief.

In any case, I'm sure it'll be better when we're a bit more calmed down.

"In regards to that matter, afterwards please take your time talking together with Sylphy about it."

"Yeah, I'm grateful for your care."

Lead by Cliff, Elinalise withdrew.

Cliff, please take care of it well...

—

No congratulations came from Badigadi.

He took up position at the edge of the room, turning the ambiance of the room bright while laughing with a Fuhahahahaha.

He's an appreciated existence.

The banquet proceeded without delay.

We didn't do anything in particular like a kiss of oath in public or exchanging of the rings.

From start to end eat, drink, talk, make some noise and then returning in groups of twos and threes that is a wedding reception around here.

It's not bad to do it without formalities.

The first ones to return home were Rinia and Pursena.

Making sure not to stay too long as well, seems to be manners for the Beast Race.

"Nnya. Boss, be happy."

"With this boss is the boss of school in name and in reality-nano. I'm looking forward to the new school term-nano."

While saying something like that the two left in the snow.

Nanahoshi was randomly called out to by Luke.

It was mostly hitting on her, but it seems Luke didn't openly try to lure in her as well, he started to progressively bring out topics Nanahoshi might have interest in like cooking and clothes.

Talking about topics the partner likes with a tone of voice they like.

Well, there was a bit of slippage though.

However I can learn from this.

I don't have any intention of using the things I learn though.

In contrast Nanahoshi was openly fed up with it.

She looked at Luke like he was extremely annoying and let out an extremely annoyed sigh.

In the end she stood up to go to the toilet like she was escaping.

And then soon after she came back from the toilet she came up to me.

With just a bit of an agitated expression.

"It's about time I take my leave. That guy is annoying as well."

"I see. Good work. Thank you very much for today."

"Again, I'll be depending on you starting tomorrow..and then."

"And then?"

"Next time, the bath here, is it fine if I come to use it?"

Somehow, it seems while she was in the toilet, she took a look at our bath.

If it's a Japanese, then they'll yearn for the bath as well.

Her name is Shizuka-chan as well after all.

"That's fine, just, Nobita-kun might peek in on yo.."

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Nobita Nobi character in the Doraemon anime and manga series. }

"As I thought it's fine."

"No, it's a joke you know, a joke. Please come whenever you want."

Nanahoshi nodded and was going to return.

The sun still hasn't set, but I wonder if a single woman will be alright.

I guess since she came this far alone, she also has magic items for self-defense purposes so it should be fine.

"Kurine. Please see Silent-sama back."

"Yes, hime-sama."

And just as I was hesitating, Ariel called out to one of her attendants.

As expected of charisma. Her attention to detail is well made.

Just, Nanahoshi stubbornly refused that proposal and returned alone.

Badigadi, Zanoba, and Ariel were mixing alcohol in as they had a fun conversation.

Just in case, for the sake of the drinker Badi, I had intended to prepare a considerable amount of alcohol.

I had bought three barrels of it and placed it in the basement.

Those barrels ended up being barrels in the sky in no time at all.

I thought there would be a necessity to buy more, but before that Zanoba passed out drunk.

"Fuhahahaha! How weak for one known as a miko!"

"Hahahaha..nu..I have no excuses. I seem to have taken the entertainment a bit too far."

"Master, are you alright?"

Julie supported the staggering Zanoba with her small body.

"Fufufufu..wouldn't it be better for you to take a rest in one of the rooms?"

It seems Ariel hasn't had all that much to drink.

I wonder if it's a lady's prudence in order to not become too intoxicated as well.

Nevertheless, all of Ariel's actions sure are refined.

From the way she tilts her cup all the way to her laughing manner, it just looks like she's managing her nerves.

I guess this is the complete form of Asura Kingdoms manners etiquette.

"No, passing time in Shisho's house drunken sick would be a shame as both a disciple and also as Shirone royalty. It's regretful, but I'll take my leave here while I can still walk."

While saying that Zanoba gave me the last of his salutations.

Though I think it would be fine for him to stay over.

Well, it's fine if he does as he pleases.

"Then, I will return as well. Princess of Asura, stay in good health."

"Yes. Your highness as well stay in good health."

"Fuhahahaha! I cannot be stopped by injury or illness!"

It seems Badigadi is returning as well.

I thought he would stay until the end of the banquet though, it's unexpected.

While I was thanking the two I saw them off to the entrance.

The wedding reception is already nearing its finish.

Ariel and the others as well started preparations to return.

During those preparations, I decided to go check in on the situation with Elinalise.

After going up to the second floor and peeking into the guest room.

There Cliff was giving Elinalise a lap pillow.

It seems consolation time has already ended and they've started flirting time.

Somehow that's nice.

Later I'll do a lap pillow with Sylphy as well.

"Umm, Cliff-san. I'd like to talk with Obaa-chan..Elinalise-san but, is that okay?"

I heard Sylphy ask that with a timid feeling from behind me.

Cliff sent me a look with his face like he was seeking help.

He raised up Elinalise's body and then made a small nod facing me.

I nodded as well.

After Cliff saw that he stood up and left the room.

"Thank you, Rudi."

Sylphy made a soft smile and entered inside the room.

Together with Cliff, I proceeded downstairs.

Cliff was making an uneasy face.

"Those two..I wonder if it'll be alright?"

"..If it's no good, then it's fine for us to follow through later."

And while saying that we arrived downstairs.

Ariel and the others' preparations for leaving were just ending as we got downstairs.

The two attendants were putting a coat on Ariel.

When Ariel realized I was there she drew back her chin a bit.

"Rudeus-sama. Thank you very much for today."

After hearing their masters words, the three subordinates deeply bowed.

Just like a Japanese I was about to lower my head as well.

But, in this case wouldn't it be better not to lower my head.

"What is going on with Sylphy?"

"Now she's talking with Elinalise."

"Is that so...Nevertheless, for the Sylphy who was thought to have no more relatives to still have one sure is a surprise."

"Right. Really, the world is small."

It's Elinalise and Sylphy after all.

It's like the distance between heaven and earth.

Primarily concerning ideas of chastity.

"Then, it's just right. Rudeus-sama, could I take up a bit of your time?"

Ariel's words were ones with a hidden meaning.

For the time being I nodded.

"Then, over here."

While saying that Ariel crossed the room into the corridor.

And then moved from the corridor to the entrance way and just like that opened the door and went outside.

Naturally as it is, the other three went along with her as well.

Cliff and I followed along with that.

Outside the sun was setting and it was starting to get dark.

Ahead of the entrance way, on a road with snow piling up and few people, Ariel came to a stop.

And then turned around and said it.

"Rudeus-sama. I know this is rude, but..could I request a duel with Luke? Without magic, a match between swords."

"..."

That's a sudden suggestion.

Without replying I kept silent.

After looking at Luke, he was putting his hand on the sword at his waist with a composed face.

Somehow, it seems it's not something Ariel decided suddenly.

"For the time being, would it be alright for me to ask the reason?"

After asking, Ariel tenderly smiled.

"Just, a bit of playing around."

"Playing around is it."

However, what Luke took out was a real sword.

It was a double-edged sword, since it's playing around he's going to strike with the back of the sword, such reasons really can't pass.

"At least, can't I prepare some wooden swords? I don't hold a real sword."

"I don't mind if you prepare a weapon with magic."

"Without magic?"

"Something to that degree I don't mind."

For the time being, I create a stone sword with earth magic.

I created it somewhat sturdy, but that part makes it a bit heavy.

Just in case, I swing the sword every day so it's not as if I can't swing it.

However, even with this if it hits the wrong place you can die.

At least, it's not something good for hitting your opponent with for play.

"Please feel relieved. This is something Luke proposed. I don't mind if Rudeus-sama beats Luke down with all of his power."

Without magic, I'm at an ordinary person's level.

It isn't limited to just beating down Luke.

"Just for reference. Luke has learned up to Intermediate level with the Sword God style and Elementary level with the Water God style. The sword is a magic item endowed with magic power that will lightly cut through an iron shield. The shoes are the same as the ones Sylphy wears, they increase the users speed. This mantle maintains the temperature within, the gloves boost strength, underneath his uniform a specific type of clothing that is strong against blades is being worn."

"..That is amazing."

Isn't it great he's in full sturdy ikemen equipment...

In order to assemble all of the parts, even if I sold my reformed house it probably wouldn't be enough.

"Since it comes down to that, I wonder if there's the possibility that I'll be beaten down by Luke.."

"I can't say that possibility doesn't exist but... if you feel the danger of death, at that point it's fine if you use magic."

"I'll be praying that using it just before I don't get cut in half though."

However, I wonder why they're making this sort of proposal.

If either of us dies in this sort of place, we have nothing to gain from it, right.

"Before that, I'd like to hear the reason. Did I do something to bother you?"

"No. It's just playing around. Of course, it's fine for you to reject it as well."

"Whether I receive it or turn it down, if you don't properly explain the reason to me I'll be troubled. Even with this stone sword, if it hits the wrong spot a person can die you know?"

"Luke has already made his resolve for that as well."

I haven't made that resolve though.

Ariel's voice has some kind of tragic sound mixed in with it.

I wonder what will come out from this kind of match.

I don't know.

They won't give me an answer.

I wonder if there were ceremonies like this in Asura Kingdom.

Around Sauros then, I can somewhat see him saying if you want to take Eris as a wife, then you must first defeat me.

No, old man Sauros is already gone.

"Rudeus. I'm begging you. Accept it. If you're a man as well you understand right?"

Luke's words.

He came out if you're a man.

What cowardly words.

It seems I'm not a man if I don't know the reason.

..Is it fine.

It's not like he's asking for a serious fight to the death after all.

"I understand. Please take it easy on me."

But, for the time being, I'll just use my demon eye.

I don't want to die or kill someone on accident after all.

"I'm grateful you're accepting our proposal."

I can't see the intention, but with Ariel's voice, Luke prepared himself.

Seeing that, I heard Cliff's confused voice call out from behind.

"H..Hey, Rudeus, is it fine?"

"Yeah, Cliff-senpai. If you think it seriously looks dangerous, I'll be depending on you to immediately use healing magic."

"Ye..Yeah.. I get that, but."

I slowly prepared myself with the stone sword as well.

The distance is about three steps I'd say.

Each step about one blade.

It's close to the distance I often use as an assumption.

"Then, is it fine?"

"Yes."

With my words, Ariel let out a sharp voice.

"Start!"

"Haaaa...!"

Luke's shout, he kicked off from the ground.

<The snow scatters, Luke's body is accelerating straight towards me>

Slow.

No, I'm sure it's by no means slow.

About the same level as Rinia.

But, it's not up to the level I usually train based on.

Orsted it goes without saying, it's still far from comparing to Rujierd and Eris.

Only this much while using equipment, huh.

"Ha.!!"

<While Luke is closing in, he swings the sword diagonally downwards>

His sword is slow.

No, it's by no means slow I'm sure.

It's not like he's depending too much on the equipment as well.

However, it's still far from the speed I usually act within the assumption of.

"Fu!!"

I aim at Luke's forearm.

Sword God style. First move, [Arm Drop].

It's a technique I learned far in the past, it's a formal movement that I've repeated any number of thousands, any number of tens of thousands of times.

"Gu!!"

My stone sword heavily lands, it strikes Luke's arm on the first hit.

His sword falls and stands thrust into the snow.

"Not yet!"

"No, it's over."

Immediately Luke goes to pick up his sword with his left hand.

I hinder that action by kicking away Luke's chest.

Luke rolls on top of the snow.

I thrust the stone sword at him as Luke attempts to get up.

"That's enough!"

With Ariel's voice the duel ends.

"..Damn it!!"

Luke was hitting the ground. With his broken arm.

And then, "guoo" he let out a groaning voice and held his arm.

"Erumina. Use healing magic."

After hearing Ariel's voice one of the attendants rushes over to Luke.

While wrapping up the broken arm with her voluptuous chest, she casts healing magic.

"Amazing..."

I heard Cliff's admiration from behind.

Cliff isn't all that good with close range matches, so I'm sure he wouldn't understand.

Honestly, that fight just now was low level.

Swordsmen and warriors above my level are all over the place.

That Soldat and Elinalise are the same.

I wouldn't be able to win against those guys without magic and my demon eye I'm sure.

Luke is normal.

He's a normal swordsman.

If I hadn't used the demon eye it probably would have lasted a few attacks, but just as Ariel said, he's not an opponent I would lose against.

"Luke-senpai, are you alright?"

"..I'm alright."

After hearing Luke's calm reply, I threw away the stone sword.

The stone sword sank into the snow.

"I would be saved if you could explain the reason to me in a bit more detail."

"It's nothing too important. Just, Luke had some feelings about it. The spirit of a man I guess."

"A man's spirit..could it be, Luke liked Sylphy as well?"

I didn't intend to poke fun at it, but Ariel lowered her eyebrows.

This is bad, that might have been a slip up.

"We all like Sylphy. Just, that isn't the relationship between man and woman. Precisely because we are allies who have gone through life and death together, we each have our own feelings about it."

"Yes. I'm sorry about that. It was a verbal slip up."

"It's fine as long as you have understood."

Ariel returned to her composed face.

And then she looked in the direction of the house.

About this time, I wonder if Sylphy and Elinalise are having a conversation inside the house.

Ariel started to talk about it.

"..Eventually, I will be returning to the Asura Kingdom. If I return, I'll either become the Queen or I'll die. Two possibilities for one thing. The probability of it being the latter side are overwhelmingly high, the Asura Royal Palace might become a proper place to die in my regards."

"..Can you not go about it without returning?"

"If I were to run away, I wouldn't know for what sake I had lived up until now. If I don't at least fight until the end, I won't be able to face those who died believing in me."

She says some pretty heroic things, but the princess has no color in her expression.

It's a face that thinks the things she knows are natural and a face that doesn't doubt them at all.

In my regards, I think there's an even more different way to live as well though.

"Sylphy is not my retainer, she's my friend. I don't want to take her along to that sort of place to die."

Hmm.

However, Sylphy has the mind to follow along with the princess.

But, if it's a fight where she can't personally see any chance of winning, then that's a point to stop her.

However, these past few years Sylphy has always gone along together with the princess.

They've shared the joys and sorrows together.

It's not as if I can't understand the feelings of wanting to go together until the end as well.

For example if Rujierd intended to challenge Laplace to a fight, even while my legs are trembling I'd follow along with that I'm sure.

No, that example is a bit different.

But, the feelings of wanting to fight together for the sake of your friends are the same I'm sure.

"It seems Sylphy still hasn't thought about it very deeply until now though. Getting married, making an effort, and eventually having a child. If that becomes the case, then I'm sure she won't think to try to accompany me unreasonably."

"...."

"But, if she doesn't think like that, if she tries to overdo it and follow along, I'd like for you to please properly stop her."

I wonder about that.

At that time, I wonder if I'll be able to stop Sylphy.

I have the feeling it's impossible.

Rather, I feel like I'd end up following along together and helping out as well.

Towards the princess, I do have a debt for the time being.

"..Even though I say that, if you don't intend to treat Sylphy preciously and will let Sylphy experience painful things. If she's going to feel that it were better to have died together with us, then we will take back Sylphy. I'm sure we can't win against you in power, but there are any number of methods. Please earnestly prevent Sylphy from thinking it would be better to be together with us."

"I'll keep that in mind."

That doesn't even need to be said.

"Well then, Rudeus-sama. I leave things with Sylphy in your care."

After the princess said that, she turned heel and left.

The two attendants lowered their heads towards me and while Luke was going to pick up his sword he did salutations with his eyes.

The four disappeared walking down the road of snow.

Without waiting for Sylphy to come down.

After returning back inside the house, it was just about the time Elinalise and Sylphy were coming down the stairs.

The area around Elinalise's eyes had swelled up, but it was a somewhat refreshed expression.

"Ah, Rudi. Ariel-sama is?"

"Just now, she returned home."

"I see..sorry, about leaving that to you. Did Ariel-sama say anything?"

"That she would leave things about Sylphy in my care."

I wonder how I can speak about the duel.

And just as I was thinking about it Cliff blurted it out.

"Luke suddenly challenged Rudeus to a duel. But, as expected of Rudeus. He finished the opponent off in a single hit with a counter. I wish I could have shown you two the appearance of that insufferable man holding his arm crouched on the ground."

As expected of Cliff.

He can't read the mood.

It doesn't really matter, but it seems that Cliff doesn't like Luke very much huh.

No well, let's say that's fine.

After hearing that Sylphy lowered her eyebrows.

"Rudi, did you get into a fight with Luke?"

"No, rather than a fight, it was more like being challenged to a duel in the presence of princess Ariel."

"..I see. I'm sure Luke wanted to ascertain it as well."

"What?"

"Rudi's strength. Until now, the one who has put their body forth protecting Ariel-sama and I was Luke after all."

If it's being said then it's not like I don't understand.

However, I really wonder if Luke was thinking such things like a hot-blooded man.

I guess I shouldn't really arbitrarily decide something about a person based on preconceived notions.

I guess it would mean that guy is a man as well.

They have backbone after all, boys do.

Rather, even though my wife just heard that her husband was challenged to a duel, I wonder if she won't worry about me or something.

For the time being, the opponent was using a real sword though.

"But, thank you Rudi."

"For what?"

"Going easy on Luke as an opponent. Since Luke is weak, if Rudi got serious against him he'd die right?"

Somehow it seems like she can't imagine me losing from the start.

I'm not injured either, with Cliff's explanation it seems she has no reason to worry.

With this fixed, Luke is pitiable as well.

To think Sylphy would assert him being weak.

"Well, this side went with that sort of feeling, did you finish talking on your side?"

"Yeah."

Sylphy nodded happily.

Well then, it seems that after all Elinalise was Sylphy's grandmother.

In other words, Rawls's mother.

For she who was producing half-elves all over the place, with the combination of the curse and her original personality, the trouble never stopped.

Elinalise's method of conducting herself seem to have only gotten skillful in these past few decades.

She's passed time without getting into any great trouble after that.

However, before that, the source of evil still remains now, it's firmly rooted.

Particularly, it seems that her time with the elves was terrible.

Elinalise's children, just by learning that they're her children, it's only natural to avoid them.

They've been persecuted, without being treated like people.

In the end they were finally chased out of the village.

It seems that happened numerous times.

It seems that Elinalise being abused by her children or grandchildren in passing has already happened more than a few times.

Therefore, when Elinalise gives birth to children she never reveals her own name, she looks after them until they grow into adults that can look after themselves and then cuts off all ties, it seems such things have continued like that.

It seems she realized at a glance that Sylphy was her own grandchild or great-grandchild.

But it seems making contact as little as possible was what she was thinking.

In the end, after seeing Sylphy so happy getting married, she ended up being overcome with emotion and crying though.

It's a heavy story.

It feels like tears will start flowing reflexively.

However, since it was concluded in a way that she can be satisfied with, she finds it unnecessary to accept any lousy attempts to be consoled.

After hearing that story, I was called over to the corner of the room by Cliff.

"Rudeus."

"What is it, Cliff-senpai?"

"Senpai is already fine, honorifics are fine as well. Starting today please call me without honorifics as Cliff. No, do it."

A senpai order huh.

No, I'll stop with poking fun.

"It's about Lize though..."

"Yeah."

"Honestly, Lize is different from the kind of person I was thinking."

"..Oh, and?"

As expected he's been disillusioned huh.

It's not as if I don't understand.

The partner who you've always liked and thought about, putting aside children, they even had grandchildren after all.

Furthermore, according to the story we've heard, it seems there's a possibility she has great-grandchildren.

If it were me then I'd receive some amount of shock.

Even though I say that, after hearing that story just now, if he says, "help me separate from her", as expected even I will get angry.

It's not like Elinalise has deceived Cliff.

Cliff misunderstood at his own convenience and started to like her.

Feeling disillusioned after knowing the truth, it's a common story, but I would be disgusted.

Although, I won't try to stop him.

I would completely cut off ties with such trash and tell Elinalise it's fine for her to start living in this house today.

In that case, depending on Sylphy's approval it might end up with a pseudo parent and child bowl...No, I won't be with anyone except Sylphy...

No but, indirectly you could say it's for Sylphy's sake after all...

"Lize is a more pitiful person than I imagined. I absolutely want to fix the curse for her. Since I'm a genius I think I'll eventually fix it but... In order to raise the certainty as well, will you please lend me your help?"

"...."

Who is the trashy sleazebag.

It's me.

I'm sorry.

"After hearing that story, you won't be disillusioned or anything will you."

"Disillusioned? There's no way I could think that. What are you saying?"

It was a single line without hesitation.

"Bu..but the person you like has slept around with a variety of partners and putting aside children, she even has grandchildren you know?"

"What about that. I'm a Milis believer. Regardless of my partners circumstances and how different it is from my ideal, I have a responsibility to make the lone woman who said she loved me happy."

He said it.

My body is trembling.

Dangerous.

I might have been looking down on Cliff a bit.

After this, I wonder if it would be better to call him Cliff-san.

"..I understand. If it's something that I can do, I'll help with anything."

"Yeah, it's reliable knowing that I can borrow your power."

I did a handshake with Cliff.

Cliff's small hand shook it with a powerful grip.

"Rather, stop it with the honorifics. You and I are friends right?"

"No way."

What was sprouting within my chest was respect towards Cliff.

Even if it may be my poor ability, I'll become his power.

Finally, Elinalise and Cliff left.

It became just Sylphy and I alone.

The two of us were putting in order the room left untidy by our guests.

Even though I say it was left untidy, they are a group that fundamentally knows manners, it's at most to the degree of wiping something that spilled on the floor up.

There was a bit of food left over, but it's better than not having enough right.

Well, it's today's dinner.

Around the time cleaning ended, the sun was setting and the surroundings became dark.

I turned on the lights and returned to the living room.

After sitting on the three person sofa, Sylphy quietly sat down next to me.

"Various things happened, but isn't it great that it went well."

While placing her head on my shoulder, Sylphy said that and laughed.

With this single day today, I'm suddenly worn out.

"That's right."

After putting my arm around her shoulder, Sylphy was completely entrusting her body weight to me.

After burying my face in her hair and smelling it.

Hnn, it's a sweet scent.

"Rudi, it tickles."

While saying that Sylphy didn't seem to dislike it.

Which is why, just like that, I continued to smell it.

"Rudi..I you know. I think I'm going to grow out my hair."

Suddenly, Sylphy said such things.

Growing out her hair.

In the past, it was something I suggested to her a number of times but she always rejected it.

In the past I always though a twin tail or ponytail would suit Sylphy, but I never thought it would be realized.

"..Is that fine I wonder."

"Why does that become honorifics?"

"Because it's a serious discussion."

"Umm, it's not all that serious of a talk you know. I as well, look, my hair's color, it's not green anymore right? Ariel-sama told me to become feminine as well. But I still plan to wear pants at school, at least I thought it might be better to just grow out my hair."

I see now.

It means she's already not feeling a complex about it anymore I guess.

"You won't wear a uniform for girls?"

"Yeah, it won't suit me."

I don't think that's the case though.

Alright, next time I'll buy one...

And that's fine just with that.

"But well, I want to see a Sylphy with long hair as well. There's no doubt it's certainly cute. Though you're already cute now."

"Eh~, thank you... Yeah. Then, I'll let it grow out."

Now that it's come down to it, it will soon be time to say farewell to this short hair Sylphy as well huh.

It won't be good if I don't firmly ingrain it in my memory while I can now.

No, but if you cut the hair it can be seen again soon though.

"In order to always be loved by Rudi, it won't be good if I don't give it my best."

What's with that line.

It will make me cry though.

Why am I loved this much.

..It won't be good if I don't put in the effort to not be hated by her as well.

Ore-sama type.. that's slightly different it seems so I'll forget it.

I'll stop with the dense type and aim for being a sensitive man.

I don't know if I can do it or not but...

No, I'll give it my best.

"Sylphy, thank you for today."

"Yeah, Rudi as well thank you."

But, as expected I'm tired for today, let's get into the bath and pass time comfortably.

Just like this, Sylphy and I got married.

Since Sylphy and I got married, two months have passed.

The Magic University is starting a new school term, and I was promoted to a second year student.

My lifestyle has changed greatly.

First, since I've moved out of the dorm, it's become a lifestyle of commuting from home.

I wake up in the morning in a large bed in my own room.

During this time, if Sylphy is sleeping next to me I give her a good morning kiss.

Sylphy starts her mornings early, and so she gets out of bed at the same time as me.

After that, I perform my training that has become a daily routine.

Running in a circle around the neighborhood and then swinging the stone sword I created for the duel with Luke the other day.

The same as always I still can't wear Fighting Spirit.

However, it's not like my training is pointless.

During my training, for some reason Badigadi shows his face at times as well.

If he were to laugh in his usual large voice it would be an annoyance for the neighborhood, but I can't really treat him cruelly.

Badigadi occasionally acts as my opponent in training.

If you were to speak of it in terms of skill he doesn't reach the level of Ruijerd or Ghyslaine.

On the contrary, he'll probably fall behind even Paul and Eris.

No, rather than saying it as falling behind, it's more a feeling of he can do it but he doesn't do it.

He's blatantly cutting corners on the defense side.

Because he possesses an immortal body, he must not feel the necessity.

The advice he occasionally gives is unexpectedly accurate.

If he were to fight seriously he might be considerably strong.

After returning from training, Sylphy greets me after making breakfast.

Badigadi eats meals with us and soon after disappears.

Badigadi's conduct is always a mystery.

I wonder what he's thinking about.

..It doesn't feel like he's thinking about much at all though.

On the days when Badigadi doesn't come, the two of us eat while flirting.

For example, "Ahn~".

After breakfast ends we go to the Magic University.

There's about 30 minutes of walking in distance to the school.

Zanoba said, "it's a bit inconvenient", but it doesn't feel all that far.

If you run it's right nearby.

We usually arrive at somewhat of an early time for classes.

I separate with Sylphy in front of the dorms.

After that, I have a bit of time to kill so I go to see Cliff or Zanoba.

Cliff spends the entire morning conducting research on the curse.

After borrowing a research room, he spends the time disassembling magic items bestowed with magic power and looking through books investigating their magic circles.

It seems eventually he intends to start producing an original magic tool.

"Even though we say transfer the curse, I can't even aim a guess at the method after all. But, if my hypothesis is correct, it should be possible to make a magic tool that can negate the curse."

That hypothesis is something along the lines of, "magic items imbued with magic power" and "curses" are the same type of thing.

If an object has a curse, then it's a, "magic item imbued with magic power", if a person has a curse, then it's a "cursed child", is what it means.

In other words, if something can be done about the effect of, "magic items imbued with magic power", it should be possible to do something about "curses" as well.

Something or other are pretty vague words that continued to come out, but the research has only just started so it's just to point things out.

"Up until now, I have nothing that I need to request of you. Since this is my research after all, please let me do it myself. Of course, I have no intention of slighting you, but I have my own pride as well."

He said it with the tone of a child who thinks their toy is about to be taken away.

Putting aside if it was Nanahoshi, but even if I help out I can't imagine it would provide all that much progress.

Incidentally, if I visit in the afternoon there's a high probability that I'll run into Elinalise being all clingy, so I avoid that.

It's often that Zanoba is spending all day everyday in the research room.

Fundamentally he spends most of the time deciphering the notes found in the mansion or rubbing cheeks together with the automatic doll we found.

He still hasn't shown any results yet, but it can't be helped.

Zanoba's passion towards dolls is genuine.

I'm sure he'll eventually solve the mysteries of the automatic doll.

"Please take care of things on Julie's side shisho. I will somehow manage things on this side."

I intend to believe in and leave it to Zanoba.

However, it seems Zanoba is afraid I'll be unable to be patient and meddle with it.

It seems he completely thinks that if I lend a hand the research will quickly be over.

Each and every one of them is placing too much expectation on me.

Even though I wouldn't know about things outside of my specialty.

However, since I'm being left out, it's a bit lonely.

Incidentally, the production of the Red Dragon figure is progressing slowly during the recreation time from the research.

Julie is nearby making a doll.

She was given a single desk for the purpose of working and she dedicates herself to nothing but practice.

"Grand Master, today as well, please take care of me."

Since it's become that I can't teach her magic at night, I teach Julie earth magic in the morning.

It's almost been a year since we met her.

Her growth is something remarkable, but in order to realize the mass production plan, it's still a ways in the future.

For now there's no option other than to honestly continue repetitive practice.

According to Sylphy, if you continue to use the same type of magic from the time when you're young, your precision will get higher as well.

I haven't taught her a single bit of others, she's been learning nothing but earth magic.

If Sylphy's theory is correct, with this she could become an expert of earth magic.

I'm sure it would be fine to wait until she grows a bit more before moving onto the next stage.

There's no need to hurry.

At noon I go to the dining hall.

There was the idea to make obento as well, but various things happened and it was abandoned.

The edge of the first floor of the dining hall has become our exclusive seating.

Even though I say us, fundamentally it's just Zanoba, Julie, and I, then occasionally Badigadi, Cliff, Elinalise, Rinia, and Purusena are added on.

Also, everyday Luke or Sylphy show their faces.

It's not like they eat together with us, but they exchange a couple of words with us and then return.

It's supposedly a ploy intended to show that Ariel and I have this sort of connection.

Luke doesn't particularly talk about anything, but recently I've somewhat started flirting with the "Fitts-senpai" who has become more woman-like with her hair growing out.

Even though I say that, since it seems there're still plenty of people who think she's a man, when they see us, there are guys who look at us with weird expressions as well.

During the time when Sylphy is "Fitts", it seems she doesn't want to be very clingy in public.

Once I tried caressing her butt and she made this horribly saddened face towards me.

She didn't get angry or glare at me, she just made a really sad face.

It seems she really wants me to avoid doing perverted things at times when people are looking on.

Naturally I guess.

Even though Sylphy isn't the type to mind public notice very much, it would be unpleasant for your own husband to be thought of as a monkey that gets sexually excited everywhere.

At least in front of her, I want to appear attractive.

After lunch I proceed to classes.

Same as always, it's Advanced healing magic and Intermediate detoxification magic classes.

Purusena sitting in the seat next to me, continues to do nothing but memorize, mutually cast healing magic on each other, or eat meat.

On the days without lessons, I teach Rinia attack magic.

"Recently, boss's body touching has stopped nya."

"Even though the scent of sexual excitement is amazing, since you never lay your hands on us, the sense of discomfort is strong nano."

The two can't hide their surprise over how I can maintain my reason.

Since I decided to protect Sylphy's honor, other women are no touch.

Occasionally Purusena comes out with, "Uffun-nano", but I feel like she's making a fool of me, so I just ignore it.

Since Rinia is indifferent about various things, occasionally her panties are completely visible, but I try not to look at that as much as possible as well.

Just, the depth of my study since the time I was born continues to turn, today it was light blue.

{ C-Editor's note: Translated from something along the lines of he's naturally inclined to staring at panties since he was born. }

In the early afternoon I show my face in Nanahoshi's place.

She's the same as ever.

{ C-Editor's note: She is irritable and unsociable. }

After looking at since I returned to my condition with sexual desire and that feeling of misfortune coming on more.

Around here you don't see it very often, it's a figure and features that match up with a Japanese.

Since I got into this body as well there was some changes to my preferred taste, so I won't say it's all that great though.

However, certainly I can feel the nostalgia.

"I'll just say this, but if you lay your hands on me, I'll go crying to Orsted."

"Please pardon me from that."

If I stare at her too much, she comes out saying things like that.

She knows that I excessively fear Orsted.

Of course, I don't have any intention of laying my hands on her either.

Therefore, this exchange is for the sake of maintaining our distance, it's something like a confirmation.

"....Fu."

Nanahoshi is usually irritated, moreover, I feel a bit impatient as well.

However, in this past half year, the large pile of failed magic circles she had been saving up have already run out.

I feel like we're getting close to the time when we arrive at the next phase.

After I finish things with Nanahoshi's experiments, I go to meet with Sylphy.

Fundamentally, Sylphy has continued the same until now as the princess's escort.

As expected, even princess Ariel would be considerate over newly-weds. After class, she ends her job of staying in the vicinity of the princess and returns home with me once.

Even though I say that, since there's the guarding at night as well, after eating dinner together, cleaning the house a bit, and entering the bath, she soon returns back to the school.

It feels like I've doubled her workload.

We're causing her trouble.

However, it seems like Sylphy doesn't feel that way herself.

"Somehow, having a house makes me feel relieved."

Were her thoughts on the matter.

Guarding at night..I'll start referring to it as the night shift.

Sylphy's night shift is two out of every three days.

In other words, she has a day off once every three days.

If I think about how she never had any days off until now, it's considerably insufficient.

That's thanks to Elinalise.

She bought into being the princess's escort.

I've never actually seen Elinalise and Ariel talking, but it seems they get along considerably well.

The raunchy Elinalise and the tidy Ariel. I thought they would be like water and oil, but it seems that's not the case.

...According to Sylphy, Ariel isn't all that tidy.

Something about her putting on a good face in front of me.

On the days with no night shift, we go shopping together in the market on the way home.

We buy three days' worth of food.

Although, around this area the focus is generally on beans, potatoes, and things such as dried meat that can be preserved well.

It's about time now that I feel like eating rice.

If we were to expand the trade routes that Nanahoshi pioneered, wouldn't we be able to import rice from the south I wonder...

After returning home, we eat dinner.

Different from her appearance as a track and field club girl, Sylphy is skilled at cooking.

It seems her repertoire isn't all that large, though I'm treated to cooking with a nostalgic flavor.

Her sense of seasoning is similar to the stuff I ate in Buina Village.

I guess it's natural since she learned cooking from Lilia.

After putting on an apron and energetically moving around in the kitchen, Sylphy is truly sweet, almost to the point that I want to embrace her from behind.

Once, I offered to help her out with cooking as well, but I was gently refused.

In regards to cooking food, it seems she has something she's not willing to turn over.

Though it's not like she's a cook.

Eventually, I'd like to try proposing something nude apron-like, but for some reason I can't shake the feeling that it would just be refused.

When it comes time for dinner, occasionally visitors stop by.

Even though I call them visitors, fundamentally they're a certain ten people who are invited to this house.

Cliff and Elinalise visit frequently.

I don't know if Zanoba is showing restraint, but he doesn't come very often.

Nanahoshi comes at a rate of about once per month and uses the bath.

It seems she really wants to come more often, but it seems she's showing restraint.

I'll just say it to prevent misunderstandings, but I've never tried peeking in on Nanahoshi in the bath.

I don't know if Nanahoshi is being cautious about that area as well, but she only ever seems to come by at the times when Sylphy is around.

Now.

Dinner has ended and our visitors have left, the two of us are alone.

It's the beginning of a sweet time.

Sylphy in the daytime as "Fitts-senpai" is imposing.

Looking from a distance and it's enough to turn tail and avoid getting near.

But, she comes desiring attractiveness and integrity from me.

In contrast the "Sylphy" at night is deredere moreover submissive.

She'll listen to whatever I tell to her.

Even if I carelessly desire something extraordinarily abnormal moreover perverse by the time I word that she's already willing to respond to it.

Sylphy's opinion was that, "it's completely normal compared to the people in the Asura Royal Palace."

Sylphy never makes any requests of me from her side.

On the contrary,

"All the things Rudi wants to do are things that I want to do."

After she says such things my reason is beaten down.

Honestly, I feel like my reason has been blown away numerous times and I've ended up doing everything I please.

However, if I take advantage of that and do whatever I please, then I can't help the feeling that I'm treating Sylphy as an object.

That is, I really like erotic things.

This sort of situation is something I always dreamed of.

But, however, Sylphy is my wife.

She's a person who has her own individuality.

There's no way it's good for me to do as I like.

Dignity, right, I want to respect her dignity.

And that's what I think, but I can't oppose the seduction.

If she looks at me with those clouded eyes and says something like, "it's fine if you don't endure it?"

I already feel that trying to be patient is absurd.

I'm a weak person.

The words I wanted to try saying once in my life, the words I wanted to be told once in my life.

The things that I wanted to try doing once in my life, the things I wanted done to me once in my life.

I have the feeling almost all of those in that area have been done in these past two and half months...

I haven't been forcing her to overdo it.

I haven't forced her to do things she doesn't want to.

However I really want to do something for Sylphy from my side as well.

Thinking that I tried to ask her.

"Hey, Sylphy, don't you have anything you want me to do?"

"Eh?..Then, the thing you promised before, do you remember?"

The instant I heard that I immediately fixed my head to the floor.

"I'm very sorry, I don't remember."

I honestly apologized.

Sylphy raised my head in a fluster and forgave me saying, "it was something from a year ago it can't be helped."

I might be no good in places such at this.

"Look, Rudi used it didn't you? 'Ran Ma Magic Disturber'. I want you to teach me that."

"That's a simple order. I will teach you to the best of my ability."

Since that's the case.

It became that after dinner we would teach each other magic.

Particularly teaching each other.

"For the time being, I have learned and can use up to Advanced healing magic. Rudi, you're taking healing magic lessons right. I'll teach you."

I was teaching Sylphy Ran Ma, and Sylphy was teaching me chantless healing magic.

It was that sort of schema.

If it's this then there's no meaning to it.

But, just teaching her, it seems she feels thankful.

I wonder if Sylphy is the type to devote herself.

I wonder if I'm the type who can't feel comfortable without doing something in return.

I wonder if I'm the type who feels sorry towards the other side unless they let me do something for them.

However, chantless healing magic is something that I wasn't able to do until now.

I decided to gratefully accept her teaching me.

Well, I'm sure it will be fine if I watch over Sylphy's situation again and then propose something.

Well then.

If you understand the theory, you can quickly use chantless healing magic.

There was a period when I thought that as well.

"Umm, I don't feel it's any different from other chantless magics though.."

I couldn't use chantless healing magic.

Even after I heard the theory from Sylphy and tried to put into practice as well, I still couldn't do it.

"Rudi, could it be, when you're receiving the technique, you can't understand the sensation of it?"

Now that it's come to it I finally hear it, it's something I realized after it was pointed out, but nothing can be done about the fact that I can't feel even a part of the flow of magic power in regards to healing magic.

Healing magic is when you touch the other side's body and then send a flow of your own magic power inside.

The magic power you send causes a change in the other side's magic power and fixes the wounds.

In other words, it's a feeling of using your own magic power to intervene with a target's magic power to heal their wounds.

I'm on the side that has no sense for intervening.

If I were to say it, if you touch the palm of your left hand with the index finger on your hand, it's the same sensation that you can't feel things from the side of the index finger.

I understand that attack magic has a flow similar to the feeling of flowing blood but.. it sure is mysterious.

It's not limited to just healing magic, but all of the so-called support type, buff and debuff type magics, I can't use chantlessly.

I wonder if this is the same as Fighting Spirit, something that all but reincarnated individuals can use.

Although, it could simply be that my weak type is healing magic. We could just say that's the case.

"Somehow, I'm a bit relieved. There are things Rudi can't do after all as well."

While Sylphy's saying that, a shy smile floated to the surface.

To be surpassed in a single field is a bit mortifying, but if there was nothing she could win in, thinking like that I feel sorry for Sylphy as well.

This is fine.

Despite my worthlessness, Sylphy somehow or other managed to understand Ran Ma Magic Disturber.

It seems it will still take some time before she can use it, but I'm sure eventually she'll be able to use it in actual combat.

Sylphy is excellent as a student.

Eris, Ghyslaine, Zanoba, Julie, Rinia, and a variety of others I've taught magic to, but I feel that Sylphy's growth rate was the fastest of them all.

She might be a variety of genius as well.

"But, somehow this, it's unfair right... if you have this used on you, magicians won't be able to do anything."

"Well, technically it is a technique one of the seven world powers used after all."

"Eh? Is that how it is? Rudi, you have an acquaintance among the seven world powers?"

"....No, they're not really mine, but Nanahoshi's acquaintance."

If I were to tell her I was almost killed, as expected, she would worry.

It's probably safer to not let out Orsted's name as well.

After teaching her Ran Ma at my own convenience, it's not out of the question that he would come to attack me again.

"It's better if you don't talk about this very much to other people. About Ran Ma as well. If there's a time when something happens and an opponent shows up from the seven world powers, I won't be able to do anything after all."

"I understand. It's a secret."

Sylphy seriously nodded while saying that.

On the days when Sylphy doesn't come home, I work on cleaning and laundry.

It's fundamentally come down to where it's my job to wash Sylphy's clothes as well.

Sylphy's clothing, for example Sylph's panties and bras as well.

Of course, as a husband, I refrain from perverted conduct.

Putting them into my pocket and returning to my room, moreover things like making use of them don't happen.

At most, it's to the degree of sniffing them once.

The young libido that is acquired there is somehow received by Sylphy herself once every three days.

The cleaning, for the time being it's somewhat done, but if Sylphy were to say then it seems it's "crude".

During my adventurer days, whenever I would stay over in a new inn, I thought I was cleaning up properly, although leaving things scattered is still my forte after all.

On the days Sylphy is off as well, she cleans up. We live in a somewhat spacious mansion for two people. Since there are many unused rooms, it's difficult.

While I continue to think it's no good continuing like this as well, it is too spacious.

I wonder if it would be better to hire a maid.

Speaking of maids, it would be Lilia.

I wonder if it's about time for Paul and the others to meet with Zenith.

It was three years ago when Elinalise and the others found out Zenith's location.

From there they cut across the Magic Continent, supposing it took them one or two years to arrive in Milishion.

Begaritto Continent's...Labyrinth City Lapan was it again?

I think it wouldn't even take a year to get from Milishion to there.

The first time I sent a letter out was one and a half years ago.

If it arrived then, then I feel it's about a good time for me to receive a letter in response though..

Still too soon I guess.

Elinalise said not to worry about it, but I'm a bit uneasy.

I'm uneasy, but Roxy is moving as well.

Rather than me going to search in a panic, I'm sure it's better to wait solidly for now.

After giving it some thought, since Buina Village has disappeared, Paul and the others have lost their house as well.

It's fine if they intend to live in Milishion as well, but if they intend to come over here, then it might be good to live together in this house as well.

As an ex-NEET, thinking of supporting my parents...

It's somehow emotionally moving.

Though it would be hard to give up this love nest reserved just for Sylphy and myself.

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It was morning, I opened my eyes.

Sylphy was sleeping using my arm as a pillow.

White hair and a white nape.

If you look closely long eyelashes.

This cute of a girl is sleeping using my arm as a pillow without even a single piece of underwear to be seen.

She's sleeping so peacefully while defenselessly showing me her sleeping face.

It's just that much of a situation, but I already feel a hustle coming on this morning.

I flip up the blanket and glance below it and I can see Sylphy's cherry blossoms.

Just a bit above that, a small bruise is remaining.

It's the so-called kiss mark.

It's something that I put on her last night.

In my previous life, I always wondered what was so fun about adding a kiss mark though.

Just like this, waking up in the morning and seeing the kiss mark you've created yourself is really enjoyable.

I guess it's the DQN sensation of putting a tattoo or piercing on your own girlfriend.

{ C-Editor's note: DQN is Japanese slang for dokyun which means dumbass or idiot. }

The feeling of conquest comes rising to the surface.

Sylphy is my woman.

I won't hand her over to anyone.

And while I was thinking such things, my son had started morning radio exercises.

{ C-Editor's note: Warm-up calisthenics performed to music and guidance from radio broadcasts. }

Even though he did that much intense exercise yesterday, he sure is energetic.

In my previous life, it was nothing but solo training, even though he was just a hikikomori these past few years, recently when it comes down to the time to act he's been quite energetic.

No good, no good, I can't serve it up in the morning.

Sylphy has work today as well.

I'll work it off on my end with my morning routine.

I removed my arm from under Sylphy's head and placed a pillow there.

"Nnn... Rudi, that isn't something you drink..."

Sylphy stirred, tightly shrinking her body.

Her sleep talk is cute.

I wonder what I'm drinking in the dream.

I have the feeling that I could drink any amount of Sylphy's Mineral Water.

Somehow or other, I touched Sylphy's chest and stroked them a bit.

If I do it too strong in the morning, she'll wake up. So tenderly, gently.

Almost like touching tofu as you filter it.

It's a modest sensation.

To think that I would get to touch something this good in the morning. I might be the happiest person in the world.

This is real sufficiency huh?

"Nn... Rude...?"

Sylphy faintly opened her eyes and looked at me.

And then she grabbed my hand, and with an absent-minded face laughed blankly and said,

"...Have a safe trip."

"I'm heading out and I shall be back."

I left the room.

The next time we'll be able to sleep together is three days later huh?

I'm looking forward to it.

Recently here, I've lived truly peacefully.

There's been no incident-like incident.

If you could say there was one, it would just be about the level that Rinia and Pursena introduced me to a first year.

Somehow, this boy is a delinquent of the first years and within two months he had put the squeeze on all of the delinquents in the same year as him.

After that, he was getting full of himself and thought he'd put his hands on the Bancho Group, it seems he was harshly beaten by the first assassin Zanoba.

As a result of that, it seems a variety of things happened and it was decided he would enter under my group.

That's quite the surprising and unexpected story.

According to the story I heard, it seems our school has an existence like the Four Heavenly Kings, called the [Six Demon Group] ruling over it.

{ C-Editor's note: The Four Heavenly Kings are four Buddhist gods, each of whom is believed to watch over one cardinal direction of the world. }

The one ruling over the summit of that is me it seems.

It seems if you manage to defeat all of them you can gain the privilege to challenge me, the boss.

It's a composition like a delinquent manga.

I better not have some name like Gakuensai Festival or something with that kind of feel attached.

{ C-Editor's note: A Gakuensai festival is an annual cultural festival that takes place in most Japanese schools. }

Incidentally, those six are Zanoba, Cliff, Rinia, Pursena, Fitts, and Badigadi, these six.

If you're speaking of all of them, I wonder if I'll end up having to face an opponent that can defeat a Demon King.

I don't really like that.

In any case this first year student boss was pitiful, since he was defeated by the first man.

By the time he had made it to my place, his tail was curled up, his head was rounded, it was truly a meek attitude.

This first year student head, it seems he was able to give a somewhat decent fight thanks to the fact that he kept his distance and fought Zanoba using magic.

Zanoba somehow endured it, then approached when his opponent had exhausted his magic power and sunk him with one punch supposedly.

Nothing can be done about the fact that long ranged fights end up being close for Zanoba.

Next time I thought about teaching Zanoba the ultimate technique to swing a rock with a golf swing and send the opponent flying to China.

In any case, at some point unknown to me people really started to treat me as the Bancho.

But you know, thanks to that the delinquents all listen to what I tell them, so it's quite helpful.

The other day at the time when I found some guys lurking behind the school it was the same.

If I say one word after readying my stance, their faces suddenly turn pale and they stop.

If I say just a single line to someone bullying, then the bullying stops.

It's not a bad position.

Within my field of vision, I don't forgive guys who harass the weak.

Even if for example, the bullied side was the problem.

One such day.

A letter arrived.

It was from Paul.

It seems to be a letter that was sent a year prior finally making its trip here.

[To Rudeus.

I saw the letter. That you're going to attend the Magic University. Congratulations!

Various things happened, but I feel happy that you're walking down your own path.

I'm sure you've heard from Elinalise, but it seems like we can somehow or other manage things with Zenith.

It's thanks to Roxy, Talhand, and Elinalise's help.

Please tell Elinalise thanks in that regard as well.

Well, I'm sure she'll just make an unpleasant face anyway though.

Well then, right now we're in East Port.

We're getting ready to head towards Begaritto Continent after this.

I've never been to Begaritto Continent before, but it's supposedly the next harshest land after Magic Continent.

Crossing over with children makes me a little bit uncomfortable.

Norn and Aisha are still nine years old after all.

So, the idea came up that we would send just the children up to your place.

Even though I say that, I know that letting the children journey on their own is dangerous.

Ginger said she would act as the escort for them, but I don't know what could happen.

It's dangerous, but if we're going to be separated again and worry about it, then it's better to take them along.

Just about the time I thought that, we reunited with a certain individual.

It's a person you know as well.

That person said he would take over escorting the children, so I left it to them.

I think you'll be surprised when you meet as well.

It's a reliable person.

Honestly, it was a mortifying option.

If something happens in the middle of the journey and it becomes something terrible when my eyes are off them.

When I think that, the feeling that I want to take them together with me is large as well.

But, after all I really want the children to stay in a safe place.

Including you as well.

After Norn and Aisha get there, I'd like for you to prepare a place for them to live and to commute to school from, it's fine even if it's small.

I've left money for school fees and life expenses in their possession.

It's a considerably large amount of money.

Don't buy a woman or anything.

...Like that could be the case. Well, I'm sure if it's you then you'll be able to handle it well.

Rather, it's something that I really should be doing myself though... sorry I'm a bad father.

I'm sorry, but I'm depending on you.

Thinking about it, you're already 15 years old, by the time this letter arrives you should be 16 huh.

You're an adult.

I feel bad that I wasn't ever able to congratulate you on your birthday.

I can't congratulate Aisha and Norn for their 10th birthdays as well.

But well, that's something grand we can do at the time when we reunite.

Together with all of our family.

It's alright for you to leave this side to us.

In reality, the Fedoa Region search group has disbanded, all that's left are Lilia, Talhand, Roxy, Vera, Shera, and I.

We should have enough combat potential to return from Begaritto Continent.

If things proceed favorably, with a one or two year delay we'll be able to head over there I'm sure.

In the beginning, I thought about having Lilia go together with the children on the journey, but it seems that Lilia is more worried about me than the children.

It's something I can't really accept. How pathetic.

Even though I say that, Lilia trusts in Aisha.

She seems to have taught her most things that she has to be taught.

Aisha is a genius.

Between you and Aisha, I'm scared of my own seed.

But, Norn is a normal child.

A bit different from you and Aisha.

That's why I'm sure you might feel impatient at many times, but please look at it over the long term.

Also, probably because I was spoiling her, I think she has some selfish points.

She also seems to hate you as well, along with that, her relationship with Aisha isn't very good.

Since that's the case, I think there's the possibility that she might end up being isolated, but... as an older brother I'd like for you to look after her without hating it.

Just in case, I've left the same letter with both of them.

I think it will be fine leaving it to that person, but if six months pass after the time this letter arrives, I'd like for you to search for them on your side.

For the time being, something along those lines.

It's come down to where I'm leaving every little thing down to you, I do feel apologetic about that.

I leave it in your care.

From Paul Greyrat.]

It was a letter overflowing with apologies.

Paul you... really now.

It seems Norn and Aisha alone are heading here.

I'm a bit worried, but I think it's probably better for them to come here instead of going to the Begaritto Continent as well.

But, I wonder if it would have been fine if they were left in the care of Zenith's parents in Milishion.

No, I think that in itself might have had its own problems associated with it.

Putting aside Norn, Aisha doesn't have Zenith's blood flowing in her after all.

The journey is, well it should be alright.

Comparing the Central Continent to the Magic Continent, the degree of danger is pretty low after all.

If you were to call it a worry, then I am worried that there are many kidnappings in this world, but kidnappers fundamentally only target the weak.

If there are two of them and they have an escort with some amount of skill, then I'm sure no one will try to forcefully abduct them.

It was written in the letter that they have an escort with them.

Ginger was a female knight imperial guard belonging to Zanoba.

I don't remember how skilled she was.

It's just that, since the knights of Shirone had learned the Water God style, I'm sure she'll be useful for the duty of escorting.

And then, there's one more.

It's written that it's a person I can trust.

I wonder who. Maybe Gisu?

There's no way it could be Eris right.

Thinking about other reliable people that Paul and I know... ah, maybe it could be that person.

They did say they were going to search the Central Continent after all, it could be that luckily they managed to encounter each other.

If it's that person, then I can leave it to them.

To the point where Ginger is unnecessary.

In any case, I could really feel Paul's trust in me from the contents of the letter.

It won't be good if I don't respond to that trust.

I'm the eldest son after all!

However, if that's the case it's really a success that I already bought a house.

We have plenty of leftover rooms as well.

We can receive them without any problems.

If there was going to be any problems, it would be that my two younger sisters are still young.

Sylphy's and my love life might not go very well in regards to their education.

Well, it should be fine as long as we prepare a room for them away from our bedroom.

It's something to look forward to.

I wonder when they'll come.

Maybe about two months later.

And before that.

"It's no good if I don't properly discuss these things."

I'll go discuss it with Sylphy.

Around this time she should be in the kitchen cooking.

After looking into the kitchen, a girl with a small build was chopping vegetables with a [chopchop].

Short height, small shoulders, a slender and well-proportioned body.

After seeing such a figure from behind, I started to feel a bit turned on.

"Sylphy...!"

I embraced Sylphy from behind.

I put my hands inside the hem of her apron and groped her soft chest.

"Ouch!!"

"Ah."

After looking Sylphy cut her finger.

The red blood was creating a glob and dripping down on top of the chopping board.

In the moment I embraced her, she cut her finger.

"...Geez. Rudi, that's dangerous when I'm holding cutlery."

Sylphy said it in an unusually criticizing tone.

The cut on her finger was healed in no time at all.

She seems to be using chantless healing magic almost subconsciously.

"I'm sorry. I won't cling to you when you're in the middle of cooking."

"Yeah. Please endure it when I'm cooking. It will be done soon after all."

I retreated from the kitchen and waited in the dining room.

I was a bit nervous.

I ended up getting her hurt.

I was getting a bit too ahead of myself.

I sat on the chair and waited.

And then, since Sylphy came out from the kitchen, I lowered my head.

"I am very sorry for just now."

"I'm not that angry. If you're going to apologize just do it normally."

"Yeah. Sorry."

"Yes. It will fine as long as you're careful next time."

We sat together on two chairs and started eating.

The distance to Sylphy is close.

It seems she isn't angry.

Recently, I might have been loving her too much, I'm afraid of the recoil from the time when she gets tired of courtesy.

"So, what is it? It's unusual for Rudi to be that cheerful."

"Yeah, I received a letter from my father."

"Eh!! From Paul-san!?"

I handed Sylphy the letter while she was surprised.

With a tense expression she started reading the letter and then looked a bit disappointed.

"Ah, it seems like the news that we got married still hasn't arrived yet."

It seems she wanted to know my family's reaction to our marriage.

However, after she continued reading it her face turned serious.

In the end she whispered, "I see."

"That's great isn't it, Rudi. Everyone's safe."

"Yeah."

Come to think of it, it was said pretty nonchalantly, but Sylphy already lost her parents.

I might be lacking a bit of delicacy.

After seeing my face, Sylphy made a bitter smile.

"Really, Rudi, don't make that face. Certainly my mother and father died, but now I have Rudi and Elinalise-san here as well, so I'm not lonely."

While saying that, Sylphy grasped my hand and smiled with a "yeah~"

Recently, Sylphy has been getting even more adorable.

Her very short hair has grown a bit and is just short now, it's making her seem even more girlish.

Her white hair is silky and the long ears that extend out from the sides of her hair are cute.

This kind of girl is my wife.

This isn't a dream right.

"Sylphy..."

I want to make a new family with this cute girl.

Such a desire is naturally rising to the surface.

All the more since we're doing it almost every night on the days we're together.

Even though I say that, the one who will be troubled by childbirth is Sylphy.

Her butt is small and cute, but it's far from the easy delivery type.

Since there's healing magic in this world, I think there are few death incidents during childbirth...

However, not dying and the difficulty of it are also different matters.

No, the problem rather than that, is if we can manage to raise a child.

Honestly, Sylphy and I are both still immature as people.

Of course, in terms of age we're already considered adults in this world and we can earn money.

However, as a single human parent, I wonder if we can manage it.

...It's alright, it's something all the living beings in the world are doing.

Even I should be able to do it.

Even if I can't, Sylphy is here as well.

It'll be fine if we give it our best together.

Two years later, Paul and the others will return as well.

Lilia has her own personal views on child raising after all, so there's nothing to worry about I'm sure.

The problem is the mother-in-law though.

I had heard that Zenith and Sylphy got along well together, therefore, I want to think that nothing bad will happen.

In Paul's case... well if you just show him something like his grandchild, I'm sure he would be simple-mindedly happy about it.

Oh, that's no good.

Putting that aside for now.

"I'm sure you understand after reading the letter, but my two little sisters are coming. I'd like to let them live in this house, but is that alright?"

"Of course it is. This house will become busy as well."

While saying that Sylphy laughed shyly.

And there's no problem.

After we finished eating dinner we moved to the living room.

It was time to study magic.

As usual I can't use healing magic chantlessly.

However, I've learned the incantations by heart in preparation and stored the theory as knowledge in case it's needed to survive later.

Chantless isn't the only technique.

There's no need be fixated on it, it's better if I don't try to think about getting skilled at it in a hurry.

I think I'm the type who has talent in regards to this world, but I'm sure I can't reach the peak either way.

Since that's the case, I need to make sure I fortify my foundations and be careful so I don't fall down.

"Fununu...!"

Currently, Sylphy is trying to extinguish the Water Ball I've made with her Disturb Magic.

Her fingertips are facing my hand with her face bright red as she groans.

I maintain the Water Ball I created with magic power in order to try and prevent it from being extinguished.

It feels kind of like load training.

If the Water Ball twists and bends then flies off, it's Sylphy's win.

Then she acquires the privilege to do anything she likes with me on top of the bed.

Even without that privilege, if she just says a word about it, then I will go with it.

In reverse, as long as I can maintain it then it's my win.

Then I acquire the privilege to love Sylphy to my heart's content on top of the bed.

Though I possess it even without winning.

Incidentally, I generally win.

Currently, it seems Sylphy can use Advanced level attack magic of everything except fire.

Furthermore her healing is Advanced and Detoxification is Advanced.

It's this sort of feeling.

—

Fire Magic: Intermediate

Water Magic: Advanced

Earth Magic: Advanced

Wind Magic: Advanced

Healing Magic: Advanced

Detoxification Magic: Advanced

—

They're exceedingly high spec.

It's something I learned recently, but these six types are called the "Basic Six Types" in the Magic University.

Although they're called basic, they're the types of magic that are used the most frequently.

In regards to the Magic University, in your first two or three years you're supposed to get these six types to Elementary level as your goal.

After you've achieved that, in the remaining few years you decide on your major type, and learn it up to Advanced level.

Or at least that seems to be the standard flow for it.

Even if you devote yourself to a single one of them, without talent you'll reach a dead end at the Intermediate level.

For example not having a high enough aggregate magic power or stumbling on melded magic...

After taking any of the types to Advanced level, there are almost no individuals who make it up to Saint class.

Although, it seems there are outstanding talents like Sylphy and Cliff once every ten years.

Outstanding talents once every ten years.

That means every 10 years there's one guy like that.

If they're a genius then I guess you could call them a genius, but it's a general category.

They'll never reach the level of the monsters known as Gods.

I wonder about myself.

After putting together the stories I heard from Badigadi and Kishirika, it seems my aggregate amount of magic power is in the realm of God class.

However, that absolutely doesn't mean that I myself can be considered God class.

In my case, it's almost like attaching a passenger plane's fuel tank onto an average car.

No matter how long it runs it won't stop, but the speed won't increase.

Along with the fuel tank, if you throw on the jet engine as well, this time the body of the car won't hold together.

From a design standpoint it would be a piece of junk.

Being able to run as much as it wants without stopping is a great advantage though.

"Come to think of it, Sylphy."

"Wh, what? you know I'm concentrating..."

"It's about our child, but I wonder if they would have talent in magic."

"Faa-!?"

Sylphy's concentration power was disturbed.

The unskilled Disturb Magic scattered and the Water Ball was created to its complete orb form.

I froze that and then sunk it into the cup in front of me.

"Th... That is something we won't know until it's born..."

Sylphy's face was bright red, she was restlessly squirming with her thighs together.

"In order for it to be born, that is, it's essential for the Danna-sama to give it his best, you know?"

While laughing and trying to cover that up Sylphy came over and rubbed my thighs.

Sylphy's thin hand tickled.

In exchange, I rubbed the back side of Sylphy's shoulders as well.

These days this kind of contact somehow makes me happy.

In an instant, the mood in the living room became pink colored.

Sylphy buried her face on the top of my shoulder as she embraced me.

Cute.

Danna-sama wants to give it his best right now.

Le... let alone talking about when it's born, it's too soon to be talking about it when it's not even made yet isn't it.

An un-captured tanuki or something or other.

{ C-Editor's note: Japanese proverb - Don't count your tanuki (Japanese raccoon dog) before it's been caught. In English it would be Don't count your chickens before they've hatched. }

If I don't capture the tanuki first.

"Yeah. But, since my elf blood is strong, it might be hard to make it... That is, I know that Rudi wants a child, but it seems there are cases where it can take a considerable amount of time to make it. Grandm... Elinalise-san said it as well, but, that is, the probability that we won't be able to make it soon is higher right..."

Sylphy separated her head from my shoulder and cast her eyes down with a somewhat worried face.

Several months since we were married.

Sylphy's and my sexual relationship has been proceeding favorably.

It's just a bit of naked talk, but in the instant I'm about to pull the trigger on my magnum, I use lines often said in ero games.

Not with any particularly deep meaning, simply because I just wanted to try saying the lines, and while I'm aware that they are considerably disgusting, and somehow or other the interest takes a hold and I suddenly end up blurting them out.

Sylphy might be interpreting those seriously.

It seems she's still not to the point of worrying about infertility, but she might be holding worries about it in her own way.

"Th... That is if I'm unable to have a child, it's fine if you accept a mistress okay?"

"For the time being, there's no expectation for that at all."

"But Rudi... you want a child right?"

I'll try thinking about it with the positions reversed.

If it were to come to light that I was infertile and Sylphy felt by all means that she wanted a child.

Sylphy was led away by a different man and made a child.

I might commit suicide.

I can't afford to let Sylphy feel those sorts of things.

"You sure are foolish Sylphy. What I want isn't a child, it's the crystallization of love with the partner that I love."

"Rudi..."

"I love you Sylphy. My princess."

Even for me, those are some pretty toothy lines.

The back of my neck is itchy.

However Sylphy... Or more like, the people of this world are weak to these kinds of lines.

The other day as well, as a joke I said, "Cheers to your eyes" and Sylphy's face went bright red.

The effect is outstanding.

If I'm too embarrassed to say it then we can't move forward.

"...I love you as well."

Sylphy's eyes were clouded while she was clinging onto my arm.

Her face was bright red, the area around her mouth was linked like she was extremely embarrassed.

Perfect Communication.

Well then, now that we've gotten a rise we should move up to the second floor.

I picked up Sylphy and carried her princess-like.

Sylphy put her hands around my neck.

In those clouded eyes, I could see my reflected figure trying to appear as attractive as possible, my heart was pounding like an alarm bell.

That she's given in to the arousal as well, is the best of all.

In these cases, the most important thing is that both sides' feelings are in it after all.

Now then, tonight it seems that it's going to be a hot night.

The incident occurred one month after the letter arrived.

—

Early afternoon.

I was helping out with Nanahoshi's experiments.

Just, this day, it was proceeding a bit different.

"If this magic circle succeeds, we'll be able to proceed to the next phase."

Nanahoshi declared that and displayed a magic circle much larger than any of the previous ones.

Far more enormous, even though I say that, it's still only about half the size of a tatami mat.

On an unusually large page for this world, delicate patterns were drawn closely packed together.

It was a masterpiece that took over one month to draw.

In regards to Nanahoshi, it's the compilation of two years of work.

"For the time being, is it alright for me to hear what this magic circle is intended to do?"

"...It's to summon an object from the other world."

"The metastasis disaster won't occur again right?"

Because Nanahoshi was summoned, that metastasis disaster occurred.

That would mean, it might happen even if it's with just a small object.

Is what I was thinking, but Nanahoshi shook her head.

"It's alright... in theory at least."

"For the time being would it be alright for me to hear that theory?"

"In all of the experiments until now, in order to summon something more complex and larger, I confirmed that it requires more magic power. In other words, the magic in this world falls under the category of the laws of energy conservation. This time what we're summoning is a small and simple object. If we were to use the assumption that the amount of energy used during the time I was summoned was enough to annihilate an entire region, in theory at most only an area of 1 meter or so around the magic circle would be teleported this time. And then, honestly I can't imagine it happening though, even if by chance the same thing happens again, I've prepared a safety within the magic circle. I already know how much magic power it will use after all."

The laws of energy conservation huh.

I see now. What was that again?

"Energy conservation... and, what was that again?"

Was it different from the law of conservation of mass...?

"...I'm not so knowledgeable about it that I can explain it to a person who doesn't know about it, but in other words all of the strange things that happen in this world, generally have magic power as their cause. That thing you use often, Rock Bullet was it? That as well, you're suddenly materializing a rock in mid-air, but the reality of it is that you're changing the magic power into rock."

I guess that would mean I was mistaken on the laws I thought of in the past.

I see, Energy Conservation.

I see now, the more magic power you pour into the more it becomes, fire magic's temperature rises, the weight of earth magic increases is what that means.

"And then...?"

After that, Nanahoshi explained it to me, but honestly it was too difficult so I didn't understand it.

Since you're applying the usage of some law, the magic circle's size and effect are something or other.

Also, after applying the something or other law, something or other happens.

Honestly, even if there was a hole somewhere in the theory, I wouldn't get it.

All that I understand is that Nanahoshi is full of self-confidence.

If she has self-confidence, then I'm sure the probability of success is high.

Well. Even if it fails and I end up being thrown somewhere as well.

I'm sure I can somehow or other manage to return.

"If it fails and I end up being teleported somewhere, I'm leaving it to you to contact my family."

"That's why I said, there's no chance of that."

After that exchange, I stood in front of the magic circle.

"Well then, I'll start."

"Please do."

I wonder if that wish was something made towards me.

Or else something towards God.

I started to pour magic power into the magic circle.

The ends of the magic circle on the paper started giving off light.

Then the entire magic circle began to release a dim light.

I knew that my magic power was being sucked up continuously from my arm.

However, something was a bit strange.

I felt something was out of place.

I felt like there was some kind of stagnation in the way the magic circle was shining.

One portion doesn't seem to be shining as well...

Psht!!!

A small sound was let out.

Suddenly the magic power stopped passing over.

The dim light from the magic circle stopped.

"..."

With that it was over.

After that, the magic circle returned no reaction.

After taking a good look, a part of the paper had a fissure made in it.

I guess it would mean it short circuited, and the safety or whatever started working.

In any case, this is...

A failure.

"...How about it?"

"It's a failure."

Nanahoshi said it quietly.

And then, fell into the chair, put her elbows on the desk.

She made a deep sigh.

"Fu...."

She just kept staring at the paper placed on the floor.

The paint had disappeared from the paper and all that was remaining was the rough draft of the magic circle.

And the remaining fissure in the paper.

She just kept absent-mindedly looking at those without any movement.

After a short while, she looked this way and said it.

"Thank you for your work. Today is already... fine for you to return."

Roughly two year's worth of compilation.

It ended in just a matter of only a few seconds.

However, failures go along with experiments.

"Well, these sorts of things happen."

"..."

Nanahoshi wasn't responding.

...I wonder if it's my fault.

No, I shouldn't be related.

I just kept sending magic power into it.

I didn't do anything different, as long as they have magic power anyone should be able to do it.

If that was no good, then it's Nanahoshi's fault for not explaining it enough.

"..."

Nanahoshi wasn't saying anything.

In any case, for today it goes this far huh.

"Well then, please excuse me."

I stood up.

Just before I left the experiment room, I looked at Nanahoshi once more.

She's been in the same posture as just before, without a single movement.

I passed through the storage-like room filled with a mix of things as I left the research room.

After several steps I stopped my feet.

Nanahoshi has been considerably tense over these past several months.

With this failure, she might actually be considerably shaken I wonder.

That posture, that behavior.

Could it be, rather than thinking about the next experiment's failure, she was just staring in a daze?

No, even if she's like that Nanahoshi is reasonably strong it seems.

She should have the capacity to accept a failure as a failure I'm sure.

The instant I thought that,

"Aaaaaaaaaaahhhhhh.....!"

I suddenly heard a screaming voice from the research room.

Simultaneously, I heard the sound of something breaking.

The sound of someone raging.

I turned my heels around and quickly returned to the research room.

"Aaaaaaaah!"

There, Nanahoshi was half in a frenzy with her hair disheveled.

She was tearing the books she wrote herself into pieces and scattering them, as her temper was going up, she pulled over the shelves, throwing the contents of jars all over the place.

She took off her mask and threw it on the ground.

While trying to scratch off her face she staggered into the wall.

While beating on the wall she staggered and tripped over the contents of the jar she threw everywhere.

She continued to slam the contents of the jar on the ground, stood up and then tried to tear off her hair.

I panicked and went up behind her and grabbed onto her, constricting her.

"Wai... calm down!"

"I can't return, I can't return, I can't return..."

Nanahoshi was muttering it in a whisper with hollow eyes.

All of her muscles were stiffening, like she was saving up all of her power to start raging about at any time.

"I can't return, I can't return, I can't retuuuuuuuuuuuuuurn!"

Nanahoshi was struggling.

To the limits of her power, she was struggling to try and release my restraint on her.

However, it was just the level of strength of a hikikomori female high school student.

Feeble.

There's no way she could shake me off.

Before long she released her strength and went limp.

When I started to release my hands, she started to bend towards the floor.

"Hey, are you alright?"

After looking at that face, I felt intuitively that it was dangerous.

The color of her face was pure white, her eyes were blank and had a shadow over them, her lips had lost their color, and they dried up and cracked.

This is the face that someone makes during a considerably severe emotional breakdown.

She might try to kill herself.

"...."

I can't deal with this by myself.

What should I do?

Who would help me at times like this...?

Sylphy.

It's Sylphy.

If it's her then she'll lend me a hand somehow or other.

That's right, today she has no night shift.

Alright, today I'll return home with Nanahoshi.

Let's do that.

No, but before that, it would be better to calm her down somewhere.

"Are you alright?"

"..."

"You've been working a bit too hard you know. Rest for today."

"..."

Nanahoshi wasn't responding.

I turned her shoulders around and partly forcibly stood her up.

Just like that, I left the research room while dragging her along.

The lock is... No, I'll do it after.

I'm sure it'll be fine for one day or so. Probably.

Just like that, I was heading towards the place Sylphy was at. The aim is the fifth year students' classroom.

Maybe I should have someone call out to her.

Or else, I can call her myself.

I continued to walk while lending my shoulder to Nanahoshi, the surrounding gazes were gathering on me.

Just then I ran into the lot moving between classrooms.

They were talking loudly.

We stand out.

Is it because I'm lending my shoulder to a woman?

Right now Nanahoshi doesn't have her mask on.

It would be better if we don't stand out too much.

But what should I do.

"Shisho!"

I heard a voice from behind.

After turning around. It's Zanoba.

"Shisho... what's wrong!?"

"Zanoba. Nanahoshi's in danger, help me out here."

"...Is it illness!?"

"Something similar to that."

"Then, we should move her to the infirmary for now."

Yeah, first we should go there.

Infirmary, it's the infirmary.

Alright.

"Shisho, I'll carry her."

"Do it courteously."

"Of course, now, Silent-dono."

Zanoba picked up Nanahoshi and carried her like a princess.

It was a solid and stable holding style. Nanahoshi didn't resist at all.

She was completely limp with an expression like her soul had been drawn out.

"Clear the path!"

We went straight through the crowd while Zanoba was yelling.

The people split like the sea.

I followed along through there.

We arrived at the infirmary.

We laid Nanahoshi on the bed.

She was making a blank face.

It was a terrible face.

It looks like the shadow of death is coming out.

For the time being, I conveyed the important parts to the healing magician that was on duty.

Emotional conditions can't be cured with healing magic.

After suddenly looking at my feet, Julie was pulling at my cuff.

"Grandmaster, your face looks terrible."

After hearing those words I touched my own face.

Right now, I wonder what kind of face I'm making.

Ah, no, I'm probably considerably disturbed as well.

If I don't calm down a bit.

"Yeah, since I'm ugly after all."

I put my hand on top of Julie's head and patted it.

To think I'd even be making this kind of little girl worried.

"By all means, Shisho."

Suddenly, I was handed a cup from the side.

It's Zanoba.

"Thank you."

I received it with thanks and drank the contents.

It seems he got it from a pitcher that's reserved in the infirmary.

I felt a sensation like my tongue was coming undone from the top of my mouth.

It seems at some point unnoticed my mouth got completely dry.

"Fu..."

I sat in the chair and took a deep breath.

Zanoba was standing at my side and quietly asked.

"Shisho, what happened? It's the first time I've seen Shisho panicking this much."

"Ah..."

I explained the things that happened in the experiment room.

The experiment failed and that Nanahoshi started to act violently.

Since it seemed like she might die if I left her alone, I saved her.

After Zanoba heard that, he looked over Nanahoshi with a complicated expression.

"I guess she must not be doing her research because she wants to do it?"

"...That's right I guess."

No-no it's not like she's doing it.

It's not like she's doing it because she wants to do it.

She can't return if she doesn't do it.

If it doesn't go well, it can't be helped that it ends up like this.

It's been six years since the metastasis incident.

She's tripped on the first step.

"..."

I sighed and then reclined on the chair.

Somehow I'm tired.

Zanoba didn't say anything more than that.

We just blankly stared at the ceiling in front of Nanahoshi, just able to do nothing but stand still.

After a short while, Nanahoshi closed her eyes and fell asleep.

Around the same time as that Sylphy appeared.

Ariel wasn't around.

"I came to confirm the story that Rudi and Zanoba-kun brought a female student to the infirmary."

It seems it was becoming a rumor.

I knocked a female student unconscious, brought her to the infirmary, and that I might end up doing something terrible to her.

That sure is cruel, why are they so lacking in trust of me. Is it because I'm the Bancho?

Though I haven't really done anything to earn their trust.

Well, it's fine.

I told Sylphy about the things that occurred in the research room.

The experiment failed and after that Nanahoshi went berserk.

And then, it ended up at the current situation.

"That sort of thing happened??"

Sylphy made a serious face and looked at Nanahoshi.

"Since it would be dangerous to leave her alone, I thought to let her sleep at our house for today."

"Wouldn't it be better to let her sleep in the infirmary I wonder?"

"At the time when she wakes up, it's better if there's a face she knows."

At the very least, during times like these it's no good if they're alone.

She'll fall as far as she can fall.

Nanahoshi is young. She doesn't seem like she has any sort of resistance to these sorts of things after all.

It could be that up until now several similar cases of irritability have happened as well.

However, I could feel that the shock was largely different this time.

The thing known as a person's heart, when it's shaken this violently it will fall as far as it can.

The place it will look to is, in other words, suicide.

"I don't know how long it will take for her to calm down though. I feel we should look after her for a bit and let her sleep over at our house."

"Umm, is it alright if I leave it to you?"

"If it's at the level of meals, then it's fine."

It's just keeping her quarantined until she calms down.

It might be good to let her escape from reality a bit as well.

Averting your eyes during painful times is occasionally important.

It's the so called strategic retreat.

"...It's not like I'm particularly planning to cheat."

"I understand that. Or else, is there something you're feeling guilty about?"

"Nothing."

There's absolutely no feeling of guilt.

Even though I say that, I'm bringing a different woman to our home.

Not only that, but a completely limp girl not putting up any resistance.

But, it seems Sylphy isn't going to doubt me.

So this is faith huh.

"I'll leave it to Rudi. Today are you going to return just like this?"

"Yeah. Shopping, I can't go together, but can I leave it to you?"

"Leave it to me."

I greatly nodded to Sylphy's trustworthy response.

As expected of Sylphy.

After leaving the school and hurrying to my house.

Zanoba offered to transport Nanahoshi.

Just now it was carrying like a princess, but this time he's carrying her over his back.

Zanoba is a prince, but carrying on his back sure suits him.

"I'm sorry about this Zanoba."

"No, since I'm only useful in these sorts of ways."

Zanoba who was effortlessly carrying the limp Nanahoshi.

Behind that, Julie was toddling along.

If you put diving clothes with a drill attached to Zanoba, I'm sure it would be fine to call him Mr. Bubbles.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the BioShock video game. }

As a test, I decided to try lifting up Julie.

"Hyaa! Grandmaster, what is it?"

"Nothing."

Zanoba just made a fleeting glance this way.

I walked along while carrying Julie in my arms.

Julie's body was unexpectedly fluffy.

A year prior she was like skin and bones, but it seems she's properly been eating.

She's lacking a bit of muscle, but it's not like I'm going to demand something massive from a seven year old child.

"Julie, is Zanoba treating you well?"

"Yes, Master is giving me a lot of food."

"I see I see. Master is giving you lots to eat is he?"

"Master is giving me a lot of good food to eat."

"Very good."

Come to think of it, I wonder if Nanahoshi is properly eating her meals.

During the time when I was carrying her, I felt she was considerably thin.

I won't say as light as feather, but she was considerably light.

She might not be eating any decent food.

Meals are an emotional stability drug.

Eating the things you like, eating together with someone.

Just with that, people can become a bit happier.

I don't think Nanahoshi has done those sorts of things almost at all.

"Fu..."

I let out a sigh.

I wonder what kind of lifestyle Nanahoshi has been living.

Secluding herself alone and not eating anything decent.

Without having conversations with anyone, an everyday life of just drawing magic circles.

"It's not Shisho's fault, don't let it bother you too much."

"Yeah, I get that."

It seems Zanoba was caught by my sigh in a different meaning.

He was looking at me with an overly serious face.

It seems he's more worried about me rather than Nanahoshi.

Well, I'm sure Zanoba hasn't had almost any conversations with Nanahoshi after all, it can't be helped huh.

"..."

For a short while we walked silently.

And then I heard the sound of Julie's heart beating.

Since Julie is a child, her body temperature is higher than mine and warm.

Listening to a heartbeat is strangely relaxing.

Next time, I'll buy Julie something.

After a short while, we arrived at the house.

We went inside the room I prepared for the sake of my little sisters and placed Nanahoshi inside on one side.

She was completely limp stretched out on the bed.

Her eyes were open.

It seems that she woke up at some point.

But, it's still blank. I don't know where she's looking.

It's almost like a corpse.

I wonder if she'll really return to normal...

According to my diagnosis, it's still, just barely alright.

It's a considerably dangerous condition, but she's still alright.

There was a time where I fell into a similar place, but I was able to return from there.

Acting out is something like a spasm.

Those sorts of furious situations don't continue.

But for the time being, I grope around her clothes, and take anything that seems like it might work as a weapon.

She was holding onto a small knife.

I don't think you would die with this, but for the time being I'll hold onto it.

Inside the room there's nothing dangerous.

The window is... it's the second floor after all, a bit dangerous.

I guess I should fix it in place with earth magic huh.

Though if she shatters the glass of the window it would end there, but I want to think that right now she doesn't have that much energy.

Since Nanahoshi wasn't moving, I went down to the first floor.

"Is she going to be alright?"

"Well..."

When I went down to the first floor Zanoba asked somewhat worriedly.

This guy seems like he'd be indifferent to gloom after all.

Though you can say he has weaknesses, but he's fundamentally positive after all.

"In any case, you helped me out there Zanoba."

"No, since I'm always depending on Shisho after all. There's nothing to worry about with this much."

Zanoba declared it with his same composed face as always.

As expected, he's a reliable man.

"Shisho, you as well, are you alright?"

"Me? Why?"

"It looked like shisho received some kind of shock when Silent-dono collapsed."

I've received some damage.

I wonder if that's the case.

Yeah.

I guess it is.

Nanahoshi was raging about in insanity.

After I stopped that, she became something like an empty shell.

Seeing that from start to end, I remembered things from the past.

In Nanahoshi's case, the shape is slightly different from me, but it's mental agony.

I'm feeling empathetic.

If the circumstances were a bit different, the one like that might have been me.

"Somewhat. I remembered something painful from the past."

"Is it fine for me to listen?"

"...During the time when I was small, I became like that, and just got lethargic and shut myself off."

"It's a sensation that I couldn't understand."

It was a forsaken way of putting it, but I don't want to simply be told that he understands.

"I'm sure."

"In any case, if there's a time when you need my power again, please ask, since I'm only overflowing in just power after all."

"Yeah, I'll rely on you."

I feel grateful to Zanoba's good will.

This guy as well, even if it doesn't involve dolls he's a good guy after all.

After that, a short while passed and Zanoba returned.

Since I had nothing to do, I spent the time reading in the room where Nanahoshi was sleeping.

I hesitated a bit whether to leave her alone or not.

In my case, during these sorts of times, you really want to be alone.

However, she's always been alone up until now.

She was alone.

Until Sylphy returned, I was at Nanahoshi's side.

One week has passed since we started looking after Nanahoshi.

She would just stare blankly throughout the day.

However, it seems the worst period has already passed.

Her appetite is thin, but she's eating and if we press her she even goes into the bath.

She goes in without trying to drown herself.

However, maybe because her stretched tension was cut, but I can't feel the willpower she previously had.

It's a feeling like she would simply break when pushed.

She has no energy as well.

If I were to say it, it's the kind of mood of someone who was deceived by the yakuza and found themself the star of an adult video in no time at all.

I can't leave her alone.

I need to be cautious not to let her meet someone like Luke.

The only thing that I can feel from the current Nanahoshi is resignation.

That experiment failed, but it seems she was enduring it to that degree.

She seemed so self-confident, it might have been a firm theory.

I wonder if that failure had enough meaning in it for the past several years she spent to all be pointless.

I've never experienced a setback that big.

The closest thing I have is when my data from a net game I continued playing for several years to the point of being an invalid, was deleted.

The instant I got the Bad Login message and Account Suspension mail, my heart's pounding got intense, I spent almost a full day unable to think of anything.

After protesting to the administrations, crying out thoroughly, and finally crying myself to sleep.

After that, I couldn't motivate myself to do anything for a month.

That time, I swore to myself that I would never seriously play net games again.

Nanahoshi's case is different from a net game.

She has the objective of returning to the previous world.

If she had to give up on that, I'm sure she wouldn't be able to live.

Thinking that, I looked here and there for ways to help but...

She was just spending everyday blanking out.

I don't even know if she was able to hear my conversation.

Is what I was thinking though.

"I thought I had closed it all up..."

One day, she suddenly said that.

I didn't respond and just listened.

"Magic circles, if I were to put them into words of our previous world, they're something like circuit boards. By joining together a number of patterns of circuits you can create a single function. However, no matter what, that one point, the circuit wouldn't connect together. No matter how much I changed the wiring, a certain single point and another single point wouldn't connect. I tried forcefully connecting them together, but then some other place always has a malfunction remaining."

For the sake of connecting together a circuit that isn't connecting together, she enlarged something that would normally be half the size.

And then in order to fix a single distortion, she added another circuit.

In the end it was a magic circle with a malfunction remaining in a single part.

Even though it shouldn't seem hopeless at a glance.

Just a single part isn't connecting together.

"It goes against the laws of physics. In other words, it means I won't be able to return to my home."

It was a magic circle full of patchwork almost like paper mache.

I'm sure Nanahoshi put quite a bit of effort into it.

At a glance, if she were to put a bit more effort into it, you might think that the circuit that's not connecting, would connect.

However, I'm sure if you were to do that again, a different circuit would stop connecting.

"It's already impossible..."

Nanahoshi said it like that and fell prostrated on the bed.

I proceeded towards Nanahoshi's research laboratory, I decided to gather some plans.

After hearing her story, I remembered a certain thing.

It could be that it can be resolved.

Even though I say that, I don't want to give her false hope.

First I need to think of what I can do and check into it.

Next day. I called Cliff to Zanoba's research room.

If three people meet, then they say you'll gain transcendental wisdom after all.

{ C-Editor's note: Similar to the old proverb 'Two heads are better than one'. }

I decided to borrow the intelligence of the Genius-sama.

In the research room, naturally as it was, Elinalise followed along as well.

"To think that Silent would end up in that sort of condition, it's hard to believe."

It seems she stays in Cliff's research laboratory, but I wonder what's going on with classes.

It seems like she's advanced years, but I wonder if she might end up dropping out of school soon.

Well, it's her individual freedom I guess.

"She looked like a bit stronger of a girl to me though."

"A truly strong person wouldn't seclude themself alone and worry about things."

"Well, I guess that is true."

Elinalise shrugged her shoulders.

It doesn't seem that Elinalise has had much contact with Nanahoshi as well.

Asking her to help us find some kind of breather might be a good idea as well.

"Well then, you two. First please take a look at this."

I show Zanoba and Cliff the diagram.

In that moment, Cliff made a sullen face.

"What a filthy magic circle."

Saying filthy, what an interesting expression.

"Is there such a thing as filthy and clean?"

"Obviously. When creating magic tools, it won't be settled if you don't create them small and cleanly. If it were me I'd draw it cleaner. For example, here, if you were to connect them here, this area would be able to work with more refinement."

"Oh?"

Cliff pointed his finger at the magic circle and boasted fulled of confidence

Well, anyone can criticize something that's already completed.

Probably, if we did just as Cliff says, the malfunctions would increase again I'm sure.

"Ah, but, the idea is amazing indeed. To think of making a loop in this part, normally you wouldn't think of that... I see, it's because of this description that this side has become complicated...?"

Cliff was muttering some things while looking at the magic circle.

This, for example, that for example, or then around here for example.

It was all those kinds of words.

I wonder if it would be better if I study more.

Though it's not specifically guaranteed that I'll understand even if I study it.

"And then, Shisho, what sort of magic circle is this?"

"It's a summoning magic circle that Silent is researching. Since she's reached a bit of an impasse, I'd like to borrow your knowledge."

After saying that, Zanoba tilted his head.

"However shisho, summoning magic is outside of our area of expertise?"

"Well, it's fine even if we can't come to a resolution."

Just, if it's something that you can't understand alone, if several people think about it you might figure it out.

In reverse, if the field is different, the ideas that come out might be different as well.

"For the time being, please look at this part here, it seems that the magic circle cut off around here, but do you get it?"

I pointed my finger at the part where it tore during the experiment.

"...Eh? Yeah. So it cut off here, I didn't realize it. This magic circle is incomplete. Ummm, where this should be connected to is... here?"

Cliff was surprised.

It seems even though he calls himself a genius, he couldn't recognize that part right away.

I guess it's that kind of thing.

"In order to connect this circuit, do you have any ideas?"

After asking that, Cliff crossed his arms and gave it some thought.

This and that are and started muttering to himself.

He was writing various things on the memo in his hand.

"This is a difficult problem. If you were to redraw it from scratch... No but... it's impossible."

"Could it work if we went with a multiple structure?"

Around the time when Cliff arrived at his conclusion, Zanoba interposed.

Cliff made a puzzled expression.

"Multiple structure? What kind of talk is that?"

"In the doll that I'm researching, several magic circles are layered to give birth to a single result. Even though I say that, since I've only just started my research as well, I've never even properly drawn a magic circle before..."

"Wait just a second, doll you mean, the one from the other day? Show it to me for a bit."

"Shisho, is that fine?"

For some reason after asking for my permission, Zanoba returned with the round slice of the doll's arm.

Cliff looked at the cross-section round slice of the magic circle with great interest.

And then declared it.

"The guy who created this is a genius."

For the excessively self-conscious Cliff to say it, it seems it's that amazing.

"I've never seen a magic circle like this before...ku...I don't get the theory at all. Are there two magic circles overlapping... No, it's different, there's even more. It seems without them all assembled together it wouldn't move properly... But, even though it was broken it was still moving after all... Why? ...Shit, what's going on with this magic circle."

Cliff was grinding his teeth in a mortifying way.

It's almost like the prince-sama of the vegetable country laying his eyes on the legendary superman.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to Dragon Ball Z. }

"I don't really understand it in detail yet though. According to the book, it seems to be a magic circle solely for the sake of controlling the movements of the elbow."

After Zanoba nonchalantly said it, Cliff seemed like he was about to sob.

I'm sure he's mortified over Zanoba understanding something that he doesn't know.

Immediately, Elinalise rushed over to him.

She pulled his head into her chest and stroked it.

"Yes Yes, I understand that since Cliff is a genius, if you investigate it a bit more you'll understand it in more detail."

"I... I know that!"

Cliff turned bright red and regained his energy.

As expected of Elinalise. She's reliable.

But, since it's a considerably hectic time right now, I'd like you to do that after you return.

"Cliff-senpai. If you use the technique used in this doll, do you think you can solve the problem in Silent's magic circle?"

"I don't know. But, I think there's a possibility."

It doesn't seem he knows for certain huh.

However, I'm sure it'll become some kind of clue.

Until now, Nanahoshi has only ever drawn magic circles with a single plane.

If she were to layer them, I guess such upside down ways of thinking never came to her.

Or else she might not have tried it for some other kind of reason.

I'll be praying that this talk was a blind spot on Nanahoshi's end.

And then, it would be good if she'll regain her motivation.

The next day, I took Nanahoshi out.

The destination was her research room.

The disorderly room was left in the same arrangement as yesterday's occasion.

It's a room with a mixed feeling still remaining, Zanoba and Cliff were on standby.

What the two were looking at was the research materials that Nanahoshi had investigated until now.

After Nanahoshi saw that she suddenly laughed with her nose.

"What's this!? With three men, do you intend to rape me or something?"

Rape you say.

Exactly how far in self-abandonment are you?

After just a single failure...

Well, all it takes to drive someone mad in their life is just a single large mistake.

"What was that! I am a devout Milis adherent! You know!"

Cliff was enraged.

The Milis religion is similar to Christianity on the idea points of chastity.

In one's lifetime, they only love a single woman, and absolutely never resort to adultery.

It sure is abstinent.

"Ah, I see."

Nanahoshi walked with an unreliable stagger and sat on the chair.

And then leaned on it completely limp.

"Cliff-senpai, Zanoba, for the time being please start with the conversation from yesterday."

I showed Nanahoshi a number of ideas that these two thought up last night.

Nanahoshi listened to the explanation uninterested.

The magic circle revised by Cliff.

Layering the magic circles proposed in regards to Zanoba's research.

It was a three-dimensional magic circle, that I suggested the idea of.

While looking at those uninterested.

Without a single change in her expression.

She looked fixed on them.

Fixed.

There was a point her eyes were focused on.

It was no longer uninteresting.

It was just expressionless as she concentrated.

"Ah."

Suddenly, Nanahoshi raised her voice.

"It might work...?"

And whispered that as such.

From there Nanahoshi suddenly leaped and stood up from the chair.

"I see, I see I see, there was no necessity to be so fixated on a single plane. Well, that's right. I can write multiple papers and then stick them together. If I laminate layer them, I can draw a magic circle of any size. I wonder why I couldn't think up something this simple!"

She started pacing around the room three, four times without composure.

She took the pen and paper on top of the desk in her hand.

And then, started drawing a diagram with a clatter.

She was drawing something that looked like a calculation formula, then sloppily erased it and redrew it.

"Ah, it's different, not like this!"

"Hey, isn't it like this?"

Towards that Nanahoshi acting like a bear in the zoo, Cliff suddenly stuck his head in.

At some point he had been using the red ink pen he was holding to add notes to Nanahoshi's memo.

As expected of Cliff-senpai.

Naturally unable to read the suddenly different atmosphere.

"Ah, I see... you are clever."

"Of course, since I'm a genius after all."

"Then what about this? What would you be fine with doing? I've had some doubts about it since before though...?"

"Eh... wait just a second..."

Cliff and Nanahoshi with their shoulders side by side had started getting along together while scribbling on a single paper.

I took a peek at it but I couldn't see it as anything other than a child's scribbling.

"Zanoba, do you get it?"

"At that level, I don't understand it at all..."

We've been left out of the loop.

In any case, Cliff sure is amazing.

I don't think it should have been all that long since he started researching magic circles.

Well it's fine.

It seems like Nanahoshi has regained her energy after all.

...If it's like this, then even if it doesn't succeed, I'm sure she'll get some kind of foothold.

"Zanoba sorry about this, but please look after things here."

"Shisho where are you heading?"

"I'm going to call Elinalise-san. If she knows that her own man is getting along well with another woman I'm sure even that person will find it unpleasant after all."

While saying that I face away from him.

The time when I was leaving the research room, I could hear Nanahoshi's cheerful voice.

It might be the first time I've heard Nanahoshi make that kind of voice since we first met.

One week later.

Nanahoshi completed the magic circle.

It was a magic circle almost like cardboard, with five pieces of paper layered together.

Each of those was drawn separately and then they were glued together with some kind of paste.

While Cliff and Zanoba were watching over, I started to pour magic power into it.

My magic power was being sucked out continuously.

The magic circle started to release light.

A radiant light.

The room was illuminated almost like broad daylight.

Inside the light. The shape gradually started to appear.

By the time the light had settled, something from the other world had been summoned to this world.

A PET bottle.

It has no label or cap, it's a PET bottle with a simple shape.

"Oh, this is amazing isn't it."

"What is this?? Glass? It's different?? More..."

Zanoba and Cliff couldn't hide their excitement at seeing a 500 ml PET bottle for the first time.

Elinalise and Julie as well, were peeking with very interested faces.

Nanahoshi as well, after seeing the thing summoned, she clenched her first, and in a small voice whispered, "good, good."

Looking at the PET bottle.

It's nothing but a PET bottle.

Even so it's a PET bottle.

In that moment we knew with certainty that this world and our previous world were connected.

It was an inorganic substance that's not a living being, an object with an exceedingly simple structure.

However, something that doesn't exist in this world was summoned here.

"It's a success isn't it."

I called out to Nanahoshi with those words.

And then she deeply nodded.

Very pleasantly.

"Yeah, it's a success, with this we can finally proceed to the next phase! A magic circle that uses a layered structure, if I continue following through with this, most likely it'll be able to summon anything. If there's more organization put into the magic circle, just by changing the second and third pieces of paper and..."

And then Nanahoshi turned back and looked at me.

She avoided my gaze and made a face full of retribution.

"...I'm sorry about that. I... I've depended on you."

"It's give and take right? Next time, if I'm in trouble please help me out as well?"

"...Of ...Of course."

A meek Nanahoshi sure is a good thing.

After suddenly taking a look, Elinalise was staring over here without moving.

"Somehow you seem intimate don't you."

"Elinalise-san, just like that, you always tie things together to love affairs quickly."

"It's between a man and woman after all. But, that isn't very good you know."

Mother-in-law's eyes were shining.

Even though I don't have any intention of cheating.

Even though Sylphy knows about today.

"I guess so, they are newly-weds after all, it would be terrible if his wife misunderstood."

Nanahoshi took one step away.

Elinalise laughed with a smile and put her arm around Nanahoshi's shoulder.

"Ufufu, there's no need to be that bothered by it. That's right! Let's go to a bar today! Of course it's this lady's treat!"

Nanahoshi let out a bitter smile to Elinalise's proposal.

Normally she would have made a bluntly reluctant face as she refused it.

However, well, she can't really refuse today.

"It can't be helped can it. But, with that we'll call it even with you all."

"Of course, right Cliff?"

Cliff who was squeezing and clutching the PET bottle turned around after being called out.

"Eh? Ah, that's right! Yeah, we can call it even. But, since you're considerably excellent, next time, it would be good if you can lend your power to my research as well!"

With those words, Elinalise giggled with a smile.

We all set forth to the bar in the middle of the day.

For some reason Rinia and Purusena joined up with us within the school building.

They said they didn't want to be left out so we should bring them as well nya.

I wonder where they managed to catch wind of it.

When she noticed such a large group, Ariel came along asking us what was going on.

After explaining the details, "Then I'll provide you with an overseer." she handed Sylphy over to us.

The overseer was just in name, it was Ariel's form of being considerate.

By the time we left the school gate, Badigadi was lined up in the back before anyone realized it.

No, really before anyone noticed...

On the way we dropped by the Magic Guild and Nanahoshi withdrew some money.

It seems, she's left a considerably large amount of money in the care of the Magic Guild.

Using it as a substitute for a bank.

Badigadi was a regular of the bar.

It was midday, but for the most part there were regular customers.

However, Nanahoshi wasn't bothered over things like that at all.

On the counter she dropped the bag full of money and left it with a [Don].

"Reserve the bar."

"Eh?? Eh??"

Towards the troubled shopkeeper, Badigadi declared, "Wait wait".

He took the bag of gold coins from his own pocket and placed them down with a [Don]. Doubling it up.

"Today is a celebration. Serve all of the customers that come into the store today for free."

He declared it as such.

What dignity.

As expected of a king. That makes me go numb and admire you.

Demon King-sama was making a face like it was only natural and went to occupy the largest table in the bar.

And then declared.

"Bring out all of the food on the menu this store has!"

It's a line that anyone would want to try saying at least once.

It's fine since I'm not the one paying, but I wonder if they can feed these numbers?

Well it's fine.

Around the time the first cuisine came out, the Demon King stood up.

And then said it.

"And, what was the celebration today for?"

"Silent's research has succeeded."

"I see now, then Silent, was it. Open things up with a speech."

Nanahoshi was raised up.

With a bit of a reluctant face.

"....Thank you very much for today."

"Alright, let's toast!"

"Cheers!"

It progressed kind of like my marriage ceremony and the banquet started up.

It was a fun banquet.

During times when good things happen, it's good to make some noise and drink alcohol.

The things these hands now possess are things I never once experienced in my previous life.

In this world, I've experienced it countless times.

During my Adventurer days I socialized and drank as necessary.

However, I always felt that somehow it was just troublesome.

And that those guys who get drunk, make a racket, and struggle about are fools.

And that they should think a bit about the trouble they're causing to their surroundings.

However, after I've entered into the vortex of that, I finally understand the feeling.

People have a time when they really need to undo their bindings and let loose.

I think that.

I think that while watching Nanahoshi sing Anison in Japanese as she strokes Rinia's ears.

If you don't act like that and forget about everything occasionally, you can't possibly go on living.

Since life is full of painful things after all.

Even if it's forcibly, if you don't create some good times then you'll be crushed.

I'm sure, around Elinalise and Badigadi's age they understand that idea very well.

As expected of the so called old-man's wisdom.

Well, there are guys among them that are stuck on the pot they're drinking from though.

Alcohol is the best of medicines.

Occasionally it will cure illnesses of the heart.

Today Sylphy and I drank without reservation.

We don't drink alcohol at home.

Since we don't have any habits like that.

That's not particularly why though.

For the first time today I understood how bad Sylphy's drunken behavior was.

No, it's not bad.

It's not so much bad.

Just, she's a bit of a clingy heavy drinker.

"Hey, Rudi, stroke my head."

"Yes yes, alright alright."

"It's fine for you to eat my ears?"

"Thank you for the meal."

"Awawa, it tickles."

Since some time ago, Sylphy has turned into an extraordinarily sweet creature.

Wonderful.

Next time we should start progressively drinking.

Ah, but if it's like this, then if she started drinking when I'm not around I'd be worried.

I guess I should tell her not to drink outside of the house.

I wonder if those sorts of restrictions are fine.

It's fine, I don't mind.

She's mine, what's wrong with doing as I please.

"Rudi, squeeze me tight?"

"Yes Yes, I'll hold your hips."

"Uee~ I sure am happy..."

I felt Sylphy's laughter had become somewhat slovenly.

Ah, but embracing a drunken girl close sure is that, I can feel the reason why the world is overflowing with love songs.

N ban ba, me ra ssame ra ssa.

{ C-Editor's note: Lyrics from Tropical Boy's Theme song from the Papuwa anime television series. }

Alright, for today I'll have this girl as takeout. Our house is nearby after all.

"Rudi umm, you know. I was you know, the other day you know, feeling jealous."

"Eh, seriously? Towards who? I'll never approach them again, I'll cut off ties with them."

"Yeah, Ruijerd-san. That other time you told me stories about him right? During the time when Rudi was talking about Ruijerd-san it was somehow amazing, you know."

"No, since I really respect that person, please pardon me on that."

"No way... only look at me..."

Only look at me, you say, it's somewhat different from what she was saying the other day.

I guess this would be Sylphy's real feelings.

I did think that it was going good for my own convenience to the point where it was scary, but it seems that Sylphy might have been exerting herself.

Well, I can think about the difficult matters later, for now I want to enjoy myself with this adorable creature.

After putting Sylphy on top of my lap and flirting together with her, Nanahoshi approached us.

"What's with that, Baka-couple. Stop flirting around. How many years do you think it's been since I last met with Aki."

She came to pick a fight. She's drunk.

I wonder if she's already done with the song.

If it's a famous one then I might know so I'd be fine with a duet though..

I might end up feeling the generation gap again.

"If you're going to flirt, then do it in a place where people aren't looking.

"Well don't say it like that. Right now this is a place to drink. Let's put it all aside."

"In the first place, I've been wanting to say it since before, from my room, flirting and more flirting. What, marriage? What is that, it's fine, but what is with that, even during the time when a person is feeling down... The sound was resounding all through the night, really... kya?!"

Badigadi lifted Nanahoshi up onto his shoulder.

"Fuhahahaha! You're over here! Today is the day to listen to your strange song!"

"It's not strange! In my world, these sorts of songs are popular!"

"That's a very interesting story! I don't know what world it is, but I'll offer it up to you! Now, sing to your heart's content!"

"Wait just a bit, before that I have to talk to Rudeus..."

"Fuhahahahaha! Even though you were helped out, if you're going to resort to complaints you're better off just singing! Sing sing!"

"That was just the introduction for the talk??!"

It seems Nanahoshi is shouting about something.

I wonder if she wanted to thank me or something.

Well during times when we're in trouble it's something that goes for the both of us. Thanks are unnecessary.

In any case, being abducted by a Demon King, isn't that a good position.

Almost like a princess from somewhere.

Just, the place that princess was being abducted to wasn't a prison.

It was the stage of a certain bar.

A short while after and Nanahoshi's song came flowing by again.

It's a bit late, the accompaniment started.

Was there a troubadour, is what I was thinking, but the one holding the musical instrument was Badigadi.

Can that guy really play an instrument?

Rather, even though he said he was going to offer it to her, he's going to play an instrument?

After all I don't get that guy.

In any case, it sure is a nostalgic piece.

What was it again...

Yeah, that's right it was gan...ra.

{ C-Editor's note: Gandhara is a song by Japanese rock band Godiego. }

It's not really that generation, I'm surprised she knows it.

No, for the time being it was famous, it's not all that strange.

However, it sure is being sung lousily.

I guess it's because the accompaniment doesn't know the melody.

No, it feels like the accompaniment isn't even trying to match up with Nanahoshi's lousy singing.

But, it seems fun.

Well, for today, Nanahoshi is the main attraction.

It's fine isn't it. Being lousy.

It's a lousy song, but the feelings are being transmitted.

So you want to return that much.

It's not a feeling I can't comprehend.

But the country of love, in my regards, is right here and now.

In any case, it was a good banquet.

If a celebration happens, then have a party.

It's a good custom.

I should remember it for next time.

The party dispersed when the leading actor Nanahoshi was completely smashed.

It seems that Rinia and Purusena were going to carry Nanahoshi to her room in the dorm and sleep over there.

Others scattered in groups of twos and threes.

Also, a certain heavy drinker intended to go drink at a different establishment it seems.

Sylphy and I decided to return home.

The drunken Sylphy was laughing with a, dyufufu, and clinging to my arm.

Since her footing was shaky, I was properly keeping her steady around her hips.

Sylphy was completely entrusting her body to me.

If I were at a goukon right now, "I can do it!" I understand the feelings of a careless guy full of confidence.

{ C-Editor's note: A goukon is a small group blind date or party where the participants eat and drink and socialize. }

Although, I have no feelings of guilt.

For now that is...

After we return to the house, it will be different.

"...Rudi, doesn't it seem noisy somehow?"

Suddenly, Sylphy said something like that.

"Hn?"

After being told that and clearing my ears.

And then, I heard the sound of something being pounded and the voices of a dispute.

I wonder if someone is having a fight somewhere.

It seems kind of like the sound made when cats fight as well.

While wondering what it was, we gradually approached our house.

And then it was there.

Someone was striking on the front door of my house.

From a distance, I couldn't see anything but a silhouette. Certainly they're there.

A brat from the neighborhood or else a kind of robber maybe.

While thinking about it with my intoxicated head, I at least made sure to open my Demon Eye.

Sylphy dusted off her face as well and while she was still staggering, stood on her own legs.

"Rudi, I'm going to use detoxification."

"Understood."

I accepted the chantless detoxification cast by Sylphy and all the alcohol remaining in my body was dispersed.

It doesn't completely remove the intoxication, but it's no problem.

In order to keep from being found, we stealthily approached them.

I heard a voice.

"It's because Norn-ane made a mistake with the road that we ended up coming at this time!"

"...Even Aisha said that there was no mistake going that way."

"In the first place, we don't know if it's really this place! What are we going to do, the inns are all probably closed! We might end up having to camp out in this cold!"

"...I don't want to do that either. But, in the first place, Aisha was the one who said we don't need an inn since we can stay over at his place. Even though I don't particularly want to stay over at his house, I was forced to come along."

"After all, Ginger-san said it would be alright! Even so, if only we were to take an inn we would look like idiots!"

"...Aisha you always end up resorting to that kind of vanity."

A glinting and noisy voice.

It was a child's voice that I had a bit of recollection of.

In the middle of that conversation, there was a name I had heard.

And then.

"You two calm down, this place isn't mistaken. What a nostalgic presence."

A calm man.

The instant I heard that voice.

An unknown feeling came rising up in the center of my chest.

I breathed a sigh of relief and walked out in front of them.

"...Ah."

"Onii-chan!"

My two young sisters that have grown were there.

They were wrapped in winter clothes with matching colors, almost like Ice Climbers.

Norn Greyrat and Aisha Greyrat.

Norn made a bit of a difficult face after seeing me, and Aisha was making a really happy face and sparkling eyes filled with determination.

"Onii-chan! I wanted to see you!"

Aisha came jumping at me.

Almost like the crying old man, she put a solid hold with both her arms and legs on my body.

{ C-Editor's note: The crying old man is a kind of Japanese yokai or supernatural spirit. }

And then, just like that, she rubbed her cheeks against mine.

They were soft and squishy cheeks that were pressing against me.

I wonder if it's because I'm drunk that they seem awfully cold.

"Uhi~ah, onii-chan you're warm! You smell like alcohol!"

"I'm cold... Let go of me for a bit."

After peeling Aisha off, I look at Norn.

She was tightly sealing her lips and greeted me with her jaw facing down.

"...Were you drinking alcohol?"

"Yeah, there was a bit of a celebration."

It was a pretty displeased face.

It doesn't seem like she's just being shy either.

I did hear I was hated, I guess it can't be helped.

And then, from behind Norn,

"Rudeus, it's a been a while hasn't it."

A bald man with a scar on his face was there.

Holding a three-pronged spear, a proud warrior.

With an appearance that hasn't changed since three years prior.

"Yes, it's been a while. Ruijerd-san."

The feeling overflowing from the center of my chest was nostalgia.

The days we three traveled together.

Meetings and separation.

"..."

I wonder what would be good to say.

While I was trying to choose my words, Ruijerd suddenly looked behind me.

"I had heard the information that you married at the Adventurer's Guild, but... it doesn't seem to be Eris."

The one being reflected in Ruijerd's eyes was Sylphy.

She made a surprised face and lowered her head quickly.

"Umm, Rudi. For the time being, how about inviting them in?"

"Ah, that's right. Come inside."

I undid the lock on the house and showed the three inside.

I couldn't have imagined that they'd end up coming with this timing.

It's only been a bit over a month since the letter arrived.

They were far faster than I expected.

Currently, I'm sitting on the sofa in my living room.

The one sitting in front of me is Ruijerd.

Sylphy is putting Aisha and Norn in the bath.

Sylphy and I have already come down from our intoxication.

I'm sure our breath still smells a bit of alcohol, but Detoxification magic has the power to sober one up from intoxication.

"..."

Looking at Ruijerd's face as the fireplace illuminated it, I remember back to the time we first met.

Not only that, but the time when the three of us traveled together including Eris, vividly.

"It's been quite a while hasn't it, really."

"Yeah."

Ruijerd narrowed his eyes as well, and the corners of his mouth rose in a small smile.

How nostalgic.

"For starters, I'll say thank you very much for escorting my little sisters."

"Thanks are unnecessary. It's only obvious to protect children."

That's right. Ruijerd was this sort of person.

In the middle of the journey, I made jokes about his love for children and made him out to be a lolicon, didn't I.

The escort written about in the letter from Paul ended up being Ruijerd after all.

I thought there was the possibility of it being Ghyslaine as well, but speaking of an escort for children, it has to be Ruijerd.

There's no other man as reliable as him.

Almost to the point that I want him to protect my little sisters forever.

However, it's really been a long time since I last talked to Ruijerd.

Last time, what kind of things did we talk about?

Since Ruijerd is pretty silent, we never really talked about the world at large.

"By the way Rudeus, what happened to Eris?"

Ruijerd unreservedly came out asking about the topic I was hesitating over.

It's something I don't want to be asked about very much.

However, in regards to Ruijerd, I'm sure it's something he wants to know.

"...A variety of things happened. If I talk about them in order then..."

I told Ruijerd about the things in the Refugee Camp after we separated.

That I did it with Eris.

After that, she disappeared, and as a result, I fell into the depths of despair.

The fact that I couldn't get it up.

I spent two years as an Adventurer looking for my mother.

I met with Elinalise and heard about the situation.

Following Hitogami's advice, I decided to attend the Magic University.

There, I met with Sylphy, and she cured me.

And then, we ended up getting married.

"I see..."

Ruijerd listened quietly without giving any signs.

And then, in the end, he just said one thing.

"It is something that happens often."

"Is it something that happens often?"

When I ask it in reverse, Ruijerd nods.

"Most likely, it's an illness warriors catch. I'm sure that Eris by no means hated you."

"But... she said that we didn't match up and..."

"I don't know what Eris' real intention was. It might have been a meaning just as the words said, or else, you might have just misunderstood something."

"A misunderstanding?"

"Yeah, Eris was by no means someone who was good with words after all."

Ruijerd as well is by no means someone who can be considered good with words.

Since it's him saying it like this, then, it could be that Eris' words might have had some other different kind of meaning packed into them.

"However, at the very least, during the journey, she liked you. If a time comes when you meet her once again, you should try to calm down and talk to her."

It could have just been that I simply misunderstood.

The fact that we don't match together, in reverse, could have meant that [Eris can't reach where I am.]

She might have gone off to train in order to even things out before returning.

Therefore, wait for me, is the sort of meaning it might have had.

"..."

...Even though I say that, even if I hear that sort of thing at this point...

Putting aside what kind of meaning it had, I suffered for three years.

There was no letter from Eris for three years.

The one who saved me wasn't Eris, it was Sylphy.

Since it's a misunderstanding, throw away Sylphy and start over again with Eris like that.

There's no way I could do that.

It's already at this point.

Besides, honestly, I'm a little afraid to meet Eris.

It's not as if I don't believe in Ruijerd's words, but it's a real possibility that she was tired of me.

If I approach her with the intention of reconciliation, and she starts beating me up without looking at me...

I would, as I thought, feel hurt.

...Already, I want to stop thinking about it.

Regardless of what the truth is, reality is in the present.

It can't be helped even if I idly think about it here.

"Ruijerd-san, what have you been doing?"

"...Ah."

I changed the topic.

I wanted to listen to Ruijerd's story.

He made a face like he still wanted to say something, but he deeply nodded.

"For the past two years, I was in the dense forested area of the south."

It seems Ruijerd decided that the place where the Superd race may be hiding on the Central Continent would be in a forest area.

For starters, he decided to move around the dense forest area that spreads out on the southern side of the Dragon King Mountain Range. There, he spent two years searching around scouring the area.

He wasn't able to find any of the Superd race.

However, it seems he discovered articles of the deceased of several individuals believed to have died from the metastasis incident.

Afterwards, he would bring those to the nearby town and collect information there.

In the end, the two years he spent searching in the dense forest area ended with no results.

Ruijerd started following the coast going south and moved until he made it to East Port.

His plan was to collect information from the direction of Milis, and after he finished that, he intended to go north and search the strife zone.

However, he luckily encountered Paul and the others there.

After that, it is just as what was written in Paul's letter.

For Paul who was hesitant to let two children go on a journey, it seems Ruijerd offered to be an escort for the two.

"Come to think of it, I met your Shisho as well."

"You met Roxy-sensei?"

"Yeah..."

Ruijerd made a bitter smile.

"The impression I got from her was a bit different from what I heard from you."

"Is that so, in what way?"

"After telling her my race name and showing her the eye on my forehead, she was openly afraid."

"Ah."

Thinking back to it, the one that taught me that the Superd race was a dreadful race was Roxy wasn't it.

Even though Roxy said all of that, she's still of the Demon Race. The ones most afraid of the Superd Race are the Demon Race after all.

It can't really be helped.

Roxy was timid and frightened after seeing Ruijerd...

I also wanted to see that...

"And then, you came along together with Ginger-san until here."

"Yeah, we arrived in the evening and we went to the Magic University, but we were unable to find you."

The four of them thought I was living in the dorm and would be at the Magic University.

However, by that time, we had already moved to the bar.

It seems many of the guys they asked didn't know where I went, so it seems they asked for my address.

In order to not pass by each other, they separated with Ginger there, and it seems the three of them went looking for my house.

But, along the way, Aisha or Norn made a mistake with the road, or in the first place, maybe the person who explained it to them was mistaken, but they ended up getting lost.

Around the time they were aimlessly wandering in a strange place, Ruijerd searched for my presence, and it seems they managed to arrive at my house.

"I see... in any case, once again let me say my thanks. Thank you very much."

"Thanks are unnecessary. You and I are close."

Ruijerd who said that grinned.

The fact that I'm recognized by this man is one of the things I'm proud of in my regard.

"In any case, you were considerably fast weren't you."

The letter only just arrived last month.

Even at fastest, I thought they would arrive after another two or three months.

"Your little sister was enthusiastic."

"Which one?"

"Aisha. Thanks to that child, we were able to move very efficiently."

According to the story, following Aisha's suggestion, it seems they made use of a caravan of merchants to move around at night as well.

Just, such caravans of merchants fundamentally don't accept outsiders.

It seems in exchange for allowing Aisha to ride along, they offered Ruijerd to be used as an escort.

With Ruijerd and Ginger acting as escorts.

The pay for that was allowing the load of the two young girls.

It was a good purchase, is what it means.

Although, it seems those negotiations weren't all that simple.

In any case, they would move, and then when the merchant caravan came to a stop, they would find another merchant caravan to travel to the next location.

By getting on one merchant caravan to the next, they were able to move very efficiently.

Each place's merchant caravan schedule was placed at the top of the list for information collection. Occasionally, they would go back a portion of the way to a previous town and then move to the place where a different merchant caravan was it seems.

After the other three asked why they should return, it seems Aisha responded like this.

"It's because this way is faster."

I see now, a genius.

That sure is amazing.

"But, if that's the case Ruijerd-san, wasn't it difficult? During the night you had to guard the merchant caravan, and in the day, you had to get up in order to move as well."

"No problem. In the past, I would frequently continue on without resting for several days at a time while moving.. but.."

"But?"

"For the first time in a while, I felt like I was being worked pretty hard."

After saying that, Ruijerd let out a weak laugh.

I wonder if he's remembering the Human-Demon war period.

Nevertheless, that Aisha...

To think she would work Ruijerd hard so conveniently.

Who does she think she is?

"That is, how do I put it, my little sister has greatly troubled you..."

"It's a funny story."

Ruijerd is as soft on children as always.

Even if he's fine with it, it's no good if she grows up into an adult that works her seniors hard.

Later, I'll make sure to have an intense talk with her.

"But, during the time when Ruijerd-san was desperately working, my little sister was sleeping peacefully right?"

"She wasn't sleeping. She was always calculating the most efficient route to arrive here."

Hmmm.

It seems that she wasn't just working Ruijerd alone and playing around herself.

I guess that would mean she was doing nothing but calculations for days straight.

Writing all throughout the night.

...Then it's fine I guess.

"However, she's still a child."

Aisha was joyfully making plans without any spare time for rest, but since things like physical strength didn't enter her calculations, on the way, scenes like Norn or both of them ending up unable to go on any longer required them to rest.

According to Aisha's mental schedule, it seems she planned for them to arrive here before winter.

In other words, it was a plan aimed at getting here faster than the letter.

"I'm sure it must have been difficult for Ginger-san as well, what did she say?"

"She was rather delighted. There's nothing she wants more than to quickly reunite with his highness, like that."

It seems many people in this world have muscle for brain.

Rather, Ginger has been following through with the order Zanoba gave out and protecting her until now.

She sure is a devoted person.

I wonder if she has managed to reunite with Zanoba around this time.

I wonder what kind of reaction she'll have on seeing Julie, I kind of want to see that.

"It seems just like that, she intended to return to being the prince's subordinate."

"I see now. Come to think of it, Ruijerd-san, how long do you intend to stay around here for?"

I nonchalantly asked to hear about it.

About a week maybe.

If I go around introducing him to my friends, it shouldn't take all that much time.

I'm sure Zanoba will be delighted.

I wonder what the likes of Rinia and Pursena will say.

I don't know how Cliff will feel though.

He might be an acquaintance of Badigadi.

"I'll depart tomorrow."

Those thoughts were quickly drowned out by Ruijerd's words.

"That's considerably sudden isn't it."

"Yeah, the other day, I heard information that a monster was seen deep in the forest of the eastern part of the northern lands. I intend to search and see what that's about."

It seems that Ruijerd has already found his next objective location.

It's a bit gloomy, is what I don't want to make him think.

No, trying to restrain him is unrefined isn't it.

"Besides, I don't have any intention to intrude on you."

"Intrude you say, such a thing."

Something like treating Ruijerd as a hindrance, I won't let anyone do that.

"...It's just a bit... painful here after all."

That tone of voice, after all it's a bit lonely.

It seems the fact that Eris and I weren't close together was a bit of a shock to Ruijerd.

"..."

In my own mind, things from three years prior, memories of the journey with Eris and Ruijerd are still strongly remaining.

I don't know about Ruijerd though.

If I was in Ruijerd's position and I saw the figure of Sylphy and I spending time flirting, it might be a bit of a bitter spectacle.

"That is, I guess it can't be helped..."

I felt kind of like a crack in my friendship with Ruijerd had appeared.

The friendship between Ruijerd and I might have been something that Eris held onto.

"Rudeus."

After being called, I raised my face.

It seems before I realized it, I had started looking downward again.

Ruijerd let out a weak laugh.

"Don't make that sort of face. I'll come back again."

I couldn't do anything but return a bitter smile.

I don't regret the fact that I married Sylphy.

I feel kind of like I made some kind of large mistake.

"If I meet with Eris, I'll listen to her side of the story as well."

"...Please do."

I looked into Ruijerd's eyes and said that.

There was a kind light in Ruijerd's eyes.

Soon after that, Sylphy came out of the bath.

It seems Norn fell asleep inside of the bath.

It seems like Aisha was in high spirits in the middle of the bath, but soon after getting out she collapsed into sleep.

As expected of the bath's relaxing effect, is what I'd say.

Warm water works well on a tired body.

"Thanks for your help."

"Yeah, it seems like Aisha-chan still remembered things about me. With just a single glance she correctly guessed I was Sylphy. It's a big difference from a certain someone right."

"There are the differences of the color of the hair, the sunglasses, and the cross-dressing, so it doesn't count."

"Though it seems Norn-chan couldn't remember."

"I think it would be rare for someone to remember a neighborhood Onee-san from the time when you're three or four years old."

"I guess so."

It seems the two are currently getting along and sleeping in the same bed after being changed into pajamas by Sylphy.

I'll listen to the story of the two tomorrow.

"Umm, it's nice to meet you, I'm Sylphiette Greyrat."

"Yeah, I'm Ruijerd Superdia."

Sylphy offered an awkward handshake to Ruijerd.

The two who suffered over their emerald green hair.

Now neither of them have it green.

"Ummm... Ruijerd-san what do you intend to do about a room?"

"It's fine with whatever is convenient."

"...Rudi, should we let him use a large room? He's an important visitor in regards to Rudi right?"

In Ruijerd's regard, I don't think the size of the room really matters all that much though.

At any rate, I'm sure he won't use the bed after all.

"Please sleep wherever you like. Think of it as your own house."

"Ah, I'll do just that. Well then, I'll go ahead and rest."

Ruijerd stood while saying that.

"Yes, good night."

Sylphy and I, the two of us just kept staring firmly, listening to the sound of him move.

It seems he entered the room where the two children were sleeping.

That lolicon!

No, during the time when we were on the journey as well and the time when we were asleep he never took his eyes off us.

He's that sort of man.

This time, he especially went out of his way to make it so we could hear his footsteps.

If he had something to feel guilty about, he's a man who would have erased his footsteps and presence before invading.

I'm sure he doesn't have anything to feel guilty about.

"I wonder if I did anything rude?"

Suddenly, Sylphy raised her voice with anxiety.

Certainly Ruijerd's attitude just now was a bit cold.

Normally if it was a person seeking a handshake, then he wouldn't have allowed it to turn awkward.

After all, it seems he has some thoughts about the marriage between Sylphy and I.

"No, Sylphy didn't do anything wrong. He's a person who isn't all that familiar with people he meets for the first time, he's that kind of guy."

"Then it's fine though..."

It seems like Sylphy felt just a bit hurt.

"Let's go to sleep as well."

"Yeah."

We haven't eaten dinner, but I'm not hungry.

Ah, at the very least it would have been good to serve Ruijerd some kind of snack wouldn't it.

Well it's fine.

I put out the fire in the fireplace and confirmed the front door was locked.

The best and most useful security guy in the world is in the house, but it wouldn't be good if I don't properly lock things up.

After that I put out the lights and went upstairs together with Sylphy.

We slipped into the bed together.

Then, suddenly Sylphy said it.

"Today, that is, I'd like to stop there."

"Eh? Ah, I guess so."

That day I didn't embrace Sylphy.

It was the first time for a reason other than menstruation.

Next day.

The same as always I woke up in bed.

Sylphy was still sleeping.

Usually she would be rounded into a small ball using my arm as a pillow to sleep, but today she was normally using a pillow and seemed a bit uncomfortable.

Usually then I would unconditionally feel her sweetness, and together with just a bit of sexual desire, touch her slender chest.

Feeling a woman's body from start to finish sure does leave one with a happy mood.

However, mysteriously today I don't get that sort of feeling.

Today the feeling is bad weather.

It's a bad day for the rising dragon.

Even though I should be happy that Ruijerd visited.

After all it seems the things with Eris are bothering the mood.

Somehow I feel a bit gloomy and uneasy.

I guess it might reduce some of it if I do a bit of exercise.

For the time being, I decided to start my daily training.

But, I'm not feeling all that motivated.

No, even so that will change with just 5 minutes, no 10 minutes, of preparation exercise I'm sure.

While thinking that I go outside.

A scene of chills plunged into my sight.

We had a visitor in front of the entry hall.

Two people.

Two people who are taller than I am.

One of them is a bald warrior.

A man who shaved it in order to hide his green hair and just continued on like that forever.

Without wearing any winter clothes on his body, clad in some kind of casual wear outfit of his race and a three-pronged spear in his hand.

It's Ruijerd.

And then the other one is.

A muscular structure and large build with pitch black skin. Violet hair.

With his six arms crossed, he was standing in front of Ruijerd full of dignity.

"..."

"..."

The atmosphere was extraordinarily bad.

It's dangerous.

Explosive situation.

If the janitor had come by he might have been stabbed.

"..."

There was no smile on Badigadi's face.

His mood was bad.

It's something unusual.

The usually laughing Badigadi was completely not laughing.

I wonder what is going on with Ruijerd's face.

I can't tell from just his back.

Rather, these two, are they acquaintances after all.

They were both living since the Laplace Campaign after all.

One of them was the head of the Laplace Imperial Guards and the other side was in a faction on the opposite side of Laplace.

Now Ruijerd hated Laplace completely as well, but at the time there must have been a variety of things that happened I'm sure.

"...Hmmm."

Badigadi took a glance at me.

And then looked at Ruijerd once more.

"So that's how it is huh."

Badigadi came to a conclusion on his own and nodded.

And then, without saying anything after that, silently turned and left.

Just like that treading on the snow, he disappeared down the path.

"..."

Ruijerd quietly turned around.

It seems that face was somewhat tense.

An unusual cold sweat was being drawn.

"Did something happen with His Majesty Badi?"

"...In the past."

I somehow or other guessed it based on those short words.

The Superd Race of that time would attack enemies and allies alike, without discretion, that entered their sight so to speak.

Most likely, he killed some people from the region Badigadi ruled over as well.

No matter how little he pays attention to the land he rules as a Demon King, he's still a ruler.

If your own territory has been attacked there's no way you can overlook it.

I wonder what happened to their relationship after that.

I really can't imagine that optimistic Badigadi would viciously persecute the Superd Race.

No, it's the opposite.

Precisely because he's optimistic, the probability is high that he wanted to lend his power to the people without power who were trampled.

For example, even if Laplace was involved in it as well.

Ruijerd killed them and Badigadi wanted to return that grudge.

I'm sure that truth isn't a mistake.

No, wait a second.

It could be the probability is high that Badigadi doesn't know that incident with the Superd race was caused by Laplace's hand.

Things in that area, next time we meet I'll ask him about it from my side and see.

...Rather, if I said in the future that I was planning to mass produce Ruijerd dolls and sell them I wonder what kind of face that Demon King would make.

It would be good if he just laughed it off.

Hmmm...

At any rate, I'll be troubled if things between Ruijerd and Badigadi are bad.

"Ruijerd-san, for the time being, since his majesty came to this city, I've gotten to know him pretty well, though I can somewhat imagine what might have happened in the past..."

"Don't worry, I don't have any intention of fighting him."

Ruijerd said that while making a bitter smile.

He said it, but since a while ago Ruijerd has been clearly releasing some blood thirst.

Could it be, if I hadn't come out one of them might have made a move?

"However, I couldn't have imagined that guy would be in this kind of place."

"Somehow, it seems he came to meet me."

"Ah, he was that sort of man wasn't he."

Ruijerd made a bitter smile and returned back into the house.

To think that the relationship between Ruijerd and Badigadi was that bad.

It was a blind spot.

I thought that Badigadi could get along together with anyone.

After returning inside of the house, Sylphy was awake and preparing breakfast.

For some reason, Aisha in a maid outfit appearance, was by her side helping out.

It seems like Norn is still sleeping.

I thought to go wake her up and was climbing the stairs.

I knocked and then soon after turned the doorknob, but since I had some kind of bad premonition, I didn't open the door.

"It's almost time for breakfast, so please come downstairs."

There was no response, but after listening closely I heard the sound of rustling clothes.

After all it seems she was in the middle of changing.

I didn't induce a lucky pervert.

I'm already no longer the insensitive type after all.

"...Yes."

After hearing a voice come out from inside I descended down to the first floor with peace of mind.

We ate breakfast with the five of us.

Aisha's manners were considerably good for her age, she was eating in a neat manner.

Ruijerd was the same as always, unable to use anything but a fork.

Norn still seemed to be half asleep and her style of eating wasn't very skillful.

Well, you could say it's plenty for just using a fork.

If I compare it to stabbing meat with a knife just like that and bringing it to your mouth.

"Well then, it's about time for me to leave."

Soon after the meal ended Ruijerd decided to depart.

His belongings were as few as ever and his body was light.

The four of us saw him off to the exit of the city.

Ruijerd said it wasn't necessary, but it's not a problem of it being necessary or unnecessary.

It's only natural to see off a friend.

We didn't really talk about much, the five of us were walking through the city.

Eventually, Norn grabbed onto the area around Ruijerd's cuff.

It was a reserved holding method, it seems to have a compact sound effect attached as well.

Ruijerd's walking got somewhat slower.

Matching his pace, we walked slowly as well.

It seems Norn doesn't want to separate from Ruijerd.

I understand the feeling, I'm the same.

I wanted to talk to him some more.

I wonder if it would be better to restrain him.

Honestly, even I want to spend more time with Ruijerd.

It seems like we have things to talk about that couldn't be spoken in just a single night after all.

There are a lot of people I want to introduce him to and things I want to show him.

But, after all we're caught on the things with Eris.

I don't want to leave Ruijerd with any kind of unpleasant feelings.

It's not like it's Sylphy's fault, but...

I have the feeling that he wouldn't be able to talk without the situation with Eris being made clear, almost like it's lurking in the background.

But, I don't even know where Eris is right now.

While I was thinking about that, in no time at all we reached the exit of the city.

"Then, stay well."

"Ruijerd-san as well, stay well..."

We said our farewells with short words.

Even though there's a lot of things I want to say, when it comes time somehow the words won't come out.

Well, it's not like it's a separation of a lifetime.

It'll be fine if we talk at a time when things have calmed down more.

Incidentally, it seems that he had already said farewell to Ginger at some point in time yesterday.

"Thank you very much for your assistance!"

Aisha lowered her head energetically with proper manners.

The method for moving that she thought up wouldn't have worked if it weren't for Ruijerd.

It seems she properly understands that.

I'm sure, in places where Aisha and Norn weren't aware, Ruijerd was protecting them.

"Aisha. Don't ask anything too unreasonable of Rudeus."

"Yes! I know that!"

Ruijerd made a bitter smile and stroked Aisha's head.

"U...Umm. Ummm, Ruijerd-san..."

Norn wasn't letting go of Ruijerd's sleeve.

She showed him an uneasy face, its clear that she didn't want him to leave.

"Don't worry, we'll meet again."

Ruijerd made a small smile and put his hand on her head.

It's a spectacle full of nostalgia.

I had my head stroked like that by Ruijerd when I was making a face full of anxiety.

Norn looked downward then raised her face.

Wanting to say something, but she kept silent.

Her expressions were changing with many faces, before long, she decided to say it and opened her mouth.

"I... I want to go together with you...!"

She declared that.

Ruijerd caressed her head with a troubled face.

"..."

Without saying anything, just caressing her head.

However, in Norn's eyes tears were quickly building up.

"After this, rely on Rudeus, not me."

"But, even though! He... towards Oto-san!"

"It's something that's passed. He's already reflected on it. Your father as well. You heard about his troubles during the journey. You should understand it as well."

"But, yesterday he was drunk, and the woman who was by his side before is different! I can't believe him!"

The woman who was with him during the last time that she saw him is different as well.

After hearing that, I thought the atmosphere froze.

However, it seems the only one who thought that was me.

Thinking about it, I had already talked to Sylphy about the things with Eris.

It's not like I'm being unfaithful or that I'm putting on airs of a playboy.

However, I guess that's how it looked to Norn.

Ruijerd looked mutually at Sylphy and I and made a bitter smile.

"It's the time between a man and a woman. Those sorts of things happen. It's by no means because your older brother is insincere."

"..."

After Ruijerd said that he took his hand off Norn's head.

Norn as well let go of Ruijerd, reluctant to part.

"That person is... please tell me your name once more."

"Ah, Yes. I'm Sylphiette."

"Sylphiette. Together with Rudeus I entrust things to you two."

"Wa, Yes!"

In the end Ruijerd exchanged some words with Sylphy.

In regards to her, I wonder what Ruijerd thought.

I just pray that what he felt wasn't any sort of bad feeling.

"Well then, we'll meet again."

I saw Ruijerd off until he was out of sight.

Once again, I was filled with the same feelings of gratitude that I felt the last time I saw him off.

I'm sure, Aisha and Norn felt the same as well.

After seeing off Ruijerd, we headed home.

On the way, we separate from Sylphy.

I want to be with her, but she has work to do.

It's not good to skip work without notice.

To inform Ariel of the situation, she heads off to school.

By the time we reached home, it was already noon.

Time for lunch.

Staying with Norn is a bit awkward right now, so I'll make the meal instead.

Aisha offers to help, but I'll cook alone this time.

The finished food was totally 'bachelor cooking.'

If I am going to name it, it'll be 'Bean Fried Rice,' or something like that.

Well, there is no helping it. Unlike Sylphy, I haven't seriously learned cooking.

"Is it good?"

"This is delicious!"

"....."

Aisha is eating cheerfully.

Norn is eating without complaint as well.

It's worlds apart from what Sylphy cooks, but it's not bad.

After finishing lunch, we went to living room.

Norn and Aisha sit beside each other and I in front of them.

I take a breath before I began.

"Well, it's a little late, but first, good job finishing the long trip to here."

"Yes, it's good to see Onii-sama in good health as well."

Aisha said, with a clear expression.

She's dressed in maid outfit.

Though compared to last time I saw her it's now a perfect fit for her.

It's patched up in some places, but it's probably the remnant of events of that time.

I guess this room is a new and interesting thing for her, since she is looking around with sparkling eyes.

Her brown ponytail is swaying back and forth.

Her ponytail is decorated with a white ribbon, but it's a bit rugged and turning gray in some places which makes it even more eye-catching.

"....."

Norn is looking down, just like a normal child.

Her clothing is normal children's clothing as well.

It's blue clothing with a cute design.

In Millis Kingdom I saw a lot of children dressed like this, but it might stand out a bit here.

Her blond hair is a little longer than Aisha's.

She has her hair behind her head with a large hairclip, very fashionable.

"It seems Aisha has worked fairly hard during the trip."

"Yes, it was all in order to see Onii-sama. It wasn't hard work at all."

Said Aisha earnestly.

But why is her tone weird today.

I wonder why she is acting so strange?

"We are a family and from today onward this is your home, so there is no need to refrain from anything, make yourself at home."

"Yes, but even though we are family, this is Onii-sama's house, so staying without doing anything is troubling, so I was thinking about helping with cleaning and house chores."

Somehow I feel a great distance between us, I wonder why. Did I do something. Maybe it's because she is using honorifics?

"Hey, Imouto-sama."

{ C-Editor's note: Imouto means younger sister in Japanese. }

"What is it, Onii-sama?"

{ C-Editor's note: Onii-sama is a formal way of saying older brother in Japanese. }

"That way of talking, will you please stop it?"

"I don't want to, it's the right way to talk to those older than you, is what you have said before, so why should I quit?"

Is it because of me, since I am using honorifics she won't stop using it either?

"I get it, I won't use honorifics."

"I understand, after all honorifics aren't suited between relatives. You will feel the distance, but Onii-chan I'll be using it, since you are older after all."

Oi, isn't that where you go with the flow and say 'I won't use honorifics either'? Well, it's okay. Learning how to use it from a young age means you know how to converse in the future. It's a good thing.

Hearing the words 'feeling distant' I wonder, maybe Ruijerd and Eris felt like that as well. Though I believe using honorifics is the smoothest way to communicate between humans.

Well, next time we meet, let's talk a bit more relaxed.

[Hey, Ruijerd, HOW'S IT GOING.

You have changed a lot. You were so thin and had no beard. What? That's not your name? Did you even change your name?]

..... something like that.

Ruijerd is someone I respect. Talking to someone you respect should be by using honorifics.

That's a given.

If I talked like that to Ruijerd or Roxy in a parallel world I would probably be beaten to death.

"Aisha, Norn, this is our first time living like this together, there will probably be things that we don't know about each other... well... let's get along well."

"Yes!"

"....."

Aisha nodded cheerfully.

It kind of feels like when I give Pursena meat. I can almost see her tail. It feels like she is saying, I'll listen to whatever you say.

In contrast, Norn is grumpy. That's the kind of face that says, she didn't want to come live with me at all.

Well, it can't be helped since our reunion wasn't a good one. I was drunk and had a woman along with me. I better treat her cautiously for now.

"I never thought Onii-chan would marry Sylphy-ane, I was very surprised, Norn-ane agrees, right?"

Like that, Aisha turns the conversation to Norn.

"I ... I don't really remember much about Sylphy-san."

Said Norn while shaking her head.

No helping it, huh? Since she is unlike Aisha, and didn't take etiquette lessons together with Sylphy and didn't have much contact with her.

"Ne..ne, Onii-chan, did something happen? What happened to the Eris-san who was with you before?"

Said Aisha leaning in. Well, I guess everyone is curious about Eris.

"Yeah...."

After that, I explained everything that happened to me after returning to Fedoa Region, Eris leaving me, and me becoming an adventurer.

Then getting sick, and to heal myself being referred to Magic University, and then seeing Sylphy here and getting healed.

Well, I did hide the fact that my sickness was ED and how it was treated. After all, it's not something for 10-year-old girls to hear.

After that, I explained Sylphy's situation and the fact that she has to hide her gender in public.

Well, as for whether or not I can tell people about this, Ariel gave me the right to do so based on my judgment, though my little sisters might be too young for this.

Since we are living together, they would find out about it sooner or later.

It's not wise to lose their trust by hiding things from them, and this way, getting their cooperation is easier.

"That's how it is."

I finished my monologue.

Norn is looking down with a serious face, and Aisha is looking at me worriedly.

"So, is your disease okay now?"

"Oh, it is completely cured. No worries anymore."

Although I still take a treatment once every 3 days, and Aisha clapped her hands in understanding.

"Oh, I know!"

"N~?"

"Dad gave me something to pass onto Onii-chan when I see you."

Saying that, Aisha jumped up and went to the second floor and brought a trunk back with her.

"Yes, this is it. Take it please!"

The trunk is tightly locked, with three big locks put on it. Was it caution toward those who would try stealing it? Nah, in this case, it was probably to prevent Aisha and Norn from frivolously opening it.

"Oh, the key ....."

"N? Oh~"

It seems that Aisha has the keys. I get the keys from her and put them in the keyholes.

"Oh."

There was a treasure chest full of silver and gold.

Saying it like that is going too far, but it was a lot of money.

A few dozen of big bars from Millis Kingdom made of precious metals.

It's difficult to guess the value just from looking, but if sold, it would be worth a lot.

This is the lot of money Paul mentioned in his letter, with this much we can live for 10 years, but I have to be careful to not spend it wastefully.

In the other side of the trunk there are 2 letters, let's check them out.

One is the same one that arrived the other day.

The other one is from Lilia, it's regarding Aisha and Norn's education and personalities.

Aisha is a brilliant kid and won't make any mistakes, but since she is a bit mischievous, I need to be strict with her.

Norn is a common girl, but since she gets compared to Aisha in school a lot, she might have a rotten personality. But it's better to treat her kindly, is what is written in the letter.

Lilia seems to be a bit hard on Aisha. I think it's because she thinks of herself as the lover (mistress), and spoils Norn for that same reason.

But I think you have to treat both sisters the same.

However, Aisha's really excellent.

After just a year of study, there is not much to teach her anymore.

She is at a fine level in reading, writing, history and mathematics. Additionally she is skilled with cleaning, laundry, and cooking. Her swordsmanship is at elementary level in Water-God style and she is at the elementary level for all six basic magic.

Although she went to school in Millis, since Roxy arrived and Paul went on the trip to find Zenith she shouldn't have a been there for a long time.

With just that much Aisha is like this, no wonder Norn lost confidence.

Norn is normal, not so good nor bad. Though she is better than Eris was at the same age, I think she is average, no, maybe a bit below average.

Norn was caught in the Mana Calamity incident, and from then on she has given it her all. There is no reason to lose her confidence at all [she did do well.]

There is no other letter, I was expecting something from Roxy as well but....

Well, this is a letter from family members to each other, so she might have refrained because of that.

"Be that as it is, after you have settled in you should attend school."

"Ehh!"

Says Aisha with a displeased voice, does she have a bad memory from school?

"There is nothing more for me to learn at school, I just want to serve Onii-chan at home."

"But you know..."

"But I only want to take care of Onii-chan! Remember the promise from that time, here, I always held onto it."

Then she lets her hair down and shows me the ribbon, it's the headband I gave her when we separated from each other.

Part of the metal has been bent so it could be used as a hairband, though it's kind of unrefined and rugged looking.

Seeing what I have given her being treated preciously, kind of makes me feel happy.

Be that as it may, I wonder about her not wanting to go to school.

To be honest I don't think it's that necessary for her to go to school. The important thing is the will to learn. If there is no will, going to school is a waste of time. Just like me back in middle-school.

That said, it is written in Paul's letter to have them both to go to school.

There is no such thing as compulsory education in this world but...

"Then, at least take the Magic University's entrance exam, we will decide based on the result of that."

"Yes... Oh? I understand."

Said Aisha while grinning.

She seems to be confident in getting a high-score. Well, if she can get a high-score before going to school, then not going is fine. I'll say that to Paul as well.

"Norn, how about you take the exam as well?"

"....."

When I turned the conversation to Norn, she avoids looking at me and stays silent. I wonder if I am hated... maybe she won't ever talk to me again? While I am thinking that, she whispers ...

"... but I might fail the exam."

I think it's the first time she talked to me, I might not be hated, well anyway I am happy.

Yes, being ignored is not good after all.

"There is no need to worry. That school, even if you fail, as long as you pay tuition you can get in."

"Erm... It's not like I want to go to school that much!"

I was yelled at, maybe because I mentioned the back door to get into school.

"Eh, Norn-ane, what's with that way of talking to Onii-chan."

"But, you heard it as well, he said he would do something about it with money."

"It's Norn-ane's fault for not being able to study!"

"I can do it!"

Norn started yelling and grabbed Aisha's hair.

Aisha grabs Norn's wrist and stretches her hand to Norn's face, scratching, pulling hair.

A cat fight, no it's the way children fight.

Nah, it should be like this, this is good.

Getting punched in the chin and mounted on can't be called a child's fight.

Quarreling in moderation is fine, but this time my way of putting it was bad.

Let's stop them.

"Please stop."

A voice lower than what I intended came out, both of them stopped their hands while trembling.

"....."

Norn still wanted say something, her downcast eyes were welling with tears ...

....Hmmmm.

I guess she has a more severe complex regarding me and Aisha's existence than I thought.

"Well, you see Norn, this city's school will accept students who pay tuition regardless of their talent, race, or social standings, so it's not like I was trying to get you in by bribing them."

".....Gusu~tsu"

She tried wiping her tears while sniffing.

"You remember Roxy-sensei, right? She was attending this school as well. It's a very good school. Studying a lot, you might find something that you like as well..."

...Something that you can beat Aisha in, I refrained from saying that, in these situations it's best not to compare children with each other.

Norn kept looking down for a while and then said.

"...I understand, I'll take the exam."

Eventually, after saying just that, she stood up and left the living room.

Aisha said with an irritated voice to her back.

"Norn-ane, we still haven't finished talking!"

"Shut up!"

Then we heard her running up to the second floor and slamming the door.

I get it.

She is a difficult kid, in a difficult age with a difficult personality.

I wonder if I can get along with her ...

"Ah~h she is always like this. I don't like difficult kids. Onii-chan agrees too, right?"

Aisha seeks my agreement while shrugging her shoulders.

Aisha as well, her attitude of looking down on Norn.

It's no good.

"Aisha."

"Yes, what is it?"

"Starting now, stop saying 'you don't study' or stuff like that so highhandedly to Norn."

"Ee~h....."

When I say that Aisha pouts and says with a displeased tone.

"But Norn-ane isn't even trying."

"Well, from your point of view it might look that way, but maybe Norn is giving it her best in her own way..."

"Well..... If Onii-chan says so, I'll be careful."

She nods unwillingly.

Well, me saying it probably has no power to convince her, since I don't know much about these two.

But, how am I going to treat these young girls, it's hard.

Afternoon.

I left my two sisters at home and went to school. I visited the staff room to talk to vice-principal Jinas regarding the exam for my sisters.

"If they studied at another school before, they should able to catch up with the curriculum, so let's schedule their entrance exams as soon as possible.

That's why, we arranged for them to take the exam in a week's time.

It's like a pop-quiz, but it's all right I think.

"I bet they are excellent students, since they are Rudeus-san's little sisters."

"One is excellent, but the other one is a normal child."

"Don't be modest, I bet they can even use voiceless incantation?"

"No way."

While chatting like this with Jinas, I suddenly remembered something.

"By the way, vice-principal, is Badigadi-sama at school today?"

"His majesty... I haven't seen him today."

"Is that so."

He is an elusive fellow.

However, he causes a ruckus where ever he appears, so I can find him quickly.

"If you have some business with him, I can pass along the message if you want?"

"Nah, nothing specific, I just wanted to have a talk with him, just us alone."

"I understand, if I see him, I'll pass on that message."

I left vice-principal Jinas with those words.

I planned to go back after that, but since I had a bit of time, I decided to show up in Nanahoshi's place for a bit.

I knocked and went in, but surprisingly, she is not in the room. That hikikomori is not in the room.

Just to be sure, I take a look at the laboratory as well in vain, since entering the bedroom was forbidden, I just knock there to check.

"N... Ugh"

I heard a groaning sound, she seems to be in pain.

I was hesitating to go in or not, then Nanahoshi opened the door with a pale face.

"Hey, are you okay?"

"..... I feel sick .... My head hurts ..... A"

Wow, it stinks of alcohol.

Hangover?

Well, it's not surprising, she drank a lot.

Even to the extend of alcohol poisoning, I wouldn't be surprised.

"Sit down a bit, I'll fix you right up."

I said that and took her back to the laboratory and sat her down on a chair, grabbed her head, and chanted detoxification magic. After that, I eased the pain with healing magic.

"Phew..... I'm saved."

Nanahoshi thanked me while holding her temples.

Then she puts on the mask on the desk and becomes the masked woman, "Silent Seven Star".

"What do you want today? If it's the reward, I haven't prepared it yet."

It's a cool response, but a bit of dere is mixed in. Is this the rumored kuudere?

{ C-Editor's note: Kuudere - A character in Japanese fiction, usually a girl, who is silent, reserved, and shows little emotion. }

"The other day, when I went back home, my little sisters arrived from their trip. Since I have to make preparation for them to enroll in the school, I came today..."

"... little sisters? Do you mean the ones from our world? Did they make the trip as well?"

"No way. They are the little sisters from this world."

"Is that so?"

Nanahoshi stared at my face.

"If they are your sisters from this world, they are probably pretty cute, right?"

"Is it possible that just now, you complimented my face?"

"I meant it as in our senses. I don't know how you looked in our world and in this one you look more like the western side of our world."

"Ohhhh, yeah."

I was praised, damn, she's a dangerous gal.

In my past world, I would definitely misunderstand this as 'maybe this girl loves me...'

But the me right now, am not a virgin nor am I single, I won't be shaken by a single praise.

"How old are they?"

"If I'm not wrong, they should be 10."

"I see... I have a little brother of the same age back home, if the time flow of that world is the same as this world, he is probably older than me by now."

After saying that Nanahoshi narrowed her eyes nostalgically.

I wonder if she is remembering Japan.

I don't have any fond memories of the word 'Little Brother'.

"I want pudding."

Nanahoshi said abruptly.

Well, the topic just jumped somewhere else.

Why pudding?

"Do you have some special memories from pudding?"

"The one I left in the refrigerator was eaten without permission, it was an expensive one..."

It seems all the little brothers are the same, but Nanahoshi seems to miss even this kind of memory as well.

She is facing slightly up, maybe she wants to cry. I will look the other way.

"Well, I will come again "

"E~e... the last time, I caused you trouble. Now I have a better impression of you."

"Fufufu, if you fall for me, you'll get burned..."

"What is that, are you trying to act cool?"

Nanahoshi laughed a little after saying that, it's that Generation Gap, well, I'll ask about the experiment next time after she is a bit more settled.

After school.

I am returning home with Sylphy, I have a lot I want to ask for Sylphy's help in regards to my sisters, since their age is close she probably understands a lot more about them than me.

"Oh, Rudi, let's go shopping. Since the number of people increased, we need to buy a bit more."

So I go along with Sylphy to the market.

When we set foot in the market, the first thing we notice is the sweet fragrance of beans being fried.

Market district is in full swing even in the evening.

My image of a Market district was that it would be crowded in the morning. But here, the fresh ingredients are the meats, and it's provided by adventurers and hunters who hunt during the day and return in the evening.

In other words, they stock up during the day to sell during the evening.

Though it's not that there are that many different products, and the prices are comparatively on the high side.

Still, in the [Magic Triumvirate] you can get anything you want with money.

But if you head east to the more impoverished countries, even if you have money you can't find anything to buy.

By the way, freezing the ingredients here is easy, since you can just request it through the guild.

Well, those are the requests of the students who are just learning magic.

I start talking to Sylphy about what to do from now on while we are shopping.

"I see, so their relationship isn't all that good, huh?"

"To be honest, I have no idea what girls of that age are thinking at all..."

"Really."

"Aisha does not want to go to school and insists on being a maid at our house. What do you think?"

"Since I am kind of out of the house mostly, if she says she's gonna help, I am kinda happy about it."

Sylphy said while laughing, it does not seem like she's worried about losing her role in the house.

"That said, Sylphy, we are supposed to be responsible adults."

"Yeah."

"Isn't it our job to at least provide Aisha with the opportunity of attending Magic University?"

"Un, I see. Then having her change her hair color and attend Magic university is a viable solution as well, right?"

Sylphy puts her hand to her chin as if thinking about what to do, but in the end she decided to buy ham for dinner, despite the price being a bit high.

"Sylphy, we are having a serious conversation, please think about it seriously."

"Of course I am thinking, but you know, I think Aisha-chan is way more outstanding than Rudi imagines."

"So what if she's outstanding?"

"I am sure, regardless of going to school or not, she will do well..."

"O~h."

"So, I think it's better to let her do what she wants, instead of just thinking about this and that."

Sylphy seems to have a lot of confidence in Aisha, come to think of it, Sylphy knows Aisha pretty well.

I mean, the younger Aisha that is, I heard a lot about how she was an outstanding child.

"The problem is Norn-chan, being separated from Paul-san and Ruijerd-san, she is uneasy. We should look after her properly."

"That's right."

When I saw how calm Sylphy is, I realized how nervous I was behaving.

Somehow, Sylphy looks so reliable, just like Fitts-senpai. Eh, she is Fitts-senpai after all.

"Let Aisha do as she pleases, and put Norn on the right rail, hah?"

"Rail?"

"It means making a road."

"I think yeah, that sounds good."

But doing that means treating the sisters differently, is that really okay?

But there is a big difference in their abilities, so treating them the same forcefully is the bad thing, I shouldn't confuse discrimination with distinction.

"I wonder if I said something arrogant?"

"No, you helped me a lot. I managed to sort out my thoughts."

"But, I have to guard Ariel-sama, so I can't look after them as much..."

Said Sylphy with a troubled face while scratching behind her ears.

Because she has to guard Ariel-hime, she said that with a troubled face, she might be actually troubled about it, like after getting married I ask her to stop working for Ariel-hime.

Oh, I suddenly decided to ask about this.

"Hey, Sylphiette-san..."

"What is it, Rudeus-san?"

"If I asked you to stop being Ariel-hime's guard so we could get married, what would you have done?"

I asked as lightly as I could, Sylphy stared at me with a straight face.

"...I might have refused to marry Rudi."

Eh?

...That's a little shocking. Maybe if I took my time and asked in a better way, but I see... so she would choose Ariel over me... I see Ariel is more important than me...

"Ah."

Seeing my face, Sylphy suddenly panicked.

"Don't misunderstand, I love Rudi. No, it's more than that. It's a complicated feeling that I, myself, don't understand."

Panicking Sylphy is cute as well.

"Well, I think both of them is love, and I naturally would like to have Rudi's child as well..."

Sylphy stroked her stomach while saying that.

Hearing that, I feel my body getting hot. Today's Sylphy is so bold, saying that in public.

"But I like Ariel-sama as well, it's a different like from Rudi... right, it's in the sense of a friend..."

{ C-Editor's note: The Japanese word 'suki' means both like and love. 'Suki' is translated here into the English word 'like' and Sylphy is describing which version of 'like' she is referring to. }

Said Sylphy, come to think of it, this is the first time I've heard Sylphy's feelings regarding Ariel.

"Ariel-sama, despite how she looks, has many things she's not good at. If I am not with Rudi, I am sure you could do something about life by yourself, but if Luke and I are not around, Ariel-sama will probably die soon, so I don't want to abandon her."

After saying that, Sylphy is scratching behind her ears again.

And she adds to that [But the life I have now is the one I had dreamed about my whole life, so ... if possible I'd like to stick with Rudi.]

Sylphy seems to be thinking that what she is saying is a selfish thing.

She thinks she used my good will to gain something that normally would not be possible, and because of that, she's trying her best to become the woman I love.

Though there is no way that's true.

"....."

Instead of answering that I kiss Sylphy on the cheek, the moment I do that we hear 'Hyu~u, Hyu~u' and some sleazy comments, without us noticing we had gathered a group of onlookers, Sylphy had her sunglasses on from the get go, Fitts-senpai looks cute as always.

After a few minutes, Sylphy calmed down and we resumed our shopping, though our conversation went a bit off-track.

Well, the things I wanted to talk about are mostly done, so as long as Sylphy gets along with those two, my hardship will reduce as well.

To be honest, I don't have the slightest idea what these young girls are thinking about.

"Since I don't understand the girls very well, I'll be relying on Sylphy again..."

"Un~... we are married after all, helping each other is a given."

Said Sylphy while laughing coyly.

My wife is so reliable.

But [Rudi will be fine without me, but Ariel-sama will die.] Hah, I bet Sylphy would be able to live without me just fine, unlike before.

A week later, Aisha got a perfect score on the exam.

Aisha's Ability:

She might not look it, but in truth she has already reached the skill level of a royal maid.

After the end of the exam, leading Aisha and Norn, I returned to our house.

It was a written exam.

It wasn't something that corresponds to your age.

It was an orthodox entrance exam that combines general knowledge and the basic six types of magic.

Targeting all ages.

It's different from the time with me.

Naturally, I guess.

Aisha got full points on her exam.

The culture is somewhat different between here and Milis.

In other words, that means there's a gap between the general knowledge.

Even so, she took full points.

I have nothing to complain about.

Jinas as well was saying if this is how it is when she's 10 years old, then with some conditions attached, she could be a Special Student.

Although, the promise with Aisha wasn't about that.

"Then, just as promised, I'm going to serve Onii-chan, right!?"

After we returned to the house, Aisha declared that triumphantly.

That expression was one full of pride.

"That means you intend to become the house maid? Even though we're family?"

"That's wrong. I'm not going to become the house maid – I'm going to become Onii-chan's maid!"

Her dream for the future is to become Onii-chan's maid.

That is... I really wonder about that.

I can't help the feeling that something is warped.

However, a promise is a promise.

"Alright. Then make sure you listen to whatever I tell you."

"Yes! Looking forward to serving you, master!"

Master, it has a good sound to it.

If it wasn't my little sister saying it to me, I'm sure I'd be getting very excited.

Even though I have a beloved wife.

"Even though I say that, if you think of anything that you want to learn, say it without reservation."

"At that time, does that mean master will teach me all about it?"

Aisha put one of her fingers against her lips and made a flirtatious glance.

I wonder if what she wants to be taught is something erotic.

If she says something like, "Onii-chan... teach me how children are made." I'll go ahead and teach her properly all about sex education.

Of course without eroticism.

"Although, what's with 'master'?"

"Since I'm going to be serving you, it's no good if we don't make the distinction."

Oh? It's honorifics.

"Is the usual Onii-chan no good?"

"That would be mixing work and private affairs."

As expected of someone who earned full points.

She sure knows some difficult words.

Well, it's fine I guess.

Though, I might end up being looked at with weird eyes by Sylphy.

She did take full points after all, I'll let her do as she pleases.

"I understand. In regards to the job, please consult with Sylphy, and decide on it."

"Yes. I've learned the jobs of a maid from my mother. Please leave it to me."

After saying that, Aisha stood up and crossed her arms in front of her body, then deeply bowed her head.

It's the birth of the little sister maid.

Little sister maid.

What a moving impression the sound of those words give off.

Well, she will still be taught as well, so in my previous life it would at most be called, "helping with chores."

On Norn's side, they were scores you can't really call good.

According to Jinas, they were average, or maybe even a bit lower for her age, but it seems it's not bad.

Even though I say that, if we were to compare her to Aisha, saying there's no inferiority would just be sugarcoating it.

Well, she did come here after journeying for a year. It was an exam she took soon after settling down, it can't be helped.

I'm sure at least she would have liked a chance to study and review.

Eh, there's no need to rush.

It's fine as long she improves from here on.

Even if she can't become number one, setting average as the final goal is not a problem.

Human society is made up of compromises like that.

It's fine if you're not superior. It's fine if you're just average.

"Norn, which subject do you want to study?"

"..."

Norn didn't respond.

Just continuing with her eyes cast down, averting her eyes with a sullen face...

It seems she still doesn't like me.

I'd like to close the distance a bit more between her and me.

However, well, I wonder what can be done about it.

"I'm not all that familiar with the subjects that can be studied though... If I remember correctly, after studying the common knowledge class work for three years, you're allowed to choose. In our school, there's some pretty interesting lessons you can take. For the time being, try attending for a few years and see if you can find something that you would like to do. If there's nothing, I think it wouldn't be a bad idea to try and specialize in healing magic. Mother was a healing magician as well after all. Since there's few healing magicians around this area, you'll be able to find work in a doctor's office or hospital."

"..."

Since there was no reply, I was just going on and on talking myself.

And suddenly, Norn looked this way.

It was somehow a gaze that wanted to say something.

I kept silent.

"...I want to try living in the dorm."

Norn quietly said that with a nervous tone of voice.

I started to think over those words.

"Living in the dorms, huh."

That's no good.

Though, it'll be simple to just reject it.

However, I'll try thinking about it seriously.

It seems that Norn went out of her way to gather her courage after all.

First off, it's having a 10 year old young girl living on her own.

Regardless of other things, that's too soon.

However, living in a dorm isn't living alone.

Fundamentally, there are two people per room.

Since Norn came over here, she only has a few acquaintances.

She has no friends as well.

If she were to live in the dorm, she might be able to make friends.

I'm sure there are more or less some problems in regards to her age though.

There are kids in that school who start living in the dorms and attending from a younger age as well.

The dorm has some extent of precise rules and is a safe place.

Even saying she's 10 years old, I'm sure she won't be inconvenienced.

I want to get along a bit better with her, but if things continue in this state... I have the feeling that even if we manage to get closer physically, we'll just remain at the same distance emotionally.

In my previous life I was always secluded in my parents' house.

Secluded, rejecting everything.

My family tried making plans for this and that in order to try and close the distance between us.

Fishing using expensive items, bringing delicious tasting things, talking about the future with sweet words.

Each time, I felt like my heart was getting further away from my family.

I got the feeling like I was being treated as an animal.

Rather than living in the same place, seeing each other's faces everyday, and speaking of each other's complexion, living in a somewhat separated place and watching over her from a distance might be the better option wouldn't it?

Isn't it important for each side to mutually calm down and look over things in regards to the other side?

Aisha took on a natural attitude that looks down on Norn.

I've told her to be careful about it, but since the person herself doesn't seem to be self-conscientious about it, the disposition is a bit bad.

I'm sure there's no other option than to try and fix it over a long period.

Being looked down on by Aisha inside the house, continually unable to face me whom she hates...

I don't think I can stand at the top myself, but in this world, I am considered excellent as I go about.

The bitterness of trying to grow up surrounded by superior siblings...

There's no option other than running away from home.

I already know the fate of a young girl who runs away from home.

Being pulled in by a bad man in exchange for letting her stay over, requesting these sorts of things and those sorts of things.

If that's the case, then from the start, it's better to have her stay in a place that is safe I'm sure.

Besides, Sylphy is in the dorms as well.

She stays at home once every three days, but in reverse, that means she's at the dorm two out of every three days.

If a time ever comes up where something happens, I'm sure she can quickly support her.

Fortunately, it seems Norn doesn't hate Sylphy.

I guess the naked socializing on the first day was having an effect.

Yeah, after thinking about it, I don't think it's a half bad suggestion.

Living in the dorms at 10 years old.

I wonder if she can properly learn to be independent and socialize properly.

"I get it. It's fine for Norn to live in the dorm. I'll submit an application."

"Eh!! Onii-chan!?"

The one who raised her voice in surprise was Aisha.

She was making a face like she couldn't believe it.

"Why! Norn-ane's scores weren't good at all!"

Her maid tone from just before had crumbled.

"Aisha??"

"Even though I put that much effort into it! It's no fair for just Norn-ane!"

It's not that sort of problem.

However, looking at it from Aisha's side, it might look like I'm showing favoritism.

In order for her own wishes to be fulfilled, she took full points on the exam.

It could be that during this past week, she's been reviewing and preparing for it in a place where I wasn't watching.

Norn didn't do anything.

And yet, I'm allowing Norn to do as she wants.

That is unfair. It is favoritism.

During times like these, I wonder what my parents said in my previous life.

I can't remember.

For example, listen to what I tell you or listen to what I say. I have the feeling I was told something like that.

I wonder if I was able to agree with that.

I'm sure I wasn't able to.

I wonder about Aisha.

Would she be able to accept it with that way of talking.

I'm sure she wouldn't be able to.

No, she's a superior child.

I'm sure, if I told her what I was thinking, she would understand it.

That's what I think, but that might just be my arrogance.

In any case, I'll try talking to her and see.

"Aisha. It's not like I'm particularly listening to Norn's selfishness. Just, I thought that living in the dorm would be better for her sake."

"But."

"Norn hasn't made any acquaintances since she came over here... Well, I can't really say much myself, since things don't really balance up with me as well. I'm sure you've seen this past week, but it almost looks like breathing has become difficult."

"But, Otou-san said... we should live together with Onii-chan."

Hm.

After being told like that, I feel like I have no choice other than to tie Norn to the house.

No, there's no way that's the case.

There's no way it's better to always do as one is told.

Paul is often mistaken after all.

I can't really say that my decision is correct as well though.

"Of course, I have no intention of abandoning my duty of looking after you two. But, if things continue like this, things won't end up well for Norn. By living in the dorm, she might be able to obtain something."

"...."

Aisha cast her eyes down.

For some reason, those eyes had tears building up in them.

"...Showing partiality to Norn-ane, is it because my mother is a mistress?"

Abruptly, Aisha said those things.

Mistress.

After hearing those words.

I instinctively felt that this is bad.

"By mistress, you mean Lilia-san? Aisha, who told you that? Was it Otou-san? There's no way Norn could have said it right?"

"Mother and also Norn's grandmother..."

Large tears were falling from Aisha's eyes.

Speaking of Lilia and Norn's grandmother, in other words, Zenith's parents' home.

I can't help that Lilia has said it.

She feels one step drawn back in regards to Zenith and I.

It seems she intends to pass things through completely with the position of a maid.

Therefore, it can't be helped if she makes the request for the position to be one step back in regards to Zenith's daughter.

I'm sure Paul would connect with them equally, but by no means does that make them equivalent.

Zenith's parents are nobles.

If I remember correctly, it was a house with a considerable pedigree.

My aunt, Therese, was by no means a bad person.

However, it's not like everyone has a lenient way of thinking about the social position.

In the first place, they have reason to be affectionate towards Zenith's daughter, but if it's Lilia's daughter, then there's no reason to be affectionate.

They're not related by blood after all.

It's not a matter of blaming either side.

It's that sort of culture.

"Is it because I'm only connected half by blood...[sniffle]..."

However, there's no way a child wouldn't be hurt over things like that.

Aisha with her face completely crumpled up started hiccuping.

I might have misunderstood something a bit.

Aisha is a difficult child in Aisha's own way.

"I don't think of Lilia-san as a mistress at all. I feel that both you and Norn are equally my little sisters."

"But... I, gusu... worked hard, studied, and took the exam, Norn-ane is??"

Aisha was appealing while crying between pauses.

After all it seems she studied for it.

Even though there was only one week before the exam.

She was able to take a good score...

"Aisha."

"What is it?"

"You might not understand if I put it into words, but I intend to recognize your hard work. Therefore, I permitted the fact that you don't have to go to school."

"But, you said Norn-ane is allowed to stay in the dorm??"

[Sniffle], Aisha's nasal voice is sounding in my heart.

However, this isn't favoritism.

"In regards to everything, I intend to make decisions based on that time. For example, if you were to say you wanted to go to school starting now or wanted to enter the dorm, I would allow that. But in reverse, if Norn said she doesn't want to go to school, or says she wants to do work around the house, I won't allow that because you got full points on the exam."

After saying that, Aisha bent her lips and kept silent.

And then,

".....I understand."

Having said that, it seems like she still has some dissatisfaction.

However, in the end, she accepted it with a nod.

Norn watched over this situation in a way that she wasn't finding anything amusing.

However, I feel like I can see a bit of the setting.

Zenith's family were looking down on Aisha as an illegitimate child.

And with that, Aisha gave it her best in order to not lose to Norn.

As expected, Paul never made any sort of distinction though...

It seems that in a place I wasn't aware, the relationship between my two little sisters turned into something distorted.

There are no longer any nobles nearby.

There's no one to look down on Aisha.

If I properly keep them company, then with time, things should be resolved.

"For the time being, I'll add a condition onto that. Norn, at least once every ten days, you need to show your face in this house."

After saying that, Norn lowered her eyebrows.

"...For what reason?"

"Because I'll worry."

Also, I have responsibility as the overseer.

I wouldn't be able to show my face in front of Paul if I left her in the dorm and abandoned her there,

"...I understand."

Norn nodded with an unwilling feeling.

My new lifestyle started to include my two little sisters.

I put in an application at the dorms for Norn's sake and prepared for her to be accepted there.

I talked with Sylphy about it as well, and if anything happens within the dorm, I sincerely requested for her to take care of it.

"Are you going to keep Norn-chan at a distance?"

Sylphy used a bit of a condemning tone of voice.

In her regard, she might think it's best for Norn's sake that she remains in the house and does various things.

Even I think that's a possibility as well.

But, if I think about the things that occurred the other day, I can't think that's the best decision.

I told Sylphy about that matter.

"It might be better not to keep Aisha and Norn together. It seems like a variety of things were said about a mistress and such. It's not like I'm pushing her to a distance. We're just suddenly far too close, so I'm putting a bit of distance between us."

"Hnnn... those sorts of things happened... I get it. As much as possible, I'll try to keep an eye on Norn-chan as well."

Sylphy pleasantly nodded in agreement.

It would be good as long as this continues in a good direction.

Aisha has become our house maid.

She is superior.

Ever since Aisha has started taking care of things in the house, the burden on Sylphy has largely been reduced.

Aisha is doing all of the cleaning.

The laundry is done by Aisha as well.

My jobs have been taken away by Aisha.

This means that I can't stroke or rub my cheeks against Sylphy's used panties anymore.

Giving up on it, unable to explain it, I have no choice other than to move on just like before.

There are duties which we couldn't hand over to her though–shopping and cooking are done by Sylphy.

Aisha is a helper.

Other than that, arrangements for cleaning the chimney, greeting the people who live in the neighborhood, and all these other things that I never realized were being done in succession as well.

She's really excellent.

She stands out and makes no mistakes. She has no faults.

I'm sure she's putting in effort in places I can't see as well.

It seems Aisha intends to take being a maid seriously.

Taking off the mask of a little sister, doing her duty with a steel will.

It's the result of Lilia's education.

She would generally take care of various things around the house. When we return, she would help Sylphy with making meals, help me out with preparing the bath, prepare a change of clothes before Sylphy and I enter the bath, help Sylphy after getting out of the bath, brush and set her hair.

Even on the days of her night shift, she would put on winter clothes and head out saying, [I will now conduct myself to the madam and return.]

It seems Sylphy somehow feels a bit troubled by it.

It's actually quite enjoyable to watch those two.

Also, during times when visitors come by, she looks after them as well.

Though I say that, the only one that has come these past few days is just Nanahoshi.

The other day she came to formally say her thanks again.

She said she wanted to prepare something as thanks, so I requested some kind of useful magic circle that makes use of summoning magic.

On the occasion that the experiment proceeds to the second phase, it seems she'll give me an explanation.

In regards to Nanahoshi, Aisha was truly diligent in looking after her.

Preparing the bath and a change of clothes, even up to washing her body...

It seems Nanahoshi was considerably irritated by it.

In response, I was sarcastically told that working my little sister so hard is something a fiend would do.

In her regard, the bath might be isolated, rich, and something that she can't help but be appeased by.

The next time Nanahoshi comes to enter the bath, I'll tell her to try and keep her distance.

Later on, when I do something in the living room, she goes around doing this and that to take care of me.

Confirming the situation of the fire in the fireplace, bringing out some kind of warm drink...

I really do feel that it's a bit odd to be taken care of like this by my little sister.

However, Aisha is doing it so happily.

I'm sure it will be fine to continue like this for a while.

It's not like I'm coercing her into it...

Is what I was thinking, but if you use magic from the time when you're young, your aggregate amount of magic power will increase.

I remembered such rules.

If she's not going to school, then at the very least, I think it would be good if she just trains her magic power.

After reaching 10 years of age, it won't grow all that much, but even then, it will mean her future growth is still positive.

Taking the opportunity as well, I'm sure it would be for the best if she can use attack magic up to the intermediate level.

Though there's no problems living with just elementary level, intermediate is the easiest to use in actual combat.

"Aisha, come over here for a bit. I'm going to teach you magic."

"Onii-chan is going to teach me!?"

Aisha was making a face like she was really happy.

When her feelings are greatly moved, her tone tends to get disturbed.

She still hasn't reached Lilia's level it seems.

"It's just in case you ever need it. Even if you say no..."

"There's no way I would say I don't want it!"

Saying that, Aisha jumped on top of my lap.

Oh, cute.

"I'm in your care!"

It became that Aisha would be taught magic by me.

Even though I say that, she's already learned all the basics.

Just because she hasn't learned it yet, if she just reads a magic textbook, she can quickly learn intermediate magic I'm sure.

Incidentally, she was unable to use voiceless incantation.

It seems to be impossible to do by 10 year old after all.

For the time being, I obligated her to use up almost all of her magic power everyday.

During the night, Aisha would come crawling into my bed.

"Onii-chan, is it fine for me to sleep together with you?"

Since that one thing happened just the other day, I'm being a bit too sweet towards Aisha as well.

Well, something like sleeping together is fine I'm sure.

"Sure it is, now come."

I didn't make any complaints in particular and invited her into the bed.

Aisha's body is smaller than Sylphy's and she has a high body temperature.

Since this region is cold, she's the best as a hugging pillow.

Of course, nothing on the erotic side goes on.

Honestly, I don't feel like I can get into an erotic mood.

In the first place, she still hasn't finished developing her secondary sexual characteristics.

It seems she does have the knowledge itself though, but the point of sexual desire is still in the future I'm sure.

I have nothing to feel guilty about.

Well, if Aisha ends up holding sexual desires towards me, then she'll have to give up on it at that time.

I have nothing to say about anything in relation to near relatives though.

I just don't want to destroy the relationship with my family.

Well, while the days when Sylphy isn't around are fine, the problem lies on the days when there's no night shift.

My night life together with Sylphy once every three days...

Since my little sister is here as well, I thought we should hold back for a short while.

However, after thinking about how there's a defenseless girl sleeping next to me, there's no way I can endure it.

No, in reality, I should be able to endure it though... If I were to take care of things myself.

Nevertheless, inside of the house, Aisha is always hanging around me.

There's no way I could take care of it in the toilet at school.

Even though I have a wife, taking care of it myself is somehow a waste.

And in the end, while worrying about things, it ended up saving up.

In this young body with strong sexual desire, if I don't take care of it within a week, it will be on the verge of spontaneous discharge.

Next to such a young body, try putting a cute sleeping girl.

Not to mention that girl is all okay without NGs.

{ C-Editor's note: NG means no good. So she is without bad traits or flaws. }

She's giving it her best to try and make a child. With her saying such lovable things, trying to endure seems stupid.

"Fu..."

As a result, the hustle was overdone to the end.

For the time being, I did make sure to lock the door, and I enhanced the soundproofing of it with earth magic as well.

...I just have to pray that Aisha doesn't try to peek from her side.

"Rudi, today you were amazing..."

Afterwards, Sylphy was left quite listless.

Soaked in sweat, her slightly disheveled hair was just a bit glossed.

Now that the sweet pillow talk has ended, I begin wiping her body down with a wet towel while sitting on top of the bed in room clothes.

The room clothes were made with a soft material – they're clothes with a bit of a plain feeling to them.

Rather than sweats, they're close to jerseys.

[They aren't very sexy are they?] is what Sylphy said, but that's completely wrong.

For Sylphy's sex appeal rather, these sorts of outfits in specific bring it to life.

It kind of feels like a track & field club girl is sitting down on top of the bed.

Precisely because the sexiness is sparse that in reverse accelerates the arousal.

It's the so-called artistic inclination.

{ C-Editor's note: Suki means artistic inclination. Wabi-suki was a style of Japanese tea ceremony that emphasized simplicity. }

For example, if this was the black negligee that Eris wore, Elinalise were wearing it saying some kind provocative words, or Rinia and Pursena with their voluptuous flesh, it wouldn't end up like this.

It suits Sylphy's lack of sex appeal.

"..."

"Hn? What is it Rudi?"

When I realize it, I'm caressing Sylphy's slender body from behind.

It sure is a good body.

There are few uneven spots, but it's not a plain.

There's some fat, but for some reason, it's soft.

Just by embracing and caressing her like this, my lightning rod faces upwards.

"Umm... Do you still want to do it more?"

"No, Sylphy has work tomorrow as well. I'll endure it. Tomorrow morning, I'll be satisfied with groping them a bit."

"Really... it's fine if you don't endure it though, okay."

Sylphy fell over onto the bed...

And then faced me and held out both of her arms towards me.

"It's fine, Rudi. Come."

Sylphy said that shyly and full of bashfulness.

My patience turned into a gestalt collapse in an instant.

I already don't know the meaning of patience anymore.

I matched both of my hands together, and then while jumping straight out of my clothes, I dived in aiming at Sylphy.

The night has that sort of feeling to it.

Now.

Speaking of Norn, during the time when all of the preparations for the dorm were being done, she was docile for several days.

She didn't say anything in specific towards me.

Even though I say that, it's not like her attitude was specifically bad either.

If I say anything, she would do it, and she honestly listens to what I say.

Just, if you were to ask if we were getting along well, it's a difficult place.

In my regards, I'd like to deepen my friendship with Norn a bit more.

Which is why I tried asking her once, "Do you want to enter the bath together?"

The so-called naked socializing that is.

"...No."

However, Norn refused it with an extremely unpleasant face.

In exchange, Aisha said, "Ah, I'll enter together with you," and then washed my back and even ended up giving me a massage.

Aisha can handle everything easily without slipping up.

Even her washing method is skillful. She will become a splendid soap lady.

No, I'll be troubled if she becomes one though.

The preparations for Norn to enter the dorm were completed after several days.

It seems her roommate is a fourth year student.

In the same year as Nanahoshi huh.

If it was at least a fifth or sixth year, then I have acquaintances though.

Her roommate had a cap almost like a cockatoo's, it was a girl like a small parrot.

Matching up with that feeling, she moves with a jumpy feel.

She's either a Demon Race or a bird-type Beast Race.

Her name is Melissa.

She wasn't a person who had any bad rumors about her.

There are many half and quarter races in this school.

I need to make sure Norn doesn't say any sort of discriminating statements.

For the time being, it might be better to just leave her with greetings.

Thinking that, I approached her with a smile, but she was frightened.

She couldn't even talk.

That frightened.

It might be better to keep it hidden that I'm related to Norn in the school.

I'm treated as the Bancho in this school after all.

It would be pitiful if she was feared and unable to make any friends because of that.

Well, I want to think things will work out somehow without worrying that much.

If I overlook things from one to ten, then I might end up excessively caring for her after all.

If it comes down to it, she can rely on Sylphy and Luke, or Ariel.

Those three are popular in the school.

If you're together with those three, people gather.

If a person enters into that group, naturally, they'll be associated with its social interactions and make friends as well.

No, in reverse, if it's those three, there's the possibility that she might be jealous.

No-no, just like that, treading through those stormy seas is also something that connects into growth isn't it?

Hmm.

How difficult.

Social disposition is really difficult.

In any case, it won't be good if Norn doesn't manage to do something about it herself.

I'm sure it would be better to not interfere until something happens.

For a short while, I'll wait-and-see.

Even though I say that, yeah, I'm worried.

After all, wouldn't it be better for her to commute from home.

The day we sent Norn to the dorm, I told Norn, who was holding her bag while wearing a uniform, about various points to be careful on.

In the dorm, you need to abide by the rules.

She needs to give it her best when studying.

Even if she sees a Demon Race, don't be discriminatory.

There were a lot of things I wanted to say, but if I say too much, she won't remember them all.

"Norn. If something troubles you at school, please tell me or Sylphy."

For the time being, I'll at least say that much.

"Yes."

Norn responded like that without looking me in the eyes.

I wonder if the day will ever come that I can get along with her.

I'm uneasy.

"Also, when you wake up and before you sleep, properly brush your teeth."

"Yes."

I need to say this as well.

"Enter the bath as well."

"Yes."

I need to say that as well.

"Do your homework as well."

"...Yes."

That's right, there's things about illnesses as well.

"Don't catch a cold."

"..."

She was looking at me with extremely annoyed eyes.

As I thought, I'm a bit worried.

Around the time when Nanahoshi was troubled and Zanoba settled it,

He had actually explained one secret of the doll a while back.

This happened about a week earlier, before Nanahoshi went berserk.

"Shishou, take a look at this."

That day.

When he entered the research lab, Zanoba was happily carrying a box.

His expression was many times more boastful than usual.

"What's this?"

"It's the arm of that doll from the other day."

Zanoba put the box on the table and took out the contents wrapped in cloth.

When the cloth was unwrapped, just like Zanoba said, there was an arm of a doll.

However, it looked as if it was cut into round slices like sweet bean jelly.

"I saw there was a joint on the portion where the paint wore off, so when I split it thinking that was the case, it became like this."

Zanoba showed me the cross-sections of the arm.

A pattern like a QR code was compactly written on there.

It's a magic circle.

It's completely different from what Nanahoshi draws.

It's a mysterious pattern.

That were different patterns on the cross-sectioned parts.

The back and the front.

The patterns were slightly different.

Even though they were part of the same joint, they were not the same.

"I see... the magic circle was compacted even at the arm. It's interesting that it differs at the surface joints."

It's like seeing the cross-section of meat.

Like a vivid view of a human body cut into round slices.

"Still, I didn't realize there were joints to this."

"Even I wouldn't have realized this if the paint wasn't falling off."

"I see."

Zanoba seemed very excited at making such an important discovery.

I am rather calm myself.

I knew that it couldn't move without applying some special craft to it.

"I see, with that many magic inscriptions written, it can only move so little."

"Oh? Shishou, do you understand these magic inscriptions?"

"Nope, not a clue."

These magic circles, they were only meant to move the arm.

Or rather, if those inscriptions weren't written on the arm, it couldn't be controlled?

Or was it something else?

I wouldn't know unless we researched it.

In any case, this doll was loitering inside the house in the middle of the night, going around and cleaning.

If it found enemies, it would go and eliminate them.

Once it finished cleaning, it would return to the charging station to recharge.

It had that sort of function.

Even a Roomba didn't have that kind of efficiency.

To have an ability like exterminating enemies, that's already like a Roach Motel.

It's not like the doll was completed merely by scribbling inscriptions on its head and body.

I don't want to make a Roomba.

I want to make a moving doll.

I want to see one in action.

If I can make one that moves, it will sell well.

I can probably sell it for a pretty high price.

No, it's not like I want a large sum of money.

I like money as much as anyone, but even if I have a lot of it, it's wasted on someone like me.

Although it's a different story, if I was to make a doll that could restore the honor of the Superd Race...

That was one of my dreams.

Another dream was of having a maid robot.

"There must be a magic circle to control the movement in the head or torso. If you locate it, please 'break' it carefully."

"Yes, Shishou."

Zanoba nodded and wrapped the pieces of the arm and placed it back into the box.

Thus, with that kind of discovery, Zanoba came up with a theory.

With that theory in mind he helped Nanahoshi complete her layered magic inscription.

Even though she was about to give up, she successfully summoned something from another world.

I am sure I can complete my maid robot soon.

That reality is not far away.

When that thought comes to me, I become motivated.

Today, like any other day, I headed to Zanoba's laboratory.

My steps were light.

"Zanoba, I'm coming in."

I knocked once, and then I entered into Zanoba's lab.

There was a girl standing there acting as the gatekeeper.

Although not a beautiful woman, it was a woman that I recognized.

"Ooh, Ginger-san, it's been a while."

She had eyed me with suspicion, but when I greeted her, she bowed her head with a straight face.

"If it isn't Sir Rudeus. It's been a while."

A former knight of Shirone, and a bodyguard of the Third Prince Zanoba:

Ginger York.

How nostalgic.

"I had thought about greeting you at least once, but it's been a little hectic."

"Not a problem. In fact, I apologize. I had not thanked you for guarding my sisters without compensation..."

"Thanks to Aisha-dono, our trip was very quick. That is already my compensation."

Ginger waved me in, and I entered the lab.

Zanoba and Julie were working as usual.

Zanoba was transcribing the magic circles, and Julie was chiseling a figurine.

In any case, Julie seemed to be nearly finished, so I went to take a look.

"How is it?"

"Yes, it's almost complete, Grandmaster. What do you think?"

"This Zanoba doll is pretty good. But doesn't he look a bit too attractive?"

"Master is cool."

Yup.

She's still unrefined, but she's got good taste.

She has been learning quickly.

Zanoba was taking a bit more time.

When I looked, Ginger was suddenly looking at me.

"...What is it, Ginger-san?"

"No, it's nothing... just that, you seem to have grown a lot."

"The last time we met was about four years ago I think? Of course I've grown."

Recently, I felt that many people have said that I looked cool.

It could be that my sex appeal was flowing out.

If I hadn't married Sylphy, I would probably have had a harem by now.

No, having a harem would be a disaster in its own way.

It doesn't seem like I can casually raise kids in that scenario.

"Come to think of it, what will you do from now on, Ginger-san?"

"I am thinking of staying by Zanoba's side."

"So you mean to go back to being his guard?"

"Yes, since I have completed my mission."

The mission of guarding Lilia and Aisha.

She was loyal in protecting the both of them, for a mission that spanned many years.

What admirable loyalty.

Zanoba should reward this lady more.

A blessing and duty.

"Zanoba, shouldn't you give her some kind of reward?"

"No, Rudeus-dono, I am..."

"Hmm. You're right. Ginger, is there anything that you want?"

Zanoba asked that question.

Ginger stared in puzzlement.

Surely, she had not received anything from Zanoba up till now.

She thought for a moment, then knelt on one knee with her head bowed down.

Then, she spoke.

"In that case, please allow me to educate Julie. While she is the disciple of Sir Rudeus, to have her work for Zanoba may be slightly rude."

"Very well, I give you permission."

"Yes! Thank you very much!"

Permission to teach, huh.

Different from what I expected.

In the end, it's all for Zanoba's sake, no?

No, it may be that slaves were not meant to receive higher-quality education.

Humans ate the fruit of wisdom and were chased out from the Garden of Eden.

Before obtaining wisdom, human beings were happy-go-lucky and did not have any doubts.

To a ruler, it's good that people under them remained stupid.

That's why slaves don't receive education.

The risk of rebellion would increase.

Although in exchange, their productivity also increases.

Well, it's fine.

It would be troubling if she were to demand a plot of land.

I don't hate a loyal relationship where one doesn't ask for much.

"Now, let's talk about the research. How's it going?"

"I'm thinking of starting on the feet next."

"I was just thinking that as well, but wouldn't it be better to research the inscriptions on the arms thoroughly before starting the feet? Once you break it apart, you can't put it back together."

"Yeah, you're right."

"If we show this to Cliff-senpai or Nanahoshi, they might know something."

Zanoba and I started to disassemble the second arm.

Suddenly, Ginger was standing next to me.

Looking at her, she showed an expression of wanting to say something.

"What is it?"

"Rudeus-dono... Um, even if Zanoba may be comfortable, he's still Shirone royalty. No matter what kind of master-servant relationship you guys have, isn't it impolite to ask in that manner?"

"Hmm?"

Impolite.

Come to think of it, I've been speaking to Zanoba in a casual manner today.

Normally, I think of speaking using honorifics.

But after speaking with Aisha a few days back, I might have relaxed my awareness a bit.

As a retainer, to hear such impolite words directed at her master, she would probably feel irritated.

It can't be helped, guess I'll use honorifics when I am in front of Ginger.

"You're right, I apologize. I've been careless and spoiled by Zanoba's goodwill..."

When I said that.

Zanoba moved.

"GINGERRRRR!"

Zanoba grabbed Ginger's neck.

She was lifted up and pushed against the wall.

It made a loud thudding noise.

Julie was surprised and stopped moving her hands.

"You bastard! Even though Shisho has opened his heart towards me! What are you saying?! Apologize! Apologize to Shisho right now!"

"Guh... uughh...!"

Ginger was in pain.

...Hey.

Hey, she's seriously being choked.

This is overdoing it!

"Zanoba! Zanoba! Let her go!"

When I shouted, Zanoba released his hands.

Ginger's neck showed Zanoba's grip marks very clearly.

She tried grasping at her neck, and her pale face grimaced at the pain.

She couldn't lift her hands. It seems when she was pushed up against the wall her shoulder bones had broken.

I immediately chanted healing magic and healed her wounds.

Ginger knelt in front of me and bowed her head.

"Cough... Cough... Rudeus-dono, I apologize."

She apologized to me.

Even more so, after being strangled...

"..."

I couldn't endure this feeling.

You're apologizing to me, isn't this wrong?

Ginger shouldn't be blamed for this.

I turned to Zanoba.

"Zanoba! Are you an idiot?!"

"Huh...? B-but Shisho, she selfishly said those things without any regard to our relationship..."

"Even so, just words would have sufficed!"

Ginger had served for a long time.

She had protected my family for four years in foreign lands.

She came all the way back here despite suffering hardships during those years.

However, with just one word of impoliteness, her throat was crushed, and her shoulders were broken.

This was too cruel.

I treasure the fact that he and I get along.

It even makes me very happy.

However, he shouldn't make light of a woman who has remained faithful all this time.

"No, Rudeus-dono, it's fine. Although I had not seen him for a while, Zanoba has grown up splendidly. I am not upset at all."

Ginger said that with a straight face.

...Huh?

Was I wrong?

I had thought she should have been rewarded more.

Was I thoughtless in saying that?

"...Zanoba."

"Yes, Shisho."

"I think that you're a great friend."

When I said that, Zanoba's face lit up.

"However, Ginger has protected my family. Ever since we had parted, for the past four years, she has always looked over them. She's someone I am indebted to. Please don't make light of that."

"I understand Shisho. Ginger, I apologize."

Zanoba made a meek face and nodded.

However, Ginger spoke.

"No, Sir Zanoba. Those words are unnecessary. As I've sworn allegiance to you with my entire being, I will not be discontent even if I were to die. I apologize for my impertinence."

With Ginger's formal attitude, I can no longer say anything.

So this is another form of a master-servant relationship.

If Zanoba was wrong, should I give advice properly?

No, it's fine.

It's not something I should be worried about.

As I don't know the common sense of Shirone's hierarchy, I would just be making a mess of things if I were to cut into this.

Putting aside Ginger and Zanoba's relationship, the research on the autonomous doll was going well.

"Now, although I said to focus on the arms, you can proceed at your own discretion."

"No, let's go with Shisho's plan. Rather than breaking it apart and reassembling it, it would be safer to recreate the same arm."

Thus, it was decided that we analyse the arm.

I should get Cliff and Nanahoshi to help out as well.

Otherwise, Zanoba would probably proceed by himself.

Although I wanted to meddle around a bit, it seems like he can handle it himself, so there's no need.

"Please leave it to me. It seems that I am becoming quite talented at this."

"Oh, is that so?"

"Yes, even though I surprised myself, recently, I've been enlightened every day."

Doing his favorite research all day long.

Next to him is a doll making specialist.

So to him, it must be his ideal everyday life.

However, what will happen after he graduates?

Will he be settling down here?

Well, that's not for me to decide.

Even if one of Zanoba's reasons to do so was me.

"Well, keep it up, I'll come by again."

"I'll be waiting for you."

"Please treat Ginger gently."

"Of course."

With that exchange, I left the laboratory.

—

Thus, the research on the doll continued.

That being said, a month has passed by.

Today at Ronoa Magic University the Delinquent Group held a meeting.

...In other words.

It's the Special Student Homeroom session.

—

Currently, I am worried.

About my sister Norn.

Even since she started living in the dorms, our relationship hasn't gotten any better.

On the contrary, when we see each other in the hallway, she ignores me.

At times she seems to gaze at me frankly with scornful eyes.

Well, that might just be my persecution complex taking over...

In any case, we aren't getting along.

Well, that's fine.

It's fine.

Even though I'm a bit lonely, it's fine.

It's not like we absolutely have to get along as siblings.

Even if we don't normally get along, I'll protect Norn if anything happens.

Even if something happens I can't become an over-demanding parent.

Yeah.

Being in position of the leader of misfits sure is convenient.

Aside from bullying homeroom teachers, I can do anything.

And since I know Jinas, I can consult with him.

That is to say I can consult with them about many things.

I should probably send some gifts to Jinas this time.

However, over the span of this month, Norn has not made a single friend.

Even though I see her in the hallways, she's alone most of the time.

Even though she doesn't seem lonely, seeing that makes me worried.

Well, I'll think of something even if she doesn't make any friends.

But, is she doing ok in class?

Is she ok living in the dorms?

I am really worried.

Having said that, it would be wrong for me to get too involved.

Speaking of first years that I know, it would be that first-year representative delinquent.

If I use her to forcibly help Norn out, she would definitely find out and hate me.

Besides, what's that first-year rep's name again?

All I remember was that she looks like a Siberian Husky puppy.

"Boss seems to be down lately nya."

"Yeah nano."

While I was worrying, Rinia and Pursena peeked at me with their heads.

The noisy bunch, the two of them.

These girls are the idols to the males of the Beast Race.

Ever since I went and reconciled with Princess Ariel, they've been surrounded by underlings frequently in the hallways.

They definitely don't have to worry about a lack of friends.

"Since you're like this, boss, we've prepared a present for you nya."

"It took us a month to prepare it nano."

Saying that, Rinia placed a bag on top of the desk.

It was pretty big.

I wonder what's inside?

"Oh, don't look inside until you get home nya."

"Open it when nobody's looking nano."

Hey, that's suspicious.

What is it?

Is it that? That powder?

Happy Turn Powder?

In the northern lands to the east, in one part of the Demon Continent, there was a powder circulating in the markets that brings you happiness.

In this country, there are no laws specifically forbidding drugs.

As far as I know, Milis and Asura have laws regarding that, but there are none in this region.

Of course, I won't go out of my way to get powder.

If it's poisonous or if it makes me go into withdrawal, my intermediate detoxification magic won't work.

I heard that Saint level detoxification can suppress those withdrawal symptoms, though.

In the beginning, it's not like I really need to rely on powder.

However, I might need to use for something.

I'll keep it for now.

If I run into financial troubles, it'll sell pretty well.

"Thank you very much."

"It's nothing at all nya."

"Boss is having trouble down there as well nano."

Ah.

That's right.

Speaking of which, these two live in the dorms.

Living in the dorms for six years, they should know various things.

I should consult with them a bit.

"Actually, I am worried about my little sister."

"Little sister? Ah, we met her the other time nya. The girl that's dressed like a maid."

"She was at the marketplace. We knew by her smell. She smelled like the boss."

It seems like the two of them had met with Aisha in the city.

The maid sister frequently sleeps together with me, which would explain why they could smell my presence on her.

"It's not her, it's my other sister who started living in the dorms last month."

"Eh? There was another nya?"

"She's living in the dorms nano?"

The two of them exchanged glances.

They haven't been introduced to Norn, but it seems they wouldn't have realized it even if they had met.

Since she hasn't been around me, they probably couldn't smell my presence from her.

"Yes, but she seems to hate me, and recently hasn't been talking. What can I do to get along with her?"

"Eh, ummm... let's see nya. It's a difficult problem nya."

"As long as we advertise Boss's good points it'll be fine nano."

Manipulation of information.

If people speak of Rudeus in the school as a popular super hero,

then would Norn want to speak with me?

Even if Rinia and Pursena did this, there are already stories of [Rudeus the leader of misfits] floating around.

I want to have a more child-friendly story where I rescue a puppy or something.

Maybe a story like when I first met Julie would be good.

"Ah, that's right. My sister doesn't seem to have any friends. Even though it has only been a month, and I know I shouldn't be anxious. However, as a transfer student, I am worried that she isn't adapting to the class."

"I, I see nya. But you don't know for sure nya."

"It might just be that she doesn't have a chance to talk nano."

Ever since we started talking, Rinia and Pursena are acting strange.

As if they were flustered about something.

When these two are stammering like this, it means they're hiding something.

"...Don't tell me you guys laid a hand on my sister when I wasn't looking."

"Th, that's not it at all nya!"

"That's right! Totally unthinkable! Boss's advice to 'Never bully the weak', we take it to heart!"

I see.

Then, why are they flustering?

Something's strange.

But, since I've told them now, if Norn happens to get bullied, these two will protect her.

"B, boss's sister, how old is she nya?"

"Is she older than the maid nano? Or younger?"

They asked something weird.

Although she's older, she's only older by a couple of hours.

"She's of the same age, she's ten."

"I, I see nya!"

"Then we're alright, we didn't do anything wrong nano."

It seems they felt guilty.

They probably were acting bossy towards the freshmen.

Well, if they're just glaring at them, then it shouldn't be a problem.

Those two were trembling in fear.

Usually when giving other people presents you would be looking with anticipation.

I've got a bad feeling about this.

I feel like I want to open it now.

"Preparing something like this for me, there's no way I would be angry."

Even if there's a corpse of a rat inside... Well, I'll be shocked at the very least.

Then, I saw Cliff sitting next to us.

"What do you think, Cliff-senpai?"

I decided to ask him on a whim.

"...Hmph, you can survive even if you don't have friends!"

When Cliff says that, it feels kinda heavy.

I don't want you to worry, you're not alone.

Elinalise is also with you.

...Ah, and me as well.

But, even if Cliff can't read the atmosphere,

My heart as a brother wants him to know he has at least one person.

Lunch break.

Nanahoshi brought her own lunch to the cafeteria.

She's realized that eating with people is important.

Then again, she's very quiet when she eats.

"What is it...?"

"No, it's nothing."

When I looked at her she stared at me.

Even though she prepared her own food, she hasn't eaten much up to now.

Although she doesn't seem to mind the taste, she doesn't act like it's delicious.

"That seems awful."

"Yeah, even though it's a recipe I made myself, it's the worst."

"In this world, there aren't any good ingredients compared to Japan."

"Yeah."

"Do you have anything you like to eat in this world?"

"Well, there's the potato chips I ate at your house. Those were delicious."

Sylphy made those.

Certainly, it's simple to make and the taste isn't very different.

"Should I make some again?"

"...No thanks."

Alrighty, I'll prepare some the next time you come for a bath.

However, this past month, Badigadi hasn't shown up.

I haven't seen him once in the cafeteria.

I wanted to speak to him about Ruijerd.

Though, thanks to his absence, Julie's table manners have improved.

Ginger taught etiquette to Julie.

When Badigadi was around, this proved difficult.

But, without Badigadi around, something felt off.

That laughter was really enjoyable after all.

I think it was written that laughter brings forth the substance of happiness.

"Fuhahahahaha!"

"W, why are you laughing suddenly, did I do something?"

"Master?"

"Grandmaster...?"

Though I suddenly laughed,

I just felt embarrassment swelling up.

I just can't do it like Badigadi.

"What are you laughing about?"

Luke suddenly appeared.

He was good-looking as ever, but he didn't have his followers today.

Sylphy isn't with him either.

"Since the Demon King isn't here, I tried to laugh like him."

"I see... Rudeus. Can you please come to the Student Council Room?"

Luke was putting on a complicated expression.

Did something happen?

"Understood."

I quickly gulped down my food and followed Luke.

Luke seemed angry.

His footsteps were violent.

When we entered the Student Council room, there were two other people waiting.

Ariel's expression was the same as usual, although her face was a bit pale.

Sylphy was also looking uneasy.

In front of them on the desk was something like a small pouch.

It seems something happened shortly after the new school term started.

"Thanks for bringing me. Did something happen?"

"Yes..."

Ariel nodded.

It was mixed with her sigh.

Seems like it's a difficult subject.

"Recently, the freshmen faces in the women's dorm have been pale lately."

"Oh."

Freshmen in the women's dorm.

It seems this is related to Norn.

"When I asked them, these students put on a worried expression."

Perhaps Norn was involved?

If that's so, I will cooperate as well.

If I can resolve this problem in a splendid manner,

then as a brother, I can be someone that she can respect.

"Today, among the people I questioned in detail, about Rinia and Pursena, um..."

It seems Rinia and Pursena are related to this as well.

I told them not to bully the weak though.

Maybe they were extorting other students?

Something like cornering female students who had meat or beef jerky.

"It seems they were coercing freshmen into giving up their panties on the spot."

Panties?

"..."

In an instant, my gaze flew over to my bag.

No way.

But, it can't be.

"And when I got more information, those two seems to be talking in the cafeteria saying [Boss will be happy] and such."

"..."

That means, there are panties in this bag.

Moreover, ones that have not been washed.

Oh My God.

Who was the one that wanted this?

Ah, I hate the me that's slightly happy.

"Also, I heard the underwear they collected was put into a bag..."

When Ariel said that, she silently looked at the bag that I was holding.

Everybody in the room also gazed at the bag.

They probably connected the information they just heard to this bag.

They are probably quite certain that it's full of panties.

My dream of a bag filled with panties has come true.

"Rudeus-sama, pardon me, but..."

"This bag is something I had received from Rinia and Pursena this morning. I was told not to look inside it until I was alone at home, but now that you said that, the contents inside this bag is most likely what you've guessed."

I took the initiative. If I were to say it later it would be bad.

"I see, then I just want to confirm... did you order them to do this?"

"No, you're mistaken."

I answered flat-out.

Any hesitation in replying is unforgivable.

I must answer firmly.

Otherwise there'll be misunderstandings.

"So you're saying you're not involved in this."

"Correct."

In the first place, why would I hatch such a crazy plan like this?

Especially when my sister is in the dorms.

Damn it, what excuse can I give?

A way to clear this misunderstanding...

"I understand, I'll believe you."

Ariel sighed lightly as she spoke.

She believed in me.

Even though I didn't have any proof.

"Thank you very much."

"No, it's just that I thought too that this was strange. Having an intense night with Sylphy yet attacking other girls..."

Did she overhear about our hot night?

In that case, even my embarrassing lines from last night too?

"...Sylphy. Did you talk to the princess? About our lover's talk last night."

"No, not at all. I didn't say anything! Princess Ariel, what's the meaning of this!?"

Sylphy was shaking her head in a panic.

Well, even if they got along well together, one wouldn't talk about the details of her and her husband's night life.

Though even if she did talk about it, I wouldn't be bothered by it.

As long as Sylphy wasn't grumbling about being unsatisfied.

"No, I was just teasing. It's good that your married lifestyle is going well."

Ariel said that like nothing happened.

Well, whatever.

However, why did those two do this...

Gathering panties, it's not something an ordinary person would come up with.

No, come to think of it, I remember saying something like that a long time ago.

About gathering up girls' panties or something...

I had certainly intended that to be a joke, I didn't think they'd carry it out.

Yup, it's not my fault.

I have no part in this.

Let's leave it at that.

"Well, I think they did this rashly but acted out of good faith, so I'll go ahead and scold them. Ah, please give these back to the victims, Princess Ariel. By the way, I did not look inside, nor have I touched any of them."

I said this while giving Ariel the bag.

Rinia and Pursena had not done this out of malice.

I must tell them properly.

That there are other ways of taking them off...

That if they want me to be happy they should take it off in front of me.

Wait, that's not it.

This is wrong.

"Yes, certainly."

Ariel nodded when she opened the bag.

With this the case is settled.

"However, with only this amount of underwear, aren't you regretting it?"

Ariel said that.

While looking over at Sylphy.

"You're mistaken. I have no interest in underwear and the like."

"...I see, I apologize."

"No, it's all good if this clears up any misunderstanding."

Phew, too close, too close.

If I brought this back home I would have trouble disposing of it.

Surely, being at the end of my wits, I would've soaked all the panties in alcohol and burned them.

"But, I'm glad. I thought that I wasn't able to satisfy you."

Sylphy said that straightforwardly, making the atmosphere in the room a bit lighter.

Sylphy immediately realized what she just said, and turned bright red.

Then, the bell signaling the end of the lunch break rang out.

"Oh, that's no good. I'll be late for class."

"I apologize. It was Rinia and Pursena's fault."

"No, things like these happen sometimes."

Luke opened the door, urging me that I leave.

I went along and left the room.

After that, Ariel and Sylphy followed.

When Luke was the last to leave, he locked the door.

"Let's go."

As I walked out, Ariel was walking next to me.

Sylphy and Luke followed behind.

Ah, in this scenario it might have been better if I was in the rear as well.

"Ah."

While I was thinking that, Norn appeared when we turned around a corner.

She was looking around restlessly with an anxious face, then when she saw me, let out a small gasp.

"Norn, what's wrong? Classes are about to start."

"..."

Norn turned her face away with a huff.

She was facing towards Ariel.

"Nice to meet you. I am this school's student council president. My name is Ariel."

Ariel smiled gently, and Norn's face turned red.

As expected of her charisma.

"My name is N, Norn Greyrat..."

"Okay! Norn-san, what's wrong? It's almost time for lessons to start."

"Ah, um, I didn't know where the third practice room was..."

"I see..."

It seems Norn was left behind when they were moving between classes.

I feel sorry for her.

That's obviously painful.

So it seems she's been left out in class after all.

"Luke, please guide her."

"Yes. Please come over here."

Luke gave a gentle push on Norn's back, and escorted her.

Norn turned red, and seemed to be embarrassed.

Luke is good looking, after all.

But Luke's no good. He's a womanizer.

"..."

Suddenly, Norn turned around and looked at us.

Me, Ariel, and Sylphy.

She looked at each one of us.

Then, she turned away again with a huff.

What did I do wrong...

After school.

I called Rinia and Pursena behind the school.

After today's debacle there are things I need to say.

Back of the school.

A place that's used as a movie scene for students in their youth.

Rinia and Pursena came by acting triumphantly.

"What is it Boss, calling us here nya?"

"Making a love confession nano? If you're confessing to us you better talk to Fitts-chan, or she'll get mad."

The two were acting quite boastful, but...

"About the bag from the other day, I gave it to Princess Ariel this afternoon. I told her to return the stuff inside back to their original owners."

When I said that, their expressions quickly changed,

then they started to point fingers at each other.

"See, I told you it was no good nya!"

"It's Rinia's fault nano. You said Boss would definitely be happy!"

"That's because Pursena was so eager nya!"

"I said to first test it out with your panties nano!"

"It's unfair if it's only me nya!"

"That's why I got them from the other students nano!"

"I had meant for you to take off your own nya!"

"My breasts are too big so they're no good nano!"

They were starting up an awful comedy sketch.

What do you mean I have a small breast fetish?

I love big breasts too.

"Shut up!"

In any case, I shut the both of them up.

"Haven't I said this many times before? Didn't I say not to bully the weak?"

The both of them were trembling.

"W, we didn't bully the weak nya!"

"T, that's right nano, we properly asked to get them..."

'Asked', huh.

When these two are asking, there's no freshmen that could have refused.

"The disgrace of taking off someone's clothes, surely you guys of the Beast Race should know best..."

"W, we gave them underwear to replace the ones they wore nya!"

"Weren't there plenty of freshmen who weren't happy, though?"

"It must be because the sizes were different nano. We didn't take any underwear from the ones who refused strongly."

Hmm?

There seems to be a difference in stories from what I heard from Ariel.

To be honest, if they had forcibly stripped them, I would have been disgusted.

I would have made them strip naked in public if that was the case.

They need to understand the damage they've done after all.

"I, I told you not to be angry if you weren't satisfied nya."

"This was an unhappy misunderstanding nano. Please forgive us..."

The two were cowering.

However, thinking about it, these two did it for my sake.

I had been looking unhappy, so they gathered the panties thinking that it would make me happy.

Though I did not appreciate what they did, the act itself was not evil.

Well, of course, if I were a victim I'd be disgusted as well.

However, Rinia and Pursena had done this with good intentions.

Unlike me in my previous life, they were not attempting to disgrace the others with their actions.

To use an analogy, they were like children gathering cicada husks.

It would be overreacting to severely punish them.

"If I find a child who was really hurt by this, I will have you both prostrate naked before her."

"I, I understand nya."

"I'm sorry nano..."

Well, all that's left is to follow-up with Ariel.

For my part, I won't get angry at them.

I wonder if it's because they're my followers?

It seems like I am also showing signs of favoritism as well.

"So, why did you think of giving me underwear as a present, anyway?"

When I asked that, the two stared at me in puzzlement.

With a face that said [Isn't that obvious?]

"Boss's religion is the God of Panties, right nya?"

"You seem to worship them very seriously nano."

Ahh.

I see, so it's my fault.

The cause of this was because I showed them the [Divine Artifact] some time ago.

"That's different. It's not like I regard panties as something taking the place of God. That particular one was worn by someone who I deify. In other words, it's sacred cloth."

I love panties.

But, this and that are different.

"That's why, I ask that you don't do this again."

"I understand nya."

"We'll be careful nano."

And then, I suddenly added.

"If you really wanted to give me underwear, it'd be better if you actually took them off in front of me."

"Eh?"

"Eh?"

Crap, my tongue slipped.

Rinia and Pursena were grinning.

"So you really did fall in love with us nya"

"It can't be helped. Boss is a male beast, he can't be calm when we're around nano."

Tch, shut up.

That reaction saying that I want panties.

These guys, maybe they like me...?

No, that's wrong.

It's something different.

It must certainly be something like goodwill.

Different than Sylphy getting close to me.

Even though I say that, I don't understand the difference.

Since I don't understand, I'll just chalk it up as a sign of friendship.

In any case, we finished talking.

We moved away from the back of the school.

Although some gossip as a result of this incident damaged my reputation a bit.

Well, it's not like it's a big problem.

I'm the type that doesn't particularly care about rumors.

When the three of us left, we saw a group lined up outside of the school building.

It's the freshmen.

They're probably lined up to retrieve their panties.

We went around them so they wouldn't notice us..

Walking past the end of the line was Norn.

"...!"

Norn looked at me, then at Rinia and Pursena beside me.

Then, with an expression like [I don't believe this!], glared at me with all her might as she passed by.

"What's with that first year, acting so mighty nya."

"Fakku nano. Let's show her that she needs to respect her elders."

"I'll say this right now, that was my sister."

Just when I said that.

Both their ears drooped.

"W, well, it's good that she's energetic nya."

"She's quite cute nano."

They're so easy to understand.

I pat both of them on the shoulder.

"Well, please get along with her, okay?"

"Of course nya."

"We won't do anything bad nano."

However, though I wanted to talk with Norn, how should I go about that?

Well, even if I can't, I hope there won't be any problems later on.

—

And so, the days passed by without incident.

I hadn't gotten along any better with Norn.

But, she kept her promise to show up at home every ten days.

Although she hates me, she obediently listens to what I say.

I thought she would be more rebellious, but at least she wasn't opposed to meeting face-to-face.

Even though she doesn't look like she wants to.

Hmm...

If I think about it, apart from when they were too young to remember, I've met them only once.

It's probably a mistake to think that we could just suddenly get along as brother and sister.

My relationship with Aisha is rather strange.

Just because we're family doesn't mean we can get along unconditionally.

I understand that all too well.

Rather, it's because we're family that there are things that couldn't be forgiven.

Like the time when I beat up Paul in front of Norn.

Me and Paul have reconciled our differences.

However, from Norn's perspective, that is something that still could not be forgiven.

...If.

If she brings up that matter, I'll apologize.

I'd apologize and explain what happened honestly, but bringing something up from that long ago is no good.

Well, there's no need to rush.

We'll be together for many years.

Over a year or two, we'll slowly get along.

As siblings it's not like we need to be attached to each other.

We'll get along slowly, while being aware of our distance.

Closing the distance will take time.

While I was thinking that.

Norn became a shut-in.

When I went to school with Sylphy,

I learned that Norn became a shut-in.

The ones who told me were Rinia and Pursena.

They waited at the school's front gate first thing in the morning.

They told me that ever since yesterday, Norn secluded herself in her own dorm room and wouldn't come out.

"...I'll go see her!"

When she heard that, Sylphy quickly headed towards the female dormitory.

When I heard that, I stopped moving.

Even though I could've gone with Sylphy.

The fact that 'Norn became a shut-in' made me lose my wits.

To me, becoming a shut-in has a heavy meaning.

"Boss...shouldn't you go nya?"

"Are you going to leave her alone nano?"

I was overcome by this turn of events.

What is there to do? What is there that I could do?

I don't know.

During my life, I never came out when I was a shut-in.

Why?

Because outside was full of enemies.

If I went to school, I would be bullied again.

Yes.

It must be bullying.

Even if a shut-in was to go outside, she'll just suffer.

In that case, I need to get rid of the source.

Instead of meeting up with Norn, I need to get rid of the reason why Norn became a shut-in.

I instantly started thinking.

Reason.

The first and foremost was that she's being bullied.

My memories of that time were clear as day.

The cafeteria at high school.

Waiting in line for 5 minutes and then, when I thought it was finally my turn, some scary looking delinquents cut in front of me.

I told them off with my stupid sense of justice.

The delinquents acted dumb, saying [Huh? Like I care.]

Then I raised my voice, so that other people around could hear me, as I spread word of what they did.

People then started looking our way.

I became proud that my sense of justice was asserted.

Then, I got beaten to a pulp.

I was beaten to the point where I couldn't stand up again.

After that incident everyday life was hell.

If Norn is experiencing that same kind of hell, I wish to rescue her from there.

I'll beat those misfits down and give her a place to belong.

I'll fight those who would protect the delinquents.

I don't care if they are nobles or royalty.

I'll fight them with all my strength.

I'll make them regret making me fight seriously.

Even if Norn's actions or words started it.

In this world there are those who do good and those who do bad.

Norn is my sister.

Even though she hates me, even though she hates Aisha, and even though she can't stomach our present situation...

She's my sister.

An elder brother is someone that must protect his younger brothers and sisters.

An elder brother must not abandon them.

I took along Rinia and Pursena, and headed towards the freshman classrooms.

Though it would have sufficed to go alone, I do not have any confidence in my own appearance.

If I am with Rinia and Pursena, no one will make light of me.

"Boss..."

"Rinia, stop, he's really angry, it's scary."

The two had some doubts towards my course of action.

It's not like I don't know.

Even I am aware these actions are unbecoming of me.

It's not like I don't understand the feelings of concern from those around me.

But, right now, I am an overprotective parent.

I will throw away my shame.

In the first-year classrooms, I arrived at the room that Norn attends.

It seems homeroom has already begun.

"Excuse me."

I opened the door, and boldly went inside.

"Ru, Rudeus... We're in the middle of class."

"I wish to borrow a bit of your time. Is that fine?"

"But..."

"I said, is that fine?"

I brushed aside the teacher, and stood in front of the podium.

I surveyed the classroom.

Everybody had puzzled expressions.

Surely among them were those that bullied Norn.

Did they punch her, did they kick her?

They might also have verbally abused her.

I came here to tear the person who hurt Norn limb from limb.

"Everybody, you may know this already, but there was a person who didn't attend yesterday's class."

"..."

"Everybody, whether or not you are aware of it, she is my sister."

The classroom was murmuring.

"While I have not heard the circumstances from her, there are not many reasons for her to skip school. Like a reason where she doesn't want to come to school. A person here has given her such a reason. That's what I believe."

I looked around the classroom as I said that.

Upon meeting my eyes, many of them turned away.

Even though we're wearing the same uniforms, I'm rather intimidating.

Suspicious. It must be her.

She's the first suspect.

Though I can't remember her name.

Could it be...?

No, it's still too early to tell.

"To those responsible, I am not asking for much. Perhaps there was a misunderstanding. Or perhaps my sister was in the wrong."

I kept a watchful eye on the classroom.

Who was it, who was it that did something so cruel?

Is it her? That noble that looks like bonbon?

Or is it her? That Magic Race fellow with an evil face?

No, those normal looking groups of girls are suspicious.

Those who bully look like normal children at a glance after all.

"If possible, please name yourself. I will not be angry. I only want to know why my sister was hurt, and for you to apologize."

Once they name themselves, I'll tear them apart.

There are a few the same age as Norn here.

However most of the class is older.

Some of them are over 15.

Did they pretend they didn't see anything? Or did they participate in the bullying?

Against a ten year old child?

"..."

Nobody said anything.

They were taken aback in astonishment and just looked at me.

"Uh, um..."

A girl nervously raised her hand.

I reflexively wanted to hit her with a rock bullet, but I restrained myself.

It was a very timid looking girl.

She seems to be about 13. A raccoon-type from the Beast Race.

She had a short bob, looked somewhat slow-headed, and chubby.

In fact, she seems like a person that would be bullied.

"D, during that time, I talked with Norn-chan..."

"Did you say something bad by mistake?"

If it was just a quarrel, then it can't be helped.

"N, no, um, I, I know about Rudeus-san. But, Norn-chan is a normal girl. That's why, when I said she's totally different from her brother, she got really angry..."

Angry?

When Norn was told she was different from me?

What's up with this?

"Ah."

Suddenly, the teacher next to me spoke up.

I looked at her.

She was a middle-aged teacher.

Don't tell me, did she say something?

Bullying does not only occur between children.

It's possible that the teacher may have been leading it.

"Do you remember anything, teacher?"

"The other day, Norn-san turned in some homework..."

"You gave out a lot of homework, and since she wasn't able to finish it in time you made her stand in the staff room naked?"

"N, no way! Just that, her grades were somewhat bad, so I told her to be more diligent like her brother."

"..."

"Then, with a face that's about to cry, she said [I'll do my best.]"

Huh?

She wanted to cry?

"Come to think of it. I too..."

After the teacher finished, other people in the classroom also spoke up.

We left the classroom and went to the cafeteria.

Since classes are in session the cafeteria is deserted.

I sat somewhere and buried my face on the table.

I was slightly overwhelmed.

It was all my fault.

Norn was being compared to me and wanted to cry.

The students in that classroom realized that Norn and I were brother and sister.

Of course.

Unlike Aisha, Norn and I come from the same father and mother.

Our faces are quite similar.

And Norn hates being associated with me.

Of course she would also hate being compared to me while my name was being praised.

Ah, of course, they were not in the wrong.

At the very least, it wasn't like they were making comparisons with ill intent.

There were those who were close enough to her to say those things.

That she was different from that infamous leader of misfits.

However, I am a celebrity in this school.

And, being famous, it was easy for people to make comparisons.

However, for Norn, that comparison was painful.

Even at their previous school, she was always being compared to Aisha.

She must have built up a lot of stress from constantly being compared to her sister.

Entering a new school, living in the dorms.

She was finally able to separate from Aisha.

Or so she thought, but now she's being compared to me.

No matter where she goes, she sees herself as the inferior sibling.

It must be painful for her.

Not to mention that incident with the panties.

None of the freshman involved in that incident were scarred by it.

Thanks to Ariel's follow up it merely became a funny story.

Although there were originally rumors that they were coerced into stripping, it was actually a cheerful spectacle of Rinia trading them new panties.

That was what Ariel reported to those watching from the sidelines who thought there was extortion going on.

I left the follow up to Ariel.

She had the ability to do so.

Even so, Norn must have received an indescribable shock.

That such a pervert was above her.

"Haa..."

What am I even doing?

Getting ahead of myself, going to the classroom.

Saying all those things.

What kind of overprotective parent am I?

Wasn't I just a big idiot?

"Thank you, both of you. It seems I am an idiot."

For now, I thanked them.

They were following an idiot.

I had made them do such useless things.

"You're not an idiot for acting on your sister's behalf nya."

"But that was surprising. I've got a better opinion of you now nano."

I made a cup, and poured water into it.

Then drank.

There was no taste.

But it managed to help me relax a bit.

"Hey, Boss. What will you do now nya?"

"There's nothing I can do. It's my fault that she became a shut-in."

She shut herself in.

Yes, she's confined herself.

Although it's only been one day.

She has shut herself in.

"We must make her attend class by force nano."

"That's right nya."

"If she doesn't come out she'll become a moron nano."

"Right nya, Right nya."

"She'll become a moron like Rinia."

"It's as Pursena says nya...What!?"

I have no time for this comedy duo.

I understand the difficulties of a shut-in.

It's not like anybody likes to decide that they don't want to leave their room.

To not come out, there's a reason that makes them not come out.

Even if you forced them to come out, nothing will be resolved.

It'll just make the situation worse.

Even so, remaining as a shut-in is no good.

She'll definitely regret it.

After a month or two she'll realize that time has been permanently lost.

Since I'm the one saying this, I can't be wrong.

But even if I explained it, she won't understand.

The regret that you can't return is something you can only see in hindsight.

If she becomes a shut in for one year, or ten years, no regrets will form.

And then, when she does begin to regret, it will be too late.

That's why parents are always making their children do their best.

Because they will more or less regret it.

"As siblings, as one with the lowest ability, what can she do when other people say things like that?"

When I asked Rinia and Pursena, they just shrugged.

"...I'm not an idiot so I don't understand nya."

"We do reasonably well nano."

Come to think of it, these guys were idiots and not leadership material, so they were sent here.

The patriarch probably told them to study and be suitable leaders.

Though they are idiots, if they're that optimistic then it's not a problem, I guess.

However, Norn is very naïve.

I'll be troubled to lump her together with them.

"Ah, but, there's one other thing nya."

Rinia proudly boasted that name.

"Aunt Ghyslaine was a violent person that couldn't do anything well, but when she began swordsmenship she became a Sword King nya."

"Ah...I see."

Ghyslaine was a bit of an exception.

However, it was probably an unexpected talent that she had.

To begin with there's no need for her and Aisha to do the same thing.

If you don't want to be compared, just do things that can't be compared.

Though I can't think of anything for her to do.

However, the world is big.

Be it magic, or swordsmanship, one can discover anything.

Or perhaps she can find a passion for something despite having no talent.

Like Zanoba.

Even though Zanoba has no talent in making dolls, he happily appreciates them each day.

Creating dolls, viewing them, loving them, and even collecting them.

That is enough for him to live happily.

Living happily like that is fine.

However if I said that, she wouldn't accept it.

If it was me, I wouldn't accept it.

"Be as it may, what can I say?"

"There's no need to think about it so hard nya. Just say it straight out nya."

"That's right. Tell her to come right out and take classes."

You guys can say it so easily.

But, if that's the case...

Is it because I'm overthinking this?

Norn is only ten years old.

She might just be throwing a tantrum.

In the first place, even though she's still shut-in, it's only been a day, and this is only day two.

If it's only to that extent, rather than being a shut-in, isn't she merely secluding herself?

Anybody would seclude themselves when they feel down.

It's not about talking.

It's not about taking action.

Thinking about it, isn't this just running away?

As a brother I should support her and make her life as comfortable as possible.

If this is what she wants to do, then isn't it alright?

Isn't it alright to have some gloomy thoughts?

But Norn isn't old enough to be considered a middle schooler or high schooler, she's still an elementary third grader.

"Alright, let's meet with her."

Before I realized, I had already decided.

"Then that's good nya."

"A quick slap to the face is good nano."

Though I said to meet, will she listen to what I say?

I was the cause.

I can't think of anything to say.

No, I won't think of it right now, but I should say something when I meet her.

"How can I meet with her?"

Norn was in the female dorms.

Even if I ask at the front of the dorms, I will probably won't be allowed to go in.

"We'll just enter by force nya."

"We'll sneak in nano. Let us guide you."

Rinia and Pursena thumped their big chests.

Infiltrating.

Though, it wasn't all that difficult.

I have a lot of allies on my side.

Sylphy and Princess Ariel were here too.

When I told Ariel about the situation she willingly became an ally.

Even so, aside from Goriade, the girls' dormitory vigilante patrols were not sympathetic to my cause, so we had snuck in.

The spies were Rinia, Pursena, and Sylphy.

Sylphy was downtrodden.

"Sorry, even though I told you to leave it to me with Norn-chan in the dorms...I hadn't asked her anything..."

"No, it's not your fault Sylphy, I am the one to blame."

I explained to Sylphy what happened.

That it was my fault that Norn became a shut in.

Sylphy had a dark face, and shook her head.

"It's not Rudi's fault."

"But, I..."

I had...

No, I hadn't done anything.

What I should do, I don't know.

But, I must do something.

Night time.

I headed over to the girls' dorm during dinnertime.

Currently, a majority of the female students are at the cafeteria.

Ariel is making a speech there.

In order to hear her, people have gathered there to listen.

However, it wasn't everybody.

The cafeteria can't hold that many people after all.

Even so, as a plan to draw out the vigilante patrols as much as possible, it was successful.

I moved as close as I can to the entry point that we established.

The window frame is decorated with one flower.

I moved towards that window, then threw a small pebble from below.

When the pebble hit the window frame, the window quickly opened.

I used my Earth Magic <Earth Spear>, lifted myself with it, and quickly went in.

At the same time, I released the earth spear, and it returned to the ground.

The moment I entered the room my nose was filled with the smell of an animal.

Though it smells, it's not a smell that I am revolted by.

That is to say, it's the smell of beast girl going through puberty.

As living beings, it's a smell that males are tolerant with.

"Good work."

"Welcome nya."

Rinia welcomed me.

Her eyes were glittering in the darkness.

Those were cat eyes.

I surveyed my surroundings.

Fundamentally, it's the same as any other room.

A double-bunk bed, a desk and chair, a closet.

Although it was dark, I can see things are scattered around.

"Please don't stare at me like that nya, it's embarassing."

"Pardon me."

In the darkness, I fumbled around for the exit.

My hand felt something.

The material felt quite soft.

"Ah, that's Pursena's bra."

"..."

Pursena wears this size?

It's big.

"Hmm, it's ok if you bring that along, you know?"

"No it isn't."

I threw Pursena's brassiere away.

Normally I would take this chance to sniff it, but I don't have time for that right now.

Rinia knocked on her door from the inside.

A knock was returned.

"It's okay now."

At the same time she said that, she opened the door and I dove into the cart that was prepared for me.

It was a cart used to carry laundry.

I slipped into the sheets covering it.

I understood from the smell.

These are sheets that Sylphy uses.

In order to hide me completely, it was packed with blankets, shirts, and underwear.

All of them belonged to Sylphy.

However, for some mysterious reason, I wasn't excited at all.

It's about Norn right now.

Currently, Norn must be feeling quite bitter.

Being a shut in, secluding herself, being alone.

I must save her.

As her elder brother I must save her.

"Alright, let's go nya."

The cart began to move.

In the meantime, I thought about Norn.

It's fine if it's just a child's temper tantrum.

However, if it was something far more deeply rooted...

I wonder if I can do anything.

At the least, before my brothers drove me out, I never left the house.

Now, in a position of an elder brother or parent, I could not think of a way to make her come out.

"We've arrived nya."

Before I could collect my thoughts,

the cart already arrived at its destination.

It's Norn's room.

I went inside.

It's dark.

The lights weren't on.

I lit up a candle that was in the corner of the room.

The light dimly illuminated the place, and I saw a girl sitting on the bed hugging her legs.

Within the darkness, a pair of eyes were seen.

Norn just sat there, and stared at me.

"..."

I walked cautiously, and sat on a chair.

In times like this, what should I say?

What can I say that would make her listen?

I do not know.

The things I thought I wanted to say were all blown away.

The only thing I remember was that she'll hate it if I said those words.

It was not something that I could easily say.

At the very least, it's forbidden to talk without first listening to her.

<Go to school.>

<Who do you think is paying for you?>

<Don't cause trouble for others.>

Those words would have an opposite effect.

Like Rinia and Pursena said, it might be good to hit her once.

Norn is still ten, and she might even listen to me.

However, that won't solve anything.

Perhaps, in the near future, something like this will happen again.

And at that time Norn will become even more stubborn.

In the first place, the cause of her becoming a shut-in was me.

What kind of face should I make when saying that?

Should I hit my arrogant face when I say that?

Then, should I apologize first after all?

But if I apologize, would that solve anything?

Rumors of me won't go away, and Norn will still be compared to me.

"Norn."

"Nii-san."

Our voices were strained.

I wanted to listen to Norn's words, and kept my mouth shut and stayed silent.

Norn too, also kept her mouth shut.

It felt like a once in a lifetime chance went away.

I decided to speak up first.

"Norn. I'm sorry. It's been painful ever since you came here, right?"

Norn didn't say anything.

"Even though you just entered into a new school, but because of me, all of this happened. I don't know what to say..."

Norn didn't say anything.

"I, didn't know what you were going through..."

Norn didn't say anything.

I didn't know what else to say.

Even though I was thinking of various things to say before I came here.

In the first place, I didn't know a single thing about Norn.

Being distant, being unfeeling, I did not even try to learn about her.

"...Even though things became like this, I don't know what to do."

Norn kept silent.

I don't know what she was thinking.

Nor do I know whether or not she was listening to me.

So it's no good after all?

Should I leave her as is until Paul returns?

Yes.

That's right.

I should withdraw for now and consult with various people.

If I ask Nanahoshi for her opinion, since she's similar to Norn, I might learn something.

If it's Elinalise, then she might be able to draw Norn out.

It's not like I have to take it upon myself to solve this.

"...Ah."

Suddenly, I remembered my past.

When I was a shut-in, I remembered when my older brother came to my room.

During that time, he faced me and made logical arguments that hit close to home.

I had spit on that from the depths of my heart.

Even so my older brother stayed with me for a while.

Looking at me, with his eyes that wanted to convey something.

Thinking that he didn't understand my feelings I rejected him to the very end.

...So this is how my elder brother felt.

Me, who didn't react to anything, and my elder brother who was silent.

I don't know how many hours my brother was there until he left.

From then on my elder brother never contacted me again.

After that, I didn't know what my elder brother thought.

However even though he no longer came, many others did.

Perhaps that was his way of trying to help me out.

In the end, I didn't even lend an ear to what the others have said.

...Perhaps.

If I leave here, I won't be able to come back.

Norn will also remain a shut-in.

I must not leave here.

Within this dimly lit room, I continued to wait for her.

–Norn's POV–

I wonder when I started to become afraid of my brother.

At the very least, it wasn't like that at the beginning.

When I first met him, brother was hitting my father.

I loved my father.

Although he was useless in many aspects, I knew that he loved me with all of his heart.

Even if it wasn't like that, as a five year old child, he was a father that I loved without a doubt.

My brother punched that kind of father.

Appearing all of a sudden, and then punching my father.

I didn't understand the conversation at that time.

Even though I now understand that my brother had a lot of hardships before he finally met with father,

I also knew father made a fool of him and got into a fight with him.

These things were unrelated to me at that time.

My brother hit my father.

When I saw him on top of father pummeling him,

I thought that my father would be killed.

Then, I came to a conclusion. The one and only truth for me at that time.

This person, I could not recognize him as family.

It wasn't from fear.

It was from hatred.

The feelings of hatred continued long after.

Because everybody was praising my brother.

Naturally from father, and then from my little sister and the maid that I met after as well.

The more they praised my brother, the bigger that stubborn part in me grew.

Like my brother, I hated my little sister.

At the school that we went to, she was my rival in everything.

Be it studying or physical exercises.

And then, excelling in everything, she looked down on me.

I had thought that we will never get along.

I was tormented by my inferiority complex.

The one who didn't approve of this was my grandmother.

At the same time that she was despising my non-blood-related little sister, she held excessive expectations for me.

No, perhaps it wasn't expectations.

It was just what my grandmother said.

"As a lady from the House of Latreia, you must possess talent that won't shame us."

And then I was forced to study etiquette and detailed ceremonies.

I wasn't able to do them well, and each time I failed, she got angry.

Each time, my grandmother would say:

"If you become enthralled by an adventurer, you will muddy our blood."

I knew immediately that she was talking about my father and mother.

My grandmother despised my father who worked with all of his might.

I then hated my grandmother.

That's why, when a person calling herself my brother's Shisho came and and revealed my mother's whereabouts, rather than stay with grandmother I decided to follow my father.

Yes. My father was at a loss.

He wondered if he should leave me with my grandparents.

My mother inherited the blood of Milis nobles, and my father descended directly from Asura nobles.

There were no problems with my lineage.

My grandparents seemed to have wanted to welcome me into their household.

But, I hated that.

That's why I begged father, I clung to him in tears and followed him.

And yet.

And yet, my father sent me away to my brother's place.

He said that it would be dangerous from here on.

He said that my brother had prepared a base up north, so I should wait for him there.

He said that once he finds my mother, he will definitely catch up later.

I cried.

I said I hated it. I cried that I wanted to be where my mother was.

I thought that I must not separate from my father no matter what.

If Ruijerd-san hadn't appeared there, I might have been together with my father.

And then, I would have gotten sick at the Begaritto Continent, and become an inconvenience for my father.

Ruijerd-san.

I remember him quite well.

The first time I met him, was on the same day I met my brother.

He gave a helping hand to me who looked like I was about to collapse.

He patted my head with gentle hands.

He gave me an apple.

At that time, I didn't know his name.

After learning that he was a guard for my brother, I didn't ask for his name.

Nothing about him changed since that time, he patted my head, and persuaded me gently.

And thus, it became that I headed towards my brother's place.

When we began our trip, my little sister was in excessively high spirits.

She threw off her the mask that she never took off in front of father and her mother, and took on the mask of a leader, then made unreasonable plans one after another.

She was doing foolish things was what I thought.

That there's no meaning being this enthusiastic when there were two grown-ups here.

That's what I had thought.

But, Ruijerd-san and Ginger-san, obeyed my little sister.

I thought it was unfair.

They went along with my little sister's demands, yet they don't go with what I say.

However, since Ruijerd-san was attentive towards me, I was able to bear it.

He was always watching over me.

But, even he was praising my brother.

Saying that he was an amazing person.

That he was looking forward to seeing him.

Even though he rarely smiled, he was saying that while smiling.

I was sure that my brother that I knew, and my brother that he knows were different.

That's what I had thought.

Ahh.

That being the case, it must've been during this time.

I started to become afraid of my brother.

My brother is strong.

Everybody says that he was a person to be respected.

However, the brother within my heart, was a brother who hit and beat down my father.

Perhaps.

And maybe perhaps.

Would my brother also hit me as well?

If I said something that he couldn't stomach, would I get hit?

I became afraid of meeting him.

To be living under him for who knows how long made me afraid.

I was anxious and couldn't sleep, and I woke up in the middle of the night many times.

Each time, Ruijerd-san would console me.

He would place me on his lap, then he would tell me stories from the past while looking at the night sky.

There were many sad stories, but for some reason I was able to relax and sleep peacefully.

—

When we finally met again, my brother was drunk and had a woman beside him.

That person was a childhood friend of his from Buina Village, and he had married her.

I did not remember this person at all.

Though I remember vaguely that there was a person that stuck close to my little sister and her mother.

I had thought that she wasn't that type of person.

I thought that she would be something else. I felt that something was different.

My brother seemed happy.

When I saw that, my feelings of hatred began to well up within me.

My father did not lay his hands on any woman.

He said he was postponing that until he found my mother.

He never laid hands on my little sister's mother, nor did he lay hands on that woman who was always with him.

And yet.

And yet, my brother was a hypocrite.

I was filled with hatred.

But, I couldn't say anything.

Because I was afraid.

If, I said something, I thought I would get hit.

If my brother hit me, Ruijerd-san might have gotten angry.

When Ruijerd-san met my brother he seemed very happy.

Perhaps, he wouldn't get angry at all.

Perhaps instead he would get angry at me.

That he would tell me not to be selfish.

I couldn't say anything.

And then, that next day, Ruijerd-san left.

I thought that he would be with us forever.

I had thought that I didn't want him to disappear.

But, he left.

I became even more afraid.

In the house, my brother, my little sister, my brother's wife were there.

My little sister was in high spirits meeting my brother.

I thought that my brother's wife was a gentle person.

But, she was not my ally.

In this house, I had no allies.

Until my father came back, I had no choice but to live here in fear.

My little sister was affectionate towards my brother.

I was certainly not like that.

My little sister was pampered, and I was told to work harder.

My little sister said that I wasn't able to do things because I don't put effort into them.

But things that can't be done, can't be done.

No matter how well I do, no matter how hard I practised, I was no match for my little sister.

What was I supposed to do?

To make sure they wouldn't get angry with me, to make sure I wouldn't be compared to my sister, I lived like I was in hiding.

I was afraid of being thrown out of the house into the snow.

At my brother's words, I went to school.

Different than the school I went to in Milshion, it was a little special.

Even though we were in the same grade, rather than children close to my age, there were people of all ages studying.

Honestly, I didn't want to go.

In the end, I would be compared to my little sister again.

However, it seemed that my blessed sister had no intentions of going to school.

To me, that was a bright light of hope.

If my little sister isn't there, perhaps I could work diligently.

That's what I had thought.

My brother faced my little sister, and gave her a condition.

There was an exam.

In order to enter school, an exam was necessary.

I was to take it as well.

I was in despair.

Even if I took the exam, I would certainly not get a passing grade.

When I told him that, my brother said he would sort it out with money.

Hearing something that insensitive, I accidentally raised my voice.

My little sister got mad, and we fought.

"Stop it."

With my brother's cold voice resonating through the room, my fear of him grew.

I thought that I would get hit.

I was scared.

I was in tears.

That from now on I had no choice but to always live in fear of him.

On the day of the exam.

I heard about the dorms from my brother.

Students would leave their homes and live independently.

It seems there were facilities such as this in this school.

That's what I had thought.

My little sister would definitely pass the exam.

Then, she won't go to school.

If I were to live in the dorms, I would not have to face my brother.

I would not be compared to anybody, and would be able to live freely.

When I thought about that, I thought that would be the best outcome.

A few days later, the examination results came back.

My brother asked me what I wanted to do.

I timidly suggested, "I want to try living in the dorms."

I thought that he might get angry.

My father had said for me to live with my brother.

The letter that my brother received should have said the same thing.

That's why I thought he might get angry and tell me not to be selfish, and hit me.

But, that my brother had so easily given permission was beyond my imagination.

The one who got angry was my little sister.

My little sister shouted that was unfair, that it was favoritism.

She was always treated more favorably than I was until now,

And was unable to stomach that only she was asked to try taking the exam.

But, why did my brother give his permission?

I don't know.

I don't understand my brother.

Thinking about it, aside from the time I got into a fight with my little sister, he didn't get angry even once.

...Perhaps, my brother had no interest in my affairs.

Thinking that it would be a bother to take care of me in the house, he probably threw me out into the dorms.

Even if I hadn't suggested it, I probably would have ended up in the dorms regardless.

When I thought that, for some reason I felt sad.

Even though this outcome was convenient for me.

—

Everything felt fresh living at the dormitory.

First, my roommate was fresh.

Melissa-sempai was from the Magic Race.

My grandmother said that the Magic Race were evil.

I was taught that the Magic Race were existences that should be rejected, and an evil that must be destroyed.

If I had not met Ruijerd-san, I would definitely have thought so up to now.

That's why, when I met Melissa-sempai, I understood that I should have a courteous attitude towards her.

To me who was able to greet her properly, Melissa-sempai welcomed me.

She warmly received me, who had entered in the middle of the term, and helped me with many things.

Things like how to eat our meals, how to use the restrooms, what the dorm rules were.

Everything was taught by Melissa-sempai.

The Senpai from the vigilante corps said that everybody living in the dorm was family and that we should all get along.

She was a person from a scary looking race, but had a strong sense of responsibility.

My heart leapt in joy at this lifestyle I will have from now on.

While it's a pain to have to show my face at my brother's house every ten days,

My brother wasn't going to ask in detail about my school life, so I felt relieved.

My life at the dorm began.

First, the classes were difficult.

I think it was because the way of teaching was different than the school in Milis.

While it may have been different if I learnt things from the beginning, since I came in the middle, there were many things that I didn't understand.

Although there were religious classes in Milis, Ranoa had none, and instead it had magic classes.

Since this class also wasn't from the beginning, I was not very good at it.

If my grades were bad, I would perhaps be forced to move back into the house.

Thinking that, I studied even harder to stay in the dorms.

For parts that I was at a loss with and couldn't understand, Melissa-senpai kindly taught me.

Then for the first time I began to understand the parts of the classes that I had missed.

Surely my little sister would have understood immediately.

I was fed up with my lack of power of comprehension.

The school grounds were big as well, and I got lost many times.

Especially for physical and magical classes that the Milis schools don't have, I was perplexed as to where the classrooms were.

Each time a person from class would come search for me, or a senpai or teacher I don't know will assist me.

I also saw my brother once.

At that time, being seen with my brother who was the greatest person at the school, I felt ashamed.

My brother was feared in the school.

It seemed he would take along six of his henchmen and do whatever he liked.

Among them were two people that acted pridefully in the dorms.

Even Melissa-senpai warned me that I was better off not to defy them.

It seems that my brother used those two to gather panties from cute girls.

Does my brother's wife know about this?

She may not know.

Although I don't know what he planned on doing with those panties he gathered, even though my father was suffering at this time, my brother was playing around like this.

I was filled with hatred.

I disdained him.

However, even though he does these things, despite my expectations, my brother's reputation was good.

He isn't violent towards regular students, and even though he did what he liked, it seems he did not make anybody unhappy.

On the contrary, it seems he told the school's delinquents not to bully the weak.

The scary child in my class was talking proudly about my brother.

He was better at magic than anybody, and his teaching methods were great.

And it seems that he taught someone much smaller than me as well.

My classmates, Melissa-senpai, even my teacher.

They all said to become like my brother.

That I should aim to become like him.

I didn't understand what they were thinking.

To become like my brother that I feared, hated, and scorned.

I didn't want to be like him.

But, more than that, I was frustrated.

My brother, like my little sister, was above me in everything.

He was an existence that I could not hope to reach no matter how much effort I put in.

Even though I hated him.

Even though I disdained him.

But,I was an existence that was lower than even him.

—

That day.

I went back to the dorms, and fell on the bed.

Various emotions were jumbled up inside me.

Bitterness. Sadness. Helplessness. Anger.

My feelings became tears that overflowed.

After a while, Melissa-senpai came back.

She kindly asked me, who was crying, what was wrong.

I rejected her, saying nothing was wrong, and covered myself with my blanket.

What is it that I should do?

Is my attitude towards my brother a mistake?

...I see.

Maybe my brother was not a person that I had first imagined him to be.

That day, the day when my brother hit my father.

I was very young.

After that, no matter how many times my father said, "Your brother also had it tough," I was unable to understand.

But right now, especially right now, I was able to understand a little of how he felt.

Because, right now, it's painful.

Being here, doing my best, doing things to my utmost effort.

Being full of energy, and then being told, [You were just playing around without a care, right?]

Even I would have become angry.

Even if it was my father, we would have gotten into a fight.

But, that being the case.

What kind of face should I show to my brother?

What did my brother want me to do?

How did my brother and my father make up?

Think.

Think.

My stomach was in pain.

As if the area below my chest was squeezing tightly.

I became nauseous.

I passed the time curled in bed.

I couldn't do anything.

Just merely facing my brother, I couldn't do it.

In times like these, it was always my father that came to the rescue.

Whenever I curled in bed from hateful things, my father would come and gently comfort me.

When I separated from my father, it was Ruijerd.

He would place me on his lap, and while patting my head, he would talk about various things.

Here, I have nobody.

Melissa-senpai had helped me a lot.

However, she's not an ally.

[Let's go see your brother], or [You should show up in class.]

She was saying those things.

I understand them.

But my body refuses to move.

—

I wonder how long it has been since I became troubled.

Thinking, getting tired, then sleeping.

While repeating these actions, it felt like many days have passed.

I sat at the end of the bed.

When I realized, I saw my brother in front of me.

He sat on a chair, his elbows on the backrest.

Then he looked fixedly at me.

"Norn."

"Brother."

For the first time, it felt like I called my brother "Brother".

{ C-Editor's note: Up until this point in Norn's inner monologue, she had been referring to Rudeus as Ani, a more polite way of saying older brother in Japanese, rather than the more affectionate Nii-san which means big brother. }

Many things came into my head.

This didn't seem like an illusion.

This is the girl's dormitory.

Why is he here?

I was confused.

My brother was fixing his gaze at me who was confused.

We looked at each other for a while.

Like this, it may have been the first time I truly looked at my brother's face.

It was a face of anxiety.

It looked a lot like my father.

A face that gave me a peace of mind.

Of course, since they're father and son.

"Norn. I'm sorry. It's been painful ever since you came here, right?"

My brother opened his mouth quietly.

"I, didn't know what you were going through. Even though things became like this, I don't know what to do."

My brother was saying these things with an uneasy face.

A figure that looked exactly like my father.

"..."

And since then, my brother did not move at all.

He looked at me uneasily.

But, he never moved from his seat.

If it was my father, he would hug me without restraint,

And if it was Ruijerd-san, I would likely be patted on the head.

However, my brother does not approach me.

"Ah..."

For some reason.

I understood.

He couldn't approach me.

He was scared of being rejected by me.

When I thought that, the feelings inside me mysteriously cleared up.

The feelings of hatred and fear towards my brother never gushed forth.

I no longer felt afraid.

My brother was just like my father.

My brother, would definitely not hit me.

And surely, he would never again hit my father.

"...Uuu..."

I have to forgive my brother.

"U...hic..."

Before I realized, tears were welling up and dropping

My throat trembled, and I began to cry.

"I'm sorry, brother...I'm sorry."

My brother timidly came up and sat next to me.

Then, gently, he placed his hand on top of my head, then hugged me close.

My brother's hand was warm, and his chest was big and tough.

And, he smelled just like my father.

On that day, I cried in my brother's arms all through the night.

— Rudeus's POV —

In the end, I couldn't do anything.

She wouldn't say anything to me.

What she was unsatisfied about, or what she was troubled by.

I did not understand her true feelings.

Norn just kept crying.

When she finished crying, she just silently said "I'm fine now".

Her face seemed refreshed contrary to what I imagined.

She looked into my eyes.

Deeply and directly.

When I saw that, I felt relieved somehow.

I thought that everything will be fine.

That's why I left Sylphy to take care of the rest, and left the room.

—

The next day, Norn became cheerful again.

It wasn't a noticeable change.

When she sees me in the hallway, she'll at least say, [Brother, good morning.]

She doesn't converse much, nor does she carelessly cling onto me.

Compared to me, who hasn't changed one bit in this situation, it seems that Norn no longer minded that at all.

I couldn't understand her.

I couldn't say anything, and couldn't do anything.

It was disappointing.

I had thought that I could understand the feelings of a shut-in or a person that couldn't do anything.

But when facing the real thing, I became like this.

Probably,

And just probably,

Norn had probably sorted out her own feelings.

And from sorting her own feelings, she overcame this situation.

She's an amazing girl.

Paul and Aisha might have thought that Norn wasn't particularly good at doing anything.

However, I didn't think that.

At the very least, in my past life, she did something I wasn't able to do.

If, in my past life, I was able to sort out my feelings like Norn,

Would things have changed?

Would I have been able to avoid that future where my gentle elder brother hit me?

I don't know.

I don't know about events in the past.

It's different than the situation between me and Norn.

Even if I did sort out my feelings, I don't know if I could have headed outside.

Reincarnating to a different world, if I hadn't met Roxy, I would surely have remained a shut-in.

In the first place, I can't go back after all this time.

The past won't change.

My soured relationship with that family won't go back to normal.

My elder brother's intentions will remain lost in the dark.

...However, it felt that something that prevented me from speaking clearly has been taken away.

If, Nanahoshi ever manages to go back to our original world,

At that time, I wish to send my older brother a message.

Thank you for worrying about me at the time, and I am very sorry.

One year has passed.

The seasons are changing, it's become a warm season.

It's the second summer since I came to this city.

It's not hot enough to call it summer, but the people have started to wear much lighter clothes.

The outfits of the female students at school and Aisha's maid outfit have become short sleeved as well, it's a treat for the eyes.

Sylphy is often wearing sleeveless shirts around the house as well.

She didn't have such plain clothes before, but recently it seems she's been buying them for my sake.

A Sylphy with lots of exposure. It's truly fresh.

After looking at Sylphy's short build and white shoulders, I start to feel like spontaneously embracing her from behind.

It's a good season.

This country doesn't have any black insects that come home and stay without notice after all.

{ C-Editor's note: Japanese centipede also called Mukade. }

Speaking of black, recently I haven't seen Badigadi.

I wonder where that guy went.

Well then, in one month there have been a variety of changes going on.

First, Norn has made some friends.

It's not just a man, she's been involved with girls from a different class as well, I've caught sight of her moving around in a group of about two guys and three girls.

A girl about 10 years old is speaking girlishly with giggles.

Regarding Norn, they are her first friends.

As her older brother, I'd like to at least greet them once.

Which is why, I told her to at least bring them to see me once, but Norn refused.

It seems it's a bit embarrassing to let her friends meet her family.

In any case, it seems that nothing has become strange because I marched into her classroom.

I'm a bit relieved.

The relationship between Norn and I is going favorably.

The most conspicuous point in that regard, the other day, she asked me to help with her studies.

I was enthusiastic over that proposal.

I thought that I would instruct her on all of my secret techniques.

But, I considered that if I'm too enthusiastic, Aisha will most likely get angry.

We made it so that after school, I would teach her in the library.

In terms of time, it's for about one hour.

She reviews the things that she learned throughout the day and prepares for tomorrow's lessons.

Just with that, there should be a large difference.

Norn was working very hard, but it can't be helped that a lot of it was fruitless effort.

I guess she doesn't know how to apply it.

Even though I say that, it's not as bad as Eris and Ghyslaine.

If she gives it her best she'll soon be at the average level.

"Come to think of it, Ruijerd-san said his hometown was in the Babinosu Region, but Nii-san you traveled in the Magic Continent right, do you know where it is?"

"Hn? No clue. I had heard that it was close to the Biegoya Region though. I've never gone there."

Through studying Norn has become capable of idle talk.

Even though I say that, what Norn talks about is almost always on the topic of Ruijerd.

Speaking of a common topic between Norn and I, it would be Ruijerd.

After all, it seems that having a topic you can understand is important.

I feel happy as well, having a partner to share stories about him with.

"I see... what kind of a place is the Magic Continent?"

"All of the monsters are huge. The culture is considerably different as well, but I guess it's not all that different from around here. It's a normal place where people live."

Norn often talks to me with good manners.

I guess she would be the respectful younger sister.

Since we don't use honorifics when I talk together with Aisha, she might be adjusting the distance she feels towards me.

"Ah, nii-san, did you hear the story about the spear from Ruijerd-san?"

"That huh. It was a story filled with tears right?"

"That's right... I wonder if there isn't something we can do."

"...Yeah."

It's about time I advance one step forward with that plan.

Creating dolls of the Supard race and selling it together as a set with a book.

This plan still exists.

Although it's still impossible to mass produce dolls with Julie's aggregate amount of magic power.

However, it might be a good time to make some prototype goods.

In regards to creating a book about the Supard Race, the problem is the time it takes to write.

The other day, I mastered Advanced healing magic and Intermediate detoxification magic.

Even though it can be said that I'm skilled at memorization, it took a considerable amount of time.

I wonder what I should learn next.

If I'm going to take on classes for Advanced level detoxification magic, it would only be if there's nothing else I want to learn.

Might as well just try finding someone to teach me Fire or Wind Saint class magic.

No, the Saint class fundamentally deals with manipulating weather, they're never thoughtlessly used.

It's fine to learn them, but I want to learn something with a bit more practical use.

Like horse riding...

Just around the time I was thinking that, it was just right.

I decided to allocate the time that opened up to writing.

In addition, I started writing during the time I would teach Norn as well.

A book that frankly tells of the Supard race's past.

I'm not really all that skilled at putting order into writing, but I'm sure I'll be able to do it somehow.

...Is what I was thinking, but now that it's come down to write about the past, I don't know how it would be good to write about it.

I wonder if it would be good to gather it all together, documentary style.

Maybe it would be good to write about it diary style.

First, it's often said that it's better to not write and write an epic from the start.

I guess around 10 pages would be good.

Then we'll copy those like a magazine, attach them to the figures, and distribute them.

Then, I'm sure a light literary style would be good.

I guess going with the feel of a good vs evil theme and Laplace as the evil guy...

No, wasn't Laplace made out to be the hero of the Magic Continent.

If I make him out to be too evil, I might buy into some animosity.

"Nii-san, what are you doing?"

While brooding over this and that, Norn came out asking.

"Yeah, I thought of writing a book about the praiseworthy exploits of Ruijerd. But, I don't know where it would be good to start writing."

"Fuu... nn..."

While saying that, Norn looked at my handiwork.

The manuscript I was writing had the title, "History of the Great Warrior Ruijerd's Conflict and Persecution" on the paper.

I had still only written just about one page of the manuscript, and it was just an outline of the person known as Ruijerd written there.

Since it was passing through my own bias, he was considerably close to a saint.

"Is it just this much?"

"Hmm, not yet, there's more after this."

I don't know where it would be good to write about from the start.

The story about his manner of fighting during the Laplace Campaign still remains in my memory, after that I know about his history of persecution as well.

However, since it was something I had heard several years prior, it's somehow become hazy.

I thought it would be a good idea to leave something like memos.

"Wo... would it be alright for me to help out as well?"

Norn started talking about that with a nervous feeling.

After listening to her story, it seems every night Ruijerd would put my little sister on top of his lap and talk about stories from the past while caressing her head.

How could this be.

Even though I was never able to sit on top of Ruijerd's lap, just Norn-imouto, how unfair.

No-no, that's not it.

"Oh, that would be a big help. But, make sure you don't neglect your studies."

"Yes."

Just like this, it became that Norn and I would make a book together.

Since that day, in the interval between Norn's studying, we started to write stories about Ruijerd.

The literary style was clumsy and full of rough places.

However, mysteriously while I was reading it, I would remember things about Ruijerd and tears would come out.

It was such a composition.

It might be the case that Norn has literary talent.

No, that might be the bias of an idiot older brother.

However, like itself will make one skilled.

{ C-Editor's note: Japanese proverb meaning people become skilled at what they like. }

Such words exist as well.

Just like this, if she continues on with it, it could become the case that she grows up into a great writer.

For the time being, I just continue revising the parts where the literary style is incorrect and decided to watch over her writing activity.

Rather than writing it by myself, it seems that with Norn we could create something several times more interesting.

Well, now that I've started to get along with Norn, there was a bit of a change with Aisha as well.

Though I say that, it's not like she's started to come along in regards to Norn.

Same as always, their relationship isn't very good; but, maybe because I said it, things like looking down on her or fighting with her have lessened.

Since it's come down to this, I'm a bit worried.

She might just be holding back what she really wants to say after all.

"Aisha. If there's anything you want to say, please tell me?"

For the time being, I'll just say that.

Even if my relationship with Norn has gotten better, I don't have any intention to slight my relationship with Aisha.

"Things I want to say, you say?"

"Yeah, for example if I'm minding Norn too much, you want me to look after you more as well. Or if you want to take a rest because your job is painful. Or if you want to sleep throughout the day..."

"Does that mean something I want?"

Aisha put her finger against her chin, tilted her head and listened.

It's a sweet behavior.

"That's right. It's fine if you ask for more selfish things after all. Don't restrain yourself?"

"Selfishness... Then, just one thing."

Aisha laughed in a teasing manner.

I wonder what she intends to request.

I wonder if she's aiming for my body.

I did say I would listen to it, but I didn't say I would grant it, if I said such things as expected she might get angry.

"Please pay me wages!"

After hearing those words from Aisha, I felt somewhat confused.

"Wages...?"

Thinking about it, she's been working promptly as a maid.

Almost to the point that it's strange I haven't paid her money up until now.

No, since she's family after all, there's nothing strange with that.

In other words, this is that isn't it.

An allowance right.

Since I help out around the house, please give me an allowance.

It's that sort of flow.

"Alright, I get it."

I pleasantly accept it.

Just, in regards to the amount, together with Sylphy, the three of us discussed and decided it.

We considered giving Aisha a somewhat large amount, but she refused it.

Rejecting it because it's too much, is this fellow really 10 years old I wonder?

In the end, we went with not too much, not too little.

We settled on a fair amount of money.

"Receiving something like wages, what do you intend to buy?"

For the time being, I'll try asking.

For the time being, just in case.

It's fine whatever you're buying though, for the time being.

"Various things."

However, Aisha's reply was immediate.

That is, I'd like to know the contents of those various things though...

Just as I was thinking that,

"I understand. Then, next time I go out shopping, please come along with me."

And I was invited along.

It's a date.

Date with my little sister.

What a splendid sound those words make.

Just in case, I made sure to let Sylphy know that I was going out shopping.

Even though it's a day off, I leave behind Sylphy with work to go on a date.

Somehow, I feel really apologetic about it.

But, since it's my little sister it's alright.

It's not cheating.

However, I wonder what Aisha intends to buy.

For example, I wonder if it could be a brawny male slave.

I don't really want to get all that involved with some difficult guy.

Even though there is a large, dark, and muscular guy who occasionally shows up for meals.

No, though recently that guy hasn't come by.

The day of the date.

The place Aisha was heading towards was the general goods store.

A place in the corner of the market, a small store that stocked common goods.

Inside of the store there were things overflowing from the shelves, but there were no customers.

It gives off the impression of just old goods left out everywhere.

There Aisha bought three small flowerpots.

"What are you going to do with those. Are you planning to drop them on the head of a Demon King passing by?"

"No, I was just planning to normally raise flowers in them, but is it strange?"

Aisha asked that with her eyes upturned.

My response was naturally already decided.

"There's no way it's strange."

Just, it was a bit hard to imagine Aisha growing flowers.

My image of Aisha is an energetic, young, genius girl.

Things she likes are cleaning, budgeting, and profit and loss calculations.

I have that sort of image.

Gardening is something you carefully enjoy.

While entrusting it to the power of nature, it's something you do slowly and carefully.

No matter what kind of genius they are, there will be many times where it doesn't go according to plan.

No, it might be gardening for that reason.

I wonder if it's interesting because it doesn't go the way you want.

"Then, wouldn't it be good to buy some earth? The earth around here, since it's considerably infertile, it's probably not suited for gardening."

"...I was thinking I could get Onii-chan to make that with magic and give it to me though, is that no good?"

Upturned eyes.

The reply is already decided.

"It's not no good."

Since I'm a man after all, I really like plowing through dirt and sowing seeds.

I'll prepare some amazing earth for you that will make a Baobab tree grow from the seeds of a Tulip.

"What are you going to do about seeds?"

"I have some from our journey, where I was gathering up seeds a bit at a time."

"If they're picked in the wild, they might not sprout?"

"Hn? It's probably fine."

While we are having such a conversation, we were looking around inside the store at whatever was relevant.

I bought some earrings as a present for Sylphy as well.

They're teardrop shaped earrings with a blue colored gem.

I'm sure it'll suit her.

"Those, are they a present for Sylphy-ane?"

"Yeah. I'm a man who values his wife."

"Sylphy-ane is a blessed person isn't she. Great ani-sama, if you have the spare time please bestow your affection upon me as well."

Upturned eyes.

Naturally my reply is already decided.

"No way, I'll be hit by oyaji."

{ C-Editor's note: Oyaji means father in Japanese. }

"Cheh..."

While talking about such things, we finished things at the register and left the general goods store.

The next destination we were heading towards was a store that specializes in the treatment of fabric.

It was a store that had a large quantity of handwoven cloth rolled up into sheets.

On the occasion when I bought carpet for my house, it's the store that Ariel informed me of having quality goods.

The variety of prices is vast as well, it's not particularly aimed at high class stuff.

It's a roomy store.

I wonder where did Aisha find information about this sort of store.

There, Aisha bought some curtains.

They were the pink kind with frills attached, a bit expensive.

Aisha haggled that price down as much as she could.

Using my name, Ariel's name, she used everything she could use to haggle it down.

In the end, the price being suggested was still a bit high.

"If you don't have enough, then should I pay for a portion?"

"Hnn, it's alright, it's exact after all!"

And she ended up buying it at the same amount as her remaining spending money.

She managed to match up the amount she used to the exact amount of money she was given for allowance.

I guess this is what they call good business sense, I feel some kind of dreadful thing.

"I think it would be good to leave a bit of your spending money remaining? Just in case the worst ever happens."

For the time being, I left her such advice.

Since you never know when or what will happen after all.

You might end up suddenly being teleported to the Magic Continent.

As a matter of fact, I'm hiding money all over my body in a variety of places as well.

For example, the sole of my shoes.

"Then, next time I'll start doing that!"

In any case, to think it was flowerpots and frilly pink curtains.

The image of a genius is taking priority, but her sensitivity might be of a maiden.

"I wanted these sorts of cute things."

"Lilia-san never bought any for you?"

"Oka-san said it wasn't allowed. Maids aren't allowed to have any preference in furniture she said... is it not allowed?"

Aisha is skilled at making use of other people's kindness, not to mention she's clever.

With some upturned eyes added in, it was a performance where she was clinging to my waist.

My reply was already decided.

"It's not no good."

If I was a strange old man, then I'd have already taken you away.

Since that date, there has been an increase in maiden-like items in Aisha's room.

It seems Aisha likes accessories.

Raising a small flower in a small flowerpot, lining up fist sized dolls on top of a shelf...

Before I realized it the end of her apron had a small embroidery on it, she must be sensitive to fashion as well.

In the future, I wonder if she will become a gal.

{ C-Editor's note: Gal, or Gyaru in Japanese, is a fashion subculture that is considered to be nonconformist or rebelling against the Japanese standards of its society and beauty. }

Onii-chan is still just a bit worried.

My two little sisters have that kind of feeling.

Nanahoshi had regained her pace as well.

The last experiment was the time when the PET Bottle was summoned.

Currently, that PET Bottle had turned into a vase and was left on the window of the research room.

Making use of this success, the research has proceeded to the second phase.

"Next we're going to try and summon "organic matter" from our previous world."

Nanahoshi declared that.

"Organic matter?"

"Right, organic matter. Food would be good."

It seems that after the events from last time, Nanahoshi's degree of trust towards me went up.

She talked to me in regards to the research phases after this.

One. Summoning "Inorganic substance."

Two. Summoning goods with a composition of "Organic matter."

Three. Summoning "Vegetation" or else "Living Things" like a "Small Animal."

Four. Summoning a living thing from this world with "detailed conditions attached."

Five. The final one is an experiment to try send the summoned living thing, "back to it's original location."

Strictly speaking since the PET Bottle isn't an inorganic substance, it seems there's some adjustments required, but it seems to be a trivial matter.

"That is, are the [detailed conditions attached] requirements?"

"Yeah. When I'm sent to the other side, if I was suddenly thrown into a foreign land it would be troublesome right?"

In other words, the summoning targets get gradually closer to humans and the final goal is to pinpoint a return to Japan.

You could say they're experiments just for that.

Incidentally, it seems the current summoning already can have some degree of conditions attached.

However, supposedly it's broad and there are some differences that come out in the individuals.

For example, if we were to use "cat" as the condition for the summoning.

Then three cats, a tabby cat, tiger, or a leopard might come out.

It seems that the research in that area is meant to nail down those details more.

So that, instead of something of the cat family, an actual cat comes out.

And even within the cats that you can specify, there are even more details on the variety.

"In order to research these attached conditions, it won't be good if I don't meet that person again."

Nanahoshi said that in passing.

Speaking of that person, it probably means he is the person that is an authority on summoning techniques.

"That person, is he knowledgeable on attaching conditions?"

"I guess so...?"

Nanahoshi put her hand on her jaw and thought about it for just a bit, then nodded to herself with an, "Yeah", and started to explain one thing.

"I'll explain. The summoning techniques in this world are split into the types of Magic Beast summoning and Spirit summoning."

"Oh."

It seems that Magic Beast summoning refers to summoning monsters.

Summoning a monster with high intelligence is dependent on the magic circle, and then through some sort of compensation they serve you.

You could say it's the type of image that one gets when they hear the thing generally known as summoning magic.

There are many varieties in the existences that are called with Magic Beast summoning.

The monsters sitting around over there, ones living in another world, even up to legendary creatures.

Of course, it doesn't stop at just living things.

As a matter of fact, the PET Bottle we summoned the other day was classified as Magic Beast summoning.

You can summon things as well.

If I were to master this, I'll summon the panties Roxy is wearing! This might be possible to do.

In comparison, Spirit summoning is a different disposition.

Spirit summoning is a type of magic where you use magic power to create the existences known as spirits.

You create the existence with magic power.

It seems it's close to programming.

"But, it's better if you don't reveal very much of this."

"Why?"

"In society, it's said that spirits are in the world of the void and they're being called from there."

In other words, it seems they're treated the same as Magic Beast summoning.

On the magic beast side, control is difficult, but they move according to your thoughts, and application is effective.

On the spirit side, controlling them itself is simple, but they can't do anything but the programmed actions.

However, if you actually produce a spirit with a complex program, it seems they'll move almost as if they're people.

It seems she has actually seen spirits such as that in reality.

By the side of that [That person] it seems.

"I see now."

"And this is changing the conversation a bit though. This, is the magic circle you asked about last time."

While saying that, what Nanahoshi gave to me was a single scroll.

On the single piece of writing paper, a subtle magic circle was drawn.

"This is?"

"It's a magic circle to summon a spirit of light."

Speaking of a spirit of light, it's a spirit that floats behind the user and continues to release bright light.

It can follow simple orders like "shine over there", but after time passes the magic power will dry up and it disappears.

It seems it's such a frail existence.

It seems the more magic power you pour into it the longer it will last.

However, it sure is plain.

I do feel that it's a bit of a stingy reward for the experiment's first phase...

"That magic circle is something that no one at the magic guild can use, it's an original of the person I was talking about before."

"Oh, is that how it is?"

Zapanizu whose heart dances when told it's a limited item.

"If the next experiments succeeds, the next one I give you will be more amazing. Therefore, I'm depending on you."

While saying that, Nanahoshi clasped her hands together.

What a nostalgic pose.

Naturally, I have no intention of abandoning Nanahoshi on the way.

"You can probably use your earth magic to create something like a potato stamp and mass produce those. If you were to take that sheet to the magic guild, you should be able to sell it for a considerable price."

"Sell you say? Wouldn't the person who made the original get angry?"

"It's alright since they're not a narrow-minded person who would get angry over that."

However, a potato stamp huh.

I wonder if it's fine if magic circles aren't hand-written.

"If you're going to sell it to the magic guild, then please use my name. If you do that, then you won't get involved in any kind of weird fraud."

"I understand."

Just like this, I gained one means of a source of income.

In any case, to think that all spirits were artificial spirits.

I have the feeling that it might be somewhat related to Zanoba's research as well.

If we were to combine them, it might be possible to give birth to a robot that can crawl or something.

The dream is spreading.

"Ah, that's right. If we were to summon some kind of random inorganic substance from our world, couldn't some kind of useful thing come out?"

I suddenly thought of it, so I proposed it.

And then, Nanahoshi shook her head.

"Though I say it's inorganic substance, making use of the foundations from the current phase, we can only summon things composed of a single material. Since we managed to summon a PET bottle, I think there's a pretty wide range of things we can summon."

A single type of material.

The PET Bottle didn't have a cap or label attached did it.

But, if the research on attached conditions proceeds, I have the feeling we'd be able to summon just components and assemble something.

"Also, I said it once before, but bringing things from our world into this one isn't something all that desirable."

That thing about history changing or something huh.

"Though I think you're just overthinking that."

"If you think that, then feel free to test it after I return. I don't want any part in it."

How distant.

Well, I guess it can't be helped.

Speaking of Zanoba.

The other day, he finally managed to complete the Red Dragon figure.

There's differences from the Red Dragon I saw, but since the angle it's framed at is cool, I decided it was a good gift.

The amount of time it took was considerable, but Julie was delighted.

She's a child that doesn't laugh all that much, but after holding her up and showing her it from below she let out, "oh...!" a voice of admiration.

"Master! Grand Master! Thank you very much!"

Julie said that somewhat awkwardly, but she lowered her head in a graceful gesture.

"Humu, from here on out work hard okay."

Zanoba nodded exaggeratedly.

Truly greatly.

Julie as well nodded happily again.

"Yes!"

In any case, Julie's human language has improved considerably.

Rather than saying my method of teaching is good, it might be because Ginger is correcting her way of speaking at every point.

After all, it seems if you quickly revise the words at every time you make a mistake, you'll quickly learn it.

"That's great isn't it, Julie. Make sure you treat it preciously."

"Ginger-sama as well, thank you very much."

Ginger is always on standby at the edge of the room, she brings out drinks for Zanoba and corresponds with visitors.

If I remember correctly, she's renting an apartment room nearby the school.

There's a single room next door to Zanoba's that is intended for escorts, but she refused it saying it was too awe-inspiring to stay in a room next to Zanoba-sama.

Rather than a knight, it's more like a commuting wife.

Otherwise, maybe the feeling of a fanatic worshiper.

It kind of feels like if she was told to die she'd gladly cut open her stomach.

"What is it?"

"I was just wondering why Ginger-san swore loyalty to Zanoba."

I just suddenly decided to ask and Ginger nodded like, great of you to ask.

"I was asked personally by Zanoba-sama's mother to look after Zanoba-sama. Since that time, I made an oath. That I would serve Zanoba-sama with all of my effort."

"Oh, that sure is a beautiful story isn't it..and then?"

"That's all there is to it though?"

With just that, you continue to follow through on that oath even when you're looked at with terrible eyes huh.

No, I guess that itself could be what it means to remain loyal to an oath.

I guess that means if it's a loyalty that will waver even a bit, you're better off just throwing it away from the start.

No, wait.

Come to think of it, I think I read about something like that in an old manga.

Something like feudalistic society is composed of a portion of sadistic people and countless masochistic people.

I wonder if Ginger is a maso.

After thinking about it like that, I think I understood it a bit.

Although, I guess it's not that juicy of a story.

Some progress can be seen in Cliff's research as well.

It seems, of all things, he's managed to complete prototype number one of the magic tool that can suppress the symptoms of the curse.

Cliff had become quite the braggart when he came to report that to me.

"It sends magic power from outside counterbalances the magic power inside the body. It's not quite to the point where it can completely suppress it, but it's become possible to lengthen the curse's limit by several times."

It seems to align the magic power outside with the magic power on the inside and then the magic power of the curse inside of Elinalize's womb it does something or other with.

And it was explained to me in a difficult way.

In regards to the theory, since I'm not a theoretical person like Cliff, I'll leave it out.

In any case, it seems it's not yet possible to negate the symptoms of the curse.

"But, there are two problems."

While saying that, Cliff showed me the actual thing.

It was a rustic mawashi almost like the one a yokozuna would have attached.

{ C-Editor's note: A mawashi is the loincloth that sumo wrestlers wear. Yokozuna is the highest rank in sumo. }

In regards to looking at it, it looks like a diaper.

"I see, one of the problematic points would be..that it's unfashionable right."

"That's right. I can't let Lize put something like this on."

It seems that Cliff and Elinalize uncharacteristically got into a fight over that.

Elinalize said she wasn't bothered over things like that, but Cliff wasn't willing to yield.

It seems he was bothered over letting his girlfriend wear a terrible looking outfit.

I'm relieved since its reason is just like Cliff.

Incidentally, it seems they reconciled after a single night.

Baka-couple.

"For the time being, thanks to receiving collaboration from Zanoba and Silent I've managed to make a small type as well. The effectiveness still has a ways to go though, but if you leave it to a genius like me, then it's a piece of cake."

It seems the aim is the size of panties.

I don't know how far they'll actually be able to shrink it, but if they were able to gather it together into something the size of a glove, I'm sure Zanoba would be delighted over it as well.

If his own hand was made so he can work on the dolls.

No, since that guy was probably clumsy in the first place, even if the curse disappears it might be impossible.

"What's the other problem?"

After asking that, Cliff made a bitter face.

"This time that's the reason why I called for you. Rudeus."

"Oh."

"As a matter of fact, this magic tool, the amount of magic power it consumes is too large."

Magic power consumption.

Magic tools activate as the user sends magic power into them.

If that is too large, it seems they'll have no practical use.

The ideal is having the consumed magic power enough that Elinalize can always have it on.

However, currently putting aside Elinalize, it seems not even Cliff's magic power lasts more than an hour.

"After this, since I'm going to improve it a bit at a time, each time I'd like to perform some tests. If it's just us, then there's a limit to the number of times we can do the experiment each day."

"I see now, leave it to me."

Cliff doesn't just call himself a genius, he should have a reasonable amount of aggregate magic power.

And yet, even then it's nowhere near enough.

I guess that would mean it's my turn.

For that reason, since this day on it became that I would be participating in Cliff's experiments.

Incidentally this magic tool.

It seems it doesn't have the effect of suppressing sexual excitement.

Recently, I feel like I've been living a good life.

Wake up in the morning for training.

Eat breakfast.

Go to school, meet Zanoba, meet Cliff,

Listen to progress with the research, occasionally offering something like advice.

After eating lunch, meet with Nanahoshi and help with experiments,

After school I help Norn with her studies for about an hour.

On the way home I go shopping together with Sylphy,

After returning home, we greet Aisha,

I enter the bath together with Sylphy, the three of us eat dinner together.

And then, we all start training our magic together while chatting.

After putting Aisha to sleep, I work together with Sylphy at making a child.

And then, I fall into a deep sleep while using Sylphy as a hugging pillow.

Each and every day is just a bit different, but while taking one step forward at a time we proceed living our lives.

I guess this sort of lifestyle would be what they call "happiness."

It was something I never obtained in my previous life.

After another year or so when Paul returns, I'm sure we'll be even happier.

The incident occurred on a certain day.

In the morning, just as always, I was doing my training.

I haven't seen Badigadi, but it's nothing to worry about.

That guy is whimsical.

It can't be helped, bothering over each and every thing.

...At least that was what Elinalise was passing on, but I'm sure that's just how it is.

After returning home from my training, Aisha and Sylphy were waiting for some reason with serious faces.

After seeing me return, the two were fixed on my face.

"...Ah."

"Rudi..."

What is it I wonder.

Did some kind of problem or something occur.

I'm feeling a bit uneasy.

"Umm, awawa, now that it's come down to it, I'm somehow a bit scared."

While Sylphy was scratching the back of her ear, she made a bitter smile.

"There's nothing to be afraid of. Look, Sylphy-ane, gather your courage!"

After being pressed by Aisha, Sylphy stepped towards me.

While fidgeting with her hands in front of her chest, she came directly in front of me with a red face.

And then she placed her hand on her stomach.

She said it.

"Umm, Rudi. I... these past two months, it hasn't come."

Hasn't come? What?

Isn't what I asked.

"And then you know, my physical condition was just a bit bad so I thought perhaps it could be."

I was fixed on Sylphy's stomach.

It's a slender stomach.

It can't be.

No, it can't be.

"An... and then you know, yesterday Aisha told me I should properly go see a doctor nearby... That is, probably, it's congratulations they said."

"...O..."

My voice was trembling.

My hands were trembling as well.

Even my legs were trembling.

Congratulations.

I guess that means it was conceived.

This isn't a dream right.

I'll try pinching my cheek. Ouch. It's not a dream.

I swallowed deeply.

I see, that's right isn't it.

That combination said it as well didn't they.

You can do it if you try.

I did it with that intention.

If you were to say it's just as planned, that would be correct.

Since I had heard that elves can't conceive easily, it was unexpectedly fast, that I'm just a bit bewildered.

"Umm, Rudi... what do you think?"

Sylphy was making an uneasy face.

Somehow, I wonder what kind of reaction would be good for me to have.

I don't know since it's too sudden.

"Is... is it okay for me to touch?"

"Eh? Ah, yes, please do."

I caressed Sylphy's slender stomach.

It's the same sensation I always feel when I caress it.

Slender waist, little fat, a tight stomach.

After touching it, a warm and soft sensation is returned.

After hearing it said, it does seem just a bit larger I guess.

No, it might just be my imagination, it shouldn't be something that I can tell just from touching yet.

"I see, inside here, my child is..."

After trying to put it into words, it felt like something deep within my throat was coming up.

There was something boiling up.

What is this.

I want to shout out.

I have a child.

A child was made.

There's no sense of reality.

However, what is this, I'm amazingly happy.

No, the words of happiness can't possibly express it entirely.

What is this, what is it...

"Onii-sama. Isn't there something you should say to the madam?"

From Aisha's words, I returned to myself.

"Eh?"

Things to say.

I wonder what.

Congratulations?

No, that's not it.

Thank you.

That's right, it's thank you.

"Sylphy, thank you."

"Eh? Thank you?"

While making a bit of a bitter smile, Sylphy was smiling.

Was it different?

Then I wonder what the correct answer is.

Searching through my knowledge, what did Paul say to Zenith again.

Remember the words that Paul said at the time when Norn was made.

[You've done well.]

[You've done it.]

It was words with that kind of feeling.

That guy, I wonder why he has to use words like he's looking down from above.

Did he think pregnancy was something that depended on the effort of the woman?

That's possible, if it's that guy then it's possible.

...Pregnancy.

Sylphy is pregnant.

This cute girl with a short haircut has my child.

Mine.

That's right, just by thinking about it, I feel moved to the point where I can't say any words.

Somehow, tears are coming out.

"Sorry, somehow, somehow, I can't say it well. Sylphy..."

"...Wa ...Rudi?"

I embraced Sylphy.

Just like that, I lifted her up and felt like spinning her around.

No good, it's no good if I handle her too recklessly.

Gently, that's right gently.

It might adversely affect the child in her stomach.

"...Fufu, Rudi, you were always saying you wanted a child right."

Sylphy put her hands around my back and patted it.

After tightly embracing her, I released her body.

My eyes were fixed on Sylphy.

I was reflected in those round eyes.

A terrible face overflowing with tears.

Sylphy's eyes soon shut.

While caressing her head, I kissed her lips.

The soft sensation of her lips.

This is love.

"[Cough]."

With Aisha clearing her throat, I returned to myself.

By the time I realize it, I'm groping Sylphy's chest and butt.

"Onii-sama, since it might hinder madam's body, for a short while please prohibit your sexual negotiations."

No good, no good.

During this period, it's no good if I lay my hands on her.

No matter how much love we have, it's no good if I lay my hands on her.

Ah, but if it was just two months prior, then not all that much time has passed yet, just a bit should be. No, that's no good. I'll endure it.

"Yeah. Of course."

I hammered down the nail.

Aisha suddenly laughed and lifted up the hem of her skirt.

"Since that's the case, during this time it would be fine if I was the partner."

"Leave the sleep talk for when you're sleeping."

Aisha dropped her head downwards.

I'm grateful for the invitation, but for some reason I feel no desire towards you.

Although, it's not like I specifically think it's wrong to lay my hands on my little sisters.

Therefore, it's just right.

In this world, I don't want to do anything that would be related to breaking up the family.

"Then Onii-sama, after this I will go to convey this to Ariel-sama and return. Madam as well, it would be best if you take a rest from your job."

Aisha said that with a clear face.

If she's pregnant, then she can't guard.

Certainly, it would be better if she takes a holiday.

"No, I'll go. I'm sure it would be proper for me to explain it."

"Ha... Onii-chan, don't you need to stay with Sylphy-ane and talk about more things?"

My little sister made a sigh as if she was tired.

Things to talk about.

I see, about things from here on out, if we don't talk about various things more.

"Then, I'll conduct myself and return."

"Yeah. I leave it to you."

Aisha departed, Sylphy and I were left behind.

I was sitting on the sofa lined up with Sylphy.

When I nervously grabbed onto Sylphy's hand, she returned the grasp as well.

And then she leaned on me.

"..."

"..."

I don't know what to talk about.

Thoughts about words of taking responsibility are coming to mind, but we're already married.

"That is, Sylphy."

"What is it, Rudi?"

"I'm sure it would be difficult after this, but, that is, please take good care of me."

"Yeah, leave it to me."

Sylphy laughed with a puff and placed her head on top of my lap.

With the hand I wasn't holding her's with, I caressed Sylphy's head.

I was feeling around the area behind her ear when...

"Hey Rudi."

"Yes?"

"Would a boy be good? Or would a girl be good?"

After suddenly being asked, I was bewildered.

That's right, there are two varieties of children.

"Rather, it's not really something you can choose right."

While saying that, Sylphy shyly laughed.

A boy or a girl.

I wonder which would be good.

I wonder which will be born.

After all, for the purpose of succeeding the house, I wonder if a boy as the eldest would be good.

No, it's not like we're a samurai family.

It's not like there's any particular problem with letting a woman take over.

Things for now, even speaking of my assets, there's a limit to it at most.

No, I guess it's fine not to think about it too much.

A boy or a girl.

If it was me in my previous life, I'm sure I would have said a girl without hesitation.

With my mind in the gutter, I'd probably say something about keeping an observation diary and photographs everyday about how a girl grows up in a girl's way.

What a foolish man.

However, now it's good either way.

As long as they are energetic. That is fine.

"But you know, Rudi. I, somehow I'm a bit relieved."

"Why?"

"With this finally, I feel like I've properly become Rudi's wife."

"..."

I guess that means in any world, doing their job would mean leaving behind offspring.

It seems Sylphy as well, more or less might have been holding some anxieties, or was rather in a bit of a hurry.

Since she has a constitution that makes it hard to do.

Of course, such worries are pointless.

"But, after this Rudi will be forced to endure it right. In that way."

"It's not a matter of enduring it."

It's the so called natural responsibility.

I'm different from Paul.

"If I ever put my hands on another woman, then don't be concerned about seriously getting angry with me."

"...I won't particularly get angry, but I might feel a bit lonely."

Is it something you finish with just feeling lonely.

No, but you know.

I won't betray her I'm sure. Thinking about it logically.

Think about it with the positions reversed.

"If another man put his hands on Sylphy, I feel I would be angry."

After saying that, Sylphy laughed with a, "Nfufu".

This smile is only shown to me.

I'm happy.

For a short while, we passed the time quietly without words.

Evening, Aisha returned bringing along Norn.

"C... Congratulations, Sylphy-san."

"Yeah, thank you, Norn-chan."

While facing Sylphy, Norn quickly lowered her head.

Sylphy grinned with a small laugh and stroked her head.

Having her head stroked, Norn's mouth loosened up.

It was a face that meant she wasn't totally against it.

I wonder if she likes having her head caressed.

In any case, it's good that they're getting along well.

"Everyone, today I had intended to go around greeting everyone, but I decided to leave that for another day."

Aisha informed us indifferently.

It seems she was trying to follow my idea and just go with family for today.

So, she returned only bringing Norn.

I don't remember proposing such an idea though.

Well I'm sure it's fine.

Certainly, going around here and there at this time, telling people would be pretty embarrassing.

It's something best left for a few days.

"I notified Ariel-sama that madam would need to take a rest for at least two years. I also made sure to request an absence from school. On that note, great aunt Elinalise-sama, gratefully decided to undertake the part of a guard."

"I wonder if that's alright with grandmother. For example, the stuff about the curse..."

"She said she'll manage somehow, so there should be no problem."

Elinalise is good at self control after all, there's the magic tool as well.

I'm sure there's no problem.

In an empty classroom, the gym warehouse, and even during classes. There are plenty of places they could use after all.

"Zanoba-sama will come over during the evening in five days. It seems he intends to eat over here, we should prepare. Ariel-sama will come over in ten days, during the evening as well. When I asked if she would be staying for dinner, she said it would not be necessary. Cliff-sama and great-aunt Elinalise-sama will come together with Ariel-sama it seems. Rinia-sama and Pursena-sama will show their faces a short while after, at an appropriate time. The specific agenda is unknown. Nanahoshi-sama had said congratulations. Just a single word, 'Congratulations'. Badigadi-sama couldn't be found, but I left a message."

Completely indifferent.

It's almost like a secretary.

Aisha sure is excellent.

"I see, thank you for your work, Aisha."

"Yes, Onii-sama."

After saying that, Aisha snorted with a "fufun" while looking at Norn.

Norn stared back at Aisha with an offended face.

It seems Aisha wants to keep up a good face in front of me, so she often makes these sorts of behaviors.

The fact that they are siblings of different mothers seems to be lurking in the back a bit.

I have told her not to be bothered by it and I treat them with impartiality.

I know these two often get into disputes over pointless things.

They do say, fighting is proof you get along, I'm sure it'll be fine as long as it doesn't become a cold war situation.

In the middle of the fights as well, they haven't said anything fatal after all.

"In any case, if you say a child is going to be born at the time when Oto-san returns, I'm sure he'll be surprised."

"Oto-san!"

After saying that, Norn's face suddenly brightened up.

Norn is a father's child.

{ C-Editor's note: A daddy's girl. }

I'm sure at one point, she has said her dream for the future is to marry father.

"Oto-san's surprised face, I want to see it!"

"Yeah, that guy is the type who would be considerably sweet to his grandchildren. I'm sure he'll be delighted. During the time when Norn and Aisha were born, he was completely deredere after all."

{ C-Editor's note: The Deredere characters in Japanese anime are usually very sweet, energetic, and in a cheerful and happy mood. }

After saying that, Aisha and Norn suddenly felt awkward.

I guess it would be a bit awkward talking about a time that doesn't remain in their memory.

"It's something to look forward to right, nii-san."

With those words from Norn, we smiled.

Sylphy and I married.

Paul, Zenith and Lilia here.

And then my two little sisters here as well.

The dream-like ideal from the time we were in Buina Village, seemed like it was immediately before us.

—

The bad news arrived two months after that.

An emergency express post was delivered, the date that was on that letter was stamped half a year ago.

The sender's name was Gisu.

The characteristic of an express post is that they're made up of extremely short content.

"Difficulty rescuing Zenith, requesting assistance."

The instant I saw those words, everything before my eyes went pure white.

—

By the time I realized it, I'm in a pure white room.

I had returned to my fat and menial figure.

Simultaneously, I felt like my spirit was being splintered.

I focused the irritation in front of me.

That guy was there.

The one hidden in mosaic while continuing to smile, the Hitogami.

"Yo!"

Hey, what does this mean.

"What do you mean?"

That letter.

The one from Gisu.

It said difficulty rescuing Zenith.

What does that mean.

"There's nothing to what it means, I'm sure it's been difficult."

You!

You said it didn't you!

If I go to the Begaritto Continent, I would regret it!

What was with those words.

Did you trick me!?

"I haven't tricked you. If you go to the Begaritto Continent, then you'll regret it. That still hasn't changed, even now."

Ah, I see.

I get it.

In other words, it's that right. This is what you want to say.

If you go to the Begaritto Continent, then you'll regret it.

But, even if you don't go you'll regret it, like that.

"That's not the case. Actually speaking, have you ever regretted it until yesterday? You've made a lot of friends. Met with a variety of people, even you yourself have grown a bit. You've fixed the bad condition of your body as well. Gotten along well with both of your littler sisters. Moreover, you've gotten married and even have a child coming."

...Certainly it's not bad, it's not bad.

But you know!

You were the one that said it!

That it's better if I don't go to the Begaritto Continent.

You tricked me.

"I haven't tricked you. In fact, I'm here now just to say the same thing again. It's better if you don't go to the Begaritto Continent. You'll end up regretting it."

But, but.

My family is in trouble.

Please, at least tell me the reason.

"I can't say that."

Shit...

Come to think of it, you were that sort of guy.

"That sure is a terrible way of putting it. Even though you've always been helped by my advice."

Talk about whether I've been helped or whether I'm being tricked are different.

Hey, at least tell me something about it.

What am I going to regret?

If it's like this, then I can't even balance things out properly.

"Normal people don't even weigh out their options you know. You sure are extravagant."

Extravagance or whatever is fine.

I don't want to regret it.

"If you just think about it a bit, I'm sure you'll understand. You've spent one and a half years during your school life. Your little sisters spent one year in order to come here. There's no mistake that it's become a misunderstanding right?"

No.

My little sisters saw the letter from me and came this far.

If there hadn't been a letter, they should have remained in Milis or remained in one of the port cities.

"Nope, even without that letter, Paul was going to send his daughters to Asura Kingdom. Since Lilia's family is in that country after all."

...I see now.

After you say it, I get it.

"Even now it's the same. If you were to leave on a journey now. Then, what are you going to do about Sylphy and your child? Going to the Begaritto Continent and then returning. During that time, do you intend to leave your own wife alone?"

You mean no matter how I move, I'll end up regretting it in the end.

"That's right. Even if you think you can avoid the regrets, you can't avoid them. If you go to the Begaritto Continent, you'll miss a large opportunity as well. That's why it's better if you don't go."

Cheh...

If you're going to say that much, then it's certain I'll probably regret it.

I get it.

"I see, then, will you listen to the advice?"

Yeah, for the time being, tell me.

"[Cough]. Rudeus, during the next mating season, wait on standby. Then, Rinia and Pursena will come to draw near you. Create a relationship with one of these two. If you do that, I'm sure you will become even happier."

Hey, suddenly bringing up talk about cheating.

I already decided to protect Sylphy's honor you know!

My relationship with those guys isn't like that!

I'm sure... I'm sure... I'm sure.

With the echo left behind, my consciousness faded out.

I woke up.

Sylphy was looking down at my face with concern.

I realize that I'm sleeping on top of the bed.

"Ah, Rudi, are you alright? You were having a nightmare."

"Yeah..."

What happened after I received that letter, what was it again.

I don't remember well.

I remember going into a dumbfounded state of stupefaction.

Probably because things here have been proceeding so well recently.

The shock was big.

The letter from Gisu.

The words requesting assistance.

Something must have happened.

However, there are the words from the Hitogami as well.

Even if I start traveling now, there's the possibility that it's a misunderstanding.

It might be too optimistic, but that letter might just be something Gisu sent out in a panic.

That's right, the sender wasn't Paul. It was Gisu.

It was newbie, that monkey bastard.

I wonder why that guy would send this sort of letter to me.

It's because he said he was going to search for Zenith.

At least, there was never the name Gisu in Paul's letter.

It might be that Gisu is searching for Zenith alone and he found her.

The time the letter was sent was half a year ago as well.

It could be that, the time when he sent the letter was before he met up with Paul and the others.

That time he might have thought there was nothing he could do, so he sent the letter.

It could be that he sent a similar letter to Paul as well.

However, soon after that, he met up with Paul and it ended just like that... that might be the case.

All of them are "might be possible".

I wonder what the actual case is, for I'm in a distant land, I can't even make a guess about it entirely.

There's also the matter of Sylphy and our child.

In order to get to the Begaritto Continent, no matter how fast we go, it'll take a year.

It's a road I've once taken down to the port city of East Port.

Therefore, it might be possible for me to shorten the time more.

But, even if for example, I were to say it will take half a year one way, a round trip would still be a year.

After all it's impossible.

There's no way I can leave behind my pregnant wife and depart.

"As I thought, it's about that letter right."

"..."

I couldn't reply.

There was my promise with Sylphy as well.

That I wouldn't suddenly disappear.

I certainly promised that.

Saying that I'm leaving a notice of it behind before-hand, so it's not sudden, is just sophistry.

Even if we discuss it well.

Or if I leave behind a letter hoping for her to understand as well.

The side left behind will still find it painful.

"Hey, Rudi, if it's about me... it's fine if you don't let it bother you too much? Now Aisha-chan is here as well, right."

Sylphy said that with a somewhat painful looking face.

There's no way she couldn't be uneasy about it.

Naturally as it is, she doesn't have any experience with pregnancy.

A stomach which gets bigger everyday.

Days where even climbing the stairs gets harder.

It might be possible that I could die at the destination.

I might never come back.

She has no choice other than to fight against such worries.

"...I won't go. I'll stay with Sylphy."

After saying that, Sylphy made a troubled face.

The Hitogami's words were resonating in my head.

In the end, regardless of which one I pick, there will be regrets remaining.

Those words.

And then three days passed.

Sylphy, Aisha, and Norn are all making uneasy faces.

I declared that I wouldn't go to the Begaritto Continent.

However, whether that is really fine like that, I don't know.

I can't make the distinction.

I may have declared it, but I'm still hesitating.

There aren't all that many people I can consult with.

One among them.

Elinalise said this.

"I guess so, it's probably better for you to remain here."

You.

From those words, I understood Elinalise's real intention.

"Elinalise-san, could it be that you plan to go?"

"Rudeus. Sylphy is my grandchild. Please allow me to pitch in and help for the sake of my grandchildren."

It seems that letter seeking assistance arrived at her place as well.

However, she says she will go.

Even though there are those who will be left behind.

"What do you plan to do about escorting Princess Ariel?"

"If it's while she's inside of the school, then there's almost no danger. Almost to the point that the need for an escort is stupid."

No matter how low the danger is, it's for when the time comes to it, isn't it.

No, the one who thinks about that is Ariel.

Elinalise is escorting out of good will, there's no reason to restrain her.

"What are you going to do about Cliff?"

"I'll separate from him. He might end up resenting me, but it can't be helped."

"Why don't you explain it to him? If you say it, I'm sure he'll understand."

Elinalise quietly laughed.

It wasn't her usual bewitching smile.

It was a lonely smile.

"Cliff is a pure child. He has talent as well and faces forward. He has the potential of becoming Pope in the future. The love he feels towards me, it's a moment of getting lost in his feelings during his younger years... Leaving it as such a case, it's for the best."

Putting it that way is pitiful for Cliff.

The doctrine of the Milis Church, is for them to love only a single partner.

If, Elinalise disappears, Cliff's faith might be shaken.

That guy is a man of heart, but if he were to lose his faith, I don't know what will happen to him.

"Also."

And Elinalise said it in the end.

"The one who said for you to remain here is me. Please, at least let me do something like cover for you. Therefore, you'll leave things to me and it would be fine for you to wait at ease. At the time when we return, please show me my energetic great-grandchild, okay?"

Those words which I was told were used to close this matter.

It seems Elinalise's feelings are something that will stand firm.

I consulted with Zanoba as well.

Even after he heard that, his expression didn't change a bit.

"Is that so. If it's Shisho, then I'm sure you'll quickly resolve it and be able to return."

He said that completely indifferently.

"Since I'll be waiting here as I continue with the research, I'll be wishing for a quick return."

"I thought you would say not to go or else that you would be coming along."

Previously, the time when we separated at Shirone, he was clinging to me in tears.

This time as well, I might have been wishing for something like that.

However, Zanoba's words were the opposite.

"If Shisho desires a companion, then I won't turn it down, but... since I'm unfamiliar with journeying I might slow you down, besides..."

With a glance, Zanoba looked at Julie.

"It's not like I can bring her along on a long journey."

Julie is still young.

There's also the option of leaving her behind in the care of Ginger.

If it comes down to that, the research will be delayed.

If he leaves on a journey, he'll end up using his magic power down to the last drop, which is dangerous as well.

"Zanoba... I say, should I go?"

"That is, something Shisho should decide."

Something that I should decide.

It sounded like words that were intended to push me away.

Though I wanted to consult with him.

And then Zanoba suddenly said it.

"However Shisho. There is just one thing I will say."

"Hn?"

"Even if the father isn't looking, a child will be born. If you're worried, then you should go and during that time, I will take responsibility and watch over your wife."

Zanoba's words had his actual feelings mixed into them.

I see.

I'm sure a king doesn't specifically oversee each of his wife and concubine's pregnancies himself after all.

"Of course, I always want to remain by Shisho's side though."

"I see... Thank you Zanoba."

Sylphy isn't alone.

Aisha is here, Ariel and the others as well.

She's not alone.

It's not like she's alone.

Should I go to the Begaritto Continent?

Or should I not go?

Elinalise said that she would go and I should wait.

Zanoba said to leave things to him, go help and then return.

I wonder what I should do.

I guess I should go.

What Zanoba said is quite right.

Certainly, if the mother is healthy, then the child will naturally be born.

Even if the father is or isn't there.

No, there's no way that can be the case.

I'm not a king or anything.

It's already decided that it's better for the father to be there.

Sylphy said not to mind it and go, but it's her first childbirth, she should be uneasy.

In reality, she should want to cry and shout at me not to go.

Moreover, I said many terrible things about how I desired a child from Sylphy.

If I were to speak of how much I actually wanted one, even I don't know myself.

But, Sylphy properly received that and gave it to me.

After that, she's pregnant and now I'm leaving on a journey.

Wouldn't that be a betrayal.

However, until now I feel like I've been putting off things with Paul and the others.

Putting priority on myself.

Thinking of curing my ED and going to school.

For this reason, this timing itself, shouldn't that be the reason I conduct myself and go to save my family?

Wouldn't putting things off for the time when it came, balance it out?

...I don't know.

I have a feeling I'll end up regretting it regardless of which I pick.

While I was worrying about it, it became the fourth day.

The days where I couldn't sleep continued.

Early morning, I couldn't get motivated to do my training and just passed time absent-mindedly in the entranceway.

In this city, even summer is considerably cool.

Especially in the early morning, when it's even a bit chilly.

I was absent-mindedly watching the morning sunrise.

"...?!"

Suddenly, I heard a voice from behind.

After turning around, the entranceway was opened.

The one standing there is Norn.

She has the large bag I used during my adventurer days on her shoulder.

Since the inside is completely packed, it's an appearance that gives the premonition of a long journey.

However, because she's only ten years old, it's almost like she's going on a picnic...

"..."

I silently looked at her.

Norn avoided my gaze awkwardly.

It was the face one makes when they're found at the scene of a prank.

"Where are you going?"

"..."

Norn wasn't replying.

I asked once more.

"Where are you going?"

Norn looked at me and then opened her mouth after deciding what to say.

"If ni... nii-san isn't going, then I thought I would go."

I looked at her seriously for a second time.

Go, going, to the Begaritto Continent I wonder.

I look at Norn once more.

Norn is small.

Far too small.

She's still ten years old.

"..."

The luggage she's prepared, it doesn't seem like she's prepared all the necessary things she needs at all.

It seems she has money, but I wonder if she knows how to use it.

Does she know the routes.

Does she have a means to avoid danger.

After she leaves this city, wouldn't she be abducted soon after.

"Norn, it's impossible for you."

"But, even though, nii-san... oto-san and oka-san are having a difficult time!?"

Norn's eyes with tears piling up were aimed towards me.

"Why, why isn't nii-san going to save them!?"

Why.

That is because my child is going to born.

I have a family.

"Nii-san, even though you're very strong, even though you can make the journey! Why?"

I can go on the journey.

I won't say as well as Elinalise, but I came along as an adventurer for five years as well.

I have a considerable amount of know-how.

If I were to look up, there's still a ways to go, but I should have a reasonable amount of skill.

Even without Ruijerd, I should be able to conquer the Magic Continent.

"..."

That's right.

I can do it.

It's not about thinking about the choice if I'm going or not going.

Just like Norn, even if she wants to go, she can't, but that's not the case for me.

I have the ability.

I have the ability to make a round trip from here to the Begaritto Continent.

For this reason, Gisu sent a letter requesting assistance to me.

Not to any other person, but me.

"...Norn. I get it."

"Ni, nii-san...?"

There are other people who will help me look after Sylphy.

However, there's no one else who can assist them but me.

There's no one else other than me.

I'll travel to the Begaritto Continent and proceed to the Labyrinth City Lapan.

I'm the guy who can resolve the problems that happen there.

"I'll go. Norn, is it fine if I leave things with the house to you?"

Norn's face was suddenly shining.

And then, soon after she tightly closed her lips.

She nodded with a serious face.

"Yes."

"Don't fight with Aisha and please help things with Sylphy."

"...Yes!"

"Alright, good girl."

I feel I'm going to do something bad to Sylphy.

Towards the child that is being born as well.

It could be that she gets tired of my courtesies.

No.

That's wrong.

Here I need to have faith.

"I'll go to the Begaritto Continent."

There, I'll save my family.

Right, I made my decision.

The Holy Land of Swords. If from there you walked north for about an hour, you'd arrive at a nameless peninsula. There stood a single girl doing practice swings. It was not one of the Sword God Style's forms, nor was it anything else; it was just practice swings. Her name was Eris Greyrat.

"..."

Eris Greyrat was swinging her sword. She stood in a place with no one else around.

She did so single-mindedly, completely single-mindedly.

Practice swings where you had unnecessary thoughts were useless practice swings.

Practice swings where you simply imitated someone else had no meaning at all.

As long as you continued to swing your sword single-mindedly, without a single other thought, with each swing you could sharpen yourself.

The amount you could improve by was a tiny amount, like a tiny layer of skin, completely transparent; even so, you could sharpen yourself.

Though it was just like a tiny leaf of skin; you would strengthen yourself.

But for how long would you have to pile these layers up?

How long would you need to continue this to reach Orsted's level of strength?

Eris didn't know.

No one knew.

――――― It could have been that no matter how many of these layers you piled up, you would still never reach Orsted.

But it was exactly this idea that was an 'unnecessary thought'.

"...Tsk."

Eris clicked her tongue, shook her head, and sat down. Then she began to think.

It was something troublesome. She wanted to defeat Orsted. The more she thought this, the further away Orsted became.

In the past, Eris's Shisho, Ghyslaine, had said this;

[Think]

she had said.

However, Eris was bad at thinking. No matter how much she thought about it, she couldn't come to an answer after all.

In light of this, her second Shisho, Ruijerd, was a godsend. 『Understand?』 he would ask. Beating Eris down, and then asking only [Understand?]. Until Eris understood, they'd repeat it, and repeat it, again, and again. Even when her head no longer worked, she'd stand up on the spot and repeat it.

Eris respected Ghyslaine. She respected Ruijerd as well. Because the Sword God's lessons were irritating, she came to understand the good parts of the two that she respected.

She continued to swing single-mindedly. She'd swing her sword until she was tired, and then she'd sit down and rest whilst thinking. Then when she was tired of thinking, she'd stand up and continue to swing her sword.

This was what the Sword God had ordered of Eris. Eris swung her sword as she was told. She'd swing, she'd sit, she'd swing, she'd sit. When she grew hungry, she would eat something. She'd then swing again, sit again, and continue to repeat this. At first she did so in the dojo. However, someone or other would always interrupt.

The ones who interrupted were mostly other women in the dojo.

[Hey, you join in on our morning sword rallies as well.] for example.

[Hey, the food is done so come eat.] for example.

[Hey, come practice with me for a little.] for example.

[Hey, you smell so go have a bath.] for example.

Because it got irritating, Eris left the dojo. After leaving the dojo, she walked straight forward. She found a peninsula with no one else around, and there she did her practice swings. For food she would eat what she brought from the dojo's kitchen, or she would kill and eat monsters that attacked her. Because it was winter she brought firewood from the dojo which she'd light with magic. When she became tired she'd return to the dojo and slept as much as she wanted.

Eris had already continued such a lifestyle for half a year.

She'd swing, she'd think, she'd swing, she'd think. There was one thing that Eris had come to realize as well: swinging a sword was difficult.

When she was small she had thought that it was a lot easier than studying, and that she was a lot more suited for it. That thought hadn't changed even now. She was more suited for swinging a sword than studying.

However, at the very least, it wasn't easy. Thinking about it, since it was just learning things that others taught you, studying might be easier.

Just raising her sword, and swinging downwards. Though it was just that much, she couldn't become good at it no matter what. That she should be raising her sword faster. That she should be swinging down faster. Thinking these two thoughts, she'd swing her sword.

She had become a lot faster than she was half a year ago. However, Ghyslaine was even faster. Ruijerd was even faster. The Sword God was even faster. And Orsted was much, much faster.

Eris sat down. She began to think. She began to think about how to swing her sword. She recalled the Sword God, Ruijerd, and Orsted's figures.

How was it that the Sword God moved? How did Ruijerd, and Orsted?

She would try to imitate them, imitate their every cell from their fingertips to their shoulders. Then, whilst aiming for even greater heights, she'd imitate them. She wanted to transcend them.

However, she didn't know how to do so. She didn't know. There was no way she could know. Eris was bad at thinking.

Once she got tired of thinking, she'd stand up and continue swinging her sword. Without thinking a thought, she'd swing her sword.

-Raise it up, swing it down.-

[It has to be faster.]

-Raise it up, swing it down.-

[It has to be faster.]

Tens of times, hundreds of times, thousands of times, she'd repeat this. When she did, worldly thoughts would interrupted her. This happened when she was tired.

"...Tsk."

Clicking her tongue, Eris sat down. Her hand hurt. Her mind wasn't working properly. She produced a cloth from her chest and carelessly wrapped it.

Eris didn't think that this was tough. She would always recall that incident three years ago, at the Lower Mouth of the Red Dragon. When she compared it to that, she felt like she could endure anything else. That's why this wasn't tough. Whether it was the pain, the harshness, or the frustration, it wasn't tough. Even if it was the fact that she was now alone, or that he wasn't by her side, it wasn't tough.

"Rudeus..." she muttered.

However, she didn't think about anything further. Eris was bad at thinking after all. It wasn't as though she was someone who could only think optimistic thoughts; she understood that if she thought about it more deeply, she would break.

"Phew..."

3 years.

Though she thought that she had gotten stronger, there was still a long way to go.

Eris stood up again and started swinging her sword again.

Fighting off the urge to sleep, Eris returned to the dojo. When she did, she found an unfamiliar man standing at the entrance of the dojo.

He was an eccentric man. He was wearing a rainbow-coloured coat, shorts that barely reached his knees, and four swords at his hip. He had a peacock tattoo on his cheek and his hair was styled in the shape of a dish antenna.

When he spotted Eris, he lowered his head a little and gave his greetings.

"I am the North-"

"Move it."

Eris spoke only one line to the man who was stopping her from entering the dojo. She didn't have the energy to speak further.

Because of the practice swings, Eris had been sharpened to her limit. The glint in her eyes was like that of a beast. Killing intent welled out from her whole body, like a glow. There stood a wild beast that would allow no one near her.

"...!"

The man immediately drew his sword.

"You're in the way; move it."

Eris spoke as she took a step forward. Eris could recognize the man before her as nothing but a hindrance; a rock that stood in the way of the shortest place to her sleeping place.

"Wh-, what's with this woman...?"

At the time, the man hadn't realized that Eris was speaking. A starving beast was before his eyes. While the hungry beast was out searching for prey, he had unfortunately come across it. That was the conclusion he had reached based on his experiences.

He hadn't thought that a beast would speak. However, after a few seconds Eris prepared her sword, and only then did he finally realize her true nature. It seemed that she was human, and a swordswoman.

"I am 『Peacock Sword』 Auber. 'I am here to meet the disciple of the Sword God Style.' Could you please convey this to Sword God-sam-..."

"I told you to move."

While irritated, Eris advanced another step. "Move" she said. However, that line didn't reach the man named Auber. All that reached him was her bloodlust.

Speaking to her was useless. This idea floated through this man's mind. It was likely that after her next step, he would be in her range. Realizing this, Auber's right hand grasped his sword tightly, whilst his left hand moved to the shortsword at his waist. However, the swords he held were pointed the wrong way; the side that faced Eris was the back of the blade.

He was now in her range. In that instant, Eris decided to remove the rock in front of her.

"Shh!" [Sfx: He's exhaling through the teeth]

Eris's blade flew. It was the 『Longsword of Light』 that had been sharpened to the limit because of her practice swings. It was a technique that the average person could do nothing against: the Sword God Style's certain kill technique.

"Fhh-!"

But that was only for the average person. Auber swung the swords in his hands and parried it. Sensing this, Eris moved for a return swing.

"...!"

Eris's sword was checked by the sword in Auber's left hand. Auber was dual-wielding, whereas Eris was using a two-handed grip. The power of their strikes couldn't be compared. Eris simply swung. However, she was parried. Her sword stopped near the man's dish-antenna hairdo. Eris was parried and because of that she stumbled forward.

In that instant, Auber's right sword moved. It was aimed at Eris's neck and moving at a terrifying speed.

"Tsk!"

Eris let go of her sword and fell to the ground in a squat. Auber's sword cut through the space where Eris' neck had been.

Like a cat, Eris rolled her body. She was aiming for her sword. Auber immediately kicked it away. It was buried in the snow.

It would've been his victory. Normally, that is.

However, Eris didn't stop. Seeing that she couldn't attack with a sword, she leapt at Auber barehanded.

Auber immediately slapped Eris away with the flat of his blade. It was a strong enough impact to break the bones in one's neck.

However.

However, Eris wouldn't stop.

"Gahhhhh!"

Eris swung her fist at the chip of Auber's chin. Still grasping his swords, Auber moved his left arm to stop it.

"Mu-!"

Auber's right hand was caught by Eris. Her fingers arrived at the sword's pommel. She was trying to take his sword.

A chill ran down Auber's spine. He realized that this beast couldn't be stopped unless he killed her. He kicked away the woman who was holding him and righted the swords that he had been holding backwards until now.

By luck, Eris had been kicked to where her sword was. Her breathing wild, she picked up her sword. There was no choice but to kill her. The moment Auber readied his sword and seriously meant to kill,

"That's enough."

suddenly, a voice rang out. The bloodlust stilled. Eris as well received that killing intent and stopped her movements.

At some point, the Sword God had been standing at the entrance of the dojo. Auber sheathed his sword, and Eris collapsed onto her back with a flop. Breathing wildly, she looked up at the sky. Her face was warped into an expression of frustration.

Auber placed his right hand to his chest and bowed.

"It has been a while, Sword God-sama."

"You've come, 『North Emperor』."

"I saw your letter and... And then that girl..."

"Yeah, amazin' right?"

"It's my first time meeting such a serious swordsman. She was like a beast... Ahh, is this the Mad Dog that you mentioned?"

Whilst Auber chatted with the Sword God, Eris stood up, swaying like a ghost. Seeing that figure, Auber readied his sword.

"..."

Eris glared at Auber and entered the dojo.

"..."

Without even sparing a backwards glance to the dumbfounded Auber, Eris entered the building. Whilst wiping the gash on her cheek, without even shaking off the snow, she walked down the corridor and entered her room. She then tossed her sword near her pillow and collapsed onto her hard bed. Like that, she slept like a log.

She was bitter about her loss. However, right now that was a trivial matter to Eris.

That evening, Ghyslaine arrived at the [Space of the Present] audience room.

There sat the Sword God Gul Farion and a guest, 『North Emperor Auber』.

He had an eccentric hairstyle and odd clothing. Ghyslaine was frowning a little. However, she didn't pay it any heed and rudely entered. She then immediately got to the point.

"Shisho, why aren't you teaching Eris?"

Hearing that, the Sword God gave a short laugh.

"I am teaching her, aren't I?"

"How to do practice swings?"

"No, how to forge herself."

The Sword God answered as if natural. His voice had none of the usual wildness. It was a calm reply. Ghyslaine couldn't stomach such an attitude. That's why she racked her dull mind and chose her words.

"This is something that Shisho always says. [Do everything rationally], you say."

"I did say that."

"Eris spends everyday doing sword swings like an idiot; just what part of that is rational?"

"Hah...?"

The Sword God looked at Ghyslaine like she was a nuisance.

"When did you start to talk about annoying things like this?"

"Before I returned here!"

"...Will you no longer listen to what your Shisho says?"

"However... Uh!"

Before Ghyslaine had noticed, a sword was pointed at her. To an ordinary person it would've looked like the sword had suddenly appeared. Ghyslaine had seen the movement of the sword. However, she hadn't been able to respond. Even if she was a Sword King, in the face of the man who was this generation's fastest, she wasn't skilled enough to react properly.

"Ghyslaine. You know, I kinda regret teaching you a little."

"..."

"That old Ghyslaine who was like a hungry tiger lost her fangs and turned into a little kitten. Even though had you stayed as you were, you'd be a Sword Emperor by now."

Ghyslaine gulped at the Sword God's words. Lately, Ghyslaine herself had sensed that she had become weaker.

However, it wasn't something that she had thought of as a bad thing. Indeed, her growth as a swordsman had stopped. She wouldn't become any stronger than this. However, in exchange she had gained something great: they were wisdom and knowledge. They were things that she would never gain from swordsmanship.

"I won't pull out anymore fangs."

The Sword God was dedicated to the sword. He expected Ghyslaine to understand with just that. However, Ghyslaine irritably asked,

"I don't understand. Why aren't you training her? Isn't Eris pitiful like this?"

The Sword God sighed. He sighed as though Ghyslaine was a child who wouldn't understand unless you spelled it out from A to Z for her.

"Listen up, Ghyslaine. If you just wanted to surpass me, then following rational methods to the end, you could surpass me one day. I myself ended up where I am by following rational methods, after all. Well, of course to become a Sword God you'd need effort and talent as well, but let's leave that aside. What that girl is aiming for is the Dragon God. The Dragon

God Orsted. He's 『an existence beyond rationality』. HE's a monster in a completely different league. With only my teachings, you'll never defeat him."

The Sword God narrowed his eyes as if recalling something nostalgic. He himself had actually fought with Orsted once. It was before he had become a Sword God, back when he was still a stubborn Sword Saint. Though it had been a complete loss, for some reason his life wasn't taken; on the contrary, he didn't even know why he was left without even a limb missing. His stubbornness had been completely broken, and after that he continued to train with Orsted as his goal. The result of that was his ascension to Sword God. It was exactly because of this that he didn't feel like being interrupted further on this topic.

"Hey, Ghyslaine. Training isn't the same as practice, yanno? Even more so if you have a goal. There's no point if you just blindly accept what someone else tells you. Right?"

"...Shisho always speaks of difficult things. I don't understand."

"Hah!"

Ghyslaine replied. The Sword God snorted.

That's right. She's an idiot who won't understand even if you carefully spell it out from A to Z.

"Well, the point is that she's not just gonna be taking lessons from me. For that purpose, I've prepared various things. To start with, this guy."

Saying this, the Sword God pointed at Auber. Auber gave a small nod and greeted her.

"I am the North Emperor, Auber Corvette. I'm known as 『Peacock Sword』."

Ghyslaine frowned. It was because an indescribable odor was coming from Auber's body. It was a strong, citrusy smell. It was probably a perfume. To a member of the Beast Race like Ghyslaine, it was an unpleasant smell.

"What business does the North God Style have here?"

"I've been called here by Sword God-sama. He wanted me to train one of his students, he said."

Ghyslaine made an even more doubtful expression. She then questioned the Sword God.

"Why the North God Style? Eris isn't suitable for their kind of makeshift style."

"Because the Dragon God uses it."

The doubt on Ghyslaine's face deepened. She had never heard that the Dragon God used the North God Style. If he were a North God Style, then the Second Place was likely the North God.

"Just what kind of person is the Dragon God?"

"Like I'd know... But that guy, whether it's the Sword God Style, or the North God style, what he uses incorporates all of that. Of course if you can use it, then you can deal with it, and that guy uses it. In that case if we don't learn to use it too, we won't be able to fight evenly against him."

The grimness on Ghyslaine's face disappeared. After all, learning to use the techniques that the enemy used was an extremely rational approach.

"I see, so in the future you'll call for the Water God Style as well?"

"Yeah, I'll send a letter."

"I see."

Ghyslaine's tail started swaying in a good mood. Seeing that, the Sword God chuckled bitterly. As long as it was a reply she could easily understand, she would consent. In this respect, she hadn't changed at all since the past.

"Well then, North Emperor-dono, please stay at your leisure."

Because her doubts had cleared, Ghyslaine had stood up and greeted the North Emperor. She got down on one knee and performed the particular etiquette passed down in the Sword God Style.

"Mmn, Sword King-dono. I'll be in your care."

Auber once again placed a hand to his chest and returned the greeting. And so like that, Eris would begin her training from the beginning again.

——

Eris would eventually become a 『North Saint』 a year from that point.

Mushoku Tensei: Isekai Ittara Honki Dasu - Volume 12

Begaritto Continent.

That continent is a different land isolated by the ocean.

The place of our objective is Labyrinth City Lapan, inland on the eastern side of the continent.

There are two kinds of routes for the sake of crossing over to the continent.

The method of traveling to the edge of Central Continent, Dragon King Kingdom's port city East Port and then moving across by boat.

That would mean you enter the Begaritto Continent on the eastern side.

It's somewhat of a roundabout way, but it's the safe course.

The other one is a route to take a boat from a port city in Asura Kingdom and enter the Begaritto Continent from the northern side.

It's a bit dangerous because it means crossing Begaritto Continent, but it can drastically reduce the time it takes.

Taking that into consideration, the former would take 18 months.

And the latter would take 12 months, or at least it could be said to be around there.

Even if we were able to find some sort of efficient method to move, we can say from the start it's still impossible to do the round trip within seven months.

In other words, I won't make it in time for the childbirth.

That's not the only concern.

This time I'm completely opposing Hitogami's advice head on.

Although, since it's him, the fact that I would disobey it might have been within his assumptions.

However, if it comes down to opposing him head on, as I thought the story is different.

If I were to say it, during the time we crossed over to the Central Continent, it's almost like not going to Shirone Kingdom.

Without ever meeting Zanoba, it would mean Lilia and Aisha continue to remain captive.

Just, in that case, things might have changed so I wouldn't have ended up running into Orsted.

If I had done that, I wonder what would have been going on around this time.

Without any specific problems we would have arrived at the refugee camp.

Still, I wonder if it would have ended up with my first night with Eris and then separation?

About 10 years later, after finding out about Lilia and the others whereabouts, I wonder if I would have regretted it.

Right, that guy said that I would regret it.

The advice from last time is unchanged from this time's advice as well, that I would regret it.

Most likely it's not something related to time.

If I go to Begaritto Continent I will regret it.

I don't know what kind of regret it will be.

There are several things I can imagine.

For example, it could be that... I might lose something.

Right hand or left hand.

Or, Paul or Zenith...

No, I should stop with thinking about it too deeply.

In any case, if I decided not to go and didn't go, then I would have ended up living another year or two worrying endlessly.

As a result of that, if I hear notice of someone having died, it could be possible that I get criticized by a worn-out Paul or Gisu.

There are any number of possibilities.

I have no choice other than to go.

Even knowing I will regret it.

First I decided to talk with Elinalise.

If Sylphy starts to cry when I talk to her, then my resolve might get dull after all.

First by talking about it with those around, I want to fortify my resolve.

I called out Elinalise to an empty classroom at school.

There, I informed that I had decided to go to Begaritto Continent. She made a bitter face.

"You know, Rudeus, I told you stay behind here?"

"Yeah, however..."

While I was hesitating to say it, Elinalise said it.

"In the first place, that letter, it might just be Gisu jumping to conclusions you know?"

"Jumping to conclusions huh?"

"I'm sure you know as well Rudeus, but that man has times when he jumps to conclusions without confirming the important things first as well."

Well, I'm sure there are things like that as well.

Gisu is the type that doesn't tell the whole truth while moving around and doing things in the background.

"This time as well, that possibility is plenty likely. Unexpectedly, one month or so later it might become the case that we get a letter saying, [Previous Statement Withdrawal, Zenith is Safe.]"

"I've considered that possibility myself as well."

After going to carry it out and by the time we get there Paul and the others have already resolved it.

It would be a difference in passing.

That's certainly a possibility that exists but...

"But, think about it a bit, isn't it strange that Gisu would know my location?"

"...Ha?"

"The time when we sent a letter after deciding our residence was one and a half years ago. If Gisu has been in Begaritto Continent for over half a year, how did he find out our location and send a letter?"

Just by moving, it will take close to one year.

Even sending a letter will take about that amount of time.

It's not like we can just use a cellphone or mail.

Even the special express delivery, takes more than half a year to arrive.

The time doesn't match up.

If Gisu had come together with Elinalise, separated soon after and moved straight to Begaritto Continent, then it would still be better.

How could a guy who has always been on Begaritto Continent know of our location?

"Most likely, Gisu has already joined father and the others. Then he heard my location and sent out a letter using that express delivery."

"Then, why is the sender Gisu?"

"Either it's Gisu's own judgment or something with my father's pride, I guess."

"Pride...?"

Elinalise put her hand to her chin and considered it.

Paul wrote down in the letter sent to me as well, that he's leaving things afterwards to me.

That matter is probably interfering and making it hard for him to ask for help.

Elinalise looked at me.

However she made a [Hmm] and considered it some more.

In the end she finally nodded in agreement.

"...It can't be helped, can it? Let's go together with the two of us."

I don't know what kind of conclusion she came to.

However, while smiling bitterly, Elinalise said it.

It was almost like she knew it would end up like this.

We'll be going together to Begaritto Continent as a party of two.

That's our plan.

One hour later.

"Then, let's decide on the route at once."

Elinalise returned to her own room and quickly came back carrying a large map.

For the sake of the journey it must be something she prepared and left out in advance.

The two of us studied the map.

The detailed roads and locations of the towns aren't written down, it was a simple map with just the shape of the continent and the locations of the mountains.

These past few days Elinalise must have been investigating the roads in advance.

The rough location of Lapan and various important points along the way have marks next to them.

Just as I thought, there are two routes.

"For the time being the sooner we arrive at Lapan, the better isn't it?"

Elinalise pointed her finger at the shortcut.

The route that enters from the north.

"But, the route that enters from the north is dangerous you know."

This route is dangerous.

We don't know the roads either. It's a route where we have no choice but to cross a dangerous continent.

I have a reasonable amount of confidence in my own ability at fighting monsters as well.

There are no worries about combat potential.

Even though I say that, an unknown land is still scary.

"If I remember correctly Rudeus, you can speak the Fighting God language right?"

"Eh? Yeah. It's not very native sounding though."

"Then it would be fine if we hire a guide when we get to the actual place."

"I see."

Following Elinalise's advice we decided on the route in a flash, since she was used to traveling.

After that, we roughly decided the flow of the journey.

First, we'll buy a horse in this town.

We'll travel with the minimal amount of luggage necessary until Asura Kingdom.

If the luggage is too heavy then the movement speed starts to dull after all.

The lighter we are, the more distance we can cover.

Along the way we'll continue to replace our horses, moving as quickly as possible towards the port city of Asura.

After we arrive at the port city of Asura, there we'll buy and prepare equipment and food.

Especially food goods, it's not confirmed that we'll be able to buy what we need in Begaritto Continent.

The price of goods in Asura is high, but at least in regards to food, we'll without a doubt be able to gather it.

After the preparations are done, we'll get on a ship to Begaritto Continent.

In the port city we'll hire a guide.

Depending on the situation, we could hire a number of escorts as well.

Elinalise will conduct the negotiations at that time. I'm the interpreter.

With the help of the guide we'll traverse Begaritto Continent and arrive at Lapan.

There we'll merge with Paul and the others and solve the problem.

Then we'll return using the same route.

"Up until Asura at least, it's a journey we've done any number of times so it will be fine. The problem is choosing what we take with us when going to Begaritto..."

It's not like we can just take anything and everything.

If we could get our hands on something like a carriage it would be easy, but Begaritto is a land of continuous desert.

Most likely there's some other kind of different transport used.

If I were to compare it to Magic Continent, it would be those lizard-like fellows.

According to my predictions there should be something like a camel.

"That is something we'll complete somehow or other relying on experience."

"As expected of an old-one's wisdom."

"Please don't flatter me."

I was an adventurer for five years or so as well.

Even though I say that, if I were to be compared to a great veteran like Elinalise, it would still be fine to call me an amateur.

It's come down to where I'm considerably leaving it to her.

"Since we have physical strength after all, we should be able to move at a considerably quick pace."

"That's right."

Elinalise is probably fine, but the problem is how far I'll be able to keep up I guess.

I've been continuing my training, but I still wonder if I'll end up slowing down Elinalise since she's used to traveling.

Though I think it will be fine.

"Since there are horses raised for the purpose of traveling long distances around here, it's just right."

The objective is to arrive within Asura in less than two months.

I don't know how long the trip on the boat will take, but we can assume one month.

Neither of us have been to Begaritto, but since it seems to be a harsh land, we'll try to move to our objective within half a year.

...One-way it'll take about eight months.

That's reasonably faster than first assumed.

I have the feeling that if I use magic then I can reduce it even more, but the shallow thinking of an amateur can cause some kind of mistake. It's quite possible that it will end up taking unnecessary time as well.

This is where I'd like to go with a more reliable method of arrival.

Other than that, there're various other things we need to keep in mind while confirming one by one on the way.

I'd say as expected of a veteran like Elinalise.

She's ironing out the details to avoid conflicting opinions from coming up during the journey.

Worthless disputes can't be stomped out in just a single day.

Even down to the details, we confirmed each and every thing.

"The problem is..."

In the end Elinalise put her hand on her chin and made a difficult face.

I feel that we decided all the main points, but I wonder if there's anything else.

"It's about my curse."

"Ah..."

If she doesn't have intercourse with men, she'll die.

If it's a willful journey, then it's fine.

It's fine to just find a relevant partner in a town she stops by.

If it comes down to a long journey, then there's also the possibility of sticking together with a party from somewhere as well.

But, on a journey in a rush, there will be times when nothing can be done about it.

".."

"...."

We both kept silent.

There's a method to resolve it.

It would be fine for me to be the partner.

I'm a man as well.

Before we attended the university, it's different from the time when I formed a party with Elinalise.

If I was told to work as a partner, then I can do something like being a partner.

However I don't want to betray Sylphy or Cliff.

"During the journey, Elinalise-san and I can't do it."

"Yeah, that's right."

"Let's try to make use of something like a brothel on the way."

During the journey, we won't lay our hands on each other.

We need to make that clear.

If we don't do that, we might end gradually moving in a direction where we end up doing something after all.

"Come to think of it, that one magic tool? It can weaken the effect of the curse right?"

"If I were to bring that out, then Cliff will.."

"You don't intend to speak to Cliff?"

Elinalise intends to silently leave Cliff it seems.

No matter what, isn't that just to pitiful for Cliff?

"It's no good if you don't talk to Cliff."

"But, I.."

"Please leave it to me. I won't let it end up badly."

We started towards Cliff's place.

Cliff's research room.

After Cliff saw us, he came up to show us that one diaper magic tool with a full face smile.

"Just look at this, I've improved it a bit and it's become smaller. With this, even if you wear it for long periods it won't rub against your crotch and cause any pain..."

"Cliff-senpai, do you love Elinalise-san?"

I interrupted with my words and asked straight to the point.

Cliff looked at me with a puzzled face.

"That's obvious, right?"

It was a face like he was asked, [Yesterday, did you eat food?]

As expected of him, I'd say.

"Do you intend to continue to love her no matter what happens?"

"Naturally. I love Lize. You know that much right?"

"I wanted to hear those words."

I explained the situation.

The possibility that my family has fallen into a predicament.

That my father has a deep relation as friends with Elinalise and she wants to go help them.

That it will be a long journey.

During that time, the probability is high that Elinalise will end up having relations with other men.

In addition, I talked about various things.

"..."

Cliff remained silent while listening to the story advance.

And then flatly said it.

"...If I were to try and go with you, I'd be nothing but a dead weight."

That is frankly true, but they're words that are hard to reply to.

The one who replied wasn't me, but Elinalise.

"That's right. Honestly, Cliff's physical strength won't last."

If it was the usual Elinalise, then she would continue more oblate.

However, this time she said it quite clearly in order to bluntly refuse.

"I see..."

Cliff dropped his gaze in regret.

That gesture felt like it was stabbing into my chest.

I wonder how much he really takes matters to heart with her.

If she goes on the journey, then Elinalise has no choice other than to have intercourse with other men.

No matter how much Cliff accepts her in his heart, even if he understands that it's because of the curse, it's still something heartbreaking I'm sure.

"Hey, Elinalise-san, why don't we have Cliff-senpai come along as well in spite of it. He can use barrier magic as well. Even his Exorcism is Advanced level. Certainly he might be lacking in physical strength, but I'm sure he'll be useful somew..."

"No, it's fine Rudeus. During the time when we went adventuring together as well, I was just slowing things down. I'm sure, this time as well even if I were to follow along on the journey, I would just end up as a hindrance."

While saying that, Cliff placed the diaper-like magic tool in my hand.

"Rudeus."

"Yes."

"I entrust Lize to you."

Honestly, I thought he would cry out about it more.

However, still even more than I thought, it seems Cliff understands his own power.

"Lize."

Cliff faced Elinalise's direction.

And then, from a somewhat lower height from her, gently embraced her.

"Cliff.."

Just like that the two tightly embraced each other.

"Lize. After you return, let's have the wedding ceremony. The curse still hasn't been solved, but we'll buy a house for the two of us and live there together. I've made you feel uneasy because we haven't done that until now right? That it might just be talk like that."

"Ah, Cliff, but I'm a cruel woman you know. This time as well, I was actually planning to leave silently without telling you."

"The marriage ceremony will be a Milis ceremony, but is that fine? Even though Lize isn't a Milis believer.."

I wonder if Cliff was intentionally ignoring Elinalise's words.

In any case, for Elinalise that was fine.

Just by hearing those words from Cliff, it seems she was overcome with emotion.

"Ah, Cliff..I love you! More than anyone in this world!"

Elinalise pushed down Cliff.

By the time Cliff's lower half had been peeled bare I had left the research room.

From here on out, it's time for the two of them.

The hindrance will be left here.

However, that Cliff, he really knew she was feeling uneasy about his promise to marry when he said that.

I went around to say farewell to others in each place as well.

I won't be able to return for a year and a half.

If any trouble happens on the other side, then it might even take two years.

Two years is a long time.

It's no good if I don't do it properly rather than just a short greeting.

The first place I went towards was the staff member room.

It's Jinas's place.

It won't be good if I don't make sure to take care of the formal office work-like procedures ahead of time.

The same as always, he had a pile of documents in front of him as he worked energetically.

"Greetings, vice principal Jinas."

"Ah, if it isn't Rudeus-san. It's been a while. I heard that you succeeded on a large scale experiment or something at Seven Star-san's place."

"Yeah, it's thanks to the assistance from Zanoba and Cliff."

"Is that how it was?"

It seems that story of that one experiment has circulated around to Jinas as well.

I wonder if that kind of information unexpectedly seems to make it around.

"And then, what is it for today?"

"Yes, I need to do preparations for an absence of about two years or so."

"Two years is it?"

"Something important has come up."

"Is that so..."

It's not that I'm trying to avoid the topic, but Jinas didn't try to ask anything more than that.

"I understand. I'll do the paperwork for a temporary absence from school, at the time when you return, please show yourself in front of me again."

"Is it alright to take a temporary absence for two years?"

"If it was a normal student then it wouldn't be something good, but it's permitted as a special privilege to special students."

I'm sure it would have been taken as dropping out normally after all.

"Thank you very much."

"No, the special student system is for that sake after all."

"Then, in addition could I ask to allow the student known as Elinalize to be treated as a temporary absence as well? She isn't a special student, but she intends to go along with my convenience as an escort."

"Is that so... I understand. I'll try to make it work out somehow."

Jinas pleasantly took that on.

It's a really appreciated talk.

I said my thanks to Jinas and left the staff member room.

Soon after leaving the staff member room, I ran into Rinia and Pursena.

After seeing me, the two of them raised their hands and approached me.

I told the two that I would be absent for about two years or so as well.

"I see. It will become lonely nya."

"If it's going to be two years, then we'll have graduated. We won't meet again nano."

After it was said, I realized it.

They're sixth year students. In another two years, they'll have graduated.

They'll have returned to the Great Forest.

It sure is lonely not be present at that farewell.

"That's right isn't it..."

Come to think of it, the Human God said to start a relationship with one of these two.

In another two months or so the mating season will start. I wonder if a development like that would come up.

I take a good look at the two.

"What nya? Is there something on me?"

Rinia.

Those cat ears that twitch as they move, the tail that swings back and forth, and those healthy looking thighs are her characteristics.

Her chest size is big as well. About D or E size.

Since all the Beast Race are big, it might just be average.

She gives off the feeling of a healthy kyonyu-chan.

Even on top of the bed, it seems like it would be enjoyable for her to show that cheeky reaction.

"[Sniff][Sniff]... could it be boss, since we're not going to see each other again, you're thinking something like, [At least once] nano?"

Pursena.

With those soft looking dog ears and that plump full body as her characteristics.

Even among the beast race the dog type seem to be large, but I think her chest is around F.

I've groped them several times, but they're considerably soft.

If you were to embrace her enough to be buried in them, I'm sure that would feel great.

"Excuse me. The other day, a certain person gave me the advice to push you two down during the mating season. So I was just remembering that."

"Seriously, boss, did you have such intention nya?"

"Even though I've tried seducing you, since you never get on board I thought we were hated by you nano."

While the two said that indifferently, they were smiling with a grin.

Making children with them.

Furthermore, according to the way Hitogami put it, Sylphy doesn't blame me for that it seems.

I wonder if it's because she's pregnant, or else if she doesn't want it to turn into a scene of carnage, I don't know.

However, if it means that I'm going to become even happier, I wonder if that means it would result in something that's convenient for me.

It's one thing to have a sword to protect Sylphy's honor, but I'm a man as well.

It's still somewhat captivating.

Having a harem is the dream of a man after all.

Accept them as the concubines and do some foursome play with Sylphy.

I guess there was such a future out there.

"Rinia, Pursena."

"Yes nya."

"Yes-nano."

After calling out to them, the two of them were looking at me with somewhat tense expressions.

"Let's continue being friends."

The two's features crumbled.

They shrugged their shoulders and came up from both sides.

"...It can't be helped nya. Boss is the lonely type after nyall.

"We'll remain friends, don't want to betray-nano."

I exchanged a handshake with the two.

Thinking about it, this might be the first time I've shook their hands.

Female friends huh.

Friendship doesn't exist between men and women, I've heard such talk before though.

Well, even if there's some amount of sexual desire mixed in, friendship can still hold true as friendship.

What's important is to maintain a mutual sense of distance.

"Then, we'll meet again. Ten years later, or twenty years later I don't know though."

"Right nya. In another ten years, I'll have become great, so you'll need to prostrate before me nya."

"For the conquest of the Great Forest."

The two speaking of their ambitions, I left just saying one thing, "I'll pray that it doesn't become a case of gekokujo."

{ C-Editor's note: Gekokujo is a Japanese word which refers to someone of a lower position overthrowing someone of a higher position using military or political might. }

If luck permits, then I'm sure we'll meet again.

After arriving in front of Nanahoshi's research room.

I wonder how I should break the ice.

She's the solitary type.

While taking a tsuntsun attitude, on the contrary she might show a large amount of loneliness.

I'm going to be absent for up to two years.

If it comes down to that, her research will stagnate as well.

Her journey home has already been progressing slowly at best.

Natural as it is, I'm sure she'll try to restrain me.

Probably with some kind of reason attached.

She might try to threaten me as well.

[If you're going to go on a trip then, I'll ***** Sylphy] If I'm told something like that I wonder what I should do.

{ C-Editor's note: Unclear what the author meant by 'okakeru su' and unable to properly translate the meaning into English so '*****' remains as part of the text. }

I don't think she's yandere to that extent though.

"Fu..."

I took a single breath. A single knock.

"Come in."

After waiting for a response, I enter the research room.

Nanahoshi raises her face from the desk and looks over here.

"What? It's different from the usual time though."

"Actually, I've come to give notice of something unfortunate."

"Unfortunate notice?"

Nanahoshi was making a puzzled face.

Well, it doesn't really change how I talk about it.

I'll just say it as it is.

"I'm leaving on a journey. Since my family is in trouble. I'll be going as far as Labyrinth City Lapan on the Begaritto Continent. Round trip it will take about two years or so."

"...Eh?"

After spending a short while dumbfounded, Nanahoshi stood up while kicking off from the chair sharply.

She put her hand on top of the desk and looked at me with a dumbfounded face.

"....Begaritto, Labyrinth City Lapan, two years..."

She continued to repeat my words like she was considering over them.

"I'm very sorry about this, even though I said I would help you. But, no matter what, this is something that I have to go and do."

Nanahoshi opened her eyes after hearing my words and took a deep breath.

And then, sat down in the chair with a bang and looked up at the ceiling.

"Two years..."

"After I return, I'll properly continue to help out with your research."

"...Two years."

Nanahoshi crossed her arms and didn't say anything but two years.

More than that, she didn't say anything else.

She's not trying to restrain me or cry out either.

Just, she's looking at the ceiling like she's thinking about something.

Just like that, about half the time passed.

Today is nothing but painful times.

"Well then, please excuse me."

It can't be helped.

Even she should understand that I'm only helping out of good will.

I'm sure she really wants to restrain me, she's enduring it.

I turned heel and was about to leave,

"Wait a minute."

I stopped my feet at that voice.

Honestly, I don't really want to chat.

I know she's going to try and stop me.

But, I'm sure it's better to properly talk it out.

Thinking that, I turn around.

From the lowest drawer of her desk Nanahoshi takes out something like a notebook.

She turns over the pages flipping through that, she opens it to a certain page and shows it to me.

"Look at this."

Just as I was told I take a look.

The notebook had scraps of a map attached to it.

I have a recollection of the map, it's the surroundings of this city.

Even though I say that, the scale is somewhat large.

On the top part of the map, in somewhat large letters, "N1" was written.

In a certain forest in the southwest a red cross mark was made.

Above the cross mark the letters, "B3" were written.

"This is?"

"...."

Nanahoshi was clearly hesitating.

Whether to say it or not to say it.

However, in the end she said it.

"It's a map of the locations of the ruins scattered around the world with teleport magic circles in them."

Teleport magic circles?

"Eh?"

I let my eyes fall on the notebook again.

The letters, "B3".

Could this perhaps be.

"It's the teleport magic circle to Begaritto Continent."

"O well.."

Come to think of it.

Come to think of it, Nanahoshi did say she traveled around together with Orsted.

If I remember correctly, they were making use of the teleport magic circles scattered across the world to travel here and there.

"You said you didn't remember the location..."

That's right. Nanahoshi said she couldn't remember the location of the teleport magic circles.

"Orsted forbid me from speaking about it and that I shouldn't reveal it. That time, I said I couldn't remember it either way, so I couldn't say it anyways but.."

But, she left a record of it in case the time ever comes up where she needs it huh.

Secretly drawing a map in each place, or else writing the map in text.

Casually asking Orsted the name of the land.

Nearby towns and remembering the general location...

It's not memory, but a record.

I flipped through the pages of the notebook.

It's far from perfection.

In places where she couldn't buy a map or she couldn't even arrive in a town, she just wrote [A mountain can be seen on the left side. Most likely three days to the east, we'll cross a single river, furthermore two days.] and used that sort of writing manner.

The alphabet shows the continent name and the number seems to show the order they're passed through.

N is for the northern part of Central Continent.

S is for the southern part of Central Continent.

W is for the western part of Central Continent.

MT is Magic Continent.

ML is Milis Continent.

I guess as expected there's none for Heaven Continent.

And then, B is for Begaritto Continent.

In places where she didn't know which Continent she was on she used the alphabet letters X and Y.

It was a single volume showing the effort Nanahoshi put in afterwards.

"I've certainly heard the name of the city known as Lapan. I remember it. This teleport magic circle will take you to somewhere nearby a certain Bazaar, if you move North for about a month or so, you should arrive. Therefore, it shouldn't be a mistake."

"One month... you say..."

I turn back to the page from just now.

Ranoa Kingdom. It's in the forest southwest from the Magic City Sharia.

The scaling of this map makes it hard to tell. It seems to be about 10 days or so of distance?

It might be even closer.

It's there, the location of the magic circle that will take you to "B3".

I turn the page.

"B3" is on the previous page.

In order to get to a nearby town from the "B3" magic circle it will take about one week it seems.

From there it will take about one month, in other words that means...

47 days.

Round trip would be 94 days.

We can do a round trip in just three months.

If we can finish things up on the other side within one month then...

Four months.

We'll make it.

We'll end up making it in time.

For Sylphy's childbirth.

It won't make it in time for the mating season of Rinia and Pursena, but that is, well... that doesn't matter at all.

"But, is it fine? You were forbidden from speaking about it right?"

"I hesitated over it, but I relied on you the other day after all. Although, I'd like for you not to talk about it too much. Since teleport magic circles are a forbidden technique, if they're spread around in the world, they're something a country could easily destroy."

If they were to be destroyed then that would mean Orsted's means of moving around would be decreased huh.

The ones who he would be angry with are those who revealed it, which would be Nanahoshi or me for sure.

Orsted...

Just being reminded of that name makes me start trembling...

I won't say it, to anyone at all.

"Thank you, Nanahoshi. This is a big help."

"I just want to return home faster."

Nanahoshi said that while snorting through her nose with a [Hmph.]

Embarrassed Tsundere.

I took the notebook in my hand and deeply lowered my head.

And then, turned heel and left in high spirits.

"Ah, I forgot to say it, but on the first page there's the mark that shows the location of the ruins with the magic circle, and the method to break into the concealment magic is written down there, so make sure you properly read it."

"Understood. I'm indebted to you."

"I'm just repaying the debt."

While making a bitter smile at those words from Nanahoshi, I leave the research room.

And then I returned to Elinalise's place.

I returned quickly.

It's good news. I'm sure she'll be delighted as well.

There's no choice other than to change our plan for the journey.

One and a half months.

It could be that we could even manage to bring along Cliff.

Naturally, we'll make it back in time for Sylphy's delivery with time to spare.

My mouth was becoming slack.

While I continued to strike my cheeks I opened the door to Cliff's research room.

In the next instant, something like Venus with a Renaissance feeling came jumping into my sight.

"I'm very sorry Rudeus. As I thought I can't go!"

Elinalise is unstable.

With a body like a model wrapped in a blanket, it was a seductive appearance.

Elinalise's breasts almost like the Niagara Falls and long slender symmetrical body, you would feel it was almost artistic.

However, I didn't feel anything like art or otherwise.

Just simply erotic thoughts came up.

In the first place, there's no way I would understand anything about the arts.

If I were to convert it into a figure then I would just think it's erotically cool.

Cliff was in a corner of the research room and he had become like a Pharaoh.

It's a mummy.

His face is quite happy.

This side is far more artistic I'd say.

The Interval Between Life and Death, or some title like that seems like it would fit.

"There's no way I can endure being separated from Cliff for two years! Even if I know it's dishonorable, I will not go!"

Women are creatures that live based on feelings.

Such a line floated across my mind.

"In the first place, if Rudeus is going then there's no necessity for me to overdo it and go is there?

There's still things hovering the background between Paul and I as well?

I'm sure he doesn't want to show his face in front of me as well?

If Rudeus is going, then the job of protecting my granddaughter's first childbirth will be mine as well?"

"..."

There was no longer even the shadow of the woman who coolly declared, [Leave things after to me and wait.]

Quite effeminate.

I'm sure, in the period these last few hours, she was able to go to quite the good feeling paradise.

"I see. As a matter of fact, a method for reducing the round trip time to at shortest three months has entered my hands though.."

"Eh!!?"

Elinalise stopped her movement.

"What is that?"

After confirming that Cliff is sleeping I whispered into Elinalise's ear.

"To tell you the truth, Nanahoshi has.."

"Ah...my..my ears are no good, I'll feel it."

"Listen to me seriously."

"Cheh. It was a joke."

I showed her Nanahoshi's notebook and explained the outline.

And then the fact that Nanahoshi firmly forbid us from speaking about this as well.

After Elinalise flipped through the pages of the notebook, she couldn't hide how surprised she looked.

"In just this amount of days.."

"That's right, if it's this, then we'll make it in time for Sylphy's childbirth."

"...We can do it."

One-way, one and a half months.

It's not a long journey.

The color in Elinalise's eyes changed.

If it's this number of days then, it was that sort of face.

"Well, if it's this then there's no problem. As I thought I'll go."

It seems her mind has changed. How self-interested.

But, well, two years would be a long time after all.

"If it's one and a half months, then physical strength-wise we could bring along Cliff-senpai as well."

"...No, we'll leave behind Cliff."

"Is it fine?"

"I'm sure Cliff, if he comes to know about the matter of the teleport magic circles, he won't be able to keep from talking about them."

No, I don't think Cliff-senpai is that kind of person.

I don't think so but...

But, among my acquaintances he is the number one person to suddenly let leak something like that.

Humu. After all, going with a large number of people would be bad.

If the number of people that know increases, it will mean the secret just spreads that much easier.

However since it seems to be a dilemma, I'd like to bring along someone with real ability.

A party consisting of a few elites I'd say.

Those I would bring along would be for example, Ruijerd right.

There's no other person as reliable as that person.

Since he's silent, I'm sure he'd never reveal the teleport magic circles to anyone as well.

Otherwise Badigadi.

If it's a guy that lives in denominations of the thousands of years, then as a matter of fact he might already know about the teleport magic circles.

It seems like he knows about Orsted as well, I feel like it wouldn't be a problem to talk to him about it.

Well, since I haven't seen either recently, I can't make the request of them.

If it comes down to this, other people who we could bring along... there aren't any.

It doesn't seem like Zanoba is very familiar with traveling after all.

...That's right.

We might as well just go, if there's not enough people on the other side then returning with another is still a possibility.

Right now it's the first time we're walking down this path therefore we're cautious, but if it's a path we've taken once, then it's not all that difficult to walk it leading someone.

It will mean talking about the matter of the teleport magic circles, but we can't change things that need to be done.

It takes three months for a round trip, but in reverse that means in three months we can certainly bring back enough helping hands to finish it.

"For the time being, let's go with just the two of us."

"Let's quickly go and put an end to this, then quickly return home."

Just like this, Elinalise's short period of hesitation cleared up.

And then, finally I discussed it with Sylphy.

In the living room of our home, I gathered together Sylphy, Aisha, and Norn.

I started to talk.

"I'm planning to go assist father and mother."

Sylphy muttered in a small voice, "Eh?", and showed a color of anxiety.

It was a confused face.

However, she soon shook her head and nodded with a serious face.

"Yeah, I understand. Leave things with the house to me."

"I'm sorry that I'm not able to protect the promise that I won't suddenly disappear."

"You're protecting it. It's not sudden at all."

Sylphy smiled shyly.

However, that smile, I felt like it was somewhat artificial.

Even though she might say this or that, she's shaken as well I'm sure.

Somewhat, it's become a feeling like running away.

"Umm, I wonder how long it will take? About two years?"

"No. Actually, thanks to Nanahoshi's cooperation, it's become that we can make use of teleport magic circles. Therefore, I think we'll be able to return in time for the delivery."

I'll talk about the teleport magic circles.

If I can't talk about them with Sylphy then who in the world could I talk to about them.

"Eh!!"

Sylphy was looking at me with a surprised face.

And then, it still turned into a worried face.

"Teleport you say, is it safe?"

We both went through quite a bit of hardship thanks to that teleport incident.

Those sorts of words coming out are only natural.

"I don't know. But it seems Nanahoshi actually used them herself, so I think it will be fine."

"Ye..Yeah."

Sylphy was still making an uneasy face.

I embraced her and whispered close into her ear.

"It's alright, since I'll absolutely return home."

"Yeah."

"Sorry."

"Yeah..."

I'll leave things after to you, such things are proof of trust.

I call out to the little sister in the maid outfit standing behind Sylphy as well.

"Aisha."

"Onii-chan...?"

Aisha was making a more uneasy face than Sylphy.

"Can I entrust things to you?"

"It's fine..is what, I think. Since I properly learned things about a pregnant woman from Okaa-san."

"If you feel it's no good then ask for help from someone reliable. Don't try to do everything yourself. You're excellent, but you're still inexperienced. Get an experienced adult to help you."

"Wa, Yes."

Aisha nodded.

There's some uneasiness remaining, but it can't be helped.

Things never go flawlessly.

"Norn."

"Yes."

"If you feel that Aisha or Sylphy are at their limits, indirectly try to help them. It's fine even if it's just talking or listening to their complaints. If it's something about emotional suffering, then you should understand as well right?"

"Yes! Nii-san!"

"Also, don't neglect your studies as well."

"Yes!"

Somehow Norn is enthusiastic.

It's almost to the point where I'd like to make sure she doesn't get into a fight with Aisha for being too enthusiastic.

Well then, what else is there.

I wonder what else I should say.

"...That's right, should we at least decide on the name of the child before I go?"

I do intend to return home.

But, it's possible that the worst case may happen.

At least it's probably best if I leave after naming it.

I wonder what kind of name we should go with.

Since they think the chuunibyou type is cool in this world, maybe we should go with that type.

If it's a girl then maybe Ciel or Sion.

..If it's a boy then maybe Nero or Wallachia.

No-no, since it's not a game after all.

{ C-Editor's note: Characters from the Melty Blood video game. }

Umm, since it's the child of Rudeus and Sylphy.

If it's a boy then maybe Shius or Sirius?

If it's a girl then maybe Lucy or Lulushi?

That might be too simple.

It might be good to ask around Paul about names in this world.

After taking a look and the three of them were making complicated faces.

"Na..Name you say, Rudi??"

"Onii-chan, why are you saying something like that?"

"Nii-san?"

Everyone is looking at me with uneasy stares.

There's tears starting to build up in the edges of Aisha's eyes.

I wonder if I said something strange.

I wonder if there's such a thing in this world that it's no good to give a child their name before they're born.

"If you do something like give the child a name before going on a journey, you won't be able to come back??"

Sylphy's face was full of uneasiness.

It seems like only I don't know about the death flags of this world.

Ah, No.

I remember.

Come to think of it, there was an act like that in the Legend of Pergius.

One of Pergius's allies, "The Man of Fortune" Fire Emperor class magician, Furouzu Star, said that he might not be able to return from the battle, so he gave a name to the child before he left on the journey.

The name he gave was the same as his own.

Furou Junior.

However, Furozu Star lost his life midway through the battle.

And then, while being reminded of his own son, he was defeated by the hands of Demon King Raineru Kaizeru.

That son, trying to succeed his great father's name, ended up growing up into a splendid magician.

And at least that's how it goes according to the story, but in reality it's said that they became burdened.

Because such a story is famous, giving your conceived child a name before you leave on a journey is considered taboo.

It's not like Furozu died was because he gave his son a name, but well, it's the so called shouldering of an omen I guess.

"...After all, would it be better not to decide on it yet?"

"I..I wonder."

"But, I want to participate in naming it as well... even taking into consideration the worst case..."

"Don't say things like the worst case."

"Sorry."

At any rate, it's my first child.

The sense of reality isn't all that there yet, but I want to try giving it a name.

"[Cough]."

Aisha tried clearing her throat.

It seems she has some kind of plan.

"Onii-chan. Let's do this. If the child is born we'll decide to call it Rudeus Junior, if onii-chan returns home, at that point we'll decide on a name for it. Just like that North God Kaaruman, if we make "Rudeus" into the middle name it will be fine."

Rudeus Junior huh.

In this world it's not all that unusual to give your son the same name as yourself.

For example how about giving it the name Lucy, Luci..el Greyrat is what it would become I guess.

It's not bad.

Doing the same thing as a great man, thinking that feels strangely embarrassing though...

It seems like a large number of people are already doing it after all.

Hn?

Wait, if it's a girl then, moreover if I'm unable to return home then I wonder what they'll do.

Will she be stuck as Rudeus Junior her whole life?

Isn't there something wrong with that name?

If she ends up being picked on over her name and says [What's wrong with Rudeus being a woman's name!] won't she grow up into a child that shouts and hits?

No, there's no way, it's not like she's a Mad Dog from somewhere.

...Yeah, it's better to do it after I return.

"I understand, let's do that. Sylphy."

"Yes."

"...Umm."

I thought to say something to Sylphy, but I can't think of the words for it.

During times like these I can only think of words that seem to give of a bad premonition.

"Sylphy."

I stood in front of Sylphy and placed both of my hands on her shoulders.

"Eh...Ah."

Sylphy sensed it and closed her eyes.

She raised up her jaw and crossed her hands in front of her chest and was trembling.

It's not like it's the first time, but this might be the first time that she's obeyed respectfully with this kind of feeling.

After taking a glance at Aisha and somehow it seems like she's looking over here while leaning her body forward.

Norn was covering her eyes with her hands and looking over here through the gaps in her fingers.

I give a single wink [Pachitto] to the two of them.

And then, suddenly Norn closed her fingers.

In contrast with Aisha who returned the wink [Pachipachitto].

She sure is playful.

You want to see the kiss scene that much huh.

Well, I guess it's fine at these sort of times.

I gently kissed Sylphy.

While listening to small "kya~" shriek from Aisha...

We changed the plans for the journey.

First we buy a horse.

Then we both ride it heading towards the forest with the teleport magic circle.

We make use of the teleport magic circle and then we'll arrive in Begaritto Continent.

According to the story from Nanahoshi, if we travel one week North from there we'll arrive at an Oasis and Bazaar supposedly.

Just, it seems to be a considerably severe desert.

Nanahoshi was in a completely groggy condition and supposedly she had to be moved while carried on Orsted's back.

Since that's the case, it just means we need to firmly take care of preparations.

Well, I have magic as well.

It's possible to create a giant block of ice in the dead center of the desert as well.

I'm sure the flexibility will be effective.

There's no map up until the Bazaar.

However it seems Elinalise has confidence in regards to her sense of direction, she said it was fine to leave that part to her.

It seems the elves don't lose their sense of direction even in deep forests.

When I pointed out that deserts and forests are different she got angry and said, "Exactly how many years do you think I've traveled?"

If she has that much confidence, then I'm sure it'll be fine.

After we arrive at the Bazaar, from there we'll hire a guide.

Lapan is roughly one month north from there.

According to Elinalise, if we only know the direction, then the method of hiring someone is probably faster.

We'll move until we get to Lapan, rapidly assist Paul and the others, then return using the same route.

I'm a bit afraid of letting them know about the teleport magic circles, but it can't be helped.

It would be a strange talk to try and force just Paul and the others to return on the normal route after all.

On the other side, if I remember correctly, there were six people.

If we include Gisu, then it would be seven people.

It won't be good if I don't at least be careful to make sure they keep silent.

Incidentally, I've already finished forbidding Sylphy and my little sisters from speaking about it.

I told them if they spread it around a person who can instakill Ruijerd might show up, so they should sincerely keep it secret.

Preparations for the plan were progressing.

We already gathered all the fundamental types of equipment.

My partner [staff] Aqua Hartia and the robe Sylphy picked out for me.

After that, it's only stuff at the level of the summoning magic scroll I received from Nanahoshi that I'm carrying.

I don't know what I'm going to use it for, but for the time being I'm carrying about ten of them along.

If I have the negative, then I can make more in about a day.

I'm bringing along the drawing material as well, if it's not enough then I can use a mold. If I were to sell them it would be good money as well after all.

Speaking of money, there's no currency exchanges on the other side.

What kind of currency they even use on the other side is unknown.

For the sake of making money, we need to make sure to prepare something that can be turned into money.

After that it's just to the degree of preparing preserved food.

Since it's the first time we're traveling to Begaritto Continent, we don't know if there's some other special thing necessary.

I'm sure it would be better to get our hands on supplies on the other side as well.

Begaritto Continent is said to be a desert.

In order to prevent direct sunlight, I'm sure it's better to carry a coat.

No, there's the robe, I'm sure it will be fine if I just wear a hood.

After that I can deal with things using magic.

If it's a journey of only about one and a half months, then we have considerable leisure with our baggage as well.

We can manage to bring along several unnecessary things as well.

Even though I say that, it's not like we can just bring along anything and everything.

It's better not to take along anything unnecessary.

It's said we'll arrive in the Bazaar one week from the location of the teleport after all, it's not like it's a completely uninhabited place.

There we'll investigate the things we need and gather them.

However for the time being as insurance, we decided to take along a book that has details written down about teleport magic circles.

No matter how much it's said that Orsted makes use of them, that we're using them makes us a bit uneasy after all.

After proceeding to the staff member room once more and lowering my head to Jinas, I received permission to borrow a book for a long period.

In addition, I borrowed one volume of the books on the Fighting God language from the library.

It's insurance for the worst case scenario if I can't communicate any words.

"Exploration Record of the Teleport Labyrinth" and "Begaritto Continent and Fighting God Language".

It should be fine with just these two books.

It seems Ginger was knowledgeable in regards to horses.

Since that's the case, we requested her to accompany us to the stable.

In addition I said greetings to Zanoba as well.

"Is that so, you'll be able to return in just half a year or so."

"Yeah. Well, I can't explain the circumstances though."

"Is that so... since that's the case would you like to bring along Ginger?"

"Don't say foolish things."

I don't want Ginger holding some kind of grudge against me.

"Humu. Is that so."

"More than me, please take care of Sylphy and my little sisters."

"It doesn't even need to be said. Since that's the case, how about I place Ginger as their escort."

Unintentionally I let out a strained laugh.

"You, why do you keep trying to keep that person at a distance like that?"

After asking that and after Zanoba took a glance as Ginger, he secretly said it into my ear.

"She nags a bit too much. Since the time when I was small, she would always be grumbling about trivial things. Even about Julie, recently it's always been about this and that, it's so annoying I can't stand it."

Since she nags too much he doesn't want her nearby.

It's almost like a statement a college student would make towards his mother.

Zanoba is still in the middle of his twenties.

It's not as if I don't understand it.

However, Ginger sure is pitiful as well.

She's still young as well.

Spending her precious twenties looking after this kind of large friend.

"Julie what do you think about her?"

For the time being, I'll try asking Julie as well and see.

I need to tell her to properly keep up her everyday training during the time I'm not around as well.

It would be fine to start working on the Ruijerd dolls after I return.

"Ginger-sama. She taught me about all the bad places of Master."

"Is that what she says. It won't be good if Zanoba fixes his bad places right. He should learn from Julie's example."

"Mumu.."

It's like a mother that has plunged into the life of some siblings living an enjoyable life on their own.

There's that sort of atmosphere here.

It's truly pleasant.

"Ah that's right, Julie. Even when I'm not around as well, make sure you properly do what you were told."

"Yes, Grand Master, I'll give it my best."

Julie's human language has improved considerably as well.

This is the result of Ginger's education as well I'm sure.

And, that moment, Ginger returned from searching for a horse.

Holding onto the reins of a single horse.

"Rudeus-dono. Please judge whether this horse will be good."

"Oh."

It's a huge horse.

The horses around this area are all generally massive for the sake of crunching along even in the snow.

It feels like they're an even larger size than even the horses of the Ban'ei horse racing.

{ C-Editor's note: Ban'ei horse racing is a form of Japanese horse racing in which large work horses pull heavy sleds up sand ramps. }

It seems their speed isn't all that great, but they have physical strength and they're fine running for a full day as well.

It seems like there are many horses that are like monsters in this world.

For the time being, I'll give it the name Matsukaze I guess.

"Thank you, Ginger-san."

"No. Thanks are unnecessary."

"As a reward, is there anything you'd like from Zanoba? Like a shoulder massage?"

"..Rudeus-dono. No matter how much you are Rudeus-dono, don't very much on the side of royalty.."

"Ah, no excuse me, it was a joke."

She seriously started to glare at me.

In any case, we've purchased the horse, we've already said all our farewells properly with those related to the school.

...Huh?

I feel like we're forgetting someone.

No, I'm pretty sure we've said farewells to all our acquaintances.

Badigadi isn't around so he's fine though...

Yeah, it's alright.

I properly forbid everyone I told about it from speaking of the teleport magic circles.

Yeah, there's no problems.

Day of departure.

Saying the final farewells to my family.

In front of the entrance way, my wife and two little sisters are seeing me off.

"Sylphy, I'll return soon."

"Rudi..."

With tears building up in the edges of her eyes Sylphy embraced me.

It's the sensation I've grown used to embracing this past half a year.

Small, but it firmly has warmth, almost like a small animal.

Such shoulders trembling.

"[Sniffle]..."

Sylphy wasn't making any noise, just sniffling with her nose.

When faced with this sort of response, it makes me not want to go.

...As I thought should I just stay home.

...Couldn't Paul get by somehow or other until the delivery.

...That's right, after giving it some thought, normally then it would take close to a year for the one way trip.

...Even if I just stay at home for another seven months or so, wouldn't it be fine to depart after watching over to make sure the delivery goes safely?

...Since it takes one and a half months to get there, even so isn't it like meeting within 10 minutes.

Such a thought was floating through my mind.

However, Gisu especially went out of the way to use the express post to deliver it.

On the Begaritto Continent, in order to contact other continents, it's a high speed post that only goes one-way.

Since you can't send anything other than extremely short messages, on top of that it's expensive, it's not something you can use any number of times.

He especially went out of his way to send the letter using such a method.

It's an emergency.

It's without a doubt a situation where every minute matters.

Even though I say that, we'll make it in time for the delivery.

It's something like going for a short business trip.

I wiped Sylphy's tears.

And then, I called out to my two little sisters standing behind her.

"Aisha and Norn as well. I'll leave things to you."

What I'm leaving to them I don't really know myself.

However my two little sisters nodded with meek faces.

"Nii-san. Please don't worry about anything, since I'll give it my best."

"I understand. Onii-chan as well, may the fortunes of war be with you!"

I quietly nodded to those words.

"Yeah. Anyways, both of you, make sure you don't fight."

"Yes."

"Yes."

The two who faithfully nodded were making bitter smiles.

"Sylphy!"

Elinalise who was on the horse approached us.

On top of the horse two weeks worth of luggage was packed, but it's movements haven't even slowed a bit.

As expected of Matsukaze.

"It's alright, even without the husband a child will still be born. Since I'm the one saying it there's no mistake."

"...Yes, Obaa-chan as well, please take care of yourself."

"There's no need for worry, everything will go well."

Elinalise gallantly flipped her hair back.

How cool.

It's almost like a female knight that comes out in a fairy tale.

If it comes down to this, I'll just have to pretend I didn't see the scene of Elinalise going back and forth the other day.

It will halve the moving impression.

Well, I guess it just means that the usually aloof Elinalise has her weak points as well.

Everyone has times when they lose themselves.

"Then, we'll head off and return."

I jumped up onto the horse.

Behind Elinalise.

It was a slender but reliable back.

And then warm.

Sorry about this Cliff, I'm borrowing it for a bit.

"Rudi?"

Sylphy tilted her head just a bit.

No it's not like that.

If I don't properly hold onto her then I'll fall I say.

"I'm heading off and shall return."

Let's depart.

Five days southwest of the Magic City Sharia.

We arrived at a forest.

These past five days we've been traveling together with a single man we hired at the adventurer's guild.

For the sake of taking the horse and returning.

The horse would just be a hindrance in the forest after all, we don't know the size of the teleport magic circle as well.

It might be convenient for carrying our luggage through the desert, but I'm sure that it would be better to purchase something from the other side instead.

That land should have its own animals more suited to the desert.

Then, it's better for someone to take the horse and return I'm sure.

It's not a cheap purchase after all, we'll make it into our horse.

Since I can't ride a horse, we're moving while I cling to Elinalise from behind.

Naturally, it's not like I'm not doing anything at all.

And, that's not in an erotic meaning.

Everyday I'm pouring magic power into that diaper type magic tool.

Since I have my arms around the area of her hips, the adventurer who was accompanying us was making an envious face as he watched me.

We separated with the horse at the entrance of the forest.

We had the adventurer person take it and return home.

Goodbye Matsukaze.

Live energetically, since Aisha is probably the one who will be looking after you, get along well.

Well then, it's the southwestern forest.

What was the name of it again.

If I remember correctly, it was the Forest of Lumen or a name with that kind of feeling.

If we were to go with a literal translation it would be Stomach Forest I'd say.

If I were to try and express this forest in a single word then it would be, "thick", I'm sure.

The density of the trees is thick.

There are many trees that are huge and the trunks are thick as well.

Since the leaves have overgrown and obstruct the sunlight, the entire area is dim, the ground as well, rather than call it the ground it's more like walking on enlarged roots and the footing isn't all that good.

Since the trees are larger, the roots are thick as well; there's a considerable difference in the sizes.

There's places where the trees and roots ended up like a stairway as well.

It's like a natural dungeon.

If it's like this, then I'm sure even people who are used to walking through the forest could easily get lost as well.

And then, inside of the forest you get attacked by monsters and almost fall to your death slipping from the roots at high point.

As a result it means you end up becoming nutrients for the forest.

The Stomach is a nicely way of putting it.

Most likely, lumberjacks don't stop by this forest very often.

Maybe because of the frequency at which monsters come out, some of them are strong, or else other forests are just much better for providing lumber.

I'm sure in regards to a reason it would be along those lines.

Oh my, you shouldn't go making light of lumberjacks.

The lumberjacks in this world, they're stronger than the average adventurer and they work like an organization.

There's an abundance of lumber in the forest, but monsters come out.

Even just cutting the trees you have no choice other than to take on a high danger.

Forming a team and occasionally hiring some adventurers as your combat potential, then while fighting the monsters on the expedition, you cut the trees.

There's no way anyone in the Lumberjack Guild would be weak.

If no Lumberjacks enter it then the trees won't be cut down.

If the trees aren't cut down, splendid Treants will grow up.

"Rudeus, just as we arranged, we'll go with the same formation as before."

"Understood."

Although, in the case of veterans like us there's no how about it.

Without particularly working ourselves up we enter the forest.

Elinalise is the advance guard and I'm the rear guard.

For Elinalise I'd say as expected of the Elf race.

Her method of walking through the forest was really well done.

Her ears are good, she can detect enemies very fast as well.

"On our right, there's three of them!"

"Understood."

Just as I was told, I fire a rock bullet in that direction.

And then, in the distance an emerald green wild boar has blood spraying out.

I see the remaining two panic and run away as well.

Search and Destroy.

Elinalise finds them and I dispose of them with magic.

The monsters are annihilated without even being able to approach.

It's nice and easy.

Honestly, there was no close combat.

It seems Elinalise was avoiding the territory of monsters that swarm as we pass.

Rather than it being the special characteristic of the Elf race, it seems more like something from her own experience.

"We've found it, it's this stone monument right."

After walking for a short while Elinalise discovered the landmark.

It was a stone monument with a crest carved into it.

In front there was something like a wall covered in densely grown ivy.

I had prepared myself to end up walking around in the forest for two or three days, but we managed to quickly find it before the sun went down.

I'm sure without a doubt Elinalise has such a skill as, "Detect Secret Doors".

The stone monument was similar to the stone monument of the Seven World Powers and it has the crest of the Dragon God carved into it.

It's a design with triangles combined together into an acute angle.

Somehow or other, the image that floats into your head looks similar to a crest that gives off an impression of overwhelming power.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Triforce artifact from The Legend of Zelda video game. }

The details are completely wrong, but as I thought it seems to look like a wooden printing block of a dragon's face.

However... this crest.

I feel like I've seen it somewhere before...

Ah, I see.

It was in the basement of my house, it looks similar to the crest that was on the research data of the automatic doll.

But, the details of that crest are somewhat different as well.

It's just the ambiance of it that's similar.

I wonder if it could be that the producer of that doll was someone related to the Dragon God...

No well, I'm sure there are any number of similar crests.

Even the national flags in the world of my previous life, there were a lot of them that looked similar.

"What's the matter?"

"No, it's nothing."

After being asked by Elinalise I shook my head.

We don't have the spare time to worry over something like that right now.

"For the time being, let's release the barrier."

"I'll leave it to you."

After a short exchange, Elinalise started to keep lookout of the surroundings.

I placed my hand on top of the stone monuments and looked at the memo.

It's the notes Nanahoshi blessed us with.

What was written there were the words for an incantation.

"That dragon lived solely while following its faith. Nothing is able to escape from the grasp of those grand arms. The second dragon that died. He who possessed the most ephemeral eyes Dragon General of Lustrous Green Scales. Borrowing the name of the Holy Dragon Emperor Shilard, I now pierce that barrier."

Just then, the stone monument started sucking magic power out of my arm.

Simultaneously the space in front of my eyes around the stone monument started to distort.

We could see ahead of the stretched distortion.

With trees overgrown in the place where there was the wall like thing, a building made of stone appeared.

"Oh, amazing."

"I've never seen magic like this before.."

Seeing that spectacle the two of us just let out voices of wonder.

However, I have a recollection of this sensation of magic power being sucked out.

It's the same sensation as the time when you make use of a magic tool.

Most likely, this stone monument itself is a variety of magic tool.

I wonder if the Seven World Powers stone monument is a magic tool as well.

If you were to split it open, you might find a magic circle inserted inside it.

However, this incantation.

I can't shake the feeling that it's an original of the Dragon God.

Holy Dragon Emperor Shilard, or something like that comes out after all.

This is, that right.

One of those guys that comes out in the legends, the "Five Dragon Generals" right?

This incantation, since it has no magic name most likely you can't figure out what it is from just the middle of it, but if I could understand it through the end, it may or may not be able to achieve the same effect as this stone monument.

For example, cancelling out all barriers.

I'm troubled since it seems possible.

"Let's get going."

"Sure."

If I could I'd like to extract this stone monument and take it home with me.

But if Orsted were to find out about it, he might come to kill me.

I'll stop there.

"Nevertheless, they certainly do give off the feeling of ruins."

"Occasionally, the entrances of labyrinths are this sort of feeling."

What appeared was just a single floor made of stone.

The walls had ivy crawling all along them, several places were worn down and crumbling.

"Rudeus it's your first time in a labyrinth right."

"Yeah."

"Be careful not to step outside of my footsteps."

"Understood... or rather, this place, isn't a labyrinth is it?"

"It's just in case."

Traps are scary after all.

However, I'm sure Elinalise isn't particularly a master or anything.

I wonder if it's alright.

Even if we get caught in a trap, I wonder if we would be able to stand it.

For the time being, I'll keep my Demon Eye open.

If anything happens, I should be able to deal with it on the spot.

"Then, let's go, if anything happens cover me."

"Understood."

Together with Elinalise we walked into the ruins.

".."

Inside was made of stone as well and from in there ivy and roots were coming out.

It's exactly the feeling of ruins deep in a forest.

Even though I say that, it doesn't seem to be all that large of a building.

There were only four rooms.

We decided to take a look at them in order.

There was nothing in the two rooms near the entrance.

They were just a space of about 4.5 tatami mats filled with clatter.

In the third room there was something like a closet.

After opening it to look inside, winter clothes for a man were placed inside for storage.

There are traces of it being used.

I wonder if someone would get changed here.

Someone, though I can't think of anyone other than Orsted.

According to the story, on the other side of the teleport it's a desert. I guess in the winter around here it ends up a snow-fallen area

You can't get your hands on winter clothes in the desert.

Therefore, that would be why they were left here beforehand.

Humu, if there was this sort of room, then it might have been fine to bring even more luggage.

Well, it's too late now.

"What's the matter? Staring at those clothes, is there something that's bothering you?"

"No, if we were to leave behind some luggage here, I was just thinking we could have made use of something."

"...Here, then it would be like throwing things away as you go."

Well, as expected you wouldn't be able to leave behind food goods or that type of thing in storage.

Even if there's a barrier, it seems like bugs or such things could get in after all.

"Let's go."

"Yes."

There were stairs in the final room.

Stairs going underground.

"Oh my, how suspicious..."

Elinalise was carefully investigating the surroundings of the stairway.

It was a movement kind of like clearing in an FPS.

{ C-Editor's note: FPS - First person shooter game. }

It seems there are many cases of traps in the vicinity of stairways.

"It's alright."

However, it seems she wasn't able to find anything.

In the first place, if there was a trap set, then I'm sure there would be more placed in other locations.

For example, the entrance of the ruins.

"We're going to descend. Follow me."

"Understood."

Elinalise was carefully proceeding down.

I was following behind in Elinalise's footprints as well.

I would look at the same place as her footsteps and step on the same spot.

Even though we're going underground, our surroundings are mysteriously bright.

The reason for that became clear at the time when we descended into the underground.

"...It's there, isn't it?"

Ahead of where we descended from the stairs there was a large magic circle.

The size would be about 4.5 tatami mats, I guess.

It's about the same size as the one I saw in the cellar of the Shirone Royal Palace.

That was releasing a bluish-white light.

"This is a teleport magic circle?"

"Most likely, I'd say it is."

For the time being, I took the book out of my luggage and looked at it while making a comparison.

It had a resemblance to the type of magic circles which are capable of two-way teleportation.

The details are different, but there's no mistake on the characteristics.

If the story I heard from Nanahoshi is true, then if you place your foot here, just like that, you'll be in Begaritto Continent.

Elinalise just kept staring at the teleport magic circle while standing still.

"What's wrong? Let's go."

"No, I have somewhat bad memories from teleportation."

Bad memories of teleportation, huh.

There must have been something that happened during her adventurer days.

"If it's just at the level of bad memories, then I have some as well."

"That's right, isn't it?"

Elinalise shook her head and looked at the magic circle with an "alright."

"If we end up being dropped into some weird place, let's punish Nanahoshi."

"...Yeah. I'll capture her with both of my arms, and during that time you can thrust into her."

"No, in a sexual way is just a bit."

"I didn't particularly say what you would be thrusting into her and where. For example sticking your fingers into her nose, easily coming to those sorts of ideas, you sure are lewd!"

"Thrust my fingers into a girl's nose or something like that, wouldn't that be something to get excited about."

"Oh my, is that so? Next time I'll have Cliff give it a try."

"I won't take any responsibility for that."

While we were making immodest jokes, my hand was grabbed by Elinalise.

It was a slender but sinewy hand.

It's the hand of an adventurer.

Warm and a bit sweaty.

My heart's beating a bit.

Even though I have Sylphy.

Even though Elinalise has Cliff.

If I take her hand, I wonder what would happen.

Rather than an affair, it's more like adultery.

It's not like we particularly like each other.

"It seems like you're making some kind of misunderstanding, but if you aren't in contact with some part of their body then you won't be teleported together you know?"

"Ah, that's right isn't it? Excuse me."

No good, no good.

It's not like I'm a virgin. These sorts of misunderstandings are no good.

"Ah~, to be seducing my granddaughter's husband. How sinful of a woman I am!"

"In order to atone for the sin, you should do it for once."

"Ah, wait, don't say those sorts of things."

Humu.

If we can poke fun at it with this kind of feeling, then it doesn't seem like we'll cross over the line.

As expected of Elinalise's ability to read the mood.

"Now then, shall we go?"

"Yeah."

We stepped foot on the teleport magic circle.

I felt a sensation almost like suddenly waking up from sleep.

I guess it would be the feeling of being taken aback.

It clearly felt like my consciousness was interrupted for a moment.

After looking next to me, Elinalise was looking over the surroundings with a face like a fox had her as well.

"We've teleported haven't we?"

"I wonder."

I look at our surroundings.

It's the same as just before, ruins made of stone.

It really doesn't look like there are any differences.

No, in the corner there's a bit of sand piling up.

There's no ivy along the walls anymore as well.

The light brown color has increased as a whole.

It's a different place.

We slowly and carefully leave the magic circle.

There's nothing unusual with our bodies.

We have our baggage.

Elinalise and the contents haven't changed places either.

After we left, the magic circle started up activity again and began to release a bluish-white light.

That sure is convenient.

From what I can see, even though it doesn't seem like a magic crystal has been established anywhere, I wonder how it works.

I wonder if there's a crystal left deep underground.

If it's capable of absorbing the magic power from its surroundings, then I would certainly like to know the method but...

"And. For the time being, I'd like to ascertain if we can return."

"That's right."

There are magic circles for two-way teleportation, but that doesn't mean we are able to return unconditionally.

In the case of a one-way passage, we'll have to return on foot.

We've already managed to come here, but the return trip on foot would still be half a year.

"Then I will..."

"No, I'll go. I'll go for a short while and if I can't return, then go on ahead without me."

After saying that Elinalise had me step back.

"If the worst case happens and you end up disappearing, I'll pass on reporting that to Paul."

"I see, then I'll leave it to you."

Well, I don't really mind which of us does it.

It does seem like we were teleported, but it's not certain that this is even Begaritto after all.

"Then, I'm going."

Elinalise jumped onto the magic circle.

In the next instant, it was almost like the magic circle sucked her up and her figure disappeared.

It's the first time I've seen the moment when someone was teleported.

It gave off a feeling kind of like being swallowed up by the ground.

I wonder if you move through the inside of the ground.

"..."

For the time being, I'll wait at ease.

I have faith in Nanahoshi's story.

Orsted claimed that it doesn't particularly require any incantation.

There's the possibility that it might have required some kind of magic tool as well, but for the time being we've already succeeded on the teleport once.

Then, I want to think that returning will be fine as well.

Five minutes.

Ten minutes.

Fifteen minutes.

"She's slo...O."

After fifteen minutes Elinalise returned.

In the moment she appeared it was like a reverse playback of the moment she disappeared.

From the ground it seemed like she was almost exhaled out as she appeared.

Elinalise was restlessly looking around her surroundings, after seeing my figure she nodded deeply.

"I was able to properly return it seems."

"In any case, you were just a bit slow though."

"Is that so? I had intended to return immediately though."

Is there some sort of time lag.

Even though I say that, it's at most several minutes.

On the one-way path only about seven minutes.

I wonder if the time difference has some relation to it.

Ah, come to think of it, I feel like I heard the story somewhere that there was a bit of a lag between the time when Fedoa Region disappeared and the refugees started to appear as well.

Was the one who said it Sylphy I wonder?

Teleporting isn't instant movement, but it might be high speed movement.

Or else maybe it's something like Boson Jump.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the fictional means of travel in the Nadesico anime series. }

"In any case, if we're able to return then there's no problem."

"That's right."

If it was something dangerous, then I'm sure Orsted wouldn't use it after all.

We should just be fine with the fact that we were able to confirm we can return.

"Then shall we go."

After we confirmed that we can make use of the magic circle, we went up the stairs.

The moment we arrived on the first floor, I felt the temperature quickly rising.

It was a gust of hot air.

However, maybe because the humidity is low, but it doesn't feel all that sticky.

I heard that the desert stretched out around the surroundings of the ruins.

Then, I can understand this heat as well.

The first floor was made well with stone the same as the ruins in the forest.

If there was something you could call a difference, it would be that there's no ivy on the walls and roof, and there's sand piling up in the passage.

There's almost enough sand that you can barely see the floor.

And, there's a number of footprints still remaining.

It better not be those of Orsted.

If we end up running into him, I'll have to surrender in a dogeza.

There were four rooms.

I wonder if the layout of the ruins is the same.

Inside of one of the rooms, there was a thick white mantle and a canteen deposited.

...As I thought this should be something that belongs to Orsted I'm sure.

"The footprints, what should we do, should we try and erase them."

"Is it that one Orsted? I think it will be fine but.."

But, it's scary.

I wonder if we should leave a note or something.

With Nanahoshi's referral, I've made usage of your teleportion magic circle. We will make sure to keep to the obligation of confidentiality, so please do not get angry. Something like that.

...Since we don't know when he'll come, unexpectedly the probability that he doesn't find out might be high as well.

There's the possibility that the note itself might be the snake in the bush.

For the time being, I'll avoid going with that.

After that, we investigated the rest of the ruins, but naturally we didn't run into Orsted.

After investigating the rooms we went outside.

It was hot outside.

It wasn't warm.

It was HOT.

The breeze blowing across my face hurts.

In front of my eyes was the scenery of sand dunes spreading out that I've seen a number of times in pictures in my previous life.

It's a desert.

However, the sun has started to set.

I'm sure it will be night very soon.

How did it go, was it better to walk around in the desert at night?

Or since it's below freezing at night, was it no good to move around?

I wonder if it's fine to apply that sort of common sense to this world as well.

...If I remember correctly, there are many monsters in the desert that are active at night.

Moving around in the darkness, I'm sure getting surprise attacked by monsters would be dangerous.

"Elinalise-san, what should we do?"

"Even if we started walking now, we wouldn't cover very much distance. It's a bit early, but let's sleep in a place with a roof."

It became that we would be staying over night in these ruins for today.

The night was an intense cold.

I had heard that the temperature difference from the day and the night were severe, and that certainly was the case.

It's fine right now because we're inside of the ruins, but I can't help but think about the time when we'll be camping outside.

I wonder if it would be fine to create a shelter with earth magic and pass time there.

Using earth magic to create an "Earth Fortress" is convenient, but if I stop supplying it with magic power it will collapse.

However, if I tamper with it a bit, maintaining it in the shape of a Kamakura is possible.

We could make a campfire inside of there and warm it up.

Yeah, let's go with that.

For today, we're laying down in sleeping bags in one of the rooms in the ruins.

For the time being, before sleeping I poured all the magic power I could supply into Elinalise's magic tool.

Putting my hand on the diaper and pouring magic power into it.

It's an idiotic scene.

Elinalise said it in passing.

"...Rudeus, if you end up not having enough magic power, at that time put off the magic tool."

"But, if I stop supplying this magic power, won't Elinalise-san be unable to endure it?"

"If it comes to combat, then your magic is absolutely essential. Let's go with placing priority on that."

The monsters on Begaritto Continent aren't as strong as the ones on Magic Continent.

Even though I say that, there should be monsters at the same level.

We can't let our guard down.

"No, with just this much then it's not like my magic power will disappear after all."

"Is that so? It's really endless isn't it.."

"It doesn't match up to Elinalise-san's sexual desire though."

"Ara, it's not to that degree at all."

In the first place, if I skip out on pouring magic power into the magic tool and Elinalise becomes a sex beast then it would be terrible.

If I'm attacked then I'm sure I won't be able to endure it.

[Just once, it'll be fine as just a secret between the two of us.]

[I resisted it, but I wasn't able do anything to prevent it.]

Like that, I can make up a lot of excuses for myself after all.

If I can't endure it, both of us might end up experiencing disaster.

Like Elinalise getting pregnant.

Cliff would resent me for his whole life, Sylphy would look at me with an empty look, my little sisters would scorn me.

Yeah, if I were to lay my hands on Elinalise, I can't see anything but a bad future ahead.

If, you end up unable to endure it, at least make do with just the mouth.

And, that's no good.

By the point that such thoughts as those rise to the surface, I start to accumulate it as well.

This past week I've been clinging on to Elinalise after all.

We haven't done anything particularly erotic, but I am young after all.

Tonight, at the time when I'm standing guard, I need to make sure I take care of it.

"Well, let's sleep. It seems that for a short while this desert will continue, it won't be good if we don't preserve our physical strength."

"That's right."

Even though it's no good if we don't preserve our physical strength, if I don't let out what needs to be let out it won't be good.

It's painful being a man.

That night.

While we were on standby in a room of the ruins I suddenly could smell a sweet scent.

And simultaneously I suddenly felt a throbbing.

My heart was beating fast.

After opening my eyes, there Elinalise was sleeping.

While embracing her sword close she seemed unable to sleep well.

The nape of her neck is white.

Her hands are white and supple.

Her face looks similar to Sylphy, but more adult-like than Sylphy.

Her figure as well, her height is taller than Sylphy and slender.

Especially, the line going from her waist to her hip, more than any other woman I've seen until now it was a perfectly drawn curve.

Elinalise, if I remember correctly, she was unreasonably skille..d right..

"Haa..haa.."

By the time I realized it, my log had grown into a large tree.

My head feels fuzzy.

"Nn.."

Elinalise twists her body.

The blanket opened up and I could see her thighs tightly wrapped in those fur pants.

It's a good butt.

It makes one want to start groping it with all their strength.

Subconsciously, I started to stretch my hand out towards her inner thighs.

I want to touch.

I want to touch.

Tempted by emotion, I touch her inner thigh.

Her legs are almost like an antelope.

After I touched them and Elinalise let out a moan of "nn", she slightly opened her legs.

This person, isn't she tempting me...?

By the time I realize it, my lower half is already in a situation where it can't endure.

It's fine. It's alright. If it's just once, just once.

Elinalise won't refuse it.

She'll silently accept it.

It's no problem, just like that.

"Cliff...?"

With her sleep-talk, I returned to myself.

I crawled on all fours and left the room.

Just like that, I left outside the ruins like I was running away from something.

I thought I was still safe, but it seems like it's somewhat saved up.

No good, no good.

I can't be swept away by a moment's feelings.

This sort of sinful fluid, it's restricted to being ejected.

Thinking that, I sit down on top of the sand.

And then around the time I pull down my pants.

Suddenly, I feel a presence.

"...Nn?"

I wonder if it's Elinalise.

Thinking that, I face the direction of the presence and there was a bewitching female standing there.

Even though it's cold, she's wearing attire like a dancer.

The cloth is thin. If you look in bright places, it might appear transparent.

Her hair was short and the color is black I guess. The ends of her hair have some curls.

It's hard to tell what color her skin is in this darkness.

Just, in this darkness, it appears to shine dimly white.

In any case, it's a good body.

Almost like the kind you would want to hug. I'm sure this would be that case.

It's a dynamite body.

If I were to make the comparisons, Elinalise is like a tree branch.

She placed her finger to her lips.

Then she licked the tip of her finger.

That bewitching gesture, I had my eyes stolen.

I couldn't take my eyes off her lips.

Just like that, she slowly walked over to my side.

And then crouched in front of me and slowly spread her thighs.

In that instant, the same sweet scent that I just smelled before went into my nose.

A scent with a more overwhelming richness than just before was stimulating my nose.

"[Gulp]..."

I swallow my saliva.

I felt like something was dripping from my chin.

After wiping it and taking a look my hand was stained in deep red.

I realized I had a nosebleed.

"Ufufufu.."

She extended her arms telling me to come.

I grabbed that hand almost like falling towards her and...

"Rudeus!"

In the next instant, I heard a shout echo from inside the ruins.

Simultaneously, a woman jumped out.

In the place where the woman was, Elinalise, while holding a sword, jumped.

Just like that, she thrust herself into the space between the woman and I.

"Get a hold of yourself!"

"Eh?"

Bewilderment.

Elinalise was standing at the ready, she charged towards the woman.

"Ki.....!"

The woman raised a high-pitched scream and grew out strangely long nails.

Before my eyes, her physique was changing and wings grew out of her back.

Moving those wings, she flew into the sky.

There she leaped to attack Elinalise.

Ga~n!

After, she hit the shield and with a dull metal sound let out, the woman rolled onto the ground.

Without delay Elinalise pinned down the woman's body with her foot.

And then, she stabbed her sword into the torso of the struggling woman.

"Gyo....."

The woman let out an eerie voice.

Without negligence, Elinalise stuck her sword into the woman's body a number of times.

After that, she stepped back taking some distance.

For a short while, the woman moved with a twitch, but after a little while she stopped moving.

She died.

"Eh..."

I watched that scene in a daze.

Wait, what happened I don't know.

Same as always, my lower body was ecstatic.

Huh?

Why?

What happened?

While I was in confusion, Elinalise started slapping my cheeks.

"Get a hold of yourself, it's a Succubus!"

"Eh? Succubus? Just now was?"

The dead woman.

No matter how you look it, she's a normal woman.

Though she was growing wings like a bat from her back and her nails were abnormally long.

Ah, after looking properly, her skin is blue.

The parts of her face as well, if you look closely, they're a little different from a humans.

But, it's a good body.

Though she died.

If she's dead, then she won't get angry if I grope them.

There's holes on a corpse as well after all...

"It's the first time I've seen one as well though. Just as it was said in the rumors, there's a scent strong enough to twist your nose, there's no mistake.."

"Scent?"

Rather I feel it's a good scent.

I feel amazingly aroused.

In any case,

look at Elinalise's body.

While her chest is on the small side, she has a beautiful face and long slender legs.

That splendid curve around her hips.

"Elinalise-san, you have a good body right?"

"Wa? Wait, Rudeus. Get a hold of yourself."

It's alright, this woman is lewd.

If I praise her, I can do it.

Do it. She's an easy to do girl.

"I feel like I want to be embraced by a gentle person like Elinalise-san..."

"I'll tell on you to Sylphy?"

"If you don't say anything, it'll never be exposed.."

I stand up and face Elinalise.

Elinalise prepared her shield and drew back.

"Ah, come to think of it, I heard that Succubi bewilder men."

"Hey, Elinalise-san..let's do perverted things.."

Elinalise lowered her eyebrows and sighed once.

"Hnnn!!"

Ga~n!

I was hit with the shield.

I was thrown back on top of the sand.

My eyes are flickering.

No, that's fine, rather than that it's Elinalise.

If I don't violate the woman in front of my eyes right now.

"Haa..haa..one time, it'll be fine just one time. I'll absolutely make sure to satisfy you so..."

"Ah, geeze..Rudeus. While I count to 10, use Detoxification magic."

"Detoxification magic? Then will you let me do it?"

"...Quickly use it."

Without even trying to hide my rough breathing, I say the incantation for detoxification magic.

Starting with elementary and then moving into the incantation from intermediate.

Suddenly my body feels lighter.

"...Huh?"

Suddenly my head feels refreshed.

My lower body is a bit heavy, but the unbearable sexual desire is already gone.

I look at Elinalise.

Well, her figure is erotic.

Certainly it's erotic.

But, it's just that.

"The scent that Succubus let out, I had heard that it has the effect of seducing men, but it sure is exceptional isn't it?"

After letting out a sigh, Elinalise put her sword into its sheath.

And then, crossed her arms and "fu.." took a deep breath and sighed.

"..Fu.. Good grief."

".."

Just now I. What was I doing?

The words I said a moment ago.

...This is bad.

"Now, let's sleep. Please take care not to let your guard down next time."

While saying that, Elinalise returned back into the room.

While fidgeting with my hands together, I called out to her.

"Umm, Elinalise-san. That is, I'm sorry about just now."

After saying that, Elinalise turned around with a suspicious face and then laughed with a grin.

"I want to try being gently embraced by a person like Elinalise-san."

I felt my face get hot.

That is something the Succubus forcibly made me say!

"Let's do perverted things?"

"Gununu"

What is this?

Why is this so embarrassing?

While Elinalise was laughing and grinning, she walked up to where I was, and patted my head with a [Ponpon].

"I understand. Succubi are that sort of monster. It can't be helped. Of course, I will make sure not to say anything to Sylphy or Paul as well."

"Elinalise-san!"

Erinarise looked like a goddess.

"But it's not good to be too trusting. Until now I've been able to handle things myself, but since the curse is gradually getting stronger. Eventually I will be unable to endure it anymore."

"I understand. Please take good care of me at that time."

"That's not it, at that time you need to endure it!"

"Yes."

After saying that, Elinalise quietly smiled.

"Then, since I'm going to sleep, please take care of continuing to keep a lookout...also, please burn the corpse as well."

"Understood."

Elinalise went inside of the ruins.

I did something bad.

I burned the body of the Succubus and buried the bones.

After looking from nearby, the Succubus didn't have a cute face or anything at all.

It was a face like a bat.

Why did I feel desire towards this kind of thing I wonder?

When I looked at it just now I thought it had a human face though.

If you reveal it's real nature you'll see it's true face, or something like that I guess.

It's like a Vampire from western movies.

Body huh, this body is no good huh.

It had a good body though.

Bon-kyu-bon.

{ C-Editor's note: Bon-kyu-bon means big-small-big and refers to Japanese women with hourglass figures. }

It feels kind of like having the option to attach breasts to Elinalise.

And, no good, no good.

In any case, that was dangerous.

If Elinalise hadn't jumped out there, I wonder what would have happened.

Just like that, if I took that hand...

I might have died from having my vitality sucked out.

Wu, nevertheless, my lower body is heavy.

This and that as well, it's all because of that Succubus.

If this is going to continue, I might really end up attacking Elinalise.

Before I enter the ruins, I should make sure to take care of it.

In any case, from now on, I need to be cautious of Succubi as well.

Just like this, we passed our first night on Begaritto Continent.

Our trip in the desert began.

My body was tense thanks to the surprise attack from the Succubus.

Perhaps due to spending the last few years in school, my intuition might have dulled.

Although, my intuition was never that sharp anyway.

These sorts of things are dependent on the feeling.

This is the Begaritto Continent.

It is different from the safe Central Continent.

I may die if I'm not careful.

"Let's wear thick clothes for now. Making sure to keep well hydrated, please tell me if the water in your flask runs out."

"Understood."

We are wearing a hood and a coat.

We aren't letting our skin get exposed.

If Cliff was here, he would probably complain about having to wear thick clothes even though it is so hot.

Even though we're in a desert, I can make water and ice with magic.

However, we don't know what might happen.

Neither me nor Elinalise know the proper ways of traveling through the desert.

I have to make sure I don't suddenly get heat stroke and become unable to use magic.

"The direction we should advance, well, is North fine?"

"Yeah, I'm in your care."

Looking at the map, the closest town is due north.

Elinalise began walking precisely North without relying on a compass.

The elves do not lose their sense of direction even within a dense forest where you can't see the sun.

With her decades of experience, Elinalise can move straight in the correct direction.

Although, even without being an elf there are many people in this world who can safely arrive in the village as long as they have a map.

It probably comes from experience.

"Anyway, it's hot isn't it."

"Should I make rain fall on this whole region?"

"You'd better not, monsters will come."

In any desert, living things seek water.

In the Great Forest as well, during the rainy season lizard-like beasts came out in large quantities.

However, I heard that the beasts of the Begaritto Continent are weak to cold.

If the time comes, I will freeze the whole area.

Obviously making sure I don't drag Elinalise into it.

While thinking such, I followed Elinalise.

Just in case, I confirmed the position of the stone monument as well.

It's the first time I have ever walked in a desert.

It feels like my foot is buried in soft sand every step I take.

It's good that I got used to walking in the snow in the northern lands.

Although, I can't say it's the same thing, the burden on my legs is about the same.

Like this I won't have any problem even walking through the whole day.

Or that's what I thought, but I was exhausted after walking for just a few hours.

The strong sunlight must be affecting me.

The strong rays and hot winds raise my body temperature and make me dizzy.

Although, I am regulating my body temperature by replenishing fluids, the lethargy that occurs is beyond control.

Perhaps I should have made at least one cloud in the atmosphere.

Compared to me, Elinalise was full of energy.

"Rudeus, unexpectedly you have no stamina, do you?"

"Well, I think the sand is fine since I am used to walking in snow. But I can do nothing about the heat."

"But I'm sure if it was Cliff or Zanoba here they would have collapsed long ago. I think it was the right call not to take them along."

As I thought the warriors of this world have monstrous stamina.

Perhaps this is thanks to Fighting Spirit?

I'm jealous.

Still, the heat is dangerous.

It feels like my sweat evaporates the instant it comes out.

When I was in the northern lands, the cold was dangerous.

Back then I just used magic to raise the temperature in the space around me.

It was an application of the fire magic [Burning Blaze].

If I tamper with that it might be useful here.

I'll try activating it right now.

"Oh, that feels nice, did you do something?"

"I tried lowering the air temperature around us."

It feels like the temperature dropped something around 5°C.

It's still too hot.

This flashiness must be because of the never ending sun.

Even though I am wearing a hood, the top of my head is burning.

It might have been good to prepare a parasol.

For now, I walked forward while lowering the temperature around me and froze a water flask to put under my clothes.

If it melts I will freeze it again with magic.

This made me feel a lot better.

Like this, I can handle the heat.

During the day, we encountered several beasts.

What we first saw looked like a big scorpion.

About 2 meters I'd say.

The tail was separated into two and each attacked by moving separately.

According to Elinalise it was a [Twin Death Scorpion].

Because the tails emit deadly poison, you can't treat it without Intermediate detoxification.

It's good that I learned it.

The [Twin Death Scorpion] had a somewhat hard shell, but its movement was slow.

After Elinalise stopped it's movement, I shot a single [Rock Bullet].

It was an opponent we could defeat in two seconds.

It seems to be B class, but the affinity with the party was good. It's a small fry.

However, if it was Elinalise alone it would be a close fight due to her lacking a bit in attack strength, it seems.

"Phew, it's pretty big isn't it?"

"Isn't it pretty normal?"

"About the same size as the beasts on the Demon Continent."

Well, now that you mention it...

The beasts on Begaritto Continent are weaker than the ones on Demon Continent.

That's what I heard, so this size was a bit of a surprise.

I expected the size to be about half of this.

"This one might be especially big compared to the others, right?"

"The one you meet first being the best is something you hear often."

"No, it's not."

"Well, maybe the opponents in this area are just stronger."

"That might be the case."

While conversing like that, we hurried forward.

The next thing we saw was a treant.

This monster is really everywhere isn't it.

This time it was formed into a cactus.

By the way, it's called a [Cactus Treant].

It's a C rank monster.

It came in shooting needles and used something similar to earth magic as well, but still it was nothing special.

"I feel sort of relieved whenever I find a treant."

"It's something you find everywhere after all. It's like a slime."

"Hmm? You only find slimes in caves though?"

"Uhh don't mind me just talking to myself. Anyway, you can't really make this cactus into firewood can you?"

"It has absorbed too much moisture after all. If you have no magic though it's a thankful existence."

Elinalise can currently use water magic as well.

Although I thought she was skipping classes, it seems she was properly learning whatever she could.

Then that thing suddenly appeared.

"Enemy attack!"

While suddenly shouting that, Elinalise took a back step.

In the next instant, something big came out of the ground where Elinalise had been.

It's an earthworm.

With a thickness of one meter and a length of about five meters, a giant worm burst out of the ground.

After making a weird "bakun!!" sound in midair it immediately dove underground again.

"Phew, that surprised me."

"What was that?"

"It was a Sandworm. A bit big though."

Sandworms are a monster that waits motionlessly in the earth waiting for prey to pass above, at which point they burst out of the ground to eat it.

Although I didn't see any, it seems there are similar monsters in the Great Forest.

Just the size is different.

The one in the Great Forest is apparently around 20 to 30 centimeters in diameter.

It's not really a threat to humans.

"There are big ones in the Demon Continent as well, right? Have you seen any?"

"I only saw snakes and wolves in the Demon Continent. And some weird armor."

"When you say armor do you mean Soul Breaker?"

"No, it was called Executioner or something like that. It had a big sword."

"Oh, the stronger one. It's not something you want to meet alone, is it."

Anyway, Begaritto Continent's sandworms are big.

Just the part that came above ground was already 5 meters long.

If you include the part underground, in total it might come close to 10 meters.

It was at a size where it could swallow a human whole.

Something like that was lying in wait underground waiting to "bakun" if something passed by.

It's a kind of instant death trap.

Although, if you dodge the first attack putting an end to it is not hard.

If you put the sandworm underground in a "mixer" with earth magic, they will instantly die without even a death shriek.

The bodily fluids collect into a puddle above ground.

It's a bit gross.

"I wonder how magnificent of a butterfly would be born from a caterpillar this big."

"It might unexpectedly turn into a succubus you know? The butterfly of the night, or something."

"Oh oh then Elinalise-san must have been born from a caterpillar."

"Fufu, I did have a caterpillar-like period once."

She won't deny being part succubus either.

Anyway, I wonder what a caterpillar-like Elinalise was like.

Maybe a girl with glasses sitting in the library.

Or maybe wearing overalls doing farmwork in the fields.

If you showed Cliff a video of those days he would probably get aroused.

The gap is a splendid thing after all.

{ C-Editor's note: Gap Moe refers to the juxtaposition of two seemingly contradictory character traits in order to increase a character's attractiveness. Rudeus is comparing Elinalise to what he imagines she may have looked like in the past. }

The last thing we encountered was an ant.

We discovered it after climbing over a sand dune, and the instant Elinalise discovered it she immediately pushed me down.

After finally climbing to the top, we rolled halfway down.

"What is this suddenly?"

"It's a swarm of Phalanx Ants!"

Phalanx Ant.

Even if you say that, I have no idea what it is.

For now, imitating Elinalise, I slowly crawl up the hill.

In front of me was Elinalise's ass packed in hide trousers.

As usual Elinalise has a nice ass.

Sylphy might have something like this as well when she's about 20.

Right now it's a small ass, but it's still plenty attractive.

"Move quietly so we don't provoke them."

We arrived at the peak of the dune.

Hiding behind the slope, we tried observing the swarm of Phalanx Ants.

There, a swarm of bright red ants moved in files of troops.

If I were to estimate the size, they're about 30 centimeters to 1 meter big.

There are both big ones and small ones.

Their forms vary as well, there are some with wings and some with an upper body like a human.

While making noise those ants were marching along heading towards a single point.

Simply said, it's an army of ants.

The army of ants looked like a red river.

The length was from the horizon to the other side.

It was a line of terrifying length.

"With that size and amount, they can easily be classified as S class."

"Wow, S class is it. For reference please give me an explanation."

"The Phalanx Ant is one type of the strongest monsters which consume everything on their path.

There are some in the Great Forest as well, but this size must be a characteristic native to the Begaritto continent."

Phalanx Ants are a variant of army ants.

Even though they're ants, without making a nest they earnestly travel while consuming everything on their path.

Although there are several natural enemies, if it's an opponent walking on the earth, even if it's a stray dragon, it will be consumed.

And then, when a certain season comes around, they make a nest and switch with the next generation.

Up to this point they're like normal army ants.

However, perhaps due to being a monster, their intelligence and aggressiveness are apparently higher than normal army ants.

For example, if we made a grand appearance from behind the dune, even if we took no hostile action, they would change direction to come attack us, it seems.

"They're not that strong one on one. From what I can tell, the small ones are E class and the large ones are from D to C class."

"But still they are C class at most?"

From what I can tell, there are a lot more than one or two thousand of them.

The number of monsters in the swarm is taken into account in the monster ranking system in this world.

Even if they're D or C class, if 10000 small fries come together it's easily S class.

In a certain game in my previous life, ants three times as large as humans came out in large quantities.

But it's not necessary to be that big.

The monsters in this world are awfully good at moving around.

"Oh, that one is the queen."

Elinalise pointed at a certain point in the swarm.

There was an especially large individual.

The ant was more than 2 meters long, with a woman's body growing from it's upper body.

It gave off the feeling of the Hive Queen.

{ C-Editor's note: A monster in the Romancing SaGa 2 video game. }

I'd say Stun must be it's weak point.

In my previous world, the queens of army ants were at most 50 millimeters big. Taking that into account, that Phalanx Ant is 50 times the size of it.

It's a threat.

This world has awfully many monsters that group together.

For some reason they are also good at group tactics.

That's why I don't want to fight those ants.

I'm sure the instant I try to meddle with them they will rush at me in a beautiful roman circle formation.

There might even be ants that use magic or launch long range attacks at me.

There might be a chance of victory if I used a large scale magic attack that could wipe them out.

No, if I used something like that we would take damage as well.

"Hey Rudeus! Why are you making a face like you're ready to fight?"

"Fight? I wouldn't do something like that."

"You were making a face like you were planning on how to attack the ants if we fought."

I wouldn't make a belligerent face like that.

Which combat race would I belong to.

I'm not getting excited.

"Nah, I was just thinking about how to escape if they noticed us."

"Then it's fine. We are going to wait until the swarm has passed through."

"Understood."

I agreed with Elinalise's plan.

It's not like my experience points would go up even if I dispersed them.

Even if I grabbed materials to sell them for gold I wouldn't be able to carry those red and hot-looking shells in this damn heat.

Let's avoid danger.

Our objective right now is to arrive in Lapan after all.

Not to raise my achievements.

It wouldn't be good if something like reconnaissance became the duty of our mission.

After about an hour, the ants disappeared.

The evening in the desert is red.

The ground is dyed deep red and the contrast in the patterns on the ground is seen clearly.

As red and black produce stripe patterns on the surface, an illusion like scene stretches out.

It's another world.

There must have been such a scene in the previous world as well.

"The temperature is falling. It seems like at this rate we can gain a lot more distance during the night."

"That's right, let's keep going."

"Understo...huh?"

As we were talking, I noticed something was flying around in the air.

Looking closer, it was a large bat around 50cm.

Big.

They started circling around us while making noise flapping their wings.

It doesn't come out during the day, maybe it preys on normal insects and lizards.

"It's a big bat isn't it."

"Oh, is it a monster?"

"Whether it's a monster or not is hard to tell, but we should be careful since there are so many of them."

It seems this bat is called a Giant Bat.

Its rank is F.

Because there are many of them, it might be around E class.

It lacks attack power and is not much of an opponent.

It doesn't attack humans either.

It only makes annoying flapping sounds, it seems.

"W-what? What are they doing?"

For some reason they were swarming around Elinalise.

They weren't particularly attacking, just flying around her.

Are they male?

"Hey, Rudeus! Don't just look and do something!"

"Okay."

Not even Elinalise can handle being swarmed around this much.

Should I make a tornado to scatter them?

I was thinking such carefree thoughts.

"Hmm?"

Within the swarm of bats.

A conspicuous large silhouette was mixed in.

With the wings of a large bat, it was bewitchingly skipping closer.

At the same time, a sweet scent was tickling my nose.

It's a Succubus.

"Uoooh! [Rock Bullet Stone Cannon]!"

From my hand a thick and hard bullet shoots out driving itself into the succubus like a body blow.

While making an anguished face, the succubus takes a back step.

Without stopping it runs away while holding it's stomach.

Whoops.

I unconsciously lowered the strength.

Somehow it seems if the opponent has a human face it's no good.

I don't have such a thing as the resolve to kill.

I am weak to the monster called succubus.

I'll admit it.

Since I won't kill it, the moment I sniff the scent, pheromones I'll lose my reason.

On the day I approach one to fight it, I will probably be captured before I know it.

Although, as long as there's distance between us, I can defeat it with a single rock bullet.

I won't be defeated.

The combat strength of a succubus is around E class, but it is classified as C class.

It's a powerful monster.

If I was still a virgin, no, if I hadn't experienced the sweet nights with Sylphy, I probably couldn't have won.

The being called succubus itself was something I loved during my previous life after all.

The succubus of this world is a bit ugly without makeup, but as long as you show your naked body in front of a man there's nothing to be done about it.

Once you understand it's something like that, it's easy to accept it.

That's why it can't be helped.

After the Giant Bats had been taken care of, coming from behind Elinalise and embracing her.

This is something that can't be helped.

It's an abnormal status.

"Hey, Rudeus! Pull yourself together! Use detoxification quickly! Stop pushing on me!"

"Just a bit, it will only be for a bit! Just the tip! It will be fine if I do it from behind, from behind it doesn't count as an affair!"

"Stop messing around!"

"Guho!"

As I was embracing her, Elinalise struck me with a sturdy buckler.

If this was an eroge, Elinalise would be called a violent type heroine.

It's not unreasonable.

In any case, after coming to my senses a bit from the pain, I used detoxification.

"Haa... haa... You trouble me."

"It can't be helped... It's that kind of monster after all."

Uu, the place where I was hit is throbbing with pain.

A shield is a blunt weapon after all.

"Fuu... Seriously, I want succubuses to leave us alone already! Ahh, really, I'm starting to feel the itch coming on."

Elinalise was slapping her reddened cheeks while shaking her head.

In my courting behavior it seems she felt something from the irregular movements.

It was completely the Succubus' pheromones fault, it's not like I actually wanted to succumb to lust or anything.

Well, it's fine.

By hitting me she is withstanding it as well.

It couldn't be helped.

This is something that just couldn't be helped.

"Those bats must have been the underlings of the succubus, right?"

"It seems so."

In the central continent as well, there are monsters that make weaker monsters obey them.

If I remember correctly, the first monster I saw in this world was like that as well.

I wonder what its name was.

I seem to have forgotten because I only saw it once.

It was some kind of wild boar walking on two legs.

The succubus was using Giant Bats as its subordinates.

If they happen to see a traveling couple, it sends the bats after the woman, then attracts the man and kidnaps him.

The succubus then takes the man to it's nest to eat him in a sexual way, after which it literally eats him.

We can handle them since I can defeat them in a single long range attack.

But I'm sure it must be difficult for swordsmen and warrior types.

At any rate, you can't fight with close range attacks without sniffing that scent.

The longer the fight lasts, the more disadvantageous it becomes.

Any noble knight as well will just collapse without a fight.

You must be at least gay to win against a succubus.

"What is it this time?"

After the battle with the succubus.

A velociraptor-like bipedal lizard appeared from behind a sand dune.

One after another they are coming at us.

Although they're not big, there are many of them.

Some of them started eating the fallen bats on the ground.

"Haven't seen these before."

Elinalise readies her battle stance without letting her guard down.

I monitor the situation as well while holding my staff.

"There are monsters that even Elinalise-san doesn't know about?"

"It's not like I'm some monster professor you know."

Elinalise didn't know the names of these lizards either.

Must be a species native to Begaritto.

After looking at us for a moment, the raptors came in menacingly to attack us.

Maybe they thought we would steal their prey.

No, since we were the ones who defeated the bats it is they who are stealing our prey.

Although they're not that strong, they do have sharp teeth and fast feet.

Well, they're nothing special.

We defeated 7 of them.

There are about 10 left.

They became alert and took some distance from us.

Hmm, should I just take all of them out with some advanced magic?

As I was thinking that, the next moment:

"Rudeus! Be careful! A big one is coming!"

As we were fighting the raptors, an especially large one came out.

Said simply, it's a giant chicken.

A giant, 5 meter chicken.

It's already a dinosaur.

The bright red crest hurts my eyes.

It seems to be the natural enemy of velociraptors.

They group up as five or six to assault and trash them in no time at all.

The fleeing raptors are being eaten by chickens.

"It's one type of Garuda isn't it."

{ C-Editor's note: A garuda is a large mythical bird, bird-like creature, or humanoid bird that appears in both Hindu and Buddhist mythology. }

Garuda are C class monsters.

In the current flock they are about B class apparently.

Well, at this size they might even be A class.

Because of gaining a bit of distance from us due to the combat with the raptors, the chickens were only intimidating us without moving closer.

The raptors were miserably running around trying to escape, but I wonder how long they can last.

Once they've all been eaten we will probably be attacked next.

Not that they're anything we can't defeat...

"Rudeus, we're running away. Why are you just standing around?"

However, thanks to Elinalises sharp senses, they could feel the presence of a large carnivore at the back of the chickens.

"Understood."

While we were retreating, Elinalise shrewdly snatched one of the raptor corpses.

They look tastier than the bats.

In a place away from the battle with the raptors, we made a shelter.

We're going to spend the night here.

The raptor corpse was our dinner for that day.

It's not like the food supplies we brought were dwindling, but being self sufficient along the way is a basic thing for adventurers.

Anyway, the night in the desert is a lot different from the day.

Monsters come out one after another.

If we had continued fighting the chickens, another monster would probably have come out.

According to Elinalise, the pheromones from the succubus from before attract monsters as well.

To males it's a sweet scent.

To females it's an unpleasant stench.

Although other monsters don't care about the smell, the place where the smell is coming from is likely to have prey, so they drop a visit.

And so the succubus makes a human male its prey.

The places humans walk through are likely to gather stray monsters.

When we defeated the first succubus there weren't any bats or other monsters, maybe because the place was protected by a barrier.

We had bad luck with a succubus that had slipped into the barrier.

...Don't tell me that succubus was Orsted's acquaintance or something.

N...No-no.

If it was, it wouldn't have suddenly started alluring me.

They should have thought we are related to Orsted as well.

Wait a second.

If there's a difference of cultures, that might have been just a greeting from a succubus.

They have a thing called "naked communion" in Japan as well.

A cultural thing that foreigners can't understand.

With that intent in mind the succubus might have only intended to make me feel good.

If it's like that I'm in trouble.

I may have drawn my bow at Orsted without knowing anything.

Should I go back and make a grave or something?

Although I don't know what exactly happened, if I did a proper burial I might be able to get rid of my sour stomach.

No.

If there was someone like that in those ruins, I should have heard at least something about it from Nanahoshi.

That's right, isn't Orsted hated by humans because of the curse?

It might be that it not only works on humans, but monsters as well.

Yes, that's why that succubus must be unrelated.

"Phew... Begaritto Continent is a lot different from what I heard."

Whether she noticed my uneasiness or not, Elinalise said that while yawning in the shelter.

That's pretty carefree.

People who don't know Orsted are like this after all.

Anyway, these thoughts of mine are probably just needless anxiety.

[Oh, this monster might be someone's acquaintance.]

If I think like that, I'll have to start questioning all the monsters on the way to our destination.

The other side comes wanting to prey on me.

I will repel them.

That's all it is.

"That's right. There are a lot more monsters than I thought."

I responded to Elinalise while shaking off my own thoughts.

Honestly, the density of monsters is worse than on the Demon Continent.

It better not be something like, actually we've teleported to Heaven Continent.

"Well, for the time being we can somehow make do with them so it seems to be fine for now."

"But, letting your guard down is forbidden."

"You don't need to say it. But if we use the same tactics as we've used until now we should be able to repel most of the monsters."

"In case I get done in by a succubus again as well, I'm counting on you to strike me."

"Please be a bit more careful on that end."

While we were talking as such, the first day had passed.

It was an especially long day.

Rather, it's only been a day.

The future is long.

The second day since we started our trek in the desert.

We continued north.

On the second day as well, we made our resolve to fight the monsters.

This desert has a lot of monsters.

We especially have to be careful of sandworms.

There's no problems if we are cautious with the worms while walking.

However, there are times where we can't pay attention to our feet.

For example, in the middle of battle.

Once, while fighting a Twin Death Scorpion, a sandworm appeared.

It swallowed me whole, and seemed like it was about to drag me into the ground.

I panicked a little, and immediately cast intermediate-level [Wind Slice] and sliced his body to bits.

With earth magic I escaped to the surface.

Elinalise got poisoned by the Twin Death Scorpion.

She was shaken up when she saw me get done in by the sandworm.

Elinalise's knees crumbled and her face was purple.

I immediately killed the Twin Death Scorpion.

Then I saved Elinalise with intermediate-level detoxification.

It wasn't anybody's fault.

It was merely bad timing.

"That way of killing it, as expected of the Quagmire. You've saved me."

Elinalise didn't blame me for her almost dying.

Even though from one's point of view, it was from my negligence.

What an amazing person.

"Don't make such a face. Even if you concentrate as much as you could, there are times when it's just not enough. This was just one of those times. That's all there is."

We were very close to being annihilated.

She understood that quite well.

It was only that time when we felt such dread.

Right now we're moving along smoothly.

On the way, we saw an enormous monster.

It was walking clumsily from far away.

Just by walking, clouds of dust were stirring, but we knew from afar.

Maybe it's about 100 meters?

It's a creature that's hard to describe.

It's like a blue whale that has multiple elephant-like feet attached to it.

"That's a Behomoth."

"You know what that is, Elinalise?"

"Oh, would you finally stop addressing me so formally?"

"No, never. I always show my respect to elders."

"Zanoba is older than you, though?"

"That's because he's a big child."

It seems Behomoths are a well known creature that live in the Begaritto continent.

Their lengths range from 100 meters to 1000 meters.

What they eat is unknown. They're found in the desert.

Their personality is quite gentle for a monster.

As long they're not attacked, they're pretty docile.

In the past, according to stories from people that defeated Behemoths, was that they carry a lot of magic stones in their stomachs.

When people heard that, they made plans on getting rich quick.

But taking down a Behemoth was difficult.

The skin was extremely firm and hard, with a tough body that doesn't flinch when facing ordinary attacks.

Although there are ways to attack, just having that giant body rampaging is enough to be a threat.

One would think, "Why not use long range attacks?"

However, when a Behemoth feels he's in danger, it escapes by diving deep underground.

Therefore, there aren't many people that have claimed to kill one.

Also, it's been said that nobody can find a corpse of that, despite its giant body.

Thus, there were rumors that there exists a grave for Behemoths.

It seems there are a large amount of Behemoth bones and magic stones there.

An imagery of that kind of grave, I am a little excited.

I wonder if a reason for that is that they eat demons?

"If it's Rudeus, you could do pretty well, no?"

"I have no intention of attacking innocent herbivores."

But, if I ever run into money troubles, maybe I'll amuse myself with a long range fight.

The third day, we encountered a sandstorm.

No, it might be strange to say that we 'encountered' it.

While we were walking, we saw something that looked like a wall from far away.

When we got closer, it was a sandstorm.

Although I consulted with Elinalise that we should wait until it dies off, it seems that this sandstorm seems to be fixed on one spot.

There were no signs of it ceasing.

Since we needed to hurry on our journey, I stopped the sandstorm with my magic and broke through.

I've been told it's best not to mess with the weather too much, but it can't be helped.

After walking for about an hour, I suddenly turned back.

A sandstorm reformed in that same place again.

Perhaps that was another type of magical barrier.

Like a natural barrier to block off the path to the teleport ruins Orsted used.

Nanahoshi didn't say anything like that, though.

It seems she didn't have the luxury of checking her surroundings.

There may be some things she doesn't remember.

Her information may not be entirely accurate.

Fourth day.

The number of monsters decreased significantly.

That sandstorm must've done its duty by acting as a barrier.

The ecosystems were totally different before and after passing through the sandstorm.

Not a single sign of a scorpion tail, and there were no herds of ants.

Even the sandworms were only about as big as Elinalise's body.

Around evening time, we sometimes saw raptors.

However, the herds were few, and their bodies were small.

While there were a lot of Garuda, I couldn't find a shadow or shape of them now.

At night, succubus no longer attacked us.

Should I be happy or sad about this?

No, I am not sad at all.

Fifth day.

We walked across the desert.

A sea of sand as far as the eye can see.

A landscape that stretches endlessly.

When a person walks without landmarks, even though he intends to walk straight, he'll instead walk in a big circle and come back to the same place.

It seems it's because the pace between the right and left leg differs.

I don't think it's like that for Elinalise.

However, speaking of which, that sand dune, I feel like I've seen it before.

When I thought about that for a moment, a seed of doubt began to grow.

Don't tell me, Elinalise is lost?

Well, let it grow.

As long as I don't speak out it's fine.

If I speak out, Elinalise would feel bad.

If she feels bad, our teamwork will crumble.

Crumbling teamwork means death.

All I can do, is forgive.

When Elinalise makes a mistake, I can only forgive with a smile.

I must not condemn her.

Yeah.

"...Hmm, Rudeus. I can see something."

It seems that determination was for naught.

Elinalise pointed ahead, and I could see something swaying in the heat haze.

"Let me confirm."

I used earth magic to create a stone pillar.

From the top, I confirmed from afar.

There was something over there.

However, I still don't know what it is using my eyes.

It may be a mirage.

We are heading straight over there.

While being careful of monsters.

We headed there in earnest.

Come to think of it, we had not encountered a single monster today.

There may not be any monsters in this area.

No, we mustn't let our guard down.

While thinking that, we saw it clearly.

It's a huge rock that resembles that of Ayers Rock.

{ C-Editor's note: Uluru, also known as Ayers Rock, is a large sandstone formation in the center of Australia. }

It was about 50 meters high.

The word "rock ledge" comes to mind.

Although it's not directly perpendicular to the ground, it's a formation that one would have hard time climbing.

This seemed to stretch beyond the horizon.

There was no end in sight.

"Shall we take a detour?"

"No, let's go up. I'll use magic."

I used earth magic to create a stone pillar.

Elinalise held onto me, and aimed towards the top with my make-shift elevator.

However, suddenly my body felt uneasy.

I felt a strange sensation of something rubbing my butt.

"Um, Elinalise-san?"

"What is it?"

"Your hand movements are a bit lewd."

"Just a habit, don't mind me."

For the few minutes till we reached the top of the ledge,

Me and Elinalise's body clung together.

...

Perhaps it's the effects of the curse.

I poured magic into the magical tool.

However, I am merely extending its limit.

It's been about 10 days since she did it with Cliff.

While it's thanks to this magic tool that she's still hanging on, in the end it's only a prototype.

I must be careful.

I want to get to a place with people fast.

If the time comes, I have no choice but to be her partner.

But, that's definitely having an affair.

You can even say it's adultery.

No matter how much of a fault the curse is.

On this trip, I will not do it with Elinalise.

Haven't I decided that before starting this journey?

If there's a place in the bazaar that deals with male prostitution, that would be good.

It would be best if we recognize it as relieving one's sexual urges.

It's for both of our sakes.

"Elinalise, we've arrived at the top of the ledge."

"Yes, it seems so."

Elinalise didn't separate from me.

She was feverishly gazing around my shoulders.

"...Please let go."

"Sorry."

Elinalise pushed away.

But her gaze was focused at my bottom half.

I felt my chastity was in danger.

Maybe going up here while being hugged was a bad idea.

There might have been a better way.

In retrospect, I could have avoided making physical contact with her.

Though again, I might have messed up our balance.

Oh no, I must get to a Bazaar fast.

"Let's go."

"Ok."

At Elinalise's urging, we started walking.

In the next moment, a shadow was cast at our foot.

"Rudeus! Get down!"

A sudden scream.

Before I confirm what was above me I hugged the ground.

At that moment there was something that flew over my head.

I felt a sense of dread run down my back.

Immediately getting up, I confirmed its identity.

A sand-colored monster, with hands and feet of a lion, and had a head of an eagle.

Flapping its enormous wings, it landed somewhere close by.

"It's a griffon!"

Elinalise's scream.

It's an enemy. My mind instantly switched gears.

I turned around facing the griffon and held my staff.

Our position was bad.

Elinalise was more or less behind me.

We were put unexpectedly into a 'back attack' position.

No, even in this situation Elinalise can move pretty well.

She can easily switch with me and return back to the front line.

"Rudeus, we're pairing up! I'll leave that side to you."

It's not as I had first though.

Behind me, I could hear the sound of flapping.

There were two griffons.

We were caught in a pincer.

I have to take down griffon A that's in front of me.

If I dodged and griffon A is aiming for Elinalise, her back will become vulnerable to attack.

...No, it's better that way.

Elinalise will fight against those two, and I'll bring them down one by one.

That was the pattern of how we did things up till now.

No, this time it's different.

She said she'll leave that side to me.

If I don't take it down, Elinalise can't support me.

Alright.

The griffon leaned forward, half-opened its beak, and glared at me.

It's close.

The griffon looks pretty smart. It seems like it would dodge my rock bullet.

Or possibly, it will just take the bullet head on.

I want to bring it down for certain.

Let's not use the rock bullet.

That guy has wings, I don't know how long he can keep flying.

But it seems the effects of a quagmire would be very little.

In that case, let's use wind.

The griffon's hind-legs were gathering strength.

It's coming.

The griffon's back legs gave off a sharp tap sound.

Like a tiger it spread its fore legs and pounced.

I crouched down, and used magic on the ground.

Upper-level Earth Magic <Earth Hedgehog>.

The length was 3 meters.

From my surroundings it expanded in a circle.

"Kyuea!"

The griffon immediately moved with the wings behind his back.

<It's controlling its trajectory in the air, and will promptly turn around and leave.>

I can see it.

I can see it with my demon eye.

I used wind magic with my left hand.

I generated a small tornado, and stole the griffon's control.

The griffon hung in mid-air.

However, even so it twisted like a cat and tried to land.

Without a moment's delay, I let loose a rock bullet at its landing point.

The rock bullet flew with an earsplitting sound.

Impact.

The body of the griffon had a black hole opened up.

In the next moment, the echo of a gunshot.

The griffon staggers for a bit without making a sound, then fell with a thud.

I immediately finishted it off with fire magic.

I immediately turned around.

Is Elinalise alright?

She was fine.

She took on the griffon's attack with her shield, and used her estoc.

The griffon's front legs were dyed red.

Elinalise was attacking at that spot.

Focusing her attacks in one place, she was sapping the enemy's strength.

"Elinalise! [Stone Cannon]!"

"!"

I shouted from behind her, and let loose a rock cannonball.

Elinalise sidestepped away.

The griffon didn't chase after Elinalise.

It was aware of me, and attempted to dodge my rock bullet.

However, Elinalise promptly lunged with her estoc.

She shallowly struck at the griffon's forelegs that were still on the ground.

The griffon fell with a jerk.

It was unable to evade my rock bullet.

Impact.

A hole opened at the back of its neck.

The rock cannonball tore apart the griffon's innards as it passed right through.

It broke its spinal cord, and went through the other side.

The griffon, along with its neck, fell to the ground

The body of the griffon was twitching and convulsing.

Elinalise finished it off with a blow to the head with the estoc.

After that, I burned the griffon up with fire magic.

We beat them.

Afterwards, we became vigilant for any pursuers.

After a while, we exhaled in relief.

"Phew, I apologize, I let down my guard a bit."

"No, I also must take responsibility for not confirming what was above us."

We apologized to each other for our failures, then we looked straight ahead.

While there's some sand on this rock ledge, it is solid rock.

There doesn't seem to be a need to be cautious of what's beneath us.

"From this point on, let's pay attention to the skies."

"You're right."

After doing a minimal checkup, Elinalise and I started to walk again.

The sixth day.

The rock ledge was a griffon's nest.

We were attacked by them on a regular basis.

At seemingly regular intervals.

Griffons are B-class monsters.

They do not use any sort of magic.

However, they have high physical abilities, and also the ability to fly.

Being able to maneuver in three dimensions, it is quite a formidable enemy.

While they're normally seen alone, when they make babies, they make two to five at a time.

They possess high intelligence, and together in a flock they can hunt with advanced coordination.

Thus, when they gather together it's said they're equal to A-rank.

That being said, they're no match for us.

Being able to say that, I must be quite strong.

It became nighttime.

There was no presence of succubi.

It probably won't enter a griffon's turf.

Then again, griffon's are acutely aware of each other's territory.

At least for today, it doesn't seem like we'll get attacked by griffons from far away.

In other words, we're safe here.

For the first time in a while, we used an open fire and barbequed griffon meat.

The last griffons we defeated were carrying their young, so we ate those.

Whatever creatures they are, the meat of the young is soft and delicious.

This is something like veal steak from a calf.

As a person that's about to have a child, I felt a little sorry for them.

However, this is life.

Man is a living creature with ego.

I have a little bit of knowledge with regards to cooking the meat of monsters.

That's why I had brought along some seasoning.

Unfortunately, the meat of a raptor doesn't taste good, but if it's mammal-like or bird-like like the griffon, I can definitely make it taste delicious.

I had already started mixing the seasonings together.

With Kokuri fruit, seeds of Awazu, and dried leaves of Abi, I mixed them with a 1:2:2 ratio, and pounded them into a powder.

Licking some off my fingers, I felt a tingling spicy sensation.

I sprinkled it evenly across the meat, and mixed it in.

Then I sprinkled it with salt, then grilled it.

Once the meat's surface has browned, I put it a bit away from the fire, then grilled it some more.

When the surface was sizzling with drops of fat dripping down, it's done.

Being careful not to burn myself, I bite into it.

The meat of a young griffon was soft and juicy.

It had somewhat of a strange taste, but the spicy taste from the seasoning erases it.

Ahh, of course, with this way of grilling, the heat won't get to to center of the meat.

But that's not a problem.

Once I see an undercooked portion after eating the surface, I just have to sprinkle more seasoning on it and grill it again.

"This is quite nostalgic. Gisu always hid this kind of seasoning."

"It seems people in the thief-class carry things like this."

It's been a few years since Eris broke up with me.

I've come a long way as an adventurer.

I've mixed in with various parties.

There would always be at least one person in the party that would produce this seasoning.

A lot of the thief-class did this.

They look at trees and shrubs here and there, plucking off fruits and leaves, then saving it for later.

They didn't use them just for cooking.

There are monsters that don't like the strong smell of herbs and fruits.

In case of emergencies, they can be used like insect repellent.

When made into a powder, it can be used to blind them as well.

"I like your particular way of seasoning."

"Well, thanks."

Elinalise was having poor manners, licking the fat off her fingers.

That way of eating is something one absolutely doesn't do in town.

When Elinalise licks her fingers, it's for something different.

Like when she wants to seduce a man.

"Elinalise, you're not behaving."

"Oh, so you speak just like Zenith."

"...My mother says these things?"

"[You're a girl, so you should be more careful] and other lines like that, with a bright red face."

Elinalise was imitating someone's tone of expression.

The image of Zenith was a bit different.

But it's probably her.

She too had a period where I didn't know her.

And that Zenith is right now...

No, let's stop there. It's better not to think things that'll make me anxious.

Even if I become anxious along the way, nothing happy will be gained from it.

"So, Elinalise was quite a bitch at that time after all?"

"Bitch, huh... well, that's not entirely wrong.

Although, in those days, everybody was naked or in their underwear, you know?

Even Ghyslaine didn't know about the existence of brassieres.

And Paul would ogle at her with his eyes..."

That Ghyslaine was shameless.

No, if it's that Ghyslaine it might have been possible.

And they seemed pretty distant.

And damn that Paul...

Well, it's not like I don't understand.

Everybody from the beast race had ripe big melons.

"Ahh, come to think of it, when I first met Zenith, she was around your age..."

"About 16 years old?"

"Yeah, a little girl that didn't know her right from left, Paul picked her up and took her away."

Elinalise narrowed her eyes filled with nostalgia.

Come to think of it, Gisu and Ghyslaine occasionally had those same eyes when talking about a person.

They must be remembering back in their days.

"It felt like Father wanted to apologize to you, may I ask what happened?"

"...It's better if you don't ask."

Elinalise frowned.

It seemed she doesn't want to say.

"I am sure you don't want to hear the love entanglements your father got into, yes?"

"Yeah, I don't want to hear about it."

Actually, I wanted to hear.

But, if she doesn't want to talk about it, it's better not to ask.

That's what reading the situation is about.

But still, it seems like it's love entanglements after all.

It seems he had sexual relationships with Ghyslaine,

So perhaps he also had a sexual relationship with Elinalise as well?

Then, the party got dissolved with Zenith's pregnancy.

I can imagine what kind of love-hate drama took place.

"When we reach Lapan, he'll definitely prostrate himself."

"...I won't forgive him no matter what he says."

Elinalise was frowning.

Maybe a lot of things had happened.

Paul.

That guy is a good-for-nothing.

Because he's a good-for-nothing, I have to rescue him.

As a good-for-nothing comrade, I have to go rescue him.

If push comes to shove, I will also bow my head towards Elinalise for her to forgive him.

Seventh day.

We continued to fight against Griffons while moving north.

The rock ledge was wide.

Though I described it as a ledge, it's more like a mountain.

Although the ledge was flat, visibility was poor.

That's because huge rocks were scattered about.

When walking in such a place, we sometimes see an open area.

Usually, griffons attack us there.

We repel them, then continue onward.

"Oh."

And, at some point the ledge stopped.

"Seems we're finally here."

Below the cliff.

It wasn't a desert.

There were even some trees growing.

There was some grass spread out like a savannah.

Just a bit further away, I could see something vague.

It's a large lake.

And surrounding it, white-clothed roofs.

It's the bazaar.

Eighth day.

We got down from the ledge and headed towards the bazaar.

Looking from above, the bazaar was like a donut.

The tents surrounding the lake were like frosting.

And surrounding those were bits of green.

I haven't eaten such a pastry in a long time.

"We finally arrived."

"You're right, even though it's only been ten days, it felt like such a long time."

"Probably because of all the monsters."

The ground was not a desert.

The earth was reddish-brown, with fist-sized rocks spread about.

The ground may be similar to that of the Magic Continent.

Thanks to that, it was fairly easy to walk.

The temperature also dropped considerably.

From the ledge to here, there was a great difference.

By the time we reached the bazaar it was evening.

Bats were flying around over the reddish earth.

Thinking there was a succubus, I put myself on guard.

But, the bats did nothing but fly.

They neither dove for an attack, nor was there a succubus in their midst.

These were just bats.

However, even though we're close to the bazaar, there may be monsters.

We moved while being alert.

Kiee-...

When we got close to the bazaar, a cry of a griffon could be heard.

We became even more wary.

"What was that?"

"They must be fighting."

Elinalize said that while looking ahead.

I still couldn't see where.

"Who?"

"Dunno."

I got a blunt reply when I asked that.

We got closer to the bazaar.

Then, we saw several people and griffons.

Four humans.

Five griffons.

No, to be exact, it wasn't four people.

It was six.

2 people were on the ground.

In addition, 1 person was crouching while holding his head.

The rest were in the middle of battle with the griffons.

3 vs. 5.

The remaining three were coordinating well with swinging their broadswords.

However, I could grasp that they were quite fatigued.

"Shall we assist?"

When I asked Elinalize, she shrugged her shoulders.

So which is it?

"I'll leave that to you."

Leaving them to die would make me feel guilty.

Why not help them out?

"Let's save them."

"Understood. Cover me!"

"Roger!"

Elinalize broke into a run.

At the same time, I shot out magic at the griffon that was in the air.

Bullseye.

It probably wasn't paying attention to me.

However, it seems it took evasive action at the last minute.

It avoided instant death.

With its feathers scattered, the griffon fell.

There, as if Elinalize was dancing, she stabbed it in the neck.

I continued to fire off rock bullets one after another.

I took down the second one with a single blow.

The third one avoided it.

The griffons noticed my presence.

However, in front of them were armed men.

And there was also Elinalize who is skilled in defense beside me.

That being the case, I could shoot out magic all I want.

We won't be losing now.

We steadily beat them down.

"Kyuiiiiii!"

The last remaining one was trying to run away.

I shot out a rock bullet at its back and finished it off.

I can't afford to let a wounded beast get away.

The battle was over.

I went together with Elinalize towards the group.

"Is, is it finished!?"

The man who was crouched while holding his head looked up.

He looked around restlessly, then let out a sigh of relief.

The group of warriors fighting the griffons approached us.

"What are you doing! Hurry up and look!"

Amongst the men, a warrior was giving out instructions.

The person who received them ran off somewhere at full speed.

"Seriously... what a disaster, why are griffons here..."

The man giving out orders carried the remaining two, and looked at us.

"You've saved us. I'm grateful."

The man giving out orders wore something like a yellow gown on top of a red robe.

He had a red dot marked on his forehead.

He really looks the part of a merchant of the desert.

He had a long and skinny moustache.

However it wasn't majestic.

It gave off a feeling like its an accessory.

I felt a bit relieved.

"Not at all, it's times like these that we have to help each other."

"Normally you'd just abandon us."

Since he thanked me in Fighting God language, I replied back in the same.

It looks like they can understand, and it got through to them.

Seems like we'll be fine.

"May you be graced with the blessing of the winds."

Saying only that, he turned back.

And walked towards the place where the comrades had fallen.

"..."

The remaining two were clad in red armor.

Their bottom half had something like a skirt with thick loincoth hanging down.

They were more heavily armed compared to warriors on the Central Continent.

Hanging from their waist was a big curved sword.

It was thick and wide.

It easily surpassed the length of a meter.

I often saw swords like this when I was on the Magic Continent.

They were probably effective against large monsters.

Their swords were big, and their armor was thick.

I wonder if that was why they couldn't match up against the quick and nimble griffons.

"A magician, huh, that's unusual."

A big man murmured.

A large tattoo on his face.

An eyepatch on his left eye.

His height was close to 2 meters.

He seems to be about 40.

His behavior seemed as if he had tons of experience.

"Bro. This person, maybe she's a succubus?"

There was a girl on their side.

She said that while staring at Elinalize.

Dark skinned, wearing chest armor and loincloth-like skirt.

While I couldn't see underneath her clothes, she seems like she has a lot of muscle.

She seems to be in her early twenties.

<What are you saying?>

Elinalize didn't understand their words, and looked puzzled.

She doesn't understand Fighting God language.

<<'Is she a succubus', you say?>>

<<Well, it's not uncommon that she would get mistaken for one.>>

<<Shall I confirm it?>>

<<But, she isn't giving off a stinky smell.>>

<<Well, to men, it's a smell of pleasure.>>

The big man hit the girl on the head.

"Fool! Like there's a succubus that'll accompany a man! For someone that saved you, what's with that way of speaking!"

"But, bro, when the bats were flying, when you saw her, you said you thought she's a succubus!"

The girl being hit was crying out in a pathetic voice.

It was hard to understand her words.

Maybe she's got a strong accent.

While I could pick up a few words here and there, I felt a bit uneasy.

"Geez, that's why you get called a blockhead!"

The tone of the man facing her was normal.

'Clear'...not sure if that's a good way to describe it, but for me, I could easily listen to his Fighting God language.

"Phew."

The big man sighed.

Then he looked down at Elinalize and apologized.

"I'm sorry, please don't take offense. This person...she's Karumerita, but she's a moron."

Elinalize looked at me with a troubled face.

She couldn't understand what he was saying.

<...What did he say? Is he courting me or something?>

<The girl beside him called you a succubus, and he's apologizing.>

<Ah, I see. I forgive him.>

With a smile that could charm a man, Elinalize smiled at the big man.

I could tell that face of the big man turned red.

"It seems she's not worried about it."

"I, I see. Does that woman not understand our words?"

"Yes. I'm an interpreter."

The big man looks at Elinalize bluntly.

I could more or less get what he was thinking.

Probably something like, 'that's a nice girl.'

Or perhaps, 'She's got no breasts.'

Elinalize probably didn't mind this at all, as she's used to being gazed like that.

She even had a boastful atmosphere.

The man broke off his gaze from Elinalize, and looked at me.

"...I'm Baribadom. Let me thank you again."

"I'm Rudeus Greyrat. This is Elinalize."

"I see, if anything happens..."

"Hey, what are you guys standing about for!"

Someone was shouting at Baribadom.

It was the man from before.

"Hurry up and look for the cargo!"

"Pardon me. I'll thank you later for sure."

Baribadom and Karumerita went to the side of the man.

Those three were discussing things briefly,

But they quickly split into two groups and went off.

All in the blink of an eye.

"Oh, how frank. Even though they could at least say thanks."

Elinalize was grumbling.

It's not like she wanted a reward or anything.

"The wounded are left here, huh..."

I looked at the people who were on the ground.

If they need treatment, I could use healing magic if necessary.

When I was thinking of that,

"Are they dead?"

To begin with, they didn't even show the attitude of wanting to be treated.

Was it that obvious?

"These people are quite young."

One was a young girl.

She must be about eighteen years old.

Her head must have been smashed by the griffon's beak.

There was a large hole on her forehead.

It was instant death.

"On this continent, I wonder if it's a custom to leave the dead behind."

"That doesn't seem to be the attitude of adventurers."

"They didn't look like adventurers, though."

While conversing, I burnt them with magic and buried them.

To not give their comrades a burial, how heartless.

The warrior from before, I think he was named Baribadom.

He said he would thank us later.

But, we hadn't even asked the name of that moustached master.

Without telling us his contact info, how is he supposed to thank us?

Don't tell me, is he going to look for us?

Is he going to track us down, then tell us to come get our reward?

Is it that kind of culture?

...Well, it's fine.

He probably didn't want to give us thanks from the beginning.

I'm just a good-hearted person.

"Well then, let's go."

"Yeah."

Thus, we arrived at the bazaar.

We entered the bazaar.

By that time night had fallen.

But our surroundings were quite bright.

Like a temple festival, there were bonfires lit here and there.

Around these bonfires were rug-like cloths being spread out.

On top of them, were men and women eating and having a good time.

It felt like some kind of flower viewing.

{ C-Editor's note: Hanami, or flower viewing, is the Japanese traditional custom of enjoying the transient beauty of flowers and having outdoor parties beneath the blossoming cherry trees. }

Everybody was wearing turbans.

While their clothing colors and patterns vary, the colors of each race was well defined.

Me and Elinalize felt out of place.

Although this sense of being out of place is nothing new to us.

"I'm getting hungry."

"Yeah, me too."

Seeing people eating made me hungry.

That doesn't change no matter which world you're in.

That being said, we need to find a place to sleep first.

When I was thinking that, a man called out to us.

"Hey, you two, wanna eat? I'll treat you to a meal for just 3 Shinsa!"

It seems that he was selling leftover food.

Whether or not he was calling to one or both of us, we accepted his invitation.

We can't think of a good plan when we're hungry, after all.

When we sat on the rug, the advertiser held out his hand with his palms up.

"Please pay in advance, I'll get some food for you."

I took out 3 copper coins from my pocket and gave it to him.

When he took them, he made a puzzled expression.

"What is this?"

"They're copper coins from the country of Ranoa."

"What country is that? I can't use these."

As expected, in these parts, money from the country of Ranoa can't be used.

It was obvious.

We were planning on going somewhere to exchange currency, so we don't have any on hand right now.

"Is this fine?"

When I was thinking of what to do, Elinalize slipped something in the advertiser's hand.

It was a metal ring.

The advertiser took it, then brought his face close to it and took a good, long look at it.

Afterwards, being satisfied, he said 'Thanks', then went to seek other customers.

"In times like these, bartering things is better."

Yeah. This must be the wisdom of the elders.

Her judgement was quick.

"Elinalize, you are really quite reliable."

"Nothing will come from flattering me."

I sat on the rug.

For some reason, there was a strange nostalgic feeling.

I wonder if it's because I haven't sat on floors for some time now?

It felt like sitting on carpets in Japanese households.

"Here ya go!"

We didn't order anything, but food came out.

It was white mushy soup, which seemed to have beans, meat, and potatoes cooked together.

And the steaming meat was giving off a spicy smell.

There was also some kind of sour fruit from the southern countries that had sweet sauce on top of it.

Sweet soup, spicy meat, and sweet and spicy fruit.

It's a combination that makes one yearn for carbohydrates.

Or, so I thought, but it was unexpectedly pretty good.

The soup was especially good.

At first glance it seemed like white meat and potato stew, but the dripping part was actually cooked rice.

In other words, it was some kind of porridge.

I didn't think I would be eating rice here.

Since there were no paddy fields, I wonder if it would be decent.

I had heard that you could harvest rice even in the tropical regions.

Yeah. This rice is good.

I finished it in the blink of an eye.

I felt that even if I didn't want to eat the rice by itself I'd end up just finishing it regardless.

I was in really good spirits.

I wonder if it's possible to cultivate this type of rice in the north also.

If Aisha can study this type of agriculture, it might be possible.

No, I shouldn't raise her to become a farmer just for my own convenience.

"Oh, for someone who complains about the taste, you sure are quiet today, Rudeus."

"That's because this is much more delicious than I thought."

I even ordered seconds.

I don't mean to find fault with Sylphy's cooking.

But, this is different.

Rice is another story.

If there were eggs and soy sauce, even better.

I see.

Perhaps there may be soy sauce on this continent.

For eggs, I can use something other than Garuda.

A bird will produce eggs.

There is rice, and there are eggs.

In that case, there's only one thing left.

Soy sauce.

"Alright then, let's find an inn."

However, we're not here to sightsee.

Once we rescue Paul, I can spend time to find it.

I'll postpone looking for now.

I'm not here to play around.

"It seems it'll be good to find a guide tomorrow morning."

Looking around, the surrounding shops were starting to close up.

With lights being extinguished, it seems that was also a concept of bedtime here.

It seems to be pretty early to sleep.

Now doesn't seem to be the time to hire someone.

Since the advertiser from earlier was still here, I decided to ask.

"Excuse me. Is there an inn around here?"

"Inn? We've got no such thing here, just sleep wherever you like."

We got that answer in reply.

There were no such thing as an inn at the bazaar.

It seems that it's natural for travellers without a roof to just sleep outdoors.

In our case, I could just make a shelter.

"How will we be sleeping?"

"It seems it's popular to sleep near the waterside."

"Then, let's go somewhere further away."

We consulted then decided on a spot.

We decided to set up a place to sleep between two tents.

If the tents are big, there must also be many guards.

There won't be many people that want to steal from a place near here.

This is what you call 'looking for a big tree when you want shelter.'

{ C-Editor's note: A Japanese idiom that means 'If you need protection, find an influential man'. }

I made a big bedroom.

While it took some time to make it, it was wider than a shelter.

It was a good size enough to spend at least one night.

Then again, it'd be very hot inside when the sun is up.

This is only useful at night.

"Phew, anyway, thanks for everything so far."

"Yes, same to you."

We placed down our luggage, and breathed a sigh of relief.

"Let's at least be on half alert."

"We'll do stuff tomorrow. We'll prepare what we need, and then look for a guide."

We easily confirm what needs to be done tomorrow.

Resupplying of food.

Securing our money.

Confirming our road to Lapan.

Searching for a guide.

That should be all for now.

We conducted maintenance on our equipment.

We polished our sword and shield, then confirmed there were no scratches on our armor and robes.

This has already become our everyday routine.

Our equipment inspection ended.

We made a bed using a blanket.

All that's left is to sleep.

At this point, Elinalize got up.

"Now then, time to head off."

To the convenience store?

As if to say that, I turned my head at her in puzzlement.

"Where to?"

Elinalize answered with a bitter smile.

"Searching for men."

She said something bold, but to put it simply, it's to fulfill her curse.

"You should be fine still during this period, yeah?"

Elinalize's curse typically requires sex once every two weeks.

With the magic tool, that's extended to 2-3 times.

So she can hold it in for at least a month.

The last time she did it with Cliff was nearly two weeks ago.

Seems like a good time to 'replenish'.

"Yeah. But, I want to do it at least once here."

"I see..."

This is a round-trip that will take about 3 months.

And to account for unknown factors, it may possibly be 4 months.

Even if the curse can be suppressed for 3 months at the most, she must do it at least once.

Either way, it's something we cannot avoid.

"I understand, please take care."

"Yes, see you later. I don't mind if you go to sleep first."

"Then I'll take you up on that offer...Ah, would you know what they are saying?"

"Won't be necessary. Things like this are pretty much the same anywhere."

Elinalize said that as she headed out of the shelter.

The next morning.

I was crying "Ants!" as I woke up.

It was an attack of phalanx ants!

...Though nothing like that happened.

I was able to get a full night's sleep for the first time in a long while.

The dreams were good.

I dreamt of Aisha and Norn insistently asking for a ride on my shoulders.

When Norn got on my shoulders, Aisha pouted.

When Aisha got on my shoulders, Norn cried.

Finally, Sylphy came along, and like a bully got on my shoulders.

When I chided with 'hey now, take turns on the swing',

Sylphy would go 'No no, this is mine!' and such, and made Norn and Aisha cry.

When she appeared, Sylphy was fully grown, but when she rode on my shoulders she was as small as when she was seven.

It was a good dream.

When I woke up, I unconsciously broke into a grin.

Thanks to that, I felt quite refreshed.

When I looked beside me, Elinalize was unusually bright, sleeping with a satisfied face.

It seems she enjoyed a lot last night.

I felt sorry for Cliff.

When it was morning, the bazaar completely changed.

The quiet atmosphere at night went away, and a lively scenery appeared.

Goods were lined up in front of tents, and people were raising their voices.

"Big melons here! Will be disposed of tomorrow!"

"Claw of a griffon! Right now only 30 Shinsa!"

"Is there anybody selling Naniia cloth? I wish to trade them with fruit from Tokotsu!"

The merchants were shouting their goods and prices in a loud voice, and those who were buying raised their voices more.

One could exchange with currency, or conduct bartering.

This scenery of crowds of people full of commotion was stretched out.

"Here's a glass bottle from Vega! It can't be found any further east! Is there anybody who wants it?"

What attracted me was the glass.

It seems that glass bottles are a specialty product in this region.

Pretty square patterns were neatly lined up on the glass bottle.

With regards to glass, the people of Begaritto had a high aptitude for handling it.

The Central Continent also had glass.

But the glass was thin and rough, and was low in transparency.

Of course, even Begaritto was at a level far from modern day Japan.

But, there were many interesting shapes that gave off a hand-made feel.

Maybe I should buy one as a souvenir before heading back.

"Rudeus, we're not here to sightsee."

"I know."

In the midst of this scenery overflowing with liveliness, we began to set out to do what we planned before.

First is money.

This region's currency is called Shinsa.

Ever since coming to this world, this is the first time I heard of this currency.

It felt like a fresh reminder.

In the Central Continent there were things like gold and silver coins.

Though, the shape doesn't change.

It was just a round metal plate that had a clumsy pattern engraved on it.

When I was with Eris and the others at East Port, I remembered seeing those at least once.

Selling a little of what I had, I obtained a bit of this currency.

Although bartering seems mainstream here, having money gives for a peace of mind.

I sold things from the northern part of the Central Continent at a high price.

To my surprise, I sold them with the price three times that of cheap dried meat.

If I tried harder, I could have sold it even higher.

If I brought this glass over to Ranoa, I could probably make a killing off of it.

Though it seems like it'll attract attention, so I probably won't do it.

For the time being, I presently have about 5000 Shinsa on hand.

While I am not sure how much we will need to suffice, yesterday's meal was 3 Shinsa.

If I have 5000, this should be plenty.

After getting enough money, I gathered information about the labyrinth city Lapan.

I easily gathered information about Lapan, apparently it's a big city.

It seems that Lapan is about a month's trip north from here.

It's exactly what Nanahoshi's info said.

Once, I tried listening in on the path to get there.

"While it's a popular route to take a detour around the desert by going through the way of Ngotsu, there have been many robbers recently so it's dangerous. If you're a smart merchant, you'd cross the Ucho desert. From a landmark in the east, you'll arrive at an oasis if you head north, then from there head west along that path, then when you see the Kara mountain range, head north while facing the left mountain side and you'll reach another oasis. Once you cross that, then once you come out from the east, if you head northwest from there, you'll intersect with the original route."

It's all gibberish to me.

There were many proper nouns, with landmarks, mountains, and deserts everywhere.

For now, I understand there are 2 routes, but unless you're accustomed to travelling on the Begaritto Continent, you can easily get lost.

"You don't sell maps here?"

Once, I tried asking that.

With a map, it'll be reliable.

It's reassuring to at least get a rough position of where I am.

However, the answer I got was bad.

"Map? Who would make something like that?"

As I was told.

There wasn't an Inou Tadaka around here.

{ C-Editor's note: Ino Tadataka was a famous Japanese surveyor and cartographer. }

Thus, like our original plan, I decided to hire a guide.

"Then, is there a place where people gather that would guide us as far as Lapan?"

I asked that, just like a shot in the dark.

However, that too proved to bear no result.

"While there are people that know the roads, I doubt you'll find one looking for someone to go to a place like that."

"Is that so?"

"Well, normally you'd look for places for trade, right?"

"I see."

It's obvious once you think about it.

I wonder why I didn't realize this while we were coming here?

Elinalize casually said to hire a guide.

As a rule of thumb for her, if you don't know the land you're travelling in, you'd hire a guide at the starting town.

Using a teleportation circle, the idea of starting the journey at the midpoint never crossed my mind.

There may have been some warped logic there.

It wasn't going as planned.

However, one should not be impatient.

Things don't go according to plan all the time.

It hasn't even been two weeks since we started on our trip.

Once you think about how it normally takes about 1 year to get to this point, we've progressed far too well.

"In times like these, what would you do, Elinalize?"

"I'd just break through with my own strength. But, to be honest, I'd rather not go through another desert."

"Of course."

"So, what are you going to do?"

"...Let's see. How about looking for someone that is planning on heading towards Lapan?"

"That seems good, let's do that."

Aisha clung onto caravans and was able to travel really quickly.

I'll follow her example.

Then again, it's not like we're traveling quickly, more like getting directions from place to place.

"Do you have an idea of where merchants heading towards Lapan would be?"

Just like guides, there wasn't anybody recruiting for guards either.

But, Elinalize is an S-class adventurer, and I am a Saint-class water magician.

Thinking that, I continued investigating.

It seems not many merchants here want to go to Lapan from here.

They seem to normally head towards the city in the east named Kinkara.

However, it's not like there wasn't anybody.

Lapan was called a labyrinth city, and there are countless maze dungeons surrounding it.

It's a place full of magical items.

People stock up on magical items there, then head to another city to sell them at a high price.

There were merchants that did that type of trade.

Those merchants carry a magic stone or magic crystal from the southwest, passing by here, then heading towards Lapan.

"But, I don't know how long it'll be to get there.

I mean, I'll definitely pass by there within a few months or so..."

Hearing that, I felt a little uneasy.

If that's the case, it'd be better to stick with other merchants heading east.

If it's a trade hub, we can hire a guide there.

Thinking that, we continued to look around.

While there were many merchants heading to Kinkara, not a single one was going to Lapan.

Maybe it's best to go out of our way to Kinkara after all.

When I was starting to think that, we got a result.

"If you want to go there, you should seek out master Garuban. If I remember, he should be around the tents on the west side of the lake. Go look for him."

We searched for this man called Garuban.

The merchant named Garuban was a person that made his fortune peddling from Lapan to Tenorio.

He carries magic stones to Lapan, then from there he carries away magical items.

Possessing six camels, he seems to have made quite a living from this.

Once we knew the name, we found him immediately.

It wasn't as big of a tent as was described.

Six camels were tied up outside.

Just like the info had said.

When we got close to the tent, a dark-skinned girl came out.

She was wearing chest armor and a loincloth-like skirt.

While I couldn't tell from underneath her clothes, she seems to have a lot of physical strength.

Wait a sec, it's the face I saw yesterday.

It was the female warrior Karumerita.

"Hey, you were from yesterday!"

She was surprised as she pointed at me.

It seems like she remembered me.

It seems the man with a small group that we saved yesterday was Garuban.

Saving people creates good opportunities.

Garuban gladly welcomed us.

"When we returned yesterday, we didn't see you guys around, so we were surprised."

We were told they went looking for their cargo, their fleeing camel.

When they returned after recovering the camel,

We had already disappeared.

Seeing that his comrades were properly cremated and buried,

He couldn't find us even though he wanted to say thank you.

It seems he went around for a while looking for us.

I really wanted to ask for an explanation.

But, it could be perhaps that's the common sense of how things are around here.

First priority is cargo.

Everything else comes after.

"This must be fate, would you become my guards?"

Garuban wanted to replenish his guards.

Well, two of them did die yesterday.

"How about 600 Shinsa including meals until we reach Lapan? Hmm?"

It seems like something he had thought of before.

Using flattering words, that we did a great job at defeating those griffons, or something like that.

Even though you were crouching in fear and didn't see it at all.

However, this is what we had wished for.

"We'll go ahead and take on escorting you to Lapan."

"Ooh, is that so! I appreciate it!

If that's so, I don't mind hiring you with an exclusive contract.

I haven't seen any magician quite like you. Let's give you a bonus.

One year is 10000 Shinsa...well, Baribadom would complain. How does 8000 Shinsa sound?"

"We also have our own objectives, so let's leave that for another time."

Since it seems the talk of this was getting bigger and bigger, I stopped it then and there.

And so, we got ourselves a guide to Lapan.

Just a little more now.

We aim towards Lapan while escorting Garuban.

The members are:

Merchant Garuban.

Escort Captain Baribadomu "Hawk-Eyes".

Escort Karumerita the "Bone Crusher".

Escort Tonto the "Big Blade".

These four, and if you include me, Rudeus of the "Quagmire", and Elinalise of the "Dragon Road", that makes six of us.

Furthermore, there's six camels, as well.

I thought about attaching names to the camels as well, but it seems that if you run out of food in the desert, you eat the camels, so I decided not to do it.

The first time I taste camel meat, I want to eat it deliciously without a sense of guilt after all.

We decided to go with a formation that we arranged beforehand.

Fundamentally, its center is Garuban, Baribadomu is the head, and the sides are covered by Karumerita and Tonto.

Elinalise and I are stationed in the back.

It's become a shape where the five of us surround Garuban and the camels.

No matter what direction an attack comes from, we're positioned to follow up and prevent any damage from reaching Garuban.

It's the Imperial Cross.

{ C-Editor's note: Imperial Cross is a battle formation in the Romancing SaGa 2 video game. }

I thought Karumerita or Tonto would be better for the rear guard, but they're taking into consideration that I'm a magician, and it ended up becoming a shape where I work in coordination with Elinalise who is familiar with me.

"Then, let's depart."

First we leave the Bazaar heading east.

After moving to the east, it seems you arrive at a route almost like a main road.

I don't really remember the name of the region very well, but if my memories are correct then it's a route which thieves come out.

For the time being, in regards to that matter, I seek counsel with Baribadomu in charge of security.

"The route for crossing the desert there are no known roads. Besides, we're escorting for that sake. Unexpectedly, if we're caught they might try to charge something like a passage fee after all."

Passage fee. I wonder if there's that kind of thing as well.

When in trouble solve it with money.

It's nice and easy to understand.

That's right, even thieves are humans trying to live their lives.

If you just hand over the things they want, they won't request any more than that.

Handing over money to guys who don't work and aren't relatives or anything is a bit of a disgustingly bad story in my opinion.

However, this time it's not like my pockets will suffer after all, so it's no problem.

Although, even thieves are people.

They might want things other than money or goods.

For example, since Elinalise is erotic they'll take her as well.

If it comes down to that, it's a troubling story.

The relationship between Garuban and us isn't all that strong.

Even though it could be said that we saved his life, there's no way he would exchange his own life for ours.

There's the possibility that we might be cut off as well.

It might end up with just Elinalise and I fighting alone.

"Rudeus, you're making an uneasy face, but if we have a magician of your level, then thieves aren't all that frightening."

"Is that how it is?"

"If it comes down to it, I'll manage to do something using seduction."

"And then, after being taken to the hideout of the thieves, tied up with chains and one after another taking their turn..."

"It's surprisingly gentle you know."

"You have experience with this?"

"The result of my youth."

It seems like Elinalise is full of composure.

Even though I say that, the past is the past, now is now, if something were to happen to her, I wouldn't be able to face Cliff.

Well, if it's just several tens or so of opponents, then I think we can manage somehow or other.

We started walking east through the desert.

We were attacked by monsters many times.

The herd that came charging at us, "Begaritto Buffalo".

The one that came rustling along the ground, "Great Tarantula".

The one that comes using wind magic from the sky, "Air Force Eagle".

The ones we had already identified, "Gyro Raptor" and "Cactus Treant".

Etc...

But, thanks to Baribadomu discovering them at an early stage, it never turned into a large scale battle.

Baribadomu is a warrior possessing a Demon Eye.

It seems that's why he's called Baribadomu "Hawk-Eyes".

Close to two meters tall, a brawny and muscular warrior.

His age would be around 40 years old I guess.

The wrinkles on the corners of his eyes stand out making his expression look somewhat cunning.

His hairstyle has a peculiarity, the sides and back of his head go up to the top of it.

He closely resembles some place's high school basketball club captain.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Slam Dunk sports manga and anime series. }

It's a hairstyle that would match well if he started shouting, "It's fine so do the taping."

His Demon Eye is the same as Ghyslaine, the "Magic Power Eye".

It's an eye that can see the flow of magic power.

That is generally used to search for enemies.

"It's a monster, everyone prepare for battle."

He predicts attacks from monsters and changes in the weather quite accurately.

Almost like Ruijerd.

His accuracy isn't as good as Ruijerd though, but maybe because it's something learned through experience, the speed at which he discovered enemies was relatively fast.

"How nostalgic. Ghyslaine used to use her eye and nose to find enemies like that."

Elinalise narrowed her eyes and said that.

After all, if you have an ally that can search out enemies there's a vast difference in security.

If the enemy is found then I can attack from long range.

At first I was using rock bullet, but since it started to become a pain trying to aim, I changed to the course of using wind magic to lift them and drop them to their deaths.

It's nice since this way is easy.

"Using such large magic like that, will your magic power last?"

Probably because I'm just using whatever works to defeat them, Baribadomu asked something like that.

"If it's only one day's worth then it'll be fine."

"I see, I get it now, you're a great sorcerer huh."

"What's that, great sorcerer you say?"

"It holds the meaning of magician who has mastered a great path."

"No, it's not really something as amazing as that."

"In any case, a magician that doesn't put up a pretense of slacking off is rare."

Within those known as magicians, there are guys who make the decision to only use half of their entire magic power during a single day.

There were many magicians like that in the northern part of the Central Continent as well.

For a magician who has low physical ability, when the time comes down to it the only thing they can rely on is magic power after all.

Naturally.

Although, I haven't even been using half of it you know.

Keeping magic power in reserve is common sense among magicians.

However, it seems among the warriors of the desert who don't know magicians well it just appears lazy.

It might be something related to his age, but it seems Baribadomu understands the meaning to why magicians preserve their magic power.

After seeing how he wasn't surprised over the chantless casting though it doesn't seem like he's all that knowledgeable about magic itself.

"It's good that you're not slacking off, but please think about preserving your magic power for the time when we need it. Since there's five of us after all. Just stick with monsters that are designated as out of range, alright?"

"Understood."

There's no real necessity to hide that fact that I have a large quantity of aggregate magic power though...

There's no necessity to say it either.

Even I myself don't really understand well where my limit is after all.

Using it all I want and getting ahead of myself then making a mistake is something I don't want to do.

During the night the five of us keep lookout in rotation.

Garuban puts up a tent and sleeps there.

Alone.

All of the escorts are outside.

Well, we are on sides of the employer and the employed after all, I guess it's only natural.

I made the suggestion of creating a shelter and sleeping there, but it seems Baribadomu and the other's sense for night attacks would be dulled so it was rejected.

It seems there's a proper reason for sleeping outside as well.

If they're going to say something like that, then I find it difficult to sleep inside a shelter as well.

However, Elinalise said it.

"There's no need to let it bother you, we have our own way of doing things. Trying to get some rest is the important part."

She makes a good point with her words.

I decided to sleep in the shelter as well.

Since I feel more rested that way after all.

Well then, lookout is done in pairs of two.

I thought it would be fine alone, but it seems having five people doing it in pairs is safer.

Fundamentally the rotation changes based on the day.

On the first day the ones keeping lookout were Karumerita and I.

"Please take good care of me."

"Yeah, don't sleep."

"Of course."

Even though it's called lookout, it's boring just silently doing nothing in a place with nothing.

Which is why, I started to chat with Karumerita about stories of the world at large.

"The other day, you saved us."

"No, that goes for both of us."

"You're strong, that woman as well, strong."

Karumerita is a woman warrior.

It seems in terms of age she's 20 years old this year.

Karumerita the "Bone Crusher".

Following along with that name, it seems she prefers tactics that push with power using a broadsword that's over one meter long.

The warriors around this area all seem to prefer and use broadswords.

Baribadomu and Tonto as well have similar looking, massive and long swords hanging at their waist.

It seems because there's many large monsters with hard outer shells, they must have developed using ones that won't simply break.

No matter how much ability you have, with just a trifling matter, that seems to be the case after all.

It seems like the style is an original as well.

"Your woman's sword is too thin. You can't defeat anything with that."

"That isn't the case, that's a magic item imbued with magic power after all. She even managed to tear things like Griffons to pieces. Also, that person, isn't my woman. It's not that sort of relationship."

"But, if a Succubus comes you'll embrace her, wrong?"

"No, since I can use detoxification magic..."

"When a Succubus comes, men serve, embrace women, it's providence of this desert."

"Oh?"

Karumerita triumphantly told me about the ecology of the warriors in the desert and the relationship between female warriors and Succubus on Begaritto Continent.

There are Succubus inhabiting Begaritto Continent.

It seems Succubus were originally a minority monster that inhabited the southwest region of Demon Continent.

But in the war 400 years ago, Laplace mass produced them.

In order to bring ruin to the warriors of Begaritto that were continuing their intense opposition, it seems he sent them in.

Succubus are absurdly strong against men.

Those pheromones can lay any man bare.

Honestly, if one of those suddenly appeared in front of my eyes or two appear at once even I don't feel like I can win.

Men who have been poisoned by the pheromones become the servants of the Succubus.

The primary objective of the servant is to become a meal for the Succubus, but even for a Succubus taking back several tens of people to their nest seems to be impossible, so they just take several people and neglect the rest there.

And then the remaining men left behind start killing each other on the spot.

It seems after being poisoned by the pheromones surrounding men start to look like enemies.

Exactly: "Abnormal Status: Charmed" I'd say.

In order to cure the charmed state, you either need to use detoxification greater than intermediate or else embrace a woman, otherwise it can't be cured.

Back then, 400 years ago in Begaritto Continent, there were almost no people who could use detoxification magic.

As a result of that, the vast majority of male warriors were driven to extinction by the hands of the Succubi.

If you have no partner you can embrace, then it can't be helped.

It's a cruel world.

At least in the end, even a Succubus is fine, I can imagine some thoughts along those lines.

I understand, I understand those feelings very well.

400 years after that.

If you were to ask if the warriors of Begaritto had been destroyed, that didn't become the case.

As a counter-measure against the Succubi, it became that the warriors would always bring along several women when they move around.

Those women could be slaves or Magic Race prisoners, there were a variety of them it seems.

However, for the warriors, those who can't fight were just a hindrance.

They have no choice other than to protect them after all. They have low physical strength as well.

The warriors thought about it.

Straining their lacking brains.

And then they came up with it.

That it would be fine if they just bring female warriors.

It's certainly a logical way of thinking about it.

Even though I say that, just like this, the "Female Warrior" system of Begaritto was created.

In the current escorting parties, there's always at least one female warrior with them.

Female warriors who fight during the times when the Succubi come out and after fighting they are embraced by the men.

Depending on the situation, the more women you have the better as well.

In that way, during the times when Succubi appear, it's safer after all.

On the Begaritto Continent, women are living things that fight.

Karumerita as well is one among those female warriors.

During the time when a Succubus appears, she will become the partner for her male allies.

Of course, if she keeps doing something like that, then she'll quickly get pregnant.

However, for the female warriors that's an honor and then it seems they return to their village while pregnant.

After they give birth they leave the child to their village and then start marching around the Continent as warriors again.

It seems Karumerita has already given birth to one child as well.

All of the children born are raised together in the village.

Without relation to who gave birth to the child or whose child they belong to.

Among them it seems there're even children of different races mixed together, but there's no discrimination.

Without exception, they receive training as warriors. Around the time when men are skilled and the women have their first menstruation, they perform the ceremony of adulthood and leave for the outside.

And then they travel as warriors outside of the village, after their bodies start to decline around thirty years old, it seems they obtain the right to return to the village and devote themselves to raising the children.

Just, it seems there are those like Baribadomu who decide to never return to their village and live until they die as warriors as well.

Naturally as it is, there's no such system as marriage.

I'm sure there're no special feelings held towards any specific individual when they're embraced as well.

I'm experiencing a bit of culture shock.

In my previous world as well, I had heard stories of similar tribes.

However, when they're actually in front of your eyes, how do I put it, it goes beyond just being erotic and gives off a moving impression.

And while I was thinking that,

"You, feel grateful towards, but hate magicians, if Succubus comes out, ask white woman."

And I was turned down.

No, well, since I can use detoxification I wouldn't be asking though.

Tonto the "Big Blade" is a silent man.

Tonto has a large beard, he's a man of about thirty years old.

Underneath his dark skin he has burly muscles built up.

He's shorter than Baribadomu, but he has similar looks.

If it weren't for the difference in how he wears his beard from Baribadomu, unexpectedly you might not be able to make the distinction between them.

People of a different race are hard to make distinctions between.

During the time we were keeping lookout I did talk to him a bit, but it seems he's fundamentally the type to not speak on his own.

It's quite the contrast from Karumerita who talks without even being asked.

It's fine since there's nothing in particular I really want to talk about though.

However, I casually start conversation.

"Tonto the "Long Sword" is cool, isn't it?"

"Baba-sama gave it to me."

"Oh~. So it's not like you just naturally started to get called that."

"All of the names of warriors of the desert are given by Baba-sama."

It seems that the village chief gives the warriors of the desert their second name at the time when they leave for their journey.

One like Karumerita who has excellent physical strength, gets a name like "Mighty Strength" or "Bone Crusher", those who have good eyes like Baribadomu get names like "Hawk-Eyes" or "Eagle-Eyes".

It seems to be based on their state, in order to understand what their strong points are supposedly.

Just, because of that method of deciding, it seems they've suffered unexpectedly.

Supposedly there are people who can do nothing but boast of their physical strength.

Tonto is called "Big Blade", but it's not like he emphasizes use of a huge sword.

This is of the physical strength type as well.

I'm sure without a doubt there's a name like, "Two Swords Unnecessary" as well.

"I started to get naturally called that while I was fighting. Since I used nothing but quagmires to fight."

"A bog of mud, I've never seen it once yet."

"It has bad affinity with the monsters around here."

If it's against opponents that crawl across the ground then the quagmire has a tremendous effect, but if it's like a Griffin or Succubus, which can fly through the sky, then the effect is reduced by half.

For the insect like ones which are slow but have hard outer shells as well, even if you can stop their legs doesn't mean it will go well.

In the first place, recently it hasn't even been able to slow them down.

"Your magic is showy and amusing, I want to see your specialty as well."

"Quagmires are plain though. If there's opportunity I'll show you."

After that, Tonto remained silent.

It was like we talked about everything that was necessary.

While we were moving east, there was gradually more green coming out.

Even more moving towards the east and there was a town called Kinkara and it seems spreading out even further to the east from there is a dense forest area.

For a dense forest area to be right next to the desert, what a strange continent.

Although, the Garuban party wasn't planning to move towards there.

On the way, we encountered something like a large rock standing vertical as the landmark and then changed course to the north.

Around the time three days had passed since we changed courses, we ran into the main road.

Even if we were to call it a main road, it's not like there's any particular maintenance done to it.

It's a path that became a path because a lot of people walked along it.

If I were to compare it to the sand like ground until now and it's a lot more solid to step on, it truly gives off a feeling of stability.

As I thought, it's better for the ground to be solid.

"Sir. From here on out, the thieves come out. I think we can do something about it, but if the time comes down it..."

"I'm paying you money, make sure you protect at least the luggage!"

"...Will do."

Baribadomu was probably trying to say that if the time came to it, we should throw away the cargo and run.

However, in regards to Garuban, it seems the cargo is more important than his life.

Sense of values are various among people.

"Ani? Is it alright?"

"Bon kura, it's fine for you not to worry about anything."

Karumerita is called "bon kura" by Baribadomu and Tonto.

Since she's Bone Crusher it's bon kura.

It's truly an easy to understand nickname.

No, insult maybe?

If I were to say it, it seems like I'd be hit.

{ C-Editor's note: The way Baribadomu refers to Karumerita is bon kura, which has a double meaning of both dumbass/fool and is a short hand for how Bone Crusher is spelled. }

"Quagmire and Dragon Road. You two remain by Garuban-san's side without getting separated. Tonto, you look after the camels. Don't let even one escape. The rear guard is you, bon kura. I'll proceed forward while scouting things out. If something happens, I'll shout out. Don't miss the signal."

"Eh? Ani?"

"Eh?"

"Understood."

After each of us had been signaled we created the formation and carefully advanced.

Even if we were to call them thieves, fundamentally they're the ambushing type, if you discover them ahead of time and take a detour you can avoid them.

As a result of Baribadomu's reconnaissance, we caught onto the fact that thieves were waiting to ambush us.

Somehow, it seems difficult to discover a group of people using demon eyes from a distance, so there's a necessity to properly scout things out.

We made a large detour around the ambush.

If a pile of shit was waiting in the middle of the road, there are few guys who would walk right over it.

In order to avoid the chance of stepping in it, they walk a bit separated from it.

It's only natural.

However, I wonder what went wrong.

It could be that Baribadomu was discovered when he went to scout and then he was followed back.

Or maybe it could be that the ones Baribadomu found was an advance party for the thieves and the main body of the thieves was on standby on the detour route.

We were attacked.

Taking the detour route and just around the time we were letting out a sigh of relief.

Hyu!!

Suddenly, we heard the sound of something cutting through the wind.

In the next instant, an arrow was stuck in Tonto's chest.

Tonto crumbled down to his knees.

I didn't have any idea what was happening, I was about to rush over and use healing magic in a panic.

However, in the next instant Elinalise grabbed onto the nape of my neck.

Simultaneously, the camel on the side of Tonto suddenly had an arrow fly into it.

"Run! It's an attack! They're coming from the west!"

Baribadomu's shout.

With that I understood it.

It's an enemy attack, it won't be good if we can't run away.

Elinalise released me.

Garuban and the camels had already started to run away.

Following along with that I started to run as well.

From above the hill on my left side a horse-rider came running out.

Horse-rider.

Right, it's a horse.

Men on top of horses wearing sand colored turbans came towards us.

"Sir! Abandon the camels! If you throw away the cargo they might overlook us!"

"No way!"

"Do you want to die!"

"It's you all's job to protect the cargo!"

"There's way too many opponents!"

Baribadomu and Garuban's shouting.

In front of my eyes the camel that just got struck by an arrow had its legs get tangled up.

After looking, I noticed bubbles coming from its mouth.

After a few more steps to the side, it fell over.

I shuddered.

There's poison on the arrows.

"Cheh... They're behind us as well."

From behind us there were horse-riders coming at us as well.

The troops with bows were on top of the hills.

They have arrows fixed to the bows.

Most of them aren't reaching, but it seems several of them are shooting in abandonment.

Bit by bit they're reaching up until here.

Horse-riders and bows.

Just from what I can see, there's a tremendous number.

100, no, there's probably 200.

I was being deceived by my preconceived notion from hearing the word thieves.

This is already the size of an army.

"..."

While listening to the sound of my heart beat, I was trying to determine the situation.

The enemy is launching a surprise attack from the rear and side.

At least there are no enemies in the direction we're advancing.

If we're going to run then it's that way.

"Rudeus!"

"Yes. I'm going to use [Quagmire] and [Dense Fog]."

"...I understand, I'll leave it to you!"

While I turned around I launched quagmire.

As large as I possibly could make it.

The depth should be plenty as along as the horses legs get trapped in it.

"Baribadomu-san! I'm going to create a cover! Please run straight ahead!"

"Cover!? I understand!"

"[Deep Mist]!"

I made an outbreak of water vapor appear in mid-air and created a thick fog.

[Puff puff] almost like smoke the surroundings turned pure white.

In no time at all the surroundings had become pure white and nothing could be seen at all.

Alright, with this the bow troops shouldn't be able to aim at us.

[Thunk]...

In the instant accompanying a sound, an arrow was stabbed into the ground at my feet.

"Uooh!!"

"??!"

Just as I was about to fall backwards in panic, Elinalise supported me.

"It's alright, there was one skilled among them, but they can't aim anymore!"

I ruminated over those words.

Tonto and the camel were killed by a single person's hands I guess.

However, since I released the fog...

He can't see anymore.

"Start running!"

I was told and start running.

After that, it wasn't like we weren't aimed for.

I know. They can't aim.

They can't hit, they can't hit. I'm a war hero.

Ah, shit, it would have been good if I gotten some sort of amulet from Sylphy!

No- if I had brought that which is in the holy shrine, from my first time with Sylphy.

"No good, they're going to catch up! Karumerita! Draw your sword!"

I shuddered after hearing Baribadomu's words.

If I listen closely, I could hear the sound of horses running from behind.

It seems there are horse-riders who took a detour around the quagmire.

Even though it's inside of the fog, if they just run straight ahead it's no problem.

The opponents are horses.

Know your own disadvantages, there are such words out there as well, but there are the words that speed decides the battle as well.

It seems there are a considerable number of horse-riders making use of speed and momentum.

Just from what I can see, there's over 100.

How many managed to pass it. Fifty, sixty?

There's no way we can fight that from the front.

"I'm going to slow them down! Please keep running! [Earth wall]!"

I made a 20 meter long thick earth wall appear behind us while continuing to run.

You can't make sudden stops on horses.

If it's inside of this fog, then the wall should become a hindrance.

If they know there's a wall, their speed should slacken.

"Haa... Haa..."

The arrows have already stopped.

I just continue to run.

While sometimes creating walls behind us, running.

Suddenly, I remembered about Tonto who had an arrow stuck in his chest.

I wonder if we just left him behind.

No, there was already no saving him.

The arrow was near his heart.

It had poison on it as well.

Even with advanced healing, if it's a poison arrow in the heart I don't know if we would be able to save him.

In the first place, at this point there's already nothing we can do about it.

We continue to run on at full speed while inside of the fog.

I wonder how far we've been running.

I feel like we've been running for over two hours.

After Baribadomu confirmed things behind us and said, "It seems we've lost them", everyone came to a stop.

"Haa... Haa..."

As expected, I'm tired.

I'm soaked in sweat.

But, the results from continuing to run have showed up.

If I were told to run again, I can still run.

Even though I say that, the three warrior types were making refreshed faces.

Is it because of the Touki?

How unfair.

"Zehaa... Zehaa... Gwe..."

Garuban collapsed with a pale face.

No matter how much you say he's a merchant used to travelling, if he has to run it will tire him out.

He was relieved.

The damage was one camel and one escort.

Tonto.

I feel like if I had immediately pulled the arrow out and used healing magic then detoxification he might have been saved.

It could be that that he skillfully avoided letting it hit a vital spot.

In reality, if Elinalise hadn't pulled on the nape of my neck, I'm sure that I would have tried to do that.

However, if I had done that, I might have been late to run away.

Elinalise has more experience with things like this than me it seems.

Most likely, if I had spent time there treating him, I probably would have been in danger.

".."

After suddenly looking and Karumerita was glaring at me.

I wonder what it is.

Did I do something wrong I wonder.

Karumerita was behind me, she was in charge of the rear guard.

In the case that she's wounded, I'm sure it would be better to treat it.

It doesn't seem like she got hit by an arrow though...

Karumerita determinedly walked up to my side.

Suddenly she grabbed onto my collar.

"You! If you can use such large magic like that, then you could have done in something like thieves right!!"

"Huh?"

Done in?

Those numbers?

After being told it I realized.

That's right. There was the option to kill them as well.

"Stop it bon kura!"

"Ani? You saw it as well right! The horses sunk into a bog, they ran into a wall as well, it became that pure white!"

"Think about it more properly! That's why you're a bon kura!"

"Shut up! This guy, if he had used magic, we might have been able to save Tonto!"

"There's no way we could have defeated those numbers! That was, most likely, the Harimafu Thief Group. Without a doubt there were more lying in wait, you know!"

"But... ah!!"

Elinalise cut into the space between Karumerita and I.

She pressed against Karumerita with her buckler and put her hand on the estoc at her waist.

"Do you have any complaints with our methods?"

"What's going on...?"

Elinalise let out a single "Hmph" with her nose and glared at Karumerita.

"Rudeus was properly making judgement based on the situation. Without knowing how many opponents there are, the number was many. Not to mention the enemies were using poisoned arrows. Slowing them down with a quagmire, sealing off the bows with fog, and creating walls to obstruct them. And thanks to that we were able to escape. One person was killed, but all of the camels except one are safe. What are you dissatisfied with? Fighting like an idiot, did you want to fight losing both your life and your luggage?"

Elinalise defended me like that.

Her words weren't being understood.

However, it seems Elinalise realized what Karumerita wanted to say.

Unusual for Elinalise, she used a provocative way of saying it.

There were a large number of enemies.

100 or 200 maybe.

According to what Baribadomu said, there might have been more waiting as rear guard.

If you were to ask if I could defeat that.

I don't know.

Only if I were to use saint class magic.

Then it should be possible.

I have the magic power. Most likely I wouldn't run out.

While stopping their feet with a quagmire, using magic to do away with the bow troops at a distance, using a squall to blow away the horse-riders from below, using fire to burn them to death.

I could have done something like that.

In theory that is.

In reality I don't know what would have happened.

There was the possibility that the bow troops that I failed to kill might have shot me with a poisoned arrow, or the horse-riders that I couldn't completely stop could have trampled me as well.

Among the opponents' attack methods as well, there might have been some assumption for if anything ever happens with magicians.

Also, if it had become a melee, I couldn't use large scale magic since my allies would have gotten dragged into it.

And then, I'm sure Elinalise understood that as well.

That's why she's my ally.

"In the first place, we aren't mercenaries you know? We have no obligation to fight against that kind of large military force."

".."

"What is it, those eyes? Do you want to go at it with me? You sure are a hot-blooded young girl, aren't you? I'll take you on."

Elinalise took out her estoc.

Seeing that, Karumerita panicked and took out the broadsword from her waist.

And, there Baribadomu cut in between them.

"Hey bon kura, stop. Elinalise, you as well, Quagmire as well. It was unfortunate about Tonto, but there was nothing wrong with Quagmire's decision. The only one thinking about something idiotic like fighting in that place is you, bon kura. That's exactly why you're always going to be a bon kura."

"...It's already fine."

Karumerita withdrew while making a "Hmph" with her rough breathing.

And then, she went over to the side of one of the camels sitting down and sat down burying her face into her knees.

Seeing that state of hers Baribadomu let out a sigh.

"Sorry about that, both of you."

"No..."

"You know Karumerita, she gave birth to a child from Tonto before."

"Huh?"

"Therefore well, try to understand. For her, it's just striking out."

She gave birth to his child.

That's why she got that angry I guess.

I thought that the female warriors of the desert would by no means hold any sort of special feelings personally towards a man.

But I guess that isn't the case.

After all, if it's a partner who you've given birth to their child, they're special.

After receiving a bit of a shock Elinalise rested her estoc in the sheath and approached me.

"Rudeus. There's no need to feel down about it."

"...Haa"

"Among the adventurers as well, it's rare but there are people who can't kill others. Not to mention you're a person that is soon to be a father. I can understand why you would hesitate to kill as well."

There was a bit of a gap from what she said.

It's because she can't understand the conversation.

Honestly, I wasn't hesitating.

Even in that kind of situation where we were cornered, the option of words like kill never even floated through my mind.

Although, inside of that deep fog, there were most likely thieves who ran straight into the walls I created and died I'm sure.

I don't really feel any particular kind of guilt in regards to that though.

If it comes down to using magic and directly killing people somehow I can't help but feeling strangely sick to my stomach.

...I am nothing but a small fry and I feel a bit deplorable.

"Thank you very much."

I honestly lowered my head towards Elinalise who was trying to comfort me.

Thinking about it, in the middle of running away, she was always running besides me.

When I almost fell over she supported me as well, I get the feeling she was in a position to shield me from arrows.

She was always supporting me.

It could be that she had intended to be "my" escort.

"Geez, there's no need for thanks. It's only natural to protect my grandchildren."

Elinalise patted my shoulder with a [Pon Pon].

Grandchild huh...

By the time we're able to return I wonder if Sylphy's stomach will be large enough to stand out.

It's my child and Elinalise's great-grandchild.

In her regards, during the birth of her great-grandchild she probably doesn't want to receive the blame from Sylphy, "Why didn't you protect Rudi!?"

Together with Sylphy and together with me.

She should want to celebrate the birth of a new life with a smile.

"...Umm, Elinalise-san."

"What is it?"

"Thank you very much."

I said my thanks once more.

This time with my heart in it.

Elinalise as well, patted my shoulder once more.

With just a bit of awkwardness continuing.

The journey continued.

Even though one of his allies had died, Baribadomu was calm.

He remade the formation like nothing happened at all.

Baribadomu didn't say anything in regards to Tonto.

Without lamenting over his death, he just indifferently continued the job as an escort.

Baribadomu never once even put the name of Tonto into words.

It's heartless, there's such a part that I feel as well.

But, I'm sure that this is that sort of place.

And then they are that sort of family.

Living next door to death, where any misstep can kill you.

Thinking about it, I have the feeling it was kind of like that on Magic Continent as well.

The sense of valuing life is just a bit too different for me.

Several days later, we arrived at an Oasis that works as a relay point.

Just like the Bazaar we saw at first, it was almost like a market had been made surrounded by a lake.

The first time I saw I didn't stop to consider it, but all of the groups wearing warrior-like outfits certainly have at least one woman with them.

I wonder if all of them are warriors of the desert as well.

Garuban and the others opened up a tent in a certain section.

During the time you're in the Oasis, it seems the escorts are allowed to sleep inside the tent as well.

"Baribadomu, is there a necessity to hire additional escorts?"

"No, I'm sure there's no need. Those two are more useful than the average warrior. Going until Lapan with these numbers and hiring more there would be more profitable I'm sure. Since there's no more thieves as well after all."

"I see, then let's go with that. Nevertheless, losing a camel is painful."

"It can't be helped. It's good fortune to get out of that situation losing just one camel."

Baribadomu and Garuban's conversation was friendly.

Almost to the point where you wouldn't think they have an employment relationship.

"What is it, Rudeus? Is there something on my face?"

While I was looking at Garuban and I was asked something like that.

"No, I was just thinking that you and Baribadomu-san are considerably close."

"I've been close to that guy since the time when I was still a beginner. He's the only companion that I can trust."

I see now.

Unexpectedly, Baribadomu as well, rather than the same warrior of the desert Tonto, he might feel a stronger sense of camaraderie with the merchant Garuban.

In regards to the Escort Captain Baribadomu, his own subordinates are people that he can replace...

Maybe he's started to think that way after witnessing so many subordinates die.

After replenishing our supplies at the bazaar, we continue even further north.

After that, Karumerita never charged at me.

She as well, might have just gotten lost in that moment.

Although there was never any need for us to get along together.

Thereafter we never held any conversations during our guard shifts.

Well our relationship is only up until Lapan, so I won't be bothered over it.

If the father of the child you gave birth to died, of course it's heart-breaking.

Thinking about it from my standpoint.

If Sylphy were to die.

Well, naturally it would be heart-breaking.

Not just because she's carrying my child, I love her too.

If it were down to her dying, that is... heart-breaking.

"...Regret, huh?"

It seems if I come to Begaritto Continent I'll regret it.

Not much time has passed since I decided to journey with Elinalise to Begaritto Continent and learned about the teleport ruins from Nanahoshi.

In terms of time it's not all that different.

Therefore, I think that regret should still be the same thing.

If I were to assume that it's the same thing, it's hard to think that something will happen to those remaining at the school.

If I ignored the previous advice and I started to go towards Begaritto Continent first, I wouldn't have met with Sylphy and wouldn't have become acquaintances with the other guys as well.

I couldn't have regretted what I didn't know.

However, it could be that it's a different regret this time.

It may not be something that is going to happen on Paul's side, but something back home.

For example, if the condition of Sylphy's pregnancy gets bad...

"Rudeus, did something happen?"

"No..."

It's needless anxiety.

Something like a source of regret can be found anywhere.

For a careless guy like me, no matter what I do I'll have at least one regret.

From here on out...

I don't know what might happen.

It's the first time I've opposed the Hitogami's advice head on.

Up until now, it always turned into a good result if I obeyed them.

Then, this time, no matter what I do I wonder if it will be no good.

No.

That shouldn't be the case.

If I know that something bad is going to happen, it should be possible to avoid that.

Even though I say that, it's not limited to something happening to someone nearby like Tonto.

I can't let my guard down.

I need to think like that.

And then.

If at that time the one who is trying to harm my family is a person then...

This time I will...

...No, I'll stop there.

After all, it's just talk.

I can't kill a person.

If it comes down to it, at least I'll protect my family in exchange for my own body.

Let's go with that.

—

Two weeks after that.

We arrived at the Labyrinth City Lapan.

Labyrinth City Lapan.

That city is built within a mysterious cage-like material you can't find anywhere else.

Within the vast desert, there's an enormous white cage.

Just as you're thinking [What is it?] and approach that cage to look, of all things it is bone.

It's the bones of an enormous Behemoth.

Lapan is a city that was built within an enormous rib cage which could easily contain an average sized city.

This place that was once nothing but a small oasis was altered by the remains of that Behemoth.

An astonishingly large number of labyrinths appeared and a great number of adventurers became fascinated by that land.

Adventurers from throughout the world visit this land in order to get rich quick in Lapan, giving birth to a great number of deeply moving dramas and tragedies.

In such a whirlpool of chaos, this city is now the prominent metropolis of Begaritto.

Adventurer Bloody Count, Excerpt from book "Walking the World".

A vague recollection of my knowledge from "Walking the World".

Lapan is a large city.

Within the center of those characteristic-like 12 white pillars an earth-colored townscape was spreading out.

The buildings are made of earth and materials harvested from monsters.

Townscapes with this kind of ambiance I often saw on the Magic Continent.

Since there's an insufficient amount of wood after all.

Nevertheless, unexpectedly there's a lot of green as well.

I wonder if it's because of the oasis next to the bone pillars.

Even from a distance, I could see trees like Palm trees standing there.

The atmosphere is peculiar.

How do I put it, the scent of sweat or the scent of vulgarity?

It's a scent of people similar to the slave market.

"Are you surprised? Those pillars are the rib cage of a Behemoth."

While observing as we walked, Garuban triumphantly started to tell the story.

It's a problem of formation and recently here Garuban has started up conversations often.

Garuban really likes to boast about stories.

Whether lie or truth "I'm amazing" stories are stories that you can enjoy just listening to like that.

"Once at the time when that great hero North God Kaaruman the Second visited this land, together with his allies he exterminated a Great Behemoth that was raging about in this desert. The Behemoth's meat was eaten or rotted, and now it's all gone without a trace, but just the bones continued to remain until now without rotting like that."

"Oh~"

I wonder if this is a land related to North God Kaaruman.

I know of several legends of that North God, but it's my first time hearing one about defeating a Behemoth.

On our journey, I saw a Behemoth once, but trying to defeat something like that isn't something a sane person would try.

I wonder how he managed to defeat it.

Well, it seems the North God managed to defeat things like the Immortal Demon King and an enormous Dragon. It might have been his hobby to defeat those kinds of monsters with high HP.

"The reason there's a large number of labyrinths is because mixed in among the monsters that ate the Behemoth there were ant types. If you eat the flesh of a powerful monster, then a powerful monster will be born. The new variation of ants dug up a large number of nest holes and all of those ended up changing into labyrinths."

"I see now."

The Behemoth died.

There the insects ate.

The insects then multiplied and created nests.

After a long period of time passed the insects died, their nests changed, it's that sort of cause.

Incidentally, if you eat the flesh of a strong monster a strong monster will be born.

That is folklore.

It has about as much credibility as gaining immortality from eating the flesh of a mermaid.

If a strong monster could be born like that, then it wouldn't be strange for the people of the Magic Continent who eat the meat of monsters on a daily basis to be stronger.

It doesn't seem to be an ability of monsters to change after eating the meat of monsters either after all.

No wait just a second.

How about the theory that it raises the probability of those like Badigadi and Kishirika to be born.

It seems in the first place monsters are a mutation of normal living things, it wouldn't be strange for mutations to occur among people as well.

This is bad.

I've eaten a considerable amount of meat from monsters after all.

What should I do, if the moment Sylphy and my child is born it suddenly shouts something like, "This one is Demon World Great Emperor!"

I might end up feeling like a shrike entrusted with the eggs of a cuckoo.

{ C-Editor's note: Cuckoo birds are brood paracites that lay their eggs in the nests of other bird species. The host unwittingly raises the cuckoo chick as its own offspring. }

"Adventurers and merchants throughout the world come to gather in this land."

The magic items were found one after another.

The equipment and magic tools flew off the shelves.

Magic stones. No matter how many you have, it's never enough.

Just by bringing goods, you can reliably sell them off at a high price.

In regards to merchants, it seems to be that kind of land of dreams.

Although, in order to come here, you need the knowledge and some other stuff to walk across the desert.

Therefore it's a business where only skilled merchants can succeed, supposedly.

If you go to Central Continent, I'm sure you would be able to find any number of safer and more profitable businesses.

The frog inside of the well.

The grain of rice in the rice bowl.

Even though I say that, since Garuban is drunk on himself, I don't intend to pour water over that.

It's because there are merchants like these that the economy actually moves.

We arrived in Lapan and separated from Garuban and the others.

It seems they planned to setup a tent at the edge of the town.

It was a short time, but I feel like I was taught various things by them.

"Thank you very much."

"It goes for both of us. If anything happens again, feel free to call for us."

Our separation went all too quickly.

It was a short period, but we ended up being of assistance I guess.

I was going to bow to Baribadomu and Karumerita, but I stopped.

It's a bit awkward, but I don't want to leave anything lingering in the background.

—

Now then, it won't be good if we don't search for Gisu.

Or else Paul I guess.

I'll be running around looking for them without any clues though.

They're here right?

We still have time before the sun sets.

Normally finding an inn would be the first thing, but should we put priority on searching?

"What should we do?"

"That's right. In a city of this size then there should be an adventurers guild as well, let's try going there."

"I understand."

I wanted to leave behind our baggage first though.

Well it's fine.

If possible, I'd like to stay at the same inn as Gisu or Paul after all.

We asked a person walking down the road the location of the adventurer's guild.

It seems to be in the vicinity of the center of the city.

Those guilds are generally in the center.

The people walking down the road were mostly merchants.

The merchants were generally wearing the same outfits as Garuban.

A turban, a gown that seems to completely conceal the body excluding the head. A scruffy beard.

Guys with that sort of appearance are walking around leading camels or stallholders standing under tents on the roadside.

There's many people who properly keep their skin concealed around here.

Just, among them there are guys with an appearance like Aladdin as well.

It's almost like you'd expect a general store, metallic lamp, or pots with strange patterns and such to be sold.

It's exactly an Arabian kind of feeling.

Most likely if you blow into a recorder, a red snake will come on in the shape of a Kamon.

{ C-Editor's note: A bad pun using the English words 'come on' which sound like the Japanese word 'Kamon'. }

The closer we got to the adventurers guild, the more we saw the familiar forms of adventurers.

I wonder if there are many people originally from Central Continent around here.

Just, all of them have the faces of veterans.

Most likely they all specialize in labyrinth exploration and are S rank.

There are many guys lightly dressed.

It seems it's dangerous if you stay outside in the strong sunlight without wearing thick clothes, but since they aren't spending a long period outside it's no problem.

The adventurers guild was something constructed out of a single large rock.

Most likely, it's something created with magic.

Since I can make something similar to it, I quickly understood.

Although the workmanship was better than the ones I make.

The entrance had an elaborate relief carved into it, when you go inside the ventilation is good, it was pleasantly cool and refreshing.

The atmosphere inside of the adventurer's guild is generally the same everywhere.

However, because of this location, the figures of newbies can't be seen.

Everyone looks strong.

The guys with wounds on their faces or bodies stand out.

I'm sure, there are many who have wounds on their legs.

It's not like the only difference is that I was sponging off my parents.

{ C-Editor's note: The Japanese word sunekajiri means sponging off one's parents but also means shin biter. }

"Well then, let's try asking around about Paul or Gisu."

"That's right. I'm sure if we ask we'll know."

"Gisu gets his information from these sorts of places as well. After we just say his name, I'm sure he'll locate us from his side... and, it seems there's no necessity for that."

Elinalise's words.

After following her gaze, in the corner of the adventurer's guild, there was a man with a monkey face.

It seems he was talking about something with a Beast race swordsman.

"Hey, I'm begging you. You were helped out a good bit by that guy as well right."

"Impossible things are impossible."

"Compromise on that point, can't you do something? Every moment counts."

"It's already been a month right? They're dead."

"No, they're definitely not dead. Even then we need people to confirm if there's a corpse. Hey, I'm begging. I'm begging based on the anticipation of seeing your skill with the sword. If you want, we can even give double the reward as well."

It was a considerably frantic expression.

Gisu, you can make that sort of face, can't you?

"Sorry, but ask someone else, I don't want to die yet."

It seems like for a short while Gisu was trying to request something of the Beast Race swordsman, but soon the beast race swordsman shook his head and Gisu clicked his tongue loud enough that we could hear it over here.

"Cheh... You damn coward! It's amazing you managed to get along as an adventurer like that!"

"...Hmph, say whatever you want."

The Beast Race man didn't even turn around for Gisu's insults and left the building.

How unusual for Gisu to use that kind of abusive language.

No, it's not like I know all that much about Gisu either.

The Gisu in my heart gives off more an aloof feeling.

"Gisu, he seems to be considerably desperate doesn't he."

"Oh, Gisu is generally like that."

"Is that so? My image of him is more like..."

"I'm sure, in front of Rudeus he's putting on a good face, right...? Gisu!"

Gisu was restlessly looking around his surroundings.

After he found us, Gisu opened his eyes wide.

He walked over to where we were unsteadily.

"O... Oh! If it isn't Elinalise!"

"We're late, aren't we?"

After Elinalise said that, Gisu laughed nihilistically.

"There's no~ way... that's the case... rather, to the point, that it's way too fast."

Gisu's face turned into a smile and he patted Elinalise's shoulder with a [Bashibashi].

"Rather, hey~, how fast were you coming, huh... the time I sent the letter out was still only half a year ago, you know? Ah, could it be? You haven't seen the letter? Did you pass by and miss it?"

"We'll talk about that later. What happened on this side with Zenith?"

After Elinalise asked, Gisu's face turned into a frown.

"It's not good. We thought it would become a long fight and sent the letter out to you guys as well but...Honestly... you know. Well, this side as well, we can talk about it in detail later."

It seems the situation is bad.

However, that is something we predicted.

By the time we arrive, it would already be resolved; such an optimistic thought has disappeared.

"For the time being, please guide us to where dad is."

After Gisu took a look at me his eyes went round.

And then he scratched the area below his nose.

"O... Oh... What's this, it's senpai, right? You've gotten considerably big."

"It doesn't seem like Gisu-san has changed."

"Heh...Stop that, it's ticklish. Newbie is fine I said."

Ah, how nostalgic, this exchange.

"Oh my, you seem to have a considerably good relationship."

Elinalise said it as if she was amused.

After hearing that, Gisu smiled with a broad grin.

"Well yeah, it's a relationship where we entered the same prison together after all, right senpai?"

"That's right, how nostalgic."

Thrown into prison nude in the Dorudia race village.

Really, how nostalgic.

"Ah, here's no good. I'll guide you to Paul's place."

While saying that, Gisu nihilistically laughed and left the adventurer's guild.

The place Paul and the others were staying at was an inn in a certain corner of the city.

It was constructed of earth and stone.

If I were to go by the standard of Magic Continent, it would be aimed at about B rank adventurers.

It's not good or bad.

After we made it up to the entrance, Gisu said it.

"Listen, Paul is considerably exhausted. Elinalise, you, I'm sure there are things you want to say, but this time try to hold yourself back a bit."

"...I can't make any promises."

Elinalise said that while shaking her head.

Gisu made a bitter smile and shrugged his shoulders.

Nothing more than that was said.

Well, if it's Elinalise, then it's not like she'll suddenly become belligerent.

"Senpai, you as well. Please don't get into a fight like last time. I'm sure you have lots of things to say along the way, but don't blame him too much."

If he's going to the point of saying something like that ahead of time, it seems Paul is in a dangerous state.

Although, I've already seen a weakened and lost Paul once before as well.

It won't be good if I don't prepare myself.

Yeah I can see it, Paul is the type who is considerably weak emotionally.

If anything happens, he quickly gets depressed.

It's not quite to the level of mental illness, but he's the type that hasn't gone through any kind of major setbacks in the past.

If we could just find Zenith, then I thought he would return to the Paul full of confidence from Buina Village though...

Well, this time. I'll go with guts.

Let's go with tolerance.

Let's go with the level of being called Rudeus the Buddha.

"Then, let's go in."

Gisu said that and went inside the inn.

There's no door.

There was a cloth almost like a curtain separating as we entered inside.

Inns that are aimed at adventurers, generally, were all made to look the same no matter where you go.

It's a place for the sake of eating.

Only the materials of the tables and the positioning are different, there's no large difference.

I recognized Paul at a glance.

The man who has fallen prostrated on top of the table.

"...Ah."

There was a person who let out a small voice.

The person standing right beside Paul.

Even in this kind of place, she's wearing maid clothes.

It's Lilia.

She had a clear yet slightly tired expression and her hair was somewhat frayed.

However, after she met eyes with me, that face became somewhat cheerful.

She did a single bow towards me.

After that, she soon shook Paul's back.

The woman sitting in front of Paul stood up as well.

After seeing my face, she took several steps back and lowered her head after making a taken aback face.

It's a female in a robe figure.

Was that Vera or Shera again?

If I remember correctly, it was Shera.

The management person.

She was making a tired face as well.

Everyone is making tired faces.

I sat down in the seat she was sitting right in front of Paul.

"Husband, Rudeus-sama has come to visit."

"Nn..."

After Paul was shaken by Lilia, he slowly raised his face.

What a terrible face.

He didn't have a scruffy beard and his hair was reasonably in order.

There's no scent of alcohol from a certain time as well.

However, there's bags under his eyes, it feels like he's lost weight and worn out as a whole.

Same as always, he's being driven into the corner.

I'm glad I came.

If Paul is in this kind of condition, then even with just this, there is meaning in my coming here.

"Rudi..."

"Dad. It's been a while."

Paul looked at my face in a daze.

It's almost like he's just woken up.

No, I wonder if he was asleep.

With his face down on the table.

And dozing away.

"Ah... How strange. I can see Rudi...wa ha... Yo Rudi, it's been a while. You look energetic. Are Norn and Aisha doing well?"

Paul said that with glazed eyes and a dull face.

Honestly, it was a reaction outside of my assumptions.

I thought a Paul who was lost in alcohol would come out like some time ago.

And then, I thought he would come out shouting at me with an alcohol bottle in one hand.

"No... Norn and Aisha, I've taken care of. Now they're living with me in the Magic City Sharia. For the time being, I've left them in the care of some reliable people, so it's alright."

"I see, I see, as expected of Rudi. I can rely on you. Yeah, how have you been, have you been healthy?"

"I guess so... Well, I've been healthy."

Paul was smiling with a fluffy expression.

It was a smile like his soul was missing not suitable for this situation.

You could even call it eerie.

"I see, that sure is great, it's number one that you've been healthy."

Paul's eyes were dead.

Could it be, I wonder if his spirit has died and he's become an invalid?

After looking at Gisu with an uneasy face, he nodded with a serious face.

...Seriously?

Paul, you've really ended up becoming like this...

"Rudi..."

Paul unsteadily stood up and made his way around the table to me.

And then, he tightly embraced me.

"Dad, you know, he's a failure..."

I just silently returned the embrace from Paul.

Paul might be no good.

He already might never return to normal.

Even though he'll soon have grandchildren born.

He's ended up becoming like this...

However, now that I've come here, it's alright.

I'll somehow do something.

I came for that reason.

"I couldn't save your mother, I couldn't protect the things I decided myself either. I wasn't able to do anything for you as a parent as well. I'm a no good guy."

"Please rest easy. Now that I've come here it's already alright."

"Wu...Rudi, you, have really gotten big."

Paul tightened his grip on my shoulders.

It hurts a bit.

However, I'll endure it.

"I've grown bigger. Soon, my child will be born as well. So, afterwards rest easy and leave things to me, please take a good rest."

"...Hn?! Child!?"

And there Paul suddenly let out a strange voice.

Simultaneous with that, the light rapidly returned to his eyes.

"O... O... Oh?"

He was touching my face with his own face like he was tricked by a fox.

"...Could it be, you're real?"

"I'm real."

"You're not a dream?"

"A good man like it's a dream, right?"

"...Ah, he's real."

Paul blinked his eyes and looked at his surroundings.

He met eyes with Lilia.

"Good morning, Husband."

"Yeah, Lilia. How long was I asleep?"

"Since Talhand-sama went out shopping, so... just about one hour."

"I see, it seems I was half asleep."

Paul shook his head and stretched a bit.

Hmmm, after all, it seems he was just half asleep.

It seems he hasn't become an invalid.

That's great.

I thought I was going to have to nurse an old person already at this age.

Paul sat back down on the chair and faced me.

And then, with a feeling once again, started to ask.

"...Rudi, why... are you here?"

"I said it just now as well, but I've come to help you."

"No, not with that sort of meaning?"

I shook my head.

It was a question within my assumptions.

Previously, these sorts of differences in contact developed into a fight.

However, this time, it will be fine.

I already saw the letter and sheltered Norn and Aisha as well.

"It's alright, Norn and Aisha as well, they've safely been taken care of."

I repeated what I said earlier.

"Right, I see."

Paul looked like he was confused as he patted my body.

Almost like he was trying to make sure if I was really here.

"No, but, after all... isn't that too fast?"

"We came using a somewhat special means of transport. I thought about talking about it on the way home."

"Special means... Well, if it's you, then I guess those kinds of things are possible..."

Paul was making a dumbfounded face and drooped his shoulders.

With the same absent-minded face.

"For the time being, could you tell us what happened after you sent out the letter?"

"No, wait just a second, I'm confused."

"That's right, please drink some water and calm down."

I made a cup with earth magic and filled it with water using water magic then handed it to Paul.

Paul honestly took that.

And quickly gulped it down.

And then, "Fu..." took a deep breath.

"Sorry. I'm a bit surprised. Though I knew that Gisu sent out a letter at his own convenience, I thought it would be a bit longer before you come."

"We came here in a hurry after all."

After saying that, Paul made a bitter smile.

"Even for hurrying, that's way too fast though."

One and a half months.

If you were to expect it from Paul's side, it would be a bit over half a year.

Even then, that would still be fast.

I'm sure it's fast.

Normally, it would be another year from there.

Paul as well, probably thought it would be another ten months I'm sure.

And, there Paul put his hand at his chin and made a face like he was thinking about something.

And then, with a somewhat tensed face asked me.

That voice was using a tone that was slowly trying to ascertain something.

"Come to think of it, earlier, did you say something about having a child?"

Come to think of it, I did say it.

Though I didn't have any intention to hide it.

After all, I wonder if he'll get angry.

That even though I'm going through this much difficulty, just you are making these good experiences.

I responded while selecting my words.

"That is. Actually, while I was attending school at the Magic University, I got married."

"...Married?"

Paul's face turned into a frown.

"With whom...? Ah, was it Eris?"

"No, with Sylphy. We were able to reunite at the Magic University."

"Sylphy? The one from Buina Village?? She was alive?"

"Yeah, though it seems like she had a terrible time in her own way."

Paul was brushing his chin while making a surprised face.

Somehow, I did send out a letter, but it really doesn't seem to have arrived.

"The story up until we got married, do you want to hear?"

"...Ah, Yeah. That's right I guess. For the time being, tell me."

I started to tell Paul about what happened after I sent the letter to him.

I entered the Magic University, the story up until I got married.

I carefully told the contents.

Honestly, my memories from school life were nothing but fun memories.

Certainly there were a few bad things as well, but it wouldn't be an exaggeration to even say they were rose colored.

I made friends as well and made a lover as well.

During every event, we had a party as well.

I cautiously told it while trying to remain as objective as possible as I said it.

I didn't keep anything secret.

Since there's no mistake that I enjoyed it.

"I see... a child... grandchild, huh..."

I was prepared to be reprimanded.

The fact that I've made a child would mean, in other words, that I did things capable of making a child.

During the time when I know Paul is desperately trying to save Zenith for our family.

Normally, I'm sure you would get angry.

It's something that accompanies pleasure after all.

It seems Paul has been living a lifestyle of abstinence as well after all.

In front of me with that kind of thinking, Paul lowered his head.

"I'm sorry about that. Because of my worthlessness, I called you who is about to become a father to this kind of place."

He apologized.

That Paul did.

"No, that is, I feel very sorry about that. Even though mother still hasn't been found, only I have.."

"No, I can't blame you for that. Once with Lilia, I as well embraced her after all."

Lilia is your wife as well, isn't that fine I wonder.

And where I think up to though.

"I thought I could last until we saved Zenith, really, it's pathetic..."

Paul hung his head down in shame, he looks like he's going to cry again.

Fragile.

Almost like he's made of glass.

And there Lilia interposed with her words.

"We were attacked by a Succubus, it couldn't be helped."

"Even with that.., you, like that...Ah, damn it..."

Paul seemed like he remembered something and held his head.

I see, a Succubus huh.

It can't be helped if it was a Succubus.

I encountered one as well, but those aren't something you can fight against.

The things that people are hiding in their hearts, it has a feeling like it can lay them bare.

But, I think there should be healing magicians in Paul's party.

And I flash a glance at Shera.

She caught my glance and went into an obvious panic.

"I...I'm very sorry. That is, I was afraid, of the leader, and I wasn't able to do anything..."

"Rudi, please don't blame her. It's my fault."

Most likely, after Paul went into heat, he started to attack the women surrounding them.

If this man were to seriously go into heat, I'm sure that would be scary.

Even more so, in Paul's party, Paul should be the core of their combat ability.

You can't invoke detoxification magic unless you're touching the other side with your hand.

Trying to hold down Paul while using detoxification, that's no different from impossible.

There Lilia must have offered her body to somehow do something I'm sure.

"I understand the fear of Succubus very well. It's an opponent that it can't be helped against."

"But you know, even though Talhand was completely fine, just I..."

Come to think of it, this party has a man called Talhand as well, doesn't it?

He was alright, I guess?

I wonder what that means.

There was a man who could resist that?

Could it be that it doesn't affect Dwarves, or something like that?

While I was thinking that, Paul's gaze locked onto me.

"What is it?"

After asking that, Paul scratched underneath his nose while answering.

"No, you, it seems you've become able to refer to yourself as Ore now."

{ C-Editor's note: 'Ore' is the pronoun 'I' used by Japanese men. 'Boku' is the pronoun 'I' used by Japanese boys. }

"Huh..."

After it was pointed out, I realized that my first person had changed.

Come to think of it, at some unknown point, I've started to be able to put "Ore" into words.

Though it was something I had intended to do.

Maybe because I was talking together with Zanoba and the others, it seems it gradually mixed together.

"Ah, excuse me. To think I would do that."

{ C-Editor's note: He switched back to Boku here. }

"No, it's fine. Using "ore" is manlier after all."

Paul smiled

He smiled, however.

Tears started to build up in the edges of his eyes.

Tears started to fall down.

By the time one grain had fallen, many were falling down.

Without end they were falling.

"...Rudi, you, really grew up a lot, didn't you...?"

After receiving those words, I felt like I was going to cry as well.

Even though we're family.

We don't even know how the other side has changed.

"Dad is sorry for being this kind of no good father..."

".."

I silently put my arm around Paul's shoulder.

It wasn't even necessary to stretch myself, my hand could reach around to the other shoulder.

In the time I hadn't realized, I had grown to the same height as Paul.

Just like that, the two of us cried.

After a short while I separated from Paul.

The reunion has ended.

It won't be good if we don't change directions.

And then, there's still one problem remaining.

"...Hmph."

Elinalise was sitting in a chair nearby and looking over here with a face like she wasn't amused at all.

Paul slowly looked over there.

Their two gazes entangled.

Paul narrowed his eyes.

Elinalise lowered her eyebrows.

No good.

"Umm, dad. Elinalise-san has come to help. She's come all the way here from Magic City Sharia after hearing our family is in a pinch. Even on top of the fact that she didn't want to see dad's face. She came to help."

".."

Paul slowly stood up.

He faced Elinalise and slowly started to walk.

She caught onto that and stood up while tightly gripping her fist.

"She's worried as well. I'm sure various things happened in the past though. In order to save my face here, can't you let things be water under the bridge?"

Paul ignored me and stood directly in front of Elinalise.

Elinalise was glaring at a high place one head above her own.

An electrifying presence was being transmitted.

It can't be, this is blood thirst.

Critical situation.

That word floated to mind.

Could it be, they're going to start a fist fight?

No, it might become a fight to the death.

No good.

I never thought their relationship was that bad.

"...Gisu."

I exchanged a look with Gisu.

Then, he shrugged his shoulders in jest and an irritating smile floated onto his face.

This guy is useless.

"Elinalise."

"What do you want?"

Paul took a fleeting glance at me.

He sent a look at Lilia and Shera as well.

I wonder what it is.

It's a gaze that has implication.

".."

Paul got onto his knees there.

And then rubbed his head into the ground.

He's prostrating himself!

"For that time, I'm very sorry!"

Elinalise wasn't looking at Paul.

She responded while looking away.

While making a displeased face, she said it completely unamused.

"...About that time, I feel that I was in the wrong as well."

...Huh?

I feel like I heard some unexpected words.

Paul was still in the form of a frog as he continued.

"It seems like you've helped me out in various ways since the teleport, I am truly sorry."

"It's fine. I had a person I was searching for as well, it was in addition."

"Thank you, Elinalise."

"You're welcome, Paul."

With that it was over.

It was something done quickly.

In between the two a small smile floated.

It seemed like something that existed between Paul and Elinalise disappeared.

Even though she said she wouldn't forgive Paul that much.

So easily.

"Fu..."

Paul took a deep breath and stopped his prostration then stood up.

He brushed his knees with a [Pan Pan].

And then looked at Elinalise.

Elinalise as well looked at Paul with a soft gaze.

"Paul, you've grown old haven't you."

"You're just as beautiful as always."

"Oh my, I'll tell on you to Zenith."

"Then I can see a Zenith burning from jealousy again."

"It's something to look forward to, isn't it?"

The two suddenly laughed.

How nice.

A beautiful elf and an exhausted middle aged swordsman.

Somehow it seems like it could become a painting.

I don't know the reason for their discord.

It might have just been Elinalise being stubborn and maybe it wasn't anything significant I wonder.

Or else, maybe it was the so-called [Time solves everything.] I wonder...

In any case, it's beautiful that everything ends well, I guess.

"Ah... But, you, I'm amazed you could endure it. From the northern regions until here, I'm sure it was considerably tough right?"

"Yeah, it was considerably tough."

"What's going on with your curse? Could it be, you didn't do it with Rudeus did you?"

"Never. I somehow managed to endure thanks to the magic tool Cliff made."

Paul tilted his head after hearing Elinalise's words.

"Who is Cliff?"

"My husband."

"Ha?!?"

Paul opened his eyes wide.

And then, let out a loud surprised voice.

"You have a husband, you really mean there's such an odd person out there! What kind of joke is that? Could it be that you're just saying that on your own! Hey Rudi, is it someone you know as well? That one called Cliff."

Paul looked at me while laughing.

I nodded with a serious face.

It's because Elinalise was making a scary face.

"Dad. That's saying too much. Certainly I feel that Cliff is an odd person, but he's a man I respect."

Cliff.

He has a bit of places where he can't read the mood, but he's straight forward, and a man who can directly say he loves a person.

He's an amazing guy.

"Seriously. For you to say you respect him, how amazing is he...?"

Paul received a shock, but soon wore a face like he was wrong and lowered his head.

"I see. Sorry about that, introduce him to me next time."

"Yeah, he's a much greater man than you."

Paul made a bitter smile at those words and lowered his head once again.

"In any case.... Elinalise. Rudeus. I'm grateful. It's great of you to come."

"Save the thanks for after this."

"If we're family, then it's only natural."

Well then.

It's about time we get to the main topic.

"Dad. Please explain the situation."

First Paul started telling us the details on how he got to here.

Generally, it was a story I already knew.

The fact that they met with Roxy and Talhand in Milishion.

After getting their hands on that information, they crossed over to Begaritto Continent.

Thanks to the somewhat complete state of their party, that they managed to somehow or other make it up to Lapan.

And there they reunited with Gisu, and found a lead on the whereabouts of Zenith.

"According to the information from Gisu it seems your mother, Zenith, is trapped in a labyrinth, one day north of here."

"..."

She's trapped.

Does that mean someone is trapping her?

The fact that it's in a labyrinth makes it vague.

I wonder if there are labyrinths that capture people.

"For all six years?"

"I don't know."

Paul shook his head.

I continued the questions.

"The condition of her life?"

"I don't know. Just, we heard that several years ago it seems a party that entered that labyrinth saw a person who looked like Zenith. And then, that party lost track of her in the labyrinth as well..."

Lost contact with them...

Isn't that hopeless then?

The fact that she's being trapped, in other words doesn't that mean you just want to believe that?

However, according to the story from Roxy, at the very least at the time they heard the story from Kishirika, it seems Zenith was still alive.

And then according to the information from Gisu, it seems the time when they lost sight of her was prior to when Roxy heard the story from Kishirika.

The time Roxy heard the information from Kishirika was two years ago.

The information Gisu heard was four years ago.

In other words, that would mean Zenith has remained missing for at least two years yet continued to remain alive.

If it comes to that, I feel like even now the probability that Zenith is alive is high.

For the time being, it seems there's a ray of hope as they continue searching for Zenith.

Even if for example she had already died, just confirming that she's died is important as well.

Naturally, I hope she's still alive but...

However, if I hear that she's died and something deep within my chest falls down.

It seems somewhere inside of me I already feel that it's too late.

It's been six years since the teleport after all...

And there Gisu interposed with words.

"The actual situation is all based on rumors we don't know. It could be that she's already dead. She might have been possessed by a monster or something and wandering around. Just, there's the story that she was seen inside the labyrinth as well."

Paul supplemented that.

"That labyrinth is an ancient and troublesome labyrinth. During this last year we've attacked it a number of times, but it never goes well. We even had a gathering of four pros at exploring labyrinths, but we couldn't even clear half of it. It's a pathetic story."

Four people.

Paul, Gisu, Talhand, and Roxy huh.

It seems like there were three others as well, but those girls were not pros at exploring labyrinths.

Come to think of it, I wonder where the remaining three went.

"Mu... Do we have guests?"

Just as I was thinking about it light shined in from the entrance.

Someone came inside.

"Oh! It seems like we've missed out a deeply moving meeting here!"

It was a short man.

However, the only thing small was his height.

He was a wide man about the same size as his height.

I recognized at a glance that he was a dwarf.

His long beard was shaking and in his hands was a large linen bag.

Most likely, he would be Talhand I guess.

Behind him was a female in the outfit of a swordsman and after all she had the same linen bag as well.

It's not Bikini Armor, but it's a face I remember.

If I remember correctly her name was Vera.

After she did a single bow to me she trotted to nearby Shera's side.

While swinging his heavy looking body the man came over in front of me.

He looked over me while scrutinizing everything from the top of my head to my feet.

"You are Paul's son huh?"

"Ah, yes. It's nice to meet you, I'm Rudeus."

"I'm Talhand. Just as I heard, you're a man who seems intelligent. Hmmm."

Talhand put the linen bag on top of the table.

"Rudeus, you mustn't approach that man. You'll have your important things as a man stolen away."

The one who said that was Elinalise.

The thing important to a man, I wonder what.

Like pride?

"Oh~, just as I was thinking it stank of a woman..."

There Talhand looked at Elinalise.

It was completely an expression like only just now he just realized it.

"What's this, you came along as well."

"Oh my, am I not allowed to come?"

"No good no good. Just having you join along causes troublesome things to happen after all."

Talhand took a glass bottle with an amber looking liquid inside out of the linen bag.

And then after popping the cork off the bottle he started to gulp it down like that.

"Bu... ha... the alcohol around here really hits the spot."

The scent of alcohol started to float around.

It seems like considerably strong alcohol.

The dwarves like alcohol after all.

"Here."

Talhand handed the alcohol bottle over to Elinalise.

She silently received it.

And then just like that took a sip from the alcohol bottle.

She didn't drink as much as Talhand, but even then I still saw her white throat move twice.

"Gefu... what vulgar alcohol."

"Vulgar then it suits you right."

After Talhand put the cork back on the alcohol bottle, he put it back in the bag.

What was with that exchange just now?

Some kind of cultural greeting for the dwarves?

No one said anything about that behavior.

What is this?

"Now that everyone is gathered I'm going to continue to the story, is that fine?"

After hearing Paul's words I returned to myself.

Since Talhand's impact was strong I forgot we were in the middle of talking.

Hn?

Everyone...

"Please wait just a minute, what happened to Roxy-sensei?"

After asking that, a shadow appeared on Paul's face.

No, it wasn't just Paul.

It was on everyone's face other than Elinalise.

When the beautiful elf realized that as well her eyes opened wide.

"Eh? You're lying right?"

Hearing those words.

In my mind as well, a certain word rose to the surface.

The worst words.

In other words, "Death".

"Roxy, a month ago, got caught in a trap in the labyrinth..."

I felt the throbbing get violent.

I don't want to hear it.

That blue haired girl is.

It can't be.

I don't want to listen.

But, she had the ability to conquer a labyrinth alone.

She couldn't use chantless magic, but she succeeded at shortening the incantation.

She was a Water King-class Magician.

And my savior.

I don't want to hear it.

"Di... Did, she die?"

But, I heard it.

Timidly.

Unaware, Elinalise stood up and put her hands on my shoulder from behind.

"No, she stepped into a teleport magic circle and just went missing. It's not decided that she's dead yet, the probability that she's still alive in the labyrinth should be high."

With those words I felt relieved in an instant, but after hearing Gisu's words next my face stiffened again.

"Hey, Paul. That's impossible. Even if it was Roxy, it's not something a single magician can do anything about. There is the possibility that she's alive, but that probability is..."

There, Talhand interposed with his words.

"No, Roxy is outside of the normal standard for magicians. There's plenty of possibility that she's alive."

"Even so, we haven't found her in a month already! We've gone searching five times and been unable to find her five times!"

"Gisu, it's not a talk about when or where!"

Paul, Gisu, and Talhand were each quarreling their sides.

That aloof Gisu is getting into a dispute with an irritated expression.

As I thought they must be driven to a corner.

In any case, she stepped into a teleport magic circle trap.

Even if she looks like that, Roxy has her clumsy parts after all.

If you were to say, "It's like her," it is, I guess.

Well, if it's not like she's died, then I'll think about it as if she hasn't died.

I can't imagine that Roxy Migurdia would die so simply.

I want to think that.

I'll think about it like that.

Ah, more than the time when I heard that Zenith might be dead, I feel like I received a greater shock.

"Excuse me. We've derailed the conversation a bit, haven't we? And then, what kind of place is that labyrinth?"

After I said that the three of them exchanged looks.

They were exchanging looks to decide who would say it.

Paul opened his mouth.

"What kind, it's an S rank. It's one of the worst labyrinths around here."

Paul slowly said it.

"The Teleport Labyrinth."

The moment I heard those words, I felt like I heard the sound from the book in my luggage shifting.

Mushoku Tensei: Isekai Ittara Honki Dasu - Volume 13

The rough story from last time: After hearing that Roxy was missing in the "Teleport Labyrinth", Rudeus was stained with the color of despair. However, within his hands was "Exploration Record of the Teleport Labyrinth" which described almost everything about the labyrinth.

—

Roxy is in a pinch.

After hearing that, even now, the impulse of wanting to jump into the labyrinth is spurring me on.

The location is the S-ranked Teleport Labyrinth, but luckily I had obtained a book describing a past exploration attempt.

I had already investigated things in regards to teleport magic circles as well.

If you have the time to observe each magic circle, then I'm sure just as written in the book you can conquer the labyrinth.

However, first we need to organize the situation.

Organizing the situation is important.

Roxy and Zenith might be in a fight against the clock.

In just five minutes, if the rescue is late, any chance to just barely save them might disappear.

However, for this reason, we can't afford to be impatient.

After organizing the situation and carefully preparing, we have no choice other than to definitely rescue them.

In a restless state, we might overlook something.

Overlooking something, making a mistake, then the probability we'll have a misstep increases.

As a result of that, let alone five minutes, one day, two days, even three days might end up being wasted.

We have no choice other than to proceed carefully.

This a setting where we can't afford mistakes.

If we were to fail, I'm sure that would connect together with "regret".

Regardless of the shape, if because of my mistake we were unable to save Roxy or Zenith, I'm sure I would have a large regret remaining.

"Dad. Here I have with me a Teleport Labyrinth book, a record of adventurers entering deep inside."

First, I presented the existence of the book.

"Exploration Record of the Teleport Labyrinth."

It was the book that Sylphy, disguised as Fitts-senpai, once recommended to me.

It's a book with the shape of the taboo teleport magic circles written in detail.

Different than other books, it's a book that paints out a description.

The reason it was able to escape the censorship of the Magic University would simply be good luck, or else because this is an adventurers record I'm sure.

Also, there's the possibility that this book is fiction as well.

The teleport labyrinth is a labyrinth that no one has conquered.

The possibility that it's a fictional adventurer's record exists as well.

Though I think that probability is low.

The shapes of the teleport magic circles written in this book actually resemble the real thing.

In reality, I investigated teleport magic circles myself as well, but this book has the most accurate moreover detailed ones written.

As a result of comparing it to other books, there's no mistake.

However, it might be... a different "Teleport Labyrinth".

We can't just ignore the possibility that more than two labyrinths exist in this world filled with teleport traps.

Even if the title of the capturing book is the same, if the contents are different, there's no meaning.

"If the contents of this book are the same as the labyrinth we're facing after this, then I'm sure this book will be very useful in regards to exploring the labyrinth."

After I said that Paul and the others' eyes were wide open.

"Hey Rudi... Wh, Why do you have something like that?"

"I thought it would somehow be useful, so I brought it from the library in Magic University."

"I see..."

For now, I'll keep hidden things about the teleport magic circles.

What we need to ascertain right now are the contents of this book and the contents of the labyrinths we're about to go towards after this.

"Please confirm this. And then, if it seems like it will work as a reference for exploring the labyrinth, let's make use of it."

After Paul took that into his hands and spent a moment gazing at the cover, he then passed it over to Gisu at his side.

After receiving the book, Gisu asked...

"Then, I'm going to read it?"

"...Please do."

Why Gisu, I had such thoughts as well.

However, since everyone had faces as if that was natural, I didn't ask.

In regards to Paul and their party, Gisu took that sort of role I guess.

He can do anything which is why he does everything, I certainly remember hearing that some time ago.

For example, "mapping" and "organizing information" in regards to exploring the labyrinth as well, I'm sure he's the one doing it.

"Dad. While Gisu-san is reading it, please tell me about the labyrinth."

Straight from the front, I asked Paul various questions.

All of them were trying to confirm things written in the book.

"Sure, it's fine."

"The types of monsters and names."

"Their numbers up to the level they're on."

"The situation inside and the color of the magic circles" etc...

Paul smoothly informed me about them.

First, there were five types of monsters.

Since Paul had only stepped foot down to the third floor, there seem to be monsters they haven't seen yet as well.

Misfortune Spider, [Tarantula Deathlord]
It's a huge poisonous spider. Even though it's a tarantula it spits out webs. Its poison can be healed using elementary detoxification. B rank.

[Iron Crawler]
A caterpillar that is like a heavy tank. Hard and heavy. B rank.

[Mad Skull]
It's a humanoid monster covered in mud. Since inside of its body a person's skull is buried, that is the weak point. A rank.

[Armored Warrior]
Rusty armor with four arms. In each of its hands, it holds swords with a good cutting edge. A rank.

[Little Devil]
It's a monster with long arms, legs, and sharp claws. It moves by crawling along the walls and ceiling. A rank.

The careful part would be how many floors.

This, we don't know.

According to rumors, it's said to have six or seven floors, but among all those who entered until now, no one has seen the Guardian.

How far the first floor goes is a difficult talk as well, but according to the book, where the spiders are making a large quantity of nests is the first floor.

The place where a large quantity of caterpillars and spiders are is the second floor.

Mad Skulls can be found commanding groups of caterpillars and spiders on the third floor.

After you get to the fourth floor, the spiders and caterpillars disappear, it becomes just Mad Skulls and Armored Warriors.

And then, after you get to the fifth floor, the Mad Skulls disappear as well, it becomes just Armored Warriors and Little Devils.

On the sixth floor, it's nothing but Little Devils.

Things after that aren't written down in the book.

The situation inside.

From the first floor until the third floor, the inside of the labyrinth is an "Ant's Nest".

A curving tunnel with complicated passages and dead end rooms.

And then, it seems there's always teleport magic circles inside of the room.

According to the book, it seems that it changes into the shape of a stone ruin around the fourth floor.

Paul and the others haven't made it down to there yet.

Just, information about the monsters and the state of the vicinity up until the third floor, they had gained some amount of information about that from numerous adventurers' trial-and-error it seems.

A model of a teleport magic circle.

It gives off a bluish-white light and has a strange complex design carved into it.

After hearing the details I think it's the same as the teleport magic circles I've seen numerous times.

The things I heard from Paul were mostly the same as the contents I had read in the book, the things they saw match together.

"This..sure is amazing.. Haha!! As expected of senpai. You really..brought along something amazing!"

Around the time the explanation ended, Gisu closed the book while shouting with a somewhat excited voice.

It seems he finished skimming it.

He's a considerably fast reader.

Or maybe he only read the parts that they've touched on.

After seeing Gisu's state, Paul raised his voice in surprise.

"Hey, Gisu. Is it really..that amazing?"

"Yeah, it's amazing, Paul. If the things written in this are real, then clearing up to the sixth floor is already easy."

In his excited state, Gisu handed the book over to Talhand.

Talhand gave a sidelong glance as he started to read and Gisu started to explain the contents written in the book to Paul as he couldn't hide his excitement.

"All of the things we couldn't figure out were written down. Which magic circles are fine to take, which magic circles are no good. Taking which magic circle will lead to which place and even what will be waiting on the other side!"

Somehow, it seems according to what Gisu saw, this book is "real".

However, Paul was glaring at Gisu with a serious look.

"I see, and, using that book, do you know what happened to Roxy or Zenith?"

"That is..we don't know though."

Gisu made a face like he had cold water poured over him.

"Gisu, don't get very excited. We already can't afford anymore mistakes."

Paul said that in a low voice.

Carefully.

I'm sure we have no choice other than to proceed carefully.

If we blindly believe the things written in the book and end up being annihilated there's no hope.

"..I get what you want to say, Paul. But you know, in addition to the book, we've got an additional reliable vanguard and rear guard as well. First, we should be glad, right?"

While saying that, Gisu looked over everyone surrounding us.

Following along, Paul looked over them as well.

And then, he stopped his gaze on me.

"Ah..that's right I guess..sorry about that. It's just like that."

On Paul's face, a smile floated up like he had some composure.

No matter how desperate of a situation it is, some amount of composure is required.

I'm sure Paul understands something like that as well.

"Alright, after we all finish reading it, let's decide on the formation."

In an energetic voice after regaining himself, the atmosphere of the place softened a bit.

The members going into the labyrinth are five people.

Paul, Elinalise, Gisu, Talhand, and I.

Elinalise and I replaced Vera and Shera.

Since the labyrinth is narrow, even if we try to enter with a large number, we'll just end up being a hindrance to each other it seems.

In order for Elinalise to replace Vera and I to replace Shera, it became a formation where we completely stole away their job.

Elinalise the Tank.

Paul the Sub-Attacker.

I'm the Attacker and Healer.

Talhand can become both Sub-Tank and Sub-Attacker.

These four are in charge of the combat side.

Talhand's role is somewhat vague.

It seems he can use earth magic up to intermediate level.

However, it seems he plays it by ear as a Magic Warrior.

Since he's the utility type, supposedly he can fight anywhere.

Even though he looks clumsy, he's quite skillful.

No, all dwarves were skillful, weren't they?

"Looking forward to working with you!"

It seems he'll end up standing right in front of or right behind me, he patted my shoulder with a sociable feeling.

For some reason, I got chills down my back.

"Rudi is fundamentally in charge of the magic. After the combat ends we'll depend on you for the healing as well, can you do it?"

"No problem."

Offense and Recovery.

Even though it's my first time in a labyrinth I have numerous plain jobs.

However, during the time when I was an adventurer, my role was something like that as well.

I'm sure there's nothing we can't do.

With these four people, Gisu is added on.

He's useless in combat, but he can perform everything outside of that at a high level.

Confirming the map, establishing the direction to advance, management of food, sorting the raw materials. He has the judgement to withdraw from the labyrinth as well.

He works as the control tower and does odd jobs.

I guess it would become a feeling like a Director.

Since exploring labyrinths isn't just about combat, naturally as it is having someone take on roles like this is necessary.

The remaining three people.

It's become that Vera, Shera, and Lilia waiting on standby at the entrance of the city on support duty.

You could call it house-sitting, but it seems this itself is an important job in its own way.

At the time when large clans explore a labyrinth, I've heard that they assign people to house-sitting.

The majority of the preparations can be left to Elinalise and Talhand, the pros.

I'm an amateur when it comes down to exploring labyrinths.

If I make use of my knowledge from my previous life then I can think of this and that, but at the present I'll put that aside.

First, I'll follow along the pros' way of doing things.

And then, if there are any parts that I can think of something it would be fine if I make a suggestion.

A suggestion.

In my knowledge from my previous life, I don't know if the things I learned from Rogue-like type games will be effective.

{ C-Editor's note: Rogue-like is a subgenre of role-playing computer games traditionally characterized by heros navigating a labyrinth, battling monsters, avoiding traps and solving puzzles. }

"First it's about our initial objective, but it's the third floor."

After deciding on the formation, Paul declared that.

"There, we'll make clear of Roxy's whereabouts."

We don't know if Roxy is alive or not.

However, in the case that she's alive, after we secure her, we'll return at once from the labyrinth.

Depending on the condition Roxy is in, we'll have her join the party after she has recovered and then venture even deeper into the labyrinth.

The six of us will check the fourth floor and beyond which we haven't been able to reach yet.

And there, after we arrive to the greatest depths, we'll search thoroughly all around and try to find Zenith who is believed to be there.

We don't know how many days it will take.

It's become an exploration wait and see.

That night.

It became that I would be sleeping in the same room as Paul and Lilia.

It seems to have been the technician Gisu's refined way of creating a space for just us family.

Even though I say that, the time I've spent with Lilia not as family is longer.

Since the time I was born up until having my sister, she was a maid after all.

I can't help but see her as a maid.

Paul sees Lilia as a wife, but as a second wife.

Zenith is number one, Lilia is number two.

I wonder if Norn would be number three.

Aisha would be fourth and I'm even further below I guess.

"It's the first time I've slept in the same room as Rudeus-sama isn't it."

"That's right."

Speaking of Lilia, she seems to give off a respectful attitude in the atmosphere as if she only sees Paul and I as her employers.

Being brought along with that atmosphere, I became somewhat respectful myself.

"Husband's snoring is loud so without reservation please order me."

However, the contents of Lilia's words were light and overflowing with humor.

"Ah, yes.."

In regards to that I was unable to return it overflowing with humor.

What it would be good to talk about, I don't know well.

How did I use to talk with Lilia again.

During the time we were in Buina village I feel it was considerably business like.

".."

Since a while ago Paul has done nothing but look at me and hasn't said anything.

I wonder what it is, it's a strange face.

It's not quite to the level of a grin, but his cheeks are becoming loose, that face.

"Umm, Rudeus-sama."

"Yes, what is it?"

"Is Aisha getting along properly?"

I thought over the answer to Lilia's question.

The topic of our family.

That's right, we're family.

Then, it would be fine to talk about the family.

"Yes. Aisha is giving it her best."

"She hasn't done anything to trouble Rudeus-sama?"

"Yeah, nothing at all. She takes care of all the cleaning as well, it's a big help."

"Is that so, it's fine if she hasn't said anything selfish."

"If she would be a bit more selfish then it would be more comfortable for me though."

After saying that Lilia quietly smiled.

It was a smile of relief.

"How about Norn-ojosama and Aisha? Have they been getting into fights?"

"That's right.. there's some awkwardness, but for the time being there's no conspicuous antagonism. The fights are almost charming."

"I told her to always stand down to Norn-ojosama, but why did it end up becoming like that..."

While saying that Lilia let out a sigh.

"It can't be helped, Aisha is still a child as well. Isn't it important for the parents to give them an equal amount of love."

"I see..that might be the case. Aisha is my child, but since she has Husband's blood in her as well..."

"Things like blood don't matter at all do they. We're family after all."

"...Thank you very much."

Paul didn't enter into the conversation.

He was just listening to my exchange with Lilia since before with the same expression and thinking about something.

"What is it, dad. Since just now, you've been grinning."

"No, somehow, it's nice, I was just thinking."

While scratching the back of his head Paul's face went red as he seemed to be embarrassed.

"What is?"

"That Rudi has. Properly become an adult and the scene of him talking to Lilia."

The exchange between his adult son and his wife.

Lilia isn't my mother, but in regards to Paul they're both family.

It might be deeply moving.

Maybe it's something I'll understand as well when my child grows up.

"Come to think of it, Rudi. You, got married didn't you."

"Yeah. Just about half a year ago."

"I see, to think that Rudi would, just that other time we met, even though you were still this small."

"My height has grown considerably over these past few years after all."

Before I realized it my height had gotten to about the same as Paul.

I'd say around 170 cm.

Paul is a bit taller, but I might still grow a bit more, I think I might eventually overtake him.

"It won't be good if we don't have a grand celebration with everyone when we return."

"That's right. After all dad, it's your first grandchild. You'll be Paul-ojichan."

"Stop that, I'm still not that old after all."

Even while saying that Paul was making a face like he didn't hate it.

And then it changed to a smile.

"That you've made a child, you mean, Rudi. You've become a "man" as well now right?"

"Husband, I don't know if you should be saying anything too vulgar.."

Paul with a grinning old man-like smile floating on his face rebuked Lilia.

"Isn't it fine, you know I, I always wanted to have this sort of talk with Rudi once."

"However."

"I'm sure you're interested as well, about Rudi."

"I feel that it's unfair to use that way of saying it."

"And, and, who was your first partner? After all Sylphy? Or else maybe Eris? If I remember you said you separated, but didn't it come down to that kind of talk when you separated?"

It seems Paul wants to have some vulgar Boys Talk.

I do have a part that wonders if it's alright to talk about that at this kind of time though...

Well, it's not like I don't understand.

It's been the first time he's seen me in a while and I'm sure Paul is in high spirits as well.

I'm sure he just wasn't able to make this sort of face in front of everyone earlier.

I have some parts where I'm happy to see Paul again for the first time in a while as well.

Since Paul and I get along well after all.

The day after tomorrow we're entering the labyrinth, that sort of composure will disappear.

For just today, it should be fine to unfasten that restraint and talk about it.

"Dad has a bit of confidence, in regards to that, after all. I'll hear you out on it all. Even if I look like this, during the time when dad was young I played around quite a bit after all."

{ C-Editor's note: The Japanese to English translation is a bit difficult but this is Paul refering to himself as 'Dad' when talking to Rudeus. }

It can't be helped, why don't I keep you company then.

This sort of partner that I can frankly talk about out in the open like this, it's only somewhat but I felt I wanted it as well.

"That's right, then there are a number of things I want to ask about though.."

"Really now, even Rudeus-sama.."

"Lilia is saying it like this, but if it comes down to the other side she's quite intense."

"Husband!"

"Come to think of it, at some point already, there was a time when Lilia-san tempted you right. Please tell me about the situation at that time in detail."

"Even Rudeus-sama, please stop it!..Really."

While watching us like that Lilia let out a voice with a sigh mixed in.

However, that face was smiling.

After that, we continued to talk like that until late into the night.

Late night.

The lights are out and I'm laying sideways on the bed.

I wonder if Paul and Lilia are already asleep.

On the bed nearby I can hear a steady sleeping breath.

It seems the two won't start messing around after confirming that I'm asleep.

Paul did say he was trying to abstain until Zenith is found.

I'm sure he's properly abiding by that.

I got a bit excited from the talk with Paul and I can't sleep.

I couldn't have ever possibly thought that the day would come where I have real experience and can take part in the ero talk.

In life you really never know what can happen.

Well, putting that aside.

In regards to the matters this time.

After all, this time I might be dancing in Hitogami's palms again.

I have such a feeling.

Thinking about it, the only reason I was able to obtain that book was because I went to the Magic University.

If I hadn't gone to the Magic University and been told to investigate the teleport incident, I would have never encountered that book and been in a situation to challenge the Teleport Labyrinth without anything.

That suggestive Hitogami's speech was the same as well.

Whether I regret it and about putting my hands on Rinia or Purusena.

I have the feeling like he spoke in such a way that he knew I would oppose him.

If Hitogami hadn't said anything, or else if Hitogami had said to "Go".

I have the feeling that the probability that I would have "stayed" would be high.

I've had rebellious feelings towards the Hitogami after all, and it might be about the same weight as things with Sylphy on that scale.

In that case, I'm sure I wouldn't have just done something irresponsible.

For example, I might have tried to dispatch Ruijerd, Badigadi, or otherwise Zoldat.

I wonder if the Hitogami acted while anticipating all of that.

All of the things that I would need to rescue Zenith, I went to the school in order to obtain.

I wonder what in the world the Human God [Hitogami] is...

Really, I wonder what he wants me to do.

Could it be that he really just finds it enjoyable to watch me?

The same as always, I don't know what his endgame is.

Just, there's no mistake that he's my ally.

I wonder if he might show up again around tonight.

That timing would be way too convenient I guess.

If things go well, then I'll give something to him as an offering.

Though I don't know what that guy likes, so I don't know if he'll be happy.

While thinking that I fell asleep.

Hitogami never appeared in my dream.

Teleport Labyrinth.

If you were to just take a glimpse it appears to be nothing but a cave.

There's no special feeling.

It's just a hole opened up in just a cliff.

There are many spider monsters in its vicinity and many monsters trapped those spiders' webs, just that.

Even if you were to see a photo, I'm sure no special feelings of any kind would come up.

However, if you go there yourself it's different.

From there you can almost intuitively feel that it's a labyrinth.

Something eerie.

However, I also felt something that was stimulating my curiosity.

I wonder if all labyrinths have this kind of atmosphere.

"Well then, Rudi. We're going just as we arranged, is that fine?"

"Understood."

Paul patted my shoulder and nodded.

We took the formation we arranged the other day and entered the labyrinth.

It's my first labyrinth, but I'm not really all that excited.

It's just the pressure of trying not to make a mistake.

"Husband, the fortunes of war be with you."

"Everyone, please take care."

Lilia, Vera, and Shera were returning to the city from here using horses.

During the time when a large clan conquers a labyrinth, they create a support camp at the entrance of the labyrinth as well.

However Lapan is thankfully only one day away, or even half a day away if you hurry.

There's no particular need to setup a camp outside of the cave.

"Now then."

The inside of the cave is dark, but it wasn't to the point of seeing nothing.

The interior of the cave was shining, to a dim degree.

However, this darkness would be fatal I'm sure.

"I'm going to make some light."

"Yeah."

Soon after entering I used the spirit scroll I got from Nanahoshi.

The bright light spirits flew up and started to circle around above us.

Gisu invoked the same scroll as I used.

Since his role is that of the scout, he needs a different light source from us.

We tested it out yesterday, the scroll can be used by even Paul and Gisu.

Naturally, since it lasts longer with more magic power, it's still best if I use it, but it seems the consumed magic power is almost nothing.

With this, we were delighted at not having to carry along a torch.

After all, it would be a hindrance to have one of your hands sealed off.

The light from the spirits is brighter than a torch, even with little magic power they last a long time.

If this was to spread, torches might disappear from the market.

"Paul, your son sure brought along a lot of useful things."

"Well yeah. He's the son I'm proud of after all."

Paul put his hand to his chest with a boasting spirit and Talhand let out a voice mixed with amazement.

"It doesn't seem he has a father he can feel proud about himself though."

"Don't say that, since he's bothered over it."

With a sigh mixed into the voice Paul's shoulder drooped.

"Look, let's hurry and get a move on?"

With Gisu's words we ventured further into the cave.

First floor.

We start walking through a cave like an ant's nest.

The walls and ceiling have white threads stretched all around them and even further inside there's bluish-white teleport magic circles shining.

There I sent the light spirits and it gave off an almost fluorescent light.

"Occasionally there are magic circles that don't give off any light so caution is necessary, was it?"

"That's right Rudi. Make sure you firmly step in Gisu's footprints."

Gisu was leading about ten steps ahead.

He wears unique boots.

The places where he steps leave behind footprints with a deep cross mark.

It seems the bottoms of his shoes have something like a cross shaped iron plate attached.

Of course, they're not a magic item imbued with magic power.

I wonder if they're something born from the wisdom of adventurers.

They seem like they help to prevent slipping and they clearly leave behind footprints as well, a useful item.

Although, on this first floor it's easy to spot the teleport magic circles.

The monsters that appear on the first floor are the [Tarantula Deathlord].

However, on the floor, there were different spiders that the Tarantula Deathlord probably use as their staple food.

It's a spectacle that would probably cause someone who hates spiders to faint.

Inside of that group of spiders there are clearly outlined voids.

They're void places that are either circular or square in shape. There's a teleport trap.

If someone doesn't like to step foot on the spiders, then, in no time at all, they'll be teleported somewhere, is what it means.

As a result, we continued walking while stepping on the spiders with a [Crunch].

It's not a very good feeling, but it can't be helped.

Well then, the countless B rank Tarantula Deathlords haven't come out into the pathway.

Occasionally there's one or two of them, but after they're discovered by Gisu they're quickly exterminated by Paul.

Up until now there's no place for me.

"He~...Well, if it's like this it's easy going."

Paul has two swords in his hands and is rapidly advancing.

Two swords.

One of them is the thing he was almost always holding at the house. His beloved sword I'm sure.

I don't know if it's has some sort of special power, but it's cutting the Tarantula Deathlords in two in a single strike.

Rather than the cutting edge of the sword, I'm sure it's Paul's technique.

In his left hand is a sword with a shape I've never seen before.

I guess it would be categorized as the so-called short sword.

It's not short enough to be considered a dagger, but not long enough to be a long sword.

It has a hand-guard that covers around the hand and somewhat curved double-edged sword.

{ C-Editor's note: A cutlass sword. }

The reason there is a hole in the center of it, I wonder if it's so it doesn't get stuck to things it cuts?

He's not using it very much.

Paul fundamentally fights using just the sword in his right hand.

I wonder what he uses the sword in his left hand for.

The results of his chuunibyou I wonder?

"...Really, it's easygoing isn't it!"

It doesn't really matter though.

Each time he finishes one off Paul does a fleeting glance towards me.

Annoying.

I wonder if he's thinking something like he wants to show off to me how cool he is.

I understand that Papa is cool already, so I'd like for you to not let your guard down.

"Paul! Properly look ahead!"

Look, Elina-obaachan's reprimands have started flying.

"It's fine I say, we've already entered the first floor any number of times, it's easy."

"That negligence will cost you your life you know."

"I get that, even if you didn't say it?"

"In the first place, you've been going too far since just now. I'm in front right!?"

"If it's on the first floor then, there's no difference is there?"

Elinalise and Paul started up a dispute.

Behind me I heard Talhand say, "Really now, they've started." and let out a sigh.

"Putting myself aside, it's Rudeus's first time in a labyrinth itself, so as an adult properly show him how things are done as an example!"

"That's why, I was trying to loosen that tension, it's become the opportunity for conversation right?"

"Stop spouting lies, just now I felt you giving off the flippant atmosphere exactly like the time when Zenith just entered the party!"

"No well, if you're going to say that I can't deny it though. What's this, you've, considerably started nagging haven't you."

"It's only natural. Paul is similar to my son after all. I'll do the scolding as well!"

After saying that and Paul laughed a bit.

"What do you mean son, since you've spent such a long time with Rudi, your feelings have even transferred to me? Stop with that. If you act like my mother then I'll start getting goosebumps."

"...Oh my, Rudeus you didn't tell him?"

"What?"

"That Sylphy is my grandchild. The fact that he's married my grandchild would mean you're related as well. Since that's the case, the parents of that grandchild, Paul and Zenith, you two are the same as my children as well."

Paul's legs stopped.

He slowly turned around towards me and came back.

The formation crumbled and everyone stopped their feet.

"He..Hey, what does this mean Rudi..Sylphy is her grandchild, it sounds like Elinalise is saying some ridiculous things though."

Come to think of it, I didn't say it did I?

"Somehow, it seems that Rawls-san was Elinalise-san's child."

"Rawls was? That guy, never said a single word about that."

"Well, it seems various things happened in the past and he was keeping quiet about Elinalise-san's existence."

"Ah..I see now..It's not like I don't understand."

"Rather than that, let's keep moving ahead. Be careful to absolutely not let your guard down."

"Ye..Yeah."

Paul said words like he understood and returned to the advance guard.

"Seriously..A connection between my family and Elinalise has been made you say..Seriously.."

While leaving behind such muttering.

It seems it was a considerably large shock.

The first floor was easy.

Just as Paul said, he must have come down a number of times already.

With breaks in-between, we continue down the passage and end up breaking through a large room with Tarantula Deathlords crowding about in it.

Cleaning up the swarms of monsters is my role as the magician.

However, before we entered the first large room, Talhand gave me several pieces of advice.

"Listen well. Don't use fire."

"Why?"

"If you use fire, then poison will fill the room. It's especially necessary to be cautious on the deeper floors."

"...It can't be cured using detoxification?"

"It can't be cured."

By poison, he's probably referring to carbon monoxide poisoning.

If you use fire in a closed off space, the oxygen will be consumed and your consciousness will eventually get hazy.

This is the same, even with fire magic.

"After that, attacking the ceiling is forbidden, as well. You understand the reason, right?"

"It's because the cave might collapse, right?"

"That's right. That's why, it's better not to use water much either. Use ice as much as possible."

"Understood."

If you were to use a large amount of water, the ground would become loose.

Well, some water should be fine, I'm sure. There's earth magic, as well.

Even though I say that, if while using earth magic you unknowingly start using the earth from base supports inside the cave, it could be a problem.

If you take out the support for the interior of the cave, it's possible it might lead to a cave-in.

Then, I'm sure ice is the safest.

The safe choice is to go with what has been suggested.

For that reason, I went with the choice of advanced water magic, [Blizzard Storm].

It's magic that rains a large amount of ice spears.

In order for Paul and the others to not get caught up in it, I start cleaning up the ones around the crowd's center.

"Oh, as expected of Roxy's disciple, the magic you use is the same..."

I heard Talhand's murmur from behind.

It seems Roxy used [Blizzard Storm], as well.

That makes me a bit happy.

"Moreover, chantless, huh? I can understand why you're Roxy's proud disciple."

While triumphantly listening to Talhand's words, the spiders were annihilated.

We advance ahead.

After clearing through the spider nest, we step on the teleport magic circle inside.

Walking through the passage, aiming for yet another spider nest.

We've repeated that about five times since we entered the labyrinth.

Of course, in regards to the magic circles, it's to investigate whether there are any differences in the book to reality.

We know where all of the magic circles on the first floor lead to, but it was for the sake of confirming the book's credibility.

Two-way teleportation.

Shape, color, characteristics.

We continued forward while checking these off, to make sure everything matches.

It was roughly one hour between arriving at each magic circle.

Since we repeated that five times, in terms of time, it would be about five hours, I estimate.

In the final room, there was a magic circle that had a stronger hue of blue and was somewhat larger than the others.

The deeper blue colored magic circle was the magic circle that leads to the next floor.

The final room on the first floor was full of spider nests.

There, two magic circles were lined up.

They're magic circles with a similar shape, if it was someone who doesn't know anything, I'm sure they wouldn't know which is the real thing.

Nearby, on the side of one of the magic circles, a large circle mark was carved into the stone.

This is something that Gisu left the last time as a marker for the correct one.

After confirming that there were no mistakes within the book, we stepped onto the magic circle.

The second floor.

Second floor.

From here on, there are giant steel caterpillars [Iron Crawlers] crawling around.

The small spiders on the ground have disappeared, and there's a decrease in the number of spider nests.

The ground floor has become smooth.

The [Iron Crawlers] with a height of about one meter and a width of about two meters, give off a plump impression.

They're close in image to the worms that come out in Nausicaa.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Ohms creatures in the anime film Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind. }

Just as they appear, they're solid and tough.

And, unlike their appearance, they're fast.

Rather than a slow caterpillar, they have speed more like a centipede.

It seems like they're allies with the tarantulas- while the iron crawlers tank, the spiders shoot off sticky threads from behind.

If you get caught in the sticky thread then the crawlers, with a body weight of about one ton, will trample you it seems.

The iron crawlers are tough, even Paul can't defeat them in a single hit.

No need to even mention Elinalise.

That's why, it's my turn there.

I can fire two magic spells at the same time.

While firing [Blizzard Storm] at the spiders in the back, I finish off the Iron Crawlers that Paul and Elinalise attract with one hit, each with a rock bullet.

It seems the iron crawlers are tougher to kill with a normal rock bullet, but I don't have much issues.

Mine easily pierces straight through.

Even though I say that, as expected of a worm, I'd say, if the place it hits is not an instakill, they writhe, struggling about violently.

"With this, there's no place for me to take a turn."

Since I was energetically working, Talhand muttered that uninterested from behind.

He's stationed close behind me for the sake of whether it's needed.

Even though I say that, in order to avoid falling into that sort of worst case pinch, I'm making sure to follow the three points to remain careful about, including the one Gisu said.

Therefore for the time being, Talhand has nothing to do.

However, that's fine.

If we can have some reserve strength remaining as we advance, then that gives me a sense of relief.

The Tarantula Deathlords continued to send their sticky threads flying.

I didn't think that tarantulas make spider webs, but I'm sure these guys are different.

Occasionally, they make it over to where I am, but since I have my Demon Eye opened it will never hit.

Even if it were to hit, they have no attack power. If I just burn it with fire magic, there's no problem.

"Ah, damn it.."

"Ueh... It's sticky isn't it."

Even though I say that, it doesn't seem like the advance guard can avoid it all, so Paul and Elinalise end up all sticky from the threads.

"Here, don't go wasting too much now!"

Although it would be fine for me to burn off the sticky threads, since Gisu has some kind of liquid that can melt the threads, I just weaken them with it.

It seems to be some kind of unique chemical circulated on Begaritt Continent, and it is harmless to the human skin.

It does no harm, but Elinalise was grumbling about how it makes the skin rough when it was spilled.

It's almost like detergent.

Maybe I'll try taking some home and washing dishes with it.

"Alright, let's take a break for a moment here."

After the combat.

With Gisu's words, we sit down on the spot.

Talhand and Elinalise remain standing on lookout, just like that.

After Paul sat down, he immediately started to unfasten his armor and sword, wiping the body fluids of the monsters from the surfaces.

During the short break, he finished inspecting his equipment in an instant.

It was a familiar way of doing it, and Paul ended up asking something a pro would ask.

"What's wrong? Rudi, you should finish up quick as well."

"Ah, yes."

After receiving a somewhat harsh rebuke from Paul I inspected my equipment as well.

Even though I say that, since I'm just firing magic from a long range, there's few places to check.

Nevertheless.

Paul is quiet.

During the time of the first floor every time we had a break like this he would somehow come out asking, "How is it?", but as expected now that we've gotten to the second floor his seriousness is apparent.

Daddy is cool.

"Cheh... It's stuck to it."

While Paul was rubbing the fluids on his armor with some kind of cloth he was cursing.

"How about trying to use the chemicals that Gisu used just now?"

"That's for dissolving the threads, right?"

And while saying that, Paul put some of the chemical on the cloth and started rubbing it.

And then, it was almost a surprising level of white.

No, the armor wasn't white though.

"I... it came off didn't it? Thank you."

"No-no."

As I thought, it's detergent.

If I buy some before I return home, I wonder if Sylphy would be delighted.

If possible, it would be good if we could make it to the other side, though.

After Paul removed the filth, he quickly put the armor back on, put his sword on, and walked over towards Elinalise.

Just as I was thinking about changing places with Talhand and Gisu, they called out to me.

"Senpai, lookout is fine."

"Is it fine?"

"Don't mind it, that old man hasn't worked after all. Rather than that- it's about from here on out- I'd like to hear a bit of senpai's view."

"Is it fine for dad not to join in?"

"It's fine, rather than that guy, senpai is smarter after all."

While Gisu was saying those sorts of abusive things, he took the book and a map out of his bag.

What he spread out was two maps.

One of them was cleanly mapped out, but the other one was produced as we stopped along the way.

"We'll soon be at the third floor. The place we lost track of Roxy is... here. If we're lucky, Roxy should still be in the vicinity of there. If it's just as the book says that is."

"Yes."

According to the book, it seems the teleport traps are made to only teleport to the same floor as they're on.

Even if they're called random warp, the moment you step on them you won't suddenly find yourself in front of the boss on the lowest floor or anything.

Roxy warped on the third floor.

According to the book, if you step on a teleport trap, then you'll go straight to the monster's den.

We don't know if the magic circle she stepped on was random or else the one way passage.

In any case, if she's still alive, then the probability that she's on the third floor is high.

Of course, there's also the possibility that she luckily managed to escape to the second or first floor, as well.

However, these two floors were ones Roxy had explored a number of times as well.

If it's someone who has as much ability as Roxy, then she would have already been able to move around the second floor. And then, it wouldn't be strange for her to have made it out of the labyrinth by now.

It doesn't seem like she is past the third floor, after all.

"Useful magic for the purpose of searching, you don't have any right?"

"Yeah, I don't have any."

I could try thinking about the application of magic I can use right now, but I can't quickly think of anything.

"It's fine, with your intuition, Senpai, but where around here do you think Roxy would be?"

"Intuition you say...."

"In this labyrinth, we can't really just go walking always following the right hand side and searching thoroughly after all. If we're going to search, then that sort of thing is necessary as well."

"Then, how about around this area."

For the time being, I try pointing to a relevant blank space on the map.

"The eastern area from where she was teleported, huh? Then, let's search around there."

How relevant.

I feel like it would be efficient to just search thoroughly, following the right hand side, though.

However, we have no one in this place who can do a scientific analysis.

In any case, we have no choice other than to walk around searching places we haven't checked.

"Honestly, without Roxy, we couldn't break through the second floor. It's thanks to senpai. Those iron crawlers are troublesome."

"I'm sure."

The monsters here have a bad affinity with Talhand's specialty attribute.

In terms of combat potential, if it comes down to it, Paul could get entangled in the threads as well, and can't properly take care of the advance guard.

Vera is unreliable as the advance guard, as well. There's no way she could follow through as well as Elinalise.

In order to pass through here, I'm sure someone who can use ice or fire type magic is necessary.

Therefore, if Roxy ends up missing, it's not strange for their progress to be at a stand still.

Rather, after Roxy disappeared, I'm amazed they even managed to come back.

"We thought we could manage something, but after all, there are few magicians in this area. And not a single person has the backbone to challenge the teleport labyrinth, as well."

It seems Gisu tried to do something in his own way.

Thinking about it, the time when we got here he was trying to persuade someone in the guild, as well.

It didn't seem to be going well though.

"I'm sure Gisu-san has had various troubles as well."

"He~... It's fine. Rather, didn't I say it's fine as newbie? If you use the honorifics then my back gets itchy?"

"...I get it newbie. Next time, I'll introduce you to a cute female monkey, you can scratch each others backs."

"Oh, that sounds nice. There isn't a red-light district around here, after all. Rather, who are you calling monkey? Hey!"

There's a variety of things I'd like to talk with Gisu about as well, but I'll put it aside for now.

I confirmed things about the route from here on out with Gisu.

The map Gisu made was truly easy to read.

However, if you were to compare it to the first floor that had been completely mapped, there were a number of holes on the second floor.

If Zenith or Roxy happened to actually be inside of one of these holes... Such a thing better not happen.

It leaves me a bit uneasy, but first we should check the third floor.

Rather than starting at the closest place, the second floor, we should search in the place with the highest probability.

"Gisu, approximately where are we right now?"

Elinalise stuck her head in.

In response Gisu pointed to a spot on the map.

"Right now, we're around here."

"Then, soon we'll be at the end of the second floor, right?"

"Yeah, but spiders and iron crawlers will still come out."

"For the composition of the monsters to change midway, it's a troublesome labyrinth isn't it?"

Elinalise suddenly flipped back her hair.

Even her proud hair rolls were effortlessly getting soft.

"By the way, Gisu, why do you call Rudeus Senpai?"

"Ihih... In the Dorudia race prison, just a bit..."

"Dorudia prison, you say, that one from what Ghyslaine said before? What happened with that?"

"After we return, I'll tell you about it in detail."

While grinning and laughing, Gisu discontinued the conversation.

The Dorudia race prison, how nostalgic.

The me from back then had so much freedom.

I can't get away with that appearance now.

Oh my, on top of the bed it's always that appearance, isn't it?

It seems I have the composure to have such a conversation now as well.

And then, we arrived at the third floor.

In terms of time, it was about 10 hours, I'd say.

It was exceedingly fast.

"I thought it would take a few days to get here."

"In order to get to places without the map that might be the case."

The nonchalant murmur I let out was picked up by Paul.

I guess it's only natural that advancing as you fumble about and using the map as you advance are different.

There's already no more small spiders on the floor.

Occasionally, there's some sticky threads on the wall, but the presence of living things is weak.

In exchange for that, I get a somewhat eerie feeling drifting about from deep darkness within the dark cave.

From here on out, it's the real thing.

First, we're going to find Roxy.

"..."

Thinking that, I feel like I can smell the nostalgic scent of Roxy drifting about.

No, it's not my imagination.

This is Roxy's scent, it's Roxy's presence.

There's no way I would be mistaken.

I can feel something stirring within my chest.

Here.

I'm confident in Roxy's continued existence.

–Roxy's POV–

I heard a small noise and woke up.

The surrounding area is dark and narrow.

It's a confining space.

This room I had reached at the end of all of the teleporting was narrow, like a cradle.

The size of the area is barely enough to allow one or two people to lie down.

Even the ceiling hangs low.

It's low enough to nearly brush the top of my head.

At this height and narrowness.

As long as I am occupying this area, no demon will metastasize here.

As I sit at the very edge of this space, I recline against the wall behind me and fix my gaze on what lies before me.

There is a Magic Formation there.

And this Magic Formation shines with a ghostly pale light.

It is a Metastasis Magic Formation.

When I place a single foot on it, I will be teleported somewhere.

The most probable place is to a monster den.

A room of death, filled to the brim with different kinds of demons.

One Month Ago.

I blundered into a trap.

The only excuse I can make is [It couldn't be helped.]

During a battle, I leaped away to avoid an oncoming attack, then I took a step backwards, and then I tripped on a stone.

This caused me to stagger forward with my other foot,

And with that step I landed on a Metastasis Magic Formation.

Before we entered the combat, we had confirmed there was a trap there.

And yet, I easily wound up stepping on the trap.

Ahead of where I metastasized, there were an absurd number of demons.

There were 20, no... 30... I guess?

I am a magician.

I myself happen to think that I am an excellent one.

Even though I cannot use the chantless magic, I can use chanting omission, so I am able to cast faster than most other magicians around.

But despite all the enemies I've become accustomed to battling...

There was never a panic I had felt like this one.

I expected to be wiped out immediately.

No matter how many I destroyed, demon after demon kept surging forward.

As demons continually began to appear one by one and fill my field of vision.

The demons of this labyrinth, after all, knew the routes of all the metastasis magic formations.

And so, this place had become a demon's nest.

This place was where demons lie in wait for their victims, the so called [Trap] room.

I was prepared for death.

But I still fought.

My magic was not infinite however.

And my intuition tells me sooner or later it'll run out, and I'll probably end up succumbing.

I know my limits.

I probably have about 30% of my MP left, no it's probably closer to 20%, and the number of enemies it seems hasn't decreased at all.

Only the number of corpses has increased, and the demons still continue to surge forward one after another.

It was a complete and utter checkmate.

There will be no rescue for me.

Was I forsaken by everyone after all?

If I were in someone else's shoes, wouldn't I leave behind such a clumsy woman?

No matter how much magic I can use, a fool who walks into traps is a burden.

No, I don't think they deserted me.

Rather, Paul was also in the range of the trap's activation, did he metastasize to another location?

With the obvious lack of fighting potential, did he have to withdraw temporarily?

Either way, help hasn't come.

While I fought desperately, I couldn't help but begin to lose my composure and began to sob and wail.

I felt the magic power within me decrease ever steadily.

Meanwhile, I noticed one bright light.

In this wide room were six magic formations.

Yet, not a single demon has appeared for a while from around any of them.

Perhaps, there might possibly not be any more demons around the place where the magic formations are.

It's All-or-Nothing.

I used every spell at my disposal to break through the swarm of demons, and I launched myself onto the magic formation.

And at last, I had arrived at this room.

I had managed somehow to survive.

It was pure luck.

I could produce as much water from magic as I wanted.

I had a bit of food stored in my backpack.

Somehow I will recover my magic and escape from here.

And so I spent the rest of that day in thought.

The next day, I stepped on the metastasis magic formation.

And the destination point was a passage I was still unfamiliar with.

Apparently, being teleported to these random locations was a typical characteristic of the metastasis magic formation.

However there were no signs that there were people nearby.

I was doing the mapping by myself, in order to escape the labyrinth, I continued moving forward.

Though I had thought about waiting for a rescue effort, but there was the possibility that the rest of Paul-san's party had been wiped out as well.

I can say with confidence that the metastasis trap is a terrible thing.

I walk around the passageway, and discover 3 metastasis magic formations.

I make a mark on a nearby rock, and jump into the first one.

I metastasize to an unfamiliar passage.

I repeated this action several times.

If I don't do things this way, I won't be able to advance in this metastasis labyrinth.

While I try and be careful not to step on a trap, or any of the metastasis magic formations hidden in or by rocks, I advance ahead.

Have I managed to advance ahead, or have I ended up just going back? I just don't know.

I cannot seem to grasp where my current location is in this metastasis labyrinth.

My senses are unreliable.

Though I am uneasy, I must somehow keep on moving forward.

And I need to secure some new food supplies.

So I defeat a demon, eat its meat, and continue onwards.

How many times have I metastasized into a demon's den?

I fight desperately, and find similar magic formations where demons don't emerge from.

Then, I return.

To this same narrow room.

How many times have I repeated this I wonder?

Five times? Ten times?

The magic formation before my eyes always sends me to a different point.

However, I somehow always end up returning back here.

I became drained, mentally and physically.

As could be expected, I was tired.

My biological clock tells me about a month has now passed by.

And after a month of going around and around, there are no useful results.

The fights are not easy.

No, there is never an easy fight.

I receive many attacks, blood loss often causes my consciousness to dim.

How many times now have the demons begun to run into the magic formations to block themselves from my magic?

I began to think that these demons actually have brains after all.

In the end though, I cannot help but just waste my magic power breaking through their blockade.

I feel like I'm being cornered.

My joints ache.

I ate all the food already.

The demons here are tough and taste horrible too.

If I don't use detoxification magic when I am eating, my body health becomes poor.

I can feel my physical strength falling.

Only my magical power do I possess in excess.

I have no idea what will come next.

Will there be many more enemies?

Will there be more cleverly coordinated enemy attacks?

Will my magic be exhausted, and my limbs torn from my body and eaten by these demons?

Only good luck will allow me to avoid having to break through a group of demons just to end up back here, the next time.

Just thinking about that prevents me from stepping onto the magic formation in front of me.

Perhaps the demons here have realized my existence.

They know that I am in the narrow room.

And they know when I step on this magic formation in this narrow room, that I will once again be returning to that den.

Surely they are waiting for me.

Hiding, and waiting for that moment when I finally make my fatal mistake.

I have a hunch.

That there won't be a next time.

[...]

It was here. It wasn't when I came here that I became truly conscious of my own death for the first time.

Surely no one will discover my corpse.

I doubt there will be any items left behind to be discovered after I die.

I will die, unable to leave a trace.

Scary.

I am so scared.

My back teeth began making a chattering sound before I had realized it.

Impulsively, I wanted to just unleash a loud shout, but instead I just gripped my staff tightly.

How many times have I looked upon death up until now?

I had lived as an adventurer, so I have witnessed people dying in my presence before.

I've seen a demon cleave a powerful warrior in half like a withered branch right before my eyes.

And I've seen an intelligent magician squashed like a tomato by a demon right before my eyes.

An accomplished and clever thief, a nimble swordsman...

All of them I have seen die in my presence.

On the days I saw such things, I dimly became aware that my turn would also come someday.

But at the same time, I also thought [At least I am safe!]

However, now that I actually have to face it, I am scared.

What have I managed to accomplish up until now?

There are things I still want to do.

I even have a dream!

That's right, my dream...

I want to become a teacher.

I love teaching other people.

Even if I have no talent for it, I love to teach.

Then, when this business is over, when we safely rescue Zenith-san, I am going to go take the examination for magic teachers at the magic academy.

I will be a school teacher!

A teacher at the Magic Academy.

I parted with my Shisho there after an argument.

Maybe I will argue with my Shisho again.

Though, I have a feeling it'll be better this time around, perhaps.

...that person was greedy for recognition, I wonder if they've at least made it to being vice-principal already?

I want to feel what it's like to have ordinary happiness.

That's right. If I was a teacher, I could possibly even get married.

Marry a man I have come to love, we would live together, and spend passionate nights together as well.

Even though I am of the Magic Race, with a short and childlike figure.

I still think there is at least a chance.

[Haa~]

The scorn leaked out.

Even if I do say so myself, with the situation like this, to remember something like my dream...

I'm going to die.

My dreams will never come true.

I will only die a miserable death.

When it comes down to it, there is no way I'll be saved anymore.

I have never known of such a person to be rescued from a situation like this.

.....I do not want to die.

However, I put my foot forward, and stepped onto the magic formation.

Because I do not want to die.

My feelings proved correct.

I metastasized to an unknown passageway, some of the magic formations that I marked had moved, and it seemed that I was naturally being driven towards another demon's den.

The moment I saw, I realized it was impossible.

Demons were piling on the corpses of the other dead demons onto the magic formation.

Is it because the demons don't metastasize into that narrow a room after all?

Since it's become like this, then there is no option left other than to get ready to take the plunge.

[All while fighting this crowd?]

I did think their formation was beautiful.

A heap of corpses, defending the metastasis magic formation that leads to my refuge, the demons are deployed radially around it.

At the vanguard are the [Iron Crawler], who have moved in front and devoted themselves as the front line of defense. On top of them are the [Death Road Tarantula], evil red spiders, moving and stopping occasionally to spit out threads while on top of the backs of the [Iron Crawler].

At the rearguard is what looks like a huge clay doll standing there, the Mad Skull, shooting out clumps of rock.

I began to weave my magic while thinking, [This is clearly an army.]

"Oh, armor of the majestic land, gather around me and become my trappings, 『Earth Fortress』！"

The surrounding soil began to take the form of a fortress around me.

Eventually, it covered the top of my head, I became protected within the dome.

However, I had to stop once it reached a certain height.

I don't need it to reach the ceiling.

If it's to the extent of my chest-height, it is enough to block the charge of the Iron Crawlers.

"Oh, falling rain, I call upon you to scatter, and flood the whole world! 『Water Splash』!"

Innumerable drops of water suspend themselves aloft around me, and then become bullets which tear through the area.

However, as the offensive power of this magic is extremely low, the demons were barely kept at bay by this spell.

I understood that, though.

So, I began chanting the next spell immediately.

"Blue Goddess, fly down from heaven and wave the scepter which would frost the world! 『Icicle Field』!"

All the demons' exteriors, which were covered in the sticky water droplets from before, made a hard sound as they quickly froze solid.

[Water Splash] and [Icicle Field], and then the melded magic [Frost Nova]. The entire forward guard of the demon army came to a complete stop.

I still had to hammer more magic in there. Advanced level magic.

"King of Frost. Supreme ruler of the great snowfields.

Clad in white, oh King of Naught, who reaps all passion.

Cold-hearted king, which rules the frozen death! 『Blizzard Storm』!"

The magic that I shortened was complete.

A spear of ice shot out towards the entire area.

It flies out in a wide arc before me.

The spear of ice pierced into the demons behind the frozen vanguard, one after another.

I did not manage to defeat the enemy vanguard.

While statues of ice play the role of the wall, I chant advanced magic, and instead struck at the back row.

When I traversed the labyrinth near Shirone, this was the strategy I learned.

The strategy of victory.

However...

[...Just as I thought.]

At the same time the demons in the back row are dying, demon after demon springs up from the metastasis magic formation.

Stepping over the pile of demons I just defeated, the new wave of demons filled the room at a surprising pace.

[Is it no good after all?]

The room quickly became full of demons in no time.

My heart quickly became full of despair, as well.

At the same time the room filled, I began to lose my composure.

This is bad.

I can't break through if I don't first do something about that mountain of dead bodies.

However, I don't have enough hands.

[Kuu~!]

From the distance, the Mad Skull sends a rock bullet flying.

Part of the Earth Fortress is destroyed, and the Iron Crawlers who had their movement dulled, began to restlessly squirm through the gap.

A cold sweat slowly rose to the surface of my spine.

"Flaming sword of my charge, tear my enemies to pieces! 『Flame Slice』!"

The blade of flames sprung forward, and the shell of the Iron Crawler is made red-hot.

The Iron Crawler writhed around as it died.

Iron Crawlers are weak to fire.

However, it is not a good idea to use fire in a cavern.

It's like something is tied around my neck.

I have no choice but to use it.

"Oh, armor of the majestic land, gather around me and become my trappings, 『Earth Fortress』!"

Once more, I create a wall of soil.

The residual amount of magic I possess steadily decreases.

I must hurry.

What's the best way to do it?

How can I survive?

Think.

I defeat demons absent-mindedly while I think about how to survive.

However, I cannot think of any way.

Have I finally been checkmated?

Is it already time for it to end?

Is it here that I am to die, after all?

Even as I continue working to kill demons, I think so.

[...~Aah~]

My feet stagger.

My head swims.

I feel the magic power inside of me beginning to dry up.

I know I will faint after I fire off a few more spells.

[I don't want to...]

I grab on to my staff.

I do not want to die.

I do not want to die.

Even though I think this, in my mind, one thing after another begins to re-surface.

Soon after I was born, I remembered my parent's disappointed faces.

In the quiet village I lived in, I was the only one unable to talk with the others.

My parents pitied me and taught me words.

I was impressed by the magician who came to visit my village, and so I learned magic.

I rushed out of the village, knowing only beginner rank water magic.

After I headed out, I met three boys.

I traveled with them as an adventurer for many years.

One of the companions died, and so the party dissolved.

Then, I traveled to Central Continent.

I had met many people, and thereby came to know of the Magic Academy.

I then entered the academy.

I took a class for the first time, and I was impressed.

I got a good score on a test, and the results of my practical skills test made others jealous.

I talked about many things with my friend in the dormitory.

When I became advanced-rank, I met my Shisho.

From Shisho, I learned saint class water magic, and it came to the point where I could easily use it on the spur of the moment.

My Shisho said this and that, and got angry.

I graduated around then, and left to travel without saying anything to my Shisho.

I thought myself good enough to work in the Asura Capital City, so I traveled there.

However, with no work to be had, I gradually moved towards the border.

And at the border, with no work to be found either, I was at a loss.

But, it was then that I found the piece of paper asking for a tutor.

I met Paul and family, and I had also met Rudi.

I was surprised to see the love affair of Paul and his family.

I was excited and jealous of the talent Rudi had.

I watched Rudi who did not get carried away with magic like I did, and my feelings of respect towards him rose.

Once I had taught Rudeus water-saint class magic, I had left.

I began to dive into the labyrinth near the Shirone kingdom.

After traversing the labyrinth, I had become employed by Shirone kindgom.

I taught magic to Prince Pax, and it was dreadfully different than when I taught Rudi. I realized the lack of talent I had as a teacher.

A letter came one day from Rudi, and I worked very hard to make a book on the Demon God Language for him.

I found myself disgusted with Shirone Kingdom, and so I left.

It was then that I heard of the Metastasis Event.

I met Elinalise and Talhand.

I was surprised at how free Elinalise and Talhand were.

I traveled around the Magic Continent.

I met my parents again after so long, and was able to confirm that they truly did love me after all.

Then, I met Kishirika.

And then, and then...

Such scenes streamed inside my head in an instant.

An Iron Crawler approaches in front of me.

The room is warmed by the heat of the previously cast fire magic, so the effect of Frost Nova has weakened.

It's already over.

I do not want to die, I hate this.

I HATE THIS!

[No...NOOOOooooo.....!]

I swung my staff around awkwardly.

Sticky threads come flying at me, and entwine my staff.

In an instant, my staff falls to the ground.

[I do not want to die. He-, help me, somebody...!]

I edge backward, but there is a wall behind me.

An Iron Crawler approaches.

How many of these are there?

I can't cast any more magic spells.

Am I going to be eaten alive like this?

I hate it, why does it have to be like this?!

[Somebody, please save me....]

Ah~.

...~ah.

I guess I'll never be able to meet my mother again.

At that moment, that was my final thought.

And, as the demon who approached before me, I squeezed my eyes shut tightly.

I waited for an eternity, but that moment never came.

Did I die instantly?

As I thought that, I realized I wouldn't have been able to think that if I was already dead.

I am unable to reason what has happened.

However, I no longer hear any sounds.

Perhaps, I have already appeared here in the world after death.

I'm scared, but I open my eyes.

Filling my view was a sight beyond anything I could have ever imagined.

It was a world of ice.

Death Road Tarantula, Iron Crawler, and Mad Skull.

All had become statues of pure white ice.

The Mad Skull, which was inside the inner part, collapsed with a crunching sound and fell apart.

The skull and the main body cracked and collapsed onto the ground with a loud sound, similar to a window breaking.

It was completely frozen to the very core.

Compared to my own Frost Nova, which only freezes the surface, this power is in another league entirely.

I doubt there is a demon left alive after this.

"...Eh?"

I don't understand what just happened.

I reached for my staff, while being confused.

"Hyaaah!"

The staff was so cold, that I dropped it instinctively.

In this world of silence, I heard a clanging sound.

Was that the reaction to the sound? One voice reached my ear.

"Ahh, what a relief..."

Walking confidently between the statues of ice, it was a solitary young man.

The moment I laid eyes on him, I began to feel my heart beating really fast.

It was the man of my dreams.

Features that seemed kind, and hair that seemed to be soft.

He was tall and wearing a robe, but despite appearing to be a magician, he also seemed to be solidly built.

Dressed in grey robes and holding a large staff, he came towards me.

He looked down at me with a face that seemed to be openly relieved.

"EHH? Ehh?"

I was embraced tightly.

It was a warm, powerful, and reliable pair of arms wrapped around me.

It was a lightly sweet scent mixed with a little bit of sweat. However, it seemed to be a nostalgic smell to me.

He squatted down, and buried his face into the nape of my neck, and as he inhaled deeply he was moved to profound emotions.

"Su~u...."

"....!"

And then I had noticed something.

I had not had any kind of a bath for about a month.

"Ah!"

The second I realized this, I pushed him away.

"What's this?"

His face had a surprised look.

Ah, I'm hopeless. I did something inexcusable like that.

Even though he just came to rescue me.

Ah, but still, I don't want to be thought of as stinking...

Ah, no... wait... do I really need to worry about such a thing right now?

What's this?

I can't follow this line of thought.

"S-Sorry, I think it may be a little smelly..."

"S-Smelly... is it? Ah, I'm sorry!"

I received a bit of a shock when he started to smell his sleeves.

"Ah, not that! I meant myself. Because I have been trapped in here for a month now."

"Oh, that's what you meant? Well, I don't happen to mind it, you know?"

"Well, I do happen to mind it."

I shouldn't have said that.

Well, it was fine as it is thought.

I should first give him my thanks.

Then, I should properly hear his name.

"Thank you very much for taking the time to rescue me."

"No, it's only natural that I do."

Only natural?

No companion I know would feel any kind of obligation that would make them try and rescue me from certain death from such an amazingly large crowd of demons.

Ah yes, his name. I must hear his name.

"*ahem*... Pleased to meet your acquaintance just now, I happen to be called Roxy Migurdia. If it is at all possible, would you please allow me the honor to receive your name?"

After I said that, he suddenly froze like a statue.

Did I say something strange?

"J-just now... pleased to meet my acquaintance?"

"Eh? Ah, have we met somewhere else before now? If that's the case I am truly very sorry, but I cannot seem to remember it at all..."

Come to think about it now, I have a funny feeling that I have seen someone like him before.

Now, where could it have been?

He does seem to look just a little bit like Paul-san...

Could I really have forgotten such a person?

"I can't seem to remember you..."

He looked blue in the face.

Did I anger him?

Whether I like it or not, I have certainly met someone like him somewhere.

There's something about his face I can recall, something from a long time ago certainly...

"Remember...Re...member....."

His head bobbed from side to side, and he staggered backwards several steps.

Suddenly, it seemed like he was holding something back in his mouth...

"UEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH"

He vomited.

—

That little boy Rudi – after such a small amount of time, had grown up to become an adult that I now knew as Rudeus Greyrat.

Paul-san and everyone else who caught up shortly after had brought me back to safety, and it was then that I understood how narrowly I had escaped death.

It's my first time seeing Roxy in a while and she hasn't changed very much.

Be it her age or her atmosphere, they were the same as always.

It's probably just because the labyrinth trapped her for a month, I'm sure.

The labyrinth considerably weakened her.

The labyrinth wore down her cheeks, made bags under her eyes, loosened her braided hair, and dirtied her entirety, appearing almost like a vagrant child.

Even then, Roxy's "Roxyness" hadn't been lost or damaged at all.

However, Gisu immediately gave out the judgement to return.

I'm sure it's the correct decision.

Talhand was carrying Roxy on his back as we returned above ground.

I declared that I would like to carry Roxy, but by removing me from the combat potential, we wouldn't be able to escape the second floor.

Therefore, it can't be helped.

Letting this kind of man, who gives off a shaggy-haired impression, carry Roxy is just fine.

I did have such feelings, but no one objected, including Roxy.

"Excuse me, Talhand-san. I've troubled you."

"It's fine. It's no good if I don't help you occasionally as well, Roxy."

"Do I smell? Since it was enough for Rudi to vomit, I think it should be considerable, though."

"Hahha, if I were to think this much stinks, then there's no way I could get by as an adventurer."

Along the way, I heard such a conversation from nearby me.

I had heard that Roxy and Talhand had traveled together for a long time.

It was a conversation where I could feel that relationship of trust.

It makes me a bit jealous.

"Sensei. I didn't particularly vomit because sensei smells, you know?"

Succumbing to my jealously, I called out behind me with my voice.

Roxy took a glance in my direction, and then quickly turned her face away.

"The... Then why did you vomit?"

"Since the happiness of meeting with Roxy and the sadness of being forgotten were mixed together, my stomach ended up tightening up."

"...It's not like I forgot about you. I just couldn't connect together the old cute Rudi and the current Rudi."

Roxy grumbled that out and then, just like that, remained silent.

Well, I've grown as well; I guess it can't be helped.

".."

It was a short conversation, but hearing Roxy's voice for the first time in a while gives me a pleasant feeling in my ears that I might just rise up to heaven like that.

With Roxy's return, the housesitting group raised cheers of joy.

Since they started exploring this labyrinth, it would be the first pleasant news, I guess.

I just want to bury that news into a hole I've dug myself already though.

No, I won't say it.

Regardless of the cause, something happy is something happy.

Lilia promptly put Roxy into the bath.

During that time, I was trying to think of something I could do for Roxy's sake and was loitering around outside her room, but Vera drove me away.

I guess it means you're not supposed to approach the room when a girl is in the middle of bathing.

I absolutely did not have an ulterior motive.

I just thought I wanted to do something for her sake.

Really, just that.

Although certainly, I do have a previous offense.

This time, I'm innocent.

I thought about asserting that, but I decided to let it pass.

...No, this is fine.

It's about me.

Suddenly, I looked to my side and saw neatly folded laundry.

It's not confined to my hand just like that grabbing the white cloth at the very top and putting it in my pocket.

I can't afford to let the pitiful whispers of the past get to me.

This time, it's "still" innocent.

Thinking about it like that, this is fine.

In order for Roxy to recover her strength, she needs several days of rest.

Even though I say that, she's an adventurer as well.

Without external wounds, she still has enough physical strength left to walk on her own.

If she just eats some good food and gets sound sleep on a soft bed, I'm sure she'll soon make a comeback.

It really doesn't seem like there's any problems.

Nevertheless, I suddenly ended up showing Roxy my unsightly places.

I hope she's not disillusioned.

Suddenly vomiting was impolite.

But, it was really a shock.

Even though I never forgot about Roxy.

I thought that Roxy forgot me.

...Come to think of it, Sylphy also said she received a shock when she thought I forgot her.

I wonder if Sylphy had these kinds of feelings at that time, as well.

After I return, it won't be good if I don't apologize to her.

Roxy continued to sleep for almost a full day.

I'm sure it can't be helped after spending a month in a labyrinth filled with monsters.

I was loitering around again in front of her room, in order to be the first one to say good morning, and Lilia drove me away again.

Since I was able to get a fleeting glance at Roxy's peaceful sleeping face at that time, I decided it was fine.

It would be good if she gets better soon.

On the second day, Roxy got up.

With a wobbling movement, she came over to the table where we were eating.

"Good morning to you, Roxy-sensei...!"

"Yes. Rudi... Rudeus-san, Good... morning."

In this place, including me, there weren't more than four people.

Elinalise, Paul, Talhand...

Gisu and the other three were currently out shopping.

The exploration group does nothing but rest at the time when they're in the city while the standby group moves around is the composition.

Gisu is in the exploration group as well, but, for some reason, he also commands the standby group.

A hard worker, or rather, that person sure is dedicated.

Wouldn't it be better for him to just quit as an adventurer and become a manager?

"Everyone..."

Everyone here focused his or her gazes on Roxy.

Roxy created a humble expression and then, matched her gaze and lowered her head with each person, one at a time.

"This time, I've caused you quite a bit of trouble. I'm already fine."

The responses to her actions were varied.

One said it was fine, and put their hand around her shoulder.

One nodded, and said it was only obvious.

One drank some alcohol, and offered the alcohol bottle.

One lost for words, and moved by her return.

"Well, if you want to say your thanks, say it to Rudi. If he hadn't suddenly started saying something weird like, 'Tou-san, I can feel the presence of God,' and started breaking down the walls as he ran ahead, we probably wouldn't have found you alive after all."

Going by the manner of speaking, Paul made it almost sound like I'm a dangerous person, but when entering the third floor, for some reason, I knew Roxy's location.

Then, I had the premonition that Roxy had fallen into a dilemma.

Since I felt it was an emergency, I proceeded straight towards the voice, not minding the danger of a cave-in.

Straight ahead was a wall, but without minding it, I just blew it down and continued straight ahead.

Why did I have that sort of premonition? I don't know.

For some reason, I was convinced of it.

I'm sure, the bond between Roxy and I brought us together.

I'm sure that's the case. Yeah.

I do, just a tiny bit, think that the Hitogami might have done something as well, but I won't believe it.

My God is only one person.

Wait a minute, if it comes down to that, that would mean this is the guidance of God as well.

Then, there's already nothing strange at all.

Just as I was thinking about that, while facing me, Roxy lowered her head a second time.

"Umm, Rudeus-san, that is, thank you very much."

...I wonder why...

I feel an endless distance from Roxy.

I know this sensation. I learned about it in school.

It's the name formalities.

It's because she's calling my name like that.

It's because she's using reserved manners like Rudeus-san.

"Please don't mind it; it's only natural after all. Rather than that, please call me Rudi like before."

After saying that, Roxy somewhat cast her eyes down, and whispered a response.

"Th... That kind of way to call you, isn't it too overly familiar?"

"No way, saying it's something like over-familiar... If sensei was going to call me something like Rudeus-san then I might as well have tou-san call me Rudeus-san as well."

"Hey now, what does that mean?"

I didn't hear anything else, like Paul's comment.

"Please call me Rudi like before, with familiarity in it. No matter how many years have passed already, Roxy Migurdia is my respected sensei after all."

After saying that, Roxy blinked her eyes.

Was I too thoughtless? Her face is red.

I wonder if she has a fever or something.

And then, she smacked her own cheeks.

"Yes. That's right, isn't it...? Rudi."

"Yes, sensei."

Suddenly, almost as if she was ridiculing herself, Roxy looked at me while a smile floated up.

That face was becoming somewhat red now.

"Nevertheless, that is, you've gotten big."

"I'm a human after all. It doesn't seem sensei has changed."

"Yeah... just as small, as usual."

"Though, I don't think you're as tiny as you say."

"Is that so..."

How nostalgic.

If I close my eyes, I can vividly remember things about being together with Roxy.

The day we met.

The day I was first taught magic.

The day I received the sacred object.

The day I learned the Saint class magic.

The day we separated.

The days of exchanging letters.

All of them are important memories.

"Nevertheless, that was some magnificent magic. Even without me saying it, you seem to have properly been continuing your training. Was that Emperor ranked water magic?"

"By that, which one do you mean?"

I wonder if I used something like Emperor rank magic.

"The magic at the time you saved me. That power, quick effectiveness, and range. It was splendid magic. Isn't that the Emperor rank magic I've heard about in rumors, [Absolute Zero]?"

It's different.

That was just a [Frost Nova].

While moving through the second floor, I heard from Talhand that [Frost Nova] was an effective magic Roxy used, and I just used it as an imitation.

But, Roxy was making a face completely like, [How about it? It's the correct answer, right?]

I wonder if the correct option is to respond, [That's not it.]

Roxy is a specialist in Water magic.

For her to mistake the magic she saw, I wonder if that would embarrass her.

I wonder if this is where I should call out black as white.

Although, it's a lie that will be exposed quickly.

Saying that's correct here and then secretly telling her it was a lie later would be the wise way of doing it, I'm sure.

No, but, after hearing that it's Emperor class, what will I do if Roxy makes a displeased face?

I had heard that my [Rock Bullet] had power matching Emperor class though, but in reality, I can't use magic that high rank.

Hmmm. What should be done?

"No, that was just a [Frost Nova]. Though, it seems to have a higher rank than the one Roxy used."

"Ah... Is... Is that so? Excuse me."

While I was hesitating, Talhand gave a response.

Something about doing unnecessary things.

Here I should follow up...

"Really, Roxy is the same as always, isn't she? Although, I agree with the opinion that if it's Rudeus, it wouldn't be strange for him to use Emperor class magic."

However, without a moment's delay Elinalise followed up.

"After all, Rudeus is a magician who can put the entire Magic University into order with but a glance."

Saying unnecessary things.

And after looking around, everyone's gazes were gathering on me.

All right, it's here.

"The current me is here all thanks to sensei's education."

After confidently saying that, Roxy was looking at me with suspicious eyes.

"Rudi... That, I heard it in a variety of places, but do you really think that?"

"It's only natural, right?"

Roxy's teachings are my foundation.

Go outside, talk to people.

Get along with everyone, without prejudice.

Always give it your best effort.

Those teachings have taken root inside of me.

For this reason, I was able to build up a good relationship with Ruijerd.

There were certainly times where I didn't protect her teachings, but that is that.

People aren't always able to maintain the highest state, after all.

What's important isn't whether I was able to perfectly follow them.

It's whether I use it as the foundations.

In that sort of meaning, I respect Roxy.

To the point where I want her autograph.

"You've just been advancing me at your own convenience. Even without my teachings."

Roxy laughed in self-ridicule.

"Becoming this splendid. It's the exact opposite of someone like me, who got trapped in a labyrinth after making a mistake."

And then, she fell prostrate on top of the table.

I can see the whirl in her hair and it's a bit cute.

"The Shisho is splendid and the disciple is splendid as well, isn't that fine?"

The one who said that was Paul.

He said something good.

That's right, I'm not particularly splendid or anything, but Roxy is a splendid individual.

So what if she's losing to her disciple on some small parts.

Roxy can't be weighed against something like that.

"Without Roxy, we wouldn't be here. Be more confident in yourself."

It seems with Paul's words, Roxy recovered a bit.

Raising her body and she was nodding deeply.

Afterwards, we started up a meeting after Gisu returned.

A gathering where everyone shows their face, including the standby group.

"It's while keeping an eye on Roxy's condition, but I'm thinking we'll do the next exploration in three days."

The director Gisu was informing us of this.

"Isn't that a bit too fast?"

The one who responded like that was Paul.

Exploring a labyrinth unexpectedly wears down on your nerves.

Especially a place like the Teleport Labyrinth that are filled with traps, where you have no choice other than to fight, while being careful not to take a wrong step while fighting.

Still putting aside the rear guard, like myself, the burden on the two advance guards is big, I'm sure.

"It's better for Roxy to enter a labyrinth sooner, rather than later, to correct herself."

"Hn? Ah, I see, I get it now. Certainly, that's true."

Paul nodded, but, I couldn't agree with it a bit.

Isn't it severe on Roxy, as well, to suddenly re-enter after her life was in danger?

"Doesn't sensei need just a bit more rest for a short while?"

"Hn? Ah... Senpai might not know this, but if a time comes up when you almost die in a labyrinth, if you don't re-enter it soon after you'll catch a curse that will make it so you can never enter a labyrinth again."

"Curse? Is there that sort, as well?"

"Yeah, I don't really know why, but after you're imprisoned in a labyrinth and fearful of death, you end up being unable to do anything, it seems."

Ah. I've read about something like that in a manga, in my previous life.

A variety of panic disorder.

The so-called PTSD.

As a medical treatment to cope with it, I have heard that it's good to repeat the mistake you made soon after to cure it, as well.

I guess that means those sorts of things are the same in every world.

"Besides, Senpai is a beginner at labyrinths. It'll be better to enter a number of times at a short pace, to gain some experience, I'm sure."

"I see now, that makes sense."

After that conversation, the surrounding faces all opened their mouths.

"I can lecture, if it's on moving while using both attack and healing magic."

"It's probably better not to use the method Rudi used, or breaking down walls, to advance very much. There's the danger of a collapse."

"If you'd like, I can go to the front."

"I just thought, but Paul would you like to switch positions with me?"

Everyone had started talking about their impressions from last time and opinions on next time- Gisu, the director, was putting them into order.

Everyone's serious.

I thought it would be done more on the spot, but it seems that isn't the case.

Even if it's rotten, this is still a party of S rank adventurers, I guess.

In regards to this meeting, the things I had to say were few.

It was just to the level of others asking about my thoughts on entering a labyrinth for my first time.

They're pros, I'm an amateur.

No matter how good I am with magic, I'm sure, it's no good if I forget about that premise.

Even if it went well the last time, it's not limited to going well this time as well.

"For the time being, next time I'd like to advance to clearing the third floor- it's dependent on the developments- but I'd at least like to search until we find the magic circle to the fourth floor, is that fine?"

"No objections."

Fundamentally, we continue ahead until we find the stairs to the next floor, and then decide whether we'll continue or return later.

In the case that we return later, afterwards, we take a straight line back to the point where we made it last time, and advance the exploration.

Last time, we descended down to the third floor, all at once, but it isn't limited to this time.

Since it seems that the longer a trip runs the greater probability that we'll fall into a trap, I guess, we greatly desire speed.

"Come to think of it, according to the book it seems the fourth floor gives off a completely different feeling. Becoming like ruins or something."

"In other words, it could be possible that there's a newer section as well."

"Hn...Well, that's what we should consider next time after the third floor. Next time it's the third floor."

"Yeah."

It seems when labyrinths, which exist for a long time, attach to adjacent labyrinths, they become situations with two magic crystals at the heart.

In such labyrinths, it seems the feeling of the labyrinth changes midway through it.

It seems that such a characteristic matches up with the Teleport Labyrinth.

Even though I say that, it seems that not all labyrinths with those characteristics have two magic crystals either.

It's only limited to being a possible problem.

According to the book, there should only be one magic crystal in the Teleport Labyrinth.

However, there's the possibility that it wasn't originally a teleport labyrinth but just a normal labyrinth you can find anywhere else. Then it collided with some kind of ruins, and became the teleport labyrinth, as well.

Some kind of ruins.

Right, for example, teleport ruins.

"What is that, a book you say?"

And there Roxy voiced a question.

"It's a book that Rudi brought along; it seems to be a memo of some fellows that cleared down to the lowest level of the teleport labyrinth. Roxy you should read it as well."

Gisu handed over the book in question to Roxy.

"He~, there was this sort of thing... I understand, I'll carefully read through it tomorrow."

It seems Roxy's plan for tomorrow is reading.

Then I'll stay in the inn as well.

I want to talk with Roxy more.

Though I don't know what would be good to talk about with Roxy?

If she's reading the book, then I guess it would be fine to talk about the contents of that book.

The asking Roxy and the teaching I. Yeah, that's nice. Quite nice.

"Well then, it's about the formation, but let's tamper with it a bit. Talhand, take over."

While I was thinking that, the topic progressed to the next stage.

Talhand cleared his voice with a [Cough].

This man decides the formation.

It's because he was in the very back and saw over the scene the most.

"Hmm, leave it to me."

Nevertheless, he stinks of alcohol.

This man always smells like alcohol.

When it comes to night Gisu drinks as he's bathing in it as well, but Talhand continues to drink throughout the day.

Although, once we start exploring the labyrinth he stops drinking for a period.

I wonder if he's a man capable of switching habits ON and OFF.

"The basics won't change from how they were until now."

Prepared on the table was a paper with two lines drawn on it and small stones with different colors.

First Talhand placed the light blue stone.

"First, just the same before, Roxy is the rear guard."

"Yes."

Roxy nodded.

And then, right next to that he placed a grey stone.

"Rudeus is Roxy's support. Roxy is the type that makes mistakes when things happen outside of her assumptions, but Rudeus possesses the "foresight" demon eye. Unlike his age he's considerably calm as well, he should be able to keep any mistakes in check beforehand."

"...Yes."

It's a remark almost as if Roxy isn't composed enough.

I'd like to object, but Roxy did make a mistake and step on a teleport magic circle after all.

It will become a snake in the bush.

But, after giving it some thought...

I can't predict things that I can't see with my foresight eye.

In other words, I have no choice other than to watch Roxy.

If I think of it, it's a just cause to have Roxy always in my field of vision while in the middle of exploring the labyrinth- it's not bad in my regard.

Imagining myself watching Roxy, I start to feel happier after all.

"Let's try having Paul and Elinalise change places. Paul is in front and Elinalise is in the back."

While saying that, Talhand switched the red stone, Paul, with the yellow stone, Elinalise.

Even though that's the case, they're almost side-by-side.

I'm sure it's more of a change of roles.

Previously, their main roles were Elinalise being the shield and Paul being the support, but this time it's the reverse.

Paul is the main shield, and Elinalise is the support.

"Gisu is the same as previously."

Talhand placed the light brown stone far ahead.

And then, finally he put his own stone protecting the middle.

"I don't think it will be necessary, but there's a large number of enemies on the third floor. I'll become a wall between the rear guard and advance guard."

Scout: Gisu

Advance Guard: Paul (Main) and Elinalise (Support)

Middle Guard: Talhand

Rear Guard: Roxy (Main) and Rudeus (Support)

It's become this formation.

Excluding Gisu, it's become a feeling kind of like the Five Bamboo mahjong tile.

The formation of Whirlwind might be close.

{ C-Editor's note: Whirlwind is a battle formation in the Romancing SaGa 3 video game. The party members are positioned in a pattern similar to the five bamboo mahjong tile. }

"Are there any comments?"

I raised my hand to those words.

"Is it fine to assume my fundamental role hasn't changed?"

"Humu. In regards to the minor coordination, it would be good to talk it out well with Roxy."

After hearing those words, I look at Roxy.

She looked at me and, with a somewhat nervous expression, swallowed deeply with a [Gokuri].

"I understand. Sensei, I'm in your care."

"Yes, look after me as well. I'll give it my best to not drag your feet down."

Rather, the one who would be the one pulling legs down would be me, though.

I wish Roxy would be more confident than she is.

Certainly, in terms of aggregate magic power and the number of magic that we can use, I might win.

However, higher strength status doesn't decide everything.

By adding in experience, she truly displays the real worth of strength.

If we were to consider those, I think Roxy is above me.

She remained trapped in the Teleport Labyrinth for a month, and she continued to fight there until the end. Not to mention Roxy's mentality; that she'll even go back down again only a few days after it like nothing happened is amazing.

If it was me, and I got into her severe situation, then I'm sure I'd vow to never go into a labyrinth again.

The wise man does not approach danger.

It's fine to rephrase it as chicken.

I'm a coward.

"Alright, this side should be fine like this. Next is talking about the standby group."

After that, Gisu quickly gave out directions to the standby group.

Gisu handed a list to Vera for things to buy while we're exploring. Shera described Roxy's condition and then prepared medical treatment items based on Zenith's expected conditions.

And then, Gisu asked Lilia to do a good job putting the other two into order.

If the Exploration Group Leader is Gisu, then the Standby Group Leader would be Lilia.

Then the Party Leader is Paul.

If you were to ask what this leader does, it would be making the final decisions and a roll call.

"Alright, then everyone: in preparation for three days from now- disperse."

With Paul's command, we all broke up.

Next day.

I was loitering around (again) in the surroundings of Roxy who was reading on the first floor of the inn.

I wanted her to ask me if there was anything she didn't know.

Not anyone else, but me.

"Umm, Rudi..."

"Yes, what is it? Sensei!"

"You're distracting me wandering around in front of me."

Roxy said that while smiling bitterly.

"Please excuse me."

I lowered my head and planned to leave that place.

I see.

I'm distracting her.

That's right, isn't it? I'm just a hindrance to her reading, aren't I?

It's no good to be a hindrance.

That's not my real intention.

I just wanted to be of help to sensei.

But, it can't be helped.

If I'm a hindrance, then it can't be helped.

I'll go somewhere.

That's right, I'll go to some kind of unpopular bar.

Occasionally, it might be good to drink alone.

Let's do that.

"Rudi."

However, there I heard a voice call out to me from behind.

"If you have the spare time to keep wandering around, there are various points in this book that I don't get. So, please tell me..."

"Yes!"

I immediately sat down next to Roxy.

I think it was the fastest Mach in the world.

If I had a dog's tail attached, I'm sure it would appear to be floating in the air from how fast it would be wagging around.

"Where is it? Please ask anything."

Ah... at any rate, Roxy is really small.

I'm sure it's in part related to the fact that my body is bigger, though.

If I were to put her on top of my lap, I'm sure I would snugly be able to wrap her up.

I'm sure she would get angry if I were to place her there, though...

"..."

And then I look, Roxy is looking at me with slanted, upturned eyes.

"What's wrong, sensei?"

After asking that, Roxy quickly turned away and faced the book.

"No, it's nothing at all. It's about this part though..."

Before one knows, I've considerably outgrown her after all.

She might be mortified over it.

It seems she's bothered over her short height after all.

While such exchanges continued, I spent almost a full day reading together with Roxy.

I'm satisfied.

Including Roxy, the exploration of the labyrinth restarted.

Just according to schedule, we descended down to the third floor, all at once.

The enemies on the third floor are Tarantula Deathlords, Iron Crawlers, and the additional Mad Skulls.

Mad Skulls are A rank monsters.

Their outer appearance is of a giant mud-golem with no neck.

The height, I would say, is around 2.5 meters.

They appear quite wide and solid as well.

Somewhere around their chest they have a skull buried, and that is the weak point.

I guess that's right, Ja*ra or Sa*eru might be close.

{ C-Editor's note: Jamila and Sangelu were two monsters from the Ultraman live action television series. }

Although their movements are dull, no matter how much you attack the mud parts, it has no effect; and if it comes down to a dangerous situation, the skull in its chest hides further inside of its body.

In regards to attack methods, other than attacking people physically with its body it uses magic almost like a rock bullet, as well.

However, the reason why it is included as A rank, isn't that.

Monsters of low intelligence obey its commands.

The iron crawlers and the tarantula deathlords become the servants to the mad skull.

In contrast to its golem-like outer appearance, it has high intelligence. It uses the iron crawlers as an advance guard, has tarantulas protect the middle, and it stands as rear guard in the formation as intruders attack.

Mad Skull is a command-type monster.

The iron crawler's stampede combined with the tarantulas' sticky web entangle is the tactic from the second floor.

On the deeper floors, Mad Skull joins the fray, and they give out commands while using rock bullets.

For Paul and the others who were having a hard fight on the second floor, I'm sure these tactics were severe.

Despite fighting with all their might, they should have had no leeway to search for Roxy at all.

Nevertheless, with the addition of Roxy and I, we solve this problem.

Then, the monsters protecting the middle, the spiders, are no big deal. So, we take the initiative with Roxy as the advance guard, finishing the iron crawlers, and myself as the rear guard, attacking the mad skulls, and it works fine.

Paul and the other two are plenty to deal with the spiders.

Since I'm in the back and Roxy is in front of me,

Then, Paul and the others decrease the number of enemies.

Mad Skulls are weak to water,

Because they're mud after all.

If you increase their water content, they end up flowing away.

Otherwise, it's fire.

Drying out the mud, they become unable to move.

However, rock bullet works fine for me.

If I focus using the demon eye, I can snipe their weak point, the skull, with a single [Rock Bullet].

One shot, one kill, I'd say.

I'm a skilled sniper. But, I'm just a hornworm, or camper, who won't move from spawn point.

{ C-Editor's note: In first person shooter games, a caterpillar or camper sniper finds an ideal vantage point and waits for players to wander into sight and be killed. }

"Fu..."

After annihilating the enemies, Roxy let out a sigh.

I peek at her face which looks out from under the brim of her hat.

I'm sure her magic power is decreasing; it's a somewhat tired face.

Suddenly, Roxy faces my direction.

While looking up at me with somewhat slanted, upturned eyes,

After our eyes met, she quickly avoided eye contact,

"Before long, I'm going to be out of magic power. Please allow some break time."

With those words, we take a break until we return to the passage.

On my end, I still have plenty of room in my aggregate magic power.

Rather, it probably hasn't even decreased by half yet.

Fundamentally, I haven't even used anything but [Rock Bullet] either.

Roxy is the one freezing the enemies using [Frost Nova], it can't be helped; her exhaustion is fast.

"Excuse me, because the amount of my magic power is insufficient,"

Roxy said that with a sigh while sitting down.

"No, though I think you have plenty."

Roxy's precision with her magic is extremely high.

With shortened incantations, she's completely using ranged magic and she is perfect.

Occasionally, even though the spray from [Water Splash] may get on Paul and the others, but after that, her [Icicle Field] freezes only the enemies, with a surprising precision.

Speaking of precision, in other words, it means limiting magic power.

Even though that's the case, she's continued to fight for a considerably long period.

It's, by no means, because her amount of magic power is insufficient.

Most likely, it's equal to or even above the amount of Sylphy.

"Well then, it's about the time I'd like for the magic circle to the fourth floor to be found, I'd say,"

Gisu compared the book to the map while scratching his chin.

After going down to the third floor, the second day since we entered will soon pass.

According to the author of the book, the number of days it takes to clear the third floor is five days.

Although our pace is faster than they are, and after visiting the third floor a number of times, the map is well done, as well.

I'm sure the magic circle to the next floor will be found soon.

"Rudi, is it fine for me to borrow your back for a bit?" Roxy asked.

"Please do."

After responding, Roxy leaned on my back.

In the middle of break time, Roxy rests while drooping onto my back.

Rather than leaning against a cave wall, I'm sure leaning against a person's back is more restful.

The so-called side benefit,

"Nevertheless, I never thought I would get to see Rudi enter a labyrinth."

"That's right. Is there any kind of advice you have for me?"

"Eh... Since Rudi's basic movements, in regards to the party, are well done, there's nothing to say."

"Thank you very much."

"Chantless magic has an extremely high precision. It sure is amazing."

"No, I still have a ways to go."

Still a ways,

Right, still a ways to go,

After looking at Roxy, I really feel that way.

She doesn't increase the number of cards she has in her hand, but increases the number of things she can do.

Then, by combining the cards she has, she overwhelms the opponent.

In the past, I used to do that as well, but at some point unaware, it had become where all I use is [Rock Bullet] and [Quagmire].

It's no good like this, but against opponents to some level, it will win the battle.

Even though I say that, it's not strong against opponents who use clever techniques, based on that assumption.

My tactics are perfect against no opponents, as well,

The objective is high and there's no objective in front of my eyes.

Like this, I can't improve anymore.

"Rudi."

"What is it?"

"If, we're able to save Zenith-san and you have spare time, would you like to explore a labyrinth together with me?"

"Just the two of us?"

"Yes. Right now, we're in a cornered situation, in terms of time, but exploring a labyrinth is interesting. Wouldn't you like forming a party with the two of us, and entering an easier labyrinth?"

Labyrinths, huh.

Honestly, if Gisu weren't here, then I feel like I would quickly step into a trap, though.

However, Roxy is a person that is able to explore labyrinths alone.

Well, she's a bit clumsy, but she has actual results, as well.

If I follow along with her, I'm sure we could possibly conquer one.

"That's fine. After we return, let's enter a labyrinth together."

"It's a promise."

"Yeah, it's a promise."

In the corner of my field of vision, I saw Roxy's hand relax a bit.

"...Ah, I'm feeling a bit sleepy; I'll sleep for a bit."

"Yes, good night."

After saying that, I felt Roxy get comfortable and the power disappear from her back.

I responded on momentum, but exploring a labyrinth requires a considerable number of days.

For me, who has no choice other than to raise a child, I wonder if I'll have that kind of time.

...Well, it's not a conversation for right away.

It will be fine if I have spare time.

After my child is born and it becomes a bit bigger, Sylphy and I will have more flexibility.

I'm sure by that time, I'll be over twenty years old, but, well, I'm sure there's no problem.

Nevertheless, I'm happy.

Being invited to a party by Roxy,

It feels like she recognizes my ability.

It would be good if I were careful to show her my good parts only.

While thinking such things, I slept for a bit as well.

After discovering the magic circle to the fourth floor, we thoroughly searched around the third floor.

However, we never saw the shadow or shape of Zenith.

—

We've arrived at the fourth floor.

The instant we came out of the teleport magic circle, at a glance, the surroundings had undergone a complete change from previous floors.

I have a recollection of those stone constructed walls.

As I thought, it's similar to the ruins where the teleport magic circle was.

I wonder if the same type of ruin ended up becoming a labyrinth.

"Gisu, what should we do?" Paul asked.

"Hn? We still have a bit more time."

"All right, then after we check the atmosphere of the fourth floor, we'll return once."

Paul said that with a sharp face, while I was looking around the surroundings restlessly.

No matter how you look at the times when he's down, Paul is a failure as a human, but, during the times he's properly doing his job, Paul sure is cool.

I don't think it's strange at all that Zenith would fall for Paul after seeing his figure, as well.

If I have his blood flowing through me as well, then that compliment Sylphy often says to me might be her true feelings.

"Sensei, when I'm putting on a serious face, am I cool?"

Suddenly, I asked Roxy something like that.

It might have been a bit narcissistic.

Roxy glanced over towards me from under her hat's brim and stuttered,

"Eh? Ah, uh... umm. We... Well, cool? I guess?"

And then quickly turned her face away,

Okay.

Just that reaction is plenty.

Roxy conveyed the feeling.

I asked something that was hard to respond to, didn't I?

Excuse me. It seems I was getting a bit too full of myself.

But, if Roxy were to suddenly girlishly ask "Am I cute?", with both hands carrying light sticks, I would affirm that with an elevated cheer from the front seat.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to concert fans who often stand up and cheer while waving their light sticks. }

Men aren't cool by their face alone.

It's their heart.

Heaving a heart of steel that burns red with fever is essential.

Every one hit by such a heart will be knocked out in a single hit.

"Rudi, it's the enemy."

After looking ahead, there were two armored monsters, each with four arms, walking towards us.

The Armored Warriors,

For the time being, it seems these types of armors are of the undead attribute.

And then, I've learned what works well on the undead is Rock or Holy attacks.

If you fire a somewhat large [Rock Bullet] with a good amount of mass, then generally everything will be blown to pieces in a single hit.

"I'll preemptively attack it with a [Rock Bullet]."

"Ah, Rudi, that's no good."

Just as I was preparing my staff, Roxy stopped me.

"I've heard that Armored Warriors use the techniques of the Water God style. If you carelessly fire off magic, then a counter will come flying back."

Water God style,

I haven't encountered it very often, but it's a style of swordsmanship that focuses on warding off and countering.

Warding off and countering Water God style, for some reason, works effectively even against magic, as well.

I don't really know specifically how to become like that, but others say they have a sword technique that allows them to counter attack magic and send it flying back.

Even if it's the usual situation, then I would still feel it's fine, but the opponent is holding four swords.

Since it's not a human, it might take on four opponents simultaneously and match up counters for all them.

"I see- then what should I do?"

"Stop its feet and provide backup. Since it's the first monsters, for starters, proceed with caution."

"Understood, Tou-san, I'm going to use [Quagmire], please be careful of your step!"

"Sure!"

The armor type monsters have power and they are absurdly skilled with the sword as well, but their legs are slow.

Also, the armor is heavy and it should sink easily into the mud.

Even though I say that, if I don't release a deep-set [Quagmire] then there's the possibility it might escape, as well.

I don't think it will lead to a cave-in so easily, but it's still better to minimize magic that changes the terrain.

About to the knees, I guess.

"[Quagmire]!"

Just as the Armored Warrior was about to take a step forward, the quagmire was created.

Both of those fellows sank up to their thighs into the mud.

From there our formation's two advance guards sprang into action.

"Paul. I'll go in from the left."

"Understood, you always take the left, don't you?"

"If my sword is on the side with the wall, then it's difficult to move."

"Just being selfish now... and whoa, how dangerous!"

It seems Paul has plenty of composure.

While warding off the Armored Warrior's sword strike with the sword in his right hand, the dagger in his left hand has already cut off one of the arms in a flash.

The armor seems quite solid, but it seems that has no effect.

Swordsmen of the Sword God style are monsters.

And, maybe that dagger's cutting edge is razor-sharp, I wonder.

It seems Elinalise is somewhat being suppressed.

By no means is she taking any large attacks, but with her attack power, she can't effectively damage them.

"Let's support them. Rudi, let's simultaneously fire off magic: on Elinalise-san's side."

"Understood,"

I prepare my staff.

What I'm using is [Rock Bullet].

If it's right now, when its legs are stopped, then it can't evade, as well.

Just, exactly how much speed it can ward off, I won't know unless I try it.

"Talhand-san!"

"Sure!"

Talhand prepared his shield and stood in front of us.

If a sword attack comes flying towards us, it seems Talhand intends to be the barrier.

As long as he doesn't die instantly, I'll use advanced healing magic.

It would be good, as long as he can avoid getting hit in a vital point.

"[Rock Bullet], [Stone Cannon]!"

"Gallant sword of ice, I seek conviction of this one! [Icicle Edge]!"

Timing it in sync with Roxy, we fired off at the same time.

A bullet-type shell and blade of ice like Ultra Slash went flying.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Ultra Slash weapon used in the Ultraman television series. }

The armor instantly moved to ward those attacks off.

Just as two of the swords moved, and were preparing to intercept the attack, Elinalise attacked using her shield with good timing, causing its stance to collapse.

The rock bullet blew off one of the armor's arms and the ice blade deeply pierced the chest of the armor.

The armor stopped moving and soon after crumbled into scattering pieces.

Simultaneously Paul's fight ended, as well.

"As expected, after it reaches A rank then it won't so easily be defeated."

Though I said that, the actual amount of time we spent fighting was just about a minute.

Although we weren't able to defeat it in a single hit, it didn't even enter the realm of a hard fight.

As expected of one who has reached Advanced with all three of the major swordsmanship styles.

In terms of talent, I'm sure it was enough that he could have made it to the level of Saint.

No, in reality, Paul might already be as strong as a Saint rank.

Something like the strengths of people can't be measured well in terms of rank after all.

"Tou-san, could it be, you've gotten a bit stronger since last time?"

Ah, no good,

I said something that might make him get full of himself.

A grand story of bragging might start up.

"Hn? No, that's not the case; almost to the point that I feel weaker than me in the past."

However, without even grinning, Paul only took one glance over here, and then faced ahead.

"Now, without being negligent, let's go."

With Paul's words, I came to my senses.

That's right.

Right now, we're in the middle of a labyrinth, we have no choice other than to stay on guard.

Nevertheless, Paul today sure is cool.

I'm sure if I were to tell Norn about these adventures with Paul, she would be delighted.

"Oh my?"

By chance, Elinalise peeked at Paul's face.

And then put her hand to her mouth and lightly laughed.

"Oh Paul you, what are you grinning about? It's disgusting."

"It's fine for you not to put those kinds of things into words."

"You must have been quite happy to be praised by Rudeus, weren't you? I understand it. [Giggle]."

"Shut it... won't you be silent?"

I retract my previous statement.

As I thought, Paul is being Paul.

After that, we defeated a number of Armored Warriors and Mad Skulls, and then we decided to return.

Walking back, it took roughly 15 hours.

As expected, labyrinths sure are time-consuming.

I wonder if Zenith is all right, as we're slowly progressing like this.

No, being impatient and becoming stranded, as Roxy did, or worse, are some things to avoid.

We must move with caution.

Right now, it seems to be going well.

While remaining tense, we're not overly jumpy; we still have some leeway in mind.

Our condition is the greatest balance.

Continuing just like this is for the best, I'm sure.

After returning once, we'll inspect our equipment and such, and then we'll come back.

After returning, we started a meeting right away.

And from there, we proceeded to buy a number of essential things.

Since we were running out of scrolls for the light spirits, I started drawing more.

As expected of the Labyrinth City Lapan, they sell parchments and dyes for drawing magic circles, so I can make them with no problem.

If I make one then, after that, Shera-san can learn and do the rest.

It seems Shera-san did work for the Milis Church, drawing things like scrolls, so it's a specialty of hers.

She said she could make about 50 of them, working today.

How dependable.

Gisu bought some chemicals that were strong against armor type monsters.

If you land a hit, then, supposedly the joint parts coil up and its movements get slower.

Since they're heavy, I suggested putting something like oil on the ground to make them fall, and Gisu, laughing, said Paul would trip.

After I responded with an, "I see," he laughed even more.

Paul and Elinalise were viewing over the available swords for sale.

It seems they're searching for a good bargain sword for Elinalise to use.

Her estoc is a magic item imbued with magic power.

If you swing it, it has the ability to send a vacuum blade flying from the tip.

But, since the previous labyrinth run, it's inconvenient when the opponents are Armored Warriors.

Even if it weren't for them, there's the Iron Crawlers as well; using her estoc is somewhat of a hard fight against armored opponents.

I understand that.

It seems the dagger that Paul uses in his left hand is a magic item bought in Lapan.

Its ability is [Armor Break]; where the harder the opponent's armor is, the sharper the cutting edge gets.

It's a considerably rare ability.

The ability is so uncommon that the sellers sold it as a bargain item, as the sellers treated the dagger as a dull blade and said it can't even cut dried meat.

Paul said something like, "My keen insight noticed this sword's ability."

However, I know it.

This ability was the same mentioned as a warrior's weapon in the [Legend of Perugius] that I read in Buina village.

That, although the warrior's sword can't even cut through dried meat, when matched against a clump of steel it easily slices it in half; it's a demon sword.

There's no doubt. It caught Paul's attention at the "can't even cut dried meat" part.

But well, it does explain why he can display such a high attack power against those Armored Warriors.

The fact that it's effective even in his non-dominant hand means it really is strong.

Elinalise bought a one-handed Gladius.

The ability [Shock Wave] imbues within the Gladius. When one pierces with it, it releases a force.

The damage isn't high, but it seems like you can use it in an instant to send the opponent flying backwards and make some distance.

Since it's something that has an ability with practical use, it seems to have a considerably high price, but, with several round magic crystals from her bag, Elinalise bought it.

Those magic crystals: How many does she have?

During the night, Talhand and Roxy drank alcohol together.

And since others consider me an adult now, I can drink some alcohol, as well.

Even though I say that, it's not as if I can get dead drunk in front of Roxy as well.

Just to the level of socializing,

The subject was supposed to be how to arrange the three of us magicians, but at some point, it seemed to change into a lecture on 「what it means to be a man」 by Talhand-sensei.

A man is, in other words, muscle, one within whom flesh and a heart of gold dwells- that kind of story.

It's not a conversation for magicians to have.

However, it was a conversation of interest.

That's right isn't it; after all, it's no good if men aren't sturdy.

Well, it seems Roxy didn't care around that point and started to get tired.

It can't be helped.

After spending such a day off and then being told, "Have a safe trip," by Lilia, we re-entered the labyrinth.

We were able to easily break through to the fourth floor.

In part, it was because of our improved equipment and preparations, but we were lucky, as well.

We were able to arrive at the goal in almost a straight line.

In terms of time, it was only about three hours, I'd say.

We almost didn't encounter any monsters, as well.

Temporarily, we returned to the fourth floor and started walking around to fill in the map.

After all, there was no sight of Zenith.

After that, we returned once again, and then started to clear the fifth floor.

In addition, to the Mad Skull and Armored Warriors, the Little Devils appear on the fifth floor.

Little Devils are demons with large mouths with sharp fangs.

With long limbs, they cling to the ceiling using their sharp claws.

If I were to put it into a single word, they give off a creepy feeling, kind of like a certain Alien.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Alien science fiction horror films. }

Although it doesn't have a frightening outer appearance to that extent, though, Little Devils are a strong enemy.

After all, they move by crawling along the cave's ceiling and walls.

The fact that they travel along the ceiling and walls means that the formation is useless.

They can pass by Paul and Elinalise fighting the Armored Warriors and come up to our place.

A spectacle that almost gives one chills.

We managed to defend against the first attack.

The Little Devil itself isn't very difficult.

It has speed and its attack power seems high, as well, but its defense is low; and it's not tough at all.

If we knock it off the ceiling then Elinalise can take the initiative using her new weapon, and the matter ends with no problem.

We can defeat the Little Devils.

Even if Little Devils are A rank and despite getting used to their eccentric movements, the Armored Warriors are arguably a far more difficult enemy with their ability.

However, keeping your gaze above is no good.

If you were to only keep cautiously watching above, you might not notice the traps on the ground.

If you carelessly step in a teleport trap, there's the possibility you might get teleported to a strange place, as well.

"Well then, shall we use that?"

Usually this is where we would return once and be troubled over it; but we have the labyrinth book.

In the book [Exploration Record of the Teleport Labyrinth] there's written a groundbreaking method to deal with the Little Devils.

They absolutely hate the scent of a certain seed.

The Tarufuro berry is sold as a food, and apparently, if you burn it as an incense, the Little Devils end up coming down from the ceiling to the ground.

Not to mention they crouch close to the ground, changing their posture to best escape from the unpleasant smoke.

For that purpose, it makes fighting exceedingly simple.

If it's like this, then let alone B rank, they're closer to C rank,

The author of this book really did an amazing job investigating.

Since that's the case, we cleared the fifth floor in no time at all, as well.

Without finding the magic circle to the next floor, we ended up having to walk around quite a bit; our goal isn't to clear the labyrinth but to search for Zenith.

There's no problem at all.

Rather, you could say it's convenient.

And then, we arrived at the sixth floor.

"Gisu, how about it?"

"We can do it."

Skipping the subject in response to Paul's question, Gisu gave a short reply.

There was almost no exhaustion.

Preparations were perfect.

We have momentum right now as well.

"Alright, then without returning, we'll keep going like this."

"Understood."

We did the preparations and we're not exhausted.

Then, there's no need to return.

The exploration continues.

We arrived on the sixth floor.

There were an excessively large number of Little Devils on the sixth floor.

The appearance of Armored Warriors ceased and it's become nothing but Little Devils.

Since we have that one incense, you could say its become even easier.

However, nevertheless, the numbers are huge.

It's almost enough to make you wonder why there's this many Little Devils.

We identified that reason after we made it to the vicinity of the innermost parts.

In the innermost parts, the rooms continuing on the way to the magic circle were the Little Devil's nests.

A large number of Little Devils crowded together and in the corners of each room, there were a countless numbers of eggs.

Those dark oblong eggs, covered in mucus, were just like the eggs of that black and quick fellow; just by looking at them, I got chills.

I wonder if it could be that, there's a queen somewhere and Zenith is being used as the seedbed.

Though I was having such scenes float into my imagination, it seems Little Devils have no such trait.

Though they do seem to be swarming, there doesn't seem to be any specific boss.

However, then where did these kinds of monsters come from and where are they planning to go?

Even though there's this number of monsters, it's not like there's very much food, either.

"Roxy-sensei, monsters... what do they eat in order to survive?"

"...I guess that's right. There are a variety of theories, but it's often said that they live by feeding on magic power."

"Magic power, is it?"

In forests and caves that have a high concentration of magic power, there are more monsters, as well.

Once, Nanahoshi said that all manner of things in this world have magic power dwelling inside, as well.

However, magic power is invisible to the naked eye.

It's hard to understand if it even exists or not.

No, for the time being, magic's existence should be proved with the Magic Power Eye that can see it.

Supposing it's possible for them to eat magic power, then why wouldn't they just take a bite out of self-made magic?

If not, there exist types of magic power that monsters can and cannot consume.

In the past, I think I once heard from Paul that monsters target the magic crystals deep inside of labyrinths.

I wonder if magic crystals are feast-worthy for monsters.

But, for that to be the case, it seems like the monsters in here do not target it.

It feels like, to the end, they're just making nests and living here.

I wonder if they're content with just living here.

Well, it really can't be helped, thinking about things like that.

After all, there are monsters that clearly can't eat anything like armor.

It's fine to leave the ecology of monsters to a monster scholar.

"Well, regardless of what they eat, it doesn't change the fact that they attack people on sight. Let's destroy the eggs as we find them, since they seem like they'll be a hindrance the next time we enter."

While saying that, Roxy indifferently started to dispose of the Little Devil eggs.

Without using magic,

While using a dagger, she went around stabbing them, one at a time.

It's truly a dry expression.

That is also good.

However, I guess monsters give birth to eggs as well.

I wonder if Armored Warriors have some kind of larva as well.

I wonder if there's something like an Armored Felt Doll tottering around with toy-like swords.

Mama Armor and Papa Armor are smiling as they watch over cute Child Armor.

Then, they hear an intruder's footstep,

Papa Armor and Mama Armor tell their son, 'stay hidden,' and plunge into battle.

The one who appears there is Paul, with a demon-like face.

He thinks of Armors as nothing but bugs, slaughtering Papa Armor and Mama Armor.

Child Armor, seeing that, starts thinking of humans as enemies. As Child Armor grows up, it transforms into an Armored Warrior monster that attacks humans on sight.

...Or not,

"Rudi. What are you thinking about? Please come help me."

"Ah, yes."

Just as Roxy told me, I went to smash the eggs as well.

Connecting to the large room, there were three rooms densely packed with eggs.

If these eggs were to hatch, would some larva come out that clings to a person's body?

Well, there's no sign at all that they're going to hatch, though.

After that, there was no such happening, such as freshly born larva attacking Roxy's body, and we finished cleaning up.

And then we arrived at the innermost room.

The final place that was written about in the book.

A wide room.

It was a room made of stone.

Its square and, excluding the entrance, in front of each wall there were magic circles.

However, the instant we entered, we felt the strangeness of it.

In here, nothing exists beyond the magic circles.

Just before this room, there was a large quantity of Little Devils.

Enough that you would think there were over 100 Little Devils, as well as their eggs.

Even though that's the case, in here there are just the magic circles.

It's almost as if something protected the room, like some sort of sacred ground.

"It's before the protector Guardian, isn't it?"

"With this atmosphere, I would say so."

"It would be good if we remain on guard."

Paul, Elinalise, and Roxy while saying that, all tightly gripped their weapons.

In front of the Boss room, I wonder if all labyrinths have this eerie atmosphere.

"Well then, I wonder which leads to where..."

Gisu went around checking each of the magic circles one at a time, while holding the book in one hand.

The rest of us were on standby at the entrance.

"I'll help out."

"Sure, that'll help."

For the time being, I participated in checking the teleportation magic circles.

And, for some reason, Roxy followed along behind me, as well.

If Roxy is here, then it's reassuring.

"How about it?"

"They give off... the same feeling as written."

Gisu, after asking, compared each of the magic circles to the book.

Each of the three magic circles in order,

The book has it written down like this:

"There are three magic circles.

We immediately understood that two of those would cause a random teleportation.

For that sake, we placed a stone marker in front of the magic circle that we believed to be the correct choice and stepped onto it.

However, that was a trap.

We were thrown into a strange room.

It was a room filled with dark and elongated bodied demons.

Right, it was the nest of Little Devils. The instant they saw us...."

We soon found the stone they used as a marker.

A fist-sized stone had been cleanly polished.

On the surface of that, the digit six was carved.

It was something that wasn't on the floors until now.

"Somehow, it's moving, isn't it?"

"You think so? It feels ominous. Listen well, senpai, these sorts of legacies of parties that were annihilated aren't good at all."

"Is that Jinx?"

"Right, it's Jinx."

"Well, it's not like they were annihilated though, right..."

While saying that, I took a good look at the magic circle in front of me.

It resembled the two-way magic circles that I've stepped on a number of times until now.

But, this is different.

If you step on this then you'll be randomly teleported.

Or else, maybe all of the contents of this room thrown somewhere,

Then, one of the remaining two should be the correct answer.

However, these two very clearly have the traits of random teleport magic circles showing.

"Rudi, do you understand?"

After asked by Roxy, I shook my head.

"No, not at all. Though if it was Nanahoshi, then she might understand."

"Nanahoshi? Who is that?"

"In the Magic University it's someone that's researching teleport-... or rather summoning. Since she's knowledgeable about magic circles, as well, she might have been able to comment on it."

"Co... Could it be she's Rudi's lover?"

"Nanahoshi? No way..."

After laughing, while saying that, maybe if Nanahoshi were here then, or else Sylphy, otherwise maybe Cliff then.

I ended up thinking like that.

Nanahoshi and Sylphy were impossible, but it might have been good to bring along Cliff.

Even now, we could still return and bring him back.

Both ways it would take about three months.

Since Cliff isn't used to traveling, then four months.

No, even if we were to bring Cliff along, he might just tell us that he doesn't know, as well.

"Just in case I did some research on teleportation in the Magic University as well, though, as embarrassing as it is, I don't understand it at all."

"Research on teleportation?"

"Yeah."

"I see now, as expected of Rudi. Without blindly searching at random, doing something like trying to find out the source. It's not something that can be done easily."

It seems there's been some misunderstanding, though; I searched the source following the advice of the Hitogami in order to cure my impotency.

Since that motive was impure, it's not something that I really want to tell Roxy.

Let's keep it hidden.

"... As a student of Roxy-sensei, then, it's only natural."

"Even if you flatter me, nothing will come of it."

Inspecting each of the magic circles had ended.

"How about it Senpai, have you understood anything?"

"No, not at all."

In the first place, all of my knowledge about teleport magic circles comes from this book.

As long as the answer isn't written in that book, it's outside of my knowledge.

No, of course, I did research things regarding teleportation outside of that as well, though.

I don't know things that I don't know.

All I know is the three teleport magic circles in front of my eyes are "different things."

Even then, I saw a large quantity of Nanahoshi's magic circles.

The things known as magic circles, if you change the details then the effect is different.

Therefore, I can just say this.

"If things written in the book are true, then that would be one of these is the correct answer, though."

"... In other words, Senpai doesn't know either."

"That's what it comes down to."

I return to the entrance of the room.

Paul and the others there in the middle of the break were sitting down in a circle.

I reported all of the things that we investigated, as accurately as I could.

"Cheh... multiple choice is it."

"... It's multiple choice."

"Multiple choice huh, really..."

Paul, Elinalise, and Talhand were all making bad faces.

"Multiple choices are dangerous... aren't they? If it's like this, then even three options would be better."

Gisu said while looking up at the ceiling, something like what a weird, hat-wearing gangster might have said.

I wonder if they have some kind of bad memory in relation to multiple choices.

It seems possible.

"Is that a jinx, as well?"

"Yeah, it's a jinx. When it comes to multiple choices, if we don't let Ghyslaine select them, it will fail."

With those words, Paul and the others all nodded saying, "Right, that's true."

Ghyslaine, huh?

I've heard a nostalgic name.

But, certainly for her, who is of the Beast race, it seems she would have that sense of smell.

"Ghyslaine, huh, at these sort of times, it's missing without her."

"Even though she's only useful at these sort of times..."

"In the middle of battle without listening to directions she plunges in, she can't understand things people say. Unable to read or do calculations, when she can't understand what people are talking about she quickly snaps. But strangely when it comes to multiple choice she always gets them correct."

That's a cruel way of saying it.

I feel pity towards Ghyslaine hearing that.

For the time being since she is one of my respected Shisho as well, I'd like them to stop there.

"Please pardon her, since she can already read, write, and do calculations now, after all."

Ghyslaine put in effort for it, as well.

She's a child that kept tripping up as she went up the multiplication tables, but she gave it her best; and even learned up to division.

"Ha... I heard about that from Paul, but I won't be deceived. There's no way that inu-koro could do something an ordinary person can."

"I heard that previously as well, but honestly, I can't believe it either."

Elinalise and Talhand were deeply in doubt.

Since Ghyslaine was considerably difficult to teach after all, I understand, though.

However, it feels strange, as well.

With all of Paul's previous party members lined up, only Ghyslaine is missing.

Even though Ghyslaine was the only one who kept in contact with Paul after the incident, as well,

The only person among Paul and the others that I knew from Buina Village isn't in this place.

Yeah, it's strange.

"Rather than something like that, what are we going to do?"

With Gisu's words, we returned to the topic.

There are two magic circles.

Which one should we enter, huh?

"Rudi, even you couldn't figure it out?"

After asked by Paul, I shook my head.

"Yeah. Even though I investigated it beforehand at school, please excuse me for that."

"I see..."

Paul crossed his arms, closed his eyes, and pondered over it.

And then, before even one minute had passed he raised his face.

"For now, let's try taking a majority vote to check. From what we can see here, those who think the right magic circle is good, raise your right hand; and those who think the left magic circle would be good, raise your left hand."

With Paul's words, everyone raised their hands.

Paul, Elinalise, Roxy were right, Gisu, Talhand, and I were left.

Three. We tied, each at three.

"Cheh... If it's like this, then we can't decide it."

"Umm, Tou-san. As expected, I don't know about deciding it using majority rule."

"Even if you say something like that... Then, is there anyone who has an idea?"

With Paul's words, Elinalise raised her hand.

"How about entering both of them, one at a time, simultaneously?"

"Are you saying to sacrifice someone among us?"

"If it were Paul or I, then making use of the incense we should be able to somehow or other manage to cut out from a crowd of Little Devils."

Entering both of the magic circles, one at a time, and then the one that's the correct answer will return.

And then, if we immediately start searching for the mistaken one, there's the possibility we settle things without problems as well.

"It's rejected."

"Oh my, Rudeus, is it fine to hear the reason?"

"For starters, there's no guarantee that either of those magic circles is the correct one."

They appear to be random teleports.

Unexpectedly, there's the possibility that both of those two are traps as well.

All three of them are traps.

The correct answer is a different room.

Of course, that possibility is low.

According to the book, fundamentally after you've found all of the rooms then you'll be able to proceed to the next floor.

If we're to believe the author, this is the final room.

However, whether it's positioning or shape, these magic circles seem different and give off an artificial feeling.

That's right, I'm caught on something.

I wonder if it would really just come down to a simple multiple choice of luck.

If they've gone out of the way to prepare a fake two-way magic circle, then wouldn't it be fine for there to be just one other as the real thing I wonder?

As the answer to a puzzle, isn't having three of them just pointless, I wonder.

No, it's not as if it's an escape game; there's no obligation for the labyrinth to have prepared a hint, I guess.

"Then, Rudeus. Do you have any kind of ideas?"

"No, but just a bit longer, won't you wait a bit longer to come to a conclusion?"

But, I'm caught on something.

I have the feeling that I'm forgetting something.

Until I remember that, I feel that simply stepping foot on one of the two options is dangerous.

The moment two people step foot on them, there's the possibility that everyone in the room will be teleported at random, as well.

In the teleport labyrinth, if you don't make use of teleportation you can't get around.

There might even be a room you can only reach using a random teleport, as well.

"I want to try investigating it a bit more."

I requested that, and...

"Alright, Rudi. We'll leave it to you."

Before anyone else did, Paul was the first one to agree.

I was sitting in front of the magic circle thinking about it.

All three of these magic circles are fakes.

For the time being, I'm deducing that assumption.

After sitting down and giving it some thought, three things floated to mind.

One. The possibility that this room isn't the last stop.

According to the book, the Teleport Labyrinth works on a certain rule.

The rule is the main route follows just two-way magic circles.

Following with that assumption, there shouldn't be any mistake: this is the final stop.

However, where Roxy was wandering around, it was a cavern that you can't enter without using a two-way magic circle.

Inside of that cavern's maze, Roxy had over thirty one-way magic circles that she was forced to try in order to return to the two-way magic circle.

Furthermore, the real final stop might be ahead of at least one one-way directional magic circle.

Though, I feel the probability of that is low.

Two. In a place where the author of the book didn't realize it, just before a different member stepped on a trap,

The author of the book thought they stepped foot on the two-way magic circle, but in reality that wasn't the case.

Because of the random teleportation that a different member stepped on, the entire room teleported to a different place.

Which is why, following this premise, this two-way magic circle is the correct answer.

...I don't think so.

If there were such a trap, I'm sure Gisu would have found it.

Three. Actually, this two-way magic circle has a second degree to it.

Magic circles have a variety of shapes.

A doughnut-shaped magic circle; it's possible there's that sort of type as well.

A trap teleport magic circle concentrically outside the correct answer teleport magic circle.

I wonder if there isn't that sort of possibility, as well.

In other words, it's not the exterior; if you jump onto the innermost circle, arrival on the next floor is possible.

...That's stupid. From what places Ikkyu-san is this.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Ikkyu-san Japanese manga series. }

Eliminating the impossible, all that exists is, after all, the first option.

Just as the author of the book said fundamentally, you need to take a bi-directional one.

After discovering that there are three varieties on the first floor, even up to the third or fourth floor, we never used either one-way or random ones.

With just that, we were able to make it here.

However, from here on, you might need to use not just two-way teleports, but some one-way teleports, as well.

..But, if it comes to that, then it might not just be here.

It's possible that where we are right now is a dead end as well.

Say the fork existed even more previously. For example, ahead of a one-way magic circle on the fourth floor might have been the true end.

Damn it... it's starting to get all mixed up.

In the first place, what decided the main path? Whether it is the floor number or the appearance of the monsters as we passed by,

Technically, the author of the book defined the correct path.

The original rule as well, might have been a completely unrelated coincidence.

After all, I wonder if deciding in that direction would be better.

Starting from the sixth floor, we start testing out each of the one-way teleport circles, defeat the monsters ahead, and search for a different route.

I have the feeling this is the correct answer.

But, look at the atmosphere of this room.

All of the veterans in the party felt it and said, "The boss is close ahead."

After all, I feel that this is a special place.

I feel that it's correct that this room is the last stop, as well.

No, that might be a trap in the labyrinth, as well.

Hmmm,

"There's no end to it, unless I say it."

I stand up while saying that.

Need to go to the bathroom really quick.

"Tou-san."

"What is it?"

"I'm going to water the flowers for a bit."

"A piss, huh, I'll go as well."

"Saying something like piss, how vulgar in front of women..."

"What do you plan to do by smoothing it over in this kind of place?"

No look, in front of Roxy is a bit...

I feel like I can't make mistakes.

No, though something like going to the bathroom, I guess it doesn't matter where she thinks I do it.

Together with Paul, I left the room.

We went into the room with Little Devil corpses and the ruins of the eggs.

We can just pick a suitable place in here.

While alternating with Paul on lookout here, we took care of our business.

"It's difficult, isn't it?"

Paul called out to me, while I was spacing out.

"Yeah, I was having second thoughts come up, as if this room isn't on the main route. If there might actually be a different route and, if we don't go there, then we never arrive in the place where the boss is, maybe."

"That's not the case. There's no mistake that room is the last stop."

"What's your basis?"

"None."

None, in other words intuition, huh.

However, you can't really ridicule the intuition of a veteran as well.

Even if it seems completely un-founded, it might actually be a subconscious conjecture based on actual experience after all.

"Well, there's no need to hurry. Tou-san and the others will wait for you. If you have any doubts, then ask and we'll respond as well. Don't try to come to an answer on your own."

"Yes."

I put a close to my business and changed with Paul.

While standing on lookout, I viewed my surroundings.

"Ah, and also Rudi- There's one thing I'd like to say, though."

"What is it?"

"...Ah, No, I guess this is fine, for now. It's something I'll say when we return to the inn."

"What is it; please stop with that. If you go saying something like that, in this labyrinth, it just brings up feelings of unease. Those sorts of things are called death flags, you know."

"What is that...? If I say it right now, it might affect the morale of the party."

I tilted my head to the voice I heard from behind.

Something that might affect the morale,

I wonder if there is something.

Maybe insecurity regarding Zenith,

Or else, something that will make the atmosphere of the place worse,

"Of the preaching type?"

"Well yeah. Something similar to that."

"Certainly, if I was to get down and it dulled our movements it would be terrible after all. Feel free to tell me off a lot afterwards."

"Heh... Well, it's not that kind of scolding. I was just going to tell you a piece of advice to prepare yourself on."

After we return to the inn, huh,

It would be good if we could have saved Zenith by that time.

"Kaa-san. It would be good if she's safe."

".... That's right."

It was something I just muttered out and it made the mood heavy.

This is no good.

But, even though we've searched this much, there's no end.

I'm sure Paul is feeling like it might already be no good as well.

It's probably better if I don't put it into words.

"..."

While listening to the sound of Paul's long piss I look around the surroundings.

The large room and the three rooms covered in eggs.

And then inner most room with magic circles,

All of them are adjacent.

I'm caught on something.

"This room... isn't it considerably oblong?"

"Hn? I guess so, what about that?"

This room is oblong.

The width is vast, because there are many bodies, it might appear square, but it's long in length.

It's a rectangle shape.

Those two long sides, each of them have two rooms.

Though all of them have different sizes,

However, something I've seen before.

Just recently,

And then, something is insufficient.

"...Ah."

I realized it.

This place looks similar to the "Teleport Ruins."

"Alright, shall we return... and, hey Rudi, what are you doing?"

Paul sent a puzzled sidelong glance at me, we quickly returned to the room with the party members.

I called out to Gisu, who was laying down like a large Buddha.

"Gisu-san, please come help me."

"Hn, ah? Did you find something?"

"It's fine, so, over here."

I pulled Gisu over to the vicinity of the center of the room.

"Please try searching around this area for a hidden stairway."

"Haa... No, it's possible. Until now, all we saw were teleport traps. But, I suppose it might be possible that there's something like a hidden room, as well."

Gisu came to an understanding on it himself, got on all fours, and started searching the floor.

And then, soon after made a face of shock and put his ear to the ground.

He took out his dagger and tapped it against the ground.

"Hey... here... it's here! Senpai. Underneath here, it's hollow."

"Can you get it open?"

"Wait just a minute."

Gisu tried touching around here and there on the floor.

He moved around the wall touching around.

And then returned,

"It's no good, it won't open up. It's probably the type you have to wrench open."

"Is there any problem with breaking it?"

"Yeah...There's no trap. All right. Senpai, do it. It's here."

While saying that Gisu carved a mark on the floor.

I aimed there and launched a rock bullet.

[Gan] a sound was out and the bullet smashed, denting the floor.

I guess that was too weak, huh.

"Just a bit stronger, you can do it, right?"

"Yes."

Just as I was told, I raised the power and fired once more.

A large [Bagon] sound let out and a hole opened up in the ground.

"Alright, leave the rest to me."

Gisu immediately got on all fours and started removing the rubble.

If you just open up a hole the rest is simple it seems.

In no time at all, Gisu spread out the hole and it changed into a square downwards entrance.

What appeared was stairs that lead down.

"Amazing... As expected of senpai, you get it well."

"Well, since I've seen it once before after all."

The teleport ruins.

There were four rooms with nothing at all and a single room with stairs leading down.

However, I wonder if originally it just appeared to be four rooms with nothing at all.

I wonder if, just like now, the stairs leading to the room with the teleport magic circle were concealed.

During the period, those ruins were used, in each of the rooms there might have been furniture; and it might have been made to appear that there was no such hidden stairway.

That deteriorated over the passing of years, otherwise maybe Orsted destroyed it or something and it ended up in that shape.

"Alright, everyone, senpai found some hidden stairs for us!"

With Gisu's voice, the other members all stood up.

After coming over to here and looking at the stairs.

And then, "Oh~" they let out voices of admiration.

"...Gahahaha, you're good!"

"Ow."

Talhand was solidly hitting my back while laughing.

"As expected of my son!"

"Ouch."

Paul hit my back as well.

"I see now, come to think of it, this place looks similar to the teleport ruins doesn't it!"

"Ow."

Elinalise hit me as well.

"Oh, and wait just a second. There might be a trap. Senpai, hand over about three scrolls!"

Gisu hit me as well, while saying that.

"..."

After turning around, it was just Roxy raising her small hand in the air.

After her eyes met up with mine, while looking at me with upturned eyes, she suddenly speedily touched my back.

"Good work,"

Roxy whispered out those words.

That expression had just a bit of mortified feel to it.

I wonder if her disciple playing an active role bothered her.

Since all of my achievements are the same as Roxy's achievements, after all, there shouldn't be anything to bother Roxy.

All right, if the adventures from this time are talked about in the future, I'll say it was actually, because Roxy gave me hints.

"Alright, we can go on ahead, everyone, stay on guard."

"Yeah!"

With Gisu's voice, everyone nodded.

After descending the stairs ahead, there was a teleport magic circle.

A two-way teleport magic circle.

However, its color was a blood-like red.

A red magic circle.

Until now, all I've seen were teleport magic circles that gave off a bluish-white light, but it's red.

Red, a color representing danger.

There are such words as Red Zone as well.

That is, it will lead to a dangerous place.

"It's ahead of this."

The one who mutters out those words is Paul.

I'm sure that was an utterance of intuition.

I wonder if Zenith or the Guardian Protector will be there.

However, strangely, there's a feeling of conviction.

Ahead of this magic circle is the final part of the labyrinth.

"What should we do, Paul? We still have some leeway, but returning once first is also an option."

The sixth floor was easy.

Thanks to the roots of Tarufuro, the Little Devils were the same as small fries.

We never had to use anything in particular; it wouldn't even be a stretch to say that our energy is full.

We relaxed quite a bit in the room just before as well.

"...No, we'll proceed. Let's inspect our equipment."

"Understood."

After hearing Paul's decision, everyone sits down to check his or her equipment. On the occasion, I take off my equipment.

I start inspecting it more carefully than usual.

"Look, Rudi as well."

After Roxy tells me that, I sit down as well.

I take out all of my belongings from my bag and line them up on the ground to confirm.

I have few belongings.

At most, I just possess a number of the spirit scrolls.

"Rudi, my scrolls, do you want to take some of them?"

Just in the case something comes up, Roxy is carrying a number of scrolls.

They're Advanced level magic scrolls.

Through shortening incantations, with a considerable return ratio, she can use a number of magic.

Even though I say that, Advanced magic requires a somewhat long incantation in order to cast it.

Since the battle may come down to that, a time may come up where you can't cast in time.

It's a trump card for that time.

"I guess so, then how about several healing magic scrolls?"

"Yes."

Since I can use magic chantless, I don't need Advanced level magic scrolls.

However, healing magic is different.

I should hold onto these, just in case a worst-case scenario happens.

For example, in case the Guardian crushes my throat or lung.

After receiving some Intermediate healing magic scrolls from Roxy, I fold them up and put them into the pocket of my robe.

If I don't use them, I'll return them.

I'd like to take one and return home with it, then have Nanahoshi or Cliff reproduce them.

No, reproducing them without permission was prohibited, wasn't it?

Though personally, I don't think the portion I use will be exposed.

"I don't know what kind of Guardian Protector there will be, but we have plenty of combat potential, Rudi. So you don't end up needing to use those scrolls, let's cover you with all our power."

"I'm in your care. Somehow I have a habit of freezing up, so when the time comes down to it, please help me."

"Yes, please leave your back to me."

While saying that, Roxy hit her own small chest with a [Ton].

How reliable.

"Rudeus, Roxy."

And then there, Elinalise tosses something over to us.

After catching what she throws, I notice it was a circular stone, almost like a marble.

The same kind of magic crystal that Elinalise carries a number of.

"If you run out of magic power, please use that."

"Is it fine?"

"It's just a loan. If you don't use it, please return it later."

"Ah, yes. Understood."

Running out of magic power towards the end of exploring a labyrinth is possible.

But, normally, at a time like that, you retreat.

After all, for that reason, you make sure to exterminate the enemies completely in the rooms behind you.

After escaping and waiting for your magic power to recover, you re-challenge the Guardian Protector.

However, there are also times when you can't escape from the Guardian.

If a boss traps you in a place like a competition field, you can't leave until you defeat it.

It seems there are cases like that as well.

The red magic circle in front of our eyes appears to be two-way.

However, in reality, it might actually be one-way.

As expected, it's probably not random.

"Alright, is everyone prepared?"

With Paul's voice, we all stand up.

After looking, everyone's faces are tense.

I'll put some spirit into it as I go as well.

"Rudi."

"What is it?"

"I do feel it's bad to say something like this now though."

Ah, this is a death flag.

"Then, please don't say it."

"Su, Sure..."

Paul makes a depressed face.

The morale might have decreased a bit.

No, important things aren't something you say right before a decisive battle.

Those sorts of things are fine after we return.

"Alright, let's go."

After looking at each other, we all simultaneously step on the magic circle.

Ahead of where we left the magic circle is a tremendously wide room.

If I were to say it in a few words, it's a giant temple room.

It has a rectangular shape and is roughly a palace hall, and as vast as a baseball field.

Along the edges of the room, there are a number of thick pillars standing up.

The ceiling is high enough up that you have to strain your neck to look up.

The ground turns into something like tile, every tile engraved with an intricate relief carving, or an etched image projecting on each tile.

"Oh??!"

Deep in the interior part of that ashen palace is a single monster.

It is gigantic.

I've never fought a monster this large before.

The size is roughly two times larger than a Red Dragon.

Even from a distance, I could tell that it has sparkling emerald-green scales.

Its torso is short but wide.

From there, a number of heads branch out.

"A Hydra, for real, it's my first time seeing one..."

I hear Gisu's murmur.

Right, it's a Hydra.

A gigantic multi-headed dragon; I count nine heads.

"There?!"

But, where Paul's eyes stop isn't at the Hydra.

Beyond the Hydra,

the innermost room behind the protecting Hydra...

There is a visible magic crystal.

It is an emerald-green magic crystal of tremendous size.

Large enough to make the marble-like magic crystals that Elinalise carries seem worthless.

A magic crystal in the shape of a crystal about two meters (6 and 1/2 feet) in size.

I've never seen a magic crystal of this size until now.

However, that's fine as well.

The size doesn't matter at all.

Rather than something like that, it's the inside of the magic crystal.

Inside the magic crystal,

she is there.

Zenith is

trapped inside the magic crystal

"Zenith!"

Paul shouts out.

Simultaneously, the thoughts of "Why?" come to my mind.

Why did it become like that?

Why is she inside a magic crystal?

Before I could put my doubts into words, Paul runs ahead, dual wielding swords in both hands.

The Hydra slowly raises up and turns its necks.

"You idiot! Don't be so hasty!"

I hear Gisu's shout.

"..!!"

Along with Elinalise clicking her tongue, she dashes after Paul.

Continuing along, Talhand starts running as well.

Elinalise couldn't catch up with Paul, who had a running start.

"I'm going to cover them!"

Roxy shouts.

There, I return to myself and aim my staff with the Hydra as the opponent.

First, we need to defeat the enemy.

Defeat it in a single hit.

I charge my [Rock Bullet] enough that it is able to blow away even a Demon Lord in a single hit.

"Quiet Fist of the Ice Man, [Frost Nova]!"

Roxy starts incanting Intermediate magic and is preemptively attacking, as well.

A cluster of cold air overtakes Paul at a tremendous speed and impacts,

[Hi~n!]

Just before impact, an ear-splitting sound, like something scratching on glass, resounds in the giant temple...

"Wha!!"

Roxy's voice and her eyes are wide open.

There isn't even a single scratch on the Hydra.

Is it strong against ice?

By the instant such a thought floated through my mind, Paul is arriving at the Hydra.

"[Rock Cannonball]!"

I fire the Rock Bullet I had been charging.

The sharpened bullet flies while releasing a high-pitched sound [Kyuin].

It passes above Paul who was a few steps from reaching the Hydra.

It impacts on the Hydra.

[Hi~n!]

Again, that unpleasant sound is heard.

"It blocked!?"

It wasn't avoided.

It should have hit.

It should have been a direct hit.

However, the sound from just now,

the high-pitched sound just now, what is it?

Almost as if nothing is done at all, the Hydra calmly stands up.

There was not even a single scratch.

"Uoo... raaaa...!"

Paul's spirited loud yell reaches up to me.

The Hydra moves that head almost like a snake and attacks Paul.

Paul avoids it with the minimum movement possible.

In the next instant, the Hydra's head is spinning off in the air.

Paul swings the sword in his right hand,

with a tremendous sword speed.

For an instant, Paul's figure blurs.

He is moving at a speed that my demon eye's foresight can't see.

In the next instant, a different head of the Hydra is spraying blood.

Paul swings the sword in his left hand, slicing.

Since the off-hand sword was shorter, it isn't enough to completely sever its head.

Paul rotates his body midair and, making use of his centrifugal force, slashes again with the sword in his right hand.

The head of the Hydra that had been hanging loosely falls.

"Shaaa...!"

The Hydra lost its second head in an instant.

However, the Hydra had nine heads.

The Hydra uses one head after another and encloses, surrounds, and attacks Paul from every direction.

Paul back-steps to put some distance between them, but maybe because of the size of the step, he isn't able to escape from the attack range of the Hydra.

"Paul!!"

Then Elinalise catches up.

With her shield at the ready, she projects her sword.

I feel an invisible shock wave release.

[Hi~n!]

It's that sound again.

Almost as if it hasn't received any shock wave at all, the Hydra pursues after Paul.

"Murmuring of the Muddy Stream! [Water Current]!"

Simultaneously with Roxy's incantation, a cluster of water appears in front of Paul's eyes.

That cluster of water washes Paul away from the Hydra, escaping from the Hydra's attack range.

Paul is then rolling into a somersault when Elinalise faces towards and immediately enters a stance to cover him.

Just about midway there, Talhand stops his feet and starts the incantation for magic.

There were some irregularities, but the formation has become the shape of advance guard, middle guard, and rear guard.

What are we going to do about combat?

Paul's attacks were effective.

However, my rock bullet was blocked.

Roxy's magic as well.

Next would be either fire or wind, I guess?

Both of them have area of effect and are hard to keep from affecting Paul and the others.

What to do?

"[Earth Pillar]!"

Talhand's incantation ends.

It's earth magic.

Above the Hydra's head, a mass of rock appears and falls onto the Hydra.

[Hi~n!]

That sound was let out again.

Just before the rock impacts the Hydra, it dissipates almost like becoming sand and disperses.

It's that sound. When that sound is let out, the magic disappears.

"Does magic have no effect on that thing!?"

What should be done? Should we keep going on?

Or would it be better to run away temporarily?

What should I do!?

There, I hear Roxy's pressured voice from beside me.

"Rudi, that! It's healing!"

I look towards her pointing, where the two heads that Paul had lopped off.

One of those heads is stretching out to the end of the cut; the bones, muscle and flesh is swelling up and rebuilding the head.

The other head as well, following along with that, started to repair itself.

It can regenerate.

That thing's heads, just by cutting them off, you can't permanently damage it.

"Let's retreat!"

Roxy's voice.

However, it didn't reach Paul.

While raising a voice filled with fighting spirit, he is resolved on striking the Hydra with his swords.

Elinalise is in danger trying to support Paul's reckless fighting style.

"Gisu!"

Talhand's voice,

Gisu takes off running.

Gisu overtakes Talhand and moves up to just behind Paul; he throws something he was holding in his hand at the Hydra.

[Papa~n], I hear the sound of an explosion.

And then, from near the Hydra something like smoke is rising up.

A smokescreen, huh?

"...!"

While Gisu is shouting something, he starts pulling Paul backwards.

However, Gisu can't restrain Paul. In no time at all, Paul is about to shake Gisu off.

In the next instant, Elinalise bashes Paul in the face with her shield.

"...!"

Gisu releases his hold and says something, then Paul faces this way and starts running.

"Rudeus!"

I start to move after hearing Elinalise's voice.

I concentrate all the magic power I could into my hand and create a dense fog in the space between the Hydra and Paul.

A fog, like pure white steam, to conceal others.

However, I know that the Hydra is approaching us, as it makes a [DoshinDoshin] sound.

Even though its sound wasn't all that fast.

Paul and the others return up to the circle.

"Rudi, we're retreating. Ahead, to the magic circle."

"Yes! Sensei!"

I anticipate it and jump onto the magic circle.

Everyone safely manages to leave using the magic circle.

Roxy, Talhand, and Gisu,

Paul, who is breathing roughly,

And then finally Elinalise comes out, with some injuries.

Blood is flowing out endlessly around the area of Elinalise's shoulder.

"Are you all right?"

"It was just a scratch."

Elinalise's shoulder is completely shaved off.

Just from what I could see, there was no indication as if she had received a direct attack though.

"I was scraped by the scales."

Somehow, it seems that Hydra's outer scales are like sharkskin.

Even though I say that, it's still within the range that elementary healing magic can heal it without leaving a scar.

Back in my previous world's life, it would have required at least several tens of stitches.

What a convenient world.

"Thank you very much."

Well then,

The problem is the reason for this injury: how to treat the person who caused it.

Paul sits down in front of the magic circle.

In addition, his eyes are fixated as well.

Blood thirst, surging from all over his body.

"Dad."

"...That was Zenith. No mistake."

Paul said that.

In those eyes, he can't see the fact that Elinalise is injured.

No, since Elinalise takes the role of shield, you could say it's her job to absorb attacks though.

However...

"Please calm down a bit."

"Yeah, sorry about that. I'm calm right now."

Paul's voice is low in tone.

It's the calm before the storm- such words came to mind.

He may be calm, but it seems he's not composed.

It can't be helped.

Certainly, that was Zenith.

From a distance even I realized, "Ah, it's Zenith".

Then I'm sure if it's Paul, there's no way he would be mistaken.

The one inside of that magic crystal is Zenith.

She's trapped inside of the crystal.

I wonder why she ended up in that state.

No, the reason is fine.

Something like being warped inside of it during a teleport, I'm sure, there are various explanations.

It seems that being teleported inside of an object rarely ever happens; in reverse, you could say although it's rare, it still happens.

According to Gisu's story, wasn't the story that she was together with some adventurers?

No, they used the words that she was captured.

Hn? Could it be that Gisu knew about this situation...?

No, that can't be the case.

It can't be helped catching him on a slip of the tongue.

It won't be too late to question him over it after everything is over.

Besides, the problem isn't there.

"...I wonder if mother is still alive, even like that?"

"Huh!?"

After saying that, Paul stands up and grabs onto my collar roughly.

"Something like whether she's alive or not, it doesn't matter does it!"

"That's right."

Certainly,

It was a slip of words, I guess.

From the start, the probability that Zenith is alive was low.

I even considered the possibility that we wouldn't even find a corpse.

Even resolved that we may not find a single article of hers,

If she's dead then she's dead, something we should offer condolences to, is what I was thinking.

If it's like this, that she's still recognizably Zenith, then the situation is far better than we could have predicted.

"Stop the fighting!"

Gisu exclaims, but Paul still nears his face to mine in an intimidating way.

"Rudi, Zenith was over there. Your mother, why are you able to remain that calm?"

"Would it be better to panic more? What would be solved by getting distracted?"

"I'm not saying that!"

I know what Paul wants to say.

Certainly, right now I might be too composed.

Even though after we find my mother, whom was missing for six years, I'm sure it's not the behavior of a typical human.

...Well.

Even during the time when I was a child, I didn't interact with Zenith very much.

My recognition towards her as a mother is weak, as well.

Rather it's even strange that I lived with such an appreciation this life.

At any rate, we separated at the time when I was seven years old, and I haven't met her in almost ten years, after all.

Even the fact that I'm taking on a heartless attitude might be something that can't be helped.

"For now, let's recognize the present condition."

"Huh!?"

Ignoring Paul's intimidation, I indifferently try putting the things from just before into words.

"Magic was ineffective against that Guardian Protector. It possesses an absurd ability, [Regenerate]; its attack strength is high enough that just by contacting Elinalise-san, it was able to break through Elinalise-san's defense as well. And then, mother is trapped inside of that crystal. Putting it clearly, it's unknown whether or not she's even alive."

"Something like that... even I know! What I'm asking about is your attitude at the time when your mother has been found!"

Gisu cut in after Paul's shout.

"Stop it with that! Have something like a parent-child fight after we return to the inn!"

Gisu forcefully pulled us apart.

Paul spit out the words, "Shit... screwing around like that," and plunks down onto the ground.

It seems there was no reason for me to say it specially; even Paul understands the situation.

Just, my attitude bothered him.

Even I feel it too: it was cold.

But, it really can't be helped, right?

What are you telling me to do about it?

"Yes, stop with the fight there, let's start discussing things!"

Elinalise lets out a clap with her hands.

Paul and I slowly move and sit in the circle.

Roxy is making a somewhat nervous face while looking Paul and I over.

It seems I've caused her to worry.

"I'm fine."

"Is that so..."

It's not the first fight I had with Paul.

After things are over and we return to the inn, I'm sure Paul will be better as well.

Even I, who has weak acknowledgment of mother, at the point when I hear Zenith's voice and realize she's been saved, I'm sure I'll feel something as well.

That's right, there's no doubt that's the case.

This time, the gears are just a bit out of order.

"[Cough]. Umm, it's about Zenith-san's crystallization though. I think something can be done about it."

Roxy says that in a somewhat brighter voice than usual.

"Is that true?!"

The one who makes a happy face is Paul.

"Yes. Occasionally, there are times when legendary magic items imbued with magic power are trapped in magic crystals like that, but I've heard that if you defeat the Guardian, the crystal unseals and you'll be able to retrieve the contents."

It's a story I've never heard.

However, they're Roxy's words.

Roxy has no reason to lie.

"That is something that I know about as well,"

Elinalise agrees,

"I know about one individual who has been through a similar situation as Zenith, but they're properly living, even now."

"..."

This is a lie; I'm sure.

Elinalise is the type to lie calmly at times like this.

Since it's for the sake of improving the mood, I won't blame her, though.

Although, no matter how much of a precedent there is, when the crystal melts, it's not confined to the person inside being safe.

Naturally, there's no need to put that into words.

It's something that everyone knows.

"The problem is that Guardian Protector... Honestly, it's the first time I've seen that species, as well."

The one who takes the initiative and cuts off the conversation is Elinalise.

Gisu continues moreover,

"That's right; you can tell it's a Hydra just from seeing it. But a variety with those kind of emerald green scales, I've never heard of such a thing."

"...Furthermore, it can even regenerate."

Talhand crosses his arms while continuing to make a troubled face, as well.

It's known that Hydras are a species of dragon.

A dragon that has a number of heads- although it doesn't flock, even alone it's generally the ultimate class in terms of power.

Certainly, I had heard that they were living somewhere on the Magic Continent.

Just from what has been currently confirmed, I know of three types.

They're differentiated by the color of their scales; the known types are white, grey, and gold.

Something like a Hydra with emerald green scales doesn't exist.

"That is most likely a Multi-Headed, Magic Stone Dragon, or [Manatite Hydra]."

The one who says that is Roxy.

"I've read about it in a book once. It's a demonic dragon, all of the scales of its body are covered in magic stones which absorb magic power. They were witnessed around the time of the Second Human-Demon War. It's written that they went extinct, together with the annihilation of the continent. I was convinced they were just a fairy tale though... to think they really exist."

Magic Power Absorption...

In other words, it is immune to magic, I guess.

"Does that mean that we're unable damage that thing at all?"

"If what's written in the book is true, then if you cast from zero distance it should be effective."

"Zero distance, you say..."

That huge thing...

Furthermore, just by pressing against its razor-sharp body, you receive wounds as if put through a cheese grater.

Does that mean we have to directly touch the Hydra and use magic?

All of our fingers will end up chopped off.

"However, even at the point we're able to damage it, it can regenerate. What can be done...?"

"Regeneration is troublesome."

"...However, it's not as if we can't defeat it," I say.

The Hydra regenerates.

Even after hearing that, I am not surprised.

It's because I had the mythological knowledge that a Hydra regenerates.

"Even if we chop its heads off, they regenerate each in a few moments. What can be done to defeat something like that...?"

Roxy was groaning as she agrees as well.

However, I didn't think it was as troublesome as everyone else did.

Even despite up until now, I've almost never ran into regenerating monsters.

For some reason,

Because I have my knowledge from my previous life...

"For the time being, I have an idea."

After raising my hand with a proposal, the looks gathered to me.

"If you cauterize the Hydra's opened necks with fire, they won't regenerate- is something I've heard."

I start telling the story of the hero of Greek Myth of Heracles.

Heracles fought with a Hydra.

According to that, I know it was said that he burned the cut end of the necks of the Hydra in order to prevent the regeneration.

Honestly, it's just a myth after all.

Its credibility is unproven.

However, the response is good.

"I see now, burning the wound, huh."

"We don't have any torches, but if it's a wound without scales then there's no worry about the magic being blocked."

"There's value in giving it a try."

I don't know just how similar the Hydras in this world are to the tales of Hydra in my previous life.

Though in my previous life, it's said that the Hydras have immortal heads...

On this side maybe, if you are to just burn all of the heads; it might all too easily die.

It's a negative way of thinking about it, but as long as it's a living thing, it should die.

"Alright, then let's try carrying that out and see."

With Gisu's words, the plan is decided.

My suggestion isn't certain.

However, things of certainty are nowhere to be found.

Honestly, I feel it might be good to return to the city once, as well.

Even though one could argue we have consumed almost no energy, the enemy is powerful.

It might be good to do preparations for a boss fight.

It's possible to hire skilled warriors just for the sake of the boss fight.

I don't know just how many swordsmen there are who can decapitate a Hydra's head. But with the city's number of adventurers, if we were to search, I'm sure we could find at least one.

".."

But, I'm sure Paul wouldn't agree.

If I were to say something like returning now, his morale state seems to say he would then challenge the Hydra alone.

Besides, even if we are to return, I can't imagine that we would even be able to find items or mercenaries that can work well against that Hydra.

There are counter-measures,

We've already gathered the precise balance of people to do it.

Then, this is the part where we should advance ahead.

"Hey, Paul. This is fine, right?"

"...Yeah."

"That's a reply with no spirit- do you get it? No one other than you can cut that thing's heads off."

I'm sure Elinalise and Talhand would be able to leave a wound on those scales, as well.

Still, it won't reach the point of decapitation.

Paul will cut off the heads and then I'll use chantless magic, immediately burning it.

Such an assignment of roles is necessary.

Depending on the situation, it might require me to approach to a considerably close distance, as well,

In order to pinpoint burn just the wound, since the probability is high that the surrounding scales will nullify friendly fire, as well.

In that case, the other three people will act as a diversion to distract the Hydra from my attacks.

If the decoys take any damage then Roxy will heal them.

It becomes that sort of role assignment.

There's nothing but that.

Naturally, as it is, attacks will come for me, as well.

I will be standing in a considerably dangerous position: directly in front of the Hydra.

"Rudi..."

Paul's eyes are facing towards me.

He is looking at me with somewhat hesitant eyes and says:

"You are...really a reliable son."

"That kind of flattery, let's save it for after we defeat the Hydra."

"It's not flattery. I really think that."

Paul says that and laughs at himself,

"I can't become calm like you, I couldn't come up with ideas either. I'm an idiot, who couldn't think of anything other than recklessly running in."

Paul continues,

The shape of his mouth twists, almost like he is chewing on the words with his molars.

"...I'm a terrible father. It doesn't seem like I'll be able to become a role model for my son."

Paul says in a tone bursting with determination.

His look was tremendously strong.

Yes, his eyes are filled with such strong power; almost as if his look can kill.

It's resolve.

Paul has decided his resolve.

"With that, let me say it. I know it's not something for a parent to say, though listen well."

"Yes."

I receive his look from head on:

"Save your mom, even if you have to die."

Paul says.

Facing his son,

[Even if you have to die.]

However, I don't feel he's a terrible old man.

This is trust.

Paul is thinking of me as his equal.

For this reason, he was serious.

Then I need to respond,

"..Yes!"

"All right, let's go!"

With Paul's words, everyone stands up.

The rematch with the Hydra begins.

The battle begins.

In the grand chamber, a massive Hydra was waiting for us,

Behind it were the magic crystals.

And trapped in the middle of the largest magic crystal was, without a doubt, Zenith.

When the Hydra sees us, it slowly raises its body.

"Alright, here I go!"

Paul sprints off,

Keeping a low posture like a dog, he is fast like the wind,

The kind of speed that would leave anyone in the dust,

However this time, Elinalise follows Paul's lead as well.

From behind is Talhand, with a slow gait.

We progress forward, matching the pace of Talhand.

Gisu waits further in the rear.

Since he cannot fight, he's useless in this battle.

He can offer no real techniques for fighting with such a large-scale monster like a Hydra.

However, he is there for a reason.

Worst case, if we should be annihilated, his role is to escape and report what happened.

"RAAaaa!"

Paul reaches the Hydra,

At the same time, three of the Hydra's heads move.

For its size, the Hydra is quick.

All of its heads, each like a wild snake, move nimbly and independently.

But,

In a moment of blurring motion, Paul severs one of the heads from the Hydra.

All right, keep it up.

"[Fire Ball]!"

At the head of my staff, I put the full might of the magic power in my body.

A tremendously hot fireball blasts off towards the Hydra.

–But, it was no good.

The fireball begins to dwindle the closer to the Hydra it gets, and disappears on impact.

I hear an unpleasant sound as if scratching glass.

"As I expected, I'm going to have to get closer to use magic."

If I do not close this distance and approach it, I cannot defeat it.

I won't be able to damage it unless I hit it point-blank with fire magic.

"So that's the plan, eh? Are you going to be able to fight up close, Rudi?"

"I'll be fine. While I trained, I didn't just limit it to magic."

Although I confidently said so, my heart is beating out of my chest.

I am weak in close combat.

Most of my memories of close combat ended up colored with my defeat.

Beginning with Paul, then Ghyslaine, Eris, Ruijerd, and Orsted,

At each time, I was unable to defeat anybody.

Though, somehow, I had managed to get by in recent fights.

The stray dragon, Rinia, Pursena, and Luke.

I used the Demon Eye of Foresight to win against them.

However, can I win against this Hydra?

It's a no.

I don't believe I could defeat an opponent that warriors, such as Paul and Elinalise, struggle to fight.

In other words, just because I had managed to win a few battles recently, doesn't mean I can win against the Hydra.

But, I'm not fighting alone this time.

It's a team battle.

I have Paul, Elinalise, and even Roxy.

Talhand as well, though I can't verify his full power; surely it must be at the same level of the others.

I take off at full speed, and arrive just behind Paul.

"Rudi, don't you dare move away from my back!"

I listen to the instruction of Paul who's in front of me.

Elinalise flanks to the left and Talhand to the right,

And Roxy casts from the rear.

The formation is exactly like the Imperial Cross.

"SHAAAaaaa!"

Three heads attack simultaneously.

It seems the Hydra doesn't move any more than three.

Perhaps it's incapable of moving more?

Or is it, because moving more heads would interfere?

I don't understand it, but it's convenient.

Elinalise sidesteps one head, Talhand bats away another.

And Paul cleanly beheads the remaining attacking head.

The head falls to the ground and begins writhing.

"Go now!"

"I'm on it!"

After I hear the shout of Paul, I dash quickly to the severed neck, and release my magic.

The fire magic hits the open neck, and the intensity of the fire illuminates the surroundings.

I scorch the Hydra's neck wound; while it makes a smoldering sound, the fire completely chars the neck.

"How's that...?"

While keeping an eye on the wound, I back step away.

I don't know yet if it was effective.

Almost immediately, another head attacks.

Paul stops the blow.

Elinalise parries it away with a shield.

At the edge of my view, a spray of blood comes up from Talhand.

"Kuh!"

"Power of the divine, become the nourishment for this body — [Healing]!"

When Talhand became injured, Roxy immediately ran, while chanting, to heal his wound.

Everybody else is moving about, overwhelming the Hydra, so no attacks can reach me.

I can do nothing but confirm it.

"..."

And as for the wound on the neck:

Does the cauterized section still regrow a head?

How did it go?

"...All right."

No new head is regrown.

The wound remains unchanged.

There is no surge of new flesh, and no new head regenerates.

"It's working!"

"Hell yeah!"

Paul bellows and another head falls.

And I scorch that neck.

The heat is terrifying.

Indeed, the temperature of the heat begins to choke me.

However, to scorch the neck sections, I must use at least this much intensity.

If I fail to scorch the neck sections properly, a new head could regenerate.

So, we continue in this manner...

"...m! Cover me!"

My Demon Eye of Foresight catches the Hydra's movement.

<Two of the Hydra's heads that don't move, will aim for me.>

I evade one.

<However, the other one aims for the place that I evade to.>

"Leave it to me!"

In the place where I dodged the first attacking head, Elinalise jumps.

Jumping in with a slightly unnatural stance, she knocks one of the heads back.

She places her body between the Hydra and myself.

The shield is placed between the Hydra and myself.

Even while I hear a snarling sound come forth, Elinalise protects me.

A small squirt of Elinalise's blood splashes on my cheek,

"Roxy! She needs healing!"

"Power of the divine, become the nourishment for this body — [Healing]!"

Roxy immediately remedies the wound of Elinalise.

And both return to their positions without incident.

"Rudi! Keep your sights on the third one!"

"Got it!" Paul shouts.

At the same time, another head falls, and a pillar of blood erupts.

I grill the neck.

My only job is to grill.

I'm grilling meat,

But I grill it diligently.

I leave the rest to the others.

I only focus on what's before me.

Paul cuts, and I burn.

Elinalise and Talhand protect me.

And Roxy protects them.

The fourth head drops, and I scorch the neck.

It's going well.

At least I thought so,

But, then the Hydra changes its movements.

Suddenly,

Yes, very suddenly,

The Hydra launches all five of its remaining heads exclusively at Talhand.

"Kuuh!"

"Talhand!"

The first attacking head Talhand avoids.

In the place of the second head, that he cannot avoid, Talhand rolls on the ground.

At this time, he grazes the body of the Hydra, rolling and rattling along the ground.

The third attacking head comes.

Talhand, flat on his arse, manages to catch the coming mouth with his shield and axe.

Then, the fourth attacking head:

The Hydra head bites Talhand's leg.

And for a moment, suspends Talhand up in midair,

"Guooooo!"

Finally, the 5th attacking head, reaches to devour the whole body of the immobile Talhand—.

"Oryaa!"

With a 'boom-boom' sound, the head crashes.

The heads of the Hydra, that is.

The fourth and fifth heads were cut off by the slashing attack of Paul.

"I'm alive! Thanks for the save!" exclaims Talhand.

"I burned them!" I report.

"Power of the divine, become the nourishment for this body — [Healing]!" chants Roxy.

While we hear each other at the same time, we work separately.

I burn two more necks of the Hydra simultaneously.

Just three remain.

"Hm?"

Again, the movements of the Hydra change.

It appeared to stagger backwards, in fear of us.

"It's going good; we just need one final push, Rudi!"

Paul goes forward.

No, wait.

Isn't this a trap?

Although we should attack, I don't know what this opponent is plotting...

Then, when I give it a moment of thought,

"Naah!"

One of the Hydra's heads,

An especially big head,

It tears the scorched part clean off one of the necks.

"What the?!"

With the cauterized part of the neck bitten off, the head regrows a few moments later.

"This is bad!"

While it cannot rejuvenate heads from necks that are scorched,

If it bites off the cauterized section, the head will regrow again.

"Don't give it time to regenerate!"

"YAAAAAaaaaah!"

Elinalise, while moving, lets out a war cry. She dashes,

And thrusts her Gladius into the regenerating neck,

"Oh, great frozen protector, to the place thou demands, go.

Strike with the muddy stream of the glacier, [Ice Smash]!"

Magic hammers into the neck which was about to revive a head at zero distance from where Elinalise was.

The premature head, still without scales and with soft meaty skin, meets with a hunk of ice slamming into it, shearing it clean.

The neck writhes around, spraying blood like a freshly squeezed pomegranate.

"Roxy!"

"Oh, small cinder blessed with greatness, burn brilliantly, [Flamethrower]!"

Roxy, who was following up with Elinalise, shoots out the Flamethrower.

Although the scales dampen the magical power reaching the Hydra, the neck smokes and burns.

"All right!"

Paul goes to pursue with the follow up.

However, the Hydra doesn't lower a head.

It rises its large body high up, raising its head to the ceiling, and glares my way.

Only three heads remain.

Am I frightened?

No, it's something else.

It's not that feeling.

It's a feeling of danger.

"Be on guard, something's about to come!"

"All right!"

Paul's confirmation.

From there, I act on intuition.

No, perhaps I can say that I act from my experience.

I have seen this posture only once before.

I recalled the Stray Dragon's body standing erect, then my figure, in front of an impending [Inhaling Breath].

"A fire breath attack is coming! Please gather close to me!"

"Right!"

Paul back steps swiftly, until he is just in front of me.

Elinalise and Talhand matches Paul's pace, tumbling close to me.

And Roxy leaps towards and clings on tightly to me.

I begin creating water.

A thick wall of water,

Immediately after the wall of water swelled, the Hydra spews its breath.

From all three heads, a terrific amount of flaming breath pours out and slams into the water wall.

Massive amounts of steam form, and the temperature in the room rises significantly.

"...!"

A dragon's flame breath boasts a horrifyingly high temperature.

It can liquefy steel and even vaporize a small marsh, in mere moments.

And this flame breath released simultaneously from three necks.

No normal magician has a spell to match this fire's intensity.

If five- no, ten- magicians concentrated to create one water wall, they might possibly defend.

But even then, it might still be impossible.

However, my magic reservoir is not normal.

"Dad!"

"Right!"

Paul leaps into the place where one of the Hydra's necks sealed.

The breath weapon seems to have restrictions on its usage.

While I don't know the exact reason, I understand that it cannot perform it in rapid succession.

Is it perhaps related to some kind of accumulation of magic inside the body?

I just don't know the reason.

But, I know flame breath is the last resort of a dragon.

And to spew it from all three heads simultaneously,

There will definitely be some recharging time.

If it was just one head using it, then perhaps another head might set up for a successive breath.

However, this Hydra didn't do it.

Maybe it has to involve the other heads.

At any rate, a chance has come.

"OOOooohh!"

Paul lops off a head.

And I scorch its neck immediately.

Two to go.

One head attached to a thinner neck, and one to a thick neck.

Is the thick neck attached to the main body?

Then that one is the last target.

"Dad, take the head on the thin neck!"

"Understood!"

Paul runs.

Elinalise and Talhand team up to take on the head attached to the thick neck.

"DaaRaaaaa!"

Paul cleanly severs the head.

And I immediately drive in my fire magic.

Excellent,

Only the main head remains.

We're going to win.

Coming this far, we cannot give it any chance to try and begin regenerating its heads.

Even if the last head is invulnerable, our team should be up to the task of finishing the Hydra off somehow.

The moment I scorch the last neck with magic,

<The Hydra makes a trembling movement.>

I did not understand what that movement was.

Although my Eye of Foresight displayed this movement, I didn't understand it.

It was too big.

"Idiot!"

"!"

Before I notice it, Paul pushes me away.

Immediately before me, I feel something huge pass by.

Certainly, there are no heads left.

No, that's not right,

It's not that it was "without a head."

It just happened to be "headless."

The Hydra swings its headless necks around like a rose whip.

Eight necks,

Covered with hard scales like a grater, it was a bundle of necks.

The body shakes, and all at once, it moves in a sweeping motion.

"Rudiiii!"

Paul shouts for a second time, and kicks me back.

At the same time, with a colossal sound like 'daan', something falls right beside me.

Something,

I immediately fall to my knees.

At the place where I am,

Between Paul and I,

"U, uoooh!"

There are eyes in front of me.

The eyes of something at its wits' end,

The eyes of a cornered beast,

The eyes that try to find a way to survive until the very last second.

The eyes of the Hydra.

From around the area of the forehead, something like a horn appears.

"OOOOOOOOOooo!"

On reflex, I immediately thrust my left hand into the eye.

Together with a 'guchari' sound, a burning sensation transmits up my arm.

The Hydra's eyelids closes.

The eyelids, wrapped in scales, closes shut, like a guillotine.

Simultaneously, I fired off a [Rock Cannonball].

As the Hydra's eyelids shut, the Hydra's head burst apart.

At the same time, I feel it jerk upwards.

After the jerk, I hear a 'pop-crack' sound resound in my head.

"R, Roxyyyyy!!"

I endure the pain and cry out, the name of my most reliable Shisho,

"Oh, small cinder blessed with greatness, burn brilliantly, [Flamethrower]!"

Though her voice was small, it reaches my ears.

Roxy scorches the last neck until black, and it begins falling.

The massive body of the Hydra makes a thunderous noise as it performs its death throes.

A cloud of dust shoots up from the headless corpse; it falls to the ground in spasms of fear.

From the body of the Hydra, I could feel the life force disappear.

It cannot perform regeneration anymore.

The last head was vulnerable.

"Haa...Haa..."

Defeated,

It was defeated.

"We did it...tttu!"

In that moment, I recognized an acute pain in my left hand.

When I look, I am aghast.

"Uuuu..."

I have no left hand.

I see the skin and muscles cut by the eyelid's scales, and I see the bones and muscles crushed with the closing eyelid.

And at the last moment, when it jerked up, the Hydra tore my hand off.

Blood makes a 'wheezing' sound as it spurts out of the artery.

"Hand, my left hand..."

Eyes,

In the eye of the Hydra, there is my left hand.

As soon as I thought of it, I see the main head,

Roxy, having used the fire magic with all of her might, carbonized the main head down to the base of its neck.

The moment I see it, I realize it.

There is nothing remaining of my hand.

Even if I search for it, I will probably never find it.

And even while searching for it to rejoin it- all the while- I'm hemorrhaging blood.

Aaah, I have to use my healing magic quickly.

"Angel of miracles, please bestow the breath of heaven which is the pulse of life,

Receiving it from the sky and the sun, Honorable God, who despises the crimson flow,

Spread your white wings, and fly down to the sea of light.

Let where you reach, the crimson not expel,

[Shine Healing]."

I chant the Advanced rank healing magic.

I know that with this advanced rank healing, it cannot regenerate a lost limb.

However, I still use it.

Pink skin swells around the severed part, and the outflow of blood stops.

Incidentally, the part of my face bruised from the time Paul kicked me seems to heal, as well.

"Fuu...Haa..."

My breath is ragged.

Calm down... Calm down.

My left hand is lost.

However, the Hydra was a considerably terrible enemy.

Arguably, it was a cheap victory if it only cost my left hand.

If at the last moment, if Paul hadn't helped me, I would have died.

"...You saved my life, Dad."

I turn around, searching for Paul's whereabouts.

There was no answer.

Everyone stays silent.

Elinalise stands still.

Talhand is silent.

Roxy covers her mouth.

Gisu runs from the back of the room, pale in the face.

There is no answer from Paul.

"...Dad?"

Everyone glances ahead,

To the place Paul had fallen.

So, he collapsed.

I turn and face towards him.

However,

It wasn't simply a collapse.

He is unconscious.

His eyes are vacant.

And then,

I see there was no lower half to his body.

"...Ah?"

I can't comprehend my sight.

"Eh?"

Aa, I hate it.

What had happened? I know.

That's right.

I see it.

Paul sent me flying with a kick,

Because the main head reached the place where I was.

That's why Paul kicked me back.

For the sake of throwing me out of the way, he kicked; and then he was alone.

So he had to kick with all of his might.

I wasn't a child anymore.

In order to kick with all of his might, in such a way, he must've pushed out from his waist.

Paul, as a swordsman in this world, avoided step-back recoil from the kick he gave me.

He is a physically strong swordsman, and is able to wear touki.

In other words, he is capable of sending me flying with a kick, and staying in position.

Another way of putting it: he was blocking.

I don't want to come to the realization of that word.

Blocking.

"A, why?"

The moment I say that, Paul's eyes begin to stir.

Paul's eyes meet my own.

"..."

Paul says nothing.

But he moves his mouth a little, expressing relief.

Having felt relieved, he exhales.

There is just a feeble vomiting of blood.

And his eyes lose their light.

Paul had died.

The moment the Hydra breathed its last, the crystal prison shattered.

Zenith was alive.

Though unconscious, she was breathing.

Scattered about the surrounding area were dozens of huge magic crystals and a large quantity of magic stones that comprised the Hydra's scaly armor.

Further inside the room, a large amount of magic items had been dropped.

If I sold those, I would become filthy rich.

However, no one gleefully went to pick the treasure up.

I surprised myself, at how detached I was completing the work.

There was a surreal feeling, like being in a dream.

I would reply if asked, but my thoughts were empty.

There was another me who seemed to be answering involuntarily.

I cremated the remains of Paul in that place.

Even though there were various reasons, I wanted to take the corpse back home with me.

But regarding the conduct of how to handle the dead inside a labyrinth, I did as I was told.

Only three items remained to be passed on as family heirlooms.

Paul's thin metal breastplate.

His tantou, which could inflict heavy damage on the toughest of opponents.

{ C-Editor's note: A tanto is one of the traditionally made Japanese short swords that were worn by the samurai class of feudal Japan. }

And lastly, Paul's beloved sword, which he always carried around.

Under the care of my Fire Magic, Paul became a pile of bones in the blink of an eye.

Elinalise said that if I buried it now how it is, there was a chance Paul's bones could resurrect into a skeleton, and I agreed.

That being the situation, I broke off a single bone that I may take home with me.

I made a small vessel out of soil, and placed the bone I broke off inside of it.

"..."

There was a mysterious feeling.

My chest clenched up very tightly, and I did not understand the meaning of this feeling.

"Let's go back."

On the return trip, I was worthless.

My surefooted steps were unstable now.

Although I used magic to defeat enemies, if Roxy was not near my side, I would have more than likely stepped on a trap.

Whenever I made a mistake, no one scolded me.

Elinalise, Roxy, Talhand, and Gisu all said nothing.

There were not even the comfortable words of complaint.

Everyone was at a loss for words.

We escaped from the labyrinth after the third day.

Everyone took turns helping to carry Zenith for this long time.

Even though there were moments of intense combat in the labyrinth, Zenith never woke.

Though I was anxious, however, since she was still drawing breath I was eventually persuaded that she was alive.

What we said to the three who waited for us back in town, I don't remember.

Certainly, Elinalise and Gisu gave a detailed explanation.

I was unable to say anything.

What could I say? There was nothing.

Shera broke down crying, and Vera fell to her knees in shock.

Even seeing such a scene, I was incapable of saying anything.

Lilia's reaction was different.

She had an expressionless face.

Concealing her own facial expression, she looked at me, and brought me into her tight embrace.

She conveyed so many feelings to me all at once: 'You've been through a lot, haven't you?' 'Thank you for all your hard work,' 'You can leave the rest to me,' 'Please, rest for a while.'

I, who had such a feeling of emptiness, had to put forth some effort to nod in agreement.

When I came back to the hotel, I took off my robe.

Looking around the shoulder area of the robe, I see a deep tear.

I should repair it with some sewing.

Though I thought that, I tossed the robe at some corner of the room.

Aqua Heartia, the tool bag, I tossed everything on top of the robe...

I collapsed in a heap onto the bed.

That evening I had a dream.

In that dream, I was in my previous form.

The form of the slovenly and subservient NEET.

However, Hitogami did not come out.

There was no white-colored room either.

It was just a memory of my previous life.

That's right, just a dream about my previous life.

I don't recall exactly when it was.

But I remembered a scene of that time.

In my previous live, at my house, even down to how my living room looked.

And then, the dream shifted to my previous life's parents talking about me in the living room.

Because it was just a scene in a dream, I didn't hear any voices.

However strangely, it was clear to me that I was the point of the discussion.

Were my parents at that time worried about me?

I didn't even know the cause of my parent's death.

Even though the both of them died at the same time, I wasn't even sick about it.

Was it an accident? Or, perhaps it was suicide?

Just before the moment of their death, I wonder what they thought of me.

How could I think of my own self as anything other than that of a shameless NEET?

Surely, there would have been an irritated feeling.

Yeah, or at least thoughts about how I was deplorable.

But, the truth is, I just don't know.

Sometimes, I saw my mother's face.

Or father whom, after a certain point tired of dealing with me, stopped saying anything at all.

At the time of their death, did they think about me for even an instant?

And then, there was me. Me, who didn't even attend their funeral. What was I even thinking?

To not even gather the bones of my parents; what on earth was I thinking?

Why? Why did I not even go to their funeral?

I was scared.

Even though my parents died, I could not lay my eyes upon them and grieve.

Other's turned eyes of contempt and hostility towards this shitty NEET.

Of course that wasn't all it was.

I was in no way an admirable person.

Actually, at that time, I didn't think the death of my parents to be a sad thing at all.

I don't think I was sad, because I didn't think my parents had any love for me.

The feeling of, [This is bad, what am I going to do now?] was stronger than the feelings of caring about the death of my parents.

From this point, I wasn't even able to stomach looking at myself.

I do not intend to justify my actions; it was just something that I did.

This situation of losing my last refuge of escapism put me between a rock and a hard place; this situation suddenly threw me unprepared into the depths of reality.

Everyone wants to have one or two places to escape himself or herself.

Though I have regrets, I however, am not being blamed.

But, at the very least,

I should have at least gone to the funeral.

I just cannot understand what was in my thoughts at that time.

I should have at least seen the last face of my parents.

I should have at least picked up their bones.

Was the last face of Paul not worth worrying about?

It wasn't a laughing face.

It wasn't even a face that seemed satisfied.

However, clinging to the corners of the mouth was a hint of a relieved smile.

What were your last words going to be?

What kind of faces did my previous parents express when they died?

Why? Why didn't I see it?

Oh, how much I wanted to return and see their faces.

The next day.

Waking up was the worst.

The feeling of wanting to do nothing exerted its influence over my whole body.

However, somehow I cheated it, and got out of bed.

I went to the next room, to Lilia and Zenith.

When Lilia sees me, she gives me a look of astonishment.

"Rudeus-sama, are you feeling all right now?"

"...Sort of, for the time being. Wouldn't it be troublesome if I kept resting?"

"It's okay even if Rudeus-sama needs to rest a bit longer, no one would mind it at all."

Listening to Lilia's advice, I went to the bedroom where I followed an urge to keep resting.

However, more than that, there was an urge to do something, the feeling I had to keep moving forward.

"Please allow me to remain here."

"...Is that how it is? Understood, please, have a seat then."

In the end, I decided to examine Zenith's state, with the company of Lilia.

How many days has Zenith been asleep for now?

It was three days out of the labyrinth, one day to Lapan, and so on the fourth day, she has still not awoken?

No matter how many times I look at her, it seems to me that she is just asleep.

Even though she's been asleep for however many days, I don't get the sense that she's lost any weight.

Rather, she's actually very healthy looking.

The same way the Zenith in my memory looked.

Nor, does it seem that she's aged even a little more.

Her hands and cheeks felt warm to the touch, and when I put my ear near her mouth, I heard her breathing.

It's just she hasn't woken up.

Maybe she'll be this way for a while.

If she stays like this, won't she eventually weaken and die?

Such a thought instantly crossed my mind.

However, I don't dare speak it aloud.

There are things I don't need to say, and there are things I just shouldn't.

Lilia and I just quietly watched over Zenith.

Occasionally, Vera or Shera would come and talk.

However, what they talked about didn't remain in my memory.

I ate a meal with Lilia.

I wasn't feeling very hungry, and the food managed to stick to my throat.

Though I tried to wash it down with water, I nearly vomited it out anyway.

It wasn't until midday that there was any kind of change in the condition of Zenith.

Lilia watching with me saw Zenith slowly opening her eyelids with a small groan,

"Mmn..."

In that room were Lilia, Vera, and I.

Vera immediately ran off to call the others.

I attentively watched over her as she tried to straighten her body upright.

Normally, when someone is asleep for a number of days, it's difficult to sit up.

However, Zenith was able to sit up almost entirely on her own, with a little help from Lilia.

"Good Morning, Madam."

Lilia's smile blooms when she spoke to Zenith.

Zenith after rising up looked at Lilia with a particularly dim face.

"...Mm?"

Zenith's voice.

It was a familiar voice to me.

If I thought about it, when I was born into this world, I had heard her voice first.

A voice that emits a feeling of relief.

I felt relieved.

Paul had died.

However, we managed to save the person whom Paul wanted to rescue.

She was safely alive.

We accomplished Paul's will.

When Zenith hears that Paul has died, she will begin to mourn.

And, most likely, cry.

However, between Lilia, Zenith, and I, we can at least share the grief three-ways.

"Mother..."

It seems like now is not the best time to say it.

When she is able to take it easy and understand the present situation a bit better.

It'll be fine after that.

It's best to take things slowly and sequentially.

I don't think it would be wise at all to push the harsh reality on her so suddenly.

First, meeting Zenith after all this time, shouldn't it be a pleasant thing?

"...?"

Zenith had a look of mild confusion.

With an action, she pushed my chest away.

She had forgotten me.

It can't be helped.

It's the same as it was with Roxy.

Because time has passed, my face has changed.

It might be a shock now, but it'll become a funny story later.

"Madam, this here is Rudeus. It's been nearly ten years since you saw him last."

"..."

Zenith stares at me absent-mindedly.

And then moves her stare to Lilia.

In my mother's eyes they reflect the face of Lilia.

"...?"

And then she returned to looking confused again.

The eyes of Lilia open wide.

Something strange is going on.

Definitely strange.

For a while now, Zenith's face was expressionless.

It's peculiar that she managed to get up after so long.

But, perhaps something else is the matter?

I don't have the words for it.

She can only groan.

And the current gesture,

A gesture that makes it seem like she has forgotten Lilia.

I can understand if it's just me, but how can she possibly forget the existence of Lilia?

Lilia grew a little older, sure.

But, not so much that there was a drastic change.

Even her hairstyle and clothes are the same as always.

"...Ae...A—..."

Her voice was poor.

Her eyes were dim.

Her words were lost.

We can only observe her reaction.

"Madam...could it possibly be...?"

Lilia seemed to notice it too.

[Could it possibly be?]

We understood the meanings of those words there.

It's a joke right, that she lost her mind?

Lilia and I talked about this many times.

"..."

We reached a conclusion immediately.

Though Zenith reacts to our voices.

However, she cannot reply with words.

That it's possible she can't understand what we are saying.

"Rudeus-sama... the madam... is lost."

Zenith lost everything.

Her memories, knowledge, and wisdom.

All three things that is vital to form a person.

She's an invalid.

She's not capable of remembering Paul.

My mother doesn't even remember Lilia or I.

Who? How? What happened that it became like this?

To be not able to remember anything,

In other words, she cannot grieve the death of Paul.

We cannot share the grief with Zenith,

Such a fact is now made clear.

"Ah..."

My heart is broken.

Since then, I wonder how many days have passed.

My sense of time has become vague.

Waking, sleeping.

Sleeping, waking.

I repeated the motions many times.

When I slept, my dreams kept playing back the moments of Paul's death.

Paul slashes the Hydra.

The Hydra's neck swings around.

Paul pushes me away to evade the attack.

Then Paul moves and the Hydra moves.

I am unable to move.

Paul kicks me and sends me flying out of the way. The head of the Hydra falls in front of me.

Then, I jump to my feet.

I take a moment to reaffirm that I'm not in a dream, and then drop myself back into the bed.

I did not have the energy to stand.

Only enough energy to think; my thoughts are only on Paul.

Paul.

That guy.

He was by no means a praiseworthy guy at all.

He was a scumbag philanderer, and an egotistical show-off.

He was weak to adversity, and quick to escape to the bottle.

Surely, as material for a father, he would be disqualified.

But... I loved him.

But, it was a different kind of love.

The love of Paul was very different.

The Paul I came to know was more like a "partner-in-crime."

While my mental age was superior, Paul's physical age was superior.

Even if you accounted for all the knowledge of my previous life, because I was a shut-in for at least ten years of that life, Paul probably had the upper hand in life experience.

But that doesn't matter.

Age doesn't matter.

When I talked with Paul, I got the strong feeling he and I were the same type of man.

I was never able to see him as a "father."

When I was a child, I never really thought much of him.

But,

Paul took the time to raise me properly, as his child.

This child, born from the contents of a deplorable thirty year old,

And who, no matter how others observed him, he exhibited strange behavior.

Paul saw me as family, and never looked away in shame.

There were certain parts that father and son couldn't meet.

But even then, this guy saw me without fail, as his relation.

There was never a time when he treated me like an outsider.

To the very end, I was his son.

He saw me only as his [son], the superman.

We were completely backwards.

But that guy had been my father the entire way.

And he continued being a father, even while he had to move around and balance so many things.

And then, he protected me until the very end.

He, the father, protected me, the son.

He risked it all, to save me.

Because it was the most natural act he could do as a father.

And because of that, he died.

It's a strange story.

Me, who isn't a child,

Paul, who was the father,

Paul, who had two real children,

Unlike my fake self, I mean, authentic, genuine children.

Unlike my fake self, who had his soul from another world put in a male body, he had two docile, cute daughters.

Norn and Aisha.

Now, I will have to be the one to protect them.

Don't you have two wives as well?

Zenith, who you searched hard for over so many years and finally found,

And Lilia, who supported you all that time until you could find her.

Two wives and two daughters.

Four people in total.

How could you leave these four people behind, Paul?

Weren't they the most important people to you?

...for Paul, perhaps I might have been one of those as well.

Two wives, two daughters, and his only son.

All five of us are equally important to him.

Although, I never watched him in the capacity of a father,

That guy's thoughts always cherished me.

AAH! SHIT! WHY THE FU- ARGH!

Paul.

Please, please forgive me...

How many times did you say it?

[Rudi, I'll try and treat you like a man.]

Did you treat me as a man?

I got married, I bought a house, I took in my sisters, and I felt like I became properly independent.

I came to help you. I even took an active role in the labyrinth party.

It was my intention to remain independent.

Did you have any trouble seeing it?

And at the end, helping me, even at the cost of your own life. What did you want to tell me with your last words?

Yet, why?

Damn it, why...

Why did you still protect me, who became independent?

When I have to go back to Norn and Aisha, how do I tell them about you?

With the current state of things, how should I explain it to them?

To the extent of Zenith, what should I do for her?

And from this point ahead, how should I continue?

Can you teach me, Paul?

Truthfully, what did you think about at the end?

Shit.

Did you expect to die?

Ahh, goddamn it!

Why did I have to let you die, Paul, just when you were finally going to be free of all your worries.

...If only he lived, no one else would have to be troubled in the end.

[Hah, this is no good, isn't it?]

Sadness overflowed.

My tears endlessly spill out.

During my life... no, my previous life, when my mother and father died, I never truly wept.

I didn't even think it was a sad thing.

Yet, when Paul died, the tears came.

It's sad.

It's hard to believe.

The one guy who wasn't supposed to disappear had disappeared.

Paul was my father.

He was my father.

Even if I never thought of him as a father,

As much as the ones of my previous life, he was my parent.

I think and think,

I cry and cry,

I am so exhausted.

[...I don't want to do anything.]

With my lethargy, I have not been able to move from this one room.

Even if I know there are things that still need to be done, I cannot muster the energy.

I don't have enough power to leave the room even.

I sleep, I wake, and I sit.

Days wasted with barely changing my body posture.

Lilia and Elinalise took the time to come check up on me.

They talked about something with me.

However, I do not remember what it was.

It felt like I was suddenly listening to an unknown language, and I was unable to understand the words that they spoke.

Even if I understood the meaning of the words, it's still just as likely that I wouldn't have been able to give a proper reply.

I did not have the words.

I did not have the words, even for them.

Supposing,

Suppose for a moment that I, for example, could have handled a sword better in combat.

Then, I also could have helped in severing the neck of the Hydra.

Would Paul really have had to die then?

Paul and I would slice the heads off, and then Roxy and I would seal it with flames.

If I had been able to decapitate heads too, we could have defeated it far more easily than what actually happened.

Even if I could have at least worn touki.

Or, if I could have just dodged out of the way a bit faster.

By evading the attack of the Hydra, Paul wouldn't have had to protect me.

Or,

If I walloped Paul hard at that time, and made us return at once.

When we returned, we could have calmly held a strategy meeting.

We may have come up with a good plan for how to handle it.

Not the impulsive way we barely managed, but a really good idea.

If the plan was different, if it was just even a little different...

However, it's too late.

Paul has died.

I can no longer see the dead face of my parent.

Even if I come up with anything now, it is already far too late.

A certain tavern,

four people were sitting at a table.

Amongst the hustling and bustling inside the bar, only that place was gloomy.

All four of them had a dark expression.

"...So Paul died, huh."

A woman with luxurious blonde hair and long ears.

Elinalize was whispering to herself.

"Yeah, he died."

A man from the Magic Race that had the face of a monkey.

Gisu said that as he looked at the mug he was holding.

"He died protecting his son. That's his true wish."

A male dwarf that had a burly beard.

Talhand replied without care.

However, he had no tension in his voice.

Even though he drank enough of his favorite drink to become wasted, there was no signs of him being drunk.

"With Zenith like this too, Paul wouldn't have been cheerful."

At Gisu's words, Talhand went silent and focused on his drink.

Zenith had become a cripple, to which they had received quite a shock.

As people that knew Zenith to be someone bright and lively, the shock was even bigger to them.

Nevertheless, they were adventurers.

They were familiar with death.

Even if Zenith had died, they would have tolerated and accepted that fact.

"Well, she survived. Perhaps, there may be a chance to heal her."

Talhand said that without any sense of confidence.

There have sometimes been tales of someone becoming a cripple due to a monster's poison.

However, there were no tales about them being healed.

If the neck was cut off, or if the head was smashed,

Even God-class healing magic would not be able to heal that.

"Even if she can walk, or talk, her memories won't return."

Elinalize said that as if giving up on that idea.

"What, Elinalize. It seems you know a lot about this."

"...That's just the way it is."

Elinalize didn't explain it in detail.

She has lived much longer than Talhand or Gisu.

She said that as if she had seen cases similar to this one.

That's why she knows.

However, as if to feel that some form of hope wasn't gone, Talhand did not press any further.

"...So, the problem now, is that son of his."

Talhand spoke.

"Yeah..."

Hearing that, his voice went up with a sigh.

Rudeus Greyrat.

Paul's son, although it has been close to a week, had not stepped out of his room.

"That guy, he's got no energy, and doesn't wanna do anything."

"It's like he's a cripple himself."

Elinalize and Gisu said in agreement.

Rudeus had become a shell of his former self.

Even when calling out to him, he did not answer.

With hollow eyes, he said [Oh] and merely nodded.

"Rudi was quite attached to Paul."

The girl from the Magic Race with blue hair.

Roxy Migurdia, who had been silent up to now, whispered softly.

What she saw in her mind was a very young Rudeus who was learning swordsmanship from Paul.

Rudeus continued to swing his sword with a disappointed face no matter how many times Paul beat him down.

It was a boy that had a bundle of talent.

For someone that hadn't spent such time with that family, it was a dazzling scenery that would make anyone feel envious.

"Well, I can understand Senpai's feelings. But, it'll be bad at this rate."

"That's right."

Rudeus has not taken a single bite since that day.

Even though he was encouraged to eat, he nodded with an [Oh], and didn't eat at all.

At the minimum, though he was drinking water, it was clear as day he was becoming increasingly haggard.

His eyes were sunk, his cheeks hollowed, one would think that he looked like death.

If he was left alone like this, he'll really die.

Everybody here thought that.

"...We must cheer him up again somehow."

At Roxy's words, Gisu glanced at Elinalize.

"Hey you, don't you do [That] all the time in times like these?"

"I can't do that."

Elinalize replied immediately.

The one who didn't understand [That] was Roxy.

"What can't be done?"

"..."

Gisu and Talhand looked at each other, then shut themselves up.

Roxy knit her eyebrows in puzzlement.

"Elinalize, do you have some kind of plan?"

"...I do not."

Elinalize answered that like she wanted to get something over with.

"Well, anyway."

Gisu was scratching his cheek.

Talhand was drinking his beer like it was something interesting.

"Well, anyway. In times like this, it's best to forget by going all out to play."

"Play?"

"Men are self-interested creatures. By drinking beer, sleeping with girls, and feeling good, they immediately feel the joy of living, and would feel better again."

"Ah....! Ahh, I see."

Even Roxy can understand what was being said.

She could understand what Elinalize, who was attracted to men, would do.

"I, I see. M-me, men are like that! I see! I see..."

Roxy was looking down with a red face.

When a man feels down, he makes love to a woman.

It feels like she had heard something like this before.

Especially for mercenaries, before and after the battle, would buy a girl to distract their fears.

There were even many adventurers who would head to brothels immediately after a near-death experience on a quest.

However, thinking of Rudeus and Elinalize getting together, Roxy was left with depression in her heart.

"Elinalize. Didn't you say this in the past? That you were good at comforting heartbroken men."

"I did say that."

Roxy was thinking.

Certainly, Elinalize was good at that.

She has numerous relationships with men on a routine basis, and have heard that she has also quite the technique.

With someone as experienced as her, it was possible to make Rudeus get back on his feet.

Though it was mortifying, it's something that can't be helped.

"That's rare. If it was the regular you, you wouldn't have left Senpai alone right now."

She couldn't bear looking at Rudeus right now.

Even Elinalize wanted to help and comfort him.

However, she understood.

If she used Rudeus's grief as a reason to make love to him here, what will they do when they return?

Betraying Clif, betraying Sylphy.

Rudeus would not take that calmly.

"Even I have partners that I can't do."

"Why is it that you can't do it with Rudi?"

Roxy glares at Elinalize.

"Even though Rudi is suffering so much..."

"Well..."

Elinalize started to speak, then realized.

That Roxy didn't know.

"Because Rudeus's wife is my granddaughter."

"...Eh!?"

Roxy lost her grip on her mug.

The mug fell on the table with a clank.

While spilling its contents, the mug rolled on the table, fell on the ground, and made a dry sound.

"Eh, Rudi, is he married?"

"Yeah. He's married. He's about to have a child."

"I, I see... w, well it's obvious isn't it, Rudi being of age and all..."

Roxy was unable to hide her trembling, and picked up the mug on the floor.

Then, wanting to drink what's inside, she realized it spilled, then ordered another one.

"Ah, please give me the strongest one in the house."

Roxy folded her arms with her eyes spinning.

Marriage.

Of course Rudeus would get married, yeah.

It's something normal.

Yeah.

She kept talking to herself like that.

Then, remembering her own actions in the labyrinth, she grit her teeth.

She thought that Rudi was free and took the initiative.

She had wanted to make a good impression, but she was not treated as an obstacle because she was merely an acquaintance in the end.

It must have been laughable and ridiculous, being right beside him.

She wanted to scream, [Why didn't anybody tell me this?!]

But, she kept the complaint to the back of her throat.

Right now she wasn't worrying about herself.

"B, But, even though he's married, this is an emergency, surely even once would be fine?"

Roxy did not even understand what she herself was saying.

Just that she felt that she wanted Rudeus to get better again.

"...Maybe that is so, but I cannot do it."

Elinalize said that with some frustration.

Even seeing her frustrated face, Roxy could not understand her feelings.

"...Here you go."

"Ah, thanks."

There was the drink that she had ordered.

Roxy stirred the mug, then drank it all in one go.

A burning sensation spread in her bone-dried throat.

It was frighteningly tasty, showing that the body really wanted that alcohol.

"Besides, for me to Rudeus..."

Elinalize closed her mouth there.

"Well, even if I can't do it, wouldn't it be fine if Gisu brings him to a brothel around here?"

"I wonder. Making love to someone he doesn't know, I doubt Rudeus would get better with that."

"Well, what that child really needs, is someone reliable to lean on."

"Then, Lilia?"

"Like I said..."

"Yeah, I get it, don't be so angry."

Elinalize's heart was complex.

She doesn't want to interfere with Sylphy's marriage.

However, she wants to help Rudeus.

If she makes love to Rudeus, she may be able to cheer him up again.

She was confident in that.

However, she felt certain that is a mistake, and that it would be something that cannot be undone.

If it was the usual, she would play the part of the villain.

Up till now, she had done so many times.

However, when she felt that she did not want to betray Cliff here, she could no longer do it.

"..."

Then, silence followed.

Only the quiet sound of drinking continued.

There was nobody that called out to this uneven group of four.

Only over there was it as quiet as the night.

"In any case, Zenith had become like that.

I want Senpai to hurry and get back on his feet, then we can say good-bye to this town."

With Gisu's words, the remaining three sighed.

"You're right..."

They were all tired.

It's been six years.

Six long years.

Since the Teleportation Incident, six years have passed.

It was definitely not a short period of time.

Heading from the Central Continent towards the Magic Continent, then crossing from the Magic Continent to the Begaritto Continent.

And, finally.

Searching in the Teleportation Labyrinth.

There were tough and painful times.

However, all of it was something one could look back and laugh at.

Certainly, the Teleportation Incident was an unfortunate event.

But, for them, it wasn't full of just misfortune.

The party that had split up gathered up little by little.

Elinalize and Talhand partied up once again.

Gisu moved for the sake of Paul.

Paul and Talhand got along again.

And, ultimately, Paul and Elinalize fought side by side once more.

Thinking that these things would never happen again, with Paul as their center, they got together again.

After rescuing Zenith, they would locate Ghyslaine, and everybody would drink together.

That is what everybody had thought.

However, Paul died.

With just that, they felt a sense of weariness that can't be described.

Like anything and everything had been ruined.

Even though they spent so much time building up to that.

The sense of weariness in that all had been trampled in the very end.

It wasn't just Rudeus who had become lethargic.

"Well, he's Rudeus, the son of Paul and Zenith. He may be depressed right now, but he'll eventually come around on his own."

"...I hope you're right."

"..."

At Talhand's words, two people nodded vaguely.

They knew Rudeus's weakness.

Nevertheless, he's already 16, no longer a child.

Even though it has been painful, his heart is that of a splendid adult.

Death visits everybody, and it is something adventurers are familiar with.

Parents will someday die.

Anybody will overcome that.

That's why, even Rudeus will eventually do so too.

"..."

The only person that wasn't nodding was Roxy.

She had remembered.

What happened a long time ago.

— Rudeus's POV—

When I looked out the window, it was evening.

I sat on the bed absent-mindedly.

How many days have passed since then?

It doesn't really matter.

No matter how many days it has been.

<Knock, knock>

Suddenly, there was a knock on the doorway.

"Rudi, may I?"

Looking up, Roxy was standing there.

Guess I left the door open.

"...Sensei."

It felt like it's been forever since I spoke.

Though my voice was so hoarse that I didn't know if Roxy heard it or not.

Roxy walked briskly towards me.

It felt strange.

I wonder why.

Ahh, I see, she doesn't have her robe on today.

She was wearing a very thin top and bottom clothing.

How unusual.

"Excuse me."

Saying that with a firm tone, Roxy sat next to me.

For a while, we sat in silence for a few seconds.

As if choosing her words, Roxy whispered.

"For a change of pace, would you like to come out with me?"

"...?"

"Yeah, there are a lot of magical items that you can't find on any other continents. If we look around here, it could turn out to be quite fun, you know?"

"No..."

I wasn't in the mood.

"I, I see."

"Sorry."

Roxy's invitation.

I understand she was trying to cheer me up.

Normally, I'd follow her like a dog.

However, I don't feel like it right now.

"..."

"...."

Again, silence filled the room.

Again, as if choosing her words, Roxy whispered.

"...It's regrettable what happened to Paul and Zenith."

Regrettable.

Is it fine to settle this with just the word regrettable?

Well, for Roxy, it's merely someone else's business.

"I also remember the time when the five of us lived in Buina Village quite well.

To me, it may have been the happiest time of my life."

"..."

Roxy said that quietly, and held my hand.

Roxy's hand was hot.

"When I was an adventurer, it wasn't rare for people close to me to die. I feel your pain, because I also experienced it."

"...Please don't lie."

I had met Roxy's parents before.

Those two were healthy.

I hadn't heard them talk about having any other children.

"Aren't your father and mother well?"

"Let's see, though the last time I met them was a few years ago, both my parents are fine. They could live for another hundred years."

"Then, you don't understand!"

I felt someone rising up from the bottom of my heart, and I shook off Roxy's hand.

"Please don't say such thoughtless things!"

I yelled in a loud voice.

As I yelled, I felt my remaining amount of power come out of my body.

Even while Roxy looked taken aback, she whispered with a serious expression.

"The one who died, was when I was just starting out as an adventurer. He had partied with me, and taught me the basics of adventuring. Though he wasn't my parent, I considered him as an older brother."

"..."

"He died while covering for me."

"..."

"I was also in distress."

"..."

"That's why, I can at least understand a fragment of your feelings."

Then, you don't understand after all.

You don't know my feelings being torn between my past self who reincarnated and the current situation.

Honestly, I don't think I can get over this.

Even if I know what Roxy is thinking that can make me better again, I don't have the will to follow it through.

"When I lived at Buina Village, I was truly happy.

When I thought of going to the kingdom of Asura to work I couldn't find any jobs,

so then when I went to the countryside, and thought of planning to start as a teacher, Rudi was overflowing with talent, even Paul and Zenith treated me warmly.

They may have been the ones that taught me the actual warmth of a family."

Saying that, Roxy looked at my eyes.

Her eyes were clear.

"To me, it was a second family."

Roxy got up from the bed as she said that.

She went behind me, and when she knelt, she hugged my head closely.

"Rudi. I will share your sorrow with you."

I felt something soft at the back of my head.

I could hear Roxy's heartbeat thumping.

It was a relaxing sound.

I wonder why hearing this sound made me feel relieved.

I wonder why I felt everything will be okay.

The same goes for the smell.

Roxy's smell made me at peace.

In such a hard time, when I remember Roxy's smell, it mysteriously became my support.

I wonder why.

The answer was coming out of my throat.

But it didn't come.

"I am your Shisho. Although I am a small and inadequate Shisho, I have lived longer than you, and am sturdy. I don't mind if you wish to lean on me."

I grabbed Roxy's hand in front of me.

It was a small hand.

But, it felt big.

Looking at this hand also made me feel at ease.

I wonder if I'll be more at ease if I was closer to her.

"Even if it's painful, if two people share it, it will become lighter."

Roxy parted from me as she said that.

Instinctively, I pulled Roxy's hand towards me.

"Ah."

Her small body easily fell on my lap.

Our eyes met directly.

Her slightly sleepy eyes were wet with tears.

Her face was bright red, and her mouth was shut tight.

I placed my hand on her back and drew her closer.

The sound of Roxy's heartbeat was getting faster.

It was warm.

"It, it's okay, you know?"

I wonder what's okay.

"W, when males are grieving, when they sleep with a woman, I heard they would feel refreshed."

Who said that?

Ah, must be Elinalize.

What is Roxy saying at a time like this?

"Women are the same, they also want to forget painful things, and it's painful for me when Paul died. If Rudi is okay with it, I don't mind at all if you sleep with me."

Roxy kept talking hurriedly.

"That's right. I want to forget about all this. But with a body that has no appeal... If you don't like it, you can go to a brothel you know?"

Roxy kept talking as if making excuses.

This person was a girl that I never ceased to respect.

If I did what I was told and slept with her, I wonder what it would be like.

"W, well, even though I look like this I'm very experienced, and I think I can do much better than the other little girls. We'll do this casually, just to wash away this bad mood, and just try it out for once..."

Roxy's incoherent words could not reach me.

I was in the mood.

Just hearing her heartbeat I felt so much more relaxed.

If I get closer to her, I wonder if I would feel even more comfortable?

I was thinking of excuses like that.

"Ah, well, if you're talking about someone who would be better, I don't mind bowing to Elinalize...ah!"

I pushed Roxy down on the bed.

Very violently.

It might be that I was venting out all my anger.

—

The next morning.

What I woke up to the first thing to was Roxy's sleeping face.

The innocent sleeping face of Roxy with her hair down.

At the same time, the thought [I did it now...] crossed my mind.

"Haa..."

I sighed.

What should I say to Sylphy...

"..."

My worries have increased by one.

But, for some reason, I felt like my vision became clear again.

As if all my worries had been a dream.

I still had some feelings of depression within me.

But this was not me at my most depressed.

It could not even be compared to yesterday.

I wonder why.

I wonder if it's because the act of creating life healed the sadness of losing it?

"Mn."

Then, Roxy's eyes snapped open.

After she took a long hard look at me who was in front of her, she squirmed as if trying to hide her body under the blanket.

"Good morning, Rudi..."

Then, she murmured while facing away.

"Um, how was it?"

Asking me [How?], I won't lie.

I treated Roxy very violently.

Roxy being experienced was a flat-out lie.

Even so, she accepted everything, refusing to complain about the pain.

It's something I am grateful and apologetic for.

As someone who loves Sylphy, praising Roxy felt like a taboo.

To be frank, Roxy's body was small, and slightly did not match my size.

But, it would be a lie to say I didn't feel good.

Right now, I am certain I feel quite relaxed.

I do not have to lie and hurt Roxy's feelings.

"It felt great."

Roxy's face quickly turned red.

"Thank you very mu... no, not that, I wanted to ask if you felt a little better."

Oh, that.

I failed.

"Yeah."

"Then, if you hug me in return, I'll be happy."

"...Yeah."

As I was told, I hugged Roxy.

Roxy's skin was soft, moist and a bit sticky.

She was sweating after all.

From her soft skin, I could hear Roxy's heartbeat.

It was a relaxing sound.

"Rudi's arms are quite burly. It's as if you weren't a magician at all."

"...I've been training."

Roxy said that while stroking my chest and arms.

With such a cute act, my love for Sylphy wavered just a bit.

I slowly pulled away from Roxy's body.

Then, I got up.

I felt like I wanted to ask her something.

"Roxy-sensei. May I ask something strange?"

"...What is it?"

She probably noticed the atmosphere around me.

Roxy also got up with a serious face, and sat in a kneeling position on top of the bed.

A naked Roxy sitting on top of the bed in kneeling position.

Because it was so erotic that it might be bad, I turned away my gaze.

Covering my bottom half with a blanket, I continued to talk.

"This is just a made-up story..."

With that introduction,

I began to talk.

A story of a certain man.

As a fiction to the end.

A man who secluded himself when bad things happened to him when he was young.

He was close to twenty years old, and lived like trash while leeching off of his parents.

However, one day, his parents had suddenly died.

That man not only did not go to the funeral, but on the contrary did the worst thing a human being can do.

Seeing that, his other family members beat him up and threw him out of the house.

The man had lost everything, but luck brought him to a new land, and he turned over a new leaf, and devoted himself to change for the better.

His lifestyle was going well, and he thought that he would be happy if things kept like this.

But, currently right now, because of a big failure, he let a person important to him die.

Because of that, that man remembered his parents deaths.

That man only then had mourned his parents' deaths.

I told that kind of story.

The more I talked about this, it felt my heart was spewing out pus.

I wonder if I just wanted someone to hear this.

Was it something that easy, I wonder?

"..."

Roxy listened quietly.

Not cutting in with agreement, just silently listening.

"What do you think that man should do?"

"..."

Roxy remained silent.

She might not know how to respond when being told such a story all of a sudden.

There would be no way that she would believe that this was a story of my life.

She is a wise person, so she may think that there is a hidden meaning to it.

"...If it was me, I would go to my parents' graves. I don't think it's too late even now. The same with talking to the other family members."

"But, the graves and the family members are far away, and he can't easily go to them. He may also be unable to return. That man has another life, he made a family in the new land, and he cherishes them dearly."

"He can't go back?"

"Yes. In the first place, the possibility that he can't go back is quite high."

Roxy again became silent at that.

But, this time it was short.

"In that case, there's nothing to be done. Now, he should take care of the family that's in front of him."

Roxy's words were awfully cliché.

They were words anybody could come up with and say.

It wasn't special or anything, just something that was obvious.

"Even Paul would have wished for you to do so, Rudi."

Roxy said something obvious in a matter-of-fact way.

Self-flattering.

Commonplace words.

Words that she heard from somewhere.

"Please face the future. Everybody is waiting for you."

But, my heart felt refreshed.

Yeah.

It was common.

The death of my parents in my previous life, and Paul's death as well.

This was something obvious.

There is no choice but to accept that and face forward.

I am living in this world.

And I will continue to live in this world.

Paul's death, and Zenith that became a cripple.

The anxiety of going back and telling that to my waiting family in the north.

The anxiety of not knowing what to do now.

It was a future full of anxiety.

But, I mustn't run away.

I have no choice but to solve what's in front of me right now.

Though I do not know specifically what I should do.

I have no choice but to solve them one by one.

Coming to this world, hadn't I already decided?

That in this world, I will live it to the fullest.

Then, I must not turn my eyes away.

No matter what kind of difficulties occur from now on, I will overcome them.

It's no good if I don't do at least that.

Yes, I've realized once again.

Though realizing that, it's not like the pain subsided.

However, I felt that I broke out of something.

"Sensei."

"Yes."

"Thank you very much."

Again, Roxy has rescued me.

Even giving thanks would not be enough.

Zenith.

I decided to talk to someone about her.

Once I calm down to think about it, I realize that her problems aren't mine alone.

I have someone I can discuss it with.

Because I still have a family member here.

"Sensei, I want to talk to Lilia about the future."

"Yes, that's for the best."

Roxy and I tidied ourselves and left the room.

Right as we came out, we ran into Elinalise leaving her own room as well.

Her eyes widen when she saw me with Roxy.

"Roxy, you..."

"Rudi, sorry, I have some stuff to discuss with Elinalise. Please see Lilia on your own instead."

Stuff?

What could it be?

Well, if she said it like that, maybe it's better if I'm not present.

"I understand."

I left Roxy and headed toward Zenith's room.

I glanced back briefly before entering. Roxy and Elinalise went into their room as well.

"..."

Anyways, I entered Zenith's room.

Zenith was sitting on her bed, with Lilia on a chair beside her.

The scene reminds me of a hospital room. I bit my lips.

"Lilia."

"What's the matter, Rudeus-sama?"

Lilia was visibly fatigued from serving Zenith.

First things first, I need to know what she thinks.

"Sorry for making you take care of mother."

"No, this is my job."

"Oh."

Job, is that it?

Even though no one is left to pay her?

"How's mother?"

I sneaked a peek at Zenith and noticed she has been staring at me the entire time.

But, she does nothing, said nothing.

Yet she still stares at me.

"Well, even though she has no memory, miraculously her body is healthy. She has stamina and no strange complications. Stuff like eating and changing clothing, she can do it on her own after being taught once."

"Is that so."

She's not a complete invalid then.

The only thing she lost was her memory.

"According to Shera-sama's diagnosis, it's a symptom of being trapped by magic crystal and overwhelmed by magic."

"Can it be cured?"

"According to Elinalise-sama, probably not."

According to Elinalise?

Is she familiar with these types of situations?

Still, I think it's too early to give up.

At least, there's no good doctors around here to examine her.

"I will take good care of madam. Master is no longer here, so I'll take care of her from now on."

"I'll do everything I can as well..."

After I said so. Lilia replies immediately,

"There's no need for that."

It's like she's pushing me away.

"Eh..."

A voice of shock came out of my mouth, but at the same time I realized that it wasn't so unreasonable.

Dad died, Mom is in trouble, yet I couldn't do anything.

Even if Lilia hates me, it isn't unreasonable.

But Lilia continues,

"Rudeus-sama, forgive my transgressions, but what I'll say will be impolite."

"What is it?"

"I think Rudeus-sama has things you'll have to do."

"– My own things?"

"Master said so as well."

I don't think Paul would said something like that.

That guy is too self-centered for that.

"Serving madam is my purpose. It's why I'm here."

Lilia is tired.

Very, very tired.

Yet, also tough.

She already left Paul's death behind her and took the next step.

I need to learn from her too.

"Lilia, there's something I want to ask you, but it might anger you."

"... I won't be."

"What are the things I must do?"

Even though this is the question I should figure out myself, but I asked anyways.

Lilia stared at me in shock.

Even for someone as thick as me, I have some idea.

But I really want to hear it from someone else.

"In my opinion, first you need to tell Norn-sama about Master's death."

Yes.

It's time to head home–

Next day.

I gathered everyone together and declared that we should leave the city.

Almost like I am now the leader, but everyone confirmed my decision.

Is it because they consider me as Paul's replacement?

In that case, then I will play that role.

First I want to discuss our route home.

To avoid talking about the Teleportation Magic Circle, I explained that we have some special method of travel.

Also, I forewarned them not to let the word out about this.

"But, Gisu seems like the type that would leak once he's drunk."

"Ah, well, even in that case I won't fess up Senpai's name. Don't worry."

That guy doesn't know how to shut up.

I won't tell them the exact coordinates.

Maybe I should make them wear blindfolds before entering the ruins.

Oh, that's a good idea.

Let's do that, blindfolds.

"Travel should be fine, but Senpai, are you really okay now."

Gisu seems still worried about me.

A frown on his monkey face, he spies at me.

"Can you see anything wrong?'

"Well, no... Ah, a lot better than before."

"Then it's fine."

To be honest, I'm not perfectly fine.

But thanks to Roxy, I crawled out of the abyss.

But, how do we deal with the trip home?

"Lilia, how's mother doing? A month and half in the desert, can she handle that kind of travel?"

"I'm not sure, but I'll take the responsibility of taking care of her."

"... Please do."

Lilia accepts the responsibility earnestly.

I should be able to help too.

As long as she has stamina for it, we can take it slowly.

"Then should we buy a carriage of some kind?"

"But we'll have to throw it away midway?"

"Not a big deal. Money is no longer a problem."

Gisu and others seem to have returned to the Labyrinth while I was feeling sorry for myself and came back with all the treasures from the boss room.

Many adventurers fell prey to the Labyrinth in its long history.

Magical items were plentiful there.

Moreover, they even looted the scales off the Hydra, or rather, those magic stones that covered its skin.

Those are magic stones that can absorb magical energy.

According to them, selling these can bring in an enormous amount of wealth.

"We'll carry everything we can to sell at Asura Empire."

Gisu said something like that as he takes out bags of magic stones, necklaces, rings and other accessories to show me.

Paul's dead, I fell into depression, and this guy is still thinking about money.

Thinking about that kind of pissed me off.

But if I think about the future, not going back would be stupid.

Money is important. It's not like we didn't work for it.

Gisu made the right judgement.

Besides, the me who fell depressed and did nothing has no right to complain about anything.

"We gave Senpai's share to Lilia already."

Looks like the issue of split were discussed and decided by everyone besides me.

My share was particularly large.

Besides Paul's split, Talhand said, [This time I wasn't of much use.] and gave half of his to me.

Shera and Vera too, because how hard it must be with Paul dead, gave Lilia some of theirs.

Then, Lilia decided to give all of it to me.

In my opinion, everyone did their part, so they should just accept what's theirs.

Oh well, I'll accept it.

It's true, the future might become hard.

"Also, even though we checked the bottom floor in detail, we never could figure out what caused Zenith to end up like that."

"Is that so? Sorry for the trouble."

"No problem."

We still couldn't figure out how Zenith end up trapped in the Magic Crystal.

Either way, even if we did, it might not relate to a cure.

In any case, we can talk about a cure once we get back.

"Then, may I leave the travel preparations to Gisu and... Elinalise?"

"Okay."

"Got it."

It should be fine to leave it to those two...

The travel plan was very comprehensive.

The routes also very clear.

Everyone here are all experienced travelers.

But we don't want any more victims.

To avoid any mistakes, we plan out every due diligence.

We also collected all the reports about bandits and confirmed escape routes.

Even though it's a bit of roundabout, that should be fine.

I'm a little concerned about Zenith, but that was solved pretty quickly.

Gisu purchased an armadillo-like monster and carriage.

Seems like a carriage made especially for the desert.

Got to hand it to him for finding something like that.

Apparently, this armadillo is a well trained monster from eastern Begaritto.

It's a bit expensive, so I thought it'd be a waste to throw away, but some sacrifices can't be helped.

...Maybe I can teleport the armadillo back with me too.

It should be fine as long as it can get pass the stairs, right?

But what if it couldn't handle the weather and dies...?

Still, if I leave it alone in the desert, it'll die anyways.

In that case, it'll be better off if I bring it over to that side and sell to a collector instead.

Preparations done.

Let's go–

Travel went by smoothly.

Luckily we avoid the locations with bandits.

Even though we encountered monsters, with all the members collected here, there's no longer any danger.

2 Warriors, 2 Magicians, 1 Magic Warrior, 1 Healer.

Even with some weaker individuals, it's still a very balanced party.

Originally there ought to be a Swordsman too.

...Forget it, don't think about it anymore.

Traveling without a left hand has been more troublesome than I expected.

It doesn't hurt, but during encounters, I often unconsciously tried to use my left hand and swing empty.

A lot of things are harder without two hands.

Still, every time that happens, Roxy would come to my aid.

Since that night, Roxy would always stick by my side.

Usually she walks on my left side.

Whenever something happens, she'll immediately give me a hand.

The way she conducts herself is almost like a lover.

"..."

I'm an idiot.

Even though I tried to become sharper, as a man, I'm still slow.

But with things like this, even I can't ignore it.

Roxy, she probably, likes me–

"... Em, Sensei."

One day, we're on watch duty.

Roxy and I sat shoulder to shoulder before a bonfire.

Everyone else is asleep in the shelter.

The shelter is very sturdy, but you never know.

Because of that, we always have 2 person on guard in rotation.

"What is it, Rudi?"

Roxy is so close to me.

Sitting by my side, sticking tightly next to me.

I can feel the warmth and softness of her tiny shoulders through her robes.

Just like a lover.

No, exactly like a lover.

With Roxy clinging, flitting like that, it would be nonsense to say otherwise.

Anyways, that's probably what she has in mind.

Does she know that I'm already married?

She probably doesn't.

If she does, she probably won't be so forward like this.

No, it's not Roxy's fault.

It's mine.

I was unfaithful.

I went unfaithful behind Sylphy's back.

I better come clean here too.

I'm very thankful.

I'm fine now.

I couldn't face my wife, so let's stop here.

"..."

Ever since coming to this world and meeting Roxy, I have always relied on her.

She taught me magic and language.

Befriending Sylphy, in some ways, was thanks to Roxy as well.

Even though the one that cured my ED was Sylphy, what supported me for those 3 years was that precious thing that Roxy gave me.

I could never return that kindness.

Moreover, she even used her body to comfort me.

Even though it's her first time, she still put herself forward to help me.

Helped the me who fell into the abyss.

Helping a useless trash like me.

How can I just throw her away once things are over?

What kind of etiquette is that?

...No, I can't just play pretend anymore.

Help?

Etiquette?

None of that matters.

I like Roxy.

I love her.

If asked who I like better, Sylphy or her, I won't know how to answer.

The ways I like them are different.

Because I wavered.

It ended up like this.

It ended up that I like Sylphy and Roxy at the same time.

But I promised to be faithful to Sylphy.

Even though I broke that promise, a promise is a promise.

Even though I broke it, I must continue to respect it.

But, Sylphy has said, [A mistress is fine.]

But I pushed that away and promised to love her only.

I promised her!

Back then, without a doubt, Sylphy felt happiness from that.

I can't betray her.

"I'm really thankful. But, to be honest, I'm already married, and I'll soon have a child. Because of that, acting like lovers like this, well, although I'm sorry, can we stop this?"

Roxy's shoulders shivered.

Then, she murmurs,

"I already knew about your marriage. Elinalise already told me."

"Ah, is that so?"

Doing this even though she knew.

In that case, that means..

What's going on?

"Our relationship, I know. Rudi, you don't have to worry. I'm just someone who took advantage of Rudi in his moment of weakness."

Roxy spoke candidly without any variance.

"I know well in normal circumstances, Rudi would never touch someone as plain as me."

"Plain? That's not true at all."

"You don't have to comfort me. I'm very aware."

Roxy's body is indeed a little plain.

Not a lot of curves, and very tiny too.

As for a woman's charm, she'd lose to Sylphy.

In another words, lolita-size.

But I'm the kind of guy that would say [This is perfect!]

"Please don't worry.

I have no plan of forcing myself into Rudi's life.

I just want to be Rudi's left hand during this trip...

After this trip is over, Rudi doesn't have to worry about me anymore. Please take good care of your wife."

Roxy stared at me with some hesitation as she said that.

"I understand."

"..."

But the fact that Roxy saved me wouldn't change.

It can't be over like this.

"Please let me return the favor somehow. Is there anything I can do?"

"Favor?"

Roxy looks at me in shock.

"Yes, anything in my power, anything would do."

Roxy's eyes sparkle.

Ahh, did I say something terrible?

Anything can be very bad.

But with all that Roxy's done for me, "anything" is perfectly reasonable.

"Eh, then, well."

"Oh"

"... Would you listen to my explanation? Just listening is fine."

"Oh?"

Explanation.

Explanation for what?

"Okay, I understand. Please speak."

"..."

Roxy fell silent for a while.

Then, murmuring, she begins to speak.

"I, it was love at first sight."

"With whom?"

"Eh?"

"It couldn't be dad?"

"No, it's Rudi, when Rudi came into the Labyrinth to save me."

Our reunion.

That time my attitude towards Roxy was too ridiculous. I couldn't help but start hurling.

To suddenly hug her, then hurl.

Why in the world would she fall for me?

I thought that'd scare her away from me instead.

"It couldn't be helped. At death's door, just when I had already given up, to be rescued by a guy in such a cool fashion, even I would be moved by something like that."

"I was cool?"

"Like how I always dreamt it."

Cool, eh?

Hearing that makes me want to giggle.

"In the Labyrinth, I was always watching you."

"Now you mention it, our sight did meet often, but you always looked away."

"That, because, looking straight at someone as cool as Rudi, isn't it really embarrassing?"

Embarrassed.

"... I know I'm no good."

Roxy spoke slowly.

"At the bar, Elinalise and I talked about it. What we do about Rudi. Elinalise and Gisu said don't worry, that you'll get back up on your own. But, when I thought about the time Rudi and I spent together at Buina village, Rudi and Paul training sword arts together, how close you two are together, I suddenly remembered when Rudi rode the horse for the first time. Back then, Rudi was very scared. Your body froze and you wouldn't move at all. Back then, I was thinking, ah, even though this kid has talents like an adult, he's still really fragile. Then, I remember again sword training, and when Rudi and Paul fought together in the Labyrinth."

"Seeing Rudy so depressed and not able to do anything, I realized that in reality, Rudi is more fragile than he looks... I think, to Rudi, Paul's existence isn't as important as everyone makes it out to be. When Paul dies, Rudi falling depressed isn't something unsolvable either. "

"Depressed to the point where you can't pick yourself back up. No, of course, I don't think I alone can help Rudi get better. I heard Rudi has someone you love already. If it's her, then if Rudi falls depressed, she can definitely help Rudi get better again."

"But that person isn't here. During Rudi's critical moment, she isn't here. That's why I thought, someone should definitely help Rudi. But Elinalise and Gisu refused to do anything. Lilia has Zenith's situation to take off. Then, I thought it ought to be me."

"Even though those sound just like a bunch of excuses, I didn't plan to do that kind of thing at the start. Even though I feel Rudi respects me, I'm just a midget. Even I don't know Rudi's lover, but if she's a relative of Elinalise, she must be a beauty. I thought Rudi definitely won't look at me. Having nothing to do with that, but at least I should take the opportunity and see what comes out of it."

"Yet in reality, Rudi suddenly grabs on to me. I never imagined that I would ever face Rudi so closely. I thought I might have a chance. I heard Elinalise and them talking about this. I thought that perhaps I can. Because it can't be helped, I like Rudi."

At this point, Roxy starts to cry.

Watching this scene, I felt a pain in my chest.

"... It's cruel. Marriage and stuff, they knew I like Rudi, yet they only told me afterwards. It's too cruel."

Who is she talking about here?

Not me.

It's probably Elinalise.

But I didn't report to Roxy about my marriage either.

Even though I don't have a particular reason to, I never saw an opportunity to mention it.

I'm equally responsible too.

But, imagine, if I met Sylphy again.

Saved by her, fallen for her.

Then naturally start to go after her.

Despite all that, Sylphy already has someone she liked.

I would definitely be hit hard too.

No doubt I would be hit hard.

... I want to repay Roxy.

Roxy deserves it.

"Then, Roxy Sensei."

"What is it?"

But, what do I do?

What can I do to repay her?

If I don't betray Sylphy, can I satisfy Roxy?

"Well, at least on this trip, can I realize Sensei's wishes? Before we get home, I can be Roxy-sensei's lover, then..."

Then what?

Nothing can be done.

I know that well myself.

No matter for me, or for Roxy, there's no way to fix anything.

To Sylphy, I'm a traitor.

Just delaying the inevitable, the worst idea.

"... That's a very attractive proposal."

Roxy said this as she tightly hugs my shoulder.

Then, she lightly taps my forehead.

"But, calm down, you don't have to say that."

"... I understand."

Don't have to.

As long as Roxy thinks so, then I will agree to it.

Up to now it's been like this, and from now on it'll be the same.

Is that okay, Sensei? —

A month later, we arrived at the Bazaar.

I bought some glassware as gifts for Sylphy and others.

Odd shaped glass bottles, a hair clip made of red glass engraved with tribal designs;

Hopefully they won't break before I get home.

Then, I also bought some rice.

Seedlings.

Although I don't think they would grow properly, but at least I want to try.

If not, I can eat it anyways.

That night, Elinalise brought the girls out for drinks.

Something like a girls night out.

Even though at their age, none of them can properly be called girls anymore.

Only Lilia refused, using taking care of Zenith as her excuse. Everyone else went, including Roxy.

Gisu and Talhand also left together chatting about something.

I stayed in to help Lilia taking care of Zenith.

Zenith spent all day in a daze.

She can walk, can eat, can go to the restroom.

But she can't speak, and doesn't show any initiative.

Following every instruction almost like a robot.

But even like this, she would occasionally stare straight at me.

Nothing in particular, just staring.

Maybe she can feel something from her own flesh and blood.

If there's a trigger to get her memories back... ah, probably not.

At this point, if Paul was here, what would happen?

Paul, what would he do?

Will he do well?

Or would he say, no good, failed?

At night, Roxy returned by my side.

Completely wasted.

She told everything about us two to Elinalise. Now she's regretting it.

This must be hard on Elinalise too.

She said she plans to treat Roxy as family.

She wants to help Roxy with her love, but doesn't want to interfere with her granddaughter's marriage.

It must be difficult for her.

Roxy uses her tiny fists to knock on my chest, then she went back to her own bed–

Next day.

We arrived at the rock's ledge.

The carriage usually can't reach this place, but I used magic to forcefully transfer it on top of the ledge.

On the first day, the armadillo was wary of the smell of griffons, and refused to move.

Looking at this, we might have to leave it at the Bazaar instead.

While I was thinking that, Gisu fed it meat from a griffon we defeated, and the armadillo suddenly felt something.

From the second day forth that heavy body started to move forward full of spirit.

Looks like it's a training method that an old friend from a Magic Race taught him.

Take down his predator in front and feed it the meat, and it'll naturally feel like being part of something stronger than its natural enemies, something like that.

I ask him whether the old friend was someone lizard-faced. He replied as expected of Senpai to know this and laughed.

After a day we entered the desert.

After 3 days we passed the sandstorm.

When I used sand storm magic to stop the wind, Roxy spoke quietly with a little jealousy [Even your earth magic has reached Saint level, amazing.]

From here on the number of monsters increased, so we're particularly careful.

Despite that, this time around we have plenty of manpower, all veterans.

Even if 1, 2 people fell into danger, reinforcements would come immediately.

The Sand Garuda that came first were taken out immediately.

Afterwards the velociraptor-like bipedal lizard were taken out too.

On the way, although I thought the Sand Worms could be dangerous, but Gisu found them all.

Seems like there's a trick to it.

After he explains it, if I look carefully, on the ground there are some faint donut-shaped outlines.

Once I pay attention, they become easy to spot.

Despite that, the desert isn't exactly flat, so often times I couldn't quite tell.

This is what they call experience.

Even though Succubi came, they were taken out without a problem.

With so many girls here, we don't have a problem in battle.

Gisu and I were affected by their pheromones, but with intermediate detoxification, it wasn't a problem.

Ah, only a slight bit of instincts were exposed, coming on to Roxy.

Frighteningly, Talhand is completely immune to the pheromones.

Elinalise said, [That's natural.]

I guess, this is what they call all muscles and no brain.

So cool.

Arrived at the ruins.

Just as planned, before we reached the ruins I blindfold everyone besides Elinalise.

Shera doesn't want to, but Vera was able to convince her.

Traveling with blindfolds.

Maybe it's all talk, but as long as they can't see the magic barrier, they won't know what happened.

The carriage couldn't fit the entrance, so we left it behind.

If it's only a week, then even Zenith can handle the trip home.

Now that we're here, a little slower is just fine.

The Armadillo fits through the entrance, so we brought it too.

Although I'm not sure whether it can survive the weather on the other side, at least it's better than leaving it as monster bait.

After taking off their blindfolds, Gisu and others look shocked when they suddenly saw the change in scenery.

From the desert, we suddenly arrive in the middle of a forest.

It must be shocking.

I told them very carefully, even if they noticed something, please don't leak it.

Anyways, just like that, we left the Begaritto Continent.

Just a bit more, and we'll be home.

The northern lands are blanketed in snow.

From the beginning of the journey, it has already been four months.

Fall, the season when the beast race is in heat, has long passed.

Only the long winter remains.

In the heart of the forest, even in the midst of dense vegetation, the snow reaches up to our waist.

"Elinalise and I will lead the way."

I head to the front after I said so.

I'll take down anything that shows up, magic is not a problem.

Zenith doesn't show much fatigue either.

The Armadillo shivers from the cold, but it's fine if it gets warmed by magic once in a while.

Everything's fine.

That night.

Elinalise and my turn for night watch.

She abruptly speaks up.

"Rudeus, I have something to say."

I can already guess what it'll be about.

It's Roxy.

I sat down in front of Elinalise.

If she reproaches me, I can immediately kneel down.

Elinalise sat down with her legs to the side.

What will she yell at me for?

Being unfaithful to Sylphy?

Or for sleeping with Roxy?

"Rudeus, you don't follow Milis, right?"

Elinanise speaks, but about neither of those things.

"...?"

I don't understand where she's going at.

But, to me, only one person is worthy of God.

That would never change.

"No."

"Also, Sylphy doesn't believe in Milis either?"

"Erm, that should be right."

Sylphy doesn't follow any religion.

Or rather, between the people I met, only Cliff really is a Milis follower.

Cliff would always wear the sign of Milis on his neck. Once every 7 days, he would go to the church for mass or something.

At least, Sylphy didn't wear any Milis symbol or attend service.

Maybe only Cliff does those things, so belief might be possible.

At least, I never heard about it.

"My Cliff, he's a Milis follower."

"Yeah."

I was just thinking about Cliff, and confirmed immediately.

"Do you know? For followers of Milis, one of the commandments are to marry only one wife."

"Something like that."

"To say, love that wife forever, even if it can be difficult, but that's also a form of love. That's true happiness."

That's how it ought to be.

To love another with all one's might, and at the same time be loved, that's what happiness is.

Even so, I still drifted and fell in love with Roxy.

I like Roxy, that's without a doubt.

But, those miserable days are still vivid in my memory.

The one who cured me and brought me happiness was Sylphy.

I want to use love to repay her.

This feeling is without a doubt too.

"But that's Cliff."

"Yes."

"I don't agree that there is anything inherently wrong with multiple lovers."

"Elinalise might think so, but won't that be unfaithful?"

I asked back, but Elinalise shook her head.

"If you cast Sylphy aside then it's another story, but as long as you properly love her, that isn't unfaithful."

"But if there're two partners, then the love to each of them becomes halved."

"It's not like you stick together all day, right? It's not halved. Although it might be less, it's not that bad."

Isn't less precisely the problem?

Human kind, are so dull against more, but also so sensitive with less.

If Sylphy felt I haven't loved her as much as I did, then that's a serious issue.

"Think about it this way. After Paul married Lilia, was Zenith unhappy?"

Unhappy, happy?

Although I thought Paul slighted her.

But now that I think about it, there was not really any unhappiness.

That's true even now.

Or rather, as a result Lilia and Zenith became even closer friends, even happier than before.

Even though when the two wives gang up on him, he seemed a little unhappy.

But that's also a form of happiness.

But now, that kind of happiness, is no more.

"... Anyways, Elinalise, what are you trying to say."

So I asked.

Thinking about Paul, I felt a tinge of pain.

If we keep going, it would only hurt more.

So, I decided to be blunt.

"Rudeus, marry Roxy. You like her, right?"

Having her say that kind of pisses me off.

"... Are you serious?"

"Oh, of course I am."

"Elinalise, should you be saying this? As Sylphy's grandma, shouldn't you consider Sylphy's happiness instead?"

I don't have a right to blame Elinalise.

The unfaithful I have no right.

Breaking my vow with Sylphy, sleeping with Roxy.

No matter what the situation is, those are the facts.

Yet here I am blaming someone else for this.

"Erm, I said so. Only I can say so."

Elinalise looked at me boastfully.

"Perhaps I can say this in a different way, but, before I was Sylphy's grandma, I had already become Roxy's close friend."

I didn't understand her right away.

But, soon after I realized it's about the order of things.

It's only after meeting Roxy that Elinalise met Sylphy.

"Truth be told, I can't take Roxy looking like so depressed anymore. That girl obviously wants to stay by your side. She clings on to you, yet plans to step back and leave. Only because she was a step too late."

Hearing that from her, Roxy really is very pitiful.

But, from Sylphy's perspective, Sylphy is pitiful too.

"That girl, if she separates with you, she would definitely suffer a cruel life. Who knows if a bad guy ends up taking advantage of her, treats her poorly, then finally sells her to a brothel for money, and in the end having children to unknown fathers."

"Isn't that a bit unrealistic?"

"Of the people I met, some girls have walked that path."

Her voice is earnest.

Is it a personal experience?

"I, even if I get blamed, want to see Roxy find happiness."

"I also want to, but-"

"Rudeus, if it's you it's possible. You can give Roxy and Sylphy love equally. You are Paul's son, you ought to have that type of aspiration."

Can I do it?

I can do it.

Yes, I can.

Because, I love them both equally in the first place, there's no reason I can't.

But is that really okay?

Can it be that simple?

Isn't that just wishful thinking on my part?

No.

...This is the temptation of the devil.

I can't listen.

"No, only Sylphy..."

"I didn't plan to say this, but–"

Elinalise interrupted me.

Then, quietly, continues.

"At our night out, I overheard that Roxy's didn't come this month."

"... Eh?"

Her period?

No, no point pretending. It's definitely that.

Eh, but that.

"Well, we don't know for sure yet..."

No, but we did it.

If it's that, then it's possible.

Afterwards, that day, Roxy punched my chest without any power.

Was that a hint?

Elinalise spies at me for a bit, continues.

"Rudeus, if Roxy is pregnant, what would you do?"

Hearing that, Paul's image suddenly comes to my mind.

Yes, that was the Paul from when Lilia was pregnant.

The Paul that doesn't deserve any sympathy.

Completely lost at what to do, I helped him.

Paul was also someone that deserves respect.

But I can't copy the him back then.

"... I would take responsibility."

"How?"

"Marry her."

Marry, so I say.

Somehow I felt forced.

Even so, I can't really say it.

Besides, after saying it, I suddenly feel a weight off my shoulders.

I like Sylphy.

But, I also want to marry Roxy.

I don't want Roxy to be stolen from me, I want to make her mine.

I'm so selfish.

After telling Sylphy those words, and even having a child.

Then suddenly wanting another woman.

Unforgivable.

Considering all that, I'm basically the scum of mankind.

Until now, I always said that Paul is scum.

But, I'm also a man.

I fell for two women, and I want them both.

If I get them both, what's wrong with that?

Just like Paul.

If this led to falling apart with Sylphy and Roxy leaving me.

Then I would lose them both, just like that.

Em, that's right.

This isn't just my problem.

"... If Roxy-sensei and Sylphy would agree, then that's another matter."

"Alright, then I'll go call Roxy over."

"Eh?"

Elinalise stood up as she said so.

And suddenly went into a nearby tent.

How fast.

Soon after, Roxy came out alone.

Doesn't look like she has been asleep.

She looks at me nervously.

Maybe Elinalise already said something to her.

"Do you have something to tell me, Rudi?"

Roxy sat down in front of me.

As a result, I also straighten up.

What do I say.

Isn't this too fast?

I haven't thought about what to say yet.

No, no point in worrying anymore.

"Well, it's about what I said before."

"Oh."

"I... like Sensei. From the start I always liked Sensei. Not only like, but also respect. Although Sensei may worry that your magic may not be as strong as mine, but that doesn't matter to me. The magic that Sensei taught me saved my life many times. It's because of Sensei that I'm still alive."

Roxy's face flushes red.

My face probably is flushing red now too.

Face-to-face like this is really embarrassing.

"That, I'm really grateful that you felt this way."

"But, well, I already have a wife."

"Oh, so I have heard."

Please be my second wife.

Can I say that?

Isn't that really inappropriate?

Can't I say it any better?

What do I do?

But, I still have to say it.

No matter how I say it, the results will be the same.

I won't separate with Sylphy, and I also want to have Roxy.

Also, I need to prepare myself to talk to Sylphy afterwards.

To do something like this before Sylphy knows it.

I'm truly scum.

But, if I don't say it now.

Roxy might leave.

She's the kind of person to leave for a new journey immediately after.

If I don't keep her back beforehand, I might not have another chance.

— That's enough.

Even if I get called scum afterwards, I don't care.

"My wife, her name is Syphiette Greyrat. Originally, she didn't have a last name, just Syphiette."

"Oh, so I have heard."

"Roxy, would you also change your name to Roxy Greyrat?"

Roxy looked shocked all the sudden.

Yet, soon she understood what I meant and bit her lips.

But, quickly her face returned to her usual seriousness.

"... For you to say that, I'm really grateful, but shouldn't you gain your wife's approval first?"

Of course, I need to discuss this with Sylphy.

To become family with someone she never met before.

I need to explain it to my sisters as well.

Lilia too, I need to tell her also.

"I need to gain her approval."

"In that case–"

I was rejected.

Of course, Roxy wished that I only pick her.

Just when that thought came to me,

"Then, after you do that, please ask me again."

In the flurry of snow, Roxy said in her usual seriousness.

[After that, ask again.]

The fact that she didn't refuse me warms my heart.

We approached Magic City Sharia.

I told Lilia about Roxy.

She looked expressionless as she usually is,

"Ah, I understand."

That's it.

She doesn't particularly blame me.

Maybe it's because she too was in Roxy's position.

That's probably not it. Outside of Milis, this world doesn't have a one-husband one-wife tradition in the first place.

Regardless, my agreement with Roxy, to gain the approval of Lilia helped take some weight off my shoulders.

Next, once I get home and report to Sylphy the journey, I need to put my head down for Roxy.

Telling Aisha and Norn about Roxy weighs heavily on me too.

But, they need to accept this too.

Will Norn will get angry and blame me?

Will Aisha start crying and blame me?

I won't run away.

I won't regret.

"... Regret?"

Just now, I feel a sudden unease.

It's about the Hitogami's prophecy.

He said I will regret.

It's the truth, Paul's dead, Zenith became an invalid, and I lost my left hand.

We lost many things.

But, right now for some reason I don't feel any regret.

Perhaps it's all thanks to Roxy, not an ounce of regret.

It's true, I once thought, perhaps if I was stronger.

If only I learned more about sword art.

If only I was strong enough to beat the hydra.

It's true I thought about that once.

But, at the same time, the feeling of [It can't be helped] rang strong and true.

In this world, I'm not fit for battle.

I don't have Fighting Spirit, nor have an idea on how to wear it.

Swordsmanship too, without Fighting Spirit, I can't get better.

Moreover the enemy was a magic immune hydra, even if I learned King-class magic, it would be pointless.

Even though, I did think there might be something else...

But, even that doesn't leave me any regrets.

Paul is dead.

But, because of his sacrifice, I could now face my past.

Even though I troubled everyone, even though everyone was concerned, but in the end, I think I still came up on top.

Because of that, I don't regret.

Only scars remain.

Right, only scars.

My trip to the Begaritto Continent left only scars.

No regrets.

In that case, regret, would it be what happens next?

Don't tell me.

Something happened to the sisters that I left behind?

No, recalling what that Hitogami said.

He mentioned something about Pursena and Rinia.

Or maybe, it's something to do with them?

Unless it's about getting their help to solve something.

Or maybe, don't tell me.

It's the pregnant Sylphy...

Outside of these, what else can I regret?

Even with this unease, we can't travel any faster.

The weather worsened, the snow fell heavier.

Everyone's fine, but Zenith seems fatigued, so I made a saddle with Earth Magic and let her ride instead.

The Armadillo seems to be suffering from the chill and about to die any time now.

Maybe I should have left it at the desert.

No, it's too late already.

At least, before it dies it deserves a name.

Jirou.

It'll be Jirou.

Do your best, Jirou!

5 days later we reached the path we came on.

From here it takes 10 days to reach Sharia.

Considering the entire journey, this isn't really long.

But, now that we're here, this felt like the longest part of them all.

We arrived at Magic City Sharia.

I head straight towards home.

I can feel my pace quicken.

"Hey, Senpai, what's up? Your face is a bit pale, maybe you should use a little detox?"

Gisu looks quite worried in his banter.

But, I completely ignore him and keep moving forward.

"Oh, this is the city center right. Well, let's stay here then, so many people going over to Senpai's would just be a bother–"

I didn't bother to listen to whoever that said that behind me.

"Hey, Senpai... Rudeus!"

Without realizing it, I broke into a run.

Leaving everyone behind, I rush towards home.

I lived here for over a year, the path I always jogged on, I ran.

I completely ignored everyone around me.

Always on the edge of falling over, I ran.

It can't be helped, my balance is terrible right now.

Without a left hand, I can't run properly.

I almost tipped over before someone held me back up.

"What are you in a rush for?"

It's Elinalise.

"No, I just have a little something."

"... What is it? You just start panicking all of a sudden. What happened?"

"Ah, no, well. I don't know why, but I felt like Sylphy is in danger."

"Danger? For what reason?"

"None, really."

I shake off Elinalise and start pacing ahead.

This unease, I need to clear it as soon as possible.

Home is right before my eyes.

If according to plan, then Sylphy's tummy should be big now, so she should be home.

What if she already gave birth, then wouldn't that be premature?

In that case, don't tell me—

Anything is fine.

Anything is fine, I don't just want anything bad to happen.

At my doorstep.

Even though the snow begins to pile up, but everything looks about the same as before.

There are trees and shrubs in the yard now.

Is that Aisha's doing?

It feels more gorgeous now.

I took out my key from the baggage.

Insert it into the keyhole, it rattles a bit.

The key felt cold; my hand is shaking.

It won't open; it won't turn.

"Ugh"

I put my hand on the door knock and rattle the icy door.

"Is it already open?"

Hearing that from Elinalise behind me, I grabbed the doorknob.

Pushing it aside, the door opens.

Be more careful!

I walked in as I thought so and stare right at the person behind it.

"B-brother!?"

"Aisha... is everything fine?"

"What's fine?"

Aisha stared dumbfounded from me to the Elinalise besides me.

Then, also to behind me.

I looked back, Roxy was panting there.

Anyways, I grabbed onto Aisha's shoulders.

Aisha seemed to have felt something odd on her right and stared in that direction. Her eyes widen.

In shock she stares between my hand and face.

"Eh, what happened, brother, your hand?"

"You're fine. Then Sylphy?"

"Eh? Eh... Em, Sylphy-sama, she's right here?"

Sylphy looks dumbfounded, standing right behind her.

Her tummy got bigger.

Ah, her breasts got bigger too.

If I remember correctly, it should be 7-8 months by now.

She'll start lactating soon.

No, either way is fine.

"Rudi... W-what's wrong?"

"Sylphy, it's fine? Did anything happen?"

"Eh? Em, everyone's doing well, because Aisha was trying hard too."

Sylphy is okay.

Ah, it's obvious just looking at her.

"Then everyone else, Norn? Cliff and Zanoba and people, they're all alright?"

"Eh? Alright? Nothing at all happened?"

"Nobody is sick or injured?"

"Em, em, nothing particularly..."

Sylphy looks dumbstruck.

I'm completely lost at what I'm trying to say.

Ah, I see.

Me.

I finally get it, nothing at all happened.

"B-brother...?"

Coming back to my senses, Aisha's face suddenly looked higher.

She sure grew.

No, I collapsed.

"Right."

All my strength left me.

In the end, that regret, is Paul's death.

Also, that about my past parents.

I was overthinking it.

"Aa..."

Realizing this, I finally let out a breath.

"Thank goodness."

Right then, Sylphy slowly walks up to me, placing her hand on my shoulder.

I feel the warmth from her hand slowly spreading from my shoulders.

Quickly she kneeled down, slowly spread her hand over my back.

I wrapped my arms around her back.

Thinking on one hand, that without my left I couldn't hug her tight, I hug her tightly with my other.

I can smell Sylphy's fragrance.

"Rudi... welcome home."

Paul, Zenith.

And also Roxy.

They are a lot that I must talk about.

I also need to go welcome in the friends that have been waiting in the plaza.

Because I rushed back here alone.

I was just anxious.

Nothing happened, just take my time.

But first, there's something I need to say.

"I'm back."

I am back.

Things were a little bit flustered.

First off, Aisha ran to the school to retrieve Norn.

Was she being considerate because of the situation with Roxy? Or was it difficult to stay? Or was it because I called back Gisu?

It seems that Elinalise's original plan had been to return to Cliff at once, but she was enduring it for now.

Until they returned here, from Sylphy, I asked her about what happened here while I was away.

Sylphy, understanding that I prioritized hearing about what happened here beforehand, didn't complain, and began explaining.

First of all, the condition of Sylphy.

Everything seems to be progressing favorably.

According to what the doctor said, the matter of the baby being born was proceeding as well as can be expected.

It seems all of my companions have been keeping well, also.

When some minor incident occurred at the school the other day, Nanahoshi appeared suddenly and settled the matter.

Doing something for someone of this world, did she finally change her way of thinking a little?

Aisha and Norn managed to get along fine without any injuries or illnesses.

Aisha it seems, has rapidly been expanding her interest in gardening,

It seems she has begun cultivating a new type of plant in her room.

Should I take the time to have her show me?

At school, it seems Norn's existence has become something like that of an idol.

There is even something like a Fan club that exists too.

Norn is rather cute after all.

Even Zanoba, Cliff, Rinia, and Pursena would sometimes drop by the house to check on the state of things.

It seems Ariel had mumbled some complaints about me not stopping by and offering greetings.

Ah, that's right; I seemed to have forgotten to do that.

I will apologize the next time I see her.

I should try not to increase my debts to her any further.

At any rate, just from what I've heard, everyone seems to be doing fine.

And when time allows, I will fill the others in on what happened as well.

However, it seems there have been no sightings of Badigadi.

Well, it's not like anything will happen to an immortal guy like him anyway.

So what has happened in this last half-year?

My cute as ever Sylphy put a finger to her chin, and gives it some thought.

"Really, nothing and nobody of incident, huh?"

"That's right. Nothing at all happened that Rudi needs to be concerned with."

"I see."

"Rather than that, let's talk about you, Rudi. What happened with you?"

"Ah. I'll tell you. However, it will have to be after everyone has gathered. There are certain reasons for this."

"...Okay. Ah, I'm so glad you came back."

So, in the place we were chatting, Roxy has returned.

I invite Gisu and company into the living room:

Gisu, Talhand, Lilia, Vera, Shera, Elinalise, and Roxy.

With Sylphy and I, does that make nine people?

Even with so many people in the room, it is wide enough to accommodate many more.

"Oh, is that Senpai's wife? Hehe, she's a cute one, isn't she? You are a lucky man, Senpai."

"That is also my grandchild!"

"Well, it seems that even this lewd bitch's defective swellings can occasionally become a shining jewel."

"What did you say!?"

I give a sidelong glance to the back-and-forth going on between Elinalise and Gisu, and then the two of them greet Sylphy properly.

Sylphy sits up straight, and returns the greetings in a formal manner.

"Nice to meet you, I am called Roxy...Migurdia."

"Roxy you say? Then you are the Shisho who Rudi is always in high praise of?"

"Yes, well sort of...I don't know if I'm quite the person all of Rudi's prideful bragging has made me out to be."

"How do you do? I always hear stories about you from Rudi, I am Sylphiette, it is my honor to finally meet you."

"L-, likewise..."

Roxy somehow made things very awkward.

Even though I had a talk with her about this kind of thing just the other day, of course it would still turn out like this.

However, that conversation is long gone.

"It's been a while, Sylphiette-sama."

"Lilia-san, how long it's been!"

Towards Sylphy, Lilia respectfully straightens herself, and deeply bows.

Sylphy seemed happy with the reunion, and her smile spread wide across her face.

However, soon that smile became strained.

"Umm, the way you just addressed me as Sylphiette-sama...could I have you call me Sylphy like you did back then?"

"I cannot. It is because you have become the wife of Rudeus-sama, so it is not possible to do it like before."

"Is, is that so..."

Sylphy felt a sense of obligation.

Maybe it was because Sylphy had been taught how to manage all of the household affairs from Lilia.

Putting it in the right context, Lilia was something like Sylphy's Shisho.

Much like how Roxy was for me.

In that way, it's only natural one gives them their due respect.

"Then, Auntie Zenith, it's been a while since I've seen you as well."

Finally,

Sylphy had spoken to Zenith.

"...Umm...Auntie Zenith?"

"..."

Zenith just seemed to space out at the repeated calls of Sylphy.

"Umm..."

Sylphy saw all of the troubled faces of the gathered.

I wonder if she was not having pleasant thoughts about being married to me, her face seemed to say it after all.

"Sylphy. The thing with Father and Mother is... well, when Norn returns I'll explain it all."

"Ah, that reminds me, I haven't seen Paul-san yet..."

After I mentioned him, Sylphy began looking around for Paul.

But partway looking, she seems to understand something seeing all the somber faces.

And she closes her mouth and keeps silent.

It was silent until Norn came back.

Everyone that was gathered here had reached this implicit understanding.

After a short time had passed, Aisha and Norn had returned.

The both of them had run out of breath hurrying back.

"Br, brother. It's been a long journey for you, thank you for all your hard work!"

Norn, while still breathing raggedly, bows her head low.

And, as she saw my hand, her face seems to be startled.

"Brother, your hand, are you sure you are all right?"

"Don't you worry, I'm fine. Although it makes a number of things inconvenient for me, I'm at least not feeling any pain from it."

Compared to what I have to talk about after this; my left hand is a rather trivial matter.

"If, if you say so."

Norn while still breathing heavily, surveys the room restlessly, she mutters a "Huh?" while she sits down in one of the chairs.

Aisha following suit, comes over by me, and asks me one thing.

"...Onii-sama, before you begin your talk, wouldn't it be better if I served everyone tea first?"

"That's a good idea. I'll leave it to you, since explaining everything may take some time."

"Ah, sorry. That's really something I should have done, isn't it? ...I'll lend you a hand."

"No, I'll be fine without troubling the Missus."

After asking it of her, Aisha begins to move immediately.

Tea for everyone is prepared, everyone's luggage is moved together into a single place, jackets wet with snow are placed on hangers, everyone is given house-slippers to replace their travelling shoes, and the wet shoot is dried near the side of the fireplace.

For no apparent reason, I could only watch her movements attentively.

But then, it isn't only just I who is watching.

She is also under the watchful gaze of Lilia.

If I stop to think about it: it is always Lilia hard at work like this, back at the scene of the Labyrinth search.

That girl, while everyone else fell into silence, is unable to do anything.

It is a rare moment.

"Aisha."

Taking the right moment when the work of Aisha could be put on hold, Lilia calls out to her daughter.

"Yes, what is the matter, Mother?"

"It seems that you have been taking care not to trouble Rudeus-sama, and have been working here properly."

"Yes."

"Even though you happen to be related to Rudeus-sama by blood, do not forget that he is the benefactor of your life, as well. From here on out, don't lose focus, and always accomplish your duty properly as the household's maid."

"Yes. Mother."

Aisha's reply was strong, and Lilia's was professional.

It was not the conversation of a parent and child.

Thinking further on it, this is probably because they haven't met in such a long time.

Even though, I still think it would be good for the both of them to have a heartwarming conversation.

Well, it might be that right now, Lilia might just be acting prudent.

Because from this point on, I have to explain a difficult thing:

"Now that everyone is here, I will begin the talk."

Though I am feeling reluctant, I have no other choice but to talk.

Because of the fact that Paul isn't here to do it.

"Umm, brother, Father isn't here yet..."

Norn chimes in while sounding insecure.

I wonder how angry she will be.

She begged me to help dad, and I told her to leave it to me.

And then to hear it from me that her father has died.

I wonder, will you blame me?

If you need to blame, then it is fine if you blame me.

Because I couldn't fulfill the wish of Norn.

I look around to everyone, and then I spoke,

"Father...Paul Grayrat has passed away."

"Ehh...?"

Norn raises a short voice of bewilderment.

Sylphy's face tries to conceal a painful expression.

Aisha's eyes open wide, and she clenches her fist tightly.

"These are his heirlooms to the family."

As I say so, I placed, one-by-one, on the table the remaining equipment that once belonged to Paul.

Sword, Tantou, Armor, and the Funerary Urn.

There, were the four articles of the dearly departed.

"...W, why!?"

Norn stands up, and draws close to me.

"Even though you went there! Why is it that father had to die!?"

"I'm sorry...I just wasn't strong enough."

"But, brother...!"

Norn, as it is, keeps pressing me, she is about to grab me by the lapels.

However, her momentum seems to stall.

"....."

My lost left hand is reflected in her eyes.

Between my left hand, the Heirlooms on the table, and my face, Norn's glance comes and goes.

Almost instantly, Norn's eyes begin to gather many tears.

Although I feel guilty, I continue speaking,

"Alright, from here on, I will explain in detail what happened."

"...*sob*...O-kay."

From behind, Aisha places a hand on Norn's shoulder.

"Now now, Norn-nee."

"I'm fine, I get it already...!"

Norn shakes off Aisha's hand, and returns to her seat.

Aisha has remained standing idly by, but soon returns at once behind Sylphy.

"Now then, where should I begin explaining it from first—"

I gave a summary explanation for each of the events that happened.

Traveling together with Elinalise to Lapan, and then meeting Paul there again.

Relying on the information about the whereabouts of Zenith; capturing the Teleport Labyrinth with Paul and company.

Having a smooth ride up until the end; then having a hard fight with the Guardian. Me losing my hand and Paul losing his life.

Though we rescued Zenith, she had become an invalid.

On the way out, Gisu handled the supplements, and slowly, one at a time, got us able to talk again.

Finally, Norn has heard it.

"Then, it's like neither Father nor Mother were saved at all?"

"I'm afraid so."

With those words, I nod slowly.

It seems like Norn's hair would stand on end.

However, she did not explode.

While she bit down on her lower lip, she keeps staring at my left hand.

"Did brother really try his best?"

"I believe I gave all that I had to it."

"Then, even if Brother gave it his best, and it still ended up this bad, it wouldn't have mattered who went..."

Norn tries to say something that would help her regain her composure.

However, just as quickly tears come back into her eyes.

"But, at any rate...Father's death, not serving any real purpose...*sob*...Wa...WAAaaaaaaaah"

She crumbles then, and large tears begin spilling out like rain, it couldn't be stopped any longer.

She cries.

Norn cries.

She cries loudly.

It is a cry that pierces deeply into the heart.

It is a voice crying out for anyone to give her some relief to her pain.

Norn cries magnificently.

Crying, and crying.

Crying with "waah-waah."

She cries, at the thing that all the others up until now could not grieve over.

We all listen to it, Norn's heartbreaking cry.

It takes a short while.

But Norn finally stops crying.

Her eyes are swollen red, and her throat makes a *hic hic* sound.

But then, she turns towards me, and her eyes hold, but a single determination in them.

"Brother..."

"What is it?"

"That is, Papa's sword, I...*hic*, is it alright...that I can have it...?"

What Norn was pointing at is Paul's beloved sword.

The sword Paul already had at the time I was born.

Paul has owned this sword for a very long time.

And was always carried on his body.

"Ah. That's right. You must take care of it. However you must not go using it recklessly."

"...?"

"Just because you have a sword, you should not make the mistake of thinking that merely having it makes you strong."

That, was it around the time of my fifth birthday?

When Paul gave a sword to me, and said the same thing?

"Under...stood."

After telling Norn such a thing, she holds the sword in her arms tightly to her chest.

I believe she is a strong child.

In a situation like this, it wouldn't be strange if she shuts herself away in a room and just cries.

She properly faced Paul's death.

Unlike I, who made the grave mistake of not being able to properly crawl back up again without having to receive Roxy's rescuing.

Truly, she is such a strong child.

As far as the other Heirlooms, they will be distributed in the family.

Aisha chose the Tantou, and I was left with the Armor.

I will make a grave later for the urn, with the intention to bury it there.

Though, by the time I finish thinking about that intention, Zenith casually moves to the table, and picks up the armor.

"...Mother?"

"....."

Even if I call out to her, Zenith says nothing.

As usual, she just continues on as an invalid.

However, the movement she makes is as if she understood what kind of scene had just unfolded before her.

Is it a coincidence?

No, the part of Zenith, that is the nucleus of Zenith, may still be intact inside of her.

At any rate, even though it became such a state that I had no memento for myself, I'm fine with it.

Because there are so many other things that only I had received from Paul.

"Now then, the next part is the matter concerning Mother."

I explain the condition of Zenith once again.

How there was a loss of memory, and how most of the stuff that makes her Zenith is gone.

"Can she be healed?"

I shake my head at the question Sylphy poses.

"I don't know."

For now, my intention is to have a doctor of healing techniques take a look at the situation with Zenith.

Although I have not heard of a Healing magic that can cure memory loss, as of yet,

And, even if I thought about it, I wouldn't even know where to begin looking for the origin.

Loss of memory from being confined in a magic crystal.

Could it be something a bit like an oxygen deficiency disease?

Since it's not something I could describe, I also think that makes the possibility of it being healed low, as well.

In this world, if you suffer damage to the brain, there is no medical technology to cure you.

At the very least, it's not something applying Advanced grade healing magic can cure.

In the case of mangas, the usual method is to have them receive a sudden shock to be cured, but I would rather avoid coming to test that method out with Zenith.

However, will curing it really be a blessing?

Paul died trying to save Zenith.

And Zenith might come to blame herself.

And if that's the case, if her memory doesn't return, she might possibly be happy.

...No, there shouldn't be any reasoning like that.

There should be efforts to recover her memories.

"At any rate, it is necessary to find treatment and nursing for Mother."

Nursing.

Supposing for a moment that in my former life my parents did not die, and instead became old and bedridden.

Would it have been arranged that I am the one to provide the nursing care?

"It is my wish to have Mother live together in this house with us."

From the outset, so as to not disturb my daily life; Lilia had proposed that a separate room be rented.

Because there was the gold earned from the conquered Teleport Labyrinth, I could live comfortably for at least 10 more years in this town.

However, I vetoed that proposal.

I could not allow such a thing after all.

After all that, Paul who died would never forgive me if I did that.

"Though I will be leaving the majority of the care to Lilia-san, everyone here should be able to help with any minor inconveniences."

"I understand. I will also try my best too."

Sylphy also acknowledged it, and pleasantly agrees to it as well.

Nobody seems to have any objection to it.

Even if they did, I am not going to let an objection stand in the way.

Even Paul's last feeling on this matter before dying was about protecting Zenith.

What was the real meaning behind those words? Even now, I still haven't a clue.

Since Paul died, I have to be the one to protect Zenith now.

Well, even though I say nursing, it's not exactly like Zenith has Alzheimer's.

Rather it's more like she has become an empty shell.

And with Lilia providing constant supervision, everything should be fine.

However, for that to work there is a certain necessary arrangement that needs to be taken care of first.

"Umm, then that means, that mother will also be living here, as well?"

Aisha seems to lament over that question.

It is a voice of someone perplexed or anxious.

"Yes. Aisha. It seems for some time I will be in the care of Rudeus-sama."

Is Lilia something like an obstruction for Aisha, after all?

Because Lilia is an education-minded mother.

The Aisha released from under Lilia, seemingly spending every day happily away.

But, if Aisha started to become dissatisfied from now on, it might not be good.

I suppose, if I suddenly start speaking of such things, of course, Aisha couldn't help becoming perfectly angry with me.

"Such things like allotment of work will have to be done won't they...?"

"That's something we can discuss later. I intend to do work that mainly centers around caring for Zenith, however, I will also take care of any work that may pile up as well."

"...Understood."

Aisha did not voice dissatisfaction.

Maybe she is weak when it comes to her mother?

A hard voice and a gloomy expression,

Seeing that appearance on Aisha, the one who intervenes is Norn.

"Aisha-nee."

Norn places her hand on Aisha's shoulder and whispers away.

"It's us, you don't have to hold it back any more, you know?"

Aisha, hearing those words, took turns looking at me, Lilia, and Norn.

Lilia also watches me again, as well.

I have no idea what is being requested of me.

However, I nod anyway, for the time being.

Then, Aisha suddenly stands up and throws her arms around Lilia.

"M, Mom...! You are uninjured, and safe, thank goodness!"

Aisha's face is buried in the stomach of Lilia while she cries.

"I'm home, Aisha..."

Lilia, with a gentle-looking expression strokes the head of her daughter.

I see.

Of course, it's like that.

Of course, Aisha would have a complicated heart as well.

For her, Lilia is mother.

Of course, it goes without saying there are the feelings that pray for the peace of Paul and Zenith as well.

However, the feeling that prayed for the safety of Lilia should of course be stronger too.

And Lilia had actually managed to come back safely.

Of course, it's a situation where one shouldn't remain obediently composed.

Please forgive this guy who ever doubted such a thing.

Afterwards, we spoke of minor details, and conclude the return report.

There is then the financial allocation, at the behest of Gisu.

An enormous fortune extends to all hands involved.

However, even this was not enough to cheer the faces of everyone up.

"Now then, that is, we should probably be sounding out a hotel to stay at for now."

At the same time the report had ended, Gisu stands up.

Everyone else also seems to reel into it, Vera, Shera, and Talhand all stood up.

I try to detain them in a hurry.

"Just for today, wouldn't it be fine if everyone stayed?"

"Eh, Senpai? There's things you need to do that outsiders would make troublesome, plus I'm a bit insensitive when it comes to these kinds of things..."

With the words Gisu offered as the natural course of action, the three of them each grab their luggage,

They put on the shoes and jackets that had not finished drying as well.

"....."

After all, I at least determined to see them off from the entrance way.

To the four people who I tried to detain when they tried to make their exit, I call out to them,

"Everyone. For a long time, my father has received your assistance, I am truly thankful for all you have done for him."

I bowed especially deeply towards Vera and Shera.

Those two had been helping Paul since they were in Milishion.

Though, I did not have too many conversations with them, they had played an important support role when it came to the Teleport Labyrinth.

The distinguished shadows.

{ C-Editor's note: The behind the scenes assistants. }

"It's nothing. Rather, we are sorry, that we weren't able to be of more use."

"When you find the place for Captain Paul's grave, please tell me later on."

The answer from those two was short.

For those girls, I wonder what kind of a person was Paul to them.

Even after the search group was disbanded, they followed him to Begaritto.

Maybe it was some kind of special relationship.

However, even if there was something about Paul that endeared him to them, that doesn't apply to me.

"From here on out, what are your plans?"

"When winter ends, we'll return to Asura Kingdom. There are people from the search group who helped us out back then, we need to pay back."

"Is that so, well then take care of yourselves!"

"Right, Rudeus-san also, even if things seem difficult from now on, take care of yourself."

To them, once more, I bow my head deeply, while they disappear into the snow.

The search group.

Now, I remember, the story of Zenith's family assisting Paul's activities with a bit of financial support.

That Zenith is safe...cannot be said, however, I should probably report on how things have become.

But, even if I send so many letters, I have no idea when or if they will properly reach her family.

While I think this, Gisu taps my shoulder.

"See you then, Senpai."

"Gisu-san, Talhand-san."

"What is it? Ah, here comes that annoying face."

"...You two, what are your plans from here on out?"

When I said it, Gisu scratches his head for a bit.

"We intend to head to Asura as well. We have Begaritto money, and the money from the magic items that we want to exchange."

"Do you plan to exchange it all?"

"Pretty much, though I have a few plans to use some of it on myself."

I also have some magic items remaining on hand.

Though I want to do some inquiries on the effects these items happen to have.

One of them is a dagger that is such a match I could substitute it for Paul's Tantou.

Though for the time being, unless I find a good use for it, I plan to put it into the basement's storehouse.

If I happen upon a time when I need to sell it for money, it will be fine to sell it off then.

Even some of the items with the more ridiculous effects, can be exchanged for a large fortune.

However, the stone that absorbs magic, that is a different matter.

If possible, I want to study it in detail when I have the time.

So that should I fight against a similar opponent, I can try and discover a method on how to deal with it, instead of finding myself once again unable to do anything.

Though, it's possible that I might not learn anything at all from it; it's better that I try, than do nothing at all.

"If Senpai wants, I can take some of your items to Asura? If I sell them there, I can fetch a much higher profit, if that suits you?"

In Asura Kingdom, the prices of items are high, and the money of Asura Kingdom can pretty much be spent anywhere on Central Continent.

If you want to sell an item, doing so in Asura is the best idea.

"So, is it your plan then on the way back to run away after squandering all that money on gambling?"

"Oh, wai, no, what? Do you really think I'd take Senpai's money and run?"

Gisu tries to deflect, but his eyes are swimming around suspiciously.

If he took an item from me, he might really have intended to use the proceeds to go gambling.

Well, it's fine, even if that's how he is, I am indebted to Gisu.

After all, without this guy, there was no way we would have been able to traverse the Teleport Labyrinth.

"I'm kidding."

"Well, I live the life of a gambler after all, huh?"

Gisu said so, raised the sides of his mouth, and laughs in a nihilistic way.

"Then, after that?"

"Return to adventuring. Besides, there is still so much more we want to do."

"I see."

"Well, I'll be around here until winter is over, wasting away my free time drinking sake. You haven't forgotten your promise, to introduce me to a nice female monkey, now, have you? My Senpai in marriage and children would certainly holds some easy access to some fine merchandise like that, right? Heh heh heh."

Yeah, certainly Gisu isn't planning on leaving, just yet.

However, one thing I know about this man named Gisu, is that when it is time for him to leave, he won't give his regards.

He's the kind of guy who just has to up and disappear.

So, I must finish giving gratitude properly now, before the chance escapes me.

"Gisu-san..."

"Senpai. Your tone's been strange for a while now y'know? How about you just say, [Oi, newbie] like you usually do?"

"...Why do you seem to be fixed on that whole newbie thing?"

When I said that, Gisu laughed hard.

"It's a Jinx!"

Jinx.

That word, given so inadequately as a reason, made my heart fall with a thump.

Well, because he says it's the jinx, it can't be helped.

"At any rate, to the both of you, for everything you have helped with up until now, I thank you very much."

"It's fine like this. Then, stay healthy, Senpai."

When I bow deeply, Gisu begins to walk, waving his hand as he does.

"Hmm, you know, there's no way to thank your friends properly. Paul wasn't one for saying it. You don't need to express your gratitude like that with us...is all."

Talhand said that while shaking his heavy body trying to walk alongside Gisu.

I watch the backs of those two until they disappear from my view.

"All men want to have times when they can act cool, don't they?"

Suddenly when I noticed, Elinalise had appeared next to me.

While I was paying my parting respects, it seems Sylphy had some kind of conversation with her.

I wonder what it was about?

If it was about a certain topic, I had told her before that I already intended to talk about everything properly with Sylphy.

Because of Elinalise's meddling with that situation, she might have been laying the groundwork for it just now.

Honestly, even though I'm grateful for her concerns, I am feeling a bit reluctant.

"Well then, I am heading over to Cliff's place. I'm way past my limit already."

Elinalise said something suggestive, and pats her abdominal region.

It seems I've given her a fair share of hardships as well.

With the going and coming back, she had relations with about three people that I am at least aware of.

The usual thing as always, though she laughs it off and says not to mind it, it was not something I could laugh away.

"Even you Elinalise-san, I'm deeply grateful for all your kindness towards me."

Elinalise gave me a bitter look when I said that.

"...As for what happened to Paul, please forgive me for that as well."

"No, that belongs to me."

My mistake, my carelessness.

Even though I thought I said as much, Elinalise continues speaking.

"But my role in that party, was to keep moving about so something like that didn't happen. It was because of my mistakes that Paul died."

There was no way she could have done such a thing.

Every one of us in that place fought desperately.

Evading the Hydra's trump cards, one after another, in what was a relatively little distance, then the Hydra suddenly behaving in such a desperate way, with no kind of planning.

At least Elinalise wasn't the only one blaming herself over being the cause of Paul's death.

"I will never blame you! Nor anyone else!"

"Fine then, but you can't go blaming yourself either then."

"...I won't."

"Then, I'm off!"

Elinalise says that, and promptly runs off into the snow.

Her own return report will start after this.

"...Whew."

I heave a long sigh.

My white breath fades away into the snow.

Now then.

Now then, with the matter of the Teleport Incident, it seems I have finally come to the long end of it all.

All the family I had lost, I had found again.

In the world, while there may be others who have not yet been found, I no longer feel any obligation to look for them anymore.

It was concluded.

It was long, and painful.

And the final result left a bitter taste.

However, it is the next developments from here,

Instead of looking behind me; it is now time for me to be facing forward.

There are things in this world that I want to do that I have still not done after all.

I must have a point to fix my eyes on.

"Rudi. Has everybody already returned?"

I look around, and see Roxy standing behind me.

"I wanted to talk with them a little, too..."

"They are still in this town, it'll be easy to meet with them when you have some free time."

"That's true."

Roxy doesn't begin walking away in the snow.

She alone will be staying in this house.

Though it is dependent on the upcoming discussion as to whether she becomes a resident of a nearby hotel, or this house.

"Well then, Roxy."

"Yeah, Rudeus."

"Shall we go inside...?"

I return into the house.

Accompanying me is Roxy, small in stature.

Five people remained in the room. They were Sylphy, Norn, Aisha, Roxy and I. Also, Jirou, the armadillo, was happily sleeping in front of the fireplace, but it should be fine if I don't count him.

Lilia and Zenith are in the bath. Before they went in, Lilia asked me [Will you be okay?] to which I nodded. I want to end this discussion without Lilia's help.

Norn hasn't returned to her room and stays here, with us. But as expected, it was tough on her as she is still sniffling. Since she was attached to Paul, it should be tougher on her than other people.

"Now then, there's one last topic."

When I say this, the three of them straighten up in their chairs.

I exchange looks with Roxy. Without saying anything, Roxy moves to my side.

"..."

Seeing Sylphy's swollen belly, I hesitate about the next topic. However, I have a responsibility. One day, Roxy will become like this too. If for instance Sylphy says no, then Roxy might have to deliver a child by herself. That's what the two of us have agreed on for now. Of course, I plan on giving her money and support though.

"I was thinking of accepting Roxy here, as my second wife."

"...Eh?"

The one who raises a bewildered voice isn't Sylphy, but Norn. Standing up, her gaze alternates between Roxy and I. As for Sylphy, she is staring blankly.

"W-, what is this!?"

"I plan on explaining from start to finish."

I explain what happened on the Begaritto continent.

About how Paul died and how depressed I was.

About how, seeing this, Roxy saved me.

About how it seemed that I was in love with Roxy.

About how I respected her, and wanted her to become a member of our family.

"Though I had no intention of betraying Sylphy, in the end, I broke my promise. I'm sorry."

I kneeled down. Though there was a carpet spread across the floor, northern winters are cold, so the floor was cold. I pressed my head deeply against the floor.

"Eh-, wai-, Rudi!?"

I could hear Sylphy's flustered voice.

"I still love you, Sylphy. But, I might have gotten Roxy pregnant. I have to take responsibility."

"Ah, okay."

The more words I pile up, the cheaper they sound to me. However, they're my true thoughts.

When I look at Sylphy, I find that she has a troubled face. Her mind might be in chaos. It's understandable. A person said that they loved you, and that they would come back without fail. When they do come back, they are in tatters. They've lost their family and their left hand. But because of the fact that at least their life is intact, you are thinking that it is something to be happy about; when suddenly they say something about making some other woman their wife.

Were it me, I'd shout, and shout, and condemn them.

But, I'll speak. Even if it's unreasonable, I'll speak words to force my way through.

"Sylphy. Please forgive me, and allow it."

"There's no way you could be forgiven, right!?"

It was Norn. The one who shouted wasn't Sylphy, but Norn. She powers over to me and grabs my collar.

"Are you going to say you know what kind of feelings Sylphy-nee had when she was waiting for you, Nii-san!?"

"..."

"Every day, [I wonder if Rudi is okay], [I want to see Rudi], [I wonder if Rudi's eaten dinner yet] she'd say. Do you know how lonely Sylphy-nee's voice and expressions were!?"

I don't. Though I don't, I can imagine it. Sylphy's face as she waited for me. Sylphy's lonely voice. Sylphy's form as she idled on a chair, swinging her legs about.

"I thought that it couldn't be helped if Otou-san couldn't be saved! Since it was that difficult a fight and you'd even lost your hand, I thought it couldn't be helped! That's why I thought it'd be barking up the wrong tree if I blamed you, Nii-san, but you actually had the leisure to sleep with another woman and make her yours!?"

"That's not it. I didn't have that sort of leisure. It's because things were like that, that Roxy ignored her own feelings and helped me."

"Were Sylphy-nee there, she'd definitely have helped you!"

That's probably absolutely true. Sylphy has helped me. The one who cured my ED was Sylphy.

However, Roxy has also helped me. She liked me, and despite her knowing that I had someone I loved, she was prepared to throw away her own feelings to help me.

"Norn, even you should understand, right? The feelings you have when you lock yourself in your room, when you have no way out, when you feel that you can't do anything. How could you ignore the person who saved you from that?"

"I understand! I'm thankful to you, Nii-san! But, this and that are different matters! If you take two wives, Milis-sama won't forgive you!"

Aah. I see. Norn was an adherent of Milis, huh? No, it probably doesn't have to do with her faith, huh. I've done something wrong. I try to ignore reason, and force my way through.

"In the first place, why a small kid like this!? Isn't she about the same age as me!?"

Norn glares at Roxy. Expressionless as usual, Roxy looks at Norn. Roxy is a little taller, but the difference in height probably isn't even 10 centimeters. Receiving Norn's gaze without expression, Roxy simply says,

"...I might be small, but I'm still an adult."

I don't know what to say. You could almost see into Roxy's heart by listening to that trembling voice.

But depending on how you took it, those words could probably be interpreted as impudence. Norn is enraged.

"If you're an adult, then shouldn't you know some shame!?"

"..."

"Don't you think anything of butting into our family like this!?"

"Norn, you've said too much. The one who proposed making her my second wife was I. Roxy hasn't done anything wrong. Roxy had wanted to back away."

I refuted Norn in a strong tone. However, Norn continues to condemn Roxy without looking at me.

"Please be quiet, Nii-san! In the first place, if she was going to back away, why didn't she stick to it? In the end, she just took advantage of your words, Nii-san!"

I have a thought to hit Norn. However, it goes without saying that I'm not qualified to do such a thing. If I hit Norn here, I'll probably become worthless in the true meaning of the word.

"..."

At Norn's shout, Roxy stays quiet for a while. With her usual expressionless face, she's hanging her head and looking at the floor. In the end, she finally raises her head and bows to Norn.

"You're right. I'm being shameless. I'm sorry."

Saying this, Roxy gets up and slowly moves. Picking up the luggage she left in the corner of the room and putting on her hat, she quickly leaves. I can't stop her. I understand why they're opposed. I didn't think that they would humor me and easily accept it. But even so, I thought that I'd be able to persuade them somehow.

But I was naive. I consider the current situation. Roxy was relentlessly attacked with words. She probably feels like she's on a bed of nails.

Her life might continue to be this way from now on. Thinking about it, she didn't want to stay here.

Were it me, I'd run away from somewhere like this.

I can't stop her.

I can't hold her back.

But I can't let Roxy leave here with ill feelings.

I don't want that.

I have to pay her back.

I didn't bring her here to make her feel this way.

I brought her here because I wanted her to be happy.

Or could it be something else?

No, think.

What should I do?

What should I do to make Norn accept it?

I can't think of anything.

Roxy is leaving.

I have to stop her at least.

Right, even if I hit Norn and she hates me-

"Wait!"

I hear a voice behind me.

"Roxy-san, please wait!"

It is Sylphy. She has stood up, trots over to Roxy, and grabs her hand. Roxy turns around, and large tears are gathered in her eyes.

"Why are you stopping her, Sylphy-nee! Isn't it fine just to let her go!?"

"Norn-chan. Could you be quiet for a little bit?"

"Eh?"

"Just now you said too much, you know. From the beginning, I never said a word about refusing, after all."

At Sylphy's words, Norn becomes speechless and freezes.

"Please sit down."

Paying a backward glance to the frozen Norn, Sylphy sits Roxy down on the sofa. Roxy doesn't resist and did as she is told. Sylphy too, takes a seat next to Roxy.

"Though things have gotten a little chaotic... You saved Rudi, right, Roxy-san?"

Asked that, Roxy meekly nods.

"...Yes. But I had ulterior motives, so I don't plan on using it as an excuse."

"Mn. Rudi is cool, isn't he? On the contrary, had you said that you didn't have ulterior motives, I wouldn't have believed you."

"..."

"Were I in your shoes, Roxy-san, I think I really would've done the same thing."

Sylphy makes a gentle expression, smiling at Roxy. Roxy's face is stiff. Whilst smiling, Sylphy continues.

"...You know, honestly speaking, I thought that it was just a matter of time."

"Umm, sorry, what was?"

"Rudi bringing back another woman."

Me, bringing back another woman was just a matter of time...

...Mn?

...Huh?

Could it be, that they didn't believe in me?

"I mean, look, Rudi is perverted, right? That's why I thought that once he couldn't do it with me; he'd definitely do it with someone else. It was like that for me too; since Rudi is sincere, after doing it he'd probably try to take them in as his wife. I didn't think I'd be able to monopolize Rudi forever, you know."

I want to speak up. But, it really is as she said. I'm not qualified to say anything.

"Though, honestly speaking, I thought that when he did bring someone back, it'd be someone like Rinia, or Pursena, or maybe Nanahoshi-san."

"Besides the name Nanahoshi-san, I haven't heard the other names."

"They're Rudi's friends from school. All of them are sexy with big chests."

Nanahoshi isn't particularly sexy, though. No, that kind of thing isn't important right now.

"Honestly, because the story of your journey was so harsh, and Paul-san died as well, so I was a little bewildered, but... I understood."

"About what?"

"Because you had always been looking at Rudi anxiously since coming to our house, I was wondering what was wrong. At first, I thought it was because you were nervous about telling us about Paul-san's death, but... it was actually 'that' after all."

"..."

"Roxy-san, your eyes are those of a maiden in love, after all."

A maiden in love. Being told that, Roxy's face is dyed bright red.

"Excuse me. I've shown you something unpleasant..."

Her face still red, Roxy bows her head. From the perspective of a wife, a woman looking at her husband lovingly would probably be an eyesore. That line of thinking is something you can vividly understand. However, Sylphy shakes her head.

"It wasn't unpleasant, you know."

"...However."

"I wonder how I should say it..."

Sylphy tilts her head in thought for a little, and then quickly goes, 'Mn,' and nods.

"You know, I've heard about you from Rudi before, Roxy-san."

"What about?"

"Just that 'Roxy' was a magician that he respected. Before the Teleport incident, and then after we got married as well, he said the same thing."

"...That's um, I'm humbled."

"That's why I was a little jealous as well. Whenever Rudi spoke about you, he looked like he really~ longed for you."

"..."

"I one-sidedly thought of Roxy Migurdia as an amazing enough magician that someone like me would never be able to compare with her."

"..."

"But when I actually saw you, when I thought of you as just a normal girl who was in love with Rudeus, my jealousy vanished."

Saying that, Sylphy takes off Roxy's hat and strokes her head. Looking up at Sylphy, Roxy doesn't resist, and lets herself be pat. Sylphy then speaks.

"Though Norn-chan said what she did, I'll welcome you."

Roxy's face was in shock. My jaw drops in shock as well. Not even in my dreams did I think Sylphy would so easily accept it.

"Sylphiette...-san."

"Just 'Sylphy' is fine. Let's get along. Umm, Roxy-...chan?"

"Um, I technically turn 50 this year, so adding -chan is..."

"Ah, so that's how it is. You're my elder... Sorry. Come to think of it, that's right. I'd heard about this from Rudi, but actually seeing it, you know...?"

"I'm small, after all."

"I'm not big either, you know?"

Roxy and Sylphy's gazes meet, and the two of them laugh.

"Let's support Rudi together, Roxy."

"Thank you very much, Sylphy."

Saying this, the two shake hands. It is a handshake filled with an odd sense of solidarity.

Seeing this, I let out a sigh of relief. It seems things will be fine. I unconsciously let my feelings show. However, seeing me, Norn's eyebrows knit together in a frown.

"If Sylphy-nee says so, then I don't have anything left to say either."

It seems that Norn still can't accept it. Her mouth upturned in a へ, she's glaring at us with an unhappy expression. We might be scorned by her again. However, Sylphy softly pacifies her.

"Norn-chan. Rudi isn't a follower of Milis, so please forgive him."

"But..."

"Even Paul-san had two wives, you know?"

"...That was certainly the case, but..."

"Norn-chan. Will you say this to Lilia-san, as well?"

Norn looks like she gasped, and looks at Aisha, who was sitting by her side. Aisha has been sitting there silently the whole time, with a prim and proper expression.

"Ah-... Sorry, Aisha."

"It's fine, it's fine. I know that Norn-nee often says things without thinking."

"...What's with that way of speaking!?"

"I mean, look. Even just now, you said something like that, right? Despite what Sylphy-nee said, you just forced your own thoughts on us, didn't you, Norn-nee?"

"Wha-!"

Norn violently stands up. Seeing her clenched fists, I scold Aisha.

"Aisha, you've said too much."

"But Onii-chan."

"I can understand what Norn wants to say. Honestly, despite what Sylphy said, it's an abnormal situation. If it's not considerate of others' feelings, I'm guilty of that too. You mustn't criticise Norn."

"Well, if you're going to say that much, Onii-chan..."

"..."

Norn is making a complicated expression. Like she didn't know what to do, at all. It was that kind of expression.

"...I'm going to sleep."

She quickly makes to leave the living room. However, as though she suddenly remembers something, she stops her feet and turns to me. She half-mutters.

"Um, Onii-san..."

"What is it?"

"Next time, could you teach me the sword?"

For a moment, I didn't understand what she is saying.

The sword. Does she mean that she wants to use Paul's sword?

I get the feeling that if she learns half-assed self-defense; on the contrary, she'll only end up ruining her body. But this is that kind of world. It'd probably be better to know swordsmanship. Even if it were only a small strength, it'd be better than nothing, after all. The problem would be whether I'd be of use as a teacher.

"Are you fine with me?"

"Though I still can't really accept what you've done, I don't hate you, Onii-san."

"...Yeah."

What I had meant was [Are you fine with someone who just half-assed the sword], but.... Well, if I'm told that she doesn't hate me, then I'm not going to refuse.

"Alright. I'll make room after school or sometime."

"Please do."

Saying this, Norn returns to her room.

"..."

At any rate, I guess the result was all right, huh? In the end, I couldn't do a thing, huh. I was saved by Sylphy's magnanimity.

"You know, Onii-chan," starts Aisha, "Right now you look incredibly pathetic, you know?"

Without replying, I agree.

After that, the three of us are planning and discussing what we would do from now on.

The turns we'll take sleeping together, for example, or times when we could fawn on each other. It might have been because we were frankly speaking about things like that too, but Aisha decides to take her exit.

"Well then, Roxy-san. From tomorrow onwards, please take care of me."

"Yes. Please look after me as well."

Despite grumbling, Aisha looks a little happy. I wonder why.

Well, whatever. It's Sylphy, Roxy, and I as well. The three of us now start our discussion. You might be wondering what the hell we're talking about when Paul's died. However, it's exactly because of that, that we want a cheerful topic.

"Basically, please have Rudi treat Sylphy as the main wife, and just spare me some time whenever you're free. I'm fine with it like that."

"That's no good. We have to be treated equally."

"However..."

"The number of wives might still increase, so why don't we be confident?"

Might still increase. You can feel Sylphy's lack of trust in my nether regions with those words.

However, this time I swear on it. I swear only to love Sylphy and Roxy. This time, definitely.

"Honestly, I feel really sorry about intruding like this, so I'll be holding back until the child is born."

"I see... We did say that it'd only be a month until it's born, but I'll be monopolizing Rudi until then. Is that okay?"

"I'm fine with it. Well then, let's make it so that I won't officially become his wife until a month from now."

"..."

Despite this situation, I ended up thinking something like 'it's a shame I'll be celibate this month'; I'm probably a worthless person, huh. But when I think that after this month when Sylphy gives birth, I'll get to sleep with the two of them as much as I want... Just what is this? My 'son' starts to stand up.

"..."

"..."

Or, so I was thinking, but the moment I give in to my delusions, the two of them turn their gazes to me.

"Umm, Rudi. When you really can't bear with it anymore, say so, okay? I'll deal with it somehow."

"No, I'll take care of it on my own, somehow."

No matter how bad I may be, in this kind of situation I'm not going to cheat even more. I'll have them feel that the one known as Rudeus Greyrat won't make mistakes due to his sexual stirrings. The reason I went along with Roxy was because, in addition to the situation being what it was, it was Roxy. Regarding falling in love with them, as long as no more Roxy-Class women appear, there won't be a problem.

I definitely won't cheat anymore.

Definitely, definitely not.

"Ah, but weren't you pregnant as well, Roxy? In that case, after a month you won't be able to do it anymore, right? What should we do?"

At Sylphy's words, Roxy made an apologetic face.

"Um, if it's about what Rudi said earlier, I think it was a lie Rudi came up with. There wasn't a chance for me to say anything, but I'm not pregnant."

"...Eh-?"

She's not pregnant. Then, saying that 'it' didn't come...

"...Ahh."

Elinalise led me along, huh?

That bitch.

Shit.

It feels like I've been dancing in the palm of her hand.

"What's wrong, Rudi?"

"Ah, that wasn't a lie; I just misunderstood."

"I see."

Roxy scratches her red cheeks and speaks to me.

"But in the future, let's try our best."

"Ah, yes. Let's."

Words like 'happy family planning' come to mind and I can't help but grin. Ahh, it'll be great from now on.

"Rudi's a pervert, isn't he?"

"Yeah. Rudi's a pervert, Sylphy."

"I wonder what kind of things the perverted Rudi is going to make us do."

While we had such a conversation, we laughed.

Like that, I managed to gain my second wife.

After that, Lilia and Zenith had finished their bath, and after Lilia prepared our rooms for us, they went to sleep.

As we decided earlier, I sleep together with Sylphy. I let Sylphy use my arm as a pillow, and Sylphy decides to go to sleep facing me.

We weren't asleep yet. Our gazes met, and we stare in silence.

"It's about what we spoke about earlier, but..."

The one who speaks first was Sylphy.

"When you said that you had something important to say, and Roxy was sitting next to you, I ended up imagining something really sad."

"What?"

"I thought that you might say that you didn't love me, so you were going to leave me."

"I wouldn't say something like that."

What kind of trash would?

"Mn. I know."

Sylphy shifted about. I could feel her with the tip of my missing wrist. She was stroking me.

"But I really am anxious after all. It feels like you're going to leave my side."

I wonder if she's feeling a sense of foreboding. But thinking about it, I really was in danger this time. I might have even died.

"Did I make you anxious?"

"Mn."

"There, there."

I stroke Sylphy's head with my right arm. Sylphy narrows her eyes and lets me pat her. If you look more carefully, she's actually grown out her hair at some point. Her beautiful, white hair. She might be able to tie it up in a ponytail, soon.

"You let your hair grow, huh."

"After all, you said you liked long hair, right, Rudi?"

"Mn."

She's so cute... Even though she has been waiting for me, all this time, on the other hand, I...

"Sorry, Sylphy. I've betrayed you."

"It's okay. I like that part of you."

"But were it the other way around, I'm sure I'd cry and scream disgracefully, shouting abuses at you like [You must feel great, betraying me, huh!] you know?"

"Mmhuhu... I won't do something like that. I don't see anyone but you, after all."

Saying that, Sylphy brings her face to mine and kisses me on the cheek. Love overflows from within my chest. Though she was probably anxious, though she probably wanted to cry out, she didn't voice a single complaint, and accepted it. I'll love her until I die.

"Sylphy."

"Ehehe."

I return Sylphy's kiss on her soft and squishy cheek.

"..."

At this point, I'd usually charge into the actual thing, but today I'll stop here. There's no way I'd force the pregnant Sylphy to do anything unreasonable after all.

Suddenly, I felt a stroking sensation at my abdomen.

"Ahh, don't, Sylphy. If you touch me there, I won't be able to hold back. Well, I do have interest in pregnancy play, but..."

"Ah, don't, Rudi. It'll harm our child, so...

"Mn?"

"Eh?"

When I look down, I find that next to Sylphy's pregnant belly is an even bigger mountain. I try pulling back the blanket. When I did, there was...

"Jirou..."

From under the bed, the huge armadillo has stuck his head right between Sylphy and I. I wonder when he did so. I really didn't notice at all.

"Sticking his head into people's crotches. What a perverted guy, huh?"

"He's like you, huh?"

"No, I... It can't be helped. Shall we sleep together, tonight?"

"Mn. Let's."

I get up and grab another blanket, and make a bed for Jirou. Jirou sprawls himself on top of it and slowly shuts his eyes. Though he looks like an armadillo, he feels like a large dog.

It seems I'll have to prepare a small room for him before long, huh. Raising him in the house is fine, but taking care of his feces is troublesome, after all. Wait, I wonder if I can train him like a dog, as well. Well, I guess I'll have another talk with our family.

"Alright. Guess it's time to sleep."

I was about to slip in on Sylphy's right, but stopped. I get in bed on Sylphy's left and grasp her hand with mine. Sylphy strongly grasps, squeezing back.

"Goodnight, Sylphy."

"Mn. Have a good rest, Rudi."

After that, I slept like a log.

Several days have passed since Roxy became my wife.

I still feel uneasy that some kind of disaster may happen, but it's gradually faded recently.

Zenith has taken up residence in one of the large rooms in this house as well.

It was the room in which the old residents died, so I said to Lilia that it might be best not to do it.

However, Zenith was quite pleased and didn't want to separate from it, so it can't be helped.

Seeing that, Lilia also said there was probably nothing to worry about.

Well, I'm sure having a large room is better than a small room for Zenith after all.

I'm not all that familiar with recuperation and nursing, but spacious should be better than confined.

Naturally, we've also brought Zenith to a doctor.

Through Ariel's referral, to an excellent physician known throughout Ranoa Kingdom.

However, it seems he has no knowledge about cases like this, the treatment method is unknown as well, so we had to give up.

As I thought, it seems the medical techniques in this world doesn't depend very strongly on past records.

Maybe it's because there's healing magic, but the treatment methods in this world are a bit deviated.

Even so, we were able to receive some guidance to rehabilitate people who have lost their memories.

We don't know if she'll get better or not, but it should be better than doing nothing.

...If I have a chance, it might also be good to try searching for a magic tool for recovering lost memories.

Of course, I don't know if such a thing even exists or not.

Looking at it over the long term, we might have no choice other than to go for treatment.

We don't know either what Zenith's home in the Holy Kingdom of Milis might say.

In regards to Zenith, there's still some uneasiness remaining.

Sylphy's progress is going well.

Recently, the child in her stomach has started to kick, so she's pleasantly allowed me to touch her stomach.

In addition, I tried groping her breasts that had swelled up from the influence of the pregnancy and she got pretty angry.

It seems it hurts to touch them strongly.

I hadn't intended to touch them all that strongly, but it seems she was surprised because I

suddenly did it.

If I'm going to touch them, then gently, she requested.

It was a way of requesting that made me want to push her down just like that.

Thinking about it, before, I've lost to this seduction of Sylphy's numerous times and pushed her down.

However, she's pregnant right now.

I can't afford to expose my desires.

Even though I say that, I still want to touch things I want to touch.

I thoroughly accepted her invitation to gently touch them.

After all, it seems there's change to your body while pregnant.

It wasn't a chest of Sylphy's that I used to grope.

I'm the one that changed it. Thinking like that, I somehow felt a kind of unspeakable happiness.

I wonder if this is the so-called feeling of domination.

Yeah, Sylphy belongs to me.

However, as I thought, not having my left hand is inconvenient.

I miss those time when I could grope her breasts with both hands.

Something that I had two of has been reduced to one after all, so the feeling of satisfaction hasbeen halved.

I wonder if it's a bit more until milk comes out.

If I say I want to try tasting them a bit, I wonder if she'll get angry.

I wonder if she'll scorn me.

I wonder about asking just once to try it.

It might be best not to do it though.

However, just once...

"Rudi, you really likes my breasts, don't you?"

"Yeah, Sylphy's breasts are small, but number one in the world."

"Number one in the world, you say.. Even though you put your hands on another girl?"

"S,S,So, Sorry please forgive me."

"Eh~, I'm not angry."

While having such a sweet conversation, my relationship with Sylphy is also going favorably.

If this were Japan in my previous life, I'm sure it would have been considerably stiff.

This is a different world and Sylphy is understanding.

Whether I take two or three wives to marry as well, it's fine just as long as I love them equally.

If you were to ask about my other wife Roxy, she's taken up one of the small rooms on the second floor.

It's one of the smallest rooms on the second floor.

I did say it would be fine to take a larger room, but it seems she likes small rooms.

I don't hate small rooms either.

Because scents build up.

Roxy became a teacher at the Magic University.

One time, I introduced her while to reporting my return, but I'll save this story for later.

One month later.

A day with strong snow.

Sylphy went into labor.

There were no particular problems, it was a normal delivery.

It was neither a breech nor premature birth.

If there was a problem, it would just be the snow being too high, so calling the doctor wouldn't make it in time.

If it were my previous life, I'm sure that would be something to panic over, but fortunately, there is Lilia in my house.

For her who has an abundance of experience as a midwife, even without me asking anything, she moved quickly with Aisha following her orders.

While teaching Aisha the process, Lilia carefully said one thing at a time.

Just in case, if anything comes up, Roxy and I are on standby at the side.

There's a big difference between being able to use healing magic and not being able to use it in an emergency after all.

Even though I say that, I was completely spacing out at the time.

Something like healing magic was nowhere near entering my mind.

I was doing my best just tightly holding Sylphy's hand as she was suffering.

"Seeing Rudeus-sama right now, it reminds me of the lady..the time of Norn-sama's delivery."

After hearing Lilia saying those words, I remembered the past.

Norn's was a breech birth, both the mother and child were in a dangerous condition.

Paul was useless and just got all nervous on his own.

That time, I moved calmly, but right now, I'm in this state.

That I was able to handle things well as a child is the same whether it be in this world or my previous one.

"However, please rest easy, Rudeus-sama. Sylphy-sama is fine. There's nothing to worry about at all."

While saying that Lilia, indifferently continued her work.

That handling was enough to be charmed by.

Even after being told it was fine, my trembling wouldn't settle.

Holding onto Sylphy's hand, calling out "hihhiffu", and wiping the sweat from her forehead were all I could manage to do.

Sylphy was making a painful face, but after looking at me in a fluster, she giggled a bit and smiled.

"Umm..It would be better for Rudi to relax a bit more."

Aisha suddenly whistled out those words.

Lilia hit Aisha's head with a [peshiri].

{ C-Editor's note: Peshiri - not an actual word but a sound effect expressed in Japanese. }

Seeing that, Sylphy lightly smiled.

"Nn!!?"

The instant the place loosened up, the wave came.

"Sylphiette-sama. Okay, please take a deep breath."

"Nn..!"

I quietly watched over as Sylphy gave her best.

The only things coming out from my mouth were just words of encouragement.

I did have the feelings that I needed to do something, but I couldn't do anything.

In rhythm with Lilia's voice heaving, Sylphy made a painful face.

It was born.

The baby who was safely born into this world raised an energetic first cry.

It's a girl.

With the same color of hair as mine; it's a cute girl.

She was held in Lilia's arms and then passed over to Sylphy.

Sylphy embraced the baby and breathed a sigh of relief.

"Thank goodness..her hair, isn't green."

Hearing those words that Sylphy whispered out, I caressed her head.

Sylphy's beautiful white hair.

It used to be emerald green hair.

"..I guess so."

Even if the child was born with emerald green hair I had no intention of blaming Sylphy.

Obviously.

For me, the emerald green of this world is one of my favorite colors after all.

Green is Sylphy's and also Rujierd's color.

Even Roxy's hair color, in some light, it reflects as if it shines emerald green.

I like the color green.

If they're going to discriminate against emerald green, even if the enemy is the world, I'll show

you.

"Good work, Sylphy."

"Yeah."

But, even if I have those sorts of intentions, this world isn't the same.

Emerald green hair is just that much of a taboo.

A daughter born with the same hair color as mine.

We have no choice other than to thank God for this good fortune.

My God is in the corner of the room tightly grasping her staff making a pale face though.

"Here, Rudi hold her as well."

"Yeah."

Holding a baby.

The high body temperature and crying voice that's noisy.

Small hands, small head, small lips, small nose...

It's all overflowing with life.

When I think that this is my child, I can feel something rising up from within my chest.

My child that Sylphy gave birth to.

".."

Tears were coming out.

Paul has already died.

However, my child was born.

Paul allowed me to keep living.

If it weren't for him, I wouldn't be able to hold my child.

In exchange for that, Paul isn't able to hold his wives, daughters, or even grandchildren.

I wonder if Paul would regret not being able to be in this place.

Or maybe he would laugh proudly and boast that it's thanks to him.

In any case, I have no choice other than to go on living.

For the sake of this child as well, I can't die.

Sylphy as well, my family as well, I have no choice other than to protect them.

I'll go on living in this world.

I'll go on living.

We took the first letters of Sylphy and my name to name our daughter Lucy.

{ C-Editor's note: RU from Rudeus plus SHI from Sylphy = 'Rushi' pronounced in Japanese which is 'Lucy' pronounced in English. }

It's Lucy Greyrat.

Aisha laughed that it was simple and Lilia hit her head.

Nevertheless, I'm glad that it was a girl.

If..it had been a boy, I might have ended up naming it Paul after all.

After that, I was driven out of the room by Lilia.

Since it seems there're various things to do, I was told to wait.

For now, I move and sit down on the sofa.

I didn't do much, but I'm suddenly exhausted.

Roxy sat down next to me.

She let out a sigh while making an exhausted face as well.

Roxy did even less than me.

No matter how you look at it, I'm sure it's mental fatigue.

"It's my first time seeing the moment a person is born. It's amazing, isn't it?"

"I... wonder how many times. I guess this would be about the third time. Though, when it's my own child, it's awfully tiring."

I'm sure Sylphy is even more tired.

It won't be good if I don't thank her with all my might later.

"I wonder if I was born like that as well."

"Well, I'm sure that's the case for everyone."

Though I don't know about things in regards to the Migurudo race.

As long as they're in the shape of a person, I'm sure there's no large differences.

"...I will be able to give birth like that as well, won't I?"

When I took a look at Roxy, she was looking up at me with a somewhat blushing face.

I took my shoes off and sat in seiza on top of the sofa.

"Yes. I feel that I will be in your care for that time."

Sylphy's child has been born.

In other words, that sort of lifestyle with Roxy will begin.

Honestly, I'm looking forward to it.

Even though my child with Sylphy was only just born. I sure am a no good person.

Although, I don't hate that part of myself.

I think Paul might have had those sort of feelings as well and I can't hate it.

I'm looking forward to it from now on.

Thinking that, I smile and Roxy's face turns bright red as she holds her own body.

"Rudi, you're making an extremely perverted face."

"I was born with this face."

Right. It's been so since the time I was born.

I've been like this since the time I was born.

".."

Ah, that's right.

Before I start that sort of lifestyle together with Roxy.

There's someone whom I have to report that I've made a child to first.

Next day.

I proceeded alone towards Paul's grave.

Paul's grave was towards the outskirts.

It's a graveyard on an elevated hill for nobles.

Paul might find it unpleasant being together with the likes of nobles.

But the maintenance is better than general use graveyard. He'll have to endure it.

I stand in the snow in front of the round Ranoa style gravestone.

I don't know what Paul's religion was.

I think he didn't believe in something like God as well.

Even if we were to mistake something like his sect, he was the type of man who wouldn't be bothered by it after all, I'm sure he would forgive us.

Although in reality, I'm sure it would have been better to make his grave in Asura Kingdom around the Buina Village area.

This land has no relation or connection with Paul.

But if I were to make it in a place too far away from my house, we wouldn't be able to visit the grave.

I've told Gisu and the others about this place as well.

Everyone already came to visit at one point.

That time, each and every one gathered things that Paul likes.

Like alcohol and daggers.

Gisu and Talhand started a grand drinking bout in front of his grave, the grave keeper got angry.

I held the alcohol bottle I bought on the way under my arm and cleaned Paul's grave.

Removing the snow on top of the gravestone, polishing it with the cloth I brought along.

It wasn't a difficult operation at all.

The road on the way here was shut off because of the snow, but the snow around the grave itself was removed to some extent by the grave keeper.

After cleaning and leaving the alcohol bottle in front of the grave, I pray with one hand.

I thought about buying some flowers as an offering, but they weren't selling any.

In this Northern region, trying to get your hands on some flowers in winter is difficult, I'm sure.

Well, he wasn't a man who had a hobby of admiring flowers.

"Paul..Tou-san. Yesterday, my child was born. It's a girl. Since it's Sylphy's child, I'm sure she'll become a beauty."

I sat in front of the grave and reported it to Paul like this.

"I wanted to show her to Tou-san as well."

If Paul were to see Lucy, I'm sure he would have jumped around in high spirits until Zenith chided him.

It's a celebration, saying something like that and drinking alcohol together with me, getting completely drunk, sexually harassing Lilia, and making Zenith shocked.

Such a scene vividly floated in front of my eyes.

Though it's only a story if Paul were safely able to keep on living and Zenith hadn't lost her memories.

"Roxy-sensei has become my wife. I have two wives. The same as Tou-san. I would have liked it if you had taught me how to be ready for times like this."

Thinking about it, that time.

In that labyrinth.

I wonder if it was that sort of thing that Paul wanted to talk to me about.

Knowing that Roxy liked me.

And that I liked Roxy as well.

I wonder if he wanted to teach me how to be ready for having two wives.

"Different from Tou-san, it's not like I suddenly have two daughters, but I think eventually Roxy will get pregnant and give birth to my child as well. That's still far in the future, but it would be nice if I can raise them to be as energetic as Norn and Aisha."

I have no intention of saying bad things about Lilia's education, but I'd like to raise my children impartially to the end.

Without any kind of weird distortions like being half Magic race and such.

"It seems Sylphy thinks that there will be even more wives from here on out in the future though. I don't have such intention, but they do say things that happen twice happen three times. That might end up becoming the case.."

I wonder if Paul ever considered marrying Ghyslaine or Elinalize or Vera.

It seems like he had a relationship of the flesh with Ghyslaine after all, I think he would consider it at least once.

Well, Paul thought about things in that area even looser than me, it might be that he never even gave it any thought.

"It might also be better for me not to overthink about things too much."

After facing the gravestone and asking that, I felt like I could see Paul's teasing smile.

It was just the smile and I couldn't hear Paul's words.

But I'm sure it's not like Paul didn't think about it either.

I feel that he was always agonizing over it.

Something like fellows that are able to live without thinking in this world, there shouldn't be many of them.

"..Tou-san. I'm a no good son. I have something like memories of my previous life. I couldn't properly love Tou-san."

I stood up while saying that.

Holding the alcohol bottle in my hand, I took the first sip.

After savoring the burn in my throat from the strong drink, I poured it over the grave.

"But now, I intend to be a proper son."

Drowning yourself in alcohol and making mistakes like Paul, alcohol might not be all that good of a thing.

But I'm sure it's fine today.

At any rate, it's celebrations for the birth after all.

"My own child has been born, becoming a parent. Finally, I understood it. That I was still nothing but a child. That I was just a brat pretending to be an adult with memories of my previous life."

Drinking, pouring, drinking, pouring.

The alcohol bottle quickly went empty.

"Though I feel that I need to quickly become an adult, I'm sure I won't be able to become one until I make a lot more mistakes. But it was the same for Tou-san, so I'll give my best as well."

I closed the alcohol bottle with the lid and placed it in front of the grave.

"Then, I'll come again. I'll be bringing along everyone next time."

Saying that, I faced away from Paul's grave.

A variety of things have come to a close.

Painful things have happened and happy things have happened as well.

But it's not the end.

I'll still go on living in this world.

I'll go on living.

In order to not regret it no matter when I die.

Seriously.

The western edge of the Northern Lands.

The Holy Land of Swords.

This land had seen battle before.

This place that was presently the headquarters of the Sword God Style had seen for a time the prominence of the Water God Style. It was only 100 years ago. The Water God of a certain generation had dueled the Sword God and taken this land from him. That Water God himself had been defeated by another Sword God and the Holy Land returned to the hands of the Sword God Style. However, since then, this place had become the place where the strongest swordsman of the generation would stay and teach the sword.

To be taught by the strongest swordsman. If possible, defeat the strongest swordsman and thus become the strongest yourself. To swordsmen who harbored these kind of wishes, this was a place that they would wish to visit at least once.

Right now, two unusual people arrived at this land.

One of them was a person who was older than 60. An old woman. Though she wore a difficult expression, she was someone whose whole appearance could bestow upon others a sense of ease. Though she was currently dressed as a traveler, were her clothes different, she wouldn't look out of place sitting in a soft chair, knitting or embroidering something.

There was just one thing that departed from that image; hanging at her hip was a single short sword. Moreover, if you looked carefully you'd realize that she didn't have a single opening. If you were a skilled swordsman, you could tell with a glance that no matter where you thrust your sword, it wouldn't meet its target.

To tell you the truth, she was the Water God 『Reyda Liia』 after all. Mastering the Water God Secret Art 『Sword of Deprivation』, she was one of those who could be called the 'strongest swordsman of the generation'.

The one who was accompanying Reyda was a young woman. She was 20 years old, give or take, and her looks resembled Reyda. She was wearing traveler's clothing like Reyda, and she too had a sword at her hip.

"Oshishou-sama. Is this the Holy Land of Swords?"

"That's exactly right. It's the den of beasts that you kept saying you wanted to go to."

"I'm nervous."

"It'll be fine as long as you trust in your sword. As long as it isn't the Sword God you're up against, you're plenty a match for this place."

"Yes, Oshishou-sama."

While conversing, the two of them entered the Holy Land of Swords. Though it was called the Holy Land of Swords, at first glance it looked just like any other town. It had an inn, it had a weapons shop, and it had an adventurer's guild. There were adventurers, merchants, and they were all walking around busily.

However, if there was one thing strange about it, it was that all of the townsfolk were swordsmen of the Sword God Style. Even the townsgirls here and there with their slim arms were more skilled than most burly adventurers.

"Shall we find an inn first?"

"There's no need; it'll be fine if we just stay at Gull-boy's place."

Saying this, Reyda left the town centre and continued walking further into the town. The further they walked, the fewer the adventurers and merchants became, and the more they would see people in thin clothing wielding wooden swords in dojos by the roadside. The girl that followed behind Reyda turned her head this way and that, regarding the sights as rather novel, and she felt that the people standing in the snow in cold-looking outfits were a fresh sight.

"Oshishou-sama. Though these people are cold, they're wearing very light clothing, aren't they?"

"Those of the Sword God Style that can't move quickly are good-for-nothings after all. Even if it's cold, they can't wear heavy things on their bodies."

"They're the opposite of us who wear thick clothes even when it's hot. It's interesting, isn't it?"

"It's not."

Without sparing a glance at the roadside dojos, Reyda walked straight ahead. After passing a certain point, whether it was the dojos, the houses, or the young people in light clothing, all of them had disappeared. All that remained was a single path that continued to cut through the snowy landscape like a valley. At the end of it was a house and a large dojo encircled by a wall.

This was the true body of the Holy Land of Swords. It was the great dojo that served as the headquarters of the Sword God Style.

—

Just as Reyda and her follower reached the entrance of the great dojo, a woman came out of it. Her long hair was tied behind her, and she bore a dignified expression. She had a bucket in her hand and looked as though she may have been going to fetch water. When she noticed the two of them, she immediately threw away the bucket and moved her hand to the sword at her waist in vigilance.

"Do you need something of us?"

After looking at the woman carefully, Reyda's difficult expression lessened a little.

"Ohh, Nina? You've gotten big, huh."

"...?"

At Reyda's words, the woman made a doubtful expression.

"Ahh, don't you remember? There's no helping it I suppose. The last time we met, you were tiny after all."

Though Reyda looked like she was seeing something nostalgic, the woman, Nina Farion, had no recollection of her. All she understood was that the old woman in front of her was no ordinary person. And that the woman next to her was as strong as, or perhaps even stronger than, Nina was.

"Today I've been called here by your boss. Guide us to him, would you?"

"Boss?"

"Gull Farion."

Nina hesitated at those words. There were many who sought out the Sword God, Gull Farion. However, the majority of them were a conceited lot who didn't know their places and sought to take the Sword God title themselves. Nina and the other disciples had the duty of turning them away.

"It may be impolite, but may I ask for your name?"

"It's Reyda. Reyda Liia. You understand just which Reyda Liia I am, right?"

"-! I understand. Please come this way."

However, the moment Nina heard her name; she bowed once to her and brought her inside.

In this world, there was only one who could boldly declare themselves as Reyda Liia. They were the top of the Water God Style; only the Water God called herself Reyda Liia.

Though Nina had considered for a moment the possibility that it was someone lying about their name, she could sense something bottomless from this old woman and extinguished that thought. Even if this woman was an imposter, she was someone of great skill.

They were guided by Nina and entered the place of the Sword God Style. Typical of snowy countries, the genkan there had a height difference. There, they shook off the snow, and then continued walking. The floor was wooden and squeaky. Reyda walked ahead whilst looking at Nina, and suddenly commented,

"Though you're young, you're quite obedient and keen, aren't you? Have you become a Sword King yet?"

"No, I'm still not there yet."

"I see. You're being humble despite probably being the strongest amongst the youngsters here, right?"

"Though I might be the fastest, I'm not the strongest."

"Ohhh? That's a good attitude. Good enough that I wouldn't think you were a youngster of the Sword God Style."

While making such conversation, the three of them arrived at the 『Space of the Present』.

{ C-Editor's note: Space of the Present - The formal name for the meeting room. }

There sat a single man. As though meditating, his eyes were shut.

Reyda felt like a sword had been thrust at her throat. As one of the heads of the Three Great Sword Styles, the 『Water God』, even in her old age she boasted the same strength that she did in her prime. However, only this man's sword was unblockable for her.

For this man was the Sword God, Gull Farion.

"I've brought Reyda Liia-sama."

"You've come."

Gull Farion opened his eyes a little and looked at Reyda. Though he glanced at the girl next to her, he immediately lost interest and looked away.

"You've travelled a very long way to come here. Such a long journey must have been tough on your old bones."

"It really was. But you bowed your head to me, so I came out of curiosity. Down we go..."

Reyda walked over to the Sword God and sat in front of him. Though she had said 'down we go', her movements were smooth like flowing water. A little distance behind her sat Nina, who seemed to be waiting, and the woman Reyda had brought along.

"So, who and what did you want me to teach? Is it fine if I teach this girl?"

Reyda gestured to Nina with her chin and asked the Sword God.

"Well, she seems like a docile girl. Though she might be suited for the Sword God Style, it's not as if she wouldn't be able to use the Water God techniques."

She had read the letter from the Sword God and came to this land.

『I want you to teach one of my disciples』 Normally Reyda would've torn up and thrown away such a letter. However, because the letter was from Sword God Gull Farion who hated relying on others, her interest was perked. However, were it only for such a reason, she wouldn't have come all the way from the Asuran capital.

"However, I have a condition."

"What?"

"Just as you wish for your own disciples to grow, I wish for you to show my disciple the Sword God Style. There's no need to teach her, so just that much is fine."

Reyda was sad over the fact that her disciple had grown arrogant. Amongst those learning swordsmanship in the Kingdom of Asura, there were many who were learning the Water God Style, however, few developed any ability. The girl Reyda had brought with her today was one of those few, and because there was no one equal to her amongst her fellow disciples, she had gotten a little carried away. Though she took her training seriously, because she had neither goal nor rival, Reyda had sensed that in this past year her disciple hadn't grown at all.

Reyda had brought her disciple here so that she would be brought down a notch, and because of that, begin to make great growth again. Even if the youngsters of the Sword God Style weren't strong enough to humble her disciple, just battling the Sword God Gull Farion would be cause for great gains in EXP. After all, for those of the Water God Style, the stronger the training partner was, the larger the results of their training.

Moreover, Reyda thought that Gull Farion was thinking the same thing when he called her here. His disciple would cross swords with the Water God Style, and tasting the Water God counters with their own body, they'd be able to grow, she thought.

"That's fine. It's a cheap price to pay."

"Huhun. In that case, shall we have our disciples fight a bout?"

Reyda took the initiative and spoke those words. The aim behind those words was to have Nina take her disciple down a notch. Though it would also be fine to have the Sword God fight her, Reyda thought that being humbled by someone of the same generation would be more frustrating.

"That's fine. Nina, call Eris here."

"...Understood."

Seeing that exchange, Reyda went [Oh?] and tilted her head. Since meeting her at the entrance earlier, Reyda had thought that Nina would be the one she'd be training.

"Um, Shisho."

"What is it? Hurry up and bring her here."

"That is, would it be possible if I participated as well? I'm interested in how far the Water God goes, so..."

"Hah? I was gunna have you do that from the start."

The Sword God Gull Farion nodded at her request like it was a bother.

"Thank you very much! I'll immediately bring Eris here."

Hearing his response, for just an instant a happy expression appeared on Nina's face, and then she bowed. She then left the dojo.

The moment she saw that girl, Reyda's skin broke out in goose bumps.

It was almost like the feeling of encountering a monster on the roadside. She almost reflexively moved her hand to her sword. That she didn't do such an unsightly thing was for no reason other than the fact that her own disciple had moved first. The disciple openly displayed her vigilance by moving her hand to her sword, a movement unfitting of a Water God Style exponent, who was supposed to always remain composed.

"Eris. This granny is the person who'll be teaching you about the Water God Style from now on."

"...I'll be in your care."

Eris didn't hide the displeasure on her face, but she bowed.

(She's like a wild beast, huh...)

Reyda could sense violent emotions like that of a hungry beast, sleeping in the depths of Eris's eyes. Even if she taught a person with such emotions the defensive Water God Style, they wouldn't be able to learn it. A person like that wouldn't have knocked on the doors of the Water God Style in the first place.

"I'm sorry, but Gull-boy, this lass isn't suitable for the Water God Style you know. It'd be a waste of time."

"I already understand something like that."

Sword God Gull Farion nodded exaggeratedly.

"In that case, what is it that I'm supposed to teach?"

"I don't want you to teach her anything. It's fine as long as you give her an opponent of the Water God Style."

From their exchange, Reyda had grasped Sword God Gull Farion's objective. In other words, he wanted the girl called Eris to practice and learn 『ways of coping with the Water God Style』. However, Reyda couldn't understand why he wanted this. Certainly, it wouldn't be a loss to gain experience in dealing with those of the Sword God Style. However, there was no need to call her all the way out here for such a thing. As long as it was a talented disciple of the Sword God

Style, it wouldn't be that hard for them to let loose a slash at a speed faster than the reaction time of an average Water God Stylist.

Rather than learning the techniques of the Water God Style, for a North God Stylist it would probably be a better countermeasure to simply hone their own techniques. After all, unlike the Water God Style that couldn't be learned properly without a fitting opponent, the Sword God Style was a style that focused on taking the initiative and speedily grasping victory, regardless of the opponent.

To gain experience in fighting the Water God Style specifically suggests that he plans at some point to have her fight someone of the Water God Style, thought Reyda. And there was only one Water God Stylist who the Sword God didn't think could be won against without going to such lengths.

"What, are you planning on having this beast assassinate me or something?"

"Goodness, no. What use would there be in killing an old lady who would croak on her own?"

"In that case, tell me what you're thinking. Why do you need me to teach her the Water God Style? Just who on earth is she planning to fight?"

At these words, the Sword God made a broad and vicious grin.

"Eris over there wants to defeat the Dragon God Orsted."

"Goodness... Orsted?"

Reyda's face showed great agitation. She too, knew very well of that personage. She too knew of his strength and that, for some reason, he could use the techniques of the Water God Style.

"The Dragon God? That's quite a grandiose attitude you're taking. Do you think she can do it?"

"I think she can. Eris does too."

"I see, I see. That's fine then. Self-confidence is more important than anything."

She didn't know if he was lying or telling the truth. Saying that they wanted to take down the 『Dragon God』, second of Seven Major World Powers, could be seen as nothing but a joke. However, the Sword God had a confident expression, and Eris was making a face like it was natural, and together they had a strange persuasiveness to them.

Additionally, Reyda thought nothing except that it'd be interesting if they did it for real.

"But you know, Sword God. I haven't the faintest intention of teaching someone with no talent. First have her fight a bout with my student, and if she's strong enough to overwhelm her, then I don't mind teaching her this or that."

It was killing two birds with one stone. No, it was killing three birds, she thought. Her student would have her arrogance crushed, and gain experience in fighting with the Sword God Style. If she somehow won, then it'd just have been participating in something funny and amusing. At such prospects, her heart leaps. Though Reyda was of the Water God Style, she was first and foremost a swordswoman.

"That's how it is, Isolte. Have a round with her."

The Water God's disciple. The woman called Isolte stood up.

"I was listening to your conversation. I am the 『Water King』 Isolte Cruel. Pleased to make your acquaintance."

At that, Nina and Eris did as well. They faced Isolte.

"I'm the 『Sword Saint』 Nina Farion. I'll be in your care."

"...Eris Greyrat."

[Three women make a market.] Though there was a saying like that, it didn't fit these three, and each one of took a wooden sword from the corner of the dojo.

"Since Shisho says so, I'll abide, but... I don't think that someone of the Saint rank would be able to overpower me."

With her hand to her mouth, Isolte mumbled as if only Reyda could hear her.

"...That's true. Please go easy on me," said Nina.

"Hmph..."

Eris snorted.

Isolte's cheap provocations easily stirred up the Sword God Style genius who was easily fired up.

One hour later, Eris was collapsed in the dead centre of the dojo.

"Haa... Haa..."

Her eyes opened, and her breathing was wild. She had been completely beaten down by Isolte. Eris's sword hadn't touched Isolte even once.

Eris's sword boasted a speed that was in the top 10 even in this dojo. Because of her solo practice swings, her swings boasted speed and strength that approached Ghyslaine's, and because of the rhythm particular to her, it was difficult evading even one of her strikes. Furthermore, once the techniques of the North God Style were added in, Eris's strength far surpassed any ordinary Sword Saint.

However, Isolte had completely parried all of Eris's strikes, and met her with counters. Only 30 minutes into the match, were they using real swords, the number of times Eris would have died approached three digits.

"..."

Next to Eris lay Isolte. After Eris's defeat, the one who overwhelmed the triumphant Isolte was Nina.

[In the end, a savage style with only speed and power like the Sword God Style can never break through the techniques of the refined Water God Style.]

Nina easily crushed Isolte's conceited thoughts.

Nina's strike flew at Isolte without mercy, and as if sucked in, struck her in the temple. The result was that Isolte was thoroughly defeated. It only took one strike.

"The result was pretty interesting, huh."

The one who said that was the one sitting at the head seat of the dojo, Sword God Gull Farion.

"..."

Nina gave a deep bow to the Sword God. He had said that it was an interesting result. He had probably not thought that she would win, even until the end. Though Nina had some discouraging thoughts like that, having been given the type of setting that allowed her to show her growth, Nina was happy as well. Nina too, enjoyed the feelings of victory.

"The result wasn't interesting or anything else."

The one who said this was Reyda. To her, this conclusion was natural. A beast that didn't even try to conceal its bloodlust was like a sitting duck to the Water God Style. Eris was certainly strong. She had potential. As a bundle of fighting spirit, she was like a heaven sent child when it came to battles, but even so, she couldn't defeat the Water God Style.

As for the fight between Nina and Isolte, the result of this too, was obvious to Reyda. Even at that age, with that much ability, Nina wasn't conceited. It was probably that because of that Eris girl that Nina had no room to become conceited. The result of training without being conceited was that she was able to defeat Isolte, who on the contrary trained with conceit.

Comparing Nina's slashes to Eris's, they weren't especially fast. On the contrary, they were just a tiny bit slower. When it came to the heaviness of their strikes, Eris's ability to overwhelm was probably higher.

However, Nina's strike was a strike that wasn't fuelled by her emotions. There was no bloodlust at all; without even preparing her emotions, a single strike. Let alone bloodlust, Isolte couldn't even sense any intent to strike.

"However, the results were satisfactory, weren't they? How about it? Do you want to learn Water God techniques from me?"

Being asked that, Nina showed that she was thinking about it for a little, but in the end, she shook her head.

"No, I intend to master the Sword God Style."

"I see, I see. That's fine."

Reyda laughed with interest.

"Gull-boy. How about this? For a while we'll have these three train with each other, and have them improve themselves together."

"Yeah. She probably has nothing to say, losing to someone like a Water King."

"Our kid as well might become hardworking again if she has a target right above her."

The result of the discussion between the Sword God and Water God was as follows:

Eris would train until she could defeat Isolte. Isolte would train until she could defeat Nina. As they had the same goal in mind, and would point out each other's weak points, some growth could probably be expected. It was that kind of conclusion.

"...Nina, are you fine with this?"

"I'm fine with it."

Nina nodded. Certainly, she had only gotten involved this time out of curiosity. Bettering herself with the best disciple of the Sword God Style would probably be a plus for her as well. Nina had won. However, Nina didn't feel that Isolte or Eris were below her. Furthermore, she understood the benefits of competing firsthand; had Eris not been here these past few years, she probably couldn't have won against Isolte, she thought.

"Alright. I guess that's how we'll be doing it. In the morning follow your own teacher as usual, and then once the sun starts to fall, the three of you gather and train together."

"Yes."

"...Got it."

Nina nodded silently, and Eris as well answered as well while still prone. Though Isolte lay unconscious, Reyda had no intention of voicing any complaints.

Like this, Eris's Anti-Water God Style training began.

One month later.

A strange three way deadlock had formed.

Eris beat Nina.

Nina beat Isolte.

Isolte beat Eris.

While each of them would still do their own training, each day they would face each other a number of times, exchanging their opinions. Isolte immediately pinpointed Eris's weakness.

"You let out too much killing intent, Eris-san. We of the Water God Style can read killing intent, so if we know an attack is coming, we can prepare our stance."

"Even if you tell me that, I don't get it. Just what am I supposed to do?"

Eris obediently listened to Isolte's words. Though she was as self-centered and violent as she seemed, Eris was a person who coveted ways to strengthen herself.

"Let's see... Though you let out almost no killing intent before you strike, Nina-san, how do you do it?"

"Even if you ask me how... Since you'll win as long as your sword is the faster one, there's no need for stuff like bloodlust, right?"

On the contrary, it was a mystery to Nina why Eris was at all times, spilling bloodlust everywhere.

[If there's no enemy, what's the point getting so worked up? Wouldn't it be better to be relaxed normally?]

Nina's thoughts were along these lines.

"I don't get it." spoke Eris.

"Let's see. Then how about making it a daily habit to get in the bath, wash your body, eat properly, and to think about that beloved guy that you mentioned while lying in a warm futon before sleeping properly?"

"What the heck. Rudeus has nothing to do with it, right?"

"Yeah... Geez, the last one was a joke. Anyway, just do the above. You stink, and you look ill, and it's really unsightly."

"...Got it."

Eris herself didn't want to stretch herself so much that she would snap. The more she trained, the more she understood that the Dragon God Orsted in her memories held ludicrous power. Isolte who was just in front of her used the same techniques as Orsted did. However, those were techniques far, far greater and more precise than Isolte's. The outsider Orsted surpassed the Water King in these techniques.

"Hahhh, why can't I win against such a person? I'll lose my confidence."

Nina let out a huge sigh. At the advice of the Sword God, Gull Farion, she spent every day continuing a rational training programme. She rationally trained her body, rationally ate meals, and spent each day rationally. Despite all this, she couldn't win against the clearly irrational Eris.

"...Because I make it so that it's like you move after."

"Eh?"

Nina hadn't thought that Eris would ever say anything to her. Eris was self-centered and someone who normally wouldn't care about anyone else's problems after all.

"It was something that Ruijerd taught me. If you use stuff like your gaze, you can make people move before you like they move after you."

"Ruijerd... Who's that?"

"He's my teacher."

Nina tilted her head at Eris's words. She didn't really understand what Eris was saying.

What Eris normally used was a high-level technique that Ruijerd taught her. As the crystallization of something that hardened combat veterans would subconsciously do, it was one of the techniques of the warriors of the Supard Race.

"In other words, you intentionally provoke your opponent's attacks, Eris-san?"

"That's right."

"..."

At Isolte's explanation, Nina understood Eris's words as well. Though she understood, as expected it didn't make it any less suspicious sounding, and Nina stared at Eris in suspicion. She hadn't thought that this woman, who looked exactly like she was born and bred in the mountains, would be able to use such a high-level technique.

On the contrary, Isolte understood that this was exactly what Eris was doing. The school known as the Water God Style was one that was primarily seated in counters. Its techniques as well were founded around the basis of making the opponent move first.

"I see. Do you do this as well when you have me as an opponent?"

"I do, but you don't move, do you?"

"I've undergone training for that after all... Next time, try not to do that, or let out killing intent and the result might be a little different for all we know."

"...I'll give it a try."

Whilst frowning, Eris nodded. Though she said she would try it, she didn't know how she was supposed to control her killing intent. After all, it wasn't something conscious that she could take control of. Of course, this was something she had been told by others many times already. However, Ruijerd had taught Eris ways to use that overflowing bloodlust instead, so it wasn't something that she wanted to hear.

[Though normally it'd be a demerit, as long as you're far enough above others, then there's no need to forcibly keep it in check.]

It was along this line of thinking.

"What should I do? Hey, Isolte-san, what do you do?"

"...For you, Nina-san, let's see, in the Water God Style we have training where you're deprived of your sight and are made to determine the real attack but... since I've heard that it's a battle technique that Magic Races often use, the Sword God Style should have its own way of coping with it as well, I think. How about asking your Oshishou-sama about it?"

Isolte had both excellence and cleverness. Amongst the swordsmen of the Water God Style, there were many diligent and persevering people.

"Phew, it won't go very well... Oh, the sun's about to set, isn't it?"

With those words, Nina ended the study session.

"Well then, until tomorrow, huh? ...Somehow, it's been fun lately, so it can't be helped that we do this for so long. It's my first time having discussions with people of my level and age, after all." Isolte said, cheerfully.

"That's true. It's the same for me, Isolte-san."

Nina agreed. Though Eris was normally silent, once she spoke to her, she found that Eris's knowledge on combat was broad and varied. Her knowledge wasn't limited just to the North God techniques that she had recently been learning, but also included the techniques of the Magic Race. Though she had given Nina the impression of being an incomprehensible monkey woman, Nina was now reevaluating her true worth. It wasn't that she was using uncivilized techniques, but just techniques of a different school, Nina thought.

"...Hmph."

Eris was the same as always. Normally, even if she participated in study sessions at the word of the Sword God, she didn't voice her own opinions.

What Eris recalled at those times was the distant past: the times when she studied swordsmanship together with Rudeus. In those days, she had done this kind of thing as well with Rudeus, they discussed this and that, and various ideas popped up as well. It was something that Rudeus did. Though it was for this kind of simple and easily understood reason, to Eris it was an extremely important reason, and made her communicate with others.

"Well then, I'll be going and training with Shisho now."

"Thank you for today as well, Isolte-san."

"Not at all, Nina-san. I feel the same way. It's the truth that I'm steadily getting stronger as well."

Where the road separated into paths leading to the dorms and the guest area, Nina and Isolte spoke their farewells with smiles. Eris continued walking briskly towards the dormitories.

"Thank you as well, Eris-san."

"...I'll get a hit in tomorrow."

"I'll look forward to it."

"Hmph."

Without glancing back, Eris continued to walk. Nina bowed once to Isolte and then caught up to Eris.

"Eris, it's fine if you keep training after this but, once you're done, at least take a bath!"

Was it the usual Eris, she would've turned a deaf ear to these words. Nina as well thought that it was a waste of breath, but stinky things stank, so she had no choice but to continue saying this every day. However, Eris was different today. While making a slightly unhappy expression, she turned her head and stared intensely at Nina.

"What you said earlier, was it for real?"

"Earlier? What did I say?"

"That if every day I get in the bath, wash my body, eat properly, and think about Rudeus while lying in a warm futon before sleeping properly, I'll be able to get rid of my bloodlust."

"Uu..."

Nina's words were caught in her throat. Those were just random words she had spouted out to get Eris to do as she wanted. However, there was no mistake that [mushin] could be born from relaxing. That's why she carried through with this idea.

"T-, that's right. In general, if you're as smelly as you are now, that guy you mentioned definitely won't turn your way, you know."

"No, he would, you know. Rudeus would always hug my sweat-drenched shirts after all."

"That's..."

While recalling Rudeus who she had only ever seen once, Nina imagined him burying his face in a girl's sweaty shirt.

[He's just a pervert.]

However, seeing that Eris's expression was quickly becoming displeased, Nina didn't say this.

"Anyway, I've heard that if you're too dirty, even men will start to hate you."

"Well, Rudeus really didn't slack off on cleaning, huh."

"T-, that's right! That's why you should make sure to always keep your body clean."

Eris started to think. What she recalled was Rudeus. Though she had thought not to think about him, she lost focus and ended up remembering him. Once she remembered him, her mouth started to spread into a happy smile.

Then, Eris noticed. That when she was like this, she probably didn't have any bloodlust.

So then, she nodded at Nina.

"I get it. I'll go have a bath then."

"Yeah, I knew you'd say that. I get it already, so I'll just give up on tr-... What did you just say?"

Eris didn't respond to that question and returned to her room.

With a confused expression, Nina stood stock-still.

———

It took another year from that point for Eris to be able to fight at least on par with Water King Isolte.

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I awaken. It's because of a sweet smell. While I was asleep, what drifted by was a lovely scent.

"!?"

When I open my eyes, there lies God. A face that could be described as innocent is turned towards me, and I could hear their peaceful sleeping breaths.

"Ohhh..."

I quietly leave the covers and sit in seiza. I join my hands and bow. At any rate, this is an esteemed personage.

"Hang on, could it be, that, this means..."

I notice a certain matter and I raise the blanket that was covering God's body.

When I do, it is as expected.

Truly, as expected.

What lies there is...

What lies under the blanket is...!

The nude body of God!

"Ohhh...!"

A body that could be considered too young. A body that is certainly not womanly, and whose waist has no hips. Though, it is dark and I am uncertain, were there not urna at her chest? Were they not the same urna found on the forehead of Buddha? No, they probably weren't urna. However, there's no mistake that they were something as precious.

"-Gulp-"

Is it not fine to touch?

It is not something sinful.

At any rate, I am the one who has been chosen by God.

There is no sin in me, the Messiah, touching the body of God.

Be that as it may, is it really fine to touch her whilst she lies in the midst of Nirvana?

If I touch her here, will I not be burdened with Karma, and be unable to reach Nirvana?

Will I not be stopped by a halo of light and be purified with, "Begone, Mara!" the instant I touch her?

{ C-Editor's note: Mara is a Buddhist demon of temptation. }

Even though my disciple/angel is so Paul-ish this early in the morning...

{ C-Editor's note: Another phallic euphemism. }

"Mn... Cold..."

God pulls in the blanket and, in her stirs, hides her body, and turns the other way.

"Ohhh..."

How divine!

That white nape that peeks through her blue hair!

A nape that is anything but sultry!

Those kiss marks that I left yesterday!

Magnificent.

To be able to see such a sight, there's no mistaking that I am the happiest person in the world.

...Oops, no good. There's no time in the morning, so, I'd best wake her up.

"Roxy, please wake up. It's morning, you know."

"Mn..."

God opens her eyes, and slowly raises her body. The blanket slips down, and the form of her beautiful back is revealed. Behold, this is the dawn of mankind.

"...Good morning."

God drowsily turns her head. Her eyes are sleepy. Two urna are on her chest, and, below that is an adorable navel. Wrapped in small panties is a small Mañjusaka.

{ C-Editor's note: Mañjusaka is another name for the red spider lily or flowering lycoris plant. }

Seeing this before my eyes, my stupa bears enough Karma to reach enlightenment.

{ C-Editor's note: Yet another phallic euphemism. }

"Ah..."

Raising the blanket, she hides her body. In that instant, I understand that God had died. The light was lost, and an age of darkness began.

"What's wrong? You're making a regretful face."

"I was just thinking that I'd like to see your esteemed body in a place with more light, Roxy."

"...Though, I doubt there's anything enjoyable about looking at it..."

"What words do you speak? Come now, please part with the blanket and allow the humble me to revere the sun."

"Why are you so energetic this early in the morning...? Well, if you're willing to say that much, I guess it doesn't matter at this point, but..."

Whilst saying this, Roxy slowly reveals what was under the cloth. When she does, the world is bathed in light.

Let there be light, and it was good.

I see the light, and find darkness; if light was called Apollo, then darkness was called Eros.

By the darkness are her navel, Cupido, and her thighs, Amor.

It is the First Day.

"That's enough, right?"

She said, as she covers herself again. Again, an age of darkness... Oh well, I guess that's enough of that.

"Um, Rudi."

"Yes, what is it?"

"Thank you for last night."

Roxy lowers her head. I recall the days that passed until I finally did 'that' with Roxy.

It was decided that once my child was born, Roxy would become one of my wives. Having said that, though, I hadn't done 'that' with Roxy until today. I was busy taking care of my child. Roxy herself, held back. Though she understood, Roxy was probably uneasy.

That's why I tried my best to wipe away her unease.

As much as possible, I tried to treat Roxy like a princess; as much as I could, I attended to her. Because I wanted her to receive all my love, I showed her the core of the Rudeus Style.

Because of that, my jaw still hurt. I used my tongue too much. Anyway, I should have properly conveyed my love. Roxy was satisfied, after all.

"Still, to think that kind of... method? Technique? To think 'that' that existed. I had no idea."

Turning red, she looks left and right as she speaks.

"Huhu, the world is a large place."

I used all the techniques I've cultivated until now. A 'course' that made Sylphy completely helpless, and left her gasping for breath.

I wanted to make Roxy gasp for her breath, as well. So that I could fulfil my desires, it was the shortest course. Or, so that's how it should've been, but Roxy was a little different than I had expected. She asked questions at every turn.

[What should I do?] she'd ask.

Though it was in the middle of 'an exchange between man and woman', she was earnestly studying. Each time, I would explain in detail, and instruct her in various techniques.

"Please teach me various things next time, as well."

"No, even if you just lay in bed, Roxy-sensei, I'd completely take care of everything, you know?"

"No, no, I want to become more skilled in these sort of things, as well."

Honestly, she really is a bit different than I thought. However, it's not a bad thing. Sylphy and Roxy have their own ways of doing things. Both let me satisfy myself, so I have no complaints at all.

"...I'll be late for school, huh?"

With a red face, she quickly turns her face away from me and slowly rises from the bed. I don't leave my seiza. Let's watch her small white butt until she leaves the room.

"Mn? What is it?"

"No, it's nothing."

Since Roxy turns back to look at me, I put on a show of getting changed, as well.

"..."

Suddenly, I can feel Roxy gazing at me from behind. Should I raise my arms overhead and start doing muscle poses? Or, so I was thinking, when Roxy totters over to me and touches my back.

"Sorry. It seems I scratched you. Does it hurt?"

"Mn?"

I turned my head to have a look. I have four swells like long earthworms on my back. When I give it a touch, it stings a little.

Roxy gave them to me last night. In other words, a medal of manhood. Ahh, now that I recall Roxy's face at the time, I'm starting to get horny... Oops, not good, not good. I don't have time to think about that sort of thing in the morning.

"They're fine."

"I hope they don't leave scars..."

Roxy's face is bright red. She doesn't mention healing it with magic, and is probably remembering last night, as well.

When I look at her face, my gaze stops on her eyes. She has beautiful light blue eyes and I could see myself reflected in them. She closes them. It was the face of someone waiting for a kiss. If I kiss her here, we'd probably begin a second round. That's why I confined it to just stroking her cheek.

"...Let's get changed."

"Y-, yeah. Right!"

In a panic, Roxy jumps away from me. She then dresses, starting with her bra. When I am sure that she is changing, I get dressed as well.

"Rudi, do I look weird anywhere?"

After we finish changing, Roxy does a spin in front of me and shows her robed appearance to me. Her three braids gently dancing in the air.

"You look fine."

"Really?"

"Of course."

I reply warmly. If there are any bastards who say anything about her appearance, I'm not gunna let them go. That's how I feel about it.

"Today is my first day teaching, huh. I can't mess up."

Saying so, Roxy clenches her fists. Starting from today, she would go to school. Not as a student, but as a teacher. And from today, I would be a third year.

Now then, before I talk about my first day as a third year, I'd better talk about something that happened a little earlier.

It's about the day Roxy became a teacher.

— A few months ago —

It is about a week after we had returned. The various commotions have started to calm down, and this happened while I was relaxing in the living room...

Roxy suddenly begins to speak.

"Rudi, I was thinking of working at the Magic University but, is that okay with you?"

"Eh?"

I didn't get it, so I ask again, and when I do, Roxy looks down at me and speaks in her usual neutral expression.

"Recently, I've found that I have way too much free time, so I was wondering if there wasn't something I could do."

"Umm... So that would be teaching at the Magic University?"

"Yes. That's the plan."

Roxy nods quietly. Roxy certainly does seem to have been free recently.

Roxy's ability to do housework isn't that high. Roxy is a solo adventurer, and she can get by on her own. However, if you compare her to Sylphy, Aisha, or Lilia, she's completely inferior. Because our house has two maids, Roxy doesn't get a turn to show what she can do.

As for what she does help out with, it's basically limited to helping me out in place of my left hand. Living with only one hand has a lot of varied inconveniences. Being helped out with changing or eating, and the like, really is a huge help. However, that's it.

"Hmm..."

A teacher, huh? I know the joys of being taught by her. If I had to add on an additional comment, she isn't something that exists to act as my left hand. I have no reason to refuse. Rather than the sense of superiority I get from keeping her to myself, it's much more important to me to let the world know just how wonderful Roxy is.

"Though a person like you, Rudi, might be thinking that someone like me becoming a teacher is completely ridiculous, I think I like teaching people."

"I don't think it's ridiculous at all!"

It's unthinkable. No matter what kind of parallel world you travel to, you'll never find a version of me that thinks of it as ridiculous. No matter how many worlds you travel to, it's destiny for me to respect Roxy. It's the will of Steins;Gate.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Steins;Gate anime television series. }

"I think you should definitely become a teacher there, Roxy!"

"Though I'm grateful that you say that, it's a bit, um, embarrassing, huh."

All right. Since we've decided on it, let's finish it in one go.

"Shall we go speak to Vice Principal Jinas now?"

When I say that, Roxy makes a surprised expression.

"Eh, Jinas-san is the Vice Principal now?"

"Are you acquainted?"

Roxy is making a truly disgusted expression.

"...He's my Shisho."

Oh? Was Jinas Water Saint Ranked? Though, I have thought he was Fire Saint Ranked, it seems I misunderstood, huh. No, even if you can use two types, they don't call you double, twin, or anything. It's likely that, though I didn't know it, Jinas could use Water Saint Ranked magic, as well.

"In the past, I said some things before parting with him. Though, I've reflected on my youthful indiscretions..."

"If it's something that happened in the past, then, it'll be fine."

According to what Roxy says, her Shisho is someone haughty and overbearing. But, the Jinas that I know gives off a strong image of being a diligent corporate worker. The Jinas I know doesn't match with the Shisho in the past that Roxy mentions.

"But, what if, when I meet him, he still has a grudge?"

"I'll get rid of the grudge and, if it isn't fixed, then I'll have him forget it."

Though, I owe Jinas for various things, this is for Roxy's sake. It isn't a problem to me, even if I add on a few more debts to it.

"Well, when the time comes, I'll be relying on you."

And so we decide to head to the Magic University.

As usual, Jinas is buried in a mountain of paperwork.

"My..."

Seeing Roxy, Vice Principal Jinas makes a bitter smile. Though he's a person who always makes such wry smiles, today's is particularly bitter.

"Excuse me, Vice Principal. Would it be possible for you to spare me a few minutes?"

"Yes, of course Rudeus-san. Shall we talk elsewhere?"

Though Jinas is probably busy, he willingly spares me the time. Though Jinas always seems busy, when I ask favors of him, he always spares me the time. He's not a bad person.

We move to the interview room. It's been a while since I've been here: probably not since the time I dueled with Badigadi.

"Please sit."

Roxy and I sit next to each other, in front of Jinas.

"First of all... it's been a while, hasn't it, Roxy?"

"Yes. It's been a while... Shisho."

"That you wouldn't call me Shisho anymore was something you'd already decided, wasn't it?"

At those words, Roxy answers with her eyes cast down.

"I'm sorry about that. I was conceited in those days too."

"I'm the same. I, too, had too much pride."

The two bow to each other.

I don't know what kind of exchanges they had in the past. But, the flow of time probably washed it away. More than 10 years have passed, and people do change.

After a few seconds, Jinas composes himself and raises his head.

"So, what do you need of me on this day?"

"Shisho. Since then, various things have happened, and having learnt the joys of teaching others, I was thinking that it might be good to become a teacher here."

"I see. That Roxy, who had said that teachers and the like were unnecessary, has changed quite a bit, hasn't she?"

With a bitter smile, Jinas speaks words full of irony. I wonder if he isn't enthused. Whilst wondering this, I look towards Roxy and find that she's also smiling bitterly. It seems that they came to some understanding through their wry smiles.

What is this? I suddenly feel kind of left out. I have planned on selling Roxy to Jinas, had he been against it, but I get the feeling that it'll be fine, even if I don't do so. On the contrary, I wonder if I'm getting in their way.

"Roxy-sensei. Would it be better if I stepped out for a little?"

"...Eh? It's fine even if you stay, you know?"

"I was thinking I'd show my face at an acquaintance's place, you see."

Since Roxy and Jinas are old acquaintances, they probably have a lot of things to talk about. And as for Roxy, she probably doesn't want me to hear about her green days very much.

Whilst feeling a little lonely, I inform her of my destination and leave.

I head to Zanoba's research room.

It was half a year ago that I told him I'd return in two years. Zanoba will surely be surprised.

I'm sad about Paul and Zenith. But, I have no intention of involving Zanoba in this. I'll proceed cheerfully.

"Alright!"

I knock on the door. Without waiting for a reply, I enter.

"Big news, Zanoba! He's like, totally back!"

"Fah-!?"

With an expression filled with ecstasy, Zanoba is leaning in on a life-sized mannequin.

"..."

"..."

After a few seconds, I meet eyes with Zanoba. I wonder what Zanoba is feeling at the moment. I know that he isn't feeling 'like' or 'hate'. I know this very well.

"..."

I avert my eyes, and shut the door.

Rustling and clanking sounds are coming from inside the room. I wait for about 10 seconds until the sounds stop. I then hear a [Come in.] coming from inside the room, and throw open the door with a 'bang'.

"Big news, Zanoba! He's like, totally back!"

"Ohhhhhhhh! Is it not Shisho!?"

Zanoba and I act like nothing happened, and hug each other happily. We do so without reserve. Zanoba and I are friends. I saw nothing. Nothing happened.

"You've returned quite quickly. I had heard that it would take 2 years."

"Well, a lot happened and I returned earlier than expected."

"To come back in half a year from a journey that should've taken two years is... As expected of Shisho!"

I look around the surroundings. Dolls and bronze statues with ethnic feels are lined up. Though, I'm used to Zanoba's research room, perhaps, it's because I haven't been here in a while, but it feels extremely nostalgic. Still, in the short time that I haven't seen it, the number of things in the room has increased. In particular, the top of Julie's desk is packed with clay figures. It seems that, though I wasn't here, she didn't slack off and continued to work hard.

"What are Julie and Ginger doing?"

"The two are presently out shopping, and because they've reserved something that isn't in stock except during the evenings, they probably won't be back until evening."

I see, so that's why he was having a tryst with his lover, the doll. Since it was such a rare occasion, I wonder if I've done something bad.

"Oh? Shisho, what happened to your arm...?"

Zanoba suddenly notices my left arm. With a darkened expression, he's looking at my arm that has nothing from the wrist down.

"A bit happened. I messed up."

"...Was it an enemy strong enough to take one of your arms, Shisho?"

"It was a Hydra that was immune to magic."

"A Hydra. Hm, quite the monster, huh."

Zanoba has his hand to his chin and thinks over something. Thinking about it, what we lacked was pure physical attack power. Had Zanoba been with us, we might have brought down the Hydra more easily. It's too late to talk about it now, though.

"If it was immune to magic, then it was probably a tough fight for Shisho as well."

"Yeah. Not only that, even if you cut off its necks it would just regenerate. It was really hard."

"Hohh, to even be able to regenerate... How did you kill it?"

"Father... Our swordsman cut off its necks, and I scorched them."

"I see. I understand it now. The idea to scorch its wounds was Shisho's idea, wasn't it?"

"I'd just heard a story of a similar situation."

When I think about that battle, a sigh escapes me. Despite knowing how to take care of it, we ended up in such a state. The more I'm praised about it, the more miserable I feel.

"You're looking quite depressed."

"Though we managed to beat it, we lost a lot."

"Ah, I see."

Zanoba looks at my hand and seems to nod in assent.

"Since that is the case, this is perfect timing."

With a happy smile, Zanoba moves to the head work desk. He's searching the lowest drawer with rustling noises.

"Please look at this."

What he produces from the drawer is a model of a hand. No, that's not it. For a hand, the shape is a bit off. It's appearance is not unlike that of a gauntlet. Is it a model of a glove?

"What's that?"

"Huhu, it is the result of this half year."

"Ohh?"

"It is not as if I have been playing around."

Zanoba speaks while suppressing a laugh.

Hugging his dolls wasn't playing around, huh? No, that never happened. I didn't see a thing.

"So, just what is this?"

"Right, please have a look!"

With a face overflowing with confidence, he holds up the glove model, makes a fist, and thrusts into it. He then chants.

" 『Oh Earth, become thine Arm.』 "

The moment Zanoba speaks those words, the glove model twitches. Though, the hand is clenched into a fist, it begins to unclench itself slowly. Moving between a fist and an open hand; and its fingers bent one by one. Each of those movements is shockingly smooth.

"It's a magic tool hand, that moves as you wish."

"..."

"As Shisho instructed, I researched that doll's hand and with Cliff's cooperation, was able to arrive at this success."

"..."

"Shisho...? Shisho?"

"Y-, yeah. Sorry."

I am speechless due to shock. Certainly, I had told him to focus his research on the hands first, but... To think that he'd create something like this.

"It's amazing. Frankly, I'm shocked."

"Huhuhu, it's too early to be shocked. After all, if you use this magic tool, you can even restrain my power."

"Really?"

"Yes."

Zanoba's eyes narrow and he has profound emotion. Happiness seeps from that expression of his. Being able to restrain his curse of superhuman strength means that he'd be able to create dolls.

Like this, he'd be able to create the things he loved.

By his own hands.

I probably can't even imagine how happy he is.

" 『Oh Arm, return to Earth.』 "

At Zanoba's words, the movement disappears from the glove, like an on and off function.

"Well then."

Zanoba holds out the magic tool to me.

"Here, please try it. After putting it on, when you chant 『Oh Earth, become mine Arm.』, it will become your arm. When taking it off, it should be fine to chant 『Oh Arm, return to Earth』."

"Right."

As told, I put my left arm into the magic tool. My arm is handless. It might have been because it was clenched into a fist, but there was too much room inside, and it felt like it'd fall off at any minute.

"It seems like it'll fall off."

"There's no problem. Please try the chant."

"Yeah... 『Oh Earth, become thine Arm.』

The moment I said that, mana is drawn from my arm. It isn't a huge amount. Since Zanoba can use it too, that's obvious.

"Oh-."

The next moment, the inside of the magic tool clings firmly to my stump. The feeling of being clung to slowly fades. At the same time, I can feel my 'fingers'.

"...How is it?"

I try moving my left hand. I open it up, and then clench it. Starting from my thumb, I clench my fingers in turn. This boneless hand of earth moves as if it is my own.

"It moves. It moves!"

"There's still more. Please try touching something."

"Alright."

I try picking up a carved wooden figure that was lying nearby. It's a figure of a horse, about the size of a fist. My sense of feeling is a little dull, and also hard. It feels almost like wearing work gloves. But, there's a feeling of having my fingertips touch something.

"This is amazing. You even went as far as putting the sense of touch into the fingertips?"

"Yes. If you couldn't feel anything, you wouldn't be able to make dolls."

Yeah. You'd need to be able to adjust finely your strength. If Zanoba created this glove with that purpose in mind, this would be something he wouldn't settle for.

I try using magic with my fingertips as a test. I made a water bullet about the side of my pinky. It seems that somehow this glove won't hinder the use of magic.

He was able to make this in half a year? Even though it shouldn't have been easy... I wonder if this is a case of, 'what one likes, one will do well'.

"I did not know if it would work without a hand, but it seems there are no problems, huh?"

"Yeah, it moves. There's feeling in it too."

"The more mana you put into it, the stronger it will get."

"Ohh."

"But if Shisho puts all his power into it, it might be the hand that breaks, huh. I had made it to be stronger than a person's hand, but please, take care."

"Let's see, let's see."

Hearing this, I try putting my mana into it. Very quickly, the weight of the wooden horse seems to disappear.

"Amazing."

The moment I say this, a 'CRACK' sounds from inside my hand.

"Ah."

"AAAH!"

The horse figure's leg has completely broken.

"Ah, ahhh... Shisho..."

Zanoba glares at me reproachfully.

"Sorry, I'll compensate you..."

"Uuu... This horse figure was... created by the traditional craft of the extinct Giara Dukedom... A second one, probably wouldn't..."

"I-, if you'd like, I'll create you a new one. It'd be made from earth magic, though."

When I say that, Zanoba's face suddenly broadens into a smile.

"Ohh! It seems that I've pressed you into doing so. My sincere apologies."

Despite saying this, Zanoba places the figure inside the desk. I wonder if he's going to glue it back together with bonding agent. I pray that he'll be able to do it well.

Zanoba turns to face me again and speaks.

"Please take the hand. After all, though it is still a prototype, it should be better than nothing."

"Is that really alright?"

"If Shisho and Cliff help me, then I should be able to produce something similar in no time after all."

Well, he does plan on continuing his research after all. I want the feeling of touch to get even sharper. If it does, I should even be able rub boobs with it.

Not only that, either. This arm is something that widens my dreams. For example... Right, it'd be interesting if I could attach modifications to it. It'd be handy for figurine creations if I turned my fingertips into drills. It might also be interesting to have a gun nozzle type thing that I could shoot magic bullets out of.

"...Zanoba, this is an amazing invention."

"Right? Though I may say this myself, I can boast that I've created something amazing."

It wouldn't only have uses as weaponry or for doll creation either. You can even use it for medical treatment.

In this world, even if you get a limb chopped off, with high-level healing magic, you can stick it right back on. Wounds that you'd have no choice but to seek medical treatment for in my previous world can be easily healed with Elementary Ranked healing magic.

I don't know if it's because of this, but I've never really seen things like prosthetic arms or legs. Even if you look, you'll only find things like Captain Ahab's wooden pole leg.

If you completely lose something, it'll be hard to treat. People who can use a high enough level of healing magic to regrow arms are few. If you went to the Holy Kingdom of Milis, you'd probably be able to find some. However, it'd likely to cost a lot of money to rely on them for that.

If you sold this magic tool to those types of rich people, you'd probably make money. Though it'd be a loss for the healing experts of Milis, we're on the opposite sides of the world, and if we used the Magic University or the Magic guild, I feel that it might work out.

No, it would work out.

"What's this magic tool called?"

"I haven't named it yet. Neither I nor Cliff are very good at naming things."

"Is that so?"

But it'd be boring to leave it nameless, like this.

"Shisho, won't you name it for me?"

"Eh, yeah, it's fine if you want."

It's not like I'm great at naming things either, though. But if I'm asked, then I can't say no. I look at the arm that's become part of myself, and think.

Since it's a detachable arm, there's something that immediately comes to mind.

Rocket Punch, or something.

But it's not like my arm can fly off or anything. Though I wonder if I can make it fly off...

A simple name like [Hand of Glory] also comes to mind. As in the saponified wax from the hand of an executed criminal. It has nothing to do with a bandana'd, jeans-wearing, perverted high schooler.

Well, let's stop with those sorts of names. This is the first of its kind in this world. That's why it'll be fine just to use the creator's name.

"How about if we use parts from the names Zanoba and Cliff and name it 『Zariff's Prosthetic Hand』?"

"Shisho's name isn't in it though."

"That's fine. I didn't have anything to do with it, after all."

"...I don't think that was the case, but... I understand. In that case, that makes this hand the 『Zariff's Prosthetic Hand』 Prototype 01 then, doesn't it?"

Zanoba speaks happily.

Like this, my arm becomes equipped with the magic tool 『Zariff's Prosthetic Hand』. Though it's not as dexterous as my real hand, nor is the feeling as sharp, it does move as I want, and the feeling is there. There's also a huge difference in power, once I put mana into it. Though fine-tuning the strength of it will take some practice, I'll probably get used to it. As for my goal, it would probably be to gently rub Sylphy and Roxy's breasts, I guess.

"Though, I think there are still many points that require improvement, I must advance my research in automatons. What will you do?"

"Let's see..."

It seems there are a few problems. For example, the consumption of mana. It seems that with Zanoba's mana capacity, he'll be out of it after 2 or 3 hours of use. Among the other problems are that the fingers are too fat and unrefined, for example, or that the sense of touch is a little dull. If those types of problems can be fixed, I'm sure that it would be the completion of something amazing. However, in the end, this is just a byproduct of research.

Our goal is to create a moving doll. This glove would sell well, it'd be convenient to have, and one day, we'd also be able to sell it for real, but taking too long on this project probably wouldn't be good.

"No, in the end, our goal is to create a moving doll. You musn't forget this."

"That's true."

"That's why, please put this to the side for the moment, and continue your analysis of the doll."

"I thought Shisho would say that."

Zanoba and I renew our plan of action. The hand is something we'll do on the side.

After that, Zanoba and I speak for a while. The contents of our conversation are to do with the dolls I saw on the Begaritto continent. When he hears about the matter of the glass dolls, Zanoba's eyes begin to sparkle.

"Speaking of which, how's Julie?"

"The other day, Julie completed a doll of a certain personage. She probably wanted to meet you and show you."

Mu.

Is it finished? The Ruijerd doll, that is. I want to see it. I want to see it, but...

"I see. But if she'll be coming back in the evening, I don't know if we'll be able to meet."

"Hmm, do you have plans?"

"After Sensei's interview, I plan on showing my face at a few other's places."

"Sensei?"

At that moment, there was a knock at the door.

"Rudi, are you here? It was here, right?"

It's Roxy's voice. It seems that while Zanoba and I were talking, the interview finished.

"Please come in. I was just thinking of talking about you, Sensei."

"Please excuse me."

While turning her head and looking about, Roxy enters the room, a little hunched over in hesitation. She then slowly walks over to my side.

"This is quite the splendid research room, isn't it? I wonder if it's okay for me to enter. It seems like this is something that outsiders shouldn't see, after all."

"A place that you, Roxy-sensei, shouldn't enter doesn't exist in this school."

"Isn't that just something that you've decided on yourself, Rudi?"

"That's true. But this place is fine."

When I said that, Zanoba stiffens. He's trembling.

"Zanoba, let me introduce you. She's Roxy M. Greyrat, my sensei."

"It's been a while, Zanoba-dono. That you seem to be in good health is most important."

Roxy bows very deeply to Zanoba.

"O-, o-, o..."

Seeing Roxy, Zanoba trembles all over. He brings his trembling hands to the top of his head.

"UOOOOOOOOOHHHHHHH!"

"Wah-!"

Zanoba suddenly lets out a war cry. He jumps up like a frog and then lands, prostrated, on all fours. Roxy trembles with a start, and half-hides behind me.

"It has been a long time, Roxy-dono! Without knowing that you were Shisho's shisho, I've been unthinkably rude to you!"

"Please raise your head, for a prince of a country to, to me, it's too much, what if someone sees!?"

Roxy's behavior looks quite suspicious. I guess there's no choice. Should I help her out?

"It's okay, Sensei. If there's anyone who complains, I'll take care of them."

"Are you saying ridiculous things too, Rudi!?"

Roxy is going [awa awa] in a fluster, even though there's nothing for her to get flustered about.

"I should be asking you to calm down, Sensei. Isn't it obvious that Zanoba would prostrate himself before you, Sensei?"

"I-, is that so? Could I hear the reason why?"

"Hey, Zanoba. It's natural, right?"

When I look to Zanoba for agreement, still prostrated on the ground, he agrees with me.

"Yes. For she is Shisho's shisho."

See? Zanoba is saying so, too.

"Don't just say [It's obvious], but please tell me the reason!"

"There's no such thing as a reason when it comes to obvious things. It's fine for you to just calmly accept it as it is, Sensei."

"However..."

"It can't be helped, huh. Zanoba, please stand."

Since our conversation won't progress like this, I have Zanoba stand. Because Zanoba's tall, right now, he can probably see Roxy's hair whorl. He's pretty haughty, standing above her. Well, whatever. It's not like he means to be tall.

"So how was it? Does it seem you'll be employed as a teacher?"

"Yes, thankfully Jinas-shisho... Vice Principal Jinas acknowledged my ability."

"Since you raised me, that's natural huh."

"Since you grew all on your own, I don't think it had anything to do with my ability as a teacher though."

Anyhow, it seems that it's been decided that Roxy will become a teacher at this school starting from next semester. This is something that needs to be celebrated, huh.

Celebration. Celebration, huh?

Roxy's wedding celebration.

My younger sisters' tenth birthday celebrations.

My soon to be born child's birthday celebration.

Should I have one big family celebration in the future? Paul's letter has mentioned having a big celebration once we returned, after all.

Well, that's for the future. Right now, we're busy, so we'll worry about it after various things calm down first.

"Ah, that's right. It wouldn't do if I didn't greet other people as well, huh?"

"That's right. I'm sure everyone else will be surprised that Shisho has come back."

Zanoba laughs happily. Stringing along, I laugh as well. Since I'm looking forward to introducing Roxy to the others, it can't be helped that I smile.

"Well then, Zanoba, thanks for the arm. I'll come again."

"Yes, when you're free again, please show your face here. Julie will be happy as well, after all."

"Of course."

"If the condition of the arm gets bad, then it might be faster to show Cliff rather than me."

"Got it."

Like that, I part from Zanoba.

Grinding sound rings out through the cold hallway.

It's the sound of my prosthetic arm. Whilst walking, I'm adjusting the amount of mana I put into it to see how much would be best. Each time I clench and unclench it, my prosthetic arm makes a grinding sound. It seems that as expected of a prototype model, there isn't a way to keep it quiet.

"Is that prosthetic arm a magic tool?"

Roxy who is walking on my left suddenly asks me a question.

"Yeah. It's the result of Zanoba's research."

"That's amazing, isn't it? For it to move so precisely."

"That's true. If I can move this easily, then it seems I'll manage even without your assistance, Roxy."

"Ah-... That's, true."

When I look at her, I find that Roxy is making the face she does when she blunders.

"I'm sorry. I didn't really consider you, Rudi. Even though it'd be hard for you when I'm not around, I went and became a teacher..."

"If it's about my left arm, then you don't have anything to worry about, Roxy."

Though it'd help me, it's not as if I am asking her to do it. It's obvious that what Roxy wants to do comes first. Since it seems that she wants to help me out in place of my arm, I didn't say anything, but there are a lot of people around me who are willing to help me when I'm troubled after all.

"Anyway, it's great, isn't it? That you've gotten a left hand."

"Yeah, with this, I can touch you as much as I want, Roxy."

Whilst saying so, I tap Roxy's shoulder with my prosthetic hand. Roxy's warmth and softness is transmitted from under her robe. It seems that this can tell temperature apart, as well. It's high performance, huh, this hand of mine?

"Anyway, I want to introduce you to everyone, so please follow me."

"Introduce... yes!"

Roxy nods with a nervous expression.

——

After that, we go to places one by one, report my return, and introduce Roxy.

Rinia, Pursena.

Ariel, Luke.

Then, Nanahoshi.

Though, I have thought to go to Cliff's place, there are sultry sounds coming from inside his research room, so I pass on it.

Each person's response was varied.

Rinia and Pursena's responses were particularly interesting. With just a sniff of Roxy's scent, the two of them started to shiver. To the two of them, who had rounded their tails, I told them that this is the Shisho that I revered and loved. When I did, the two of them bowed their head to Roxy together. It's probably because the Beast Race is sensitive to such matters; this is a person they absolutely couldn't go against, for real.

On the other hand, Ariel and Luke were dull to it. When I went to greet them after my repatriation, they said something sarcastic like [You're showing your face after returning, I see.] Though I say this, it wasn't in a blaming tone. However, it was because they had assisted me a lot for my journey. Having messed up due to lack of preparations, I felt nothing but shame. That's why I apologized.

But well, that's fine. When I introduced Roxy, after giving a blank look, the two of them then looked at each other. They couldn't believe that someone as young looking as Roxy would be teaching. However, I guess it's as expected of the princess of a country. Ariel politely greeted Roxy. She's a capable person.

Nanahoshi was ill looking. It might have been that she had caught a cold, but whilst coughing, she looked at my face, and said, [With this, we'll be able to continue the research, huh] and sighed in relief. When I introduced Roxy and said that she'd be working as a teacher starting next year, she just replied with a curt [Cool.] but because she was much too curt, I went on to list Roxy's good points at length, she replied, [Pedo. Gross.] and frowned. Well, a common high school girl wouldn't be able to understand Roxy's greatness, I guess.

We'd finished greeting everyone related to us. When it is about time to head home, Roxy pouts.

"Rudi."

"What is it?"

"Though I'm happy that you introduced me, I feel that you're overestimating me a little too much."

"That's not the case."

"Really?"

"Since your wonderfulness can't be expressed in words by someone like me, that much wasn't enough, you see."

When I say this, Roxy swiftly points a finger at me.

"Right, right! Could it be that you're making fun of me, Rudi?"

"That's ridiculous. I always seriously hold you in esteem, Sensei."

"Hahhh, somehow each time you call me 『Sensei』, it feels like nothing but you making fun of me, Rudi."

Roxy lets out a massive sigh. Though it's a proper evaluation in my eyes, it seems that Roxy sees it as excessive.

"Leaving that aside, though you introduced me in a lot of ways, and even said that I was your 『sensei』, you never said that I was your 『wife』 did you?"

"Ah-"

At those words, I realize my mistake.

It's a mistake that can't be taken back.

Right. Roxy isn't Roxy Migurdia anymore.

She's Roxy M. Greyrat.

I introduced her as such and Roxy also referred to herself as such. That's why I had thought that it was unnecessary. Ariel should've understood what it meant. But she didn't voice any complaints, and I thought she had understood, but...

But I see. That's right. What a thing I've done. Because Roxy is someone amazing, I thought she was wasted on becoming my wife, but I see, she wanted to be introduced as my wife, huh? Though she's a second wife, she's still a wife. She's someone who might even give birth to my child.

"I'm sorry Roxy, my sweetheart. But I really do love you. If it suits you, I'm fine with travelling to your parents' place and reporting our marriage to them, Roxy."

"Uu, no, there's no need. It's far, so let's do so one day in the future."

In the future, huh? I wonder if Robin-san and Rokari-san are doing well. Having married Roxy, those two are like my parents, as well. I owe them from that time as well, so I want to go see them. If we went through a few of those teleport circles, it feels like we'd be able to get there in about 2 months, but...

"I understand. In that case, one day in the future."

I guess it's fine, for now. One day, when we have enough time, we should all go travelling together as a family.

Whilst I entertain such thoughts, we return home.

9 Rumors of the School – Number 1

"The Banchou's arm flies."

First day as a third year student,

When I wake up and come down to the living room, Sylphy is there.

She's giving Lucy breast milk.

"Go, good morning, Rudi."

"Good morning, Sylphy."

It has been months since the child has been born, the progress after birth is all right.

Mother and child are healthy.

Lately, Sylphy is becoming more ladylike, I think.

Is it because her hair is growing or because of giving birth to a child?

Or is it because the experience of twenty years is piling up?

She's in the process of becoming a beautiful woman, just like a Hollywood actress.

Her figure without doing anything, just silently sitting, is surely a prize beyond other's reach, to the degree of making others hesitate to call her.

Practically, I'm relieved that, she's still my Sylphy when I call or flatter her.

"Lucy is also energetic today."

I look at Lucy.

Lucy is wholeheartedly clinging to Sylphy's breasts.

Just like me last night.

In this side, parent and child are the same, uh huh.

Lucy is a healthy but docile child.

Different from brother or sister, my own child seems to be special.

Every time something happened, illness or something uncertain, I had overwhelming anxiety enveloping me.

But the child seems to be healthy.

Looking at Lucy's state, Lilia says something that surprised me,

"I recall times when Rudeus-sama is small."

Reincarnated person,

Those words are running in my mind.

I was a no-good person in my previous world.

Because of that, I'm a little uneasy.

I suspect whether this child is the reincarnation of some kind of bad man.

Because of uneasiness, I've asked my daughter in Japanese and English whether some crime transpired in her past life.

Instantly, after my daughter was born facing her,

I said something like, [You should realize, right? This is a different world.]

[You are my sunshine! I am a pen!], figure of parent who is whispering.

It's humorous, right?

Aisha who is looking at my figure from the shadows was giggling and laughing.

I have no proof, but I think Lucy is not a reincarnated person.

While laughing at hearing my words, she replies nothing but some words like "Aba~" and "Abu~",

It's possible that she is hiding it, but not many adults can mimic a baby.

Even if that's the case, someone who desperately mimics a baby is not cute.

But, Lucy is cute.

To the extent I'm not bored being close to the crib.

I don't care anymore about reincarnated or not.

Even if Lucy's soul is reincarnated, I will just raise her very carefully.

Just like how Paul raised me.

"Today also, my child is cute."

"You're right. I wonder why she's becoming so cute."

"It's because her mom is cute, right?"

From behind Sylphy, I turn my hand around Sylphy's head and hug her.

I pretend I'm kissing around the back of her head, to feign burying my face into her hair.

The gentle scent is the scent of milk.

It's a natural perfume.

"Ehehe, thanks, Rudi,"

Sylphy while rubbing my hand, laughs while embarrassed.

Then, I see Roxy standing behind me.

"Mm, Roxy. How about yesterday's Rudi?"

Roxy is shivering.

"Eh, ah... That, I received it well."

"Though Rudi became rough when such a thing happened, were you not scared?"

"No, it's not scary. It's the second time, and Rudi was gentle too... Then, I'm sorry."

"There's nothing to apologize for."

"Is that so..."

"That is so."

Both of them are still awkward, but not strained.

A good balance is being preserved.

I can see the intention of them becoming friendly.

Something like the relation of three people, must be started and consist of three people's effort.

Particularly, I caused Sylphy trouble.

"Fo~od~, fo~od~, it's~ break~fast~?"

There's Aisha, who arrives to the living room while singing a song.

The song sucks.

She is probably improvising.

The genius Aisha seems to have no talent for singing.

"Good morning, madams of Onii-chan! Today's breakfast is same as usual, it's generally the same!"

I see green soup and white bread.

Then, Aisha had prepared warmed horse milk.

In this area, so milk can properly come out, mothers who give birth to a child are given horse milk.

"Aisha, without being reluctant, explain the content of breakfast."

The one who entered from behind Aisha is Lilia.

She seemed to be in the kitchen again too.

"Wide bean, sweet potato soup, and wheat bread. And then horse milk full of nutrition."

In response to the words, Aisha explains the breakfast proudly.

Of course, I knew what it was- even if I did not hear her- because it's what I eat every breakfast.

However, such a thing will be important as a tradition, too.

"Good. Then, wait a minute."

Lilia nods contentedly and enters the second floor.

"Sorry to keep you waiting."

She comes down immediately with Zenith.

When Zenith is in the living room, she stops and stares at me.

Then, she sits in her seat silently.

"Good morning, mother..."

Several months passed, Zenith's memory has not returned.

But she changes little by little.

Particularly, it is remarkable seeing her show different actions when she's with Norn.

It's like dealing with a two or three year old child, such a feeling.

After all, to her daughter, there are things to think about.

I wonder: will her memories return little by little?

Probably, it's better to see the situation a bit longer.

"Then, let's eat."

We eat breakfast together.

On my right is Sylphy; on my left is Roxy.

On the side across the table, lined up are Aisha, Lilia, and Zenith.

If Norn were here, she would sit down next to Zenith.

Although I do not remember particularly deciding her seat, it became such custom.

"From today, I'm at school too, and so I entrust Lucy to you."

"Yes, Mrs. Sylphiette. Leave it to me."

Both Sylphy and I return to school today.

I'm in my third year and Sylphy is in her sixth year.

While I went to school, I left the child care to Lilia and Aisha.

However, Lucy is still an infant.

She cannot live without the breast of mom.

In that sense, I'm an infant too, but I put that thought aside for now.

Anyway, I employed a nurse.

She's a neighboring woman called Suzanne: a mother of two and a former adventurer as well.

She's my acquaintance, but about this person, let's put her aside for now.

"Thank you for the delicious meal."

Now it's time for school.

"Osu!"

"Good morning!"

"Thank you for the work!"

"Good day, boss!"

Some unknown people greet me when I enter the school site.

There are only trashy guys.

Did something like a bit dignified presence come out from me?

Well, this is also because I became a father.

I'm not very aware of this.

"What's upppp!!!!"

Just when I think about that, the most trashy person greets me.

"Boss, good morning nya."

"Morning to Fitts and Mrs. Roxy, too nano."

It's Rinia and Pursena.

Even when these people became seniors, they didn't change much.

Rinia is insolent. Pursena is biting on some meat like ham.

"From morning, boss is accompanied by two ladies going to school, such a good position nya."

"Discarding us and bringing two people, fakku nano."

"Because we graduate this year, we must find someone nya."

"That is right. Duel this year, find partner, and then return to hometown nano."

I feel proud.

Apparently, I, who is blessed with flowers in both hands, am enviable.

Not Sylphy or Roxy, but me, the man:

Boss of the School,

It's the symptoms of a new leader sickness.

"Do your best, both of you."

Even Sylphy is laughing.

She also comes to say.

That is the smile of someone who has a man.

Sylphy and the both of them are distant, but have a degree of frankness.

"I'm sorry, I seemed to cut in."

However, Roxy seems to receive the words at face value.

Facing the two of them, she lowers her head.

"Nya!?"

"Wha!?"

Then Rinia and Pursena panic.

"Ah, it's not like that nya. I didn't mean it like that nya."

"Tha, that's right, it means our charm was, fakku nano, I didn't intend to speak ill to Mrs. Roxy."

Both of them apologize.

Since Roxy is an existence that should be respected so it is necessary -no, it's a bit unpleasant.

If it's these guys alone when seeing Roxy, they will say something like [We are better than this shorty nya!] or [Fuck Magic tribe nano!]

I will not forgive those kind of words.

"Fitts must have it hard, but do your best nya!"

"Though outclassed, if it's Fitts, you can do it nano!"

After apologizing for a while, both of them clap Sylphy's shoulder.

"Eh?"

"It's better to teach the second person soon nya."

"Establish your position at the top nano."

"About what?"

Sylphy gives it some thoughts.

Then she notices with, "Ah," then looks embarrassed.

"Um, does Rudi love me properly?"

Rinia and Pursena, do imitation "Gusu" sounds with their noses.

"She is brave nya."

"It's touching. Because Fitts is not standing out, she's the unfortunate type, so if the harem increases by three or four more girls, she'll gradually be ignored nano."

They're saying whatever they like.

I don't intend to marry three or four more wives. Even if it happened, I don't intend to ignore Sylphy.

I do not intend to neglect Sylphy, who has helped me with her body.

In Roxy's case, it might give her a bad experience.

"Eh, that wouldn't happen... Right? Rudi?"

Behind the sunglasses, her expression cannot be seen.

But, the voice seems to be uneasy.

Inside her heart, Sylphy may also be uneasy.

I must reassure her.

"Of course,"

I hug Sylphy.

I whisper out [Love] while patting her back.

It would be better if I say it clearly in front of people.

"I love Sylphy!"

After I declare it, applause arises in large quantities from all around.

Sylphy becomes bright red in my arm.

"No, wai-, Rudi. Stop saying such a thing at school."

"Although, you're the one who asked-"

"Th-then say the same thing to Roxy too."

When I see her, Roxy is looking up at me.

"No... Don't mind me."

A look full of expectations,

I hug Roxy with my left arm without hesitation.

Roxy at my left arm, Sylphy at my right arm,

Ah, great- flowers in both hands.

"I love both of them!"

After I say that, some students boo.

They are probably Milis Church believers after all.

It's fine. I have a different religion after all.

I will not interfere too.

However, having attracted public attention, Sylphy's face is bright red.

"La, later. I will go ahead to Ariel's place."

"Yeah, see you again at lunch break, Sylphy."

"At school, it's Fitts!"

Come to think of it, was it such a rule?

Because I didn't go to school for nearly one year, I forgot it.

I think, isn't it fine because her male appearance is already gone?

Even if anyone looks, he or she will only see a beautiful woman in men's clothes.

No, even in men's clothes, she's still lovely.

"I will also go to the staff room."

After ascertaining that Sylphy runs off, Roxy also separates from me.

"Yes, see you, Roxy."

"Ah, at school, make sure to properly call me teacher."

Is it about not mixing public and private affairs?

I understand.

But it is so; Roxy is also a female teacher from today.

Female teacher,

It has a nice ring to it. I recall the deed from last night.

I wonder if I can rent out the gym storeroom to do it for hours...

Incidentally then I notice something.

"Well... Roxy-sensei,"

"What is it, Rudeus-kun?"

Roxy looks up at me with a neat face.

"Because today is the first day, the teachers may be doing a morning gathering."

"Ah!"

Roxy cries out after doing a blunder.

Her face is deep blue.

"So, sorry. I should hurry!"

Roxy runs in a fluster to the staff room.

She seems to misunderstand the schedule a bit.

It's natural, I think.

It should not be possible for a student and teacher's schedules to synchronize.

"Then, we should go too."

"Nya."

"I'll accompany nano."

I aim for the classroom, with a cat and a dog as my attendants.

Today is homeroom day.

Although the wives are gone, there are new flowers in both my hands.

Am I popular?

But I will not lay my hands on Rinia and Pursena.

Fufu, it's tough being a man.

"By the way, I heard a rumor nya."

Suddenly Rinia points her ears at me.

Her eyes are overflowing with curiosity.

"Rumor?"

"Yes nya. A rumor that boss fought a powerful enemy to the extent of losing his left hand nya."

"Is that so..."

That reminds me; I only told them about the return report and Roxy becoming a teacher.

The only one who heard the detailed report is Zanoba.

Did that guy leak it to someone?

No, maybe Cliff heard it from Elinalise.

"As expected from boss nya- Going to Magic Continent, battling against the Seven Major Powers, and then reaching for victory at the sacrifice of just his left hand!"

"Huh?!"

What is this?

Seven Major Powers?

Where did such scary words come from?

"Moreover, the opponent is running away while confused. As expected nano."

"Wa-wa-wa, wait a minute."

What is this?

What kind of rumor has this level of exaggeration?

Please stop with these kinds of things.

Moreover, about this rumor, how should I respond about one-sidedly winning against the Seven Major Powers, alone?

What should I do if the real Seven Major Powers overhear?

If Orsted overhears....

"So, that's what we think about boss's story now nya, now is the time to spread it at great scale- gyaaa!"

I grab Rinia's tail and pull it with all of my strength.

After that comes scratches from extending nails, which I avoid with my demon eye,

Then Rinia holds her tail with tears and glares.

"What are you doing with a maiden's tail nya!"

I glare back.

"Don't spread rumors with such exaggerated story."

"Eh!? Ah, so, sorry nya,"

These people have previous criminal records with these rumors.

First crime was spreading that I had ED.

Well, that's OK.

The source is a certain truth.

But, this time it's different.

This is harmful.

At worst, death,

It's a dangerous rumor.

"We heard it from Zanoba nano."

Pursena suddenly adds,

"Boss was battling against a Hydra resistant to magic nano. [If I followed Shisho, then his great left hand should not be lost.]"

"That is right nya. But, we just couldn't think it was great enough nya. Because of that, we want to spread boss's greatness more..."

"That is not your concern."

Certainly, I became a little stronger.

However, at the end, when the time matters, thoughtlessly I failed; I'm a useless man.

I don't desire to receive an evaluation that high.

"But even if we do nothing, when someone sees boss's left hand, many kinds of rumor will spread nano."

"That's right nya, even if we say different things, nothing will happen."

"..."

Seems that I am the number one celebrity at this school, it cannot be helped if there's such rumors.

But please stop with the Seven Major Powers rumor.

That time when Orsted nearly killed me, I remember it every day.

"What kind of other rumors are there?"

"Yes nya, there are a few more nya."

Let's hear them all.

"Battling against the Supard Tribe,"

Checked.

"Stopping flocks of one million monsters, alone."

Checked.

"Succeeded in ancient magic but hand was lost in reaction."

It seems like many unfounded rumors are flowing.

I think the absurd rumors will disappear soon.

"Hmm..."

Think about it, about the Seven Major Powers, I ought to be familiar with that rumor.

The number one celebrity- winning or losing- will be a source of rumors.

I should not worry about rumors spreading a bit at school.

"So- sorry about the tail."

"Human race doesn't know about this pain nya. Pulling a maiden's tail is unforgivable nya."

"Next time, I'll treat you to fish."

"Yeah, lucky day! Sometimes making a mistake is fine nya."

"I would like red meat nano."

I move to the classroom while talking with Rinia and Pursena.

Homeroom was just like usual.

Five people sit sparingly with me in the center:

Zanoba, who was tampering with a doll,

Julie, who was imitating him,

Rinia, who was hand filing her nails,

Pursena, who was eating meat,

And Cliff, who was opening a book and in the middle of studying.

Standing behind him is Ginger; don't mind her.

I have gotten very used to this scene.

I never thought that in one year, two of them would stop being here.

Rinia and Pursena will graduate this year.

Well, there's still one year.

One year will be gone in an instant.

"Which reminds me, Rudeus."

Suddenly Cliff raises his face from the book,

"Would you come to my place for greetings?"

He looks dissatisfied.

That reminds me that I did not meet Cliff for several months after I came home.

Today is the first time.

"Sorry Cliff-senpai. When I visited, it looked like you were busy with Elinalise. So I restrained myself. "

"Well, I was surely together for a while with Lize. Yes, it's unavoidable like that. It's also my fault."

Cliff says so and withdraws.

However, Ariel is like that too; people around here would not mind much if it's just a short greeting.

In case of adventurers, it is even shorter.

"However, you should have let me know when your child was born. Although I'm still in training, even so, I'll pray for you."

"Is that so..."

"Yeah, sorry. Since you're not a Milis believer, so prayer is not needed? But recently it's like you're avoiding me. Even if you're busy with child parenting, isn't it fine if you visit me in the laboratory sometimes? You have the time for that, right?"

Now that it's said, I might be avoiding him.

There is a reason for not wanting to meet Cliff.

Needless to say, it's about Roxy.

I have two wives and Cliff is a Milis believer.

He won't be happy.

"Or, was there a reason that you did not want to see me? I want to hear it from you, if there is such a reason."

Today, Cliff is very stubborn.

Probably, he heard the details from Elinalise.

But, it's also about Elinalise.

[It's something that cannot be forgiven by religion, but if it's forgiven, then the vessel named Cliff looks great to me.]

I might say such a thing.

Needless to say, it's not necessary to have Cliff's permission to marry Roxy.

However, it's unamusing if that becomes discord with Cliff.

For now, let's try dancing on Elinalise's palm.

I will say it; Cliff will forgive me.

If he forgives me, then I'll praise his generosity.

Cliff will feel good.

Nobody loses.

All right, I'm a dancer.Dancing and singing and say it:

"As a matter of fact...""Excuse me."

And the classroom's door open interrupting my voice.

The ones who enter are two people.

The teacher, who is always in charge of the homeroom session,

What is his name again?

Oh well.

A pretty girl enters after him,

With a robed figure, sleepy eyes, blunt expression and a little nervous,

It is a child that seemed to do her best, any time.

It is a child whom I want to hug unintentionally.

I mean, it's Roxy.

"Everyone, I introduce the one who will be the class teacher who is in charge of special students."

"I'm Roxy M. Greyrat."

After she steps forward, she lowers her head.

Zanoba and the others watch her with dumbfounded eyes.

The class teacher continues his words without regard to us.

"Though her tribe's figure looks youthful, even so, her age is around fifty. Because she has a connection with people in this class, she will be taking over this classroom. For a while, she'll be an assistant homeroom teacher, but from next year on, she'll formally be the homeroom teacher, so everyone, too, in that regard-"

"Nya! What will happen to Samson-sensei?!"

The class teacher nods [Yes] when Rinia asks that.

It seems like the class teacher's name is Samson-sensei.

It's macho but not gay.

He's a person whose characteristic is having no characteristics.

"I will return to my hometown next year, because I have no relatives in this class anymore."

"That reminds me, where did Ren-senpai go?"

"My little sister entered the magic knight group at Neris Dukedom. She seems to be fine. However, I don't know what kind of mess she'll make if I leave her alone."

"Is that so nya?"

I came to know about this later.

Originally, the one who was in charge of homeroom at the special student's class was a person who had a special relationship with the special students.

It may be because many special students are quirky.

It is desirable that the classroom teacher is a person that can be the reins or shackle.

The current classroom teacher, Samson-sensei seems to be a relative to the person who was replaced by Cliff when she graduated.

That alumna had a prominent magic sense and is part of the royal family of one of the countries of the Magic Triumvirate, the Neris Dukedom.

Rinia and Pursena were greatly indebted to her.

Anyway, Roxy who has relation with me and Zanoba seems to be the ideal candidate.

Roxy steps forward, looks around, and says,

"I think I have been introduced to many of you already, though. My name is Roxy M. Greyrat. The second wife of Rudeus Greyrat who is sitting over there. Although the contact is different between student and teacher, I thank you in advance."

"..."

Cliff is offended.

He surely wanted to hear the words [second wife] from my mouth.

Then he would have accepted Roxy.

However, the plan has been destroyed.

"Well... Cliff-senpai,"

"Hoo, a second wife. Do you not have what's called integrity?"

A sermon begins after I talked,

"Yes. I think I have insufficient integrity."

"That day, I gave my blessing because you said to love only Sylphy, though?"

"Yes, I'm very thankful for that time."

"Of course, I will say nothing else because I know you're not a Milis believer. No, I should congratulate you instead. Congratulations."

"Thank you."

Cliff makes a 'sniff' sound with his nose.

"I sometimes meet your little sister at the town's church. She said that she would find a spouse and become intimate like brother and Sylphy-neesan in the future. What did she say to you, who brought the second wife home?"

"She was angry."

"Of course, she prayed for you and her father's safe return almost every day. She was very glad that you lived and came home truly."

"But in the end, she forgave me."

"Of course, she forgives you in the end. She would be thrown out if she objects till the end."

"I will never throw her out, though..."

"Of course you wouldn't do so. However, you wouldn't know that if you stood in the shoes of a weak girl, right? She, who lost her father, has only you as someone to depend on. I wonder if you guys should have considered Norn's feelings a bit more."

"Yes."

"It's not a good thing to marry too many partners, since women are not a collection."

My ears hurt.

Still, he is just like a Catholic priest.

Today's Cliff gives off an intimidating feeling.

"Yes... Well, Cliff-senpai."

"What is it, Rudeus?"

I'll give thanks because I got some information that I never heard before.

"For playing with Norn, thank you."

"I only accompanied her because I saw her at church... Oh, and don't let such a small child go alone. Though this neighborhood is safe, there are kidnappings if you enter back alleys."

"Yes, I will remember that."

"All right. I will forgive your sins, if you reflect, since Lord Milis is a generous Lord."

"Yes, thank you."

I was forgiven.

After all, was this a kind of confession?

However, my follow up with Norn was surely insufficient.

From now on, I will be twice as kind.

"Well then the talk is over, the matter of communicating–"

By the time Cliff's sermon was over, Samson-sensei resumes the homeroom.

Standing next to him, Roxy is showing an expression like she wants to run away.

She laughs a little and scolds me when I throw a kiss to her.

The flow after isn't very different from how it used to be.

I look at Zanoba and Cliff's condition, help Nanahoshi, research the absorption magic stones on my vacant times, and write a book.

As usual, there are many things to do.

I feel nostalgia for the old days, when I only did one or two things a day.

There are some changes in the after school when the lesson finishes.

Before it was time to give lessons to Norn, and now it's to teach her swordplay.

I am anxious that if I teach her swordplay, her grades will decline.

Because she declared that she will do her best, let's watch the situation for now.

She should do it rapidly while there is motivation.

About those things, I will leave them for now.

When the class was over, I go to meet Sylphy and Roxy then go home with the three of us.

When Sylphy has night duty, it's only Roxy.

When Roxy has prolonged staff meetings, I'm alone.

There's also times when I go home with Norn.

Today, I'm pairing with Sylphy.

I'm holding hands and talking about many things with Sylphy while walking home.

Mainly, it's about school.

At new school terms, it's said that the Student Council looks for new members.

"Rudi should enter too."

"I have no time for that."

After saying that, I return home while flirting moderately.

"I'm home."

When I return home, Aisha hugs me.

"Welcome back Onii-chan, would you like dinner? A bath? Or... me?"

Where did she learn those words?

No, I taught her.

But, I didn't teach it to Aisha.

I taught it to Sylphy.

First, I say [Me] then tickle her on her underarms, she cackles while running away and Lilia targets her head.

Afterwards is a bath.

Though Aisha put bath in her choices, the bath was not prepared.

She is also still cooking the meal.

Ultimately, there was no choice besides [Me.]

Well, that's fine.

Fortunately, Aisha cleaned the bath at noon.

I only fill the water, so I finish preparing promptly.

I often prefer taking a bath with someone.

Somewhere along the line "enter the bath in pairs whenever possible" became an unspoken house rule.

What kind of country would have this kind of rule?

Well, it's fine.

Today, I take a bath with Aisha.

Though Aisha is already eleven years old, she is frank, and does not have enough shyness.

If I talk about this to a young man in the middle of puberty, it will be misunderstood instantly.

"Aisha, please cover your front with cloth."

"Why?"

"It is modest."

"Yes."

For modesty and shyness examples, I think Aisha should follow Norn.

Younger sisters are truly something good.

Aisha crams herself between my legs as I wash her body.

The way she asks me to wash her hair or her back is really cute.

If I could be aroused by her, I would probably suggest making her my third wife, creating a hell-like situation.

I would have exceeded my patience limit if Sylphy or Roxy did the same thing.

Although, in their cases, it can be said that it's not necessary to endure.

Anyways, it's a heartwarming contact time with my younger sister.

While washing her body, I hear the events of the day from her:

That Lucy was cute.

That she was concerned about Zenith.

That Lilia slept at the window.

That she planted a new plant at the garden grounds.

They were trifling stories.

Oh yes, I gave the Begaritto rice seeds to Aisha and asked if she was able to cultivate them.

She replied reliably, [I'll try to plant it after it becomes a little warmer.]

If it's left to the genius Aisha, she'll let me eat rice eventually.

I'll look forward to it.

"I'm back."

After I get out of the bath, Roxy comes home and is having dinner at her own discretion.

Today's dinner is stew of river fish, bread, beans, and potatoes.

In short: as usual.

"Thank you for the dinner."

After the meal, Sylphy gives milk to Lucy.

Lucy is a child that is docile but eats well.

Will she gain weight in the future?

I don't want Sylphy's daughter to be stretched to the side.

When she grows up, I'll make her exercise. Yes.

After dinner finishes, I spend time while being in a relaxed mood.

I teach Aisha magic; Roxy is preparing for tomorrow's class in her room.

Sylphy is cuddling with Lucy, but sometimes trains her magic as well.

I may mind when Jiro, the armadillo, comes to visit.

By the way, the one who takes care of Jiro is Aisha.

Aisha trained Jiro well and it is becoming a faithful servant-like watchdog.

"Well then, please excuse me. Good night."

"Good night."

Zenith and Lilia go to sleep early.

Aisha too is early, she sleeps after finishing studying.

"Well then... Sylphy."

After everyone fell asleep,

I invite the wife to the bedroom.

"Yes..."

Sylphy picks up the hem of my clothes, blushing.

When she does such a movement, I'm already at my limit.

I lift her with a princess-carry and carry her to the bedroom.

And it's time for a dazzling nighttime.

After being satisfied in heart and body, I sleep fast hugging the body of my small-sized wife.

Before I fully sleep:

I wait until my wife has fallen asleep; I walk out from the bed.

The destination is the basement.

Tiptoeing down the stairs,

After glancing back at the stairs, I open the secret basement door.

There's the altar that is concealing something.

It's enshrining objects of divinity.

That cloth and that cloth,

{ C-Editor's note: Roxy's panties and Sylphy's piece of cloth from when she lost her virginity. }

They're tools to worship God.

I also pray calmly today.

9 Rumors of the School – Number 2

"The Bancho's eyes glow."

One month has passed. Though it's still cold, the snow is starting to melt, and the ground is beginning to reveal itself.

Morning.

I get out of bed slowly so as not to wake up Sylphy who is sleeping beside me. Because Sylphy likes to use my arm as a pillow, I need to take care when freeing my arm.

In the neighboring room I change into my training wear. I'm wearing something like a jersey that Sylphy picked out. Though it's a little cold to wear in the winter, once I start moving it's perfect.

Once I'm done changing, I pick up the stone sword that was left in the corner of the room. This misshapen stone sword is something I created with magic. It doesn't have a blade, but it's heavy, so it's perfect for my powerful prosthetic hand.

Since it's a practice sword, should I give it a fish name? Tuna or Marlin or something? Come to think of it, I haven't had sashimi since coming to this world, huh. I wonder if they don't have a culture of eating raw fish.

Now that I'm done preparing, I say goodbye to Sylphy. I stroke her head once.

"Mhuhu..."

When I do, Sylphy nuzzles her head against my hand with a satisfied smile. She's probably half-asleep. How cute.

I happen to notice that the blanket is overturned. Since her pantied butt is visible, I stroke there once as well. Despite having given birth, it's a small butt. Elinalise's figure is good as well; the Elven race sure is an amazing one.

Whilst thinking about such things, I grab the blanket and put it back in place. Though our 'nightlife' has begun again recently, since it'd be tough if Sylphy suddenly had to bear a second child, we keep things in moderation. Even so, if she gets pregnant then she gets pregnant, and there isn't much we can do. This is also a natural part of life.

"Nn uu...you later..."

I hear her voice when I am leaving the room.

Yeah, see you later.

———————

Where I'm headed to is Norn's room. Lately, we've been training together in the morning. When Norn is staying at our house, we train in the garden, and when Norn is staying at the dorms, I go meet her at the school courtyard. Today is one of the days she is staying with us.

"Norn, are you ready?"

I knock the door and open it.

"Ah, Nii-sa――"

"Oops, excuse me."

Since she's in the middle of changing, I close the door.

Norn's body is still young. Though I'm fine with both young and matured bodies, I'm not aroused by my sisters. Though it's a little bit of a shame, I'm relieved. To love someone without lust really is a special feeling.

However, when I consider that this sister of mine will one day become someone's woman, feelings of gloominess start to sprout. Is this what they call the heart of a father?

It's not bad. I'll do this in place of Paul. In place of Paul, I'll take on the duty of saying 『I won't hand Norn over to a no-name, shady bastard like you.』

"Geez, after knocking please wait for my answer."

Whilst I was thinking about such things, Norn comes out with sword in hand, wearing gym clothing. She's wearing a long sleeved top and long pants that aren't erotic at all. It's the gym uniform designated by the Magic University. I bought it at the university and gave it to her as a gift.

When I happen to peer into her room, I notice that Paul's sword is hung up high on the wall. Though in my previous life I would've left a framed photograph of him in the butsudan, there are no photos in this world. If you search earnestly you might find a magic tool that takes pictures, but normally it isn't possible. That's why the articles of the deceased are used in place of a butsudan.

{ C-Editor's note: A Butsudan is a shrine commonly found in homes in Japanese Buddhist cultures. }

"Norn, do you mind if I enter your room for a little?"

"Eh? It's fine I guess?"

I enter with permission. When I do, I find that Norn's scent fills the room. It's a scent particular to bedrooms in the morning. Nearby is a bed with ruffled sheets. If I dived into it and sniffed it, I'd probably get nothing but Norn. I won't do so though.

I stand in front of Paul's sword and bring my hands together.

"Tou-san. Today I'm going to practice the sword with Norn. Please watch over us so that nothing serious happens to us."

With that, I bow. What would Paul say? That getting wounded has value? Or, would he tell me not to injure Norn?

I happen to look at her and find that she's on her knees with her hands clasped together, in the style of the Milis faith.

"Shall we go, then?"

"Yes, please take care of me today as well."

——————

Stretching exercises. Running. Practice swings. Even if I say 'sword practice', right now we're doing nothing but building up her fundamentals. These past few months, Norn has been strictly building up her foundation.

Though I say 'strictly', the training menu that I use would crush Norn. That's why we're starting with a fifth of the harshness of mine. Since Norn is still 10, it wouldn't be physically possible anyway. If I suddenly force too much on her, all that'll achieve is ruining her body. While I have Norn do practice swings in the garden, I'm finishing off my own weight training.

"Twenty-five...! Twenty-six...!"

It's a monotonous type of training, and because of that it's simple and easy to get tired of, but Norn still hasn't complained to this day. It's something that makes me happy.

"——Fifty!"

"Alright, well done."

"Haa... haa... Thank you for instructing me!"

After the training is done, I get in the bath with Norn and we clean up. Because Norn fell over a lot during the running practice, places like her knees are wounded and bruised. I apply healing magic to those places. It's 'pain, pain, go away' magic for my little sister.

It seems that for some reason Norn doesn't want me to see her naked, so she wears panties and a thin shirt. It's probably puberty. Aisha gets naked at the drop of a hat so I want to have her follow Norn's example.

I take this into account as well and put on pants before washing myself. Still, if I told her that there are guys who get aroused from seeing shirts become transparent from water, what kind of face would she make, I wonder? Though I kind of want to see, I won't say it. It'd be lonely if she stopped bathing with me. It'd be tough if she thought of her Onii-chan as a pervert.

"Today was nothing but practice swings again, huh?"

While I'm thinking about such things, Norn brings her mouth into a pout.

"When will I be allowed to learn swordsmanship?"

"Aren't you already learning it?"

"Not just practice swings, but forms and techniques too."

I've been teaching Norn how to run properly and how to do practice swings. Running and practice swings. They're ways to build up her body and her muscles. Without a strong body and strong muscles there's no point in learning the forms and techniques. That was why I did so.

"...You're right."

I wonder if her body's gotten strong enough these last few months.

Thinking this, I look at Norn. Her small body is in its growth phase. I wonder if her limbs are more muscular than compared to when we first started.

It's still difficult to say that her body is strong enough. But I get the feeling that she's strong enough not to hurt herself. It might be about time to teach her the first form.

"You're right. Then after class today, the real stuff begins."

"...! Yes!"

While having this conversation, we leave the bathroom.

It's the evening.

The location is near the Magic University.

'The Third External Training Ground'――――――――― Frankly speaking, it's just a sports ground, and we're standing in one of its corners. We're wearing our usual training wear for ease of movement.

In front of me stands Norn. She's wearing the same gym uniform as I am. With a sword in hand, her mouth is shut tight and she wears a serious expression.

Though they were few, there are people in the surroundings. Robed students engaged in self-practice, and students who were simply taking a stroll. There were also bystanders who were wondering what we were doing wearing our gym uniform at such an hour. It doesn't matter even if we're seen though.

"Norn. Today we'll start real sword training."

"Yes."

Norn replies with energy. Her expression is filled with expectation. She is overflowing with the desire to start learning techniques already. Though it was just for a few months, doing nothing but basics training was probably tough on Norn. However, neither wielding a sword nor battling is a game. Whatever you're doing, the basics are important.

"I'm telling you now, but I intend on being strict."

"Yes."

Norn nods seriously.

"You might come to hate me as things progress. You might think [Onii-chan is being this tough because he hates me]. That's how strict I intend on being."

"Yes."

"To be frank, it'll be tough being hated. However, remember that crude knowledge gives birth to grave injury. If you die because I was half-assed in teaching you, I won't be able to face Tou-san in heaven."

Norn has no talent for the sword. I knew Eris when she was ten, and Norn has no such talent. She probably isn't very far behind the average person. However, strength is something relative. In battle the stronger person will win, and the weaker one will lose. Losing will probably mean losing your life, so it isn't some trifling matter. So that Norn can win against most people, it'll be necessary for her to put in effort, for her to undergo harsh training, and for us to put effort into coming up with some method to help her win.

"At some point, a day may come when, because it's harsh, because you can't do it well, and because some genius surpasses you, you'll want to just give up."

"..."

"I can understand this kind of feeling as well. I won't condemn those who give up on their goals because of these kind of feelings."

"..."

Norn's mouth purses into a へ. From her perspective, I might seem like a superman overflowing with talent. She might be wondering what business a person like me has spouting out such words. Certainly, this body of mine is filled with talent. However, there are various people I lost to. There have been times when I've almost died as well. As much as possible, I'd like to avoid seeing those eyes on the verge of death.

"But absolutely never give up on the sword. If you ever abandon it, I won't teach you a second time, and I absolutely won't let you use Tou-san's sword."

"..."

"As long as you don't give up, I'll absolutely never give up on teaching you, either."

I wonder if I was believable. In the first place, I wonder if I myself followed the advice, I just gave. No, though I gave up on becoming strong through the sword, I still train in the sword every day. It shouldn't be a case of being blind to my own shortcomings.

"Understand?"

"Yes! Please take care of me!"

Norn replies with energy. Blood rushes to her cheeks, and she looks up at me with a face full of determination. I wonder if this is how Paul felt when he saw me as a child.

If that's the case, it means that one day Norn might part from my hands and go searching for another Shisho as well. Once she's a fine Elementary Ranked swordsman, it might be good to call Ghyslaine. I don't know where she is though. To the west is a land called the Holy Land of Swords. If I put out a request, perhaps someone of about Sword Saint will come.

"Very well. Well then, let's start with running."

"Eh? Weren't we going to do training with a sword?"

"Yeah, of course. You'll be running with sword in hand. On the battlefield you'll always have your sword in hand, after all."

"..."

"And your reply!?"

"Yes!"

On the menu today is running, the three basics forms, and then free sparring with me.

I intend to teach her, first of all, that swordsmanship is something frightening. That it's frightening and painful.

[They won't remember unless it hurts] isn't what I'm aiming for. It's just that I think that I have to let her know about the pain and fear from the start.

A reference to the Shigurui manga and anime series where a swordsman says "They won't remember it unless it hurts". }

Perhaps Norn will end up crying. I might end up making her hate me in one go. However, I have to steel myself and do it. When it comes to these things, it's no good just to keep having nothing but fun. If you have nothing but fun, one day, you might find yourself dying helplessly.

"Alright, follow me!"

"Yes!"

While feeling a little uneasy, I start to run.

"Alright, that's enough for today!"

"T-, thank you for instructing me..."

Under the dazzling evening sun, Norn is collapsed on the ground, breathing wildly.

"Tomorrow in the morning, or lunch or whatever is fine; while I'm not around, repeatedly practice the forms you learnt today."

"Y-, yes."

The first day's practice goes acceptably. After returning from running, I teach her forms. After that, we have a proper spar with wooden swords. While we are doing so, I correct things like her footwork or her stance.

If it were the kendo from my old world, they probably would've done various other things. But there are no rules in this world, and when it comes to fighting, real experience is better. Paul had also started knocking me down from an early stage. Ghyslaine, as well, focused on meeting swords. That's why this method shouldn't be wrong.

However, Norn couldn't help but be averse to hitting people with a wooden sword. That's why, first of all, to get rid of that resistance, I have Norn freely hit me. While avoiding strikes to vital areas, I just stand there and let her hit me without defending.

Norn grimaces at the sensation passed from her sword to her hands, so I face her with a pose that says, [I'm fine, even if I'm hit.] Because of her practice swings over these last few months, her strikes have a certain weight behind them. As a result, I end up with a lot of dark red bruises.

After that, we spar as planned. I knock Norn down, and our training ends for the day. Of course, I go easy on her. But even so, she should have a lot of bruises on her limbs. To bruise that cute little sister of mine, I wonder if this is really the right thing to do.

However, Norn swung her sword at me until the end. Without crying or complaining. As long as she's that determined, everything will work out as a positive. That's what I want to believe.

"How was it, Norn? Did it hurt?"

"...No, please look after me tomorrow, as well."

"Alright."

Honestly, I have no confidence in my own teaching methods. If magic is like academics, then swordsmanship is like magic. I'm sure I'm not doing it correctly. However, if I don't continue this, then it won't get better.

"Come here, I'll apply healing magic."

I sit Norn down and apply healing magic to her. If she's injured in places I can't see, should I have Sylphy heal her? Since she's coming home with me today, I could have her get in the bath together with me and heal her then. Thinking this, I approach Norn and take off her jacket when I suddenly sense a presence.

"Mn?"

When I turn my head, I find that standing in the light of the evening are a number of male students looking our way. I wonder how long they're been there for. Thinking back on things, they might have been there from the start. Though I thought they were just curious onlookers, for them to have stayed gathered there, for so long, might mean that they have some other reason for being there. Do you have some business with me?

"Norn. Go get changed first and wait for me. Let's go home together today."

"Eh? Ah, yes. I understand."

After quickly healing Norn, I have her hurry off to the changing room. I then approach the men.

Though I had thought there were just a few of them, when I near them I realize that they numbered in the double digits. Going by their faces, all of them seem unpopular. Though I'm already a riajuu with two wives, I have no intention of looking down on them. They're the same as I was in my past life.

{ C-Editor's note: Riajuu is internet slang for somebody who has a good life. }

As I get close to them, they send looks filled with hostility my way. When I stare right back at them, they avert their eyes. What the heck is with them, anyway?

"Do you need something, or?"

When I ask them this, they all look at each other. Asking each other in small voices what they should do, and then pushing each other forward. Eventually, one man steps forward. He's probably about 18, huh? His height is around mine, and he gives a kind of lanky and unhealthy feeling. He has a slightly bad attitude, and his cheekbones protrude. He gives a really magician-ey feeling. Were Zanoba to wear glasses, he might resemble them. However, Zanoba is inexplicably overflowing with confidence. What these guys are overflowing with are insecurities.

He glares at me and opens his mouth.

"Why are you bullying Norn?"

"...Mn?"

Bullying. Hearing this unpleasant word, I can tell that my eyebrows come together in a frown. Seeing my face, he trembles with a start. However, he continues his words.

"Certainly Norn-chan is a dunce, and she fails often. Her failures may have rubbed you the wrong way. But she's always giving it her all. Was there really a need to hurt her to that extent?"

[That's right, that's right.] goes the audience.

"In the first place, Norn doesn't do stuff like swordsmanship. Even though she doesn't, for you to force her to pick up a sword... No matter what happened, isn't that going too far?"

[That's right! That's right!] goes the audience.

"Hmm."

If I consider what's been said so far, it seems that they think that I forced Norn to pick up a sword, and using swordsmanship practice as a cover, I beat her to my heart's content. Though it's regrettable, that might really be how it looked from the outside. My way of teaching her probably wasn't that great either, after all. Anyway, I'd better clear up this misunderstanding.

"That was——"

"We know that you're the strongest in the school. But if you're going to treat Norn-chan cruelly, we'll fight to protect her."

Speaks the vanguard, with a voice filled with determination.

But the surrounding voices that say [That's right, that's right] are quieter this time. On the contrary, I could hear small voices saying, [No, going as far as to him is...]

...That's right. There's something I have to do before clearing up the misunderstanding.

"In the first place, who are you people?"

"Eh!?"

The men start raising their voices in chaos, and turn away from me to face each other. When they turn around to face me again, they ask me a question with troubled expressions.

"What do you mean by who?"

"What relation do you have to my sister?"

"W-, well, since Norn-chan was a first year, she's always been trying her best, and we've always been watching her. Thinking stuff like [Do your best] and wanting to help her, we――"

The man's reply is flustered and incoherent. When he seems about to continue, the other starts speaking out as well.

"Half a year ago I noticed her and――"

"We had practice together, but she kept failing in fire magic and――"

"I saw her being scolded by the teacher during magic drills, and I saw her crying, and I unconsciously――"

Their words are clumsy and unskilled. But, I am able to understand them.

They are a group that noticed Norn in places like class and drills, and seeing the teary-eyed Norn, felt warm and the like, and casually tried to help her out. In other words, they are 'that'.

They are a fan club.

Come to think of it, I think I've heard about this kind of thing from Sylphy. Well, Norn is cute after all. I can understand their feelings. I hope they'll continue to look after my little sister.

"I see. I understand now. You've always been taking care of my little sister. I'm her brother, Rudeus Greyrat."

"EEHH!?"

They are stunned by my deep bow.

They're Norn's followers. Among them might be certain extremists and stalkers. However, the majority of them purely wish to help her. In that case, as her brother I should properly pay my respects.

However, that's its own issue. I still have to solve the misunderstanding.

"There's something I want to talk about. The sword training just now may certainly have been strict. However, leaving other things aside, swordsmanship is something that you lay your life on――"

I start to explain. That Norn is the one who had brought up swordsmanship. That I thought having half-hearted resolution would've been dangerous. That Norn has no choice but to put in more effort than others do.

Though they were bewildered at the start, they understand what I am saying. There are also a bunch who say, [For it to be necessary to hit Norn-chan that hard...] Of course, I don't think that my methods are absolutely correct or anything. Anyway, it's fine as long as they don't harbor a grudge against me or anything.

When I continue my explanation, all of them behave themselves. Since things are as I said, they assent. Though they're still young, they're already considered adults in this world. It seems they understand just how harsh battles are.

"Nii-san, what's going on?"

Norn comes back. On top of her usual blazer is a poncho-like winterwear.

"Ahh-, it's Norn-chan."

"Norn-chan! You're adorable today too!"

"You've worked hard, Norn-chan!"

The moment Norn comes, the members of the fan club suddenly becomes grosser. However, it's not like I can't understand their feelings. The appearance of Norn with a poncho over her blazer is adorable. There's no doubt about this. It's a cuteness that makes you want to have her hold a leaf umbrella.

"Ah, senpai... Hello."

Norn trembles with a start and bows her head. However, she doesn't come too close. As expected, she can sense this weird atmosphere.

"N-, Nii-san. I've forgotten something in my room, so I'm going to go head it. Please wait for me at the school gate."

As though she suddenly remembers something, Norn says this and heads towards the dorms. On the way, she trips and falls with a thump.

"Kuh..."

Norn slowly gets up. She then sneaks a glance our way. For an instant, a light could be seen in her eyes.

Seriously... There's no helping her. It's because she ran after taking that much damage to her body. When we get home, I'll give her a massage so that her muscle ache doesn't get too bad. She should take a long soak in the bath and get rid of her fatigue, too.

"...Ahh, Norn-chan is so cute..."

"If she gives her all in running, we'll see up her skirt."

"Though I thought that it had to be the school uniform, that outfit is nice too, huh..."

"But her running is slow, huh."

"That's right, huh. If she gets targeted by kidnappers or something, she mightn't be able to outrun them."

"If Norn-chan becomes a slave, I'll buy her."

"A lifestyle with just Norn-chan and I... Haa... Haa..."

Mn. If Norn becomes a slave, you'd definitely buy her, huh. Then you'd let her eat as much as she wanted. Her face, after eating her fill but forcing herself not to waste the remainders, would...

Ha-! Not good, not good. That's not it! Norn is my little sister. As if I'd let her become a slave. If someone abducts Norn, even if I have to tear the grass out of the ground, I'll find the guy who did it and beat the shit out of him. If Norn becomes a slave, I'll track down the guy who bought her and fuck him up.

"Ahem!"

"Ha-!"

When I clear my throat, the fan club whose delusions are running wild, come back to their senses.

"I'd like it if you didn't look at my sister with such strange eyes."

"S-, sorry."

"Well, Norn is cute though, so I won't mind if you keep it to watching her from afar, immersing yourself in delusions or whatever."

"I-, is that so?"

A relaxed atmosphere spreads through the place.

"But don't think I'll leave you alone if you lay your hands on her for real."

"Hii-"

Just to make sure, I give them a warning. For now, it doesn't seem like there are any guys who plan on doing anything cheeky, and after all, these kind of organizations won't allow their members to get ahead of each other. But you never know what obsessed people are capable of, after all. Someone might even suddenly snap, and attack Norn.

"Speaking of which, what are the rules of your club?"

"Eh? Club? Rules?"

"Right. According to the rules of your club, how much contact with Norn is okay?"

This is something important. For example, with idol fan clubs, essentially contact with them is forbidden, but cases like handshakes are okay. At those times, there are also guys who stick weird things to their palms. Gum for example, or sea urchin for example. You'd want to make everyone promise to wash their hands properly before a handshake event.

Or so I was thinking, but...

"Fan club?"

"Mn?"

I sense a discrepancy in our conversation. The reaction towards words like 'fan club' and 'rules' is wrong. Proper fan clubs usually have clearly defined rules. Could it be that though they're club members, they don't know about them?

"Please wait a moment. Who's the one in charge of this group?"

"In charge...? No, there's no one like that..."

"...What do you mean? Please explain."

I try asking for the details. When I do, I realize a strange truth. It seems that this group wasn't something that someone came up with. They saw Norn's cuteness and naturally grouped together. In other words, they didn't even know each other's names.

"I see."

It's an extremely dangerous situation. At any rate, a group of unknown size that thinks of Norn as cute has emerged. When people group together, they become capable of things that they wouldn't be on their own. For example, abducting the cute Norn and taking her back to their rooms. While making excuses like [It's your fault for being so cute, Norn-chan], they'd...

Outrageous!

"At this rate, a crime is going to happen."

"A crime? That's... We just..."

"There's no mistaking it. Someone will run wild and lay their hands on Norn."

When I said this, they all made a fuss.

"That's ridiculous!"

"We have no intention of doing something like laying a hand on Norn-chan!"

"That's, we like Norn-chan, but we like her as a something like a little sister..."

What'd you say, bastard? Norn is my little sister. ...No, that's not the problem right now.

"I think we need to create some rules."

In order to prevent crimes sprouting from the group, regulations are necessary. They need to decide on the rules, and watch each other to protect them. As long as people have rules, they'll abide by them. Wearing the same clothes and mufflers, and waiting together for the idol to leave, you know?

Rules are something that emerge because of history. During a group's long history, rules will be created in response to necessity. It might be because the history of this fan club is short that they haven't finished creating their rules yet.

However, it's dangerous to leave them without rules. It's a danger to Norn. I have to use this chance to make sure rules are created. It'll be too late once something happens.

At the very least, someone has to decide on them from the start. The problem is just who will be deciding. As I thought, the person who creates the group would be most suitable as a leader. However, these guys don't have such a person. The guy who came and talked to me first is surely the strongest amongst this lot. In that case, should I leave the position of leader to him and have him decide on the rules?

...Nay.

It's not suitable to leave the position of leader to a guy with no self-awareness.

Amongst those standing here, who is it that has the most self-awareness here?

Amongst those standing here, who is it that is most aware of how much they should value Norn?

"Alright!"

It's me.

Norn is my younger sister.

In other words...

————I AM the rules.

Year 425 of the Armored Dragon calendar.

At the Ranoa Magic University, a certain society was established: the Norn Greyrat Official Fan Club.

Numbering 30 members total, this group would go on to become an organization that had a great impact on the Magic University.

The name of their First Generation Chairman was undisclosed.

According to one theory, the First Generation Chairman violated the rules that he himself had set; he had gotten in the bath with Norn, and was subsequently driven from his position before the third day had passed.

His name became the shame of the organization, and was erased for eternity from the register of members.

However, the existence of the First Generation Chairman was by no means an evil one.

According to that anecdote, he had brought 『Ironbound Law』 to the fan club.

Severe and strict ironbound law.

The number of those who hated these rules and left the fan club became large.

However, the result was that the fan club's sense of unity became stronger.

Their ironbound unity was of such strength, that rumors of it spread even to the Knight Orders of the Kingdom of Ranoa.

Rumors gave birth to rumors.

At some point, the leaders of the fan club became known as proper and courteous people who maintained order.

When they graduated, they were met with favorable treatment from the knight orders and magic guilds of the surrounding countries.

9 Rumors of the School – Number 3

"At the Banchou's single shout, a group of 30 people will assemble."

Let's have a talk about Aisha.

She is energetic.

With the death of Paul and the state of Zenith, she continues to pass her time energetically without changing a thing.

Rather, she seems more energetic now than she was before.

In fact, you could say she is the most energetic when she's at home.

It's nothing like the listless face seen on Lilia as she stares out the window.

Nor does she wear a painful face like Norn, who idly stares at Paul's beloved sword.

The housework is continually done as if nothing had happened.

During the day she raises the plants in the garden, and flowers in her room.

At night I privately instruct her in magic, while she fawns all over me.

There does not seem to be any mournful feeling for Paul at all from her.

For Aisha, I wonder if father's existence wasn't a very big thing?

Norn, it seems, doesn't have many memories remaining of Buina village.

So it's possible that Aisha also might not have many proper memories of Paul and Zenith as well.

For Norn, the only real length of time she spent with family was with Paul.

For Aisha, the only real length of time she spent with family was with Lilia.

When looking at it from that perspective, it's difficult for me to say that I also am properly able to mourn as well.

I think, rather than feeling sadness at the death of her Father, that her driving force is the happiness she feels just knowing that her Mother is alive and well.

"Life" to her, isn't about holding on to regrets from the disasters that have happened in her life, but rather finding a way to get the most enjoyment out the life she is able to live.

Now, it was the morning of a certain day.

While it was a holiday for myself, unfortunately Sylphy and Roxy both had to work.

I thought about how I would spend the day leisurely, even while taking care of Lucy.

While the wives are working hard, the husband is having a rest.

Even though that seemed to give me a deplorable feeling, I rationalized that even an adult needs downtime too.

Well, as of right now, I'm not presently bringing in any income.

And it is a little hectic around here with the arrival of my baby.

But still, as for what's happening presently and also what I can see in the coming future, there aren't any money problems that I need to be concerned with.

While confirming my thoughts, I see off Sylphy and Roxy.

Then, I double-check that Lucy is asleep.

I let loose with some stretching, and head out to the garden.

At one point, the garden was dilapidated, and there were many exposed patches of bare earth.

However now, after not having seen it for a while, it had undergone a metamorphosis.

The first thing I noticed, was that three trees of the type to not wither in winter had been planted.

Each tree had a type of blossom that corresponded to one of the other seasons; spring summer and autumn.

I can only imagine how in the world each of them were brought here.

I seem to recall an inquiry on an adventurer guild request, that involved delivering something that had been uprooted from the forest.

If the transportation costs were said to be very expensive, receiving Zanoba's assistance could have lent some assistance with settling matter by way of escort costs.

Furthermore, there was place in a corner of the garden that was bricked-off.

I know of it because I helped with its creation.

In this bricked-off area, there was a paddy that had the rice seeds I brought back planted inside.

Since I didn't know how to actually make a rice paddy, the rice was being grown normally in the ground.

Presently, promising stalks have begun growing out of that paddy.

While it seems to be doing alright, as for whether or not rice will be able to be harvested, I just don't know yet.

Aisha was squatting down in front of the bricked-off rice paddy.

And curiously, Zenith was also squatting next to her.

"What are you all up to?"

"Ah, Onii-chan. We're pulling weeds!"

Pulling weeds.

This is something straight out of a Showa Era manga, isn't it?

After looking at the section for a bit, certainly Aisha has made an effort in her weeding.

Even Zenith next to her is also silently pulling up weeds.

Come to think of it, that time when I lived back in Buina village, Zenith used to pass time pulling weeds like this quite naturally.

After all, pulling weeds is an integral part of gardening.

"Zenith-sama has also been something like an assistant lately."

"....."

The way she says 'Zenith-sama', leaves me feeling a bit uncomfortable.

"Umm. Aisha. About the way you refer to Mother, is it alright if you just call her 'Mama' too?"

"I can't. That's something Mama Lilia was very against. About Zenith-sama, since Zenith-sama is the proper wife, I must always respect her as such."

Lilia's orders, huh?

Strictly enforced.

However, since Aisha is unable to look at Zenith as a mother, is it a difficult matter for her?

Around the time she was born, Zenith was able to become a proper mother to Aisha after all.

Well, it's fine.

In our family, calling her that, might as well be as trivial as a nickname.

"Since when has Mama Zenith been doing this?"

"From before this was made. At first Mama Lilia stopped her when she would come out here and help me with the gardening. But she is more skillful than I am!"

That's right, back in Buina village, Zenith did do proper gardening.

Great care was given to the plants and trees in the garden.

I wonder if this behavior is influenced by how she was?

At any rate, if there is a chance she can regain any part of her memories by doing this, I have no reason to stop her.

Nevertheless, I just watch the ladies side by side pulling weeds.

The relation between those two seems quit good.

While they are not connected by blood at all.

They look like your normal mother-daughter

"Ah, I forgot. Brother, you are taking a rest today, aren't you?"

While considering things, Aisha looked back at me and spoke.

Her cheeks were dirty with mud.

"Yeah, for today, I'll be in the house."

"In that case, can you come to my room later on, I have something I want to show you."

"Sure."

I nodded while I wiped the muddy cheeks of Aisha.

Having the mud wiped away, she could only smile with a mischievous "ne he he~"

Even I had noticed that Zenith was watching the situation.

[Because there is something I want to show you, come to my room later.]

Those were some very seductive lines.

Aisha is a precocious child.

It's very possible that she might start doing things, like abruptly lifting her skirt and saying [I want you to see all of me!]

Nope, no way.

It's all for naught, since our relations together extend into taking a bath together.

What more can you even show past that?

However, with her being so direct like that, ahh, I am worried about her future prospects.

Is it time for me to teach her Sex Ed?

No, if it comes to that, Lilia is certain to have taught her about it.

In all possibility, the one who would be giving out the wrong knowledge about that here, would be me.

Pondering that, I enter Aisha's room.

Though I was told to come by later, I never heard exactly when 'later' was supposed to be.

I don't think she'd particularly mind if I was waiting in her room.

It's not like I have any particular interest in the room of an 11-year old girl.

Then again, it's not like I can say I don't have an interest either.

"Yeah. She is definitely able to keep her own room clean."

Aisha's room was very orderly.

All the nooks and crannies of her room have been thoroughly cleaned, and not a single thing lies scattered about.

The bed is also properly made.

At various places around the room, girl-like accessories could be seen.

For instance, on the side of the bed was a plush doll.

It was a plush doll made in the shape of a human about 20 cm tall.

Bright light brown hair made of wool, wearing a robe, and holding a staff.

Clearly a Magician.

Around here plush dolls aren't sold, did you somehow buy it from a certain peddler?

I don't get the feeling that Zanoba would have had a doll like this.

Then in that case, it's a quite the treasure.

I mean... surely something like this probably wasn't made by herself.

On the windowsill there were some potted plants.

From the seeds that I had gotten on my journey, there were some sprouts.

One like a Tulip, others like the Cactus, or Aloe.

There were about 10 different sized potted plants lined up.

Unlike that of Norn, this was indeed a girl's room.

Opening the closet in the corner of the room, three different sets of maid clothes were hanging.

All of them seemed to have been thoroughly used, and the patching stood out.

They were the apprentice maid's clothes.

As Aisha steadily grows taller, the time she has left to wear these will soon run out.

Or will Lilia mend these further with a bit of her tailoring?

While looking around near the edge of the closet, I spotted a rather cutesy and girlish set of clothes.

Something that would look rather frilly if she wore it.

'Battle Clothes' I wonder?

If she wanted to show off something like this, then I feel a bit sorry for her.

I'll just pretend that I didn't see this.

And so, I closed the closet.

I instead went to open the drawer under the closet.

In it was a cluster of panties.

It was packed to the point of overflowing with small folded panties.

If I had any kind of 'thing' for Aisha, then certainly this spot would be Shangri-la.

Next to it was also a cluster of shirts as well.

Properly investigating, I was able to confirm a large number of brassieres as well.

Nonetheless, with my 11 year old sister's pleasant growth, she has already successfully managed to equip the chest armor.

However, isn't her size still that of an A-cup?

According to Oppai-sennin, on the subject of her 'equipment', from the very beginning Aisha was said to become a person of exceptional talent in this area.

Clink.

"!"

At that moment, I heard a sound from behind me.

I used my foresight eyes and filled my hands with magical power and looked over my shoulder.

Simultaneously, I closed the drawer, and then extended a fingertip in the direction I heard the sound.

"......Who's there!"

There was nothing.

There was no one.

Aisha and Zenith are probably still in the middle of weeding.

And Lilia should be handling lunch preparations right now.

Maybe it was Jiro the armadillo?

Wait a minute, Roxy rode Jiro to school.

He should be taking a nap in the academy stable right now.

Perhaps the horse I bought before going to Begaritto — Mastsukaze , sometimes I check up on him in the town stables but it's unlikely for him to come all the way here on his own.

Could the noise have been Lucy?

Not possible, Lucy can barely even crawl as of yet.

Then, could it be something completely different?

A thief perhaps?

Some kind of hentai bastard whose only aim is to possess the bra, worn for the first time by a certain young girl...

I adopt a low posture, and become cautious of the surroundings.

But still, there is nobody.

There aren't any hiding places.

But my sharpened instincts tell me, that something strange is going on.

Impossible, but could it be an invisible enemy?

Using a magic item to make themselves invisible?

In that case, the effect would wear off soon.

"......So is it a test of patience then? Fine with me."

I mutter that alone.

Without anyone being here, it could be that I am an idiot and it is just the rattlings of this old house.

No. Certainly something was there.

It was an uneasy feeling.

I need to look properly.

Anything that looks different from before.

...Plush doll.

No, that's the same.

The door hasn't been opened or shut.

The bed isn't disorderly at all.

Even the ceiling is clean. I doubt even a mote of dust would fall from there.

That can only leave one thing.

The potted plants.

There you go.

The number of potted plants is different.....no that's not quite it.

There doesn't seem to have been an increase or a decrease.

However the sense of foreboding is definitely coming from here.

It was then, at that moment.

A strong light shone into the windowsill, when the sun had reappeared from behind the clouds.

Clink, Clink!

"Wha-!"

The smallest of the potted plants shook.

The plant that had been growing there began to move about in a meandering way.

Wiggling its body around so that its whole body would be absorbed in the sunlight.

Whenever the plant moved, then the pot it was planted in would move, and that was what was causing the noise.

So this little guy was the true source of the sound.

However....

"What the heck is this?"

When I timidly stuck out a finger to give it a poke, the plant twisted in a surprising way.

However, when my fingertip approached, it immediately wrapped its ivy vines slowly around it.

I hurriedly removed my finger.

And the plant, as if nothing happened, resumed its sunbathing.

"A moving plant.....?"

How strange.

Will it by chance dance as well when I sing a song?

"....."

All joking aside.

I seem to remember a plant like this.

Yeah, I've seen it many times now.

This.

This guy is...

It is a Treant!

Anywhere you go you can find the monster called Treant.

It is a classic example of a demon that lives in this world.

Strictly speaking, it's the so-called Slime of this world.

I have also visited many places during my travels.

Demon Continent, Milis Continent, Central Continent, and Begaritto Continent.

And while I have unfortunately not yet gone to the Sky Continent, I have conquered most of the world's 5 continents.

And on every continent, there was always a species of demon Treant that existed there.

Whether in the forest, or on the plains, it appeared frequently.

While Treant is a monster of the tree, its outward appearance is not fixed.

Stone Treant looks more like a potato.

Cactus Treant looks like a cactus.

They each had various appearances.

According to a story that I heard, there is even a type called Elder Treant that is able to manipulate water.

However I have never seen such a small Treant.

This one is at most hardly smaller than 15 cm.

Maybe 20 cm if I include the root size.

It has 4 leaves and 2 vines.

Currently it has no budding flowers nor fruits.

It's still a young tree though.

For the meantime, I've decided to call this guy 『Baby Treant』,

Well, what the name is doesn't matter.

Just not having a name makes it inconvenient is all.

Now then, for the problem at hand.

Why is there a Baby Treant being cultivated in Aisha's room? What exactly is she doing?

"And then, what shall I do about this guy?"

"Well about that, you see, it suddenly started moving."

Aisha, without a hint of shyness, answered so.

"When was that?"

"Almost immediately around the time Onii-chan came back, so isn't it pretty amazing?"

Rather, she pridefully boasted about it!

"Yeah, it's amazing. However, why have you kept quiet about it until now?"

"I was going to tell you! However since Onii-chan looked busy all the time I postponed telling you, and Onii-chan just found it before I could tell you!"

Aisha retorted, angrily puffing out her cheeks.

Ah, she's really lovely.

However, now I understand.

This was on today's agenda.

Was it this you wanted to show me?

"So then, there was somehow a Treant seed mixed in with the ones I received....."

"Eh, that's not what I'm saying. I got it from the Asura Kingdom, it's a germ of Bacillus."

"Ah, is that..so?"

"Yes. Don't you see how there are leaves on the vines? In just a short while, it should start blooming purple-colored flowers."

A flower of the Bacillus.

I've heard the name before.

A material in aphrodisiacs.

Aside from aphrodisiacs, it is also cultivated as part of the raw materials typical in the production of perfumes.

However, why is such a flower able to become a Treant?

"This thing, exactly how did it start moving? Was it right from the start?"

"Nope. At first it didn't move at all. But then I transplanted it into the pot, and it suddenly began to move."

According to the conversation, it first germinated in her flower bed, then after a short while she transplanted it into a new pot and it started taking care of its growth.

Then after she grew it a bit more carefully, she was going to return it back into the garden.

She seemed to be trying various methods of growing, and in the middle of the potting plant stage, it began to take form.

"Heh."

Plant pots are common.

Some time ago, I even went with Aisha to buy some at the general store.

Even though in all likelihood the plant pot wasn't somehow a magic item.

"You haven't done anything strange?"

"Nope. Same as all the others. I am only using the soil that Onii-chan made with magic. After all, compared to the soil around here, the soil made by Onii-chan, is very nutrient-rich."

Then, it seems it isn't a question of the soil.

I never particularly considered the effectiveness of the soil I produced with magic.

Aisha seems to be filling it with all of the feelings of love she has for me.

"Ah, also, I will occasionally give it some of the remaining bathwater."

The remaining bathwater!

So that means, in the times that it is not me, it gets to bathe mainly in the dissolved sweat droplets from my beloved Sylphy and Roxy?

And even on occasion, leftover droplets of Nanahoshi are mixed in too?

No wonder!

Then it would be no mystery at all that the plant would develop some ecchi tentacles.

No, wait, it might be strange after all.

But I can certainly understand it.

"Hmm."

After all, what exactly is the cause?

An ordinary seed being raised in an ordinary way becoming a monster.

Is it possible that something like that could have happened?

In the seeds that Aisha received, by chance had a Treant seed mixed in, that much I can grasp.

Treant are able to mimic their surroundings.

So by that process, it might not have been suspicious to choose the form of the Bacillus flower.

While I consider all of that, only one result remains coherent.

"In any case, it would probably be best to burn it to death."

"Whaaaat!?"

Aisha raised her voice hysterically when I said that.

"But why!? It took a lot of time and effort to raise it! And you don't want to do anything else but destroy it!?"

It's hard to believe.

That she was crying out such feelings.

Certainly, if I wanted to pridefully show off something, and was then told to incinerate that something, would I react similarly?

"......Aisha. Even you should be able to understand. This guy is a Treant. A monster."

"But still, right now it's just tiny and cute!?"

"Even if that's how it is now, there is the chance it can attack someone when it becomes bigger. It is dangerous!"

"But I've already been properly disciplining it to not attack people already!"

Aisha clings to my waist

And in her eyes, tears gather.

Just now, [I'll look after it properly, and I won't let it trouble anyone else I promise.] seemed to be silently conveyed.

However, it's not like a dog or a cat.

It's a Treant!

"Say, Onii-chan. I can keep it, right?"

Aisha pleads at me with upturned eyes.

"It's no good even if it's tiny and cute. Throw it away."

"Even if, this guy, isn't even in the slightest? Even if it becomes friendly with everyone else, and it properly listens to what I tell it to?"

"I know that's a lie. A Treant has no ears so how can you say that it listens to the things you tell it to?"

"Watch this."

When Aisha replied, she extended her hand towards the Baby Treant.

The vines of Baby Treant began to wind themselves around the small finger of Aisha.

When the vines had been wrapped around Aisha, she gently tickled and stroked the side of it's leaf.

While it was being petted, the Baby Treant began to wiggle its body.

It was a strange thing to see.

The plant was behaving like a domesticated animal.

"Yes, now release finger."

When Aisha said so, the vine unwound with a rustling sound, and stood up on the palm of her hand.

"Which one is the pinky?"

The vine took a moment, seemingly at a loss, then coiled itself around the pinky finger.

"And now the middle."

The vine then released the pinky, and coiled around the middle finger.

"Okay, now the thumb."

Following the words of Aisha, the vine coiled around the middle finger began working it's way over to the thumb.

However, without sufficient length, only the tip of the vine could touch the thumb.

"Good job, Release—"

Aisha and Baby Treant played in that sort of way, for a while longer.

And then she turned around and faced me.

"How's that? It listened to me properly, didn't it?"

"A- Yeah."

Certainly it was possible that those two had come to be able to understand each other.

The impression I got from watching, was that the Treant had definitely taken to Aisha well.

Should I change my way of thinking just a little on this?

...even though Treant is a demon.

In my image of it, it's a ferocious demon that mimics a tree to ambush and attack travelers.

However, even though I just call it a monster, there are those that get used to people.

The lizard I rode on in the Demon Continent, and even Jiro the Armadillo are also demon beasts.

However, between demon beast and demon, if I look into the origin of both, they can be called the same thing.

Is it possible for Baby Treant to be domesticated into a demon beast if it gets used to people?

If it's a matter of risk, then wouldn't keeping the larger sized Jiro be a much bigger risk?

However, Jiro was a demon beast that was trained by a professional.

"I'm more worried that in the middle of the night, it will take advantage of you being asleep and strangle you to death."

"In the case of the Bacillus flower, at best it might grow to twice its current size, so I think everything will be fine."

"But, Still..."

"Then suppose I am injured, and at that time it still obeys me!"

"By the time it would take to get back here, you might be injured beyond any repair."

"Muu.....Say, surely it's not still no good?"

Up until now, I have never heard the story of the Treant being domesticated.

I don't know its habits, nor do I know how it should be trained in the future either.

And the Treant, even though it is a small fry, it is still a demon.

If one wrong step is made, I have a feeling it could become a major incident.

Even if it only grows at most to 30 cm like Aisha said, I guess the level of incident could be known.

The Treant which has been germinated from a seedling, had been raised all the way to here.

If it was able to become accustomed to people, then it would be hard to imagine that it could cause significant harm.

Hmm.

"....."

"I get it. Even if you say it is no good, I still have a plan."

When I seemed perplexed, Aisha indignantly raised her lips.

And then, folding her arms defiantly, glared at me with her upturned eyes.

"A plan?"

"I'll just talk to Sylphy-ane and Roxy-ane, about 'that thing.'"

"'That thing?'"

It sounded like I would be met with something troublesome.

To the perplexed me, Aisha arrogantly declared.

"Why, the hidden room in the basement!"

"-!"

There are certain parts to people you shouldn't mess with.

For me, that happens to be the basement altar.

When everyone is fast asleep, that is the sacred place I secretly visit and offer my prayers.

Although the god I worship is already beside me, still, this is this, and that is that.

Such a thing is what I believe in.

The act of praying is relieving to a person, and it allows one to live their life to the fullest everyday.

I have already been doing it for so many years now.

It has become a vital part of my existence.

Suppose such a place becomes known, what would happen?

What would Sylphy think?

What would Roxy think?

I want to think that Lilia already sort of understands.

And Aisha at first has taken the trouble to pretend not to have known.

However, Norn would probably despise me more if she knew.

And then perhaps they'd demand I destroy the altar.

"Ah, Aisha. I uh, am only thinking of your well being after all. Treant is a dangerous monster you know, and even if you raise it, there is no telling if it still won't be dangerous."

"Don't worry, I no longer mind that Onii-chan is a pervert, but I wonder how Sylphy-ane and Roxy-ane would feel? Especially Roxy-ane, that for all these years you've been holding on to her underwear, how would she feel if she knew?"

Gununu.

This rascal.

Here I am just trying to look out for her well being, and then bam... she threatens me!

Ahhh. Shit, How should I handle this?

I'm doing the best I know how to do.

Then, in the moment that I was most troubled.

The door behind me suddenly opened.

"Umm, I thought I heard my name, were you trying to call for me?"

"EH!"

"EH!"

Me and Aisha both turned around in wonder at who was standing in the doorway.

There, standing there dressed in her robes, was the person I had just seen off only a little while ago, Roxy.

And she was wearing a blank face.

"W,Why is Roxy here...and not at the Academy?"

"Ah I had left something behind, and I came back to get it real fast. At this time, I don't have any class."

How Roxy-like of her, to forget something!

No, it's not like that.

"Say Roxy-ane, Did you know? Onii-chan has Roxy-ane's MFFFFFHFUFHHFFF....."

I panicked and held my hand over Aisha's mouth.

What should I do?

"....."

"....."

Silence fills the room.

And on the windowsill, Baby Treant meanders about.

Roxy's eyes hone in on it.

...All right.

For now, I'll let Roxy voice some opposition to it.

Surely she can relate to the fear of keeping a Treant well enough.

"This is a Treant isn't it?"

"It,It appears to be that way, Roxy. It seems Aisha has been wanting to suggest that she cultivate it! But, The Treant is a demon too, and I wonder if it wouldn't be dangerous instead? Does Roxy also think that the idea is no good?"

Aisha makes 'Mff Mff' sounds while trying to pry my hand from her mouth.

Fool, don't you understand my true power?

Even if you bite it, I won't ever remove it.

Ah, Wai-, don't lick it.

Ack, Don't slurp it either!

"Isn't it wonderful!"

How unexpected!

She approved of it!

"If it is raised properly and takes to a person well, I doubt one of this size would be dangerous to a person."

"Eh? Really?"

"Yes. While I haven't really taken a good look at this one, The Migurudo tribe bred Treants to keep harmful birds out of the fields."

Is that so?

That the Migurudo Village had such things?

Whether there was, or there wasn't.

Did I even look?

I can't really remember it all that well.

Well.

Was it not dangerous after all?

I moved my hand off of Aisha's mouth.

"Aisha. Perhaps, Onii-chan was mistaken."

Though Aisha gave me a suspicious look, eventually she gave me a broad smile.

"But, Onii-chan was also trying to think about myself as well."

"Right. Of course I was. Keeping a demon would be dangerous, right?"

"Then, about 'that thing'... I'll keep quiet about it for now."

"Thank you Aisha. How about you go cook us something delicious, right now?"

"Sure!"

Aisha separated from me.

And then ran over to Roxy, clinging to her with a 'pyon~'

"I love you Onee-chan!"

".....Eh ah, okay?"

Finally, only the perplexed face of Roxy remained.

Thus, the household pets now included 『Baby Treant』

Of course, I attached several conditions on the matter of keeping it.

Firstly, if he ever harms a person he will be disposed of immediately.

Secondly, it must be properly trained to not attack people.

Thirdly, the family must be instructed properly on what kind of plant it is.

Fourthly, taking into account the worst-case scenario, it is to never be put near the baby.

Etc.

Though saying these various rules made Aisha's mouth sour, she nodded without making an unpleasant face.

But because the orders were mostly relevant to the protection of my child, everything should be fine.

Incidentally, in regards to the name of the Baby Treant, it was given the name 『Beet』

I have expectations for its growth.

Certainly in the future it will become a wonderful protector of my rice garden.

Still, for her to have found that altar...

I truly cannot take her maid skills lightly.

9 Rumors of the School – Number 4

"A monster lives at the Banchou's house."

Three months passed again in the blink of an eye.

Summer is here.

The snow has already completely melted; every day is drying heat.

This year, I'm crazy about Lucy.

Whenever I have the time, I hover over to see Lucy.

She is my first child.

I must adore her very much.

Even now, in a custom-made baby room on the first floor, I am still looking at Lucy.

Looking at her angelic yet naive and innocent face,

With naturally loose cheeks, and a mouth that looks sloppy.

However, for now, I am the pillar of this house.

Although I don't have any dignity, I still have to pretend in front of my wives and sisters.

If I dote on children too much, my cool image will fade.

So, I think I should be stricter with my child.

Yeah, strict.

Perhaps, Paul also thought about it when he saw me,

Fathers are great; they should be the children's goal.

Once, I thought that Paul looked like a pathetic man to me.

But, now is different.

Paul was a great father.

Although he was lacking in some areas, he's still a great father.

Indeed, he was rough with his relationships with females, but that was not something I should say about, that's why it's enough to see the part of how great he was.

For now, I can say like this:

I want to be like Paul—.

"Aahn, Aah"

Ah, that's not good; Lucy woke up crying.

And Sylphy isn't around.

"Be good—, Lucy-chan. It's daddy, funny face."

"Akyuwa, Kyakkya!"

Oh, so cute.

Is there anything in this world that is cuter than a grinning Lucy?

If there are angels that exist in this world, this child should be one.

Ah, not good,

I was just thinking about the dignity of a father.

I think a father should be a presence that is closer yet further.

Usually gentle with children, but sometimes will scold them severely.

But, if anything happens, a father should protect his child with his life, saving the child.

Should be that kind of existence,

An ideal father should be like that.

Eh?

This is completely like Paul.

To me, Paul is the ideal father.

I don't want to let my children know I am a useless father.

But, due to his uselessness, I felt closer to Paul.

There were many things to learn from him.

And, although I viewed him as a failure of a father,

But, to Norn, he was a good father.

Otherwise, she wouldn't have become that attached to him.

Whatever it is, cherishing children is the most important thing—

"Ah—, ahwa—, wa—."

Not good, Lucy is crying again.

"Oh—be good. Lucy-chan. It's daddy. Carry high. Be good."

"Ukya, Akyakya!"

I carry and rock Lucy about.

Lucy is delighted.

Rocking in my forged strong arms, she smiles like a cupid.

Oh, so cute.

"I wonder, Danna-sama."

"What's the matter, Suzanne?"

While I cradle Lucy, the nanny Suzanne comes to speak to me.

She's a former adventurer, and an acquaintance of mine.

"Cradling Ojou-sama, shouldn't I be doing it?"

"Please do not take away my time of happiness."

I knew her when I was an adventurer.

I had not seen her for 4 years.

When we met in a place for recruiting nannies, I was surprised.

"Well, I can't stop you if you want to do it."

"Are there men who are unwilling to do this?"

"My husband isn't willing to do that."

"Then he is not self-conscious enough to be a father."

I still remembered the time well when I met her.

When, I was 12 years old, and broke up with Eris, I headed north to cover my sorrow.

I was at a town in the corner of Basherant Dukedom, alone, feeling the indescribable loneliness brought by the dissolved [Dead End] party.

At that time, in order to distract myself from the loneliness, I accepted quests that cannot be done alone.

There was also a time when I wanted to give up.

And then there was Suzanne's group.

Two warriors, one healer, one mage: a 4-person party,

Her party rank was a B-rank; four of them were veterans.

Suzanne was a warrior.

Although she was not skilled in swordsmanship, she was still one of the B-rank adventurers.

But, she is a woman who was caring, and deserved respect.

She spoke to me who was accepting quests alone.

[This quest needs more than one person. Do you need help?]

I remembered that feeling.

And then I replied, [Oh, then I am glad if you can help. I want to gain some fame].

To see me like that, Suzanne was shocked.

She seemed to be in a panic.

Moreover, it seemed when I spoke to her in honorifics with dead eyes; it made her feel a creepiness that overwhelmed her shock.

In spite of that thought, Suzanne was willing to help me.

Before I left town, she invited me to join a fixed party many times.

After all that, she kept saying, even if I refused to join a party, I shouldn't be eating alone, and she treated me a meal.

In hindsight, I might have been taken care of by her a lot.

And I appreciated that.

After that, Suzanne seemed to have married one of the magicians in the party.

And, I started living in the hometown of magicians known as Sharia.

Now, she is a mother of two children.

However, the third one seemed to be a premature infant; it died right after birth unfortunately.

Even though the third child died, she still has breast milk.

And, breast milk could be sold.

She found my name in the place for recruiting nannies.

And that is how we met again.

"...Anyway, you've really changed."

"Did I change that much?"

"Of course, if it was the old you, you would not belittle a husband in front of his wife."

Certainly.

And if I thought of that, during those days, I was extremely afraid to offend others.

That feeling has not changed much, even now.

But, probably after going through many things, it seems to have faded a little.

"Did I make you unhappy?"

"No. That will be fine. Just take it as a joke. I also can feel slightly sociable."

It was also the same at school,

Making jokes tended to put us slightly closer.

Zanoba and Cliff also want to be close; I also felt easier.

"That kind of spooky honorifics, is it all right not to use them? You're the employer."

"Well, one must have manners if one wants to be closer to another."

"Right."

Suzanne says with a wry smile.

I am grateful to her.

No matter what, the one who told me about the common knowledge of the adventurers in the northern continent:

It was her.

"Well, it's alright with me as long as I can get my pay."

"Of course, I will not fail you."

It is good to get more gold.

Even though these were just spoken words, Suzanne did her job seriously.

I still felt uneasy due to cases in my previous life where the babysitter would abuse the infant.

But Suzanne treated Lucy as her own child.

Well, Lilia and Aisha would always be in the house- I also know Suzanne would not do anything to a friend's child.

"Come to think of it, how are your sons?"

"Both of them are terrifically healthy. But they stick to my grandparents like superglue."

Suzanne seems to be living with her husband's parents.

Of course, otherwise, she would not leave the children alone when she became a nanny.

Living with the mother-in-law seems to have many kinds of problems, she would complain to Lilia about them.

Lilia did not have much to say in the position of a mother-in-law, but she seems to be the same age as Suzanne, so conversing with her was easier.

I have witnessed them often drinking tea together.

"...Do you feel it is better to have a boy as your first child?"

"No not really, why do you ask?"

"You know, it's about having an heir."

"Ah."

Children were born to do that, I heard that story many times.

Zanoba, Ariel said that too.

Indeed royal families, noble families seem to be concerned with boys and girls who were born.

Boreas nobles in the Asura Kingdom also said that, the main family would adopt boys who were born.

"I am not even a noble or a merchant. It's enough as long as they grow up healthily."

Rather, girls were cuter.

Recently, there was an imbalance with boys and girls in the house.

However, I had no complaints especially when cute girls are surrounding me.

They are not unreasonable or oppressive.

All of them support me.

"That's nice. My husband, from the time I got pregnant, went on and on about how we'd raise him if it's a boy... I never even considered what to do if a girl was born instead."

"And then a boy was born, was that not good enough?"

"I guess. Though I feel a little bit complicated about it. Well, the third one was a girl."

"Oh, it... I'm sorry about that..."

If Lucy was a dead infant,

As I think about it, I am horrified.

"I'll just give birth to another. It's alright."

However, Suzanne was quite open-minded.

I wondered was it like that?

If one could not make it and just give birth to another,

I wondered if something like that could be easily thought.

At least, I would not think so.

Sylphiette had a body that could not be that easy to impregnate.

Not only that,

Speaking of her, her feelings would be more down than I, with tear-filled eyes she would say, [I am sorry- Rudi's baby- I did not manage to give birth properly, I am so sorry.]

Oh, even just the thought pains my stomach.

Stop.

This is just an imagination.

Lucy was born; Sylphiette is also healthy.

This was not a dream.

"Ara?"

Suddenly, Suzanne looked behind me.

"Mother."

I turn to look; it's Zenith.

With Lilia following from behind,

"..."

"Excuse me, Rudeus-sama."

Zenith walked over with a dazed look, sat in a position beside my side,

Where she can look at Lucy,

"Mother. Today again, Lucy is quite healthy!"

"..."

There's no response from Zenith.

But, she still keeps looking at Lucy.

I felt ever since Zenith came into this home that she began to move more actively.

She eats together if Norn is around.

She also pulls weeds with Aisha.

When I look at Lucy, she comes over here the same way she did.

She also has different reactions towards Sylphiette and Roxy.

Her expressions still had not changed; she is also unable to speak.

However, she can move by herself.

There was a change.

Although it's little by little, she is still heading towards recovery.

"..."

"Akyawa! Kyan!"

Zenith reaches out to Lucy.

With a smiling face, Lucy held her hand.

"Lucy, you sure love grandmother a lot."

Initially, I was more wary.

Zenith seems to have the so-called senile dementia,

Possibly, she may cause harm to Lucy after a change of some sort of emotion.

However, it was groundless.

Zenith only stares at Lucy quietly.

There were no negative feelings.

Rather, she lets out an atmosphere of a grandmother who cares for her grandchild.

Why should I worry whether Zenith will harm Lucy?

In the first place, Zenith had never gone on a rampage.

"Ahu—! Keke!"

I wonder, did Lucy also know about it?

Each time she interacted with Zenith, she was always smiling.

Granddaughter and grandmother, it is a heart-warming sight.

That said, there's no knowing what will happen based on Zenith's condition.

Somehow, I did not feel anything would happen after seeing this sight. But at least, I did not know what would happen; I should not leave them out of sight.

It was good for each other.

Even without the intentions, accidents do happen.

"..."

Suddenly, Zenith raises her head.

She is looking at me.

I wonder what is wrong.

It feels like she wants to say something.

"Ah—Eh! Ah—Eh!"

The next thing, Lucy starts to cry.

"Madam, Zenith. If you'll excuse me."

Lilia carries the baby away from Zenith slowly.

Suzanne approaches her, and begins cradling Lucy after lifting her.

At the same time, she checks the condition of the diaper and Lucy's back for rashes.

And, she nods.

"It's almost time for her breastfeeding."

Has it been that late?

To say, after Sylphiette breastfed her in the morning, it has been a long while.

"Very well, I will excuse myself."

"It's alright to stay and watch."

Although Suzanne said that, I still refused.

Even if she's someone I know, I shouldn't be looking at another wife's breasts.

After all, Suzanne's breasts will never lose to Zenith and Lilia's size.

Moreover, I did not know whether now is her milking period, her breasts seem to be much bigger.

If I saw them, the Sennin from my heart will be awakened.

{ C-Editor's note: The Sennin is Rudeus' old imaginary oppai-sage. }

Then I would be dripping saliva over Lilia.

Sylphiette and Roxy will be disappointed.

Indeed, it's clear that their breasts couldn't win.

But, I did not choose them because of their breasts.

That kind of worry is needless.

Saying about that, Zenith:

Did she feel that Lucy was hungry?

...Having the experience of bringing up two children, she might be able to feel that.

I left the room.

I am looking out the window, and it is raining, unfortunately.

I am not sure about the time, but if it is breastfeeding time, it should be noon right now.

I am just a little concerned about Lucy, and it has been a long day.

But, I did not feel it is a waste of time.

To me, this is a precious time.

I go into another room.

It's where I've prepared my research, a small room on the first floor.

Recently the number of rooms had decreased as the number of family members increased; I had to make effective use of the remaining ones.

But, for guest rooms, let's just leave one.

I walk towards the desk that was tailored to the room.

Placed on the desk, there were my research reports and the magic stone.

During this half of the year, I did not just play around with my sisters and daughter.

I was also investigating things about the magic stone.

From a hard fought battle with the Hydra, a magic stone that absorbs mana.

This magic stone seems to look like a pale green scale.

If it had no transparency, it would look like a piece of stone.

When I studied the magic stone at the library, I found out a few things.

Firstly, the name of the magic stone,

It seems to be known as a [Mana Absorbing Stone].

The stone was made from a Manatite Hydra's body, and has the ability to absorb mana from the surroundings.

It seems to have gone extinct together with Manatite Hydra, it is now considered a phantasmal magic stone.

Most dragon-type creatures seem to be able to generate magic stones inside their bodies.

It would be like pearls, or maybe something like gallstones.

The one that is on my magic staff, it was also generated from the body of a dragon-type serpent creature.

There are various different types of effects, but basically they often involve affecting mana.

It could amplify the mana or reduce the magic consumption cost, with the same mana you could demonstrate double the power.

In other words, there is nothing strange about a magic stone that absorbs mana instead.

The problem is the theory behind how it absorbs mana.

This magic stone, if left alone, would not absorb mana.

So then how could you make it absorb mana?

I thought of some experiments and tried them.

Then, surprisingly early in, I obtained some results:

A "front and back" were present in this magic stone.

They were difficult to see in appearance, but they were certainly there.

If I placed my hand on the back and applied mana, the front would start absorbing mana.

When that happened, a high-pitched sound would ring out.

It was not automatically active, and could be manually turned on or off.

If I was to try saying it, it'd be something like the suckers on an octopus tentacle.

Apparently, that Hydra seems to activate the magic stone the moment it sees magic; any magic that flies toward it would then be rendered useless.

Those are wonderful reflexes.

But, that would be obvious, of course.

For wild animals, their reflexes and vision are overwhelmingly better than humans are.

Thinking of which, Ruijerd's stone—the thing on Supardia Tribe's heads, it should be the same kind of magic stone.

After experimenting further, I found that apparently the magic stone seems to be [not necessarily absorbing mana].

I released magic on myself: while raising the magic stone and shouting "Now!" I activated the effect. The mana I used was also not recovered.

Rather, I feel like the same amount of mana I used to cast the released magic was drained from me again.

Although there is much to investigate regarding this point, I tried to make a single hypothesis:

Could it be that mana generated into the back of the stone transforms into [a canceling wave] through the front, effectively negating magic?

I think, though it has an effect similar to Disturb Magic, its breakdown power is at a higher level.

Of course, some things cannot be explained.

For example, even though I tried hitting a doll I had created with the wave, it did not break.

The doll is okay, yet the [Rock Bullets] are useless.

I wonder what the difference is.

After existing for such a long time, did the magic doll become unbreakable after the mana stabilized?

...Hmmmm,

It can't be helped, even if I try.

I am not clear about what mana actually is in the first place.

Yet more than the finer details, I want to prioritize thinking about how to use it or how to deal with it.

While I was thinking, I carried out another experiment.

I feel that by using this magic stone, it is something that can destroy things that Disturb Magic could not.

So, for example, a [Magic Circle].

I asked Cliff to help me with this experiment.

The result: I was able to destroy every magic barrier that Cliff had drawn.

Although the magic circle on the paper remained, as long as I trigger the stone, it seems to erase the magic without any problems.

However, there was a magic circle in the Hydra's room:

That blood colored magic circle.

In addition, magic circles inside of magic tools can't be erased, as well.

Instead of being drawn, maybe both could be engraved?

Let's just remember that under [things that can't be dispelled].

Anyway, most things are erased.

So, even if I am trapped in a barrier, I could escape it on my own, as well.

Of course, the most important thing is to avoid being trapped.

By inserting it in the palm of [Zariff's Prosthetic Hand], it might be useful later.

But, it would be difficult to use magic with the same hand...

"Onii-chan. A guest has arrived."

I was in my laboratory for a while; Aisha's face appeared.

With a professional expression:

"Who is it?"

"It's Zanoba-sama."

Zanoba, Julie and Ginger as well, I'm sure,

Is there any problem?

No. Not necessary to come over just because of something.

He could also come over to play.

"Ask them to wait in the living room."

"Leave it to me."

I stand up and say in a perfunctory manner.

Speaking of Zanoba, his research is also progressing.

It is the study of the automatic doll.

Currently, he has finished researching the hand, and now is in the process of researching the foot.

In the process, he made [Zariff's Prosthetic Leg], but it is still an unreliable product.

About the leg, it has the same mechanism that my hand has.

I also helped him to make a prototype.

Zanoba came up with the blueprints, I made the model, and Cliff engraved the magic circles.

The work consumed a lot of time and effort.

It took nearly a month to make one.

Although someday I want to sell prosthetic arms and legs, the production still has a long way to go.

Well, after research on both hands and legs, Zanoba had begun conducting research on the doll's body.

He carefully had cut its body where the limbs joined, opened, and disassembled it from the inside.

Then, inside the center of its chest, he told me he found a big magic stone.

Red colored- a magic stone that has the same beautiful shape of a crystal,

However, it was not a solid magic stone.

Rather, a combination of small magic stones that has magic circles engraved on them.

Without a doubt, this would be the core of the autonomous doll.

If one can analyze the pattern that is written in this core,

Then making the same thing is possible.

And, by advancing research from there, it would make the dream Maid Robot.

That said: Zanoba seemed to be stuck a little there.

The contents of the pattern were too bizarre.

Moreover, the related written contents on the old book had diagonal lines canceling them.

In short, we saw that the maker of the automatic doll was still in the process of researching the core.

As the current product was incomplete, we were also not clear about the maker's goal.

Researching from here on would be extremely challenging.

However, Zanoba said that this was fate; he had decided to do it all over again.

I hoped he did his best.

"Sorry to keep you waiting."

I reached the living room; Zanoba who was sipping tea stands up.

"Shisho, sorry to bother you!"

So as to match Zanoba, Ginger and Julie, who were around the corner of the room, also bowed in silence.

"Any business for today?"

"Because we happened to be nearby, so I came with a greeting."

So he came over to play.

"Okay, please slowly take a seat."

Although it was unusual of him, it was still nothing bad.

While I was thinking, Julie approaches me.

"Grandmaster, this one, it is finished."

As she finishes saying that, she gives me a doll.

It was the homework I gave her, a Ruijerd Doll's duplicate.

"Well, you've improved. Continue this way, from now on."

"Yes!"

Julie bows cheerfully.

While I was on a journey, the doll that Julie undertook, it was completed.

The Ruijerd Doll, which Julie made, was not bad.

Although she made it using my doll as the basis, still I have to admit that she did it better than me.

There are no mistakes with the pose.

Even for outsiders, it would look cool to them.

After Norn sees it, she mutters in a low voice "I want." It is given to her as a present.

Later, it would go on her shelves in her dormitory room.

I see the success, and order Julie to mass-produce the accepted Ruijerd Doll.

Although it takes time to make one, it is better to make it one-by-one, slowly.

She is also going through magic training, and when it is time to sell one, there is no loss if there are a few.

"Yesterday, Norn-Sensei, we met at school."

"Oh, really, you met, what did you say?"

"She thanked me, so I thanked her back."

"I see, that's great."

I pat Julie's head.

Julie's body is a little rigid, but she still allows me to touch her obediently.

So, recently Norn had also completed the book.

Although she has started to practice sword training, Norn has never quit writing.

The book story is short; the writing style, it looks rough,

And there's only one story.

It spoke about how Ruijerd fought for his lord, yet was betrayed and went off for revenge. It was all about the spear's story.

But, it is enough to express his sorrow; and also the stubbornness of Ruijerd.

With a little editing, it'll be enough to release it to the young ones.

I read it to Julie, and it is the best to her.

She persistently keeps asking me to read it again; in the end, I read it to her three more times.

If Ginger did not stop her, I would be reading to her for the fourth time.

I hear that no one read stories like that to Julie when she was small.

The dwarven race did not have that kind of culture.

Or should I say, both parents had no time to look after her,

Well, either way, it's good.

Due to that happening, I actually had wanted to find a chance to let Norn and Julie know each other, but they have already met.

Being called as a sensei-whatever, sure gave Norn the shivers.

{ C-Editor's note: It is a Japanese custom to call an author "sensei". }

No matter what, as long you get along, it's good.

Getting to know each other is the first step for a good relationship.

Anyway, the image-improving plan of the Supard Race is progressing well.

Research and training,

Doing what can be done.

Doing more than is required; I will be overloaded, indeed.

One might say it's better to focus training on just one thing.

But, I am afraid I don't have that kind of talent.

It was true in the previous life, and it did not change, even now.

There is always someone stronger.

Indeed, it is possible to make the top in the academy, but there are even stronger ones out in the open world.

There are talents which not even effort can surpass.

But, it is not always necessary to win by force.

It's okay to win in various turfs.

If it is not possible to win by confronting, go for the sides.

Although that's what I always thought,

However, foes like the Manatite Hydra might still occur.

Just in case of emergency, I need to have the strength to protect my family.

But I am still not good at close quarters fighting.

"Zanoba, do you want to look at Lucy?"

"Oh! Your daughter!? Is that all right?"

"Sure, why not?"

"Oh yes! Although, I forget which country it is, but there's a place with customs that does not allow children below the age of 5 to meet outsiders."

"I prefer it; it's better to let her be blessed by all kinds of people."

Well, for now, this is not the time to think that complicated.

No matter what, just make sure every little thing in view is done.

Every day: bodybuilding, magic practicing, doing research, and interacting with different kinds of people...

I'm now beyond comparison with my previous life.

The current situation for me is too damn good.

So, there is nothing to be hasty about.

If too hasty, it will blind you from the surroundings; and you fall sometimes when you are blind.

Just like what happened that time with the Hydra,

That's why for everything I do, I must put in effort.

I wonder, what will be my next step?

I have my prosthetic hand.

Research is progressing.

Get along with my wives.

My sisters and daughter are healthy, as well.

The resources at hand are still enough.

And life is stable.

...Now for the next thing:

Time for Roxy to teach me Water King class magic.

9 Rumors of the School – Number 5

"The Banchou loves small children."

Somewhere in the Magic University, lustful voices rang.

"No, stop!"

Outside of a storage that had been re-purposed by students as a gym locker.

A young man grabs tight the hand of a girl with aqua hair.

"Eh, say yes! Sensei, please?"

"No means no!"

But that girl refuses his advances.

She shook her head.

Even so, the boy refuses to quit.

"Once, just once!"

"I said no. Let go. Lunch break is over already."

"Don't say that!"

The boy lets go.

The troubled girl searches her surroundings.

Outside the gym locker, there are still a few students milling about.

But they quietly turn away from the girl's pleading eyes.

Why? Because that boy is too scary.

He's the most well-known riff-raff of the area.

So everyone thought,

Even if I try to help, her fate is sealed.

Not only that, but I too might experience something terrifying.

Knowing that, there's not one person brave enough to help her.

"Sensei, please reconsider. It won't feel bad for either of us. Well, first you might hate it a little, but it will feel better later on."

"Well.. True..."

"If you do this favor, I'll do anything Sensei asks?"

"Oh, but..."

That boy's pursuit against the reluctant girl is relentless.

Bunching closer to her, as if to whisper something to her.

That motion makes her face flushed.

Fiddling with her triple ponytail, she shyly droops her head.

"The Student Council came!"

Just then, the so-called [Most Handsome Man on Campus] has arrived.

With a sunglass-wearing, white-haired girl behind him.

"Kyaa! Luke-sama!"

"It's 'Silent Fitts'!"

Student Council members Luke and Fitts.

"Luke-sama, you're so cool today too!"

"Give me a hug~!"

"Fitts-sama, you're looking cuter everyday."

"Please show us your face!"

With people cheering them on, the two approaches the boy and girl.

"We received reports that Rudeus attacked another female student..."

Luke sighs.

The boy before him is the one called Rudeus, and the girl Roxy.

Not a student, nor is there an attack.

With the facts checked, he turns around and heads back the way he came.

"Fitts, I'll leave the rest to you."

"... Oh."

Fitts nervously rubs her ear and nods.

"Haa."

After Luke left, Roxy sighs too.

"Female student, huh?"

"It can't be helped. Lots of people still don't realize that Roxy-sensei is a teacher yet."

Rudeus nods in sympathy.

"Eh? Sylphy, what's wrong?"

He suddenly realizes Sylphy is wearing an unhappy expression.

Slightly puffs a cheek.

"Em, Rudi. Just because you're married, doesn't mean you can be so forceful. Girls have times when they don't want to too, you know?"

"Eh? Yeah, sure I understand."

"Well, even though Roxy-sensei might be better at it, I'm here for you too..."

Fitts mumbling her words.

"... Unless."

Rudeus approaches Fitts visibly excited.

He pokes Fitts's one puffed cheek.

With the puffed cheek suppressed, but the other side puffs up.

"Haha! Sylphy is jealous!"

Rudeus hugs Fitts tightly.

Not enough to put her completely at ease, but her anger is gone.

"J-jealous, not even..!"

"Don't worry, Sylphy. I don't plan to leave Sylphy out either."

"Eh, what, then, you mean the 3 of us...?"

Rudeus whispers in Fitts's ear.

"That's right. Let's ask Roxy to teach us together."

"Umm, Roxy will teach us?"

"Of course, she knows it the best."

Fitts glances to her side.

Roxy instantly turns away.

"I haven't agreed to it."

"Don't say that. Fitts want to know too?"

"B-but it's embarrassing..."

From when Rudeus starts to hug her, Sylphy begins to fidget.

Dressing as a boy.

But with her sunglasses you can't read her mood, but she's probably already wet.

"W-well, it's for Rudi's sake... okay?"

"Sylphy!"

Moved, Rudeus buries himself in her hair, enjoying its softness and sweet scent. His hug tightens.

Losing herself in his firm biceps, Fitts lets herself go, ready for whatever.

Too easy.

Roxy looks at the scene with envy.

Rudeus did not relent in Roxy's pursuit.

"Why do you refuse? Don't tell me, Roxy hates me?"

Rudeus says, looking hurt. Roxy rushes to answer.

"No, not even! I like Rudi the most. Love, I love you!"

"Then, why?"

"Well, if I taught you, then I don't have anything I can beat Rudi in anymore..."

"Who cares about winning. Roxy's existence alone is greater than I!"

"Hey, Rudi. Now that you mentioned it, I'm not as great as you think. I'm just petty and scared that my student will surpass me."

"It's fine. Even your pettiness, I think it's great!"

"Basically, learning this might take a few months? Well, Rudi and Sylphy are more talented than I am, so maybe a little faster..."

Just now, Fitts realized she might have misunderstood something.

Coming back to her senses, she asks her man.

"Em, sorry, Rudi. What are we talking about?"

To Sylphy's question, Rudeus replies.

"Ah. I was asking Roxy to teach me Water King-class Magic."

So that's what it was.

— Rudeus's POV —

Bicycle of youth.

As in when an adolescent boy and girl ride a bike together.

The boy busy pedaling with a girl riding behind.

Sitting side straddle on the back rack, gripping tightly to the boy's waist, while trying to subtly keep their distance.

Occasionally the roles are reversed too.

Eventually riding like that together, they arrive at a riverbed colored red by sunset.

The crimson sun concealing their flush cheeks.

Right now, my situation is something similar.

Even though the sun still hangs high.

But before my eyes I can see Sylphy's nape.

Just sticking my nose out a bit, I can enjoy to my heart's content of Sylphy's sweet scent.

I wrap my arm around Sylphy's waist, crossing near her tummy.

Keeping her upper half wrapped tight.

Sylphy's beating heart can be clearly heard from her bosom.

How wonderful.

By the way, I kept our lower halves subtly distant.

The reason should be obvious.

Even a wife deserves some propriety.

Also, harassing a busy driver is just begging for accidents to happen, so I have heard in my previous life.

"Matsukaze is such a good horse. Obedient, trustworthy, and strong too!"

A voice from Sylphy's front.

I look over her shoulder and see aqua covered head.

Roxy.

She sits in front of Sylphy.

"That's right. Such a great horse is truly rare."

Comfortably we're riding a single horse together.

Roxy in the front, Sylphy and I in the back.

The pet least cared for by the family, Matsukaze trots ahead, completely unhindered by the three it carries on its back.

"If I remember correctly, Ginger picked him out. That person really knows her horses."

"Does Sylphy know a lot about horses?"

"Ah, no, not really. But I have seen in Asura palace the one they claimed as the best horse of the land. The one ridden by Knight Captain-san."

"Then it must be really great."

As soon as I said that, Matsukaze neighs loudly.

"Ah, sorry. You're great too. Only to be expected of Greyrat House's horse."

Roxy busies herself to comfort Matsukaze.

Does this horse understand human speech?

Or rather, does Roxy know horse?

No, no matter what kind of pet, if you talk with it everyday, you can read them eventually.

Aisha seems to talk with Jirou often.

"But sitting in the front at my age is kind of embarrassing."

Roxy has a habit of hiding her blushing face during physical contact.

She probably feels like riding in a baby seat, for riding in front of the one holding the reins.

"Maybe I should ride Jirou instead."

"Not allowed. Saying that, are you trying to make a run for it again?"

"I'm not a little kid. I won't run."

While listening to my wives' friendly banter, I take in my surroundings.

We're on the outskirts.

On the right a pretty little creek, and on the left an expansive empty field and forest.

Even though we're so far up North, there is plenty of green this season.

Just now we can see fields of taro and wheat, but now there's only vast wilderness.

We didn't plan on how far we're going, just somewhere without many people.

Fish in the creek dancing under the sun.

A tributary of the major river next to Sharia.

Even though this isn't very far off, but fishing here on a nice day should feel quite nice.

Well, I actually never fished before.

"Now that it's decided, I plan to teach properly."

It has to be here.

After Roxy finally relented, she made that condition.

"The spell I'll teach is Water King Magic [Lightning]."

Roxy looks a little reluctant.

Sylphy and I nudge ourselves against her shoulders.

So Lightning, huh?

From the name alone, it sounds like the lightning magic we often think of.

Well, thinking about it, Lightning Magic doesn't seem to exist in this world.

And King Class too.

Must be some awe-inspiring magic.

"Okay, here should be fine."

Arrived at some point, Roxy jumps down off the horse.

She ties Matsukaze to a tree roughly the width of my thigh.

How nostalgic.

I learned Water Saint Magic in a place like this, with a horse tied like this.

"Sensei, do you still remember Kalajav?"

"Ah. Paul-san's horse. How nostalgic..."

Roxy says, her eyes off to a distance.

I was 5 back then.

12 years have passed already.

I learned many things since then, but it's finally time to reach King Rank.

Feels like I took a very long detour.

Ah.

That time our horse almost died by lightning.

It survived barely, but dying from that wouldn't be at all strange.

Roxy might have forgotten about it already, but just to be safe.

"It's safe this time, right?"

"It's safe. But you should cover Matsukaze up, so he won't catch a cold."

"Got it."

Following her instruction, I build an earth fortress for Matsukaze.

Matsukaze did not object, but hid himself inside it.

"Then, should I keep my distance too?"

"No, it's fine. I can only do it once, so watch carefully."

Sylphy and Roxy wear their raincoats as they talk.

We were soaked during Saint Class too.

If it rains, then those are obviously necessary, so we brought some along.

"All set?"

"Okay."

"Got it."

Roxy nods and points to a far away tree.

A huge tree.

Even far away, it's obvious how wide it is.

"I will target that tree over there. I can only do it once, so please watch carefully."

"Okay."

Roxy nods to me and takes a deep breath.

"Phew... Haa..."

Roxy holds up her staff, closes her eyes, and concentrates.

The preparation time is unusually long for her.

Saint Class was right away, but King Class must be different.

"Phew..."

If someone used Magic Power Eyes to observe Roxy, they could probably see the magic gathering.

Roxy stayed like that for a while.

And a little later, suddenly says.

"Then, I'll begin."

I hold my breath.

Roxy sticks her staff on the ground.

Her left hand holding the shaft, her right holding its magic stone.

Then, reciting each line diligently, she begins incantation.

"Oh great water spirit, the son of the lightning emperor who ascended to the skies!! Fulfill my wishes, rain down your ferocious blessings, and show me your strength to this tiny existence! Let your godly hammer strike the anvil, and demonstrate your authority, and devour the earth with water!!"

Something's off.

No, this isn't right.

"Ah, the rain!! Destroy and wash everything away!"

Suddenly dark clouds cover the sky, turning pitch black.

And immediately rain begins to pour down.

Blustery wind blows, and I was soaked instantly.

Electric flashes cover the sky, soon to become lightning.

But this is merely Water Saint Magic [Cumulonimbus].

"Oh great light spirit, help the lightning emperor in the sky!"

Right when I was thinking.

Roxy continues the incantation.

"Had you not seen that stands on the ground! Rising arrogantly against the emperor! As sword of the thunder god, strike him down! Let your power shine, show the wrath of his majesty!"

The clouds shrink with every line.

Those dark clouds tightly gather in a single point.

Squeezed tightly, as if struggling the dark clouds let out flashes of light.

Soon after it reaches the size of a pea...

"[Lightning]!"

A beam of light reaches up to the sky.

Or rather.

From the compressed cloud, the beam strikes the ground.

Lightning strikes.

Bang!

With a slight delay the thunder roars.

From the corner of my eyes, I spy Sylphy covering her ears and wrinkles her face.

I can only watch in awe.

"..."

Lost for words.

Speechless.

Unconsciously my clenched fist trembles.

I swallow my spit.

After the thunder, nothing remains.

The dark clouds covering the sky.

The pouring rain cleansing the earth.

And the lightning bright as day.

And that grand tree off to a distance.

Gone, all gone.

Clear skies.

Only wet ground remains from the rain.

Only charcoal remains from what was once a tree.

"Ha..."

Roxy staggers a step.

Her staff fell, and she fell forward as well.

I rush to catch her.

"Are you alright?"

"It's done. At my magic power, even with my staff I can only do this once... More importantly, [Lightning], did you see it?"

"Yes, Sensei."

I saw it.

I definitely saw it.

I memorized the whole incantation.

"Can you do it?"

"Let me try!"

I left Roxy in Sylphy's care and held up my staff.

Arrogant Water Dragon.

Since I was 10 years old, she has been my partner through thick and thin.

Perhaps even without it I might be able to do this.

But I raised it anyways.

I recall the scene just now.

And towards the sky I shout.

"Oh great water spirit, the son of the lightning emperor who ascended to the skies!! Fulfill my wishes, rain down your ferocious blessings, and show me your strength to this tiny existence! Let your godly hammer strike the anvil, and demonstrate your authority, and devour the earth with water!! Ah, the rain!! Destroy and wash everything away!"

Terrifying magic power flows through the staff in my hand and shoots to the clouds.

Forming as a thundercloud, magic begins to rage.

For [Cumulonimbus], just this is enough.

But I can't stop yet.

If I stop now, compressing it might prove impossible.

So before the magic stabilizes, I move to the next step.

"Had you not seen that stands on the ground! Rising arrogantly against the emperor! As sword of the thunder god, strike him down! Let your power shine, show the wrath of his majesty!"

With every word, magic rages ever more.

I forcefully, desperately push further.

A show of force.

This magic requires control.

Until now, I never needed to force such level of control in a spell before.

It might fail.

No.

I did it before.

I remember this feeling.

The same feeling as a high power Stone Cannon.

A moment of clarity.

Control immediately becomes easier.

"[Lightning]!"

The moment that the incantation finishes.

I feel a hole open underneath the compressed magic.

And magic power pours down.

Bang!

.... It lands.

A great lighting strikes.

Without target.

But, it indeed lands where I was aiming for.

"..."

Then, nothing remains.

The clouds in the sky has disappeared.

Only a beautiful open sky remains.

The ground is wet by the rain.

And their raincoats cover in water drops.

Only a shadow burn in the back of my eyes, and ringing in my ears.

Success.

"... Amazing!"

Behind me Sylphy's shock can be heard.

I became a Water-King Magician.

"I feel a little frustrated."

On the way back, Sylphy said.

After I succeed, Sylphy tried as well.

After a failure, she succeeded in casting Water Saint Magic [Cumulonimbus].

But [Lightning] failed.

Failed, and she also depleted her magic power.

Looks like magic compression is extremely difficult.

I can do it, probably because I happen to have always been using it.

But Sylphy is clever, so I think she'll figure it out in a few tries.

"I still fail one out of five attempts."

Roxy said that to comfort Sylphy.

Even though it was easy for me, I think Sylphy's failure helped Roxy keep face...

From this, it seems that Sylphy's magic power exceeds Roxy.

Probably because she practiced so frequently as a young child.

But Roxy's magic power is by no means low either.

"Rudi did it on his first try. That's amazing!"

"Yeah, I thought it might be possible. But with such ease, I feel a little lost."

"..."

I don't know how to respond.

Indeed I have been practicing magic since 2 or 3, and worked hard to increase my magic capacity.

But even though, to reach this level, I have to chock up to my special constitution too.

I made effort, but I feel like I cheated somehow.

Thus, I don't know how to join the conversation.

No matter what, bringing my two exhausted wives home safely is my job.

And I should massage their shoulders when I get back.

No sexy time with them today.

They're tired.

"Ah, Rudi, look! It's so pretty!"

I look towards the western sky where Sylphy is pointing, where the crimson sun sets,

That kind of natural beauty is the same in any world.

"Ahh, how pretty."

No, you're prettier. I should be saying.

"Phew..."

Sylphy is tired too, she leans lightly against my body.

We should be home before night fall, but I should stay vigilant.

Right now, neither of them can use magic.

If a magic beast appears, I'll protect them.

So pay attention to my surroundings.

"... Recently, sometimes I wonder if this is a dream."

Roxy suddenly said.

Sylphy tilts her head in confusion.

"Dream?"

"Erm. Whether I'm still trapped in that Labyrinth, a sweet dream before I die, like that."

I stay on guard as I listen in on their conversations.

Those two chat slowly, with exhausted voices.

"The past half year has been wonderful. Married, becoming a teacher like I wished for. Even if Sylphy considered me just an hindrance, the three of us riding together like this, I can't help but feel blessed."

A hindrance, when she said that, Sylphy shudders a little.

"Eh? Hindrance? That's impossible. I'm happy to live at peace with Roxy. If Roxy wanted to take Rudi away, I don't think I can win."

Sylphy said without an ounce of confidence, because of that, I tighten my hug.

With one hand at the rein, as if to tell me "I know" she caress mine with her other.

"In my view, I was just lucky to meet Rudi when he was still young... If not, Rudi probably wouldn't even look at me."

"That's not..."

"If I hadn't met Rudi, I wouldn't be alive right now."

If I hadn't met Roxy and Sylphy when I was young.

What kind of life would I be living right now?

At least, without meeting Roxy, I might still be a shut-in right now.

If I never left, I would not have met Sylphy. After the Metastasis event, would I have survived the Magic Continent?

If I never met Sylphy.

Then I wouldn't have headed to Fortress City Roa.

Then I wouldn't have met Eris and Ghyslaine either.

But I might have gone to school.

On the magic side, sooner or later I would hit a bottle neck, and request to attend the Magic University at Sharia.

Maybe under different circumstances, Paul wouldn't demand that I wait until 12, and okay it right away.

But, Sylphy won't be there. Not even if I waited.

Perhaps I would still befriend Pursena and Rinia, and eventually even become lovers.

Then, after graduation head to the Great Forest to live with the Beast Race.

No, after the Metastasis Event happens, I probably would head back to Asura.

But I got a feeling that I'll still meet them eventually, and reunite with them.

In Science Fiction this would be called Cause and Effect.

In other words, fate.

Destiny.

"..."

I reach out my hands and hug Roxy and Sylphy together.

"Rudi..."

What has happened.

What hasn't happened.

What's important right now is just to cherish these two.

In the setting sun, we head home.

After coming home, I attempt to summarize Water King Magic.

[Lightning].

The logic behind this magic is fairly simple.

Pour enormous amount of magic into the sky, then compress it, and strike a designated spot.

That's it.

Make cloud, get lightning.

With that consideration, [Cumulonimbus] and [Lightning] are two spells of the same vein.

Strength-wise it's the strongest spell in my arsenal.

Concentrate the most magic consuming spell I know, [Cumulonimbus], into a single point.

In destructive power, it might even exceed Stone Cannon.

With this much power, without a doubt it'll come in handy in the future.

Even though it's called "Lightning," fundamentally it's magic compression.

Perhaps other King Ranked magics operate under similar principles.

Regardless of what, as long as I recite an incantation once, thereafter I can always use voiceless incantation for it.

Next time, I should try to shorten the time from [Cumulonimbus] to lightning strike.

But even with practice, there might not be an opportunity to use it.

As a single target spell, Stone Cannon should be plenty.

[Lightning] might be OVER KILL.

Let's weaken it slightly.

With that thought I try out various tactics, and incidentally created an electric current.

I can use voiceless incantation to form a miniature thundercloud, compress, and designate a target for [Lightning], and strike.

Perhaps the voltage is too low, its power is visibly weakened.

I don't really understand the principles, but just as well.

It might be weak, but when it flew off my hand, I still zapped myself.

Oh well, I won't die.

At worst I just feel numb for a bit.

This kind of magic can cause self-harm, so it won't do much in an emergency.

But, a little more practice.

Disabling an opponent is an useful skill to have.

Electric strike is hard to avoid.

And the electricity numbs the nervous system, so it might come in handy against people that wear touki.

I don't have a test subject right now, but if Badigadi ever come back, I'll ask him to help test this out.

Maybe it can become my trump card one day.

By the way, even though it was already named [Lightning].

To distinguish this, I gave it a new name [Electric].

I learned some awesome magic today.

9 Rumors of the School – Number 6

"The Bancho is a monster."

The night I became Water-King Rank.

That night, I planned to sleep alone.

Since Roxy and Sylphy were both exhausted and in no mood for those things.

I was a little tired myself, but together I definitely won't be able to control myself, so I ended up sleeping in another room.

Hearing that, Aisha volunteered "Onii-chan come sleep with me!"

Even now this happens rather often.

I never initiated myself, but if she asks I won't refuse either.

Thus, I got permission to sleep with her.

Of course, there's no plan for perverted stuff tonight.

Coincidentally, Norn was home that night, she even looked a little jealous.

But Norn is Norn.

Even if I asked she would definitely refuse.

Despite thinking that.

Before I told Aisha okay, I tried to offer Norn as well.

For some reason, she actually said yes! Thus the three of us ended up sleeping in a row.

Aisha to my right; Norn to my left.

The two of them sleeping quietly in my arm pillows.

Even though I am stuck in between and can't even budge, I can't help but feel covered in happiness.

Like I'm completely stuffed by something unknown.

As they say, you need two wings to fly.

Suddenly a shot of inspiration hit me.

[I want to do this with Sylphy and Roxy.]

A devil's temptation.

The snake of desire begins to rear its head and flicks its disgusting tongue.

No, I have to stop myself.

The legendary ménage à trois.

I have been interested for a long time now.

But actually asking them feels impossible.

Even though I said I will love them both together, but doing it, obviously only one at a time.

Sylphy and Roxy must have assumed the same.

It'd be great if they were okay with it.

But it'd be terrible if my petty desires end up destroying this peaceful life.

It makes me anxious.

Besides, it's not like I don't feel satisfied with the current situation.

To have two once-in-a-generation beauties to myself.

And one even gave me a daughter.

But I still want to try it once.

Because they're different types.

Sylphy is submissive.

She does everything I ask.

I say this, and she'll be embarrassed, but nod.

I say that, and even with fear in her eyes, she won't refuse.

Even so, she's not like a dead fish in bed either. Her reactions are wonderful, and would desperately cling on to me.

All for me.

How endearing.

In comparison, Roxy is the technique type.

She will often seek her Shisho (Elinalise) for guidance, wisdom to improve her talents.

I say this, and she'll consider how to improve upon it.

I say that, and she'll offer an alternative.

Even though there's a difference in stamina, her effort and hard work are more than enough to overcome that.

All for me.

How endearing.

Sylphy is the accept everything unconditionally type.

Roxy is the research and improve type.

I don't plan to measure them against each other.

Even if, while maintaining this current life, my feelings start leaning towards one side, I don't plan to neglect the other.

I will do everything to treat them equally.

Right. Equally.

And if I say I want to treat them equally at the same time, is that really unreasonable?

No, it shouldn't be.

At least once, that's the heart of man.

All men are weak to the desires of the flesh.

But, I can't say it.

Leaving selfish desires at the door, that's the secret of maintaining amicable relationships.

Thus, even though 3P is constantly on my mind these days, that's as far as it goes.

I won't say it in the future either.

At least that's what I thought.

Next day. I came to Cliff's research lab.

Cliff is currently researching magic tools.

Research for removing curses.

I put my ear at the door to listen.

In case noise can be heard, I will refrain.

Confirmed that it's safe, I knocked on the door.

"Come in, it's not locked."

I head in and see Elinalise sitting on the windowsill.

Her gorgeous hair of natural curls droop down, her eyes peering out the window.

Just as always, when silent she's a piece of art.

But, she's probably thinking something perverted as usual.

"Just yourself?"

"Yeah."

Cliff has been busy recently, but with research.

Recently he has been considering the use of the magic absorbing stones to improve existing tools.

But not much progress has been made in the past months.

"Cliff, is also making preparations for the wedding ceremony today?"

That's right.

Cliff and Elinalise are getting married.

"Even though I want to help, he said it must be done by him alone."

"That's a man's pride, so please forgive him."

Getting married once she comes home.

Cliff made that promise.

But by the time we got back, Cliff hadn't gotten anything ready.

It can't be helped.

We said two years before we left.

And we came back in half a year.

It would be strange if he was ready.

But Cliff is a man who keeps his promises.

Showing shocking tenacity, he has been making preparations in the past months.

A place to live, furnitures, all the basics.

I tried to help too.

But in the end, all I did was help with finding a place.

Unlike me, he didn't plan to buy a big place.

Just a rented apartment on student street.

He said that if it ever becomes too small, then it's time to move.

Awfully humble for the usually showy Cliff.

But it's not like Cliff is short of money.

All the furnitures he bought are top class. Even if it was an issue, Elinalise would have helped.

I'm well aware of how loaded Elinalise is.

"In any case, congratulations!"

Next month is the wedding.

Calling Elinalise a newlywed might be pushing it, but as long as they're happy, it'll definitely be a wonderful ceremony.

"Anyways, just wait a bit until Cliff gets back."

"Okay."

With that I sit down on a chair.

Elinalise has yet to turn around despite her replies.

Then, a long sigh.

"Ha..."

So she has stuff on her mind she wants to share.

A sigh from Elinalise loud enough to be heard.

"Are you not satisfied with the wedding?"

"No, of course not. Cliff is so sincere. He's almost too good for me. No way I would be unsatisfied."

True.

Even as a man, I can tell Cliff's sincerity.

Of course, he's not perfect.

In fact, he has a lot of flaws.

But Cliff is barely 20.

Looking forward to the future, he'll definitely become someone exceptional.

"Then, Elinalise-san, why do you sigh?"

"Do you need to ask?"

"I don't?"

Oh, bedroom stuff.

"Recently Cliff has been so busy that we can only do it once every three days!"

See, I knew it.

"But it can't be helped. Hasn't Cliff been working hard for Elinalise's sake?"

"Em, of course I know."

"Once your love nest is built, you two won't be leaving for a week anyways."

After the trip, Elinalise and Cliff hunkered down in this lab for quite a while.

It makes one think whether they're only fulfilling their bodily desires.

Well, I'm not one to talk.

It can't be helped.

I love sexy time.

"Ha, I'm so jealous of Rudeus."

"But even I have three day breaks sometimes."

"But you can do it with Sylphy and Roxy together, right? Even though I'm satisfied with Cliff alone, but I'm jealous that you can have two at once."

Of course I object to her suggestion.

"No no no. Ménage à trois never even crossed my mind."

"Eh, never? The more the merrier. Don't you even want to try at least once?"

Bad.

A devil's temptation.

I must not listen.

Be gone! Mara! Amen!

"Ménage à trois is just too shameless. Only in Elinalise-san's vocabulary does that even exist."

"I don't think Sylphy and Roxy will mind?"

"Liar! It'll destroy our relationship!"

"True. In some ways Roxy is still pure. If you pop the question out of the blue, you might scare her off."

"See! I told you!"

Right.

That'll definitely happen.

Sylphy is submissive, and she'll do everything I ask.

I don't know what she'll think, but she'll at least hear me out.

Somehow feels like a sacrificial lamb.

But Roxy is different.

She's still a maiden at heart.

If I push for ménage à trois too hard, she might reply [I'm done. I'm going back to mom's.] Then what?

"Ah, how about..."

Elinalise suddenly has the appearance of a guardian angel, in a trustworthy voice.

"I lay the ground works for you?"

Groundwork!

Of course!

It can't be out of the blue.

Since Roxy is already receiving guidance from Elinalise already.

If she subtly mix in some multiplayer information.

And nonchalantly mention it to Sylphy.

Then without worries, we can do this without tripping up!

"Elinalise-san!"

I can almost see a halo around her.

Right there I bow my head down.

On the way down, I can hear Elinalise's cheerful voice.

"Ara ara. What should I do? I get nothing out of this."

"Oh."

So she has demands.

Terrible woman.

But I'm a goner.

Already I'm dancing in the hand of the devil.

Like dangling a carrot in front of a horse.

"What, do I, have to, do?"

I raise my head, Elinalise with a wicked smile.

What a disgusting smile.

Even I won't make such a disgusting smile.

Probably.

"I recall that you should still have some of Asura Kingdom's treasured aphrodisiac."

"Ah, indeed. Still there."

"Then, give them to me?"

Asura Kingdom's treasured aphrodisiacs.

The ones I got from Luke, those aphrodisiacs.

Honestly, I never have a chance to use them.

My stamina and vigor already exceed those two, using that I might actually break them.

And I can't make them drink it either.

I was troubled by how to dispose of them.

"What for?"

"Honeymoon with Cliff."

"Is that even necessary?"

"I want Cliff like a beast for our wedding night."

Why is Elinalise so sincere when it comes to sex?

I think she's demanding too much out of Cliff.

"Elinalise-san, have you considered that Cliff would hate it if you're too demanding?"

"Never. If he hated that, then we won't work out in the first place."

"Never consider meeting him half way?"

"Even if I do, sooner or later things will fall apart. If so, I should just be myself from the start."

As expected of Elinalise.

Thinking carefully, never once did Cliff try to change himself for Elinalise's sake.

Well there's bedroom stuff, but I don't think he feels forced.

Feels like they're just satisfying each other's desires.

I'm a little jealous.

"I got it. I'll bring them next time."

"Thanks. Ah, a drugged Cliff that lost any self control, Ahh.."

Lost in her fantasies, Elinalise's drooling.

Well, em.

As long as it deepens their relationship.

A month later.

Saint Milis Church.

The only church in all of Magic City Sharia.

A foreboding solemn atmosphere like a Catholic church.

Lined with simple pews, a Milis Church symbol shines under the light shining through clear window glass.

In front of the church symbol stands a priest.

The priest currently offering to God a solemn prayer.

"Saint Milis forever watch over us."

A man and woman stands side-by-side before the priest.

Both dressed in white.

Behind them, some twenty-some guests watching over them.

"– When a person appears to separate them, Saint Milis will shield them.

— When a person appears to harm them, Saint Milis will condemn him by the sword.

— If their love is to become false, Saint Milis will come down from heaven and scorch them."

I'm also a guest.

Dressed in Ranoa Kingdom formal suit and standing at the head of the pack.

Sylphy to my right; Roxy to my left.

Both of them wearing tidy dresses.

Because none of us actually own suit or dresses, we end up buying new ones.

They'll see uses after today, so it doesn't hurt to be prepared.

Ariel and Luke stand beside Sylphy, wearing expensive-looking formal wears.

Behind us are dignitaries like Zanoba, Pursena, and Rinia.

And after them Julie and Ariel's other two attendants.

I can't see from here, but Norn and Aisha should be here as well.

They're wearing dresses also, but theirs are rented.

They're still growing, so I told them it's too soon to buy for them. They reluctantly agreed.

There are others here I don't recognize.

By the way, Nanahoshi is absent.

Milis Church weddings seem to seat guests by social status.

The closest are the high dignitaries and the newlywed's confidants.

Ariel naturally belongs here.

Sylphy is Elinalise's only relative.

As her husband, that means I'm here also.

Her attendant, so to speak.

But standing up front feels rather particularly forbidding.

Of course, the one who feels it the hardest should be Roxy.

As so-called second wife, her existence is an affront to the Church.

Perhaps as a result, Roxy has been rigid from the start.

But Luke said there are many nobility of the Milis faith in Asura Kingdom that nevertheless ignored the one-husband, one-wife command, so don't worry too much about it.

"The husband, Cliff Grimoire, do you solemnly swear to love Elinalise Dragonroad for the rest of your life?"

"I promise to love Elinalise Dragonroad until the day I die."

That sounds familiar.

Is that necessary even for the Milis faith?

Well, Cliff's words hold weight.

He will definitely fulfill his vows.

Elinalise will be the only one in this life.

Even I would yearn for that manliness.

Well, I couldn't.

"The wife, Elinalise Dragonroad, do you solemnly swear to love Cliff Grimoire for the rest of your life?"

"I swear my love for Cliff will never change."

Elinalise's too.

But will she?

Well, that curse remains.

And life span poises a problem.

Cliff will go first, and afterwards Elinalise will probably move on.

But I probably shouldn't say rude thoughts like this.

Yeah.

Still, Elinalise who entered the the Magic University to have sex with 15 year old kids, getting married, huh?

Life sure has its ups and downs.

"Now, let the groom place on the bride the necklace of Milis."

Cliff receives a necklace from the priest.

On it hangs many various decorations.

An ornamental necklace known as [Necklace of Milis.]

A replica of one actually worn by Saint Milis.

A requirement for every Milis church.

"Eli, lower your head a little."

"Ah. Sorry."

I can hear their whispers.

Elinalise bends down, and Cliff tips his toes to put the necklace on her.

It's kind of embarrassing.

Cliff isn't very tall.

"Bride, please grant the husband a kiss of oath."

"Yes."

Carefully Elinalise bends down and kisses Cliff on his forehead.

Not the lips, forehead.

This ceremony seems to originate from a Saint Milis legend.

Once upon a time, before heading to certain death, he gave a necklace to his most beloved one.

The most beloved one kissed Saint Milis on his forehead, and wished for his return.

When Saint Milis was in dire straits, the most beloved one offered that necklace to God.

God, touched by the exquisite necklace and the most beloved one's love, saved Saint Milis.

That was the legend.

Discerning fact and fiction in this world is difficult.

So that might have really happened.

"God! Please grant these two eternal happiness and prosperity!"

At that moment, the staff on the priest's hand shone a dazzling light.

It bathed the church in white.

The bride and groom become a single silhouette. Their white dresses give an illusion swallowed by the light.

A scene the stuff of dreams.

But to me that can only think of [Ah, that staff is a magic tool too] it was a little lackluster.

The newlyweds left with the guests looking on.

The wedding ceremony has thus ended.

In essence, they're there to show their proof of love to God, and we're merely there as witnesses.

No reception or after party either.

I guess for royalties it might be different, but unfortunately Cliff isn't one.

But if Badigadi were here, he'd definitely yell loudly for an after party.

I was in the mood for one right now too.

It's a time worth cerebrating.

"So cool!"

"The bride looks so pretty!"

Aisha and Norn seem excited by the wedding ceremony.

From the start, they were busy exchanging their thoughts about the wedding.

Right now, you can't even tell how they usually don't get along.

But recently, they haven't fought much either.

They're on surprisingly good terms with each other.

"A Milis wedding is so dazzling!"

"I want to wear that one day!"

The two girls yapping among themselves.

Norn will probably find someone one day and wear that white dress.

That someone will be such a lucky man.

My wedding present? A punch to the face.

And Aisha?

I can't imagine her married.

Somehow, she gives the impression of a career maid.

"I guess girls really do yearn for that?"

I ask Sylphy besides me.

"Oh. But it's not like I was unsatisfied. I thought ours were really heartfelt too."

Sylphy said with a smile.

Of course if she wanted it, I could have done the same.

But since I'm not of Milis faith, it's more of an act.

I can always go down on my knees and beg Milis to act as the priest.

Kneeling for women is the honor of men.

No matter how many times I have to kneel.

"..."

Suddenly I feel a tug on my left sleeve.

I turn around to find Roxy looking straight at me.

Her beautiful face, lightly covered in make up.

A faint redness cover her cheeks.

"... Roxy wants a wedding reception too?"

Roxy hasn't had her reception yet.

Part of it was due to Paul's vigil.

The Migurd Race doesn't have any practices of wedding reception either.

That's why Roxy herself said it was unnecessary.

But seeing this scene, she probably has a change of mind.

"No, it's fine. But.. you know?"

With that said, Roxy closes her eyes, puckers out her lips and "Mm."

Before my eyes a beautiful girl waits with her eyes shut.

So this is having something handed to you on a platter.

Bon appetit.

I grab Roxy by her shoulders, and kiss her on her forehead.

"Eh?"

"Excuse me. It's a beautiful forehead."

"Oh, really.. Haha."

Roxy looks a little flustered.

Because she was kissed at a different place than expected.

But, she hasn't started laughing herself silly either.

Too easy.

But that is a nice point too.

Alright, it's decided. Tonight I'll have Roxy.

"Ah, Rudi. Me too, me too."

Sylphy leans on my right with the same request.

Of course I have no reason to refuse her.

No reason to hesitate when it comes to kissing pretty girls on their foreheads.

"Ehehe..."

Even though it was her own suggestion, she still laughs anyways.

Ah, Sylphy is so cute.

What do I do. I want to hug Sylphy.

But I also want to hug Roxy.

Can I hug them both?

Will Elinalise come through?

I think it should be fine now.

The aphrodisiacs are already hers.

I'll ask her next time.

"... Nii-san. In this place, can you hold back a little?"

Norn begins to complain as soon as my perverted face begins to show.

It says on her face, I'm so happy after seeing such a nice ceremony now don't go ruining it, that kind of face.

So watching her relations flirting like this is no good?

Also, doing it with two might have been pushing it.

"It can't be helped."

"Ah! Hold on, stop!"

I pick up Norn and kiss her on the forehead as well.

Her face bright red as she tries desperately to scrub off her forehead.

How nice.

"..."

Aisha looks with a face of envy.

Written on her face: I want it? Can I? What if I was refused? those feelings are there.

Of course, there's no reason to worry at all.

"Aisha!"

With open arms and a face of grace (in my opinion) I face her.

"Onii-chan!"

Her face gleaming, she runs over.

I pucker her forehead, and she clings on me like a cat.

Come, rest in my arms.

But even her legs wrapped around me is a bit too much.

She's wearing a skirt too, so her panty is going to get exposed.

"Aisha. Don't wrap your legs. You're wearing a skirt. It'll be troublesome if your panties showed."

"Okay."

Aisha takes her landing, leading ahead with a face of satisfaction.

Seriously.

I guess at 11 she's still a child, but many girls in this world are already fine ladies at 10.

I should watch her carefully.

"..."

Suddenly, I remembered...

In the letter Paul wrote back then, he said to properly celebrate once everyone reunited.

I have been meaning to, but half a year passed in the blink of an eye.

Neither sister ever even celebrated their 5s and 10s.

But mine were grand, so I feel a little sorry for them.

Right, time to celebrate these happy times.

Okay.

I have decided.

Let's have a party.

9 Rumors of the School – Number 7

"The Bancho is great."

Two weeks after the wedding ceremony.

I took Sylphy and Roxy downtown.

To buy birthday gifts for Norn and Aisha.

We decided on a surprise party.

Secretly preparing a surprise for the sisters.

There's another reason that the three of us are together, but I'll explain that later.

We arrived at the plaza.

Perhaps due to the harvest season, the city is particularly bustling.

Carriages rushing to and forth, people selling fruits and vegetables, faces full of smiles.

Food right now is both plentiful and cheap.

A platform rises in the middle of the plaza.

Soon it'll be the Harvest Festival.

All the festival is a bonfire in the plaza, using big pots to cook the harvest, and everyone having a feast together.

No other event besides that.

Merely a gathering around the bonfire to thank earth for the harvest and feast together.

No singing or dancing.

Speaking of which, ingredients are free to everyone who brings a pot over.

Last year, while I was away, Aisha came to pick up some.

She said it wasn't very good, since the ingredients are just tossed together.

Maybe I'll have some this year?

Even if it doesn't taste any good, I still want to try it.

"This season sure is lively as always."

"Yeah, people from all walks show up around this time."

Roxy glances back and forth with curiosity while Sylphy replies.

Students enjoying themselves in the plaza, searching for merchants,

Farmers with cartloads of vegetables passing by,

Adventurers arguing it out after walking into each other.

Only in this season would Magic City Sharia be so lively.

Many Beast Race can be found in the Plaza too.

Strong ones, wielding great swords the size of machetes.

They're part of the festivities.

The festival coincides with Pursena and Rinia's mating season, so warriors of all ages gather at the Magic University to win their hands.

Seems like Rinia and Pursena are ready to find mates as well. They are taking the challenges seriously this year.

But regardless of traditions, they declared that they would only pick among suitors that can defeat them.

Sword must be Saint Rank or better, Magic must be Advanced Rank or better, adventurers must be at least A Rank, ideally have a beautiful pelt, a wild yet gentle man with upright tail and ears.

Even I think their standards might be a tad high.

Well, I hope they find a good man.

Someone like me.

"..."

I look around.

Roxy to my left.

Sylphy to my right.

Truly, a flower in both hands.

"Um, Sylphy-san, Roxy-san."

"What is it, Rudeus-san?"

"Yes?"

"May I wrap my arms around you?"

A sudden bout of inspiration.

All men dream of this once.

That popular sensation to have a girl in both arms.

Once upon a time, I'd spat out from seeing a guy like that.

But, in my heart I still yearned for it.

I must try it.

"Em."

"... Fine."

Sylphy leans in my right.

Roxy sheepishly leans on my left arm.

Ohh, envious eyes shower upon me, like during the Resurrection of Jesus.

How pleasant, to be envied.

Just kidding.

Rather than in my delusions, basically no one looked.

Merchants are all too busy, and all the beast warriors are rushing to the Magic University.

A few students sheepishly glance but quickly look away.

Adventurers too, whether at the tavern or bickering outside, waste no time to jeer at us.

Even so, I'm already satisfied.

In particular.

The sensations from my right arm.

That tactile feedback from here and there simply didn't exist from Sylphy in the past.

'Here and there' might be a bit rude.

Her breasts.

Leaning against a girl's boobs in public.

Such a wondrous sensation from something so simple.

My heart, deserted by youth in my past life, feels rejuvenated.

Just a little more, and this oasis may soon return to mini-size perfection like Elinalise's.

In other words, right here exists twin islands where dreams are made of.

The treasure islands are right here!

Of course, not only with Sylphy.

In my left hand, Roxy's flat chest is also well cherished.

But flat doesn't mean nonexistent.

My well trained hand easily discovers the softness of Roxy.

Oh, how wonderful.

I'm thankful to my well toned muscles.

Because without them, she would merely feel half as soft.

Haha, don't be jealous of my biceps.

You're wonderful too.

"... Ufufu."

I couldn't contain my smile.

The reason we came out today was to pick presents for the sisters.

But that wasn't the only reason.

A few days ago, Elinalise told me.

"I conveyed the message. The three of you go out somewhere, and when the mood is right, find a decent hotel and do the deed."

In other words, that thing.

Today, it's happening.

The pleasure of two girls, one bed.

Will I able to satisfy them both?

Ah, I can't wait to find out.

"Rudi, Rudi?"

Sylphy's calling brought me back to my senses.

"You're drooling. Hungry?"

Roxy wipes my lips clean with a handkerchief.

No good, no good.

Delusions overwhelming.

Of course.

Even though I'm looking forward to the endgame the most.

I have no plans to neglect the journey.

Find great gifts for Norn and Aisha.

And an enjoyable date with Sylphy and Roxy.

"Sorry, my mouth felt a little lax."

While apologizing I try to regain my focus.

We spend a whole day looking for presents, traversing the town.

First is the craft district.

The craft district has a variety of magic items available.

Of course, the business district has magic items as well.

But the ones available there are all commercialized items, practical but expensive.

Craft district have many inexperienced magic toolmaker trainees, so a lot of their practice works can be found.

None of much use, basically all toys.

But, you might find a rare item by a future genius here too.

According to Roxy.

Seems like one of Roxy's classmates studied in the Craft District.

But unfortunately he already left town.

"Although I don't think we'll find anything for the girls here."

Despite what she said, Roxy busies herself checking out all the magic items.

Of course, I don't think we'll find Aisha and Norn anything here either.

I'm actually here to find a present for Roxy.

Even though Roxy and I already married, we never even had a wedding reception.

She said wedding ceremonies are unnecessary, but we should at least have a reception.

So I plan to celebrate it along with Aisha's and Norn's birthday.

Of course, Roxy doesn't know.

This too is a surprise.

A surprise for one that helped prepare it.

I plan to drop by in secret tomorrow, if Roxy says [I want this] here.

If it's a magic tool, it might be pricey.

Right now, my family income includes Sylphy and Roxy's wages, royalties from the scroll I got from Nanahoshi, and my share of earnings from the Labyrinth. Four income sources in all.

In particular with the last one, including the inheritance from Paul, there's enough there for us to enjoy for 30 years or so.

Not enough to squander frivolously, but plenty there.

Still, you never know when a time to use money comes.

That's why I still avoid being a big spender in everyday life.

But commemorating a wedding is an exception.

Even if Roxy said [I want a Porsche Cayenne] I would buy it for her.

But recently Roxy has been riding Jirou everywhere, so I don't think she needs a new ride.

"This pot freezes anything when you pour magic in it. It might work for Aisha?"

"I think Aisha wants something cuter."

"Ah, true, we shouldn't give her anything work-related..."

While Sylphy and Roxy discuss this and that, I carefully keep an eye on Roxy.

Until now, I have yet to find Roxy fawning over anything.

So far she has only diligently looked for gifts for Aisha and Norn.

Completely ignoring her own feelings.

"Rudi, are you looking?"

"Yes. Looking to lick Roxy all over."

"Please take this seriously. Wasn't it Rudi's idea to buy presents?"

Of course, I was thinking about presents for Norn and Aisha too.

But I think we won't find anything here also.

We head to the business district.

Our target is the clothing store that Sylphy frequents.

The same shop where she bought me the robe.

So far, this is the most likely place to find gifts.

"This place looks really upscale."

Roxy hesitates when she saw the storefront.

She nervously checks over her own robes.

I should probably tell her that the store doesn't have a dress code.

"Eh, this is upscale?"

Sylphy tilts her head, puzzled.

When it comes to clothing, she only shops at upscale stores.

That doesn't mean she's a big spender.

Just habits she picked up from being constantly with Ariel.

You tend to shop where your friends shop.

Sylphy isn't loose with money.

She's just shopping at places she feels comfortable in.

In other words.

No one really thinks of their own stuff as upscale.

"No. This is perfectly suitable with the money in the Greyrat house. Just that I don't frequent this type of store myself."

"R-really.... it's that expensive..."

Sylphy looks dejected.

Her ears flop down.

"Eh, Rudi. Have I been spending too much money?"

"Of course not."

Sylphy's wages basically cover her clothing expenses.

She only spends her own money.

Nothing I need to chide in about.

"I definitely wasn't thinking that Sylphy was wasteful. When I was a court magician, I frequented stores like this as well. It's a great place to shop for birthday presents."

"Oh, yeah, for birthday presents... Yeah..."

Roxy adds.

As expected of my Shisho.

Instantly, she follows through.

I should help as well.

"I think clothing slightly on the expensive side is just fine."

"I think they're tasteful."

"What should we do? Maybe we should look elsewhere... But besides here, all the stores I know are expensive too."

"It's fine. We can just shop here."

Sylphy doesn't have much personal clothing in the first place.

And she's dressing up all for my sake anyways.

Even if I shouldn't thank her, I don't have any complaints either.

To be honest, from my perspective the clothing here is on the pricey side.

But that's because I'm used to wearing the cheap stuff for adventurers anyways.

Besides, just enjoy it even if they're pricey.

We have money.

"Oh, if it isn't Greyrat-sama! Welcome!"

Shop assistants circle us as soon as we arrive.

They probably recognize all their frequent guests.

"What are you looking for today?"

"Birthday presents for 10 year old girls."

"I see, come this way!"

With that said, a shop assistant immediately led us in.

They're well trained.

Our target is an area with various children's wear.

Everyday wear, robes, dresses, etc.

The options are plentiful.

I guess lots of people come to shop for 10th birthday presents here.

"So many things here I don't even know where to start."

"Winter is coming, so maybe something warm?"

Roxy and Sylphy chatting happily in front of a pile of clothing.

As expected of girls.

Completely opposite of that 'anything would do' red-haired girl.

"Um, Rudi, what do you think?"

"Norn is a little short in winter coats, maybe a new one for her?"

I gave Sylphy my opinion when she asked.

Both girls nod in approval.

"Ah, this overcoat looks quite nice... How about Aisha-chan?"

"A few days ago Aisha mentioned that her boots are feeling a bit small."

"Boots? That sounds good. Let's go with that."

Our targets decided, we begin to shop around.

With options so plentiful, we quickly found the perfect fits for both of them.

For Norn, a brightly colored overcoat; for Aisha, a pair of embroidered boots.

Both a little on the big side, but since they're still growing, it should be fine.

Afterwards we browsed the store for a little more.

I said no reason that we can only give one, since that wasn't a complete lie.

But the truth is I wanted to find a present for Roxy.

"Do you think Aisha will like this fabric brooch?"

"Yeah, she seems to like flowers."

"No, maybe it's too mature?"

"Say, what does Norn-chan like?"

"Norn... Well, I don't ever recall her talking about her likes and such..."

"Norn-san seems to like armor and horses and swords and such boyish things."

"Eh, how does Roxy know?"

"I really want to get along with her."

We walk and chat.

"..."

Suddenly, Roxy stops in her tracks.

A robe catches her eyes.

A Magician's robe and hat on prominent display.

Sized for an adult male, they're probably too big for Roxy.

Looking longingly at the hat, she removes her own.

Then, nearly in tears she stares down at her own hat.

The hat looks rather ancient in comparison.

She probably wore this back in Buina Village too.

While not in complete tatters, it's visibly frayed after being around the block a few times.

But the black coloring helps that from becoming obvious.

Roxy replaces her hat back on herself, and slowly on her tippy toes, reaches for the hat on display.

She flips it around, eventually locates the price tag, dismay befalls her face.

Instantly she puts the hat back into place.

Looks like it's too expensive.

"Sigh..."

Roxy sighs, as if nothing happened, she heads back toward me.

"Hey, Rudi."

Suddenly I noticed Sylphy besides me.

"That's it."

"Yep."

Sylphy and I are in agreement.

With that, Roxy's gift has been decided as well.

Afterwards, I placed an order for the overcoat, the boots, and secretly the hat as well before heading out.

Pick up is the day of the party.

Gift wrap is included as well.

I can't wait!

Finally, we wander over to where the adventurers gather, the tavern district.

Since we've been all over, it's already night time.

Around this time is when adventurers return with their haul from Labyrinth raids.

Also, those short on cash are pawning what they have around now as well.

So there are deals to be found here.

But magic tools are quite pricey still, and no must-haves either.

Window shopping is a pleasure in itself.

But that's just me.

"Look, Sylphy. These are what adventurers wear. This is where regular folks shop."

"Okay. I get it. But I never wore clothing like these before. I don't know how I would look in them."

"I think Sylphy would look good in this. Since you're slender, this cloak should look good on you."

They chat among themselves. Before I realize it, they have an entire outfit put together for Sylphy.

In the style of a magic swordsman, it even comes with an elbow protector.

Lacking in elegance, but it has the charm of a new adventurer, and is actually quite cute.

With this, Sylphy can become a new adventurer anytime she wants to.

An F-Rank Adventurer!

Well, she has work already, so she has no need to become an adventurer.

Even more, her work outfit are all magic items.

So I doubt there's a chance for her to ever wear this.

"Haha, thank you."

But Sylphy looks quite happy.

While we're shopping, all the stores start to close shop.

The merchants won't bother to sell into the night.

Thus, we naturally walk around, and naturally we steer toward the dining area.

Obviously.

The only ones natural here are Sylphy and Roxy.

Everything went according to my plan.

Knowing this will happen, I already have a place booked.

We head towards a S-Rank adventurer's tavern.

Elinalise recommended this place as "the last stop for the date."

The food is delicious, the mood is just right, the bed is wide, and the sound isolation is perfect.

That kind of place.

"Ah, grandma told me about this place. She told me to make up with Rudi here if we ever get into a fight."

"Eh, Sylphy too?"

But they already knew about this place.

In the end, we're merely three little lambs dancing in Elinalise's palm.

Still, even if we all knew, that's fine as well.

"Elinalise-san also said, one day I might come here with Rudi and Sylphy. And, when that happens, that means..."

"She told me the same thing... so that explains it."

"Rudi is a pervert!"

Sylphy and Roxy both look towards me with scorn.

But not with disgust.

Elinalise has done her job.

Thus, both have already come to terms with my scheme.

All thanks to Elinalise-san.

No, all hail Elinalise-sama!

"But we didn't say we would stay out tonight. I'm worried about Lucy."

Sylphy suddenly mentions Lucy as if she just remembered.

But, I already took care of that.

"Don't worry. I already asked Lilia-san to take care of her."

Lilia said [Count on me] as soon as I told her tonight will decide everything.

"You asked... Well, I guess she'll be fine with Lilia-san."

Sylphy probably wants to complain that parents shouldn't both disappear, even if everything's taken care of.

I understand that as well.

But, well.

... I don't have any excuses.

I'm sorry, Lucy, I love you.

Please forgive this father for being a slave to his desires.

"I... have school tomorrow."

Roxy is worried about her attendance, but I have that covered as well.

"We'll just head home a bit earlier."

"Will we get up in time? I don't have any confidence... after that."

"Count on me."

"Eh, if Rudi said so, then please..."

It'll bit a tight fit, but I'm already set on spending the night out tonight.

"Then, Danna-sama. We're in your care tonight."

"Please take care of us."

My two lovely wives lower their heads. Battle preparations OK.

But heading to bed straight away now will just be rude.

First we will have dinner in the first floor of the tavern.

The food here is indeed delicious.

Food, drinks, flirting.

Getting into the mood is important too.

My love for them goes beyond mere sexual urges.

I won't deny my urges are strong, but I still want them to enjoy a pure us-time together.

"Wow, this looks amazing."

"You can't eat this just anywhere..."

Sitting side by side in front of the cuisines being served, both exclaimed.

In the North, food is pricey and quantity lacking.

Thus, everyday meals tend to be on the plain side.

But right now, in the middle of harvest season, and at such a upscale restaurant to boot.

A rich salad made from fresh veggies.

A spicy soup, stewed with river fish.

A Black Angus steak topped with spices.

All cuisines that you can't find everyday.

In addition, a wine with a strong whiskey-like aroma.

"This soup is delicious. I wonder what flavoring they used."

"I think... mustard seed simmered in oil?"

Sylphy, concerned with Lucy, is abstaining from alcohol.

But she seems quite curious with the soup, repeatedly tasting it.

"I want to look into this a bit more. Rudi, if I make this, will you eat it?"

Sylphy tilts her tiny head.

If she does, I'll wolf it down without a doubt.

"Haha, I'll have it with a side of Sylphy."

"Seriously, Rudi."

The finale is desserts.

This restaurant offers every dessert you can think of.

Even so, for time consuming stuff like ones I had at Holy Kingdom of Milis, they'll be a little different.

The main desert is an apple-like fruit.

I had this before. Compared to apples of the past life, it's a bit sour.

Cut bite-sized and dipped in honey-like sweet syrup.

Tastes like a fruit preserve or a fruit punch.

Quite delicious.

Even though the only thing that comes to my mind with apple/honey flavor is sweet coffee, but that is my mistake.

"This is...!"

Roxy really loves the dessert.

Her eyes sparkling, and relentlessly she feasts on it.

My Sensei really loves sweets.

Or perhaps, all Migurdia Race loves sweets.

"Amazing, I can even taste something like this, this far North!"

Roxy doesn't say much, but she looks truly moved.

I feel like light is shining out of Roxy.

Like she'll start talking loudly about the jewelry box in her mouth at any moment

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to a catchphrase of Japanese comedian Hikomaro. }

"Aww..."

Finishing her dessert in an instant, Roxy looks at the empty plate filled with regret.

"You can have mine."

I push my plate towards Roxy. Astonishment overcomes her.

"Eh, really?"

Food should be eaten by those who enjoy them.

"Of course. Here, ah-ah."

"Ah- Huh? I am not a little kid anymore... Ah-ah."

Roxy takes a bite anyways. Happiness sweeps her face.

Even though I want to feed her more, but regrettably my share has disappeared as well.

Next time.

Well then, now that we have our fill.

Stuffed with sweets, these two pretty ladies turn particularly sweet as well.

"Well, ladies."

"What is it, Rudi?"

"What?"

"Actually, I already booked a room..."

I finally said the line I waited my whole life to say.

"... Oh. Well, Roxy, let me ask again... are you fine with me?"

"Yes. I'll be in your care."

Roxy and Sylphy share a glance and a nod.

I pick up a key from the lobby and rush the two into our room.

A cloth rack by the doorway, and a thick carpet cover the floor.

In the far end a large, fluffy bed big enough for five to roll in.

Darkness by the window.

I hurry to shut the blinds and light up the already-prepared candles.

Thus, in this dimly lit room the silhouettes of two lovely girls appear.

"..."

"..."

Blushing, both slowly remove their outer wear.

I watch, convinced again that this night will be the most wonderful night.

9 Rumors of the School – Number 8

"The Bancho is rich."

Day of battle.

Norn is home that day.

Roxy is on break that day.

Even though Sylphy isn't on break, she requested the day off as well.

Preparation OK.

All that remains is the actual battle.

I call Norn, Aisha, and Roxy together.

"I have things to talk about. I hope you'll accompany me."

"What?"

Both sisters tilt their heads.

But I already informed Roxy about the surprise party.

While making food and picking up gifts from the shop, we have to take the sisters out somewhere.

"I got it. It's fine."

Roxy straightforwardly accepted the request.

Ho ho ho, she doesn't know she's part of the celebrations yet.

"Eh, mom. Can I leave my work today and go?"

"It's Rudeus-sama's invitation. Of course it's fine."

"Alright, I'm heading out."

Aisha got Lilia's permission.

"..."

Norn looks toward Sylphy, slightly bothered.

"Roxy-san is going too, so why not Sylphy-neesan?"

"Eh?"

Norn suddenly asks. Is excluding Sylphy too obvious?

"Well, you see, I have to take care of Lucy!"

"A few days ago, you left together too. Sylphy-neesan, are you fine with this?"

"W-well.."

Sylphy looks toward my direction for help.

But, as soon as she spots Roxy, I can almost see her eyes sparkle with inspiration.

"A-actually, this was my plan."

"Eh? What is?"

"Norn-chan, you don't have a good relationship with Roxy yet, right?"

"Oh, that's true."

"We're family now. It's bad if we don't get along, so I thought a chance out the house can help you two get to know each other better. If you spend some time together, you should become more comfortablewith each other, right?"

"... So that's why. I get it."

Looks like Norn bought it.

On the other hand, Aisha starts to show surprise.

Because it's not like Aisha and Roxy don't get along.

When Roxy prepares her lessons, Aisha would even bring tea and snacks for her.

Those two get along just fine.

But a moment later, something seemed to click for Aisha.

With a shrug, a smile resurfaced on her.

... Did she figure it out?

"That's why, the four of you enjoy yourselves today."

"Yes."

"Okay."

"Sorry for the trouble."

Still sweating bullets, but I successfully escort those three out of the house.

Prep work will take a lot of time.

Cooking, decorating the room, and preparing the presents with just the two of them.

Just in case, we should stay out until at least the afternoon.

Even though, we can't go to the business district.

It'll be trouble if we stumble upon Sylphy on her way from picking up the presents.

Of course, we can go to the travel district or the craft district, even wasting time at school would work.

But I end up picking that place.

"Let's go fishing."

We head out the city.

And arrived at a quiet creek, far from the hustle and bustle.

In the clear creek waters many fish can be seen.

"Ah. Is this really a good way to get to know each other better?"

"What Sylphy said wasn't entirely a lie."

Roxy quietly whispers as she takes out the prepared fishing gear.

No fishing reel or artificial baits.

Just a regular wooden stick combined with spider silk from giant spiders, a simple substitute.

In addition, we have cheek pouches of Radiata Frogs as floats, and hooks of iron I fashioned.

The bait is earthworms.

"I never fished before."

"Me neither, but I always wanted to try."

The sisters pick their own gear as they say that.

Aisha quickly installs her hook and floats, prepares the bait, and runs besides the creek.

Then she casts her fishing rod out like Sanpei.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Fisherman Sanpei manga and anime series. }

Has she really never fished before?

"Nii-san, what am I supposed to do?"

"Hehe, Nii-san doesn't know either. I never fished before."

In my previous life, I was an indoor-type.

Never fished before, never interested in fishing either.

Of course, after coming to this world I never fished either.

If I want fish, I can just freeze this creek and call it a day.

"Then, Norn-san. Can I teach you?"

Roxy nervously offers to help.

Looks like she has some experience.

If she doesn't, it would be fun to experiment between the 3 of us too. Since she offered, I'll join the lesson as well.

"... Please."

With some mixed feelings Norn nods.

As a Milis believer, I guess she really does have some reservations about Roxy.

But, she probably doesn't hate Roxy herself.

"– Okay, now try it yourself."

"Like this?"

"Yep. Good job."

"... Thank you."

Roxy's teachings are detailed.

Norn listens carefully.

Good, good.

I also hope that Roxy and Norn will get along.

Then we start fishing.

Roxy has a wealth of experience.

What I mean is, she looks so cool.

Sitting on a chair I made with earth magic, with one hand on the rod, her eyes focus only on the water surface.

In that pose, she looks just like a monk in meditation.

Then when even the tiniest vibration reaches her hand, she will pull the rod.

Although at the beginning she swung empty, but by this point she's far in the lead.

"Roxy-san is so good at this."

"When I was traveling alone, I had to learn to catch food on my own."

"Oh yeah, in his travels, Ruijerd-san caught fish as well."

"He can fish?"

"No, with a spear, he just stabs the water, and comes back with two or three fish–"

Norn sits by Roxy's side, making casual conversations.

Still a bit wooden, but the mood is there.

"Ah, Norn-san, you got a bite. Try to pull!"

"Eh, Eh! oh, oh! Ah.."

"This happens pretty often. Bait it and try again."

Norn keeps losing focus and managed to let another one go.

But Roxy seems to be enjoying herself, with a topic relevant to her, her mood visibly brightens.

"Haha, Onii-chan. You don't look so good there. Something wrong?"

Aisha is in her best shape.

Although she swung empty a few times, she already caught 3.

"Don't forget, we promised that the loser has to listen to the winner's commands."

Earlier, I accepted Aisha's challenge to see "who will catch more fish," but so far my results are 0.

Looks like I'll lose.

Well, doesn't matter if I do.

But, even though we are both beginners, why is the gap between us that large?

Aisha is great no matter what she does.

"Only stuff within my abilities."

"What should I choose? Hold me tight all night and whisper sweet nothings like 'Aisha is cute'? Or maybe the stuff you do with Roxy-ane and Sylphy-ane?"

"No perverted stuff. Dad will get mad."

"Don't bring dad into this-"

She might say that, but in the end she'll probably ask for something expensive anyways.

Well, losing is fine.

I can let my sister win this time.

No.

Isn't this a chance to show myself off as the cool older brother?

Rather than a gentle, unreliable brother, I want to be a strong and reliable one!

"Aisha, I'll now show my true form."

"So you haven't been taking it seriously?"

"Haha, from now on, I'll use my Demon Eye!"

"Ehh, that's cheating!"

Whatever you say.

This is my true form.

It might be just a second into the future, but that should be enough for me to demonstrate the overwhelming skill gap between us.

I open my Demon Eye.

And focus on my float.

<No reaction.>

<No reaction.>

<The float begins to shake.>

"Fiiish!"

A swing honed through daily sword practice.

Wrist strength enhanced by an artificial limb that ignores any resistance.

With a bit of force I pull up the hook.

"Oh! It's a big one..?"

I hooked a boot.

"..."

Boot exists in this world too?

Well, this creek sits downstream from Magic City Sharia.

People often come to it to wash and fetch water.

So sometimes, for whatever reason, a boot falls in and gets lost.

Or maybe further upstream somewhere, an adventurer lost it, and it traveled downstream. That is possible too.

"Onii-chan..."

Aisha looks at me in shame.

No, let's change our thought process a little.

This isn't a boot.

That would work.

Yep.

If I think about it, this looks like something else entirely.

Yep.

Looking carefully, isn't this a fish?

Indeed, calling it a fish isn't completely unreasonable.

It looks like a fish no matter how you look at it.

It looks like nothing else besides fish.

Thus I put the boot inside the fish tank.

"Alright, that's 1. I'll catch up soon enough."

"Hey! That was a boot!"

"It might look like a boot at first glance, but it's actually a very respectable fresh water creature. I call it... Shoe Fish."

"You're so full of it! There's no such thing! That's cheating!"

Aisha plunges a hand in the fish tank and tosses the boot back in the creek.

"Ahh!"

Don't throw trash in the creek.

Well, no. That's catch and release.

The boot is just a baby.

If we let it go now, it'll definitely work back to the ocean and eventually return.

I'll go with that.

"Ah! Oh... Got it! That's No. 4."

While I was busy thinking, Aisha has already caught her fourth.

Ugh.

I'll lose for sure now.

Sorry Sylphy and Roxy.

I'm Aisha's bed warmer tonight...

"Just like that, very good. Now pull, pull!"

"Arg... Grr... Ah!"

"Do your best. Careful!"

Getting noisy all the sudden, I turn over to look, Norn got a bite.

A big one!

Almost the size of a Koi fish.

"Wow! I caught one! First time I ever caught one!"

"Wow! And it's so big too!"

Norn laughs happily. Roxy claps her hand in excitement too.

Such a heartwarming scene.

This trip was worth it.

Just like that, the sun begins to set, and it's time to head home.

"We should head back soon."

The sisters begin to drag their feet as soon as they hear me.

"Eh, going home already?"

"... I want to catch another one."

Time flies by when you have fun.

I can appreciate them wanting to spend more time here.

But the real deal awaits.

"If it gets dark, monsters will come out."

"We're fine, if Onii-chan is here!"

"Roxy-Sensei said so too..."

Indeed there's no concern with magical beasts in this area.

Roxy and I.

Us two should be plenty to protect Aisha and Norn.

Right now I should have that kind of strength.

But that's a different issue.

If I agree, we'll be here all night.

Even if we don't have plans later, better safe than sorry.

"No. We'll come again next time."

"Onii-chan is just bitter you didn't catch anything..."

"If I want to be serious, I can catch as many fish as I like."

I can use electric shock and explosions, no reason that I have to hook them.

Definitely not because I'm a sore loser.

"Alright, let's go home."

"Fine-"

"Fine."

I use magic to flash freeze the fish we caught to take them home.

On the way back, I thought about frying and eating them, but it's better if we go to the party hungry.

Fish can wait until tomorrow.

On the way back.

Aisha and Norn are arguing happily about who caught more, whose were bigger.

Roxy and I follow behind.

Roxy has a face of success.

Her relationship with Norn had been a little tense.

After today, it should improve a little.

"We're back~!"

"Congratulations!"

Clapping hands the moment we came into the house.

Sparse but energetic claps.

Sylphy and Lilia, also Zenith lining up near the entrance.

Although Zenith can only stare blankly, but maybe it's just my imagination, but I feel a smile from her.

"Eh?"

Norn sounds shocked by the ambush.

Cooperating, Roxy and I begin to clap behind them as well.

Norn turns her head around and makes another [Eh?] sound.

Doesn't look like she figured it out yet.

I hurry the confused Norn and surprised Aisha into the dining room.

The room is dressed in simple but pretty decorations.

No banners hanging, but the wall has been decorated with flowers.

In various places candles shine.

Covered with a white tablecloth, a flower vase and dinner plates line the table.

Drinks were prepared, but no food.

They'll probably be served later.

By the table.

Two so-called birthday chairs have been prepared.

I ask them to sit down there.

"Eh? Why?"

Norn shows a face of surprise.

But Aisha begins to giggle.

So she figured it out.

What a clever girl.

After they sit down, Lilia and Zenith sat down as well.

Sylphy and Roxy sit on their regular seats.

After everyone sat down, I clear my throat.

"It's been seven years since the Metastasis Event. A long time has passed, and the family has finally been reunited. Even though dad is gone, and whether mom will recover her memory is still up in the air. But, if we stay gloomy like this, dad will never be able to rest in peace. I think if dad were with us right now, he would be all smiles too. It was dad's last wish to have everyone gather and celebrate together. So today, following his will, let's enjoy ourselves. Cheers!"

With that said, I raise a toast.

"Cheers!"

Besides Norn, everyone else quietly raises their cups.

Norn is still in a daze.

But Aisha seems to understand completely, grinning happily.

Say, I was trying to be cheerful, but somehow my eyes are welling up.

No no.

I need to be smiling.

"Sylphy!"

"Ah, right."

Sylphy hears my call and immediately begins to move.

We're on the same wavelength.

Sylphy takes them out from under the table.

Two large, beautifully wrapped boxes.

Sylphy hands one to Roxy.

Then Sylphy and Roxy each take one to Aisha and Norn.

"Happy 10th!"

"Happy birthday!"

Norn and Aisha both look completely baffled.

"But, we're already 11...?"

First time I have ever seen Aisha so baffled.

From the look on her face, even Aisha didn't expect that she would be receiving a present.

"Um. We didn't have a chance to celebrate for your 10th. Even though it's a little late, but Paul said within a year is fine."

"Onii-chan...?"

Aisha looks rather moved, hanging tightly to the box.

Then, she looks towards Lilia.

Lilia gently nods towards Aisha.

Aisha, unable to contain her excitement any longer, turns back to Sylphy.

"Can I open it?"

"Of course!"

With that said, Aisha and Norn begin to move.

Ready to tear through the wrapping paper.

But, in sync, they suddenly realize something.

Then slowly they unwrapped the ribbons and remove the pretty wrapping paper.

No clue why they're so in sync right now.

They really are sisters.

"Wah~, boots! Norn-ane what did you get?"

"Look, Aisha, I got a jacket!"

Looking over their presents, they laugh happily.

With them so happy, even us givers feel gratified.

Then, Lilia and Zenith come beside them.

"Mom, mama! Look look!"

Norn shows off her new jacket to Zenith.

As expected, no reaction from Zenith.

I feel a little pained seeing this.

Zenith used to be so frolicky in these situations.

She was so excited for my 5th, [How is it? I know exactly what Rudi wanted, right?] with those feelings she gave me a book as present.

If she was her normal self.

Then she would definitely be riled up like a little kid with Norn.

But the Zenith right now.

Looks blank.

Seeing that, I feel glum.

If she ever recovers and hears about Paul's death, will she show any pain?

But still, seeing her completely emotionless right now, it makes my chest hurt.

While I was thinking, just a for a brief moment–.

— Zenith smiled.

"... Eh?"

And quickly her smile disappears.

Just for a moment.

Maybe only I saw it.

"Did she just... smile?"

No.

Everyone saw it.

Lilia, Aisha, Sylphy, Roxy too.

Everyone looking towards Zenith in shock.

".... Mother?"

The one that witnessed that smile face-to-face, with wide open eyes, tears gushing out as Norn looks at Zennith.

"..."

Zenith follows up by petting Norn and Aisha on their heads.

That rubbing is gentler than usual.

Zenith is very happy too.

Because her daughters are growing up.

"Madam... thank goodness..."

Lilia quietly holds on to Zenith's shoulder.

On Lilia a tear-filled smiling face she rarely showed.

Zenith with a blank expression rubs Lilia's hand.

Lilia bites her lips as to hold back her tears.

"These are from Madam and I."

After taking Zenith back to her seat, Lilia turns around to give the girls their presents.

A pair of matching handkerchiefs with pretty flowers embroidered.

"Thank you very much. Lilia-san."

Norn candidly accepts hers, but Aisha looks hesitant.

Does getting the same thing make her uncomfortable?

"Em, mother, can I accept this?"

"Oh, of course. You are also Paul-sama's daughter."

The mood has changed somehow.

Lilia has always been instructing Aisha of her role as a maid.

"From today too, please continue to serve Rudeus-sama and Norn-sama with respect."

"... Yes, mother."

Ah, Lilia is still Lilia.

But even saying that, recently, whether in the tone of her voice or whatever,

I have never seen her sternly lecturing Aisha.

She has her own thought process.

After Lilia returns to her seat, Zenith places a hand on her shoulder.

"Madam..."

"..."

Lilia puts her own on Zenith's hand and quietly thanks her.

"Thank you very much."

They seem to have reached a level of understanding beyond words.

Roxy seems deeply moved by this scene.

"Oh?"

Someone tugged my sleeves while I was looking at Roxy.

I turn around to check, and it turns out to be Sylphy.

In her hand a different box than the sisters'.

Oh yeah.

I almost forgot.

"Roxy."

Roxy turns her head.

She looks at me and the box in Sylphy's hands, puzzled.

"W-what is it?"

Sylphy says,

"Oh, this, is our present to Roxy."

"Eh, ha, eh, that, what for?"

"A wedding present. Roxy, congratulations on you and Rudi getting married!"

Sylphy, with that said, hands the box to Roxy.

"Come on now, open it."

Roxy under her urges opens the box.

And seeing the hat within, her eyes widen.

"This, Sylphy, Rudi, Is this?"

"Roxy. Let's live happily together, just like Zenith-san and Lilia-san."

Sylphy has the smile of an angel.

Roxy bites her lips, seeing that smile.

And with her head slightly lowered, pressing the hat tightly against her bosom.

Then, with a voice almost too faint to hear, she says.

"Truly, thank you, Sylphy..."

Tears sparkle in Roxy's eyes.

Afterwards she told me.

That moment was the first time that Roxy truly felt Sylphy's approval.

The party was smooth sailing afterwards.

First the cake was presented.

Baked soft, like a sponge, but no butter.

Lots of dried fruits inside.

Even though it had a slightly bitter aftertaste, but the fruits sweetness covered it well.

I remember eating it at Asura Kingdom before.

During my 10th as well.

How nostalgic.

Is Eris doing well?

That girl is lively no matter what her circumstances.

But will she be married like me... Probably not.

If there's a guy that can handle her, he has my deepest respect.

I asked Lilia about the cake, and apparently it's a traditional snack of Asura Kingdom.

Prepared for every holiday.

But we never had it at Buina Village.

Seems like Paul hated it, so she never could make it then.

Likes, hates, that's Paul for you.

Sylphy learned how to make it this time, so she'll make more herself in the future.

Norn really enjoys the flavor, and I don't dislike it either.

But Aisha seems not particularly fond of it, trying to pick off the dried fruits and eating only the cake itself.

Lilia doesn't look very pleased, angrily telling her not to be picky, while saying "you remind me of your father" with a smile.

Aisha says playfully, [Onii-chan, help me eat this], but she caught the attention of Roxy's sweet tooth.

They probably will enjoy sharing with each other.

I watch with a light heart.

But Roxy seems to have a misunderstanding.

"Aisha-san. You don't realize how lucky you are. There are times when one gets so hungry that one has to even eat poisonous scorpions."

"Oh, ah, okay."

And the lecture begins.

Feels like Ghyslaine had said this as well.

Even I had to force myself to swallow some terrible meals during my time in the Magic Continent.

But I don't think I actually ate anything poisonous before.

I suppose I also have no clue how lucky I am.

"Don't waste any of your sweets. Treasure them."

"Okay."

Not angry, yet very convincing, even Aisha got scared.

Then, quietly she works through her cake.

Thinking about it, this feels like the first time Aisha actually does as she's told.

No, she always does anything I say.

But if you think about it, being picky isn't that big of a deal.

It's only cake.

But I could be wrong.

As expected of Roxy.

"But if you really can't finish it, I'll help."

Roxy has already finished hers.

Oh.

As expected of Roxy.

"I really can't eat anymore."

Aisha replies immediately.

Scared that Roxy will lecture her again, she replies immediately.

"No! Eat it yourself!"

Sylphy and I never really scold Aisha.

Perhaps as a result, Lilia starts to refrain herself as well.

Aisha is clever, but she's only 11.

She deserves to be scolded once a while.

—

Roxy is getting along better with the sisters.

Slowly but surely Norn and Aisha ceased fighting.

Zenith's condition is definitely improving.

I feel like the family ties are growing closer than before.

Party successful.

Ah, parties are truly wonderful.

Norn and Aisha.

Let's have an even better party for their 15th!

9 Rumors of the School – Number 9

"The Bancho is bald."

{ C-Editor's note: He is thinking about playing the Telephone Game at the party. The first player whispers to the next player that Rudeus was not able to catch any fish. When the rumor finally reaches the last player, it would be transformed into "The Bancho is bald." Apparently these two phrases sound similar in Japanese. }

In the blink of an eye a year has passed.

The season changed, and winter returns.

I am 18 already.

On the school side I safely advanced a grade and will be a 4th year soon.

Research has been going well, nothing major to report.

Even though I successfully advanced, Elinalise was forced to repeat a grade.

Because she left for half a year even though she's a regular student.

Even though she doesn't really mind, but because it was for my family troubles, I feel a little responsible.

By the way, Sylphy has poor attendance too, but her grades are the best in school.

And since she's also Princess Ariel's personal guard, she successfully advanced a grade as well.

Of course, everything's fine on the family side as well.

Lucy is growing well.

She weaned really early and is now wolfing down baby food.

And a few days ago, out of no where.

She call me "Ru- Di-" for the first time.

Not "papa," not "daddy," not "Mr. Bubbles," but Rudi.

{ C-Editor's note: Mr. Bubbles is a reference to the BioShock video game. }

Well, no one calls me papa at home, so it can't be helped.

Yet she calls Sylphy "Ma- Ma-," but that's because of Sylphy's parenting skills.

Maybe I should change my first name to "papa."

No, in the end she's learning to talk.

I shouldn't be impatient.

When she grows bigger she'll definitely call me father.

Ah, say, why is the girl already talking after barely a year?

Is my daughter a genius?

No, even I know this is normal.

Sooner or later kids start to talk.

Sylphy and Lilia have been diligently teaching her to talk, so this is the fruit of their labor.

But still, my girl is talking already, I can't help but think "amazing!"

But, at this rate, soon she'll start saying stuff like "I don't want my panties washed with papa's."

I can't wait!

With Lucy grown, Sylphy has stopped lactating as well.

That sweet, delicate flavor that tastes of excitement, is gone.

A pity, but it can't be helped.

At the same time, her enlarged bosom has returned to its normal size.

Small isn't bad either, but I feel a tinge of loneliness that the bonus time is over.

Also, since we no longer need a wet nurse, our contract with Suzanne ended.

This too is fate. If she is ever in need, I will try to lend a hand.

Like if her children are to attend school, then I'll help where I can.

But by then, I might have graduated already. I might have to ask Norn instead.

Norn and Aisha are both doing well.

They both exclaim in one voice over how cute Lucy is.

From their perspective, she definitely feels like a little sister.

I also overheard them having a strategy session behind the stairs, "Don't fight in front of Lucy."

Besides that, they also have various other plans.

Mostly about how to show off as cool big sisters, something like that.

Recently, things have rarely gone ugly between them.

People naturally become more respectable once they have someone looking up to them.

If because of Lucy, they're willing to make up, that'd be wonderful.

Roxy's teaching career is going well.

For some reason regular students are a little scared of her.

She doesn't seem to have any bad students in class, and for now is enjoying a happy teaching life.

Zenith remains the same.

Sometimes eating with Norn, sometimes weeding with Aisha.

Sometimes holding Lucy's fingers and smiling.

Also, after Aisha's and Norn's birthday party, Zenith started to smile quite often.

A small, delicate smile, barely twitching her muscles.

But anyone can tell that it's a smile.

She still can't talk, and otherwise almost expressionless.

But indeed she's recovering well.

That I believe.

Today is the Graduation Ceremony.

Even though the Entrance Ceremony was outdoors, the Graduation Ceremony is indoors.

Until today I had yet to enter such a large lecture hall before.

In it a large stage is installed, and one by one each graduate receives their graduation certificate.

Around 500 in total at most.

Even though the student body exceeds 10,000, graduates only number in the 500s.

I'm afraid this 7th year class was almost 2000 to begin with.

As they advance each year, one by one students quit, until only these remain.

Easy to enroll, hard to graduate.

Advanced Rank Magic and Melded Magic are very difficult, so many people failed to advance due to low magic power.

And for others, even those with talent, think just learning Elementary Magic is good enough.

And there are probably plenty of others quitting for various reasons.

But since I'm a Special Student, the school has been taking good care of me.

Teachers line up beside the graduates.

Around a thousand in all.

Feels like there are more here than the graduates.

Realistically, there are two, maybe three hundred teachers at most.

But that's already plenty.

Makes sense that the faculty rooms take up an entire building.

Among them, that particularly small figure is Roxy.

Even from afar she seems to glow, and I spot her immediately.

By the way.

Regular students have today off.

Entrance and exit ceremonies are both voluntary.

Not just that, attendance needs special permissions.

As if the ceremony itself is a special privilege.

I stand besides the Student Council.

The Student Council is in full attendance.

But I only know 4 among them: Luke, Ariel and her two attendants.

Also Sylphy too.

At work Sylphy looks so forbidding as always.

Not long ago Sylphy was often mistaken for a boy.

But now her hair has reached shoulder length, and maybe because she has become a mother, her femininity has really begun to show.

Like a career woman.

Cute and cool.

Makes me want to loudly declare to the world, that she's my wife!

But there's a surprise too.

Norn is sitting at the back with the Student Council.

I never heard about this.

Don't tell me she joined the Student Council?

Not official this year, but officially in the next term?

If she plans to announce it at the Entrance Ceremony, as a brother I'll be very happy.

"Graduate representative! Rinia Dedorudia! And Pursena Adorudia! It's an honor to bestow you two these graduation certificates and Magic Guild D Rank confirmation."

Rinia and Pursena were selected as graduate representatives.

Even though they had gone astray at times, they ended up with excellent grades in the end.

Besides, they're Beast Race princesses of Dorudia Village.

Status-wise there's no complaints.

It's only expected.

When selecting graduate representatives, high social status is an obvious criteria.

If between commoner and nobility, the choice is obviously nobility.

This way there's less trouble, and it won't hurt the noble's feelings.

Of course if a commoner's grades are better by a wide margin, then that's another story.

Roxy was outstanding too, but I don't think she was selected as representative.

Officially, the Magic University takes pride in welcoming all kinds of students.

But as a human enterprise, informal rules still exist.

"Rinia Dedorudia. It's an honor."

"Pursena Adorudia. It's an honor."

"May you venture on the path of magic."

Rinia and Pursena stand up looking majestic.

They step up on the stage and receive their graduation certificates with class.

During mating season, suitors popped up everywhere to confess their love, but they were all beaten senseless.

Standing atop countless corpses, murmuring [We are too strong ~nya] [Merely empty words ~nano], that awe-inspiring sight still floats vividly inside my head.

The image of a king.

I see shadows of king of beasts behind their silhouettes.

That night they spent their time in the tavern saying, [We don't need no man ~nya!] [That's right, men can get fucked ~nano!] and drowned themselves in alcohol.

After the Graduation Ceremony wraps up, I drop by Nanahoshi's research lab.

"Cough, cough"

Nanahoshi is coughing and wrapped up like a ladybug.

"Another cold?"

"Cough... looks like it."

Nanahoshi's health has been pretty bad this past year.

Always with a dry cough or a fever.

Every time I will cure her with Detoxification Magic.

And soon after she'll get sick again.

"Maybe you should start living a bit healthier."

Nanahoshi basically never leaves the room.

She will go outside when necessary, but she basically spent the whole year in the lab.

She'll go to the cafeteria for lunch, but that's about it.

Breakfast and dinner are just leftovers, everyday a repeat of this unhealthy lifestyle.

Of course eventually her immune system will deteriorate, and she becomes easily sick.

I don't want to tell her off, but she needs to take better care of herself.

"At least until your cold gets better, how about a little break?"

"Research is going well, so I shouldn't stop right now."

After she said that, she turns towards a magic circle.

Nanahoshi's research has indeed been going well.

Few months ago Phase 2 was successfully completed.

Summoned matching cap for the PET bottle from Phase 1.

Now is Phase 3.

Summon a living being, like a plant or small animal.

That's currently underway.

Just a bit more, and vegetables from the previous world may soon appear in this one.

Going well indeed.

"Today let's begin the Phase 3 experiment."

"Shouldn't we wait for Cliff and Zanoba to be here?"

"Ah, right. Then, can you go get them?"

I shake my head.

"Sorry, they have the day off."

"Both on break? How rare, what's the occasion?"

"Graduation Ceremony."

"Graduation... Ah, is it that time already?"

Nanahoshi frowns.

She doesn't want to hear about the graduation ceremony.

Because that marks another year she's stuck in this world.

"Rinia and Pursena both graduated. They both plan to head home, so I want to have a farewell party for them. Please come as well."

"... Eh, fine."

Rinia and Pursena are among Nanahoshi's few female friends.

Even though friends might be pushing it, but as farewell, she should participate as well.

They seem to get along better than before.

"They will probably become princesses when they get back."

"I can't see it."

"True."

Will Dorudia Clan really be alright with those girls as matriarchs?

Well, even if they don't look it, it should be fine if they're recognized as such.

They should be fine.

Knock knock!*
While I was thinking, a door knock.

"... Em? Come in."

"Excuse me ~nya."

"I'm coming in ~nano."

Two familiar faces come in.

A cheeky cat and a drowsy dog.

Rinia and Pursena. Walk in majestically in their uniforms.

"Boss, we were looking for you ~nya."

"Please grant us your presence ~nano."

But they feel different than usual.

What's different?

Is it because Rinia looks a little jittery?

Or because Pursena isn't chewing some meat with her mouth?

The same feeling as our initial meeting.

Their usual self would be joking around like [Flirting in another girl's room when Fitts and Roxy-sama are not looking again ~nya.] [She'll get angry ~nano.] But right now they don't feel so light-hearted.

Another duel?

Settling the score before graduating?

... I don't really like to fight to be honest.

"Boss, please ~nya."

"Please ~nano."

Simple words, but I can feel their determination.

From their eyes I can see their conviction.

They won't leave if they lose. Don't tell me that's what they have in mind?

They have their own pride.

Well, fine.

Since this is the end.

I'll play along.

I too am a man.

It'd be bad if they decide to do something to Sylphy instead.

"I understand. Nanahoshi, I'll leave for a bit."

"Wait, what about the experiment?"

Nanahoshi looks obviously angry.

But Rinia grabs her shoulder.

"You come too ~nya. Special permission ~nya."

"Permitted ~nano."

"Wait, hold on. Why?"

They want Nanahoshi as their witness?

I doubt Nanahoshi plans to testify for anyone.

But Silent Seven Star is pretty famous.

Having her as witness is definitely trustworthy.

The scene changes to one of the school's empty fields.

A required stop on the way to the student residences.

Because it tightly hugs the forest, and is covered in snow, it's rather well hidden.

"This will work ~nya."

"... How nostalgic ~nano."

This was once the location where Zanoba and I staged our kidnapping of Rinia and Pursena.

The first time we fought was here, so in some ways a place filled with memories.

And it's in this place, Rinia and Pursena stand before me.

Standing around ten paces from each other.

Facing each other.

Not me.

... Eh?

"We hope Boss and Nanahoshi will be our witnesses ~nya."

"For what?"

"Rinia and I will decide once and for all who is stronger ~nano."

In other words, a duel between Rinia and Pursena.

"Why?"

"The winner becomes head of Dorudia Clan ~nya."

"But I thought Dedorudia and Adorudia are separate tribes, so there's no need for that?"

If I remember correctly.

Although I only spent time in Dorudia Village, but I remember hearing about Adorudia Village before.

But, there can only be one clan head.

So the [Dorudia Clan, Clan Head] oversees all the different tribes?

"That was what we thought at first ~nya."

"But recently we changed our mind ~nano. The world is huge ~nano. There's more to life than just being clan head ~nano."

"We have sisters too ~nya. We can teach them what we learned from school even if there's only one of us going back ~nya."

"Living a free life is more fun than becoming clan head ~nano."

This again?

What should I say.

How aimless and irresponsible.

You know, becoming clan head has been their life's dream, what happened to them that changed their minds?

"Either way, we'll have to fight when we get back ~nya."

"If we lose in the Great Forest, then we'll be forced into a boring life ~nano. They'll make us marry the strongest warrior in the village ~nano."

"In that case, why not decide it once for all right here, and walk a different path ~nya."

"That way we won't have any regrets ~nano."

So clan head remains as their ultimate goal.

And if they can't reach it, then live an interesting life outside of the Great Forest.

Is that how it works?

Eh, there's too many holes in this story.

Rather, a lot of problems.

For one, this isn't something for you to decide.

But this is not my time to lecture them.

They spent a lot of time thinking this through before coming to their decision.

Hating being tied down at home, wanting to live a free life, I can sympathize with them.

"I get it. In that case I won't stop you. Go ahead."

"Is that fine? Letting them fight it out?"

Nanahoshi doesn't look very happy.

She's just a regular high school girl.

She probably doesn't want to see her friends fight.

"Even if I refuse to watch, they'll fight anyways."

They're probably evenly matched.

Without a judge, they might not be able to decide a winner.

If something were to happen, then they need a 3rd party to step in.

They definitely need a witness.

Also, Nanahoshi isn't entirely correct, this isn't a fight, this is a duel.

A "duel" to decide a "winner."

"I appreciate it ~nya."

"Thank you very much ~nano."

Rinia and Pursena both give their thanks.

Then, again face to face, deep breaths.

And stare down one another.

"Hsss!"

"Grrr!"

Menacing sounds that should not be possible for young maidens emit from them, checking each other.

Tension fills the air.

It'll start at any moment.

I open my Demon Eye, and Nanahoshi wears a ring, a magic item.

Starting now, these wild beasts will seriously try to kill each other.

"Pursena. I've been meaning to tell you for a long time now, I have always hated you ~nya."

"That's my line ~nano. Since Rinia was a baby you always stuck to my back ~nano. You're just a little sister, and now you dare to say that ~nano?"

"Ha?! You're the little sister ~nya. Remember how when we're 4, Pursena, you pissed your pants and I helped you hide it ~nya? Adorudia never forgets a favor, so that was all talk ~nya."

"It got wet because I was saving Rinia from drowning ~nano. Drowning, even though Dedorudia are supposed to be so graceful, how embarrassing ~nano."

"That only happened because Pursena dropped the toy we borrowed from grandpa in the river ~nya!"

"The one that dropped it was Rinia ~nano!"

What is this?

I don't feel a bit of hate in this argument.

Anger, hostility, such feelings well up.

But not an ounce of hate between them.

Purposely bringing out old grudges to taunt each other.

Like they can't go through with this if they don't.

"Pursena is a cry baby!"

"Rinia is an idiot!"

They continue tossing insults at each other.

Then it becomes juvenile.

"Pursena is a dummy!"

"Rinia is a shorty!"

"Wha...! Pursena is a fatty!"

"Ha, I am not fat!"

The one that breaks is Pursena.

The moment fat comes up, she snaps.

"Garrr!"

Pursena leaps forward.

Plunging at Rinia with fist clenched.

"Haa!"

With cat-like reflexes Rinia reacted.

Countering with a similar punch.

"Grr..."

"Ha..."

Evenly matched.

They stagger apart... the duel finally begins.

"Ah! Pursena lunges forward!

But Rinia dodges gracefully!

Pursena pursues after Rinia like a heavy tank!

Rinia uses hit & run tactics to counter Pursena's attack!

Pursena might be stronger, but Rinia has the advantage of speed!

Rinia has no chance of winning in a direct battle!

But strength alone can't guarantee victory!

If she can't catch her opponent, then that strength won't do a thing!

Pursena fires a brilliant kick at Rinia! Jab! Straight!

Rinia is too far! It wasn't effective! Just a step short!

Ahh! A straight from Pursena blows up Rinia!

Rinia is staggering! Pursena presses her attack!

What will you do, Rinia? Run? Or will you take a stand?

Rinia chooses to stand and counter!

Left jab! Another Jab! A super fast jab!

Pursena is getting exhausted!

Rinia is the same!

Strength-wise she might have a disadvantage, but she won't back down!

Pursena withdraws, but her eyes shone like a foxhound!

Pursena attacks from Rinia's right...!

Ah-! Pursena is bleeding!

Did Rinia pull out a knife?

No! It's her claws! Rinia has extended her claws and scratched Pursena with her punches!

Such a sharp cat attack!

But it isn't playing dirty! It's a fight with everything you got!

Rinia extends her claws, punch! Another punch! A left, right barrage!

An entirely different pain from Pursena's hard knuckles!

Suffering, Pursena covers her face..!

Ah! Rinia's claws are tearing Pursena's cloth apart!

You can almost see parts that shouldn't be seen!

But! Pursena lets out a roar! She's fine!

Pursena lands a hook on Rinia!

Rinia winces in pain, a direct hit!

Is Pursena going to win? Is it already decided?"

"Since they can use anything, then why not use magic?"

"Yes. Such close combat preclude any possibility of a magic battle. Because they immediately close the distance, there's no chance for incantation. If it was Sylphy and I, we might be able with voiceless invocation, but those two can only fist fight. In these kind of anaerobic activity, even basic words become difficult to say. Imagine asking a marathoner to sing as he runs. Impossible, right? Same idea–"

"That makes sense. Sorry for interrupting your commentary. Please continue."

"... Rinia stops moving!

Infighting! A classic infight!

It's looking bad for Rinia! Pursena's punches have thrown her off her pace!

Hit & run has become impossible!

Has Rinia become a butterfly without her wings? Will she be trampled on the ground by the victor?

No, Because!

Look! Miss! Rinia dodged!

Rinia uses her cat-like reflexes and dodged!

A counter! Cat punch smash!

She scratched Pursena's cheek! Blood splattering! With a bounce Pursena tries to leap away!

Rinia presses on!

Rinia presses on!

A Brazilian High Kick right at the knockers!

Ah-! Pursena! It connected with Pursena!

Wait, I see teeth! Pursena somehow managed to bite the leg that was aiming for her head!

That's right, she's a wolf! Not knuckles, she has teeth!

Just like Pursena has Rinia on the ground, smashed her down!

Is Rinia done?

But Pursena isn't the only one with teeth!

Rinia flashes her shiny teeth and bites back!

A death match between two beasts!"

"All I see is a mess of a fight..."

"Well, yeah, that's true too."

"Hey, can I ask a question?"

"Sure."

"Those two are fighting so desperately, but why are you having so much fun with it?"

"Sorry."

It was a long struggle.

First the insults fly, then the battle begins.

The beginning was highly skilled close combat.

But ended with them rolling around biting and scratching like kids.

An intense struggle.

Like playing on the snow as they fought.

Then, at some point, they stop.

And then only one stands.

"I won ~nano..."

It's Pursena.

Her body covered in cuts.

Her cloth torn, wet with snow, stained with blood.

Bite and scratch marks cover her body, dripping with blood.

A fierce figure.

A proud figure.

It's a figure that has overcame mortal combat.

"..."

Pursena sneers down at the Rinia still lying on the ground.

For a brief moment showing some mixed emotions, then turns away.

"I won ~nano."

"Ah, um. Congratulations... Sit down, both of you let me heal you."

I place a hand on her shoulder as I finish, but she flicks it off.

"These scars are my pride, so I want to keep them all ~nano."

"Thank you, but that's not necessary ~nya."

"Really?"

Pride?

They were serious.

Somewhere along the way, I thought they weren't, how embarrassing.

"I don't know if I'll see Rinia again, a pity ~nano."

"No, but you should at least have more chances before leaving?"

"No ~nano. This is goodbye ~nano. We already packed up, and are leaving today ~nano."

So everything was decided already.

From now on they'll go their separate ways, and today decided everything.

Somehow, so cool.

Then, better not have that farewell party.

Feels like it'll ruin the mood.

"... No healing magic is fine, but how about I dress the wounds?"

"I got it ~nano."

I watch Pursena as she staggers towards the student housing.

Then suddenly, Nanahoshi chases after her.

She covers Pursena under her own jacket and lends her a shoulder to lean on.

Nanahoshi has a gentle side too.

... Okay, next.

"Still alive?"

I look down at Rinia on the ground.

She hasn't lost consciousness.

Just staring blankly up the sky.

"Still alive ~nya."

She's also a mess.

Just as bad as Pursena.

Her cloth torn with bite marks.

Blood from her shoulder stain the snow red.

Maybe because she took too many punches, her entire face is swollen.

Spitting blood, but there should be no internal damage, just a few cuts in her mouth.

"Ruining something so beautiful."

"True ~nya."

Suddenly I noticed, I can see Rinia's figure between her torn cloth.

Hard not to stare.

I take my jacket and put it over her.

But it is rather cold.

Nanahoshi lent her jacket too. Hopefully her cold won't get worse.

"Thank you ~nya."

Rinia wobbles to put her head under her hands.

Lying on the ground relaxed, with her legs crossed.

"Ahah... I lost ~nya."

White vapor flies upward with every word.

"It was a beautiful fight."

"What beautiful fight ~nya? Boss's voice, we can hear everything ~nya. You were enjoying yourself ~nya."

Um.

Well, I should have read the mood.

But it was an exciting fight.

A cat fight.

I mean, a passionate struggle between warriors under the limelight.

No, if I make it a competition she might get mad again.

"Well, what's important in the end is be happy ~nya."

"Now I feel bad."

"It's fine ~nya. For outsiders it'll just look like a quarrel ~nya. Be happy ~nya."

With that said, Rinia covers her face.

Must be licking her wounds.

"You're not going to use healing magic?"

"These are scars of a loser, so honestly I want them gone, but I will endure it this time ~nya. These kind of things will eventually become my pride ~nya."

Do all the Beast Race I have fought treat their wounds as a source of pride?

"..."

Rinia looks to the sky in silence.

"..."

I look up as well.

Unique to the North, a grey sky as far as the eye can see.

Tonight will snow as well.

"Well, what are you going to do now?"

"From now on ~nya?"

"You said a free life, but do you have anything you want to do?"

"Yes ~nya. After traveling around for a bit, get into trade ~nya."

Trade, huh?

I have a bad feeling about this.

I think she has better chances as an adventurer.

"Any specifics?"

"Of course ~nya."

Rinia said confidently.

As long as she knows what she's doing.

No, it still feels wrong.

If she goes about it so casually, she'll get in trouble.

"If it all goes according to plan, in 5 years I can make a ton of money ~nya."

"... Well, then, if you get in trouble, come ask for my help?"

"Nyahaha. After I succeed, I'll lend money to Boss ~nya."

Rinia seems rather opportunistic even though she lost.

She might have decided on her own, but now she's no longer bound by home. She has won her freedom.

Or maybe, she's just putting up an act.

Regardless, her face reads, it's finally over.

Rinia and Pursena did not say goodbye to anyone else.

They each return to the student housing at separate times. After dressing their wounds, they immediately took their luggage and left the school.

Nanahoshi and I each watched Pursena and Rinia leave by themselves.

Neither said much more.

They just asked us to let Zanoba and Cliff know.

They also apologized to Sylphy and Ariel.

Pursena will head back to the Great Forest and work hard to become the next clan head.

I don't know the details, but Rinia will do as she planned.

They do not plan to meet again.

That was the plan.

This kind of lifestyle is so cool.

A bit of gossip.

That night, I heard a rumor.

"Someone saw two Beast Race girls with luggage quarreling at a public carriage stop."

Supposedly.

I guess they forgot to schedule separate times at the public carriage and accidentally ran into each other.

How careless.

—

Coming year:

3rd Year: Norn (Bancho's Sister), Elinalise (Old Elf)

4th Year: Rudeus (Water King Class Magician)

5th Year: Zanoba (Figure Monster), Cliff (Normie)

6th Year: Nanahoshi (Summoning Sister)

7th Year: Ariel (Asura Second Princess), Sylphy (Mother of 1), Luke (Hot Guy)

Graduated: Rinia (Loser, Cat), Pursena (Winner, Dog)

Days after the graduation ceremony.

Right now I'm looking at a giant magic circle.

At first glance it looks like a brick.

Actually a stack of A2-sized paper with magic circles covering the front and back.

At least 100 sheets or so tall.

Wooden frames keep the stack together on four corners, and the frame also has a magic circle drawn on it.

Probably a magic tool of sorts.

Construction has taken a really long time.

I helped, but it has mostly been Nanahoshi.

"If you please."

Standing besides the magic circle, Nanahoshi said.

Cliff and Zanoba beside her.

They also helped with the research.

Thus they also want to witness the research advance as well.

Nanahoshi was reluctant, but since it's their right to ask, she caved eventually.

That's the excuse, but honestly they're there in case Nanahoshi goes berserk if it fails again.

And to help console Nanahoshi.

Consoled by the opposite sex, it should have some effect.

Men and women together, it has worked for me.

At least find a few guys to pamper her.

Head to a tavern somewhere, order some Dom Perignon, and go crazy.

Cliff, Zanoba, the three of us.

But this time I feel confident.

Cliff guaranteed it when the blueprint was outlined.

Thanks to the prosthetic limb research, Cliff's skills have reached another level.

It should work... probably.

Okay.

"Magic injection begins."

I place a hand over the edge of the magic circle.

"..."

My magic begins pouring in.

Rapidly magic is sucked from my palm.

The consumption rate is incredible.

Probably beyond the capacity of anyone else.

Thinking carefully, it's obvious.

Back in the days, Sylphy was exhausted after just a single one of these magic circles, so equivalent to an advanced level magic in consumption.

And now we have 100 of them.

Although Cliff helped limit the magic consumption, so it's not 100 times, it should at least still be 10, 20 times the usual.

"How time consuming. We should improve on this area a bit..."

"Shh."

Cliff murmurs to himself, but Nanahoshi stops him.

Blood-like, magic streams continuously from my heart.

The magic circles shine in reaction to the magic power.

Nothing feels off this time.

And the magic flow has been normal.

Light from the magic circle outlines complex patterns.

Colors changing constantly.

Yellow, red, purple, white...

Deja vu.

I have seen these lights before.

Metastasis Event.

The same colors as back then.

What do I do? Should I stop?

If it happens now, then Zanoba and Cliff will fall in as well.

No, it might lead to a bigger disaster.

Sylphy and Norn have school today too.

No, not just the school, the city, Lucy, everything...

But, nothing strange thus far.

In the first place, the magic circle we made doesn't have that kind of power.

We spent a long time gaining experience to prevent that from happening.

It'll work.

It's fine; it'll work.

"...!"

Light glows brighter.

Then, it begins to dim.

Dong.

A soft noise.

Magic flow quickly ceased.

Light disappears from the magic circle.

"..."

Middle of the magic circle.

A green object.

A pretty round thing patterned black and green.

A shiny, watery item from earth, in patterns of black and green.

A watermelon.

"Success!"

"Awesome!"

Nanahoshi stands up, a victory pose.

"Congratulations, Shisho!"

"We did it!"

Cliff and Zanoba applause cheerfully.

"Say..."

Cliff approaches the watermelon in anticipation and pokes it.

"Green and yellow, what an inauspicious exterior... Can I hold it? Will it bite?"

"Okay, but don't drop it. It's unexpectedly fragile."

"Oh... It's rather heavy."

Cliff picks up the watermelon with curiosity and looks all over it.

A watermelon's color does look rather unlucky.

For people of this world, the black and green pattern is something to be feared.

The inside is blood red too, of course it looks a bit disgusting.

But this world has many strangely shaped fruits and vegetables as well.

If we search carefully, it's possible that something like watermelon exists in this world too.

I think I remember seeing some kind of a melon before.

"Hey, Nanahoshi."

"What?"

"Now that I think about it, wouldn't summoning a Yubari King be better? Since that's a hybrid cultivar, it definitely wouldn't exist in this world."

"You... do you even know the difference between regular and hybrid melons?"

Having her say that, I was a bit stumped as well.

At best, I can tell prince melon and cantaloupe apart.

"Anyways, I can't go that detailed yet. Actually, I was trying to summon a cabbage this time."

Subtle emotion surfaces as Nanahoshi said.

This world has vegetables like cabbage too.

So could we tell the difference?

Figure out whether we summoned a cabbage from this world or the other.

I'm no farmer.

Neither is Nanahoshi.

Summoning vegetables might have been a mistake from the start.

"..."

No, it's fine.

An experiment is based on theory, and we have results.

Then, this watermelon should be fine.

Although we can't confirm whether it's from this world.

But, all in all, watermelon is watermelon.

Calling it a success isn't a lie.

"Well, since it's a success, let's celebrate!"

Zanoba looks uninterested, probably because it wasn't doll shaped.

"Ah, fine."

Badigadi, Pursena, and Rinia.

Those lively people are gone.

The party will feel a bit shabby without them.

But, let's put that aside for now.

That night we hosted a banquet.

Pursena and Rinia are gone.

But Roxy and Norn sub in for them.

By count, only Badigadi is short.

Lost a few lively folks, but gain a few more family.

The mood is different, but that's not a bad thing.

Nanahoshi chugs down mugs of beer on one hand, holding Julie like a doll on her lap with her other, while chatting with Elinalise.

Elinalise has a loving smile as she listens to Nanahoshi.

Zanoba and Cliff are busy discussing something with Roxy.

From the look on their faces, they're talking about the research.

"Okay, here Rudi."

"Ah, thank you, Sylphy."

Sitting besides me, Sylphy pours me a drink.

"Sylphy's not drinking today?"

"I'm weird when I'm drunk, so I'm going to hold back today."

"... Really?"

"We're not staying out tonight, and I need to say goodnight with Lucy afterwards."

"I understand."

But I think Sylphy is so cute when she's drunk.

That uninhibited flirting.

But that kind of self control shows off her motherly side too.

As I think and flirt with Sylphy, Roxy comes over.

"Rudi, may I?"

"Em?"

"Pull out a chair for me?"

Following her instructions I pull out a chair, but instead she decides to sit on my lap.

Her hair before my eyes.

I can feel her butt on my thighs.

This. How wonderful.

Ah, this is bad.

"Roxy, are you drunk?"

Sylphy asks with a forced smile.

"A little."

Looking carefully, Roxy looks a little flush.

She usually doesn't drink at all, how strange.

Am I witnessing a rare moment when Roxy lets loose?

"Phew~"

Roxy leans against me.

Pushing her weight gently on my chest.

I can hear her heart beating.

Amazing, from this angle, if I pull just a little on her robe I might see what's inside.

What should I do?

I want to see.

Let's get her a little more drunk.

"How nice... I want a turn."

"Of course, Sylphy."

If not, Roxy on my left, and Sylphy on my right works too.

Few days ago when we're sleeping together. It was also Roxy left, Sylphy right. That was amazing.

Happiness overflowing from both hands kind of feeling.

"... Brother."

Oops, with my perverted thoughts exposed, Norn has been staring.

No good, no good.

Without realizing it, I have been neglecting Norn.

She's not familiar with many in this circle.

She probably met everyone already, but I doubt they have had many conversations.

All she did was stare quietly at me from the start.

"Sorry, Norn. You're probably not used to this."

"No, it's fine. I have something I need to talk about, can I?"

"Ah, sure."

I sit Roxy on the chair nearby and turn to face Norn.

"Em. Well, it's about the Student Council."

"Oh, that thing."

On Graduation Day.

Norn was sitting at the back seat for the Student Council.

Norn looked troubled when I spotted her. It made an impression.

"Ariel-sama invited me. She said although my grades are not spectacular, I have the drive."

"So that's what happened... Does Sylphy know about this?"

"Yes. I'm aware."

I ask Sylphy and she nods to confirm.

I guess she knew.

If I have to guess, Roxy should know too. When I turn to check, Roxy purposely looked away. So she knew too!

The only one that doesn't is me.

What the heck?

"Sorry. Norn-chan said she wanted to tell you herself, so I kept quiet."

"Is that so?"

Sylphy looks troubled as she apologizes.

Maybe she's not drinking precisely for this.

Norn continues with a troubled expression.

"So, brother. May I officially join the Student Council?"

Of course.

I was just about to answer when I stop myself.

Norn is already busy with two things.

Sword training and writing.

The book doesn't have to be hurried, just once a week is enough. We can even take a break and start again in a few years, but sword training needs to be done daily.

Sword training and regular studies.

And Student Council on top of that, can Norn handle all that?

Norn isn't worse than others, but she isn't particularly good either.

Can she juggle 3-4 things at once?

"Norn."

"Yes."

"Can you handle so many things at once?"

"..."

Norn bites her lips.

Maybe she realizes herself that it might be too much pressure.

"I'm not against you joining the Student Council, but will you give up halfway?"

"I won't."

"You started writing and sword training on your own too. Well, writing was originally my job, so let's ignore that. What about sword training then? School too, third year will be even harder."

"I'll work hard at school and sword training too."

Easier said than done.

But doing so many things at once.

If you chase two rabbits, you will surely lose them both.

"Rudi."

Sylphy looks at me worriedly.

"Norn-chan. She has done well up to now."

Really?

Up to now. Indeed.

But what about in the long term?

Will she crash and burn?

"Say, how long has she been helping?"

"Over a year at the Student Council. I remember since it was when Rudi left on his journey."

"Eh? Wow, that's a long time."

During my journey.

In other words, even before sword training with me?

... Eh?

"Don't worry, Rudi. I guarantee it. Even after Norn-chan becomes an official member of the Student Council, she can do it all, and she won't cave halfway."

Sylphy sounds convincing.

Really?

So it's not a question of whether she can handle it, they drop the question after knowing for sure it can be done.

In that case, who am I to disagree?

"Yes... Norn has always been working hard."

While I'm not looking, Norn has been doing her best.

That makes me really happy.

A happiness hard to put into words.

"I get it. Although I don't think she needs my permission for this, but I'll permit it. Norn. Please work hard from now on."

"Yes, brother! Thank you!"

Norn bows happily.

Ultimately, it's up to her.

But cheering her on is the job of us around her.

So I'll do my best to cheer her on.

While I was thinking, I suddenly hear Nanahoshi's voice.

"Let's cut the watermelon."

Everyone got a slice of the watermelon we summoned today.

It's sweeter than I remembered, but a little dry.

Definitely from California.

Putting the taste aside.

I noticed one thing when we cut it open.

It's seedless.

That growing method should be unknown in this world.

In other words, it's a success.

The banquet reaches its climax.

Maybe that's a bit off.

Nanahoshi singing; Norn dancing.

Zanoba talks dolls with Norn.

Sylphy is taking care of the wasted Roxy.

Cliff and Elinalise are busying themselves.

With the banquet coming to a close, I feel a particular fatigue.

Letting the alcohol take over, I lean against my chair.

This feels nice.

"... Well done."

Just now, Nanahoshi comes beside me.

"... Cough, cough..."

Nanahoshi looks unwell.

Unwell because of drinking?

If she has a cold, she should have held off on the alcohol.

"Want me to help with detox?"

"... Please."

I cast detoxification and healing magic on her, and she finally looks more relaxed.

Looking a little better, she can finally relax.

"Anyways, thank you. With this done, we can proceed to the next stage."

"That's fine."

I have been assisting Nanahoshi's research for 3 years now.

Time sure has passed fast.

Compared to Phase 1, Phase 2 and 3 have been easy.

Of course Zanoba and Cliff helped too, but it has proceeded far smoother than my anticipation.

"If I remember right, Phase 4 is to summon an animal."

"That's right. I have a friend in this area, so I plan to go ask about it."

The summoning expert she mentioned before?

"Don't tell me it's Orsted."

"No. Although Orsted can use summoning magic too, it's someone else."

Someone else.

Say, Orsted even knows summoning magic.

As the Hitogami said, Orsted really knows all the techniques of this world.

But using and knowing are separate issues.

Innovator and user are two different things.

"So I have a suggestion."

"What is it?"

"I have yet to reward you for the PET bottle experiment, right?"

"Oh yeah."

Now that she mentions it, I really did forget it.

Back then, I was busy taking care of Lucy.

People won't ask for more once they're satisfied.

"Including this time's favor, how about I introduce that person to you?"

"Introductions?"

"Honestly speaking, if you're interested in summoning magic, then learning directly from him would be better."

Well, I don't really want to learn other world summoning.

True, summoning various things from the other world can be rather useful.

I also want to try to summon a baby bottle or a stroller.

But I can live without them.

I'm content with what I have.

But I'm rather interested in regular summoning magic.

I probably won't have many opportunities to use this, so it's purely out of curiousity.

If I want to understand the cause of the Metastasis Event, then this knowledge is indispensable.

"Is that person that big of a deal that he's worth two favors?"

"Em. Perhaps he can do something about your mother's memory loss as well."

"What...?"

Hearing that, I couldn't help but jump up.

Norn leans over too, probably wanting more details as well.

"Really?"

"I don't know for sure, but he has lived for a long time. There's a good chance he might know a way."

Cure Zenith's memory loss.

Although I think her recovery has been rather smooth.

But we don't know if her memory can really be recovered.

Even if there's no cure, but if we can figure out the name and cause of her illness, along with my knowledge from the past world, then maybe we can do something about it.

My knowledge of the past life is so-so, but it's possible.

"Are you talking about Nanahoshi's Shisho?"

"If possible, please introduce me as well."

I don't know when, but Zanoba and Cliff have come over as well.

Elinalise sticking behind Cliff.

She's busying herself with his ear. I don't know what for, but at least she looks happy.

"Well... You helped too. I can make the introduction."

Nanahoshi looks a little troubled.

Probably not an easy character to talk about.

"Ah, me too!"

While I was thinking, Sylphy leans over as well.

Roxy fell asleep on a row of chairs.

Norn is probably not interested, she's watching us from a distance beside Roxy.

If we do go, then they probably want to join too.

Including Nanahoshi that's 7 in all.

"Wouldn't it be troublesome with so many people?"

"... That should be fine. He said 12 or less is fine. Even if everyone goes it should not be a problem."

Nanahoshi nods, looking composed.

Basically, Zanoba and Cliff want to go.

But if Nanahoshi's side is okay with it, then I don't have a reason to refuse.

"Will the visit take long?"

A few months walk?

Maybe a bit faster with using the teleportation ruins.

Traveling to the teleportation ruins alone takes 5 days.

To and from, that's 10 days.

Including the rest of the trip, it'll take at least a month.

With Lucy here, I don't want to stay away for so long.

"It only takes a day if we want."

"Ah, that's awfully close. So you meet often then?"

Only a day?

So only 2 days of travel.

Even if we stay over for a few days, then we can be back in a week.

At that distance, we might as well bring Lucy too.

"Distance-wise it's not particularly close. We don't meet very often either. But if we do, there's a way."

Communication via magic tool?

Although I have yet to see a magic tool like telephones, I have seen instant teleportation.

Then, maybe telephone exists too.

Mails take a long time to send.

But if they have something setup already, then it could be faster and easier.

Like a signal flare or something.

"Ah I see. Then, who's this person you speak of."

Nanahoshi frowns.

She looks around at all the customers around us, then signals us to come closer.

Like telling a secret we put our heads together.

Nanahoshi quietly said.

"Promise you won't tell?"

We all nod after Nanahoshi asked.

Then, she said.

"Armored Dragon King Perugius."

400 years ago, the one that led humans to victory in the Laplace Campaign, one of the three heroes who vanquished the Demon god.

The 『Space of the Present』, the Holy Land of Swords.

There kneeled three Sword Saints.

Nina Farion.

Jino Britts.

Eris Greyrat.

Standing in front of them was the Sword God, Gull Farion. The Sword God leisurely moved his hand to the sword at his waist, overlooking the three of them. He slowly opened his mouth.

"Your sword techniques have already surpassed the bounds of a Sword Saint."

At those words, Jino's shoulders faintly trembled.

"I think that it's about time to choose the next Sword King after Ghyslaine."

Jino's eyes widened. Fists clenched, he trembled all over. His body was taken over by feelings of joy. He was single-mindedly keeping in check his desire to jump up in joy.

However, the Sword God continued to speak.

"Before that, a question."

"..."

"Do you lot understand the difference between Sword Saints, Sword Kings, and Sword Emperors?"

"...Is it their strength?"

The one who muttered this was Nina. You could see in all their eyes that they were asking if there was anything else besides strength. However, at the same time, they all knew. They knew that what the Sword God wanted to hear something that was beyond that. That he wanted to hear what came before this strength, and where this strength came from.

Not answering Nina, the Sword God instead asked her another question.

"Nina. What was it that your Shisho told you before you learnt the 『Longsword of Light』?"

Nina's Shisho wasn't Sword God Gull Farion. She was the direct disciple of Jino's father, Sword Emperor Timothy Britts. Recalling his teachings, Nina squeezed out her words.

"[Because you're right handed, train your left hand.] he said. I was told that until I could use the sword perfectly with my left hand, I wasn't to use the 『Longsword of Light』."

"That's right. The hand that isn't dominant is needed for the 『Longsword of Light』. Do you know why?"

"If your dominant hand is filled with power, the tip of your sword will shake side to side."

"Right. Collecting all your touki and cutting right through. It's simple, but that's the heart of the 『Longsword of Light』."

Swordsmanship was to cut down a moving opponent. If you just foolishly slashed head-on, your attack would just be simply avoided. That's why slashes from below, slashes from the side, slashes that slanted; various slashing techniques were devised so that a swordsman could cut the opponent.

However, the first generation Sword God was different. He had no use for such things. He would just swing his sword faster than anyone, and cut everything in two.

"The heart of the Longsword of Light is filled with the history of the Sword God Style."

The Sword God tapped the pommel of his sword with a sound.

"The thing that Shodai-sama somehow managed to do, is what each generation of Sword Gods after him spent their time refinement little by little, until it finally became the present Sword God Style. The Longsword of Light... The refinement of its key points, the principle behind it, and the way to train in it; when these were followed to the end, what we ended up with was something simple. It became something that anyone with a little talent will be able to use. This change marked the beginning of the Sword God Style's recognition as the strongest. We Sword Gods have refined Shodai-sama's techniques, and together with him were able to spread the name of the Sword God Style far and wide."

{ C-Editor's note: Shodai = first generation. }

With a sound, the Sword God tapped the sword pommel again.

"The 『Longsword of Light』 is the ultimate technique of the Sword God Style. It's what other styles would call a 『secret technique』. Even though you've all learned the same principles, something like differences in strength appeared. Sword Saint, Sword King, Sword Emperor... It's ridiculous huh? Even though you all know the same bloody things, for there to be strong guys and weak guys is, you know...?"

Having said that, the Sword God turned to face Jino.

"What do you think the difference is? Jino, try answering."

Having been asked this, Jino lowered his face. His face was plastered with anxiety. He didn't know the answer to the question. However, the impatience of not being able to answer quickly forced his mouth open.

"T-, thinking about it logically, excepting techniques, it would be the skill and strength of their footwork, or it could be... w-, the quality of their weapons?"

"WEAPONNNS!? You, just how many years have you been practicing!? Wouldn't it be better for you to start from scratch again, huuuh!?"

"I-, I'm truly sorry!"

At the Sword God's angry shout, Jino completely paled and hung his head.

Jino had wanted to answer 『ability』. However, he knew very well that it wasn't the answer that the Sword God wanted. It wouldn't have been an answer that you could so easily write off the problem with. At any rate, it was a discussion about what the heart and origin of talent was. Had he answered 'ability', he might really have been chased out of this place.

"Since you're still a brat, you don't get it, huh? Well, whatever. Even if they don't get it, strong people will remain strong. Alright. Well then, Nina, you try answering it then."

"..."

Being asked this, Nina carefully considered it. What he was asking was probably about Sword Gods, Sword Emperors, and Sword Kings; the difference between her and the ones above her. They had something that Nina and the others lacked. Come to think about it, the Sword God and Sword Emperors all had partners already. Something that she wanted. A boyfriend? A husband? She glanced towards Jino. He was hanging his head. His expression was truly mortified. It couldn't be helped that he, who was younger, was recently on Nina's mind. And at that moment she recalled the word that the Sword God often used.

"...Is it 『desire』?"

"Hah, lately you've realised it as well, huh? As expected of my daughter."

The Sword God smiled as though peering into the depths of Nina's heart. Nina was perturbed. This type of training continued.

"『Desire』 isn't wrong. But yanno, just how far can you endure for your desires?"

"Endure...?"

"For example, between marrying Jino or becoming Sword King, if you were asked to choose one, which would you choose?"

Hearing the word marriage, Nina and Jino's gazes overlapped. Nina's cheeks turned a little red.

"...I would pick becoming Sword King."

Between marrying Jino or becoming a Sword King, she would probably pick the latter. In other words, her desire was of that level. Nina realised the mistake in her words.

"You're as naive as ever, huh. Then Eris, what do you think?"

"It's resolve."

Eris immediately replied. Without thinking about anything, she immediately replied.

"『Resolve』. That's wrong, huh."

The Sword God smiled and rejected it. However, glaring at the Sword God, Eris replied once more.

"It's not wrong. It's 『resolve』."

What floated through Eris's mind at that moment was a scene from long ago. The figure of Rudeus being stabbed through the chest by Orsted. She who had lamented her powerlessness, and he who had fallen.

She had become stronger since then. Whether it was her power or speed, there was a huge difference compared to a few years ago. However, she couldn't win against Orsted. These past few years of training had allowed Eris to see her limits. It was probably the case that no matter how much she trained from now, she would still never reach Orsted.

However, as long as she was with Rudeus... As long as she was with Rudeus, her hand would reach Orsted. He, a magician, and she, a warrior, would do it together.

Even if they stabbed each other, as long as she could stop Orsted's movements, Rudeus would finish the rest. If Rudeus could defeat him, then it was their win. Of course, she would die and Rudeus would live. Were this to happen, she'd never have a future together with Rudeus. However, even that was fine. If she considered the future, she would get cold feet. If she got cold feet, her sword would dull. If her sword dulled, then Rudeus as well would die. In that case, it was better that she died.

Eris was resolved.

"In that case, are you fine even if you don't become a Sword King?"

"I don't really care."

"Don't you wanna get stronger?"

"Yeah. I do. But something like a title doesn't matter, right?"

The Sword God then murmured happily,

"Alright, Eris and Nina. You two fight, and the winner will be chosen as the Sword King!"

Eris and Nina. The two of them stood facing each other.

"..."

The two of them were both holding wooden swords. However, with both of them using Sword Saint techniques, it would be easy for them to lose their lives.

"This brings to mind the time when I first came, huh?"

"Yeah, it does, huh."

What floated through their minds was something that happened a few years ago; the time when Ghyslaine had brought Eris here. Because of that beast-like girl, humiliation had been planted inside Nina. In front of the other Sword Saints, as well as Jino, she was shamefully made to wet herself. When she remembered this, it made her want to cover up her face and roll about on the ground in embarrassment.

However, she didn't bear any hatred towards Eris. Because of Eris, she had become stronger. Her conceit was gone, and she whole-heartedly applied herself to her training. Thinking about it that way, she could say with confidence that the humiliation had fueled her growth.

"I'll definitely win today."

The moment Nina said this, bloodlust welled up from Eris. However, Nina didn't falter. With a clear expression like that of a monk who had reached enlightenment, she beheld Eris.

"...Hmph."

The next moment, Eris's bloodlust quickly disappeared. Then, an expression in contrast to Nina's, appeared on Eris's face. She was smiling. It was an unpleasant smile, but Eris was smiling. It was the smile of a wild beast.

Nina instinctively felt fear at that smile. During their training with Water King Isolte, she had fought Eris countless times. And she had lost. Of course, there were also times when she won. However, only the the memories of her failures remained burned in her mind.

"..."

Eris didn't move. With that beastly smile still plastered to her face, she stood still. It was something rare for Eris who always took the initiative.

The word 'counter' floated in Nina's mind. The counter that she had faced countless times in battle with Isolte. Eris couldn't use the techniques of the Water God Style. However, there were also counters in the North God Style. That was probably Eris's aim.

A silence flowed through the place.

There stood Eris in a middle-guard, and Nina in a high-guard.

The two stood still at a range of a single step and swing away from each other.

Nina was expressionless, and Eris was smiling.

Like a strange artwork, the two of them merely stood there, glaring at each other.

For those of the Sword God Style whose motto was [Victory goes to he who moves first], it was a rare stillness.

The two of them stood close together, stock still.

Frankly speaking, the Sword God sighed at them.

"How long is your marriage interview going to go on for?"

Those words became a trigger.

The one who moved was Nina.

She took a sharp step forward.

It was a movement of the Sword God Style that she had practiced tens of thousands of times.

Taking a step into the absolutely most optimal and logical place, she sent explosive energy into her upper body.

That energy combined with the touki emitted from Nina's body.

It was transmitted through her arms, and then into her blade.

『The Longsword of Light』.

The sword which boasted an overwhelming velocity swung downwards from her upper-guard.

Her execution was perfect.

It was so perfect a 『Longsword of Light』 that anyone watching might have been mesmerised by it.

However.

"GAAH-!"

Nina suffered a terrifying blow to her abdomen and was sent flying backwards.

She smacked into the wall of the dojo, and then collapsed onto the ground.

Her dougi was ripped, and her well trained abdomen was visible.

On that abdomen of hers, a swell like a long red earthworm was beginning to form.

While she felt a burning pain, the Sword God made a declaration.

"That's enough!"

Nina looked at Eris with a dumbfounded expression. Eris whose brow was wet with lots of sweat. Though her dougi was a little torn at the shoulder, that was it. Her face was no longer smiling. However, her figure was that of a victor.

"...Kuh."

Nina comprehended what had happened.

Eris had stepped in at roughly the same time that Nina had. Then, in the face of Nina who was using an upper-guard, Eris dropped low to the ground and simultaneously let loose in a horizontal slash her own 『Longsword of Light』.

However, she couldn't understand. In that case, it should have been her attack that connected first. Nina was the one who moved first and her sword swings were just a little faster than Eris. Furthermore, an attack from an upper-guard should have been even faster. Since that was the case, even if Eris lowered her head a little, it wouldn't have been strange for Nina's own sword to reach first. Even though that was the case, the result was that it wasn't even a simultaneous attack. For some reason she collapsed, whilst Eris was standing.

"You don't need more power than what's necessary to knock someone down."

Eris had spoken quietly. Nina didn't understand the meaning of those words.

What Eris had used was a technique of the North God Style. Normally, the 『Longsword of Light』 was something whose power was overkill for use on every opponent. Eris traded that power for speed. She limited the amount of power in her swing to what was necessary to knock Nina down, and moved quickly with just that much. The ability to distribute touki was something that she had learned through training the North God Style.

However, the speed that she gained from such a thing was just a slight amount. Compared to the amount of deadly might the swing had, the speed gain was disproportionate. However, because of that slight speed gain, she was able to turn the tables by just a hair's breadth, and it was enough to decide victory or defeat.

"Well done, Eris. I'll grant you the title Sword King."

Nina slowly got up. She felt a dull pain at her abdomen, and grimaced.

(I was completely done in.)

Because it was a wooden sword, it had ended with just being knocked away, but had it been a real sword, her organs would probably have spilled out. Of course it wouldn't be strange for a Longsword of Light to cut a person in two, but just the slash Nina would have received would have been more than enough to kill her. On the other hand, Eris had gotten away with just a cut to the shoulder. Nina had completely lost.

Nina let out a sigh, and stood up straight where she was. She had lost in every way. She had moved first, and then lost. She lost.

Lost.

Something heavy and painful began to rise into Nina's chest.

"Are you frustrated, Nina?"

"Yes."

Large drops of tears were flowing from Nina's eyes.

"You still have room to grow. Focus on your training."

"Yes, Otou-san."

On that day, Nina had referred to him as her father for the first time in a long time.

"..."

The Sword God waited until Nina had stopped crying. Eris, with her mouth upturned into a へ, and with her arms crossed, waited as well.

After he had made sure that Nina had stopped crying, the Sword God spoke to Eris.

"Eris. You've gained the title Sword King, but I already have nothing to teach you. I'll give you the proof of mastery."

Proof of mastery. When they heard these words, Nina and Jino looked at each other. This was a title that neither the two Sword Emperors, nor Ghyslaine had been given. The proof of mastery was that amazing of a title.

"Though it'd also be fine to jump you straight up to Sword Emperor but... you'd have to fight Ghyslaine here. If you want to jump up to Sword God then you'll have to kill me."

[What will you do?]

As if asking this, the Sword God moved his hand to his sword. Eris shook her head.

"I don't care about the Sword God or whatever."

"Right? ...Well then, what do you plan on doing from now?"

"First of all I'm going to go to where my family is."

Looking right into Eris's eyes, the Sword God felt their radiance.

He felt that she possessed something that he had lost at some point.

Because she possessed an earnest attitude towards getting stronger without losing sight of her goal...

Or it could be that because she was Eris...

He thought that perhaps she might be able to defeat that peerless Orsted.

"Come, Eris. As proof of your ascension to Sword King, I'll give you one of my seven swords."

"...Yes."

That day, it signaled the end of Eris Greyrat's long training.

Eris had parted with the Sword God, and the ceremony for bestowing the Sword King title had finished. Only two people remained there.

"..."

"..."

For a while, the two sat there in silence. Both of their chests held frustration and envy. However, they would absolutely never speak of these feelings, nor show them on their faces.

"..."

Without doing either, the two of them stood up. Walking side by side, they moved to the corner of the 『Space of the Present』 and picked up the wooden swords that were left there.

For a little while, the sounds of wooden swords striking each other could be heard from the 『Space of the Present』. Because it was the Holy Land of Swords, this was a sound that could be heard anywhere.

To be continued.

Mushoku Tensei: Isekai Ittara Honki Dasu - Volume 15

Half a day's walk from Magic City Sharia, not even an hour by horse, there lies a city ruin.

Or rather, what remains of a castle.

Great columns lie flat on the ground, stone slates scatter about.

This must be how the Parthenon would look after further deterioration.

It must have been a sight to behold once upon a time.

It gives the impression of a relic of history.

"What's left of the Scotts Castle, a relic from when mankind battled Laplace. It was said that thousands came to defend against the Demon invasion. In the end, all was for naught, and it was captured."

Explains the beautiful girl with golden braided hair besides me.

Graceful exterior, clad in expensive travel wear, a charismatic figure obvious even from afar.

Indeed, the one and only Ariel Anemoi Asura.

"..."

Was that explanation for me?

With that in mind, I glanced around me.

Luke and Sylphy stand not far behind.

A little further back, Roxy, Zanoba, Cliff and Elinalise.

Nanahoshi ahead.

Ariel looks towards me, there's no one between us.

"Ariel-sama sure knows her stuff."

It would be rude to ignore her.

With that in mind I answered. Ariel gently smiled in response.

"Folktales of this area often mention this topic."

"Are you interested in folktales?"

"To develop relationships with the aristocracy of the area, that is also necessary."

Ariel explains as a matter of fact.

Memorize local history in order to befriend the local aristocracy.

She has it tough.

"But coming to a place like this, can we really reach Perugius-sama from here?"

"To be honest, I don't really know what we do next, but..."

I look towards Nanahoshi in front of us.

Carrying a heavy backpack, moving unimpeded by the rubble around us, she leads looking straight ahead.

She told us to just follow along, but can we really get there from here?

From what I can recall, her notes don't feature a Teleport Magic Circle in this location.

"I'm more worried that having so many people tagging along would be a bother."

Hearing what I said, Ariel laughs out loud.

"Rudeus-sama sure worries over the strangest things. Even if he isn't the king of a country, he's still called [King], a true hero! A few guestslike us shouldn't be a bother."

"If you say so..."

I glance behind us.

Me, Nanahoshi, Ariel, Sylphy, Luke, Roxy, Zanoba, Cliff, and Elinalise.

9 in total.

I thought it's a bit too much, but from a royal perspective, that should be nothing.

For royalty, guests come in tens, just us few can't count for much.

By the way, Norn refused politely because of school work.

Maybe she's worried about her promise to not slack off on her sword training and studies after joining the student council.

Well, if I really brought her along, then I'd have to bring Aisha too. This works just as well.

"Perugius-sama may be living the quiet life, but after the Laplace campaign he spent some time as a guest of Asura Kingdom, as an equal ofKing Asura. He would bring an entourage numbering in the tens or hundreds to the royal palace. Someone of his stature won't be troubled by amere 9 guests."

"Ah, I see."

Ariel's charismatic voice is pleasing to the ear.

Anyone would be bothered to have guests arrive unannounced, but hearing this from Ariel, maybe it isn't that big of a deal.

"... If he got tired of the court life, maybe he got tired of guests too."

"Maybe. But if that's really the case, then Nanahoshi-sama probably won't allow me to come along."

"I don't think Nanahoshi is the kind of person that worries over these things."

Speaking of that, I recall how Ariel ended up coming along.

Back then, hearing Nanahoshi mention Perugius, I couldn't contain my excitement.

The Armored Dragon King Perugius.

Even I have heard of that name before.

Not long after I came to this world, I read about him in a book.

400 years ago, a hero of the Laplace Campaign.

In it writes that he controls 12 familiars, rebuilt the ancient sky castle, and challenged Laplace with his companions.

After Laplace was sealed, as tribute to his exploits, the new era is named "Armored Dragon era" in his honor.

Armored Dragon King Perugius did not become head of a country, rather he sits afloat Sky Castle [Chaos Breaker] and travels the world.

Of course I'm excited to meet someone of that caliber.

No matter what, a castle in the sky!

Laputa ho!

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Laputa: Castle in the Sky anime film. }

I ought to be busy with research and child-rearing.

But I still want to go.

Even if only once.

I'm sorry, Lucy. Papa's curiosity got the better of him.

But Papa will definitely bring something back for you!

Sylphy's concerns were the complete opposite of my selfish self.

She asked Nanahoshi.

"Can Ariel-sama come along as well?"

"Ariel?"

Nanahoshi looked troubled.

Ariel has solicited her on many occasions.

Nanahoshi wields tremendous influence within Asura and Ranoa kingdoms, so Ariel has long sought to bring her into her circle.

But Nanahoshi wants to avoid entanglement with this world. That would just be a bother.

"Yes. Perugius-sama may have lived in seclusion for a long time, but his name still holds pivotal weight within Asura court. Ariel-sama,she... looking towards the future, I'm sure she would want to meet someone like him."

Ariel has connections all over the place.

All preparations to one day take over the Asura throne.

It would be a tough fight, possibly an impossible one.

I don't know Ariel's plans after she graduates in a year.

Will she continue to gather strength here, or will she head back to Asura for a fight to the death?

As long as it doesn't endanger my family, I'd give her a hand.

But her position there is still uncertain.

To be honest, I don't want to involve myself in that mess either, but I do genuinely want to offer support for my wife.

However, Ariel doesn't seem to plan to bring Sylphy back to Asura Kingdom.

Sylphy has a kid now, so I doubt she plans to leave Lucy behind for something so risky.

Still, I doubt she's ready for goodbyes yet, and has been giving her all for Ariel's sake right now.

This is probably one of those cases.

In the battle for the throne, connections are everything.

Particularly, if she can obtain the backing of Armored Dragon King Perugius, hero of Asura Kingdom, then her path for the throne would surelybe easier.

"Well, I have been in your care. That's fine, bring her."

I thought for sure that she would refuse, but Nanahoshi okays it.

Afterwards I heard that while I was away, Nanahoshi got a lot of help from Sylphy.

Bringing her meals, help with shopping, casting detoxification magic when she got sick.

Although she stopped after Lucy was born, she used to come by often for baths.

"Really? Thank you very much! I'm sure Ariel-sama would be pleased..."

Sylphy clenched her fist and brightly smiled.

As a result, Ariel and Luke joined the party as well.

Sylphy said Ariel was unusually excited about this.

No matter their station, everyone reacts the same way when meeting someone so famous face to face.

I'm excited too.

He's the real deal, a genuine hero.

Hopefully he's easy to get along with.

... Speaking of which, I just remembered.

A long time ago, I did meet one of Perugius's subordinates.

Just before the Metastasis Event.

I met with Arumanfi of the Bright.

If I recall, back then he suspected me as the person behind the Metastasis Event and attacked me.

Ghyslaine was able to talk him down. He doesn't seem like a bad person, but he did try to kill me once.

That makes me nervous.

No, no reason for the master to be dangerous just because his subordinate was.

Besides, if Perugius-sama had detected the Metastasis event and wanted to stop it...

Then he deserves praise for acting on his own initiative.

But if I was killed back then...

Forget it, what's done is done.

Water under the bridge.

For our initial greetings, I shouldn't be looking to fight.

Forgive and forget.

"We're here."

While I was worrying over these things, Nanahoshi stopped at the center of the ruins.

Middle of nowhere.

Despite what I think, if look carefully, on the ground rests a stool-sized stone.

A stone monument.

Monument of "Seven Great Major Powers."

The faint light that extrudes from it hints at the terrifying powers of the names engraved there.

Seems like these are everywhere, even here.

"Now what?"

"We call him."

Having said that, Nanahoshi drops her baggage and takes out a golden flute.

Not a finger hole on it, so more properly a whistle.

Nanahoshi placed it against her lips and blew.

Fuu-!

No whistling.

Just the sound of blowing air.

Maybe a dog whistle?

"No sound?"

Cliff exclaimed.

"Humans can't hear it. Just wait, he'll be here soon."

Having said that, Nanahoshi sat on a rock besides her.

A sound humans can't hear.

Yet it can reach Perugius.

That should be impossible in normal circumstances.

In other word, that flute is a magic item too.

"Cliff."

Suddenly Elinalise yelled at Cliff with a straight face.

"What is it?"

"While we're still here I have to say this. Where we're going isn't a place to joke around at. Remember to watch your mouth."

"... I get it. I am not a kid anymore."

Cliff pouts like a kid that just got lectured.

Then Elinalise presses herself against Cliff, whispering into his ears.

Cliff seems to have calmed down, probably some sweet nothings as an apology.

"What sorts of statues will a castle in the sky have, I can't wait to find out!"

Zanoba is his usual self.

Once set to to visit Perugius, he immediately started to say [Well, let's bring some of our results to show Perugius-sama] and packed up theRuijerd that I made and other figures into his luggage.

I doubt there's an opportunity, but he probably wants to do some promoting like I once did with Badigadi.

Truly enthusiastic for his work.

By the way, Ginger isn't here.

Zanoba ordered her to protect my family.

Even though Ginger obviously wanted to come along.

Well, for me the more protection for them the better, so one more doesn't hurt.

But it's not like I'm taking a long leave of absence either.

"Don't always push your hobbies onto others. After all, that guy is over 400 years old already."

"Hahaha, isn't Badigadi-sama even older? The older they are, the more they can appreciate the craftsmanship of Shisho's figures."

"Oh... Really?"

Far in the sky, something is shining.

"He's here."

Just as Nanahoshi said.

He appears.

Literally, in a twinkle of an eye, he suddenly appears.

Golden hair, a buttoned-up, white outfit like a student's uniform.

Probably a handsome face hidden behind that yellow mask.

The mask in the shape of a fox.

A large dagger hangs down his waist.

"Arumanfi of the Bright, present."

Truly abrupt. Feels like he just materialized in the center of us.

I guess he flew?

At the speed of light, he flew all the way from the castle in the sky.

Just the way he showed up when the Fedoa Region disappeared.

"..."

Abruptly, Arumanfi turns towards me.

Does he remember me?

I'm scared he's going to attack me again.

Secretly I open my demon eye and grip my staff.

But Arumanfi doesn't seem to remember me.

Instead of me, he walks before Nanahoshi.

"...Today you've brought a lot of people."

Arumanfi looks around him, as he said to Nanahoshi

Nanahoshi said [Oh] as she nods.

"It's fine, right? As long as under 12 people."

"The number doesn't matter, however..."

Arumanfi looks towards Roxy.

"No Magic Race."

"Eh, W-why?"

Roxy looks like a cat with water poured over it.

"In the Sky Castle, Magic Race are not allowed."

"I-is that so."

Roxy sunken, her shoulders droop.

Perugius waged battles against the Magic Race during the Laplace Campaign.

Can't be helped if some prejudice towards the Magic Race remains.

"No matter what?"

"Perugius-sama is kind, but he hates the Magic Race."

I have forgotten, since this area doesn't share much prejudice against the Magic Race, but hatred towards them still runs deep.

Perugius may be a person of legends, but he's also a witness to war.

Perhaps like Ruijerd, he has memories that can't be erased of those battles.

But only Roxy is left out, I feel bad for her.

"No, it's fine. In that case, I'll stay home. Since I was a little scared of meeting Perugius... -sama as well. I still have school work todo, so just as well."

Her shoulders drooped, a flat refusal.

But looking carefully, I see some lingering regrets.

She turns to me with a forced smile.

"Rudi, I'll take care of the house."

"Okay. I'll make sure to bring some gifts back..."

"Don't worry about that, just a kiss is fine."

That, I do immediately.

A whole ten seconds, Roxy's heart races, my ATOMIC BAZOOKA engaged, its nuclear warhead loaded, fire! [2]

"Thanks."

"No, the pleasure is mine."

Still a little upset, but with her face red, Roxy backs away with a slight smile.

I will shower her with affection when I get back.

"Done, are you?"

Arumanfi approaches us as Roxy and I say our goodbyes.

He hands me something like a baton.

I turn around to look, seems everyone else is holding a similar one.

"Hold this."

I take it and follow his instructions.

A golden baton around 20 CM in length, some intricate patterns engraved on its surface.

Magic crystals nested on top and bottom.

Another magic item?

"Now what?"

"Just hold still. Perugius-sama will use teleportation magic to bring you to the Sky Castle."

Ah, teleportation magic, so this is a magic item for that.

So this exists as well.

How convenient.

Eh? I thought humans cannot be summoned..?

No, this is teleportation.

What's the difference?

Use this baton to teleport over to the Sky Castle, is that how it works?

"Ah, what about the return trip?"

"The way back, something similar."

Arumanfi replies as a matter of fact.

In that case, then it can be done.

If I have to walk home, by then Lucy would have grown up already.

I feel reassured with that said.

"Everyone got it? Hold on tight."

Nanahoshi nods after checking up on everyone and confirms with Arumanfi.

"Just a moment."

Arumanfi nods and disappears in the light.

Reporting back to Perugius that the preparations are ready, I suppose.

"... This is kind of exciting."

"Indeed."

Ariel and Sylphy banter.

It is kind of exciting.

A wry smile from Luke.

Say, with teleportation.

If it fails, where would we end up?

Kind of scary.

Even someone as powerful as Perugius could make a mistake. After all, he's only human.

"...Oh?"

While I was thinking about it, I suddenly feel heat coming from the baton.

Feels like my palm is getting sucked in by it.

What happens if I let go right now?

Would it fail?

But for this to happen all of a sudden, some people would let go by instinct right...

"Eh?"

I look around.

Everyone's gone.

No, I caught the moment when Sylphy disappeared.

Only Roxy and I remain.

Eh?

They left without me?

At that moment, my conscious fell into the baton.

When I came to, I find myself flying in a completely white world.

Nothing at all, a completely white space.

I feel myself flying towards something in the distance.

Like a fish hooked on a powered fishing pole.

Some distance before me I see Sylphy reeling towards the same location.

So that's what being summoned feels like.

Speaking of which, this space.

Feels like I have been here before.

Ah, when was it?

Oh yeah, Hitogami.

It feels a little vague, but this looks just like when Hitogami appears in my dreams.

The only exception, is my body isn't from my previous life.

Like running in a marathon, I keep flying that way.

Then, light appears before me.

The light outlines a sophisticated magic circle, which sucked me in.

Returning to my senses, I stand grounded.

"Ha!"

Like waking up from a dream.

Did I lose consciousness?

No, not at all.

I really was flying through a space of nothingness.

"So this is... Perugius's teleportation magic."

What a strange sensation.

But, I have experienced something similar once before.

The Metastasis Event.

Back then, it felt like flying in the air as well.

Well, there's one difference from then.

A sense of assurance.

If the Metastasis Event is jumping out of a speeding car, then this is like riding a taxi.

A feeling of safe travels.

"... This feels familiar."

Sylphy murmurs softly.

Ah, she felt it as well.

"Yeah."

I look around as I replied.

Ariel, Luke, Zanoba, Cliff, Elinalise, and Nanahoshi.

Everyone but Nanahoshi and Elinalise look baffled.

Regardless, everyone arrived safely.

"What an incredibly large magic circle..."

Cliff, speaking to himself.

Finally I noticed my surroundings.

We stand above a giant magic circle.

Maybe 10 meters radius.

Carved directly from a marble-like floor, with water gushing throughout.

Faint light shone from the water. Some kind of magic.

The water aside, I have seen these lights before, exactly the same as when we teleported to the Begaritto Continent.

In other words, another type of Teleport Magic Circle.

This baton and that water magic circle. Looks like teleportation magic requires all sort of preparations.

"Wow..."

Stealing my attention, far behind the magic circle...

Sits a gigantic castle.

Taller than a 50 floor skyscraper.

Wide too, not lanky, but full-frame and sturdy.

Not unlike a movie backdrop without going in to check.

Even with memory from my past life, I can't recall a building of this size.

Like building a castle atop of the Tokyo Dome.

This is the castle in the sky?

Although I saw it from the ground before... to think it's in reality that huge.

No, of course, considering the presence of it just from a distance.

"Incredible, it's even bigger than the Asura palace!"

Hearing Sylphy's voice, I looked down.

In front of the castle is an equally large garden.

Trees of all kinds and flowers of all colors planted everywhere like a maze.

Before the garden a small river shining under the sun.

Even from afar, it's easy to see how manicured the garden is.

"R-Rudi... Look back."

"Oh?"

I turn back as Sylphy instructed.

Out of the magic circle, behind a golden fence.

A sea of clouds extends in every direction.

"Clouds..."

In my past life, I rode an airplane once during elementary school.

What lies before us looks just like that.

But, to see it with my own eyes, without a window obstructing us, that's a first for me too.

Why is watching the clouds from above such a moving experience?

This must be why mountaineers climb mountains.

"..."

Cliff and Luke were stunned, their mouth open ear to ear.

Ariel too, her eyes wide, looking towards the open sky.

A scenery that takes your breath away.

It can't be helped.

No airplanes in this world, no concept of mountain climbing either.

No chance of ever experiencing a scene like this.

Suddenly, Sylphy grabs me by the hem.

"Ugh... I don't do well in high places."

I look down, Sylphy's legs have given out.

If you knew, why did you come in the first place?

Such a hard worker.

Well, if she couldn't walk anymore, then I can carry her over.

"Sky Castle [Chaos Breaker], is everyone enjoying the view?"

Suddenly an unfamiliar voice rang behind us.

I look back in a hurry, a female figure stands before us.

Like a statue, just outside of the magic circle.

Her near-white, golden hair drapes down her shoulders, wearing a white mask of a bird.

Can't be sure if she's human or not, but her figure looks female.

She wears a gown-like white robe, holding a magic staff.

The staff carries a magic stone, opaque and dark.

Without a doubt, a particularly expensive one.

In my opinion, not everything is about money, but that's definitely something expensive.

Even more expensive than my precious staff.

What's exceptional about her isn't her gown or staff.

But what's behind her.

Startlingly, from her back grows a pair of jet black wings.

"A Heaven Race...?"

That pair of wings hold an overwhelming presence.

Despite that, her person is that of eerie calm, hiding her presence.

A female that gives out a strange sensation.

She quickly bows her head once we exchanged a glance.

"Everyone, it's an honor for you to come."

How well mannered.

Even with someone as ignorant of etiquette as me can tell that her movement is well practiced.

"I am the first Familiar of Perugius-sama, Sylvaril of the Void. Please allow me to lead everyone towards Sky Castle [Chaos Breaker]."

"Guardian Knight of the Second Princess of Asura Kingdom, Luke Notos Greyrat at your service. It's an honor to be at your presence. I'll be inyour care."

Luke returns the greeting.

He stands before Ariel, flashing a gentle smile towards the woman named Sylvaril.

Sylvaril isn't particularly tall or short, but she should still be within his strike range.

No, no.

That's not what he means, this is just courtesy.

"This is the Second Princess of Asura Kingdom, Ariel Anemoi Asura."

With Luke's introduction, holding her skirt, Ariel curtsey.

Also a practiced motion.

Not something I could learn.

Afterwards, each of us make our self introduction.

Cliff and Zanoba both made their greetings gracefully.

Perhaps among the people here, I know the least of etiquette.

"Oh, everyone, it's an honor."

Although her thoughts are opaque, her actions have been courteous to us.

Finally, Nanahoshi answers her casually.

"Been a while, Sylvaril-san."

"Em, you too, Nanahoshi-sama... are you feeling well?"

"Just a slight discomfort."

Only a short conversation between them.

But they seem comfortable with each other, so it's probably fine.

"Then, this way please."

Sylvaril turns and starts walking forward, without a sound.

Her head almost without any bobble. With her legs covered in the gown, she moves like a ghost.

Nanahoshi follows behind without any concern.

We exchange a glance and follow.

Sylvaril advances straight through the garden.

In front a huge set of doors.

Rather than doors, they're more like the Arc de Triomphe.

Standing in front of it, Zanoba says with something with a hushed awe.

"Wow, what an incredible relief."

Although uninterested in everything but figures, Zanoba still recognizes art when he sees it. Perhaps there are some things in common here.

I could not tell at all whether these engravings are good or bad. But if Zanoba says so, then it must be quite outstanding.

After all, something that's not a figure managed to take his breath away.

Paying more attention now that he mentioned it, they are indeed quite beautiful.

A doorway like the Arc de Triomphe, even the interior is covered in intricate relief.

No matter what, with all these delicate patterns all over, you can't help but look up.

Walking and looking, I heard Sylvaril explaining from the front.

"This arc is handmade by the Dark Dragon King Maxwell. Maxwell-sama specializes in this sort of craftsmanship and magical construction. His extant work is also available within the palace of Holy Milis Kingdom-"

"Ohhhhhh!"

Zanoba suddenly shouts.

Sylvaril turns around in confusion.

"Is there a problem?"

"W-well! Where is Maxwell-sama presently?"

Zanoba stares excitedly at a particular corner. He's trembling.

What's over there?

But I really have no idea what's he looking at.

"Dark Dragon King Maxwell-sama wanders the world. If he's still alive, he is probably still wandering somewhere."

"I-is that so, such an amazing person... yet.. yet.."

Zanoba can't contain his excitement.

Well, Zanoba never could contain his excitement.

"May we continue?"

"Oh, oh yeah. I'm very sorry. It was just too beautiful to pass up."

"Is that so. Once you enter the castle, there're plenty other outstanding works too. We'll be happy to satisfy you."

Finishing in a gentle tone, Sylvaril moves ahead.

She's probably smiling under that mask.

At the same time, Zanoba rushes over besides me.

He shoves his mouth near my ear and quietly asks.

"Shisho, did you see?"

"Eh?"

"Huge discovery! Fortunate that we came. I really need to properly thank Nanahoshi for this."

A huge discovery?

Seems like Zanoba and I pay attention differently.

"I'm sorry. I couldn't figure out what you discovered. Can you properly explain it to me when we have the time?"

Zanoba looks visibly disappointed, hearing that from me.

"What? Shisho didn't notice?"

Zanoba retreats back a few steps.

I'm sorry! I'm not as good as you when it come to appraising this stuff.

"Mm?"

As we pass the door, I noticed some white particles coming from Sylphy before me.

"Eh?"

Sylvaril stops, turning around to look at Sylphy and me.

Although hidden behind her mask, I can feel the mood shift beneath it suddenly.

Rather, maybe it's us.

"I-is there a problem?"

I hesitantly ask Sylvaril.

Last time Arumanfi abruptly attacked.

I don't want that to happen again.

If that's possible, then I really hope we can talk it out and avoid a misunderstanding.

Even if it isn't, and something bad really does happen, at least we should retreat as soon as possible.

Although I have some questions for Perugius, but I'd rather go home rather than look for a fight.

"No. It's nothing particular. There are quite a few people like you on earth."

"Is that so?"

What does she mean by people like us?

Makes me nervous.

Don't tell me we would be trapped as soon we enter the castle?

I should keep my demon eye open.

"However, may I ask you two something?"

"Go ahead."

"Hitogami, have you heard that name before?"

I tried hard to not show a reaction.

Hitogami.

Hearing that suddenly reminds me of Orsted.

Last time, Orsted asked the same question. When I answered, he nearly killed me.

I don't want that to happen again.

I hesitated.

If I answer truthfully, it'd spell trouble if she turn hostile.

Indeed, Hitogami has been playing me in the palm of his hands, and he has helped me.

I never planned to be his underling, but I also realize that I'm becoming that sort of thing.

"No, not at all."

Sylphy shakes her head while I hesitate.

"Then, when you hear that name, do you feel an unspeakable anger or murderous intent?"

Sylphy shakes her head in silence.

I as well.

But I can sense what that question is about.

Orsted gives out that kind of feeling.

To know such things, maybe Orsted and Perugius are rivals?

I'm not sure.

"In that case, then everything is fine."

With that said, Sylvaril starts to walk again.

The Sky Castle [Chaos Breaker].

Despite its name, the only word that can properly describe it is stunning.

I can't imagine how such a huge structure was constructed.

However, despite its size, every corner has been decorated with exquisite statues, and every statue made meticulously by master craftsmen.

Not just on the outside.

The inside is covered by golden embroidered carpeting, paintings line the walls, and each side is decorated with expensive artwork and sculptures.

Zanoba will speak nonstop, looking at this and that, [This sculpture is obviously out of the Ganon school. Could it be by the master himself?][The original rider statue? To see this in person, what an honor!] He looks truly happy.

Originally Sylvaril and Ariel would respond, but they soon got worn down by him and simply smile wearily.

Usually there would be a second bothersome person.

Yet when I look at Cliff, he looks painfully tense.

His eyes are wide, but he's keeping his mouth shut unless being asked otherwise.

Elinalise besides him, holding his hand like a mom and keeping him moving along.

Well, this is fine. If those two start chattering it'd be rather noisy.

"The audience room is just before us."

At the end of the hallway, Sylvaril stops before a pair of doors.

A heavy door, dotted with silver, with a dragon painted on each side.

All in all, it took almost an hour for us to reach here from the magic circle.

Such a large place is kind of a pain too.

A segway would be nice.

"Although Perugius is generous, please observe proper etiquette."

Having said that, Sylvaril places a hand on the door.

No knocking?

"Excuse us, but we're still in our travel wear! Wouldn't that be inappropriate?"

Ariel hurriedly asks.

Now that she mentions it, don't they usually bring the guests to the reception room first in these situations?

Change into proper formal wear, get everything set before initial greetings.

I recall doing that when meeting with King Shirone.

But I didn't have any formal wear of sorts, so I ended up wearing my old shabby robes like usual.

Oh no, I never thought about this before, so that was an audience.

I should have brought a formal wear.

"Perugius-sama doesn't care about the dress code. Rather, he really dislikes the old-fashion formalities at Asura Kingdom. In my opinion,rather than changing intentionally, keep what you have on, and you'll leave a better impression with master."

Hearing that, Ariel shut her mouth.

Maybe something happened back then.

Like, the reason Perugius left for the Sky Castle was that he got bullied by King Asura or something.

"Well, may we at least put aside our coats and luggage?"

"I understand, please come this way."

Hearing what amounted to begging from Ariel, Sylvaril consents and nods.

Walking away from the big door, she opens a room on the side.

Roughly the size of my bedroom.

Compared to the rest of the castle it's relatively small and plain, but even the table, cabinet, and clothing racks are items of high quality.

"Thank you very much."

"Perugius-sama is waiting. Please hurry."

With that said, Sylvaril closed the door.

Confirming that, Ariel removes her overcoat.

Luke immediately went over to take it from her, and Sylphy takes out a haircomb and begins to comb Ariel's hair.

At the same time, Zanoba put away his overcoat in the clothing rack and put on a new one to wear.

Elinalise busies herself inspecting Cliff's hair and outfit.

I dust off my outfit and straighten my shirt.

Nothing formal... What you wear isn't important, sincerity is.

Casual wear doesn't mean we can just wear whatever.

By the way, Nanahoshi isn't doing anything.

At most she just straightened her bangs.

Say, today she's in uniform too.

Does she really hate clothing from this world that much?

"All set."

Finally Sylphy removes her sunglasses. Everyone's ready to go.

All in all, no more than 10 minutes have passed.

Despite that, Ariel looks almost like a different person.

She has bearings to begin with, but now she just exudes elegance.

Perhaps as royalty, she has spent a long time honing the skills to become beautiful.

"Sorry for the wait."

"Oh. This way."

Sylvaril receives the signal from outside.

Like nothing happened, she heads back before the previous door.

Giant doors painted with dragons.

Behind it waits Perugius.

Realizing that, I start to feel nervous.

"Phew..."

Before the doors open, I heard Ariel taking a deep breath.

Seated on his throne, the man with an overwhelming oppressive presence.

Gleaming white hair.

Sanpaku eyes with golden pupils.

Nobility radiates from his entire body.

A king.

He is Armored Dragon King Perugius.

With a single glance my legs tremble.

I know the reason.

Because, Orsted looks like that man.

Never forget.

The white haired man that killed me.

No matter their hair or facial features or style of dress, Perugius and him differ.

But they feel the same.

Just like Orsted.

"Come forward."

Urged by Sylvaril, Nanahoshi steps forth.

Matching her, Ariel follows close behind.

I follow like I'm trying to hide behind them.

This is an enormous hall.

Tall ceilings, supported by tree-like pillars.

Looking up, light radiates down from above.

Luxurious, brilliant.

Plus, hanging from the walls are curtains of complex patterns.

Products from Asura to Holy Milis, from the common to the never before seen, a little bit of everything.

On each side of the red carpet under our feet, 11 men and women stand in attention.

"..."

They're all clad in white.

Each a different design, but all the same color.

All white.

Then there are the masks.

Everyone's wearing masks.

None of their masks are the same.

Some in form of animals.

One seems to be missing an eye, so the mask covers only the eye.

Another looks like the helmet from Robocop, like it was made out of the same mold.

They must be the famed 12 Familiars of Perugius.

Despite being Familiars, they all look humanoid.

Long ago, Arumanfi and Ghyslaine fought in a stalemate.

In other words, the twelve of them including Sylvaril have strength equal to that of a Sword King.

I really don't want to make enemies out of these people.

I really need to be careful with what I say from now on.

"Stop here."

Hearing Sylvaril say so, Nanahoshi stops.

"..."

A mere ten steps from the throne two levels above us.

Perugius observes us without saying a word.

Rather, observing me.

I can feel his line of sight.

Scary.

Sylvaril walks slowly next to Perugius, standing in attention to his right.

Sylvaril on the right, Arumanfi on his left.

Then, as if to surround us, 5 on each side.

Slowly, Perugius speaks.

"I am Armored Dragon King Perugius Dola."

Captain Dola!

No, no.

Nothing to do with Castle in the Sky.

"Long time no see, Perugius-sama. As promised, I have returned."

Nanahoshi bows.

How unusual to speak in honorifics.

Suddenly I realize that Ariel is also in a bow.

Luke and Sylphy both kneeling with one knee.

Hesitating briefly, I bow as I usually do.

A Japanese ojigi.

"Nanahoshi."

Perugius's voice sends a chill down my spine.

That voice is full of majesty and oppression.

I feel like a prey animal, frozen in terror, my heart still and my breath difficult.

Cold sweat starts streaming down.

Terrifying.

Truly the feeling of a king.

"You have returned. In other words, you found a clue on how to conduct summoning from another world?"

"Yes. However, I don't know if the results match your expectations."

"Results... Searching for knowledge is the fate of the Dragon Race."

Dragon Race, so he's from the Dragon Race.

I haven't noticed until now, but that makes sense.

Dragon God and the Armored Dragon King.

Neither of them are human, but rather Dragon Race.

They look similar because they're from the same race.

Nanahoshi responds to Perugius without hesitation.

Perugius doesn't seem to hold any animosity against Nanahoshi.

A courteous friendship.

He may live secluded in a castle like this, but I guess he isn't paranoid.

"I hope as promised, you'll teach me your knowledge of this world's summoning magic."

"Em, that's fine."

Looks like Nanahoshi and Perugius have an understanding.

Nanahoshi will research summoning from another world, and share the results with Perugius.

And in return, Perugius will teach her the essence behind this world's summoning magic.

Something like that.

"Speaking of which, you brought quite a group here. Why are they here?"

"Yes. They assist in my research. As reward, they wished to meet Perugius-sama."

"Oh."

Perugius sighs out of boredom.

Calling it a reward felt a little inappropriate, but it wasn't a lie.

"Pleased to meet you."

Ariel steps forward.

"I am Ariel Anemoi Asura, Second Princess of Asura Kingdom. It's an honor to finally meet you in person, your majesty."

"Ariel Anemoi Asura, huh?"

"Pleased to make your acquaintance."

Perugius sighs loudly.

"I'm aware. Refusing to admit defeat after losing an ugly fight for the Asura throne, going as far as trying to get everyone around you involved in the mud flinging, that stupid princess."

Luke raises his head.

But, Ariel looks unshaken.

"That's a bit harsh."

As expected of Ariel.

With a gentle smile, she maintains eye contact with Perugius.

"Coming here, you want to find out whether I'll lend you a hand?"

"No, I just want to witness the world famous hero in person."

"Your scheme is obvious, Ariel Anemoi Asura."

As always, Ariel's voice is full of charisma.

But looking closely, she doesn't look so good. Cold sweat beaded down her face. Having her plan exposed, leaving a bad impression, her rhythmhas been upset.

Seeing Ariel like this, Perugius smiles a little.

A smile for a scolded child.

"However, since you're here, that too is fate. Take the opportunity. I shall allow you to remain in my castle."

"T-thank you very much."

Ariel takes a bow and steps back.

Her anxiety eased, but did not completely disappear.

"Next, and you?"

Perugius turns his attention to me after Ariel steps back.

As if my status was second only to Ariel.

Thinking of this, I sneaked a peek behind me.

Zanoba, Cliff, and Elinalise.

All kneeling on the floor.

Only Nanahoshi, Ariel, and I were left standing.

No wonder he has been staring at me.

I placed a hand on my chest, once more taking a bow.

"Nice to meet you, I'm Rudeus Greyrat."

"Rudeus Greyrat."

Perugius recites my name, chewing over it.

"Transporting you over here took quite a bit of effort."

"...?"

"To begin with, that teleportation magic isn't supposed to work on anyone with more magic."

Perugius explains unhappily.

"Your magic matches that of Laplace. If you seriously resist, even I can't teleport you."

"Is that so, I'm sorry for causing you trouble."

Laplace.

Sealed by Perugius 400 years ago, name of the Demon God.

Everyone mentions that name when evaluating my magic power.

I guess it's true.

"No matter. However, with that much power in your command, don't even think about using it inside this castle."

"Of course."

That feels like a warning shot.

No, he ought to give me a warning, just in case I go berserk.

Say, but why?

Why so vigilant towards me?

I have never been the kind to turn violent for no reason. I wouldn't go berserk if I have.

... Ah, is that still on his mind?

That during the Metastasis Event, Arumanfi suddenly tried to kill me.

Is he worried that I still hold a grudge over that?

So that's why. In other words, he wants me to let that pass.

"If it's about the Metastasis Event, that doesn't really bother me. So-"

"Metastasis Event? What do you mean?"

Perugius tilts his hand in confusion. Arumanfi suddenly teleports next to him.

Then, he whispered something in his ear.

"Ah, now that you mention it, I did hear that during the Metastasis Event, some Sword King was protecting a youth that was casting magictowards the sky. Are you him?"

So he forgot already.

Am I digging my own grave?

Just like said, I declare that I'm not really bothered by that.

But, I didn't do anything to offend them.

It should be fine?

"I also heard that someone damaged Orsted's hand, someone by the name of Rudeus Greyrat."

He even knows about that.

It's not like I really hurt him, it was barely a scratch.

If he knows that, does that mean Orsted and Perugius know each other? Or did he hear it from Nanahoshi?

No wait, Nanahoshi probably met the owner of this castle in the sky through Orsted too.

"People of your talent tend to grow overconfident. Don't grow arrogant just because you managed to hurt that Dragon God. Because, if youwant a duel with yours truly, then prepare to die!"

As soon as he finishes, killing intent pours out from Perugius.

Come on.

I'm a little worried with how menacing he became.

I came here to collect intelligence on mother's illness. And with a little luck, maybe learn a little summoning magic.

Despite that, why is he so vigilant against me?

... Does he think that I somehow fought Orsted to a stalemate?

You're kidding me.

It was a one handed slaughter. I just sneaked a shot in.

Of the 12 Familiars present.

Although it's only what's written, but I still remember each of their abilities.

But reading about a character is different from fighting it.

Besides, numerical superiority matters in a fight.

Even with one-shot-kill zombies, it's over if there are too many of them.

And these are players that match up against Ghyslaine.

Who knows how strong Perugius is, probably not too shabby.

If we fought, I'm a dead man.

In summary, I have no reason to fight.

"Of course, I wouldn't do something as stupid as defying Perugius-sama."

"Good attitude. I like smart kids. Birds of a feather flock together. Put a few smart kids together, and they can push each other forward."

In this circumstance, smart kids are the ones that don't defy Perugius, I guess.

I don't think I'm particularly smart, but at least I know that much.

"Perugius-sama, this one here... with his enormous magic power, he contributed greatly to my research. He's not an enemy. So, can you be alittle nicer?"

Nanahoshi intervenes.

As expected of Nanahoshi.

She's right.

Don't be so hostile, be nicer.

"Um."

Perugius nods to Nanahoshi's advice.

"Then I shall be a little nicer. Nanahoshi's comrade, what is your wish? Money? Power?"

Perugius asks, looking slightly bored.

So you're finally going to treat me as a guest now.

Why so harsh toward your first time guests?

Although I have been a little careless...

Well, forget it.

I should ask what I'm here for.

"Then, I have a question to ask."

"What is it?"

"About my mother's illness."

I began to explain the situation with Zenith.

"I see."

After explaining Zenith's situation and syndromes, Perugius nods heavily.

"Indeed I have heard this happening before, ancient labyrinths using a captured person as its core. As a result, as the core, the person begins tochange. Without an exception they lose their memory, but gain some mysterious power."

"Mysterious power?"

"Some call them cursed children, others call them miko, that kind of power."

A curse.

Zenith has been cursed.

A curse that prevents her from crying or laughing.

"Why does that happen?"

"Who knows. Supposedly, labyrinths are magical creatures created by the ancient ones, in their pursuit of paradise. It can evenly distributemagic from its core to its inhabitants. Those that live inside it are free from hunger and prosper. An ancient Labyrinth capturing ahuman, in order to increase that magic, isn't inconceivable."

Ancient one's paradise... freedom from hunger.

Speaking of which, monsters were everywhere in the Teleportation Labyrinth.

Especially those particularly gluttonous ones.

I had been wondering what they eat to survive, so that's why.

No, but Roxy said she starved inside the labyrinth.

So it really wasn't distributing magic power to everyone inside.

Or perhaps, monsters have some method of absorbing magic from thin air?

... Well, it doesn't matter what labyrinths are.

What's important is Zenith.

"Do you know of a way to cure mother?"

"I don't know any details, but..."

Perugius looks behind me as he speaks.

"A person that survived a similar circumstance, but healthy and living, wouldn't someone like her know more details?"

Perugius looks towards that girl with golden hair from the Long-Ear Tribe.

Elinalise slowly raises her head.

"Elinalise Dragonroad. I remember that 200 years ago I personally rescued you from the Bau Labyrinth."

"That's right."

"The long-eared girl with lost memory. We met only once. It has been a long time, have you forgotten I?"

"No, I still remember."

Elinalise looks apologetic towards me.

What's going on?

Elinalise has been through a similar experience?

200 years ago, rescued from a labyrinth?

Hold on, what's going on?

"Why did you remain silent? Coming here together, you two should be familiar, right?"

"That's..."

"You have personal experience. No one knows the situation better than you."

Hearing Perugius, Elinalise stands up nervously.

But finally, she gives a resolute reply.

"I never did regain my memory, but maybe Zenith can. That's why I stayed silent."

Her reply may be resolute, but her expression is pained.

Cliff gently held Elinalise by her shoulders.

"..."

In turmoil I couldn't find any words to say.

I did notice something odd about Elinalise.

But I never imagined a past like that.

"Sorry. I had thought about telling you. But recently Rudeus looked so happy, and that made me hesitate over it. Zenith's curse doesn't seem life threatening. I thought maybe she's a Miko, or maybe nothing at all..."

"... Please give me the details at a later time."

That's all I can say to all the excuses Elinalise tried to make.

"I understand."

I don't want to blame Elinalise.

Although she wasn't upfront, she did offer a few suggestions for Zenith's syndromes at the Begaritto Continent. Back then I thought she wasjust well informed and speaking from experience.

She's probably worried a lot over this.

Maybe she's right, that Zenith is different and her memory is recoverable.

Besides, with Paul's body still freshly buried, there's no reason to pile on the misery.

She didn't say anything because she's worried about me.

At least, Zenith might be cursed. I hope she'll tell me what she can later.

"Anything else?"

"That's all."

Perugius asks; I shake my head.

It has only been a few minutes, but I'm already exhausted.

Rather, it feels like I have been in conversation for hours instead.

There's more I want to ask.

About summoning magic, about the Laplace campaign, about the Metastasis event.

But right now, with so much on my mind, I feel like my head's going to explode at any moment.

That's it for now.

"Anyone else? Anyone have a request for me?"

"In that case, I have an inquiry. May I?"

A man stands up after Perugius asks.

It's Zanoba.

"You are?"

"Sorry. Third prince of Shirone Kingdom, Zanoba Shirone."

"A prince? Don't tell me you want my backing for the throne too?"

"No. I don't care the slightest about that."

With that said, Zanoba produces a small notebook.

Illustrated on it is a crest.

A crest I know of.

That's the crest we discovered with the doll blueprint in my basement...

Ah!

"This crest. It looks very similar to that of Dark Dragon King Maxwell-sama and Armor Dragon King Perugius-sama. More so, it looks thesame as that crest on the wall there. Are you familiar with this?"

I follow Zanoba's vision to the crest hanging from the wall.

I do recognize some of the crests hanging there.

A crest I once saw carved in the power stone. The Dragon God's crest.

Another on the magic tools inside the hidden teleport ruins. Based on the incantation I recited, that should be Holy Dragon Emperor Shilard's?

Then next to that, the same crest as the one on Zanoba.

"I am aware. The one you hold belongs to Mad Dragon King Chaos."

"Ohh!"

Ohh!

That's why. Is that what Zanoba saw carved in the arch?

No, that's Maxwell's.

He probably noticed the crest there, and saw the similarity.

Then realizing the connection between all of them.

As expected of Zanoba!

Oops, I'm sorry, I forgot to tell Zanoba about the crest on the teleportation ruin.

"T-then, where is Mad Dragon King Chaos-sama presently?"

Stepping forth, Zanoba couldn't contain his excitement.

However, Perugius can only shake his head.

"Dead. Died several dozen years ago. No clue if he has a successor."

The notebook slips from Zanoba's palm.

His arms hang powerlessly on their sides.

"So he's gone..."

Instantly, Zanoba looks 5 years older.

Well, he always did look rather old.

"Say, how did you find this crest?"

Seeing Zanoba like this, Perugius asks considerately.

Zanoba answers, still downcast.

"At my Shisho's house. Drawn on an autonomous doll in an abandoned house at Magic City Sharia."

"I see. An autonomous doll."

Zanoba nods; Perugius continues.

"That doll, is it something wonderful?"

"Of course it is! Such intricate craftsmanship, utterly mesmerizing, it fully conveys the maker's love for dolls. As a fellow dollenthusiast, I truly admire his philosophy!"

Hearing those words, Perugius squints his eyes, laughing happily.

"You look like someone who appreciates art. Good. In this castle's treasure room I also have plenty of Chaos's fine work. We shall checkthem out later."

Unbelievably gentle words coming from the same person that was talking to me earlier.

Why? What's up with the difference in treatment here.

Well, it can't be helped.

"It will be a great honor."

Hearing Perugius's answer, Zanoba smiles brilliantly.

The other side looks happy as well.

I guess Perugius really took a liking to Zanoba.

How nice.

I want to be liked too.

"Anyone else?"

"Em, I... No, I do. I have one thing to ask."

Sylphy raises her hand after Perugius asked.

Slightly stiff as she bows at Perugius.

"And you are?"

"Escort for the Second Princess of Asura Kingdom Ariel-sama, wife of Rudeus Greyrat, Sylphiette Greyrat."

Just now, Sylvaril whispers something in Perugius' ear.

Perugius grunts unhappily.

"Husband and wife..."

Quiet whispers.

Husband and wife, why would he be unhappy with that?

Sylphy has strong magic as well, but definitely not comparable to Laplace.

Ah, don't tell me, he noticed that she has Magic Race ancestry?

"Before you ask, answer me this. Do you two have a son?"

Perugius asks abruptly.

Sylphy looks troubled.

"Eh? No, only a daughter..."

"Is that so. If you have a son, bring him to me. I shall grant him a name."

"O-oh.. okay."

Perugius smiles slightly.

Super scary.

What does he plan to do with Sylphy and my son?

Going as far as giving a brilliant name.

Coming from a guy that lives in a place called Chaos Breaker...

"Now, what do you wish to ask?"

"Well, about the Metastasis event. Who is really behind it?"

Sylphy asks a question I haven't spent much time thinking about.

The Metastasis Event was caused by summoning Nanahoshi from Japan.

The side effects of summoning someone from another world.

I was also accidentally transported as well. But hers was a direct teleportation, so that's probably what caused it.

It could be an accident too.

Someone did something, and as a result summoned Nanahoshi to this world.

An accident.

"This much is certain. Originally I suspected Laplace or someone associated with him, however..."

Perugius looks at Nanahoshi before continuing.

"Summoning her over is impossible even for me. In that case, it shouldn't be possible for anyone of this world."

"In other words?"

"I suspect it's not man-made. It just happened by chance."

Indeed an accident.

No, perhaps someone even better than Perugius in summoning magic exists.

Someone like Orsted.

But I don't know if such a person exists. If I mention it he might get angry.

I'll just keep my mouth shut.

I don't want to make him angry anymore.

"Ah, I see. Thank you very much."

While I'm hesitating, the conversation with Sylphy is over.

Perugius nods his head.

"Anything else?"

No one responds.

Elinalise lowers her head; Cliff too stiff to move.

Ariel stands on her side, and Luke kneeling still on the ground.

"Then take your time and enjoy my pride and joy, the Sky Castle."

With those words, the audience with Perugius ended.

Afterwards Sylvaril led us to the guest rooms.

In the guest area there are almost 20 rooms with the exact same layout.

The same dark wood furniture, feather beds.

A large and clear full length mirror.

Some type of beer on the shelf.

The only difference between the rooms are the art hanging in them.

Almost like a hotel.

But, even more luxurious than those business hotels everywhere.

In my past life, this would probably be something akin to imperial suites.

No, forget a suite, I have never even been to an Imperial Hotel before.

"Such a large place with only 12 caretakers..."

Ariel saying that left quite an impression on me.

The entire place is spotless, but also so sterile.

Not so much creepy as lonely.

The kind of loneliness you feel when buying a second controller without a friend to play with.

But from the way Perugius talks, he should have guests once in a while.

It's free time after picking our rooms.

Zanoba and Ariel decide to go sightseeing and left in a hurry.

Of course, Sylphy and Luke went along too.

I decide to stay in.

"Phew..."

Exhausted.

It only took a hour, but it felt like we had been talking all day.

Not in the mood to go sightseeing, a break would be nice though.

With that in mind, I fell on the bed.

"Oh, how soft."

So soft, I feel like I would sink to the bottom of the feather bed.

Can I bring one home with me...

Putting the bed aside.

I should really think about what happened today.

First, that thing with Elinalise...

She should still be in.

Maybe I should go ask.

... Nah, she has her reasons. It wouldn't be good to pry.

She needs some time to prepare too.

One day I'll definitely go get all the details about these curses. That settles it.

That crest issue was certainly a surprise.

Dark Dragon King, Mad Dragon King, a bunch of names showed up.

I remember they're called the "5 Dragon Warriors."

Legend says the 5 of them once fought the Dragon God to a stalemate.

They can't really be the same 5 people as back then, right?

There must be quite a few generations already.

Armored Dragon King Perugius, Dark Dragon King Maxwell, Mad Dragon King Chaos.

Also from the incantation in the teleport ruin, Holy Dragon Emperor Shilard.

That's 4.

I remember there was a Dragon Emperor and 4 Dragon Kings.

So there's one more Dragon King.

Speaking of which, of the crests on the wall, I only saw 4 crests like the Dragon God's.

Does Perugius not have a good relationship with the last Dragon King?

Still, that doll turned out to be even more surprising.

I was wondering where I saw that crest before, turns out it's something related with those dragon people.

I still don't know what language it's written in...

Ah, right, if Perugius helps translate it, it would be a huge break for our research.

I should ask him to check it out.

But he doesn't seem to like me very much, or rather is quite vigilant towards me, maybe it's better for Zanoba to request it instead.

Zanoba and Perugius seem to click over their mutual interest in art.

Say, that Mad Dragon King crest was found in my basement.

In other words, the Mad Dragon King used to live there once.

That means, at home, that Mad Dragon King would lock himself in the basement and play with dolls.

Even though he's the Mad Dragon King.

Where does his madness lie?

Although playing with dolls is a little silly.

But, if he's someone like Zanoba, then in some ways they're both a little mad.

So Mad Dragon King Chaos also likes stuff like dolls.

Anyways, even though I came here to learn summoning magic, at this point it might be impossible.

Perugius seems really antagonistic towards me.

In that case, if I asked, he probably would say something like [Do you plan to use that magic to summon Laplace?]

... Is that even possible?

Perugius said summoning magic cannot bring forth anyone with great magic power.

My power apparently matches Laplace, so it might be possible?

Resurrecting the Demon God in a creepy underground altar.

No, I won't do something like that.

But if that's possible, then he's right in staying vigilant.

"In any case, it's good enough."

Although he hates me, he didn't kick me out, nor did he yell at me.

For now, some peace of mind.

Although not perfect, it's good enough.

Talk things out.

That's all I can do.

Thinking about various things, a day has passed at the castle in the sky.

There once was a young girl, rescued some 200 years ago from a Labyrinth.

However, that girl lost all her memory and emotions.

Her identity was unknown, but from appearance her race could be determined.

Thus, that girl was dropped off at that race's village and began her life there.

The villagers happily welcomed that girl.

That girl never regained her memories.

But a few years later, emotions did return to her.

Soon that bright and cheerful girl fell for a boy of the village, and they became lovers.

Soon they married, but from then a strange problem appeared.

Her sexual appetite grew and grew.

Every night she craved him.

The race that girl belonged to lacks a strong sexual appetite.

Inferior to human or goblins.

Because of that, the boy often felt troubled, but still they lived a quiet life.

Soon afterwards, that girl's body began to change.

Starting from her first time with a boy, every time of the month, she gave birth to something.

A magical crystal.

A small and round magical crystal.

Containing enormous magic power, it could be sold for a high price.

With her husband they discussed it.

Although it made him slightly uncomfortable, nevertheless he accepted her.

Afterwards, the boy sold the magical crystals in the city.

The enormous sums blinded him... But it wasn't his fault, so don't blame the boy.

They were not particularly wealthy, nor did the girl work.

At least, the boy did not treat that girl as a golden goose.

They lived happily together.

It happened 5 years later.

The boy died.

He was murdered.

Carrying valuables so regularly, he was marked by human bandits, and attacked, losing both life and money.

The boy died, and that girl became a widow.

Ten days after his death.

That girl lost control of herself and attacked another boy in the village.

She knew she shouldn't, yet she did.

But the target didn't really mind, so the matter rests.

Ten days passed.

That girl attacked another boy.

Another ten days, then another.

That girl went wild, her actions exposed, and was finally caught by the other girls of the village.

Thus she was cast out of the village.

Thereafter, she lived as a prostitute, a slave, and finally an adventurer, and even now she wanders the world.

Listening to Elinalise's story was the first thing I did this morning.

"... That's pretty much my life's story."

"I didn't really need that much detail..."

Honestly, I feel rather bothered by that story.

All I really need is information about curses.

Yet, Elinalise went ahead and told me everything.

"I'm sorry for hiding this from you all this time."

"Does... Cliff know about this?"

"Of course, I told him everything before the wedding."

"Right... and Sylphy?"

"Sylphy doesn't know. Her grandma was once a prostitute, isn't it better if she doesn't?"

"I think Sylphy wouldn't mind something like this..."

"Rudeus too, please don't look at Sylphy differently after hearing these things. That girl may be of my blood, but she's just a normal girl."

"Of course I won't."

Elinalise is Elinalise, Sylphy is Sylphy.

Still, with a past like hers, I can understand why she wasn't so forthcoming as Sylphy's grandma.

Most people would probably look at her at a different light.

What's past is past.

One shouldn't run from one's past, but that only I know of it is enough.

"Well, in summary, what is this curse Elinalise speaks of?"

"Magic crystallizes within my body after being fertilized by men. Without sperm, the magic will expand until I die. That sort of feeling."

"But, nothing happened in the first few years?"

"I'm not very sure myself about that... But back then, my monthlies hadn't started yet, so that might be the case."

"Monthlies..."

So it's related to menstruation. Magic crystallized from her eggs?

In that case, Zenith's curse is probably something different.

Zenith already had two kids.

I should check with Lilia, but Zenith should be 35 or so, so it's possible.

Still, at least for now, nothing has happened.

"Your memory, did it ever return?"

"No, still nothing."

"..."

Her memory never came back.

So who Elinalise actually is, we may never know.

It's still possible that she would suddenly remember one day.

But after 200 years, I doubt it.

"Well, Zenith is different from 'that girl' back then. At least right now, she seems to recognize her flesh and blood. Maybe her memoriescan recover."

"It'd be great if that's the case."

I shouldn't be too optimistic.

Rather, I should just assume the worst and plan from there.

"What about the curse?"

"For now, no symptoms are like mine."

"Right."

"She probably... has a different curse."

"Right."

"It's highly likely. Do you have an idea?"

Idea?

Clues?

Well.

Maybe, maybe not.

I don't have any clue for the curse.

"Nothing."

"Is that so. Still, you can't be too careful."

It's probably not a life threatening one.

But as Elinalise said, there might be a trigger somewhere.

"In other words, all we can do now is wait and see?"

"Yeah."

Not too optimistic.

Hopefully, nothing will happen to Zenith in the future.

"That's everything I know. I'm sorry. There's a lot I didn't want to talk about, so I was very late in telling you these things."

Elinalise looks downcast after those words.

Yeah, it's a little late.

If it was someone else, he'd yell at her for not saying anything until now.

But I can understand wanting to hide a dark past.

Rather, I should be the one apologizing for hiding my past life.

"No, it's obviously something hard to talk about, yet you told me anyways. I'm really thankful."

I hold out a hand to Elinalise.

She held it tightly.

"Then, I'm heading back to Cliff's."

"I'll take a break, then head over to check in with Nanahoshi."

"Ah, then see you later."

Elinalise left the room with those words.

In the end, not much progress regarding Zenith.

Although a curse is highly likely, at least so far nothing happened.

Prepare for now, we'll deal with situations as they arise.

After breakfast.

I sat by a long table in a room at the Sky Castle.

Seated besides me are Nanahoshi and Cliff, and next to him Zanoba.

Across me sits Sylvaril of the Void.

With jet black wings, an underling of Perugius.

"Well, let's begin."

Nanahoshi asked Perugius to tutor her in summoning magic.

Having said that, under Nanahoshi's care we ended up joining as well.

Since the lessons start from the basics, the teacher isn't Perugius.

Looks like we have to wait until the more advanced part before he makes an appearance.

Right now, Perugius is probably having tea with Ariel.

Although I don't know why exactly Ariel is so set on winning the throne, but having a goal is nice.

I'll support her from behind.

Since Sylphy is her friend.

Although their stations may differ, but there's no such concept as equality in the first place. It can't be helped.

Since Sylphy and Ariel consider each other friends, then they are.

Oh, I really should pay attention to the lessons right now.

"Then, first, just to make sure, what is summoning magic?"

Sylvaril of the Void starts the lesson with a question.

"Person over there..."

"Cliff. Cliff Grimoire."

"Then, Cliff, answer. What is summoning?"

Summoning Magic comes in two types.

The Enchantment type.

Primarily has to do with the creation of magic tools.

In other words, the art of drawing magic circles.

This is Cliff's major and is actively taught in Magic City Sharia.

The Summoning type.

A way to summon something from this world.

From the most basic creatures to smarter animals like cats and dogs.

Domesticated and docile magical beasts.

Low intelligence magic creatures like goblins and treants.

Or call up the various spirits that dwell in this world.

None of the teachers at Magic City Sharia know this magic, and only a few of the initiates at the Magic Guild are versed in it.

Maybe an unknown country has monopolized the techniques. Basically, no one teaches it at the Magic City.

That's all I know about it.

Cliff is probably the same and gave a similar answer.

"... That's incorrect."

To that, Sylvaril shakes her head in refutation.

"Indeed, magic circles are indispensable for summoning magic. But the art of magic circles itself can't be properly called summoning magic."

"In other words, summoning magic is the latter of the two types?"

I ask to confirm.

This reminds me of when Roxy taught me magic.

"Yes. It's true that summoning comes in two types."

"Basically, Enchantment isn't one of them."

"That's correct."

Sylvaril continues the lecture.

But there are no teaching supplies, no black boards.

We're using feather pens to take down notes.

This really feels like a lecture.

"Summoning come in two forms, "Magical Beast Summoning" and "Spirit Summoning."

Spirits exist in this world somewhere, but they seem to be rare.

I only ever saw the Spirit of Light from my magic scroll.

"What's the difference between them?"

"Magical Beast Summon is just as you think, it can summon creatures from various places. But by an ancient covenant man cannot besummoned. Besides that, it can summon any living thing of this world."

All living things.

Even dragons?

"Ancient Covenant?"

"A covenant passed down since the founding of summoning magic in this world. No magic can defy this covenant."

"I see."

Man cannot.

... But, is it really impossible?

Teleporting people, and summoning that person, what's the difference?

Em, oh well. Let's focus on the basics for now.

Once we get there, I'll ask properly.

"Sorry, please continue."

"Okay. With Magical Beast Summoning, it's impossible to summon any existence with greater magic power. Even if it's done, it cannot becontrolled."

Ah, I read a story like this before.

The book was [Shigu's Summoning Techniques.]

A witch named Shigu summoned an existence she could not control, and was eaten alive.

I have enough magic to probably summon anything, but that doesn't mean I have to follow through.

Indeed, I have no plans to summon anything that scary.

Basically, I already have 3 pets at home.

No point in calling another one.

"Say, can we only summon living things?"

"Yes. We can't summon the dead."

"No, not that. Like things... For example, can I summon clothing from home?"

"That's impossible."

In other words, Roxy's panties are out of the question.

No, wait.

Nanahoshi successfully summoned a PET bottle.

So it isn't impossible.

It's more like this is the limit of the current technology of this world.

Then Perugius met Nanahoshi and confirmed her results.

So that's why Perugius and Nanahoshi ended up working together.

"May I continue?"

"Ah, yes. Sorry for the interruption."

"No, questions show you're paying attention."

Sylvaril nods slowly and continues the lecture.

"Spirit Summoning... is the magic of constructing spirits."

"Constructing? So they're made?"

"Yes. Using the magic of the summoner to construct spirits of various attributes. That is Spirit Summoning."

Oh.

In other words, those scrolls I been using.

When I summon them, I'm really making the Spirit of Light myself?

"Spirits have low intelligence. They'll follow the summoner's every command until their magic has been exhausted."

"Can they refuse any commands?"

"... If the magic circle has been especially designed that way, it might be possible."

Ohh.

Make it yourself, then it can be anything you want it to be.

So it's almost programming.

Eh?

Basically programming, where have I heard that before?

"That doesn't make sense."

Cliff sounds unsatisfied.

"You are Familiars of Perugius-sama, and he summoned you over 400 years ago, right? Yet you're both intelligent and permanent. Isn't thatweird?"

Oh, as expected of Cliff to get to the heart of the matter.

Sylvaril nods with satisfaction.

"About that, allow me to explain. Perugius-sama's predecessor, the original Armored Dragon-sama, left behind the method of summoning 11ancient spirits of both high intelligence and power. But such powerful spirits only lasted a day. It is Perugius-sama that developed a wayto make it possible for them to exist as long as he lives."

Sounds like a point of pride for her.

Day long familiars becoming perpetual ones.

Perpetual motion, no matter what world that's an incredible achievement.

Eh?

11 ancient spirits?

"Don't you mean 12?"

"Right. I'm not one of Perugius-sama's spirits."

"You're not?"

"That's right. Perugius-sama rescued me during the Laplace Campaign. Since then I have always served him. I'm merely a Heaven Race."

Heaven Race.

Well, that makes sense, she's got wings after all.

Compared to the rest of his underlings, she seems more like his confidant.

Actually his lover... No, that's impossible.

Not every relationship is about love.

"Then, which will we be studying?"

"We'll use Magic Beast Summoning as the foundation, but Perugius-sama believes the other world's summoning is closer related to Spirit Summoning, sowe'll touch up on that as well."

Teaching both types?

I'm looking forward to it.

Summoning magical beasts from all over the world and opening a zoo could be fun.

"Then if possible, please teach us Spirit Summoning in detail as well."

"I am also very interested in Spirit Summoning."

Zanoba and Cliff both seem particularly interested in Spirit Summoning.

Ah, that's right. I get it.

Programming.

The heart of the autonomous doll.

When I saw it back then, I thought it looked like programming.

In other words, with Spirit Summoning, it might be possible to complete the doll.

But I imagine, if the Mad Dragon King Chaos left it unfinished, it can't be that easy...

But, we should at least be able to take another step forward.

But I don't know the specifics of where to even begin to apply such knowledge.

"Well, let's start with the basics of Magic Beast Summoning. First take a look at this magic circle–"

While I was thinking, Sylvaril begins the lecture on basic summoning.

I really should have studied up the basics on my own rather than getting help.

Well, a little late for that.

Better now than never.

In the end, I'm only 18 years old in this world.

Compared to Zanoba.

Who's already 25 or 26 by the time he enrolled, yet still spends day and night practicing doll-making.

I need to follow his example.

Anyways, right now, I'm definitely behind everyone else.

After class, I need to do some self-study.

"By the way, everyone, it's about time for lunch. Please feel free to ask if you want something in particular."

With that said, Sylvaril ends the lecture.

Lunch.

Last night various traditional cuisines from Asura Kingdom were prepared.

Meat balls and potato boiled in vanilla soup.

Wheat bread made with various whole grains.

Basically the same as in the Magic City.

It might look a little shabby for this castle, but it's simple and delicious.

It might seem like traditional cuisine to us, but to Perugius, it's what he considers a typical meal at Asura Kingdom.

Cuisine from 400 years ago.

It is said, technology advances in war, food advances in peace.

The food culture of the Asura Kingdom probably advanced quite a bit after 400 years.

Although food was served individually, I went to eat with Sylphy anyways.

No matter how luxurious the room is, eating alone is lonely.

I would never have thought about that in my past life.

I did eat breakfast alone, but it can't be helped.

"Something from Milis?"

"Ah, I want Shirone food."

Cliff and Zanoba both suggested food from home.

They probably feel a little homesick.

"I can do that. That's fine."

From behind her mask, Sylvaril's voice sounds gentle and accepts their requests.

"Anything is fine."

Nanahoshi responds.

Does she not realize what an opportunity this is?

I'm not a man that lets an opportunity like this slip away.

[Make the best use of the chance to its maximum.] The man known as Red Comet once said.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Mobile Suit Gundam anime series. }

"Vinegared white rice with sliced raw fish on top, are you familiar with that dish?"

{ C-Editor's note: Sushi. }

"Eh? For real?"

Hearing me, Nanahoshi suddenly brightens up.

But Sylvaril shakes her head.

"No, I don't, but I do prepare rice often."

Nanahoshi looks disappointed.

But now I'm excited.

As long as we have rice, then any side dish would do.

"How about adding chicken egg and flour in cold water, mixed well; add in shrimp, squid, and vegetables; then boil it all in hot oil?"

{ C-Editor's note: Okonomiyaki, a Japanese savory pancake dish. }

"I've never heard of that before either, but we do have flour and eggs..."

We have eggs!

In other words, I can finally eat that!

Well, no sushi and tempura.

Then probably no sukiyaki either.

We need cooking wine, rock sugar, and soy sauce for that.

It won't be the real thing, but with ingredients, I think we can come up with something close...

So it comes down to soy sauce.

The taste of Japan I long for comes down to soy sauce.

"Then, a sauce made from fermented soy beans. Does that exist? Soy sauce, anything like that?"

"Not in the castle."

Sigh, none.

Sure enough, this world, no soy sauce.

"But I have heard that sort of seasoning exists in Biheiriru Kingdom. I can ask Arumanfi to check."

"Yes! Please!"

Even troubling Arumanfi is fine.

If it can be found, then he has to find it.

A hour later.

In the end, no soy sauce.

Maybe an hour wasn't enough time for a comprehensive search.

It's only to be expected, looking for ingredients right before cooking starts.

No soy sauce.

But.

At least.

Arumanfi did bring something else.

Fermented from soy beans, a tea-colored edible.

They call it "tofu" in this world.

But I call it "miso."

Because that's what it is.

Biheiriru Kingdom... from memory, it's a country on the north-eastern corner of the Central Continent.

Maybe, there, I can finally find soy sauce.

I should visit one day.

Ten years, twenty years, if an opportunity arises I will definitely visit there.

I'll leave that aside for now.

We have rice.

We have miso.

We even have fresh fish.

No ginger or radish, but there is lemon.

I want to have pickles too, but I might be pushing my luck. So that'll have to pass.

With the ingredients we have, I try instructing Sylvaril the best I can.

"Is this how you want it?"

After a while, it finally arrives.

Freshly cooked rice.

Hot miso scallop soup.

Also, grilled fish with lemons.

Order for two.

The other is for Nanahoshi.

And I got a raw egg on the side.

"It's nice to eat something like this every once in a while."

"... Well, I guess."

The dishes look fantastic, but Nanahoshi doesn't look particularly pleased.

As expected, just looking like Japanese food won't impress her.

Ah, oh well.

Regardless it won't come close to the taste of Japan.

But it's kind of fun to try.

"Give it a shot. Itadakimasu."

"...Itadakimasu."

Nanahoshi furrows her brow and begins eating with a spoon and fork.

Doesn't look like she's enjoying it.

She peels off some fish with a fork, squeezes a little lemon juice on it, and puts it in her mouth.

Then follows it up with some rice with her spoon and starts chewing.

And takes a sip of the miso soup directly from its porcelain bowl.

And she finally said.

"This soup doesn't even have any dashi in it..."

{ C-Editor's note: Dashi is cooking broth, a basis of Japanese food. }

Tears flow out of her eyes.

She didn't stop crying as she ate.

To be honest, the food doesn't taste particularly good.

The rice is dry, and the soup a tad salty.

The fish is delicious, but a bit fishy, and the lemon doesn't match.

The balance is off.

Not really tasty.

Japanese cuisine in our memory is much better than this.

But Nanahoshi's hands keep moving, and her tears keep dropping.

Eating quietly, and she soon finished.

"... Thank you for the meal."

With that, I am content.

After the afternoon class, I return to my room.

Summoning Magic class is quite interesting.

Rather, Sylvaril is a good teacher.

Today she didn't teach anything special in particular, but I might fall behind pretty soon.

I need to study up while I still can.

You know, I wonder how long these lessons will take.

At this rate, maybe about a week?

Although at school only homeroom is required to attend, and the rest is free time, but I don't want to stay away from home for too long.

I'm worried about Lucy and how Zenith is doing.

Well, I should focus on what's in front of me.

All we can do for Zenith right now is observe her, and Aisha is taking care of Lucy.

What I should do now is review and prepare for Summoning lessons.

Knock knock.*
Just when I sit down on a sofa and take out my notebook, someone knocks on the door.

"Rudi, are you in?"

Sylphy comes in without waiting for my answer.

After spotting me, she just wanders in and seats herself next to me.

Then, she sighs.

I take out a pitcher and pour a cup of water for her.

"Tired?"

"Thanks."

Taking the cup, Sylphy empties it all in one shot.

"Phew."

She looks exhausted.

"How was it? On Ariel-sama's side?"

"Ugh. Well, it's been rough."

"Really?"

"Perugius-sama doesn't really care for anything Ariel-sama has to say."

In an attempt to get Perugius in her camp, Ariel has been suggesting various incentives for helping her.

Like offering him a title once she becomes queen.

Or territory from Asura Kingdom.

Or offering various concessions in business.

Of course for Perugius, those things are long behind him.

"Well, of course."

"Really?"

"Isn't Perugius-sama living here precisely to get away from those things? Not just disinterested, he probably really hates them."

"Eh? I thought he said he lives here so he can always be ready for Laplace."

Sylphy looks puzzled.

Did Perugius say that?

Well, maybe that's one of the reasons.

"Besides, if he really wants power, then he could get it on his own. After all, he's still the hero of Laplace Campaign. Didn't Sylvaril saythat he hates how old fashioned Asura is. Offering those things would only annoy him."

If he wants to, he can probably leave any time.

Yet he lives in seclusion.

Although I don't know the details, there are probably reasons for that.

"Really? I guess so. Ariel-sama is really anxious about this... Eh, Rudi, what do you think she should do?"

"What to do..."

I'm not good with these kind of things.

But I think Ariel got off the wrong foot.

Normally, don't you try to get to know each other first?

Requests can come after that.

If the other side felt troubled, then you can offer various concessions.

All things, one step at a time.

Ariel has charisma.

Maybe that's why she's always been able to convince others to support her cause, without making that first step.

So when she meets someone undaunted by her charisma, she gets cornered.

Nanahoshi, Perugius, both are like that.

And me too, I suppose.

I would help for Sylphy's sake, but for Ariel I don't really care.

"First, how about befriending Perugius-sama better?"

"Befriend?"

"Right, talk about his hobbies, listen to his war stories, those kind of things."

"Hobbies and war stories."

"Bringing Zanoba along might be a good idea. Among us, he seems to like that guy the most."

Zanoba and Perugius leading the conversation, and Ariel can join in on the side.

Perhaps that can get some results.

"Oh. Makes sense. I'll tell Ariel-sama to give that a shot."

"Don't take it too seriously? I could be totally wrong."

"Haha, thanks for the advice."

Sylphy finishes with a kiss on my cheeks.

Feeling her supple lips, my decision to study flew out the window, perverted thoughts fill my head.

Grab Sylphy right here, and let's make a second baby right on that bed...

Those thoughts cross my mind.

No, no.

I can't be so impulsive right now.

I need to study!

Okay, how about stroking that ass a little? No, better not.

"Say, how's things on your side?"

"Oh. It's like this."

With the H Genie sealed, I talk about the events of today.

Zenith and her curse.

Summoning magic.

Also, the meal with Nanahoshi.

"... Rudi is so nice to Nanahoshi."

Sylphy looks a little displeased when I mention Nanahoshi.

So eating alone with another woman is no good?

Well, Zanoba was there too.

Maybe I shouldn't have prepared something special for Nanahoshi.

Not good, got to do something to make Sylphy happy.

Sylphy needs a reminder that the one I love isn't Nanahoshi, it's her.

"Em, Sylphiette-san?"

"Yes?"

"May I have a hug?"

Hearing that, Sylphy puffs her cheeks and turns her head.

"Oh, playing nice all the sudden? What's wrong? Feeling guilty?"

Eh, eh?

Why is Sylphy so cold today?

What happened?

Is she mad?

Did I say something wrong?

Burnout?

We have been married for almost 3 years now.

The 3 year itch?

No, how many years doesn't matter.

What do I do now?

Danger, danger.

"Eh, sorry. You always seem so excited whenever Nanahoshi comes up, so spoil me for a bit."

Sylphy sticks out her tongue and hugs me tight.

I return the hug.

It feels so warm and soft.

Feels just like Sylphy.

Honestly, I might have done something that displeased Sylphy.

But, I don't want her to hate me.

I've got to be more careful in the future.

"If Rudi really wants to make Nanahoshi-san his third wife, please don't just drop it out of the blue like Roxy. Can we talk about it first?"

"No, that won't happen. My relationship with her isn't like Roxy and Sylphy. Just that, I know a bit about where she's from, so I want togive her a hand. There's nothing between us..."

"Oh really?"

Sylphy slaps me on the head with a smile.

Then she pat me on the back before she heads out.

"Well then, I need to get back to Ariel-sama. Do your best, Rudi."

"Ah, ok. You too, Sylphy."

Not good.

I was earnest, but without realizing it made Sylphy unhappy.

This is bad.

This is very bad.

I need to keep my distance with Nanahoshi.

I can't do too many things to please her.

Okay.

"Eh?"

Opening the door on the way out, Sylphy suddenly stops mid-track.

Nanahoshi is right outside.

"Sorry, I didn't want to bother you two, but... Cough.. Cough..."

Nanahoshi was coughing roughly.

Holding her chest and neck, she seems in serious pain.

"Sorry. I accidentally overheard your conversation. Cough... I don't plan to have that kind of relationship with Rudeus, so please restassured... Cough.."

"Ah, oh. That's fine. More importantly, are you feeling alright?"

"It's fi-... cough, cough."

I never saw Nanahoshi in such a bad shape before.

Like something was stuck in her throat, she keeps coughing. How worrying.

"A bit, just now, I started to have a really bad cough... cough... cough... So I've been looking for someone to cast detoxification for me. I went over to Cliff's, but they're... busy. So I came over to find Rudeus... But if it will cause some misunderstanding, then I'll hold it and wait for Cliff tomorrow."

"No, it's fine. Don't worry about that..."

Sylphy hurriedly grabs Nanahoshi by her shoulders.

"Then, let me take care of it. If it doesn't work, then we can have Cliff cast an Advanced one instead?"

"Thank you very much, please do..."

"Alright, first thing's first."

Sylphy gently places a hand on Nanahoshi's neck.

She can use voiceless invocation detoxification magic too.

Something even beyond me.

No, I should have that potential too.

"Eh?"

While thinking that, Sylphy looks puzzled and confused.

The next moment, Nanahoshi's cough suddenly intensifies.

"Cough.. Cough..."

"Eh? It feels... really weird? Magic-ish... Eh?"

Sylphy tilts her head and places her other hand on Nanahoshi's shoulder.

Instantly, Nanahoshi's cough gets even worse. The situation is critical.

"Hey, what's wrong?"

Feeling anxious I ask.

Nanahoshi covers her mouth.

"Ugh.. cough!"

Splat.

"Eh?"

Blood splattered over the floor.

"Hey; hey!"

"..."

Nanahoshi looks stunned at her hand.

Then, she slowly opened her palm and showed it to us.

Her palm was painted red with blood.

Immediately, Nanahoshi lost consciousness and collapsed on the floor.

"Eh? Why?"

I'm not the only one in shock.

Sylphy stands stunned, unable to comprehend what has happened.

"Just now, I felt, in Nanahoshi... Why? Eh?"

Her face and hand splattered with blood, looking down at Nanahoshi on the ground.

Her face pale white.

I rush to her side.

"SYLPHY"

I yell out in a coarse voice.

Sylphy's entire body trembles. Fear in her eyes, she retreats several steps.

"N-No! It wasn't me! I didn't do it."

Sylphy has retreated into a corner.

I silently follow behind.

With her back against the wall, realizing she has nowhere to run, she can only shut tight her eyes.

"I might have said those words, but I was only joking around... Something like this... I would never do anything like this!"

I take out a handkerchief and dip it in some water (warmed with magic) and start wiping the blood off Sylphy's face.

"Eh?"

Then I wipe off the blood on her hand.

A patient's blood is a treasure trove of pathogens.

Although I don't think just wiping would help, but leaving the blood there probably won't do.

Sylphy offers no resistance.

"Don't worry. Sylphy. I was watching. It's not Sylphy's fault."

"Oh, oh."

I'm very calm right now.

Seeing Sylphy in a panic somehow calmed me back down.

Maybe it hasn't settled in.

For now, stay calm.

"It's fine. It's not Sylphy's fault. Nanahoshi has been weak lately. Right?"

"Em..."

"This time you just had bad timing. Caught her at her worst. It's not Sylphy's fault."

"... Em, em, but, just now, I felt, when I used magic, in Nanahoshi, something strange, detoxification, did not work at all... Not justthat... it ballooned..."

Nanahoshi was on the ground, blood gushing from her nose and face.

Unconscious.

Situation critical.

Sylphy is still a mess.

Better to calm her down first.

No, better to keep her busy with something.

The best thing to stop someone from panicking is to give her a goal.

"Listen carefully, Sylphy. Cliff, Perugius-sama, go find someone and call him over."

"Call?"

"I will examine Nanahoshi's condition and do what I can. Meanwhile, Sylphy, go find help. Can you do it?"

"I-I can."

Sylphy's eyes regain focus.

Then, she heads to the door and rushes out.

Even though she has experienced a lot in her life, seeing so much blood close up must still be quite a shock.

Especially from someone she's familiar with.

Even if she's jealous, Sylphy would never do something like that.

But Sylphy could be impulsive sometimes...

No, no.

That's impossible. Definitely impossible.

"Okay."

Stopping myself from overthinking, I turn towards Nanahoshi.

Although there's little I can do here, I'll do what I can.

3 days after Nanahoshi collapsed.

Nanahoshi has yet to regain consciousness.

The reason that she vomited blood is unknown.

After Sylphy went to look for help, Arumanfi quickly came and brought Nanahoshi to the infirmary.

In the meantime, I went around to gather the party and inform them of the situation.

Nanahoshi was not doing well. While casting detoxification magic on her, she vomited blood and collapsed.

Right now she's in the infirmary undergoing treatment.

The truth is, everything happened so suddenly that I don't know the details.

Although troubled, everyone accepts the situation.

Right now, Nanahoshi is being treated by Yuruzu of Atonement.

Yuruzu of Atonement has the ability to heal.

Capable of transferring the health and vitality from one person to another.

Because it works on a different principle than detoxification magic, it seems to work for illnesses untreatable with detoxification...

Still, her ability doesn't work by itself, and needs the cooperation of another person.

Without any hesitation Sylphy offers herself to help.

Sylphy lies down besides Nanahoshi and treatment begins.

But Nanahoshi has yet to regain consciousness, her expression grim, her cough constant.

"Karowante, how is she?"

Seeing Nanahoshi in this condition, Perugius orders another underling for diagnosis.

Karowante of Insight.

He has the power to uncover a target's power and secrets.

For the ill, also their condition.

Like X-ray vision.

He shakes his head after observing Nanahoshi.

"This is beyond Yuruzu's ability."

"Research the library."

"Yes."

With that said, Perugius and his subordinates begin researching the name and cure of Nanahoshi's sickness.

Trying to match Nanahoshi's symptoms to the library's records.

I offered to lend a hand but was refused. Outsiders cannot enter the library.

Of course, Yuruzu continues to administer treatment, so Sylphy never left the infirmary.

In the end, there's nothing for me to do.

Of course, I didn't just sit around and do nothing for 3 days.

I returned home once to inform Roxy of the situation.

Nanahoshi fell ill and Sylphy is helping with the treatment.

So it may be some time before we return.

Roxy begins to move at once with that information.

She helps us contact school and request a leave of absence, as well as explaining the situation with family.

Then to me she said to leave the house to her.

She's far more cool-headed than I am.

She has gotten accustomed to these type of situations.

In the end, I couldn't do anything. Everything has been taken care of.

I informed Aisha and Norn that I'll be coming back late, took a change of clothing and returned to the Sky Castle.

Even at home, there's nothing for me to do.

All I can do is pray that Nanahoshi stays safe.

"... Nanahoshi, will she recover?"

The others, like me, can do nothing.

Particularly Cliff.

He spend his time praying at a chapel within the castle.

"Everything is in the hand of Milis-sama."

Cliff said, with his hands folded and eyes closed.

Praying to God during moments of crisis.

I never really believed in that religious stuff.

In this world, I believe in those that actually offered a helping hand.

But even I understand that, right now, praying to Roxy and Sylphy can bring no comfort.

"..."

Suddenly, I recall a movie I once watched.

A masterpiece of alien invasion.

Aliens, with their overwhelming technology, nearly annihilated mankind.

Yet at the end all their machineries suddenly stop working.

Aliens have no immunity against earth pathogens and all perished.

{ C-Editor's note: Referring to The War of the Worlds science fiction film. }

Nanahoshi came from another world.

She differs from me, who's reincarnated.

She does not grow old, does not have magic, and therefore can't use any magical tools.

Perhaps, not just magic, she has no immunity either.

But, if that were the case, then she should have fallen ill long ago.

The Metastasis Event happened 8 years ago.

Nanahoshi also came to this world 8 years ago.

There's no reason for this to happen now.

"..."

That girl.

Will she really die..?

Why did this happen?

4 days after Nanahoshi collapsed.

We are summoned to a round table.

Besides Yuruzu, all other Familiars are present.

Perugius sits before them.

He sat on a luxuriously big chair with the Familiars standing behind.

"Please sit."

We sit down on Sylvaril's suggestion.

Absent is Sylphy, who is helping Yuruzu with treatment, 7 present in all.

"Nanahoshi-sama has been diagnosed."

Once we're seated, Sylvaril steps forward and reports.

We finally know.

"Nanahoshi-sama suffers from Drain Syndrome."

Drain Syndrome.

Never heard of it.

Looking around, neither did anyone else.

Even someone as informed as Cliff comes up empty.

"It's expected that no one has heard it before. A disease from time immemorial, when men held far lesser magic power than now. If a child is born without any magic capacity, without exception, that child experiences similar symptoms and by the age of 10, dies."

So the same situation as Nanahoshi.

Although she's not 10, she has been in this world for over 8 years now.

And she doesn't have an ounce of magic...

At least, it's not Sylphy's fault.

Thank goodness.

"According to records, those without magic power absorbed minute amounts of magic from outside, after 10 years of accumulating in their body, it becomes an illness..."

Without magic, their ability to absorb magic from outside is minute.

I don't know the details, but I guess magic is like bacteria in a way.

For those with magic power, the good bacteria kill the bad, but in those without any power only bad bacteria accumulates.

We don't know for sure how trustworthy the records are.

But that does make a lot of sense.

"Does it record a cure?"

"No. According to the records, this disease was eradicated some 7000 years ago, after humanity increased in magic power."

7000 years ago, so the first Human-Demon Great War.

I remember hearing that the war raged for nearly a thousand years.

The war caused all kinds of advancements.

Through various means, humanity self improved.

One side effect is the eradication of this disease.

That's possible too.

Say, 7000 years ago.

There can't be many texts that managed to survive such ravage of time.

Finding the disease's name is already a miracle in and of itself.

"Then, what do we do?"

"We stop time."

The one that answers my question isn't Sylvaril.

But rather the calmly seated Perugius.

"Borrow the power from Sukeakoto of Time and stop time for Nanahoshi."

Perugius declares and a man steps forward.

He wears a mask with its mouth sticking out.

A Hyottoko mask, rather, more like a gas mask.

He is Sukeakoto of Time.

From what I remember, he has the ability of stopping time for anyone he touches.

Of course, time freezes for himself as well. But with this ability, he can prevent Nanahoshi's illness from worsening or death.

But who knows how long he can maintain it, nor does it solve the root of the problem.

"I see, then what?"

"Contact people on the ground and find a cure."

Oh.

That could work.

No one will refuse someone like Perugius.

"Still, the question is who would help Nanahoshi."

"Isn't there some way with Armored Dragon-sama's influence?"

"Nanahoshi and I only have a cooperative relationship. I shall not owe favors for her sake."

Isn't that a bit cold?

Still, I don't know the exact details of their relationship, so I have no right to object.

"Don't be mistaken. As guests of my castle, I'll offer some minimum assistance. But don't expect everything. My ultimate purpose is to find and destroy Laplace."

In other words, because of the work related to observing Laplace, he will not do more than necessary to help.

Nor will he owe favors to others.

Favors demand repayment.

Particularly so for the cure of an long eradicated disease.

The other side will definitely expect something big in return.

Perugius has no reason to go that far for Nanahoshi.

No, actually he has plenty of reason not to.

Keeping Nanahoshi alive is as far as he'll go.

He refuses to do more. If someone wants to help, then he's free to help.

That is the meaning behind Perugius's words.

That should be right.

"... So you will just watch Nanahoshi die!?"

The one that yelled is Cliff.

He stood up screaming towards Perugius.

"When did I say that?"

"Lies. Someone like you, inside such a impressive castle, with so many capable Familiars! You can definitely find a cure!"

Hearing Cliff, Perugius raises an eyebrow.

"I have no reason to help."

"Quit joking around! Helping the weak is the duty of the strong!"

"Pssh, don't push those detestable Milis teachings onto us."

"What did you say!"

Cliff got overexcited and blurts out without thinking.

He's a follower of Milis.

The Milis Church shares many similarities with Christianity.

It's possible it also has lessons on giving a hand to lost sheep and the like.

But saying that to Perugius is improper.

Perugius has his own concerns.

For 400 years, he only moved with one goal in mind.

Perugius indeed wishes to gain knowledge of other world summoning through Nanahoshi.

But that is second to Laplace.

Just a way to lull away time.

"In other words, you'll just watch Nanahoshi die! If you're going to help, help until the end."

"Cliff, stop!"

Cliff stands up kicking back his chair. Elinalise screams at him.

She put a heavy hand on Cliff's shoulder, stopping him from going further.

"Cliff, I understand how you're feeling, but control yourself."

"..."

"I don't want to lose you for this."

Looking around, all 11 Familiars in battle stance.

Seeing Cliff getting held back, Perugius smiles in ridicule.

"If you have a problem, then why don't you do it yourself? Your god said so too. When helping others, don't count on someone else, isn't it?"

"Grr..."

Looking unsatisfied, Cliff fell back to his chair.

He doesn't want to fight with Perugius.

He just thought, for a person like Perugius, capable of almost everything, he ought to be able to help.

"Mmhm..."

What do we do?

I want to help Nanahoshi.

But I don't even know where to begin?

Looking at Ariel and the others, they seem to be thinking the same thing.

Aisha and Nanahoshi know each other too, if Nanahoshi dies she'd be upset too.

Also if she dies, Sylphy would feel responsible.

Is there anything I can do?

Am I that powerless?

"Excuse me."

Just now, the door to the round table opens.

It's Yuruzu of Atonement.

She speaks facing us.

"Nanahoshi-sama has regained consciousness."

I almost leaped out hearing this.

"H-how is she?"

"On the surface she has improved a little."

"On the surface?"

"Indeed. Doline Syndrome is the result of magic accumulating in the body, which makes one ill. That illness has not been cured."

The way she says it, it feels like HIV.

So all the coughing is also a symptom of her illness.

In other words, although the surface symptoms have been cured, the cause remains.

"Then, can you remove magic from within her?"

"I cannot."

"Then, who could?"

Yuruzu shakes her head at my question.

"Is that so..."

Is there no way to remove the magic inside her?

Like, a magic tool of some sort?

7000 years passed, technology should have advanced quite a bit in this area.

But what should be done?

Would the magic absorbing stone work?

No, that does nothing for magic within the body.

I have a feeling that it can't be done.

Maybe a magic tool can be made with that property?

But how long will that take?

We don't have any leads in the first place.

Damn.

"In any case, we should go check up on Nanahoshi."

With that said I stood up, everyone else follows as well.

The infirmary feels rather dreary.

The furniture doesn't differ too much from the guest rooms.

But the stone structures are exposed and the walls lack windows.

In the center of the room there's some sort of operating table, with knives and bandages in the drawers.

"..."

Nanahoshi is at a corner.

The bloodstains on her are gone. She has been changed into a patient gown-like outfit.

Sterile, lifeless.

"Nanahoshi, are you alright?"

I ask. Nanahoshi glares at me and said.

"Do I look alright?"

"..."

Of course not.

Her face pale, dark circles under her eye.

Anyone can see she's not doing well.

Atonement's ability is hard even for the patient.

The other bed is empty.

Like on a rotation with us, Sylphy left for the guestroom.

I saw her on the way in. She looks rather haggard.

For 4 days, she assisted in the treatment.

Even though I doubt she was without food or water, it must still be hard on her body.

"They say I can't be cured."

"Ah, oh."

I sit on a chair beside her.

Doesn't look like Miss Yuruzu kept her in the dark about her illness.

"No, you will be better soon."

"I won't get better."

Having said that, Nanahoshi turns away.

Looking at the wall in silence.

What I said was probably irresponsible.

I don't know what I should be saying right now.

"..."

After I fell silent, Ariel and others all try to make conversations.

Some try to comfort Nanahoshi, others try to raise her spirit, and others say you'll definitely get better.

They each try to encourage her in various ways.

But right now, they might all have the opposite effect.

The one really suffering doesn't want to hear niceties like these.

"..."

Soon after, everyone ran out of things to say.

With Nanahoshi unresponsive, nobody knows what to talk about.

The silence is suffocating, making everyone restless.

"Then, Nanahoshi. I'm heading back. I'll come back to check up on you."

Starting with Ariel, everyone leaves for their rooms one by one.

Even though Cliff wishes to stay, but with Elinalise urging he left as well.

When they leave, I could hear Elinalise saying [... Nothing we say matters right now.]

And that's how it is.

Then, only I remain.

Why did I stay. I'm not sure either.

Still, I felt I have to stay for a little longer.

It's dangerous to leave her alone.

"..."

But I have nothing to say.

With a sick person.

With a person suffering from an incurable disease.

No matter what I say, they're just niceties.

Nanahoshi is very upset.

Her summoning research has been going so well.

Phase 1 had a little hiccup, but Phase 2 and 3 both proceeded smoothly.

Phase 4, with a little help from Perugius, should have results soon.

I'm not sure with Phase 5, but it's only a matter of time.

Maybe in 1, 2 more years she can return home.

To hear that she has an incurable disease, at a moment like this, of course she's upset.

Maybe not cancer, but it's still said to be terminal.

I wouldn't be surprised if she got violent.

No, if it really is incurable.

If her future is so bleak, then a little violence is fine.

I'd cooperate.

No matter what, as long as it helps her mood a little.

"I wasn't particularly healthy in the first place."

While I stay silent, Nanahoshi speaks with a sigh.

She sound more composed than I expected.

But Nanahoshi is obviously faking it.

"Getting sick... Although never this bad, I'd catch the cold every year."

Slowly words trickle out.

And I quietly listen.

"My grades aren't bad, but I'm no good with sports. If asked, I guess I'm the indoor type.

Medicine in this world isn't very advanced, right?

Do you know? Maybe it has to do with magic, but people of this world don't even dress their wounds? And because of that they die or lose a limb. It's retarded. All can be prevented with a bit of clean water over the wound.

Because I can't use magic, so I do all kinds of things to stay safe. Avoiding contagious diseases, staying away from crowds, don't eat strange foods...

It's true, from your perspective I might have lived unhealthily, but I exercise at home too! I took care of myself.

Because if I get sick, there might not be a cure.

Rather, if I'm sick, I probably won't be cured.

Because, if I get sick, I probably won't know why...

... Basically, this world, isn't it too weird?

Gigantic monsters too big to support themselves. I don't know what wizardry that is, but aren't they clearly against rules of nature?

Of course, even I, when I came, was a little curious.

Even I played games before. I don't hate sword and magics stuff. I'd be lying if I wasn't excited.

Just a bit, I'm jealous that you were born in this world, and you can live in this world..."

Nanahoshi said, and suddenly shuts up.

Her shoulders tremble.

Slowly, she turns to me.

Face wrinkles.

Tears collected on her swollen eyes.

"I don't want to die."

Like a dam busting, tears come pouring down.

"I don't want to die here! I don't want to die in this weird world! Why? Why? It's too weird! Hey, do you know? I didn't change at all for 8 years! I don't grow taller, and my hair doesn't grow longer! I get hungry, I poop, but my nails never grow. I don't even get periods!"

Nanahoshi throws a nearby water jug.

The jug slams the wall, splatters in loud pieces. Water soaks the bed.

"I'm not a human of this world! In this world I don't even count as alive! I'm basically a corpse! Even so, why? Why do I get sick? Isn't that just too weird? Why am I unlucky like this? I don't want to die! I don't want to die in this strange world!"

Nanahoshi screams, tears keep splattering, and splattering.

"Because I never even had my first kiss! Even though I have someone I like, I never even told him that I love him! I'm really so jealous of you! Everyday so happy, so fulfilling! What? Dad died? Mom got sick? So what? What's so bad about that? At this rate, I won't even see my dad again! If I die, mom won't even know! Just one more time! Dad! Mom! I still remember! I still remember that morning. Dad says he'll come home early. Mom says we'll have fried Saury tonight. I told dad that I'm hanging out with friends, but staying a little out is fine, and complained to mom that I'm tired of Saury already. Why, why did this happen? Dad and mom are probably worried sick about me. I want to go home. I want to see them again. I don't want to die. I don't want to die in this place... Woo.. Hick..."

"..."

I feel a sharp pain in my chest.

I can understand Nanahoshi's pain.

When I first came to this world, I couldn't sympathize.

Can't go back, can't meet again.

Not able to see family once more.

Even if you tell me, I won't understand.

Back then, I probably want to forget those things and just enjoy life in this new world.

But now it's different.

I understand wanting to go back, wanting to meet again.

Everyday is life's greatest treasure.

Once they're gone, they're gone forever.

... Because if they're gone, they're gone forever.

Paul is dead.

Zenith's memories may never come back.

Buina village and that warm home have both disappeared.

From now on, all I can do is protect my own family, my own life.

Sylphy, Roxy, Lucy.

Lilia, Aisha, Norn, Zenith.

If I separate from them, it would be gut wrenching.

If someone disappears, then I'd go to heaven and hell to find her.

If I return to the original world.

If magic like this exists in that world, I'd seek it.

I would do everything I can to return.

"Woo... Wooo...."

Holding her knees Nanahoshi cries.

Cliff, Zanoba, Sylphy, she was never close to any of them.

Only with me did she ever pay any attention.

Listen to my requests, accepting my invitations.

If I think about it, she had never done anything to wrong me.

Nanahoshi looked so excited when we chat in Japanese.

To her, maybe Japanese with me is her only anchor from that world.

"Someone, save me..."

Hearing her meek whisper.

I stand.

I return to the round table where Perugius remains.

All his Familiars have already left.

Only Perugius is left, like he has been waiting for me.

"What shall it be?"

"... I am taking action. I hope, as long as it doesn't interfere with your own work, that Perugius-sama will offer some assistance."

Perugius nods heavily when I finish.

"Oh, so you're finally making a move. Good. If Nanahoshi dies, even I would feel sorry."

"Thank you very much."

But what should I do?

The cure to a disease eradicated some 7000 years ago.

Where do I even begin?

We already know both detoxification and healing magic are ineffective.

If those have worked, then Perugius would already done something.

Magic tools.

I don't know if one might work.

One that works inside the body should be related to Cliff's magic tools.

But Cliff's magic tool was custom made for Elinalise only.

Observe Elinalise's condition and adjust step by step.

Although there are results, but it's still incomplete.

Maybe it only needs a few adjustments to control Nanahoshi's symptoms?

But right now, Nanahoshi doesn't have the time for observation and adjustment.

She has coughed up blood.

Even if we cure the surface symptoms, it will just happen again.

Next time, it might be fatal.

Moreover, if we froze time, then there's no way to experiment.

Magic tools are no go.

Maybe one might eventually work, but right now we need a more immediate fix.

A cure.

Does no one know?

Not even Hitogami or Orsted?

Would they know?

I can't contact Hitogami.

Maybe he'll show up with advice tonight.

But I have no way to initiate contact.

"Perugius-sama. Do you have a way to contact Dragon God Orsted?"

"Impossible. His movements are impossible to understand."

No way of contacting Orsted.

"He probably doesn't know either. He has been in this world for maybe a hundred years. Although he's wise, I doubt he will know about a disease from 7000 years ago."

So Orsted is a hundred or so.

Although old, compared to Perugius he's still a youngling.

No, compared to me he's old enough.

"Is that so. But someone who knows about the world 7000 years ago..."

Wait, hold on.

7000 years.

There's one.

There's one person that lived for so long.

Even though she might not be familiar with this illness...

But if I talk to her, maybe I can find a clue.

"I know someone..."

"Oh?"

But, I don't know if I can find her.

Last time it was a chance meeting.

And just like that we separated.

No particular connection.

But I have to do something.

If I do nothing, then nothing will change.

"Perugius-sama, can you take me to the Magic Continent?"

"Magic Continent? What do you plan to do there?"

I only met that person once.

Although Roxy also met her before, but where she is now I do not know.

But her name I knew from long ago.

Back in the Fedoa Capital, a name I learned from history lessons.

After we met, there's no way I could forget it.

"Meet with The Great Empress of Demon Realm, Kishirika Kishirisu."

7000 years ago.

A figure of the first Human-Demon Great War.

The plan is simple.

First, with Perugius's assistance, head to the Magic Continent.

Find Kishirika Kishirisu.

Ask if she knows a cure, or knows someone who does.

Indeed it's quite simple.

If only the Great Demon Empress Kishirika Kishirisu would stay put on a throne overseeing a city somewhere.

But I know Kishirika wanders the Magic Continent.

Meeting her is all up to chance.

Who knows how many months it'll take.

Perugius said that he has magic teleportation circles near all major cities in the Magic Continent.

Thinking about it, magic teleportation circles are truly terrifying.

Especially when he can teleport anywhere in the world from this castle, an incredible threat.

After all, there's no way to attack this castle in the sky, yet there's no defense against it.

So it's understandable why the art has long been forbidden.

Even though Orsted and Perugius have both been using them in secret.

This world probably has quite a few guys secretly breaking the rules.

It might be cheating, but that's the nature of this world.

Those magic teleport circles probably aren't used by Orsted alone.

Anyways, find Kishirika.

Just like Roxy had done before, search one city at a time.

Who knows how long it'll take.

But it shouldn't take more than a year.

Since teleporting only takes a day.

The problem is what if Kishirika and us pass each other somewhere.

About that, I think I'll ask the Adventurer's Guild for assistance.

Reward for the capture of the Great Empress of the Demon Realm.

Capture Kishirika.

Must be alive.

ALIVE ONLY.

I gather everyone together and lay out my plan.

Ariel, Luke, Cliff, Zanoba, Elinalise.

And also Sylphy.

Sylphy regained consciousness while I was talking with Perugius.

But her exhaustion is obvious.

She was thin to begin with, but now she's more frail than ever.

She should rest for at least 5 more days.

"Everyone, please lend a hand for Nanahoshi's sake."

When I said that, Ariel nods in approval.

"Then, I can provide some magic tools."

Ariel removes the magic rings she's wearing and hands it to me.

A pair of matching rings, when injected with magic, both gemstones will shine together.

Useful for an emergency, seems like a secret magic tool of the Asura Kingdom.

Although I don't know what for, I'm sure it'll come in handy.

Reminds me of a pager.

"Zanoba and Elinalise, please accompany me."

I ask Zanoba and Elinalise to be my guards.

No matter what, Zanoba is a miko.

Even if we were to fight a hydra, he can probably come in handy.

Because I lack touki, I'm weak defensively, but with [Disturb Magic] and absorbing magical stones my resistance against magic is strong.

With Zanoba as forward guard, we can even take that hydra.

But, I can't bare to see Zanoba die for my selfish desires, so with Elinalise as support I feel reassured.

"I..."

"Cliff-senpai, I'd like you to make a magic tool."

Honestly, I don't know whether we can find a cure.

Kishirika might not know either.

So this trip might be a waste of time.

To avoid this, we should try different approaches.

Nanahoshi's illness seems similar to a curse.

With some adjustments to his research, maybe Cliff can develop a magic tool to extend Nanahoshi's lifespan.

"I want to go too!"

Even though I thought so, Cliff refused.

"Please take me, I want to help Nanahoshi as well."

But continuing his research will help Nanahoshi too.

But Cliff probably wants to do more than that.

Like if he just continues as usual, he won't feel like he's really done anything for Nanahoshi.

"Please, Rudeus, even I could understand her want for returning home."

Cliff begging like this.

Now that I think about it, he has been away from home for a long time too.

Height-wise he might look only 15, but he's already 19.

I heard he left the Holy Kingdom of Milis almost 6-7 years ago.

Although the home Nanahoshi looks to return to isn't the same as Cliff's.

But their intent is the same.

"Fine."

"Really?"

Well, with Elinalise coming along and Nanahoshi frozen in time, he won't have many opportunities for research.

Yeah, no reason to force it.

If we confirm that there's no cure, or if we can't find Kishirika, then we can focus on research instead.

"Yes. I'll be in your care, Cliff-senpai."

Let's shorten the search period a bit, so we can get back to research in time.

Half a year is enough.

"... Then, is there... anything I... can do?"

Finally, Sylphy asks, looking unwell.

She has yet to recover.

She can't travel with us.

Besides...

"Sylphy, please rest here for now."

"Em, and then?"

"After rest..."

I'm hesitant over what I'm about to say.

"I wish for Sylphy to return home to care for Lucy."

"Eh?"

Sylphy looks visibly gloomy, but I continue anyways.

"It might be a long time before I can return home this time. I don't think it's good for both parents to disappear on her."

For children, parents' presence is absolutely necessary... I don't have to say that.

But it's because Paul and Zenith exists, that I'm who I am.

For children, it's better for the parents to rear them personally.

Of course, absence for a week or two won't be a big deal.

But not a few months.

"Ah, that. You're right. If Rudi isn't here, then I need to take care of Lucy."

"Sorry."

"Um."

Even though Sylphy has been informed that Nanahoshi's collapse isn't her fault, she still want to help somehow.

"Sylphy has done enough. Leave the rest to me."

"Em..."

Sylphy nods with regrets.

Of course she loves Lucy.

But at 10, she was forced to stand on her own after the Metastasis Event.

Without a last goodbye, both her parents passed.

She did well despite that.

Despite some twists and turns, she found a job, got married, and managed to live on.

So for her, maybe parents may not be that great of a presence.

Or perhaps, even children without parents can grow and prosper is the wisdom of this land.

Sylphy is only 18.

People won't change that much, just because of childbirth.

It was only through caring for my own, did my thinking start to change.

When I was 18 in the previous world, children didn't even cross my mind.

In comparison, Sylphy is exceptional.

I will help Nanahoshi. Sylphy will stay at home.

I hope she won't feel jealous.

"But won't Roxy complain? Roxy knows the Magic Continent the best."

"That too. Well, if we're in trouble, I'll talk to Roxy about it."

Roxy isn't present.

No matter the reason, Perugius will not allow a Magic Race to enter the castle.

She tried to come but was refused.

Besides, Roxy has her teaching career.

She's finally getting used to the rhythm of work.

She can't quit with only a year on the job.

I will help Nanahoshi.

But, I also need to maintain my current lifestyle.

Lifestyle is important.

Both are important.

That's why, I need to protect Sylphy and Roxy.

Of course, that's also because I'm selfish.

I don't think I'm always right.

But right now I don't want Roxy and Sylphy to face danger.

I don't want them to die in front of me like Paul.

Even though perfect security doesn't exist in this world.

Compared to the Magic Continent, Magic City Sharia should be much less dangerous.

"Please don't do anything like lose your hand again."

Sylphy looks uneasy.

"I'll be careful."

Staying safe is why I'm bringing Zanoba and Elinalise along.

But if they're in a life or death situation, even sacrificing my right hand I'll help them.

Of course, I don't want to die either...

I won't make a mistake again.

I went home again and explained the situation to Roxy and rest of the family.

Aisha cried when I said I might not be home for a long time.

But this time coming and going would be easy.

I plan to come back every once a while.

Like going on a business trip.

I'm saying that going for a long time is just in case.

The magic teleportation circles might suddenly stop working, and I might not return.

"Well, please take care."

"I understand, Rudi take care as well."

Although I was worried that Roxy wanted to come too, but after listening to my explanations, she bluntly accepts staying home.

That slightly disappoints me.

Well, looks like I'll travel many times to Sky Castle now, so preparations are important.

Accidents might happen.

Perugius said, even if the magic teleport circles stop working, he'll come get me if I use the magic tool near any monuments to the SevenGreat Major Powers.

Not that I don't believe him, but you never know.

For example, if we leave and all of a sudden Laplace revived, then he might be too busy to help.

Additionally, I brought some Spirit of Light scrolls and other convenient items.

All set.

The magic teleportation circle lies below ground of the Sky Castle.

The castle in the sky isn't just expansive above ground, but below as well.

Not just that, but underground is even more sophisticated.

Just a few levels down it becomes almost maze like.

The castle grounds are probably made for guests. It's below ground that's the real deal.

"We're here."

Sylvaril led us to a particular room 3 levels below ground.

A place easy to find once you know the directions.

No lighting in the room, but the magic circle shines pale white, illuminating the room.

"Perugius-sama just completed this magic circle to reconnect with an abandoned one on the Magic Continent."

"Abandoned?"

"It happens often with teleport magic. Destroy the magic circle on one side, and the other side stops working as well."

Teleport circles come in pairs.

But you can repair a broken one and use it again.

Magic circles of this world really come in all kinds.

"These kinds of magic circles are all under Perugius-sama's control?"

"Perugius-sama is indeed a great man."

Sylvaril sounds proud.

Speaking of which, drawing magic teleportation circles.

In these situation, making ones at will to connect everywhere sounds quite convenient...

But, because it's forbidden, he probably won't want to teach me.

Well, if I push my luck, I might end up making all sorts of enemies, so I shouldn't be greedy.

Nor should I forget that others can use them too.

For example, if a violent magic beast accidentally stumbles into one. It's possible.

If my magic teleport circles end up destroying a village or something, I'd have nightmares.

"Perugius-sama said this magic circle should get you close to the Great Demon Empress."

"Does Perugius-sama have any lead to Kishirika's whereabouts?"

"Of course."

Really?

He has a lead.

I thought I'd be on my own once I get there.

"But he could be wrong as well."

"... True."

The Demon Empress I know is unpredictable.

We might think she's somewhere, and by the time we get there, she has already disappeared somewhere else.

Her fiance Badigadi is the same...

Ah, right, Badigadi too.

I haven't seen him in a while. Maybe he returned to his domain already.

He has lived a long time as well, contacting him might give some result as well.

"I understand. We shall go investigate."

"We haven't confirmed the situation on the other side yet. The exit might be sealed as well. Be careful."

"Sealed?"

"The entrance might be destroyed to keep it hidden."

If there's no entrance, then it can't be found.

I see. That makes sense.

Sure people will look for trapdoors, but few will take a pickaxe and start wailing on walls.

Ancient Egyptians invented this technique.

Archaeologists have to pay special attention to seemingly empty graves.

Maybe that's how teleportation ruins were discovered as well.

"Em, if it doesn't work, then we'll return early."

"May the fortune of war be with you."

With Sylvaril's blessing we entered the magic teleportation circle.

How many times have I teleported by now?

Metastasis Event, to and from Begaritt Continent, and also Perugius's magic tool.

All in all, this is the fifth time.

Like waking up from a dream, I'm getting used to this sensation.

"Phew."

After the teleport, we arrived at a dark room.

The air is thick and moldy.

It has been abandoned for a long time.

No lights.

Not even a candlestick.

Basically a ruin.

Ah, I forgot to ask where we're going.

"Achoo!"

Cliff sneezes behind me.

I turn around to look. The other three have already stepped off the magic circle.

Elinalise is used to this. Zanoba pompously walking around.

Zanoba curiously studying the magic circle.

"Too dusty here, let's head out as soon as possible."

As Zanoba said that, I start looking for an exit.

"Eh?"

I see a wall.

Nothing like a door.

No ladder, not even a hole in the ceiling.

I carefully inspect the floor. Yep, no way out.

It's a secret room.

If Sylvaril's right, the room has been sealed.

"Em, well, where's the exit?"

"Um."

We split up to look.

Up, down, left, right, B, A.

"Found it."

After a while, Elinalise discovered space behind a wall.

Looks like she discerned it by knocking.

Maybe it's too thick, but I couldn't tell even when pressing an ear against it.

As expected of the Long Ear race.

"Okay. All yours, Zanoba."

"Um."

With a single punch, Zanoba punched a hole in the wall.

A huge hole on the wall some 50 CM thick.

As easy as tearing down a sand castle, he expanded the hole until it has room enough for one.

With Zanoba bracing, Elinalise passes through.

"I'll check ahead."

Complete darkness on the other side.

You can't even see your hand.

We know this is a stone structure, but that's pretty much it.

We don't even know if we're underground or not.

"Rudeus, lights please."

As instructed, I take out a Spirit of Light scroll and used it to illuminate the area.

We saw a room 10 meters ahead.

"Ugh."

Cliff screams when he saw the room.

Bones scattered everywhere on the floor.

As expected of the Magic Continent, bones of various shapes, almost like they're fabricated.

"Looks like this was a prison."

Elinalise said after inspecting the bones. On what's left of the arms and legs rusted cuffs can be seen.

Cliff looks pained, placing his hand in prayer.

"Oh... Milis-sama please save these lost souls."

I imitate Cliff in prayer.

Namusanbou, namusanbou.

Rest in peace.

Sorry to disturb you. We'll leave quickly.

"Let's go."

Speaking of which, there are bones everywhere.

How many were jailed here?

They probably never expected that there's a magic teleportation circle just a wall away.

Wait, no, I remember Perugius only recently reconnected this abandoned magic teleportation circle.

In other words, they were moved here before the magic circle was repaired.

If that's true, it leaves a bad taste in my mouth.

"There's a ladder, let's head up."

There's a ladder at the corner of the room.

Even though there's prisoners, they weren't fenced in.

Thinking that, I notice some rusted hinges fallen on the floor.

Maybe a wooden door once, but worn away by decay after a few thousand years.

Em, oh well.

In front of the ladder is a metal lid.

It's a door that opens upwards. Basically, a lid.

Elinalise checks for traps before attempting to push it open. It wouldn't open.

Something heavy is pressing against it.

"Okay. Go, Zanobarobo. Open it!"

"R-Robo? .... Got it."

Zanoba puts his hands against the door and pushes hard.

A heavy groan, but the door starts to open, dust and soil come flying down.

"Ugh."

"I'll handle the soil, keep going."

"G-got it, Shisho."

With all his might, Zanoba pushes the incredibly heavy door.

I use magic to get rid of all the fallen soil.

The door opens.

Sunlight shines from above.

Looks like the door leads outside.

When the door opens enough to fit through, Elinalise sneaks under it and exits.

"It's clear."

After waiting for her signal, we head out as well.

Outside is a steep slope.

Below the horizon a russet land.

Giant boulders scattered everywhere, a place of extremes with many highs and lows.

And on the far side, the Magic Continent special: a forest like fish bones.

And here and there lumbering Great Land Turtles.

How nostalgic.

"SO this is the Magic Continent...!"

Cliff gasps as he speaks, spying warily down the slope.

No city in sight.

Is Kishirika really around here?

We need to find the nearest town and head there.

But where the hell are we?

Maybe we should head back and check with Sylvaril first.

No, before that, let's investigate our surroundings.

"Cliff-senpai, the Magic Continent has a great many dangerous and herding magic beasts. Please be careful."

"Ah, I got it."

Cliff nods seriously.

This is a dangerous land.

If he treats it like the Central Continent or Milis, even capable warriors may die.

"No magic beasts around us. It's safe."

Of course Elinalise will never be that careless.

Neither was I... At least I think I wasn't.

Although I had Ruijerd back then, so maybe I still held some naive notions about the Magic Continent.

But my experience at Begaritto Continent should be useful.

"Also, I'm afraid you won't find many followers of Milis here. Their philosophy may be different, so please avoid getting in a fight with others for no reason."

"Oh. That, you're right. I know."

Maybe I'm being a little arrogant.

But Cliff has never been around the Magic Race before.

We need to avoid getting into confrontations for every little thing like Eris did.

"It's fine. Cliff doesn't even speak the Demon God language."

Elinalise adds in.

She doesn't either.

For the two years she spent traveling the Demon Continent, she almost exclusively relied on Roxy.

Well, she did learn all the vocabularies needed for H-stuff.

Cliff would probably faint if he finds out.

But that's the curse's fault too.

"Shisho!"

While wondering those things, Zanoba has climbed up a hill, shouting.

Does he even have careful in his vocabulary?

Of course not. Even falling off a cliff won't faze that guy.

Ah, oh well.

"What did you see!?"

Climbing as we said.

"Oh."

End of the slope is a steep cliff.

And behind the cliff a scene you couldn't help but stare.

"Wow, amazing..."

Cliff exclaims.

We stand atop a great crater.

A town stretches below us.

At the center of the crater a black-gold castle inside rests half ruined.

Surrounded by the huge town.

"So this is where he sent us..."

I recognize this city.

One of the Three Great Towns of the Magic Continent.

A crater-shaped natural wall prevents magic beasts from entering.

After nightfall, magic stones inside the crater illuminates the city.

I know the castle as well.

This was once the seat of the Great Demon Emperor Kishirika Kishirisu, destroyed in Laplace's war with the Demon Kings.

Once known as Old Kishirisu Castle.

Also, for me, a place of unhappy memories.

Rikarisu Town.

Rikarisu Town.

Lots of memories here.

Even now, I remember it like yesterday.

My life as an adventurer in the Magic Continent started here, filled with memories of Ruijerd and Eris.

But in the end, we were chased out, leaving only bad memories behind...

But the experiences I gained here are good.

It's here I learned not to overthink the situation or try to do everything by myself.

We hike down the slope and head towards the edge of the crater until we reach an entrance.

Just as before, here stands a pair of guards.

Back then, in order to sneak Ruijerd in, we came in disguise...

"Hey, it's guarded. Is that a problem?"

"No. Cities in the Magic Continent basically welcome everyone in."

"But doesn't the security feel rather tight right now?"

As Cliff said, the guards look quite alert.

Jet black armor, full face helmet.

The armor looks sharp and ominous.

When I was at Rikarisu, the guards weren't so well equipped.

The equipment has changed over the years I suppose.

"Halt."

Just as we are about to enter, the guards stop us.

"What is it?"

"No, that woman over there..."

The guards stare at Elinalise.

Cliff steps in front of Elinalise as if to shield her.

Elinalise looks unfazed.

"What's wrong?"

"...What?"

The other guard pulls out a piece of paper and looks back and forth between it and Elinalise.

I sneak a peek. Drawn on it is a succubus-like beauty.

Tall, big breasted, long wavy hair.

It wasn't colored, but Elinalise shares some similarities.

But, the chest is off.

"Not her."

"Ah, nope."

With that said, the guard puts away the paper.

"Excuse me, proceed."

"Something happened?"

"None of your business."

I left quietly after I was refused.

"Looks like they're looking for someone."

"Yeah."

There's an escapee somewhere in town?

Well, nothing to do with us.

But we should be careful.

If we wander into an alley somewhere and meet a murderer, that'd suck.

"Well, now what?"

"Let's go to the Adventurer's Guild and exchange some money."

"Got it."

After a simple exchange, we follow the road ahead.

"Wow, amazing..."

Cliff exclaims as he sees the nearby open market.

As usual, it's full of life.

Merchants and adventurers of various races.

Lizard-like magic beasts ridden back and forth.

But the things going on are about the same as those in the markets around the Magic City Sharia:

Merchants and adventurers arguing, residents wandering to and forth, a beggar asking for charity from a merchant and getting kicked aside.

Same sort of things everywhere you go.

Even Cliff should be familiar with this sight, but seeing various races mixed together might be refreshing.

Must be different.

However, unexpectedly, black-clad soldiers are everywhere.

Whenever they spot Elinalise, without a pause, they'll take out some paper.

Since it's obviously someone different even from afar, they never come for questioning.

"Cliff-senpai, your wife is rather popular."

"Eh, Ehh... Is it alright?"

"As long as Elinalise-san hasn't done anything here before, it should be alright."

With that said, I stare at Elinalise.

She shrugs.

"Nothing I feel guilty about."

Elinalise looks unfocused.

She definitely did something she felt guilty about.

The Adventurer's Guild is the same as always.

At worst, it has deteriorated slightly due to the ravages of time.

No, I remember it was always like this.

All eyes were on us when we entered.

How nostalgic.

Last time after a short act, we had the place in an uproar.

Thankfully, Ruijerd soon got in the act and we avoided a mess.

Soon, everyone lost interest.

A party of Long Ear Race and Human might be exotic, but a few rare specimens don't deserve the attention.

We head to the front desk and exchanged some Asura coins with Magic Continent ones.

Around 100 Green Mineral Coins worth, but I collected them without double checking.

Back then, I'd check the contents of my wallet everyday, even if there's only one or two pieces left. I have really changed.

No, I'm just a tad more affluent than before.

Also, we issued a request to the Adventurer's Guild for Kishirika's whereabouts.

"Petite girl, purple hair, bondage wear, self-proclaimed Great Empress of the Demon Realm. In particular, she habitually laughs like a maniac."

Since it's a search, ratings are low, but the reward is high.

I stick the request on the job board. Suddenly, I noticed at the edge of the job board an aging petition from the Fedoa Region Search Group.

The search group at Milis has already been disbanded, yet this petition still remains.

The contact person is still Paul at the Holy Kingdom of Milis.

At this rate, wouldn't someone end up traveling all the way to Milis for nothing?

I return to the front desk and change the contact to Alphonse at the refugee camp.

They probably will still accept refugees there.

Although my residence could work as well, honestly, I don't want to take care of people I don't know.

"Well, we're done here."

"Now what?"

After Cliff asked, I spent time thinking about our next move.

Of course, we shouldn't just sit around and wait. It's better if we do some digging ourselves.

We'll spend a week here collecting information.

Look for help and do leg work on our own, search carefully.

Ultimately, the Adventurer's Guild job request is just a safety net in case we missed Kishirika somehow.

"First, collect intel."

I check my surroundings.

A man walks up towards us.

A horse faced man.

I remember this guy well.

It's the guy that trapped us.

It's all his fault that we got kicked out of the city... well, not all his fault.

I know as well, back then, we broke the rules.

"Yo!"

The horse faced man, Nokopara, just like before, comes chatting full spirited.

To a guy like him, making conversation with new faces is part of the job.

Despite what I think, the person he's greeting is not me, but Elinalise.

"Long time no see! You and Roxy split up?"

Elinalise looks at Nokopara in surprise.

Not long after, probably when it finally clicks for her, she claps her hand.

"Ah, from Roxy's old party."

"...Eh?"

Roxy's old party?

What?

"Rudeus, please help translate. This is my... no, Roxy's old buddy."

Elinalise pushes me to face Nokopara.

8 years ago.

The guy that clung onto us.

Roxy's old buddy.

Old party member.

In other words, he was clinging onto Roxy too.

Why have I never heard anything about this?

"Oh, I am Nokopara. Do you understand me?"

He doesn't remember me from back then.

It can't be helped, after 8 years, I have grown up quite a bit.

Nokopara has grown old too... well, I can't really tell.

How horse-faces look when older, I can't really tell.

In turn, Nokopara probably can't tell human faces apart either.

"Yeah, Nokopara-san. I understand."

"Rudeus, he should be quite familiar with the situations in this town. Why not ask him to help collect information for us?"

"..."

This guy is good with intel, that I know.

He's very observant of others.

In that case, he should come in handy for us.

We were once pushed into a corner by him.

But we shamed him in public as well.

He might still be holding a grudge for that.

Instead of coming clean, I'm better off hiding my identity and taking advantage of him.

"I am Quagmire. Nice to meet you."

"Ah, Quagmire huh... Oh? Have we met before?"

"No, that's impossible."

If Eris was here, she'd probably kick his ass.

But I'll let bygones be bygones.

He never did realize that Ruijerd is a Supard.

And it was our misstep that caused the situation.

Besides, now is not the time to dig up the past.

"We're looking for someone. Will you assist us?"

"...How much you got?"

He pisses me off.

Well, I wouldn't want to work for free either.

"2 Green Mineral Coins. 4 if you find her."

"4!? D-done!"

Ah, too much.

It's been a while, I completely forgot about the situation here.

Ah, oh well.

"It's an emergency."

"Oh. If it's for Elinalise, I can do it for half."

Nokopara turns up his nose and smiles to himself.

After I provide Nokopara the info on Kishirika, he said [We'll get in touch in half a day] and disappeared into the crowd.

"I'm surprised you held back."

Watching Nokopara leave, Elinalise speaks up.

"Eh?"

"I remember now. That guy tried to shake you down before."

"Wow, you even know about that."

"When I came by this town, I caught wind of it. Apparently, Nokopara tried to shake down [Dead End] and almost got killed. But I don't thinkRoxy heard of it..."

Elinalise knows.

Well, no reason that she wouldn't.

A Supard showing up in town would be big news.

"It's just an unfortunate event."

Things were going so well that I got carried away and fell on my face.

The way Nokopara takes advantage of others disgusts me, but I'm no saint myself.

Since Nokopara doesn't realize who I am, all is well.

"Anyways, I don't plan on settling the score with Nokopara. But if he crosses us again, that's a different story."

What's past is past, but I am not that generous.

Cross me again, and I'll make sure that's the last time.

"Say, Nokopara and Roxy in a party together, what's up with that?"

"Ah, about that-."

I feel a little troubled after hearing the story of Roxy and Nokopara.

Ah, such a nice guy back then, yet look at how he turned out.

There's lots of stuff to get done in half a day's time.

First, securing accommodation.

This town has plenty of inns open for adventurers.

Simple inns for rookies, and luxury ones for high-rank.

This time, we selected one for high-rank adventurers.

I picked a high class inn mostly for its security.

It's a little pricey, but since prices are generally low at the Magic Continent, it wasn't very painful.

On the way there, we walked past Wolf Claw Inn.

That's the place we stayed in long ago.

By chance, we passed by three young rookies, chatting as they walk out of the inn.

It's a little late to head out for work right now, so they're probably going shopping.

Say, the other adventurers that lived here back then... Kuruto and people, what are they up to now?

Because of my misjudgment, one of them died. How are the other two doing?

No. It has been 8 years already.

They might already be dead.

But if we can meet again, I'd like to talk about old times with them.

Oh yeah.

I should go meet with the P-hunters.

Jalil and Veskel, right?

The petty criminals that specialize in lost pets.

Although I'm not looking for a pet this time, Kishirika is basically an animal. Maybe they can find her.

"Before that, let me drop by this place I know."

"As expected of Shisho, to be so well connected."

"I just know a few people."

Thinking about that, I head towards P-hunters' pet store.

It should be around here somewhere. Following vague memories of the area, I went ahead.

My memories are dubious, and the city changed.

Despite that, after spending so long in the area and following the landmarks, I can still recognize this place.

The location is right, but the store has changed.

It's a butcher's shop.

A guy with hedgehog head looks after the store. I went to check it out.

"Welcome."

"I remember this was a pet shop once. Do you know what happened?"

"Ah, Jalil? That guy's dead. Got killed 2 years ago taming a magic beast."

Eh, he died?

Seriously?

"And Veskel?"

"Veskel? She left a year ago. With Jalil dead, she can't do work no more."

Veskel is gone too.

Really, Jalil, dead?

I know that the Magic Continent is a cruel place, but hearing that an old friend has died is still rather depressing.

In the end, he did betray Ruijerd.

Even so, we did work together once.

I'd like to remain as friends.

"I took over the shop from Veskel. Do you know her?"

"Yeah, we met."

"Well then, let me give you a discount."

I also asked about Kishirika, and as pay, bought some Great Land Turtle jerky and left.

Great Land Turtle meat still tastes as disgusting as always.

For half a day, we busy ourselves in collecting intel.

Collecting intel by hand is not particularly efficient.

Particularly because I'm the only one that speaks the Demon God language.

So basically, only I could ask around.

If only Roxy were here.

Still, searching a town, one or two people won't make much of a difference.

When it comes to intel, let's count on the expert Nokopara instead.

With those thoughts, I continue to ask around...

"Petite, purple hair, bondage wear, self-proclaimed Great Empress of the Demon Realm, habitually laughs like a maniac. Have you met that girlbefore?"

"Ah, that kid. I have. But that was almost... a year ago."

Turns out I got a lot of responses.

Unexpected.

Truly unexpected.

With this, maybe it won't be too long before we find her.

"Score!"

Cliff raises his voice happily.

As if we already found her.

But Elinalise shakes her hand.

"But no one saw her recently?"

It's true.

They're all [About a year ago.]

Well, some also said [About half a year ago.]

Maybe she left already.

In that case, we should start asking [Where did she go?]

Rikarisu Town sits on the northeast corner of the Magic Continent.

For the time being, she would probably head southwest.

There's a mountain range to the southwest, in that case maybe... No, this is Kishirika after all.

Not that I know Kishirika very well.

But I got a feeling she's capable of anything.

If she doesn't follow the roads, then who knows where she could be.

"Let's go check in with Nokopara."

"It's only been half a day. I doubt even he could have found much..."

Regardless, we head back to the Adventurer's Guild.

We picked a table, and just when we were about to grab something to eat, Nokopara shows up.

"Yo. Waited long?"

Just like how he left, he came back smiling and full of energy.

No, I can't tell how happy a horse face is.

But he seems pretty happy to me.

"Sorry, I have yet to find the person, but I've got some intel for you."

"What did you hear?"

Only half a day for the eagle to land.

Basically, we already know all the information Nokopara found.

But as expected of Nokopara, he was able to summarize all the most common sightings, as well as where she was last spotted.

Not bad for half a day's work...

Rather, as part of his daily routine, he knows all the right people to ask.

Then, based on what info is needed, he picks the best candidates to ask, something like that.

That's talent too.

"Demon King-sama seems to be looking for the Great Demon Empress as well."

"Demon King?"

"Yeah. About a year ago, the Demon King from the adjacent territory traveled here."

Apparently, a Demon King currently resides at the center of Rikarisu Town, at Old Kishirisu Castle.

So all the black-clad soldiers here are her personal army. The riders too are basically her private guards.

"Don't tell me that Demon King is Badigadi?"

"No, not Badigadi-sama. It's Atofe-sama, older sister of Badigadi-sama, a very terrifying Demon King."

Badigadi has a sister?

A black amazon?

"Really scary?"

"Ah, she's a Demon King that fought in the Laplace Campaign after all. If you accidentally offend her, she might execute you on the spot."

I can't even imagine that when Badigadi is so easy going.

But if that's the case, then I should probably avoid her.

No, if she is related to Badigadi, then she might also be immortal too.

If she has lived since a long time ago, then maybe she knows of the cure to Doline syndrome.

I should try to get an audience with her and ask...

Whether she will see me is another question.

"Say, has Badigadi returned?"

"He has yet to return... Hey, watch your language when you talk about the Demon King-sama."

"Apologies."

Badigadi hasn't come back.

Who knows where he's wandering the world right now.

He's been gone for 8 years already.

Maybe wandering the world is a hobby of his.

I summarized the details to the others.

Zanoba, with a hand to his chin, says,

"The portrait looks nothing like her."

Now that he mentioned it, that portrait does look completely different from the Kishirika that I remember.

I know Kishirika was a kid.

I didn't notice when I checked the portrait, but that vixen looks quite like Kishirika.

Maybe once Kishirika grows older, that's how she will look.

Maybe Kishirika has grown in the past few years?

No, no.

We have witness reports of that girl.

In other words, that Demon King doesn't know that Kishirika is a kid?

Oh...

Maybe Nokopara would know.

"That portrait that the private guards have looks different from the actual Kishirika. What do you think?"

"Demon King-sama doesn't concern herself with petty details. So maybe she thought any age would do."

"Ah, I see."

Badigadi is whimsical as well.

Maybe Atofe is the same.

"Then, let's all check with Atofe-sama?"

I declare and get up.

But Nokopara starts to panic.

"Hey, hold on, forget it. Atofe-sama is really dangerous. You're better off not going."

"No, I must. I'll be careful not to offend her."

No problem?

I hope there won't be.

If something happens, then Zanoba will stand guard while I attack.

Just like with Badigadi, I'll hit and run...

Then, once I find Badigadi, he can mediate for us.

Well, that'll do.

"If we should meet, then allow me to help."

Zanoba stands up smiling.

He's a royalty as well, so arranging a meeting should be possible right?

If that's the case, then maybe we should've gotten Ariel to come instead...

Hold on, maybe like with Perugius, Zanoba is easier to get along with.

Since Ariel is always thinking about networking, she might be exposed and hated.

"Is Atofe-sama interested in the arts?"

"Eh? Arts? Em, who knows. Well, Demon King-samas all seem to have those sorts of interests."

Badigadi's interests... like what?

I don't think he has anything of the sort.

No, he's interested in beer?

Like really expensive beer?

Even though Atofe is a very scary Demon King, if she's anything like Badigadi, then we might get along.

"Anyways, let's go give it a shot."

With the talk over, Elinalise and Cliff stood up as well.

An hour later.

We stand looking at the castle.

Conclusion?

Failure.

Zanoba takes the crest of Shirone. I translate for him to request an audience with Demon King.

"Never heard of that country. Atofe-sama is busy! No one is allowed!"

Denied.

Door slammed in our face.

Maybe Asura Kingdom, or Kingdom of the Dragon King, or Holy Kingdom of Milis would have been different.

But Shirone is a small kingdom, so it's impossible.

It's like expecting a Japanese to know the name of some country in Africa.

Especially when there was no appointment.

It's only natural.

"I'm sorry. My home country lacks the prestige."

Rather than getting angry at the blatant breach of etiquette, Zanoba is apologizing to me instead.

"No, I was inconsiderate."

"I thought this might happen..."

Zanoba said as he frowns.

Zanoba isn't much of a patriot, but to hear his country mocked in such a matter, I doubt he'll let it go.

"...Sigh, let's take a break."

Cliff leans on a wall nearby and sighs.

I still have some gas in the tank but...

"True, I'm a bit tired too."

Looking around, Zanoba is sweaty too.

It might miss, but he's also an indoor type. A day's exercise is hard on him too.

I also feel like my head is running slow.

Let's rest.

"Alright. Then let's go grab some grub."

We didn't have time for lunch.

The jerky was lacking as well.

Well, food here is hard to eat, so I don't have much appetite.

"Shisho, there's an open-air stall there. Let's just eat there. Is that alright with you two?"

Now that you mention it, for a while, we could smell barbecue in the air.

Following our nose, there's a heavily spiced Magic Continent specialty, open stall spicy barbecue skewers.

With a crowd of... 3 customers waiting in line.

"I don't mind, but eating while standing... isn't that against the rules?"

"What the hell are you talking about?"

As they argue, Elinalise has already taken her place in the line.

"I'll hold a spot. Rudeus, go set up a place to sit somewhere."

"Will language be a problem?"

"For numbers, we can just use our hands."

That's true too.

There are ways to get around without knowing the language.

Following her instructions, with magic, I set up some chairs on the side.

Although eating standing up is fine, since we need to rest, we might as well sit down.

Although to be honest, I don't mind sitting on the ground either.

"I'll line up too."

Cliff and Elinalise line up together.

I finish with the preparations and sit down with Zanoba.

"Phew."

After sitting down, a day of exhaustion rushed onto me.

But sitting here like this, I start to feel like the entire day has been a waste of time.

We still don't know whether we can find Kishirika.

Even if we find her, we have no clue whether she knows anything useful.

Rather, I have a feeling the chances that she does is nigh.

Badigadi as well, although they have long lives, I think they rarely get ill.

"...Shisho, don't be too hard on yourself."

"Eh?"

"Nanahoshi's illness, Shisho doesn't have to feel so responsible for it."

I'm not responsible.

Right. That's true.

But, this is not an issue of responsibility.

This is what I want to do.

"That's true."

"But feeling homesick and wanting to go back, I can understand that a little. That's why I want to help."

"Really? I thought you were happy with the life you have now."

"Of course. But sometimes, I feel nostalgic for home. That's also true."

Zanoba feels homesick sometimes.

I thought he only had dolls on his mind, but I guess Zanoba is also someone's flesh and blood.

"...Nanahoshi tries so hard. Her home is definitely something important to her."

"The boy she likes, and her family too... They're all there."

Both are ordinary, but both are important.

Very, very important.

"Both of them are beyond me."

"For you, it's dolls."

I absentmindedly watch the other two while chatting with Zanoba.

Cliff and Elinalise.

Those two have changed so much from when we first met.

Cliff can't read the mood, but now he's more considerate of others.

Elinalise too, I'm fond of the time when she was busy chasing after boys.

If they ever split up, they probably would return to their true forms in a hurry.

"..."

The customer before Cliff ordered his skewers.

Probably to ask for change, a beggar in hood and rags went over, but that customer kicked him away.

Cliff looks angry when he spots this.

But Elinalise stops him, so no fight broke out.

Cliff is kind-hearted. He definitely will get something for the beggar.

As I expected, he bought an extra skewer and handed it to him.

The beggar devours the skewer as he thanks him.

Nom, nom.

Soon after he finished one, he brazenly begs Cliff for another, so Cliff bought a new one for him.

So moved that he's trembling, the beggar holds Cliff's hand.

Eh?

Deja-vu.

Say, that beggar, is he thanking Cliff in human language?

In that moment, the beggar suddenly laughs with a voice so loud that it can be heard from even over here.

"Faahahahaha!"

Throwing off her rags, she loudly declares!

"This one is called Kishirika Kishirisu! A.K.A. THE GREAT EMPRESS OF THE DEMON REALM! You have saved this one's life! It's fine if you askfor any one desire!"

I feel dizzy.

Great Demon Empress Kishirika.

She looks just as how I remembered her.

Those knee-high kicks, skin-tight hot pants, and blouse.

Her pale skin, collarbone, waist, navel, and thighs.

Her characteristic thick, purple, wavy hair with goat horns.

Well, she's dirtier than before.

But without a doubt,

That's Kishirika Kishirisu.

"Faahahahah! Faahaha! Faahahahaha!"

Cliff looks dumbfounded.

Elinalise's eyes turn into dots. That's a first.

Me too, what just happened?

The only one calm is Zanoba.

Only him, with his hand on his chin said, [Oh, so that's Badigadi's lover.]

"..."

Pay it forward.

That idiom floats in my mind.

I think Cliff is the proof of those words.

Helping a beggar sounds easy, but not everyone would do it.

Ultimately, the other person's a beggar.

Raggy clothes, a strong stench whenever he approaches, skin covered in dirt, and blackened teeth.

You feel sorry for them, so you ought to buy them food. But do you really want to?

I won't.

I won't go as far as kicking her, but I don't have that kind of universal love.

But Cliff, he does.

The first time we met, I thought he was a petty bastard.

But in the future, he probably will become a great priest.

Viva la Cliff!

Okay, that's enough praise for Cliff.

Anyways, why is Kishirika begging here?

"Come! Don't hold back! Anything you desire! But before that, state your name!"

"Eh? Eh...? C-Cliff Grimoire."

Looking at the beggar turned Kishirika before him, Cliff looks to me for help.

Meanwhile, Kishirika makes a pompous pose and continues.

"Cliff! Treating this one to food is a great deed. This one hasn't ate for half a year already!"

I walk by and join the conversation.

"In that case, how about some more?"

"Oh! Really! You are truly generous! Truly a generous man!"

Then for a while, Kishirika continues to wolf down Great Land Turtle skewers.

Devouring everything, who knows how she managed to fit everything into that tiny body.

Nom, nom.

"Phew, this one is full! With that, this one can last a whole year!"

Kishirika slaps her tummy in satisfaction. She has wiped out the entire stall.

Selling so well, the stall owner must be happy too.

Next...

"Long time no see, Kishirika-sama."

"And you are!"

I bow in respect. Kishirika stares at me.

"Eh? Oh?"

Then her pupils spin, and she claps her hands.

"Oh! You! The human boy with the disgusting amount of magic power! This one remembers! This one gave the boy a demon eye. The name is, ohyeah, eh... Ru, ba, Rumba... Rumbaus. Long time no see!"

"It's Rudeus Greyrat."

I'm no robot vacuum cleaner.

"Long time no see, Rudeus... You sure grew. How was it, after that, how was life?"

Kishirika slaps me on the thigh once she got close enough.

Like a manager from somewhere.

"Ah yes, the demon eye Kishirika-sama gifted me has saved my life many times!"

"Faahahahah! Is that so, is that so!"

Kishirika nods happily.

How simple.

So easy.

"But, this one can only reward one person! Just one!"

Kishirika points at Cliff.

"You, Cliff Grimoire. State your desires."

"..."

Pointed out by Kishirika, Cliff swallows.

Suddenly I remember.

The reward from Great Demon Empress Kishirika Kishirisu, a demon eye.

This is something well known in this world.

Cliff has his own goals in the future.

A demon eye will surely help with his magic tool research.

If it's me, I would think so too.

Of course.

Unless?

"T-then, please tell me the cure to Drain Syndrome."

"Eh?"

"A friend of mine fell ill to that. She's stable right now, but probably won't get better. If you know, please tell me."

Phew.

My mind wandered. I'm really sorry.

When we get back, I'm definitely treating Cliff to a big meal.

"Em, Drain Syndrome eh? That name sure is nostalgic. People still getting sick from that, now that's shocking!"

I glance at Zanoba and nod.

Looks like Kishirika has heard of it before.

"Then, what about the cure?"

"Of course. For that, just take some leaves of Sokasu Grass and make tea with it. Then it'll come out with poop."

I can feel a smile growing on my face.

Good.

Even though Kishirika might be wrong, but we finally have something.

Make tea with Sokasu Grass leaves.

Basically make a concoction.

"Sokasu Grass? Never heard of it before. Where can we find it?"

"Em... Phantom Capital Maio."

"Phantom Capital Maio?"

Crap.

Any city with the word Phantom in it is basically impossible to find.

Like a place you can only visit in your dream, or can only find in the shifting desert...

"North of the Red Dragon Mountain Ranges, at a valley named Red Dragon Tail in Dragon Tail Cave. Sokasu Grass grows in the deepest reachesof that cave."

"Dragon Tail Cave."

With that, we have more work to do.

No, that's good.

Not bad at all.

Better than not finding Kishirika and wandering the world for years.

Eh?

But is there even a place called Red Dragon Tail on the Red Dragon Mountain Ranges?

"Where is that place?"

"Oh, during the second Human-Demon Great War, Dragon God and Fighting God cut a hole in the ground and it disappeared."

"...Eh?"

In other words,

It's gone.

Say, that differs from the story I knew.

The hole in the ground, isn't that because of the battle between Kishirika and the Golden Knight?

No, but Kishirika doesn't look particularly strong...

Well, forget it.

When it comes to tales and legends, the truth often gets twisted when convenient.

What's important is the Sokasu Grass.

"Say, is Sokasu Grass extinct?"

"No, the Dragon Tail Cave is only where it was originally discovered."

Kishirika shakes her head slowly.

Originally discovered, so it may still be growing somewhere?

"Sokasu Grass grows in the depth of caves where the sun never shines."

Depth of caves where the sun doesn't shine.

Like Labyrinths?

Another Labyrinth?

In that case, then I'll get enough bodies this time.

20... No, I might place enough bounty to assemble 100 adventurers or so.

"Thus, under this one's instruction, Demon Kings everywhere have been growing them under their own castles."

"..."

"After all, Sokasu Grass is delicious. Moreover, drinking them leads to long life. Even Immortal Demons drink them. Faahahahaha!"

"..."

In other words.

That's it?

They're growing under the castle?

Not only that, but as ingredients for high grade tea, then we can probably find them everywhere.

"Faahahaha! You thought you wouldn't find them? Did I guess right? Too bad! Even Kishirisu Castle has them! Faahahahaha!"

This guy, I really want to kick her.

As I thought so, Cliff takes a step forward with clenched fists.

"You!"

"Hold on Cliff-senpai! Wait until she's told us everything!"

"Oh, okay."

Shit, the truth came out.

Besides, if the castle has it, then it's fine.

Or rather, it's perfect.

I'm not happy that I'm being toyed with.

This is an area I have to improve on.

But stay calm.

Keep my head down.

"Then, Kishirika-sama. That Sokasu tea. Can we have some?"

"Sure! But there's just one problem."

"Problem?"

"Um. Right now, in Kishirisu Castle is an annoying person. She's an idiot, but an annoying idiot. This one has been hiding from her for half a year already... Ah!"

Kishirika looks behind me.

"Em?"

I look up and behind me.

Over there, black-clad soldiers.

5, 6, 7... over 20 in all.

Even more from the street and alleys...

Almost 30 in all, and we're surrounded.

The soldiers watch us intimidatingly.

Elinalise takes a step forward with a hand on the sword on her waist.

There's cold sweat on her forehead.

No matter what, there are too many enemies to deal with.

Crap, we have nowhere to run.

Do I grab Zanoba and Cliff and fly away?

Do I leave Kishirika and Elinalise behind?

What do I do?

The front-most soldier among them steps forward.

With a hoarse but forceful voice he said,

"We are the Gaslow Region Immortal Demon Lord Atoferatofe's Private Guard."

In fluent Human language.

So we will work with them, probably.

"Atofe-sama commands: Hand Kishirika-sama to us, and head immediately to the castle."

Hearing him, the black-clad riders behind him compare the portrait with Kishirika the person. Eh? They seem riled up.

As Nokopara expected, the portrait was wrong. The one that ordered it was sloppy.

But, even if the portrait was wrong, if she yells out Kishirika like that, she will probably get exposed.

"What if we don't?"

The moment Elinalise asked quietly, all the soldiers drew their swords.

The sound of swords unsheathing clatters.

The chorus of sounds becomes ear-deafeningly loud.

"Kill them all."

I can't tell the strength of an opponent just by looking.

But even I have quite a bit of experience under my belt.

Even I can tell when an opponent is obviously strong.

The private guards are, without a doubt, full of incredible people.

Far stronger than the typical rider group can match.

"No, don't. If they catch this one, then who knows how they'll treat this one? Atofe is the most stupid among the the Demon Kings!"

Hearing Kishirika makes me frown.

If Atofe doesn't have a plan for dealing with Kishirika after capturing her, then why capture her in the first place?

Besides, I have no reason to meet with Atofe anymore.

I should just run...

But the medicine is under the castle right?

Then maybe we should go along... But I've never seen it before. I have no idea what it looks like.

While I'm hesitating, the soldier removes his helmet.

"Please."

A white-haired, battle-wary old man.

With a gentle smile, he bows his head.

"If everyone doesn't come, then we'll be punished by Afote-sama. We definitely won't hurt you, so please..."

I'm a Japanese man that can say... no.

Not like before.

But after such a humble request, I can't help but feel soft-hearted.

"No, don't listen to him. He's Atofe's dog."

Cold sweat dripping down from Kishirika's face.

Seems like she's hiding something.

"I overheard your conversation. Sokasu Grass is grown in Gaslow Region, and we also know the cultivating techniques. If necessary, we can even prepare saplings for you. So please come with us..."

The old soldier bows his head.

I can feel his sincerity.

Even though he can move us forcefully, instead, he requested so humbly.

I'm not too close with Kishirika, but I do know of Demon Kings like Badigadi.

These underlings must have it tough.

"Say, why does Kishrika-sama hate Atofe-sama so much? There must be a reason that you've been hunting Kishirika-sama for half a year. Can you tell me?"

"A year ago, here, Atofe-sama was supposed to receive a shipment of wine from Gekura region, but Kishirika drank them all."

"Oh."

The old soldier continues.

"Atofe-sama was really looking forward to that wine and got really angry. She ordered the private guards from our home country here to investigate and capture her. We don't know what Kishirika looks like, so she gave us this portrait, and we have been searching for her ever since..."

"So that's what happened, I understand."

I knocked out Kishirika with magic myself.

Old Kishirisu Castle.

Its appearance, in a nutshell, is of a demon castle.

Constructed from special masonry, a black-gold castle.

Its one glaring flaw is a gigantic hole in the castle tower.

Although not as sophisticated as Perugius's Sky Castle, it is still a very beautiful structure.

It's probably more desirable for those interested in the practical.

Normally it serves as a tourist attraction, open to the public, a castle that charges an admission fee.

Apparently divided into tourist section and resident section.

We're brought to an audience hall.

Not the great throne room that's open to the public.

A narrow and practical audience hall.

In this narrow hall, black clad soldiers line up shoulder to shoulder.

A tight squeeze, and hot too.

And then, on the jade throne in this stuffy hall, no one's there.

I have been waiting for over two hours here.

Outside, the sun has set long ago.

Although standing isn't much of a torture, but would it hurt if they prepare a seat for me?

By the way, right now only Zanoba and I are present.

Elinalise and Cliff were led away by some soldiers underground to gather the medicine.

"Hey, where is Atofe-sama?"

"I told you, we already called for her."

"This is taking too long, don't tell me she left town already..."

"She's loose with time, even inside the castle she might be a day late."

"But it's not good if we keep the guests waiting..."

"You there, be quiet."

The soldiers whispering among themselves.

A rather uninhibited bunch.

Somehow looking at them like this is rather reassuring.

When I checked, the old soldier has been staring at us.

"Atofe-sama will arrive soon, please hold on for a little more. By the way, don't ask for a reward."

"Ha?"

"We won't be able to help if she offers you a reward."

"Eh... Okay, I understand."

I nod candidly.

Even though I don't know what the reward might be.

Well, I wasn't planning for a reward in the first place.

A reward for selling out Kishirika, I don't want something so wicked.

Kishirika is currently tied up, squirming on the floor like a caterpillar.

Looks like punishments are in store for her. Spankings? Scrub the toilet? Hopefully nothing too serious...

Regardless I should watch my words.

The opponent is a Demon King.

The only ones I have met so far are Badigadi and Kishirika.

If those two get angry... well?

Probably not a good thing.

"Out of the way!"

Suddenly, a sound from the back.

I turn around to look and see a woman standing there.

Out of all that I have seen so far, that woman is the most demon-like of all.

Blue skin, white hair.

Crimson eyes, bat wings.

And then, from her forehead, a pair of great horns.

Her body is clad with black armor like the soldiers.

No, her armor looks well worn, far more than the soldiers'.

Covered in scars, all the decorations peeled off.

It has seen its share of battles.

Hanging off her waist, a great sword too big to imagine for her slender wrists.

Even its scabbard looks more stylish than the soldiers'.

Not particularly tall.

About normal for a mature woman.

A little taller than Ariel, a little shorter than me, around there.

But the thing really worthy of note.

Is the unspeakable anger and killing intent radiating from her.

A difficult to explain sense of violence.

Basically, kind of like Eris.

Like a female knight.

No, more appropriately a female knight commander.

Probably better I avoid her bad side.

"Did you not hear me? Out of the way!"

"Ah, yes."

Following her instruction, I made way for her.

"Good."

The female knight commander flicks her hair, unceremoniously walks up to the throne, and turns around.

Unsheathing from her waist the great sword, she slams it on the ground standing arrogantly.

Then, after a deep breath, said.

"It is I, Immortal Demon King Atoferatofe Raibaku."

"... Eh?"

While I was bewildered, the black clad soldiers hurriedly raise their swords in salute.

All, except one adjacent to the throne.

The old soldier from before.

"Atofe-sama! Why did you come from over there? How many times do I need to remind you? When you arrive at the throne, come from the back."

"I have decided that the front is better."

"Don't be so reckless!"

"Do you know? After an arduous journey to challenge the Demon King, the moment when the hero comes face to face with the Demon King at the throne, that feeling is exhilarating."

"So what! Think of how disappointed your father, one of the five Great Demon Kings, would be! Not only that, think of your husband Raibaku-sama!"

"Shut it!"

Atofe raises her sword, faster than the eye can see, swings at the old soldier.

The old soldier instantly tries to parry, but it was too late. His helmet flew off, and collapsed.

The black clad soldiers around him hurry over to help.

"Don't be so angry in front of guests! Your dead father will roll in his grave!"

The helmet rolls in front of me.

In the dead center it has split in two.

What terrifying power.

Nonchalantly I take a look at it, the interior is covered in blood.

"Ugh!"

Eh?

Ah?

Did she cut his head...

Don't tell me, that guy, he's...

Dead?

"I get it. Be more considerate next time."

While I was thinking, the old soldier stands up like nothing happened.

Smoke coming from his head as he bows to Atofe.

Don't tell me, he's also from the immortal clan?

Or rather, they are all?

"That's fine. Alright, let's start from the beginning."

"Okay!"

Atofe sheathes her sword and takes the Highlander pose.

The old soldier takes a helmet offered by another, and stands at the head of the troops.

Then, once more, the soldiers straighten up and raise their swords in salute.

"It is I, Immortal Demon King Atoferatofe Raibaku."

Zanoba kneels down on the floor, his head in a bow, I follow suit.

I'll be fine as long as I copy Zanoba, probably.

"First, allow me to thank you. Thanks to your assistance, we were finally able to catch that idiot Kishirika."

Atofe said while looking at Kishirika.

Rolled up like a sausage, she stares at the ground, resigned to her fate.

I feel a bit sorry for her.

Throwing her under the bus after helping us out, but it can't be helped.

We have our own problems.

"I don't have a portrait of this one when she's younger, so the search was a waste of time, but we finally found her!"

Ah, so that really was the case.

How careless.

"Well then..."

Still in that pose, Atofe stares off somewhere.

Then, nothing happens.

5 minutes passed.

Still in that pose, unmoving.

Like her breaker has tripped.

"Moore, now what?"

"Reward."

Looks like she forgot her lines.

Also, that old soldier is apparently Moore.

Like he's about to make a "muhaha muhaha" laugh at any moment.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Dragon Quest: Legend of the Hero Abel anime series. }

"Ah, right. They deserve a reward."

Atofe suddenly said.

"No, reward is unnecessary."

I said the refusal I have prepared.

Everything said so far are merely ceremonial.

That's why Moore told me to not go for a reward earlier.

Despite what I thought, Atofe instead stamps her feet.

"You mean a reward from me isn't good enough?"

Atofe glares at me with killing intent.

My legs begin to quiver.

That killing intent is the real deal.

Not like Rinia's or Pursena's.

More like Orsted's.

"No, no, it would be an honor."

I better not get on her wrong side.

If she wants to give us something, I better just shut up and accept it.

Like that I start looking for excuses.

"What will be our rewards?"

Hearing this, satisfied Atofe squints her eyes.

"Strength."

Strength.

Strength?

It'd be a lie if I say I don't want it.

But Moore-san told me to refuse it.

Maybe I should change the topic and tell her that we need to leave once my friends got the tea.

"I award you the honor of joining and training with my private guards!"

"Eh!"

What?

So she isn't going to put a hand on my forehead and unlock my hidden potential.

Or give me a demon eye like Kishirika?

"You are a bit soft, but after 10 years of training, you definitely will reach that level."

"Ah, em."

"I will train you day and night for the next 10 years. What an honor, right?"

10 years, training day and night...

No, I have wives and a kid at home, that kind of training I have to pass on.

It's true, if I train for the next 10 years, I can definitely get stronger.

But I'm not about to throw everything else away just for strength.

Abandoning the home I have to protect, for what?

I look over to Moore-san, he shakes his head to resign.

What do I do?

No, I have to refuse her.

I don't want to join some private guards.

"I'm very sorry, but this honor is beyond me."

"No need to be polite! Go, get a suit of armor and contract for him!"

Several of the private guards left as Atofe instructed.

"The strongest armor of the Magic Continent, the best training of the Magic Continent, and the most famed private guard of the Magic Continent. There's no greater honor than that. Although once contracted you can never defy me, but it's not like you could even if you didn't. Doesn't that make you happy?"

Cannot be defied...

I'm not happy at all.

But of all the Demon Kings I have met thus far, this is the Demon-ist.

I guess in some ways, having a chance to meet a Demon King like this, is something to be happy about.

Wait, did all the private guards get forced into a contract like this?

"No, I must refuse. I have family at home, so I cannot stay 10 years here."

"... Don't mind the family. I haven't seen my son for over a hundred years. No news is good news."

So I have to be separated for 100 years too?

Don't joke around.

"F-for humans, 10 years is a very long time. I told my family I'll be back soon. And..."

"And?"

Atofe twitches her forehead.

She doesn't look very happy.

"And I have a sick friend waiting. I need to hurry to find a cure for her and return. There are also many other things that must be done. I cannot just think of my own strength right now."

"Shut it!"

Atofe shouts in anger.

Terrifying, so terrifying.

Truly terrifying.

What? Why?

Why does she have to shout?

"Are you joining the private guard, or are you not? What will it be? Give a clear answer!"

"I, I must refuse."

After my answer, Atofe turns stiff.

Her cheeks turn red.

"Why? Why do you refuse?"

Eh?

Didn't I just give a bunch of reasons?

"Em..."

At this moment, Zanoba suddenly steps in.

I glance back, he's a face of calm.

Ah, the whole time we have been speaking Demon God, so he doesn't know the conversation.

What should we do?

How do I convince Atofe?

I look around.

Without realizing it, the mood in the room has changed.

The sympathy coming from the soldiers has congealed into something strange.

Also, feeling a little alienated.

"You see!"

Kishirika suddenly yells out.

"That one is an idiot. Don't get involved with her. You can't talk sense to her."

"Shut it! I am not an idiot!"

Atofe suddenly roars and unsheathes her sword.

"That's right. You treated me like an idiot! You said you want a reward, then you said you don't! You played with my head like an idiot!"

Then she starts to head menacingly toward us.

Eh?

What?

Hey, calm down.

"Atofe-sama! We're inside, please calm down!"

"I am not an idiot! I'm not!"

Swinging her sword wildly, she angrily approaches us, but the black clad soldiers try to stop her.

"Stand aside."

Atofe sends the soldiers flying like a Russell Snow Plow Train.

Ah, crap.

Do I attack with magic?

No, if I attack now it just escalates the situation.

"I'll handle this."

During my moment of hesitation, Zanoba stands up and takes a step forward.

"Hah!"

Zanoba grabs Atofe tightly by her wrist.

Atofe, thinking she can send Zanoba flying like the rest of them, continues ahead.

But, as expected of the strength of a miko, Zanoba manages to stop Atofe's advance.

"Oh! You are unexpectedly strong!"

Atofe smiles in wide eye admiration at Zanoba.

As if to admonish her, Zanoba speaks.

"Let's calm down. It was not our intention to bother you. It's all a misunderstanding."

"Quit saying words I don't understand!"

Atofe ignores Zanoba's words.

Rather, more like she can't understand human language.

Atofe swings at Zanoba's foot with her sword, and when it doesn't work, she exclaims.

"Oh, you're tough. Wearing a particularly strong touki! Interesting!"

While shouting those words, Atofe cuts off her own arm that was held by Zanoba.

No hesitation.

Her own arm.

Just because it was a hassle, she cut it off.

"MMph!"

The moment it separates from Atofe, the arm dissolves into soft chunks of meat.

Zanoba lets go, and the meat chunks splatter on the ground.

The meat squirms near Atofe, sticking to her arm.

Then, in an instant, reform into its old shape.

Just like Badigadi.

Physical damage is useless.

"I am the Immortal Demon Lord Atoferatofe Raibaku! Wife of the original North God Kalman Raibaku! I shall show you the true North God Style!"

Atofe raises her great sword ready.

Zanoba clenches his fist, is he really going to fight her?

"..."

In this moment, I feel a chill down my spine.

Not good.

I have a bad feeling. Zanoba will die.

Zanoba is a miko.

Typical attacks won't faze him.

But he is not invincible.

Even that Dragon God Orsted can be hurt.

This world has no absolutes.

Zanoba is also weak against fire.

He may be strong against blunt force, but it's not completely immune.

"Grr."

I immediately begin to gather magic.

As fast as possible, as hard as possible.

Stone Cannon... won't be enough.

But my magic has also improved from back then.

"Wuhahaha! Die! North God Style Secret..."

"Electric!"

Purple lightning flies from my palm to Atofe.

It snaps in an instant.

Atofe falls backward.

"Ugh!"

Falling back, the great sword slips from her hand.

Meanwhile, a numbness from my left hand, but it should be fine.

I didn't put enough magic into it to kill.

"Ha!"

Zanoba isn't giving Atofe any room to spare.

"Kaboom!"

Zanoba's steel fist hits Atofe in the face.

Instantly Atofe's head crumbles, flying off in a beautiful parabola.

Flings past the throne.

With crumbling sounds breaking the back wall.

She flew out of the castle.

"A-Atofe-samaaaa!"

The black-clad soldiers swarm toward the hole in the wall.

"Eh, oops... I was trying to protect Shiso and moved without thinking. Is she dead?"

"No, I don't think she can."

Well, she is an Immortal Demon King.

Problem is, what do we do now?

"Wow, they actually did it."

"Did they really..."

"What just happened?"

We are surrounded by some 20 black clad soldiers.

Bickering among themselves, they have us surrounded.

Now that we knocked off their master, of course they have to do something.

"Ha."

I raise my staff.

This is my responsibility.

This happened because of what I said.

...No, was I wrong?

I don't think I did anything wrong... Eh?

"..."

But the black clad soldiers did not raise their swords. They're only looking.

"You..."

Zanoba in a fighting pose.

Maybe he should grab a weapon too.

But right now we don't have the luxury to look for one.

Is there a wooden pole they're not using?

Moore approaches us.

Representing the private guards, he speaks to me in Demon God language.

"Let me ask you again, do you want to be our comrades?"

"No, we don't."

I answered him clearly this time. Moore replies.

"Master likes strong people. After getting stopped by such a strange power, then sent flying out the castle with one punch, she will definitely want to keep you."

Are all Demon Kings of this world like this?

Can't they be more serious?

Still, the black clad soldiers don't look like they plan to capture us.

All they said after seeing Atofe fly off was [Wow!] [Atofe-sama really did it this time!] [Haha!] That kind of banter.

"We private guards will not move unless instructed. But once commanded... we cannot refuse."

After Moore said that, many among the private guards look sharply at us.

Nothing funny about a group that does nothing unless they're told.

But we should be thankful that this is the case.

"Afote-sama probably won't let you get away given the situation."

"What happens after she catches us?"

"Probably force you to duel her."

"..."

"And when you lose, force you into a contract while unconscious. Once contracted, you can never defy Afote-sama again."

"T-that contract, how long does it last?"

"Until you die."

Gulp, I can hear the sound of me swallowing.

"But every 10 years, you get a 2 year break."

2 year break every 10 years.

So like a day off every 5.

But somehow that doesn't feel very restful.

"Most of the people here volunteered to join Atofe-sama's private guards, but many didn't. Especially the Human Race ones. It's rough. We can sympathize."

Among the private guards, a few droop their head.

So like us, they also felt like they got forced into the contract.

The contract is a euphemism for forced slavery.

So that's what happened, when Moore warned me to not take a reward, that's the reason...

He should have explained it better.

No, I can't blame him.

It's my fault for not asking.

I wanted to be careful, but I was careless from the start.

"... What's our chances in the duel?"

"Oh, chances? Do you think you can beat our master, who has lost only to North God Raibaku and Demon God Laplace in the last 5000 years?"

Oh, basically zero.

Immortal is in her name. Her durability probably matches that of Badigadi's.

No, she's probably better than Badigadi when it comes to fighting.

Badigadi never used North God Style or anything.

At least, he never did when we practiced.

"If it was a tie, what happens?"

"Rematch if an enemy, mutual respect if a friend."

In my situation.

Probably a rematch.

Feels like I already made myself an enemy.

Then, after a couple fights, I'll definitely lose eventually.

"T-then, what should we do..?"

"Run away."

Moore says bluntly.

"Your friends should have gathered enough Sokasu Grass by now. Under the castle is a tunnel out the town. Please escape from there."

The black clad soldiers around us plead.

"Don't follow our footsteps."

"If you ever head to the Holy Kingdom of Milis, please go to Wako Village..."

"Idiot, stop that. You can head back in 7 years."

"But..."

That sort of grieving coming from behind us.

Eh, I'll pretend I didn't hear anything.

I don't know even know where Wako Village is.

I start running out as I thank the soldiers.

Incidentally, I caught a glance of Kishirika.

She pleads with her eyes.

Now, she and I are the same, both fugitives.

"Can I bring Kishirika-sama with me?"

"...Well, our command was only to capture her."

The private guards decide to overlook this too.

Looks like Atofe never commanded them to prevent Kishirika from escape.

What happened to punishing her?

How easygoing.

Quickly I burn off the ropes tying up Kishirika.

"Ohh. Thank you very much! This one will definitely repay you!"

We escaped from the throne room.

We made contact with Elinalise and Cliff inside the castle.

Carrying a sack full of tea leaves on their back, and each with a sapling in their hands.

Ocher colored leaves, reminds me of shriveled aloe.

"Because they're weak against sunlight, they must be grown underground. I also got a notebook of instructions, but I can't read them."

"I can have Roxy take a look at it after, let's hurry."

"What happened?"

I explain to them the situation.

Elinalise has a [I knew this would happen] look on her face.

"I heard something like this before. Like Kishirika gives demon eye, Badigadi gives wisdom, and Atoferatofe gives strength."

"If you knew, you should have told us!"

"I don't understand Demon God language, maybe you should have translated better."

Ah, true, I was at fault too.

But I am not a translator.

I don't know what I'm supposed to do.

"No time to fight. Hurry and run. Then, that underground tunnel? Should we go?"

I come back to my senses after hearing Zanoba.

Right, right now Atofe may have already healed the face Zanoba smashed open, and is on the way to kill us.

"No, better avoid going underground."

A voice from behind my legs.

When I look back, Kishirika has been staring at me.

When we last met, we were roughly the same height, but now I can't help but stare down at her.

"This one didn't say anything earlier, because this one was mad of your betrayal, but Badi destroyed that tunnel during the Laplace Campaign. It hasn't been fixed yet."

"Really?"

"Really. That guy is a liar. Moore lies to help Atofe. He's basically her right hand. He might have said that, but he's probably planning something once you start to fight Atofe."

Even if Kishirika is lying, that sounds plausible.

Moore wants to deceive us and capture us underground.

That bastard...

... But he was kind enough to not attack us immediately.

And he kindly prepared cultivation notes for the herbs for us too.

Betraying that kindness, pissing off Atofe, that's all my fault.

I should just hand over Kishirika and cleanly refuse the reward.

Maybe they would let me go.

Although Moore might grumble about Atofe, he's definitely not on our side.

"But if that's the case, then why not catch us right then."

"That's Atofe you're talking about. She definitely wants to catch us herself."

I see.

It's just a game.

As a confidant of the Demon King, this is part of the job.

Do the other soldiers know?

Maybe some did, and some didn't.

"I understand. Then, we escape from above?"

"Yes. There shouldn't be any inspections right now."

Inspections at the entry points.

Indeed, with the private guards all inside the castle, there shouldn't be any inspections.

"Perhaps things changed when Kishirika-sama was in hiding. Maybe they have already fixed the tunnels?"

"If that's what you think, then either way is fine right?"

True.

Is the enemy above or below ground?

Um.

"Elinalise-san, which would you pick?"

"I definitely won't pick the path that might be blocked."

"Zanoba?"

"Narrow areas are easier to fight in."

"Cliff?"

"I, I pick above ground. I hate dark places."

It's decided.

Democratic rules.

"Then let's escape above ground. Elinalise take the front. Please lead us straight to the magic teleportation circle. Cliff and Zanoba inthe middle, and I'll take rearguard. Zanoba and I will handle our baggage."

I take what Elinalise was carrying.

Better to let us hold it than them.

I can use magic, so I don't need much mobility. Zanoba won't mind a little weight.

Cliff isn't very strong, so better off if he doesn't carry anything.

"What about this one?"

"Your majesty, you can sit with Zanoba's luggage."

"Understood."

As instructed, Kishirika climbed up Zanoba like a small animal.

I was kidding...

AAh, oh well. That's probably the safest.

"Alright, let's go!"

We run out the castle.

From within, the sound of [Moooreeee! Chase themmm!] can be heard loudly.

Terrifying.

Desperately we ran through the night streets.

Although it ought to be dark now, it's actually quite bright.

Brilliant lights pour down the cliffs of the crater.

But choosing above ground was right for now.

Not a single black clad soldier in sight.

No one chasing behind us either.

Just as Kishirika predicted.

They are probably searching the tunnels right now.

No, maybe Atofe gave up already.

Impossible. Think about it, we even have Kishirika with us.

Atofe has no reason to give up the chase.

We ran through the main road, passing by the Adventurer's Guild.

Nokopara is probably still inside.

I never expected to be heading back already.

Our rooms have been paid for.

Our change is still inside.

It's unfortunate, but not a big loss.

We passed the empty marketplace.

Briefly, I spot the alley where we dyed Ruijerd's hair.

Back then we ran out of town just like this.

All in all, not a single happy memory from this place.

We came to the city entry, a crack in the crater.

No black clad soldiers, but there are guards.

A lizard head and a pig head.

They watch us but don't show any suspicion. We easily passed.

We're almost there.

We follow along the edge of the crater.

"Ehh? Where are we going?"

"A magic teleportation circle we used."

"Oh. Magic teleportation circle. That thing's still there? But, em.. Oww, This one bit its tongue..."

We marked the location on the way out.

We'll be fine.

It's a little dark, but Elinalise won't make a mistake.

Make a left turn on the mark, then head straight uphill. We stop our steps.

"Well, well, it's about time."

Up the slopes.

The entry way to the magic teleportation circle.

Atofe stands proudly there.

Around her around 10 black clad soldiers.

Another hole can be seen near the magic teleportation circle entrance.

Don't tell me, the underground tunnel exits... here?

"As expected of Moore. It's just as he said. I'll have to handsomely reward him."

Were we tracked?

No, they even got here before us.

They even knew where we are going?

"How, how impressive... How did you catch up so quickly?"

"Hah, easy when you can fly. I can see you running."

Atofe flexes her wings as she speaks.

"Moore has arrived."

I turn to look. Black clad soldiers appear near the corner of the crater.

Atofe follows from above.

Ten black clad soldiers follow from below.

And more follow above ground.

Attack from three sides.

... If you think about it, it only makes sense.

They're not Inspector Zenigata, of course they'll split up to search.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Lupin the Third manga and anime series. }

Not just that, they knew where we were heading, so none of the paths would work.

The black clad soldiers behind us have us surrounded.

With the escape route cut, there is no escape.

"Moore. Well done. It's just as you said."

"If you think so, then listen to my request."

"Refused."

After the short conversation, Atofe claps her hand.

Thus, the black clad soldiers, all together, unsheathe their swords.

"Well then..."

Atofe takes a step forward, her sword unsheathed.

Then, from the high ground with sword pointing she speaks.

"Wahahaha! I am the Immortal Demon Lord Atoferatofe Raibaku. Defeat me and people shall call you a hero! Lose to me, you shall become my puppet, follow my every command until you die!"

A grim smile.

An overwhelming murderous intent.

The Atofe who's shorter than me looks like a 5-meter tall giant.

"..."

Sorry, Sylphy.

I might not get back.

Immortal Demon Lord Atoferatofe.

She is a very famous Demon Lord.

Her first appearance in history is the second Human-Demon Great War.

[5 Great Demon Kings] Immortal Nekurosu Rakurosu's daughter, shock troop of the Demon Race.

Low intelligence, but wields tremendous battle prowess and tenacity, a cruel and feared Demon Lord.

But, perhaps because of her low intelligence, her supply route was cut.

Captured by humans, she was sealed.

Her revival happened before the Laplace Campaign.

Demon God Laplace revived her personally, and she became his most feared Demon Lord. After the Laplace Campaign, defeated by North GodKaruman, she surrendered.

It is said, that North God Karuman and Demon Lord Atofe had a child, who became North God Karuman II.

It is also said, that North God Karuman taught Demon Lord Atofe everything he knew of the sword.

And it it is said, that North God Karuman II's sword art was taught by none other than Demon Lord Atofe herself.

In summary, Atofe is a veteran of uncountable battles, a protege of the original North God, and also immortal.

We're screwed.

Atofe before us.

Black clad soldiers surround us.

Our retreat blocked, Atofe eagerly brandishing her sword.

"Alright, come at me, all four of you."

Atofe did not attack.

Carefully wielding her sword, she is diligently observing us.

Her eyes are her real weapon.

With her strength, devastating us is not out of the question.

"... I won't be so naive this time. I remember well."

With that said, her glare alternates between Zanoba and me.

Vigilant.

Zanoba's special strength, and my lightning strike.

Even a Demon Lord cannot avoid our attacks.

But she now looks completely unscathed.

She completely recovers even after taking a Zanoba punch to the face and having her face smashed.

"Alright, do that again. I will dodge this time."

Plenty of confidence.

It feels like she'll dodge it.

This world's sword art can even reflect magic.

Not sure about North God Style, but since she's a Demon Lord, I think she can avoid magic of my level.

Open my demon eye for now, but would a second of foresight really make a difference?

What now?

... First, find a opening.

But if we do, then what?

Would my magic even do anything?

My strongest Stone Cannon couldn't kill a defenseless Badigadi.

Much less when Atofe is poised.

As long as she guards it, no matter what kind of magic...

"Rudeus. If it's just Cliff, then he can make it to the magic teleportation circle and escape."

I look over to Cliff after Elinalise said that.

Cliff, his eyes focused at Atofe.

But his legs are shaking.

And no battle ability.

"Tea, plant, and notebook. Take all three with him, and Nanahoshi will be saved."

"Right."

Right.

Yeah, this is why we came in the first place.

Save Nanahoshi, that was the goal.

If we have a goal, then accomplishing it is the most important.

If we lose here, we won't die. But we won't see family for 10 years, which sucks.

"And find reinforcements. Perugius and Atofe have a history. He can definitely get help."

Perugius and his 12 Familiars.

True, if it's him, maybe he'll come to our aid.

No matter what, he's the hero that sealed Laplace.

If he can do that, he should be able to take on Atofe.

"Fine. Then, let's do that... Can you convince Cliff?"

"Watch me."

Elinalise retreats next to Cliff.

Zanoba, Elinalise, and I will create an opening.

Cliff will break out, run into the magic teleportation circle.

Cliff convince Perugius. We'll try to hold out.

Will it work?

Can we handle it?

Also, can Cliff convince Pergius?

While Cliff tries to convince Pergius, would we lose and be forced into contract?

No matter what, if Cliff escapes, then Nanahoshi is saved.

Save Nanahoshi.

That was the goal.

But, I want to return too.

Eh, damn, I am going in circles.

Calm down.

First, we need to restrain Atofe.

At that moment, use magic to disperse the black clad soldiers and let Cliff escape.

Then, if the situation allows, we will also take a chance and dive for the magic circle.

Okay.

Let's do that.

Atofe cannot be defeated, but the surrounding black clad soldiers can.

Take it seriously this time.

Destroy them all.

Okay.

I can do this.

Do it, do it.

Kill.

Kill them all, and I get to go home. Okay.

Yes, I can do this.

I'm not just saying it this time.

"Don't worry, Shisho. Demon Lord Atofe, I would stop her even if it cost me my life."

Not an ounce of hesitation from Zanoba.

Calm.

Reliable.

Why is he so manly in a situation like this?

Like a line out of the movies.

If I'm a girl, it wouldn't be weird if I fall for him.

[But can I really get away? I don't run very fast, and the luggage too...]

[If they give chase, Rudeus and I will stop them. Don't look back, don't think, just keep running. And don't trip.]

[I should fight as well...]

[We won't win even with the four of us. You leaving for reinforcements is also a serious battle.]

[In that case... Oh, I get it...]

Cliff's voice passes by my ears.

From here, to the magic circle entrance, takes about thirty steps or so.

Not close nor far.

But he has to run the whole distance.

"Persuasion successful."

Soon Elinalise returns to the front.

Looking at Cliff.

A serious look on his face.

A man with a purpose.

Not one running from a fight.

Running for help is a battle...

Elinalise sure has a way with words, how envious.

"Zanoba and I will create an opening with Atofe. Rudeus, take care of the black clad soldiers around you."

"Got it."

Strategy session over.

We turn towards Atofe.

Poised with her sword, sneering at us.

"Your goal is to beat me?"

No enemy behind her.

30 paces. Uphill, no good footholds.

Won't Cliff fall on the way?

No, do it anyways.

"Zanoba, Elinalise-san, I'll take the first shot."

"Understood."

Facing Atofe, I raise my magic staff.

Using my usual stone cannon.

By firepower alone, the King Class [Lightning] might be better, but at this distance we'll be hit as well.

Annihilated by my own magic, I'll pass.

"Phew..."

Deep breath, focus magic into the staff.

Atofe stands still.

Even if she knew I know voiceless incantation, we will proceed as planned.

Convenient, but...

<Atofe deflects the Stone Cannon with her sword.>

Demon eye clearly sees that Atofe moved to doubt my attack.

Damn. Even though I was told that my stone cannon is very high level, but it seems useless against Atofe.

Then, would lightning work?

Use the magic that she's most vigilant against...?

"Shisho. I'll definitely follow through, count on me."

"... Zanoba."

I can trust his words.

... I also prepare myself.

"Okay, go!"

I fired off the strongest possible Stone Cannon.

With a Kaboom it flies toward Atofe.

"Just give up!"

Atofe moves like a mirage.

Just a tiny bit she moves her wrist, barely shifting the sword.

And in that moment, sword and cannon collide, frightening sparks come flying out.

The stone cannon shifts course and slams into a boulder at some far off distance, kicking off a great cloud of dust.

Still no good.

"Arrrrgh!!"

In the next instance, Zanoba threw something at Atofe.

"Ehh?"

Screaming as it flew towards Atofe.

Atofe smiling at she prepares to parry the attack.

"Just give... Eh?"

Just when Atofe was about to cut it in two, she stops her motion.

Then, what's tossed hit Atofe on the face.

"Wah?"

"Ah?"

Like glue it sticks on Atofe's face...

It's Kishirika that was sitting on Zanoba's shoulder.

"Ew! It smells! Go take a shower you idiot!"

"This one wants to too.... Eek?"

Atofe grabs hold of Kishirika and tosses her somewhere far away.

Kishirika flew out of the circle surrounding us and lands with a dud.

"Come on, throwing something like that over here.. Eh?"

Atofe screams in shock.

Zanoba with his fists clenched rushed up to Atofe.

Elinalise follows behind like a shadow.

Crap, I should stop watching.

"Come to me, fighting spirit!"

"Ahhh!"

Zanoba throws a punch.

With horrifying strength it flies towards Atofe.

With her gauntlet she easily...

"Ugh?"

She didn't dodge.

A terrifying noise, bam, he steps into Atofe.

The gauntlet smashed into an awful shape.

Zanoba follows through with another step.

A big step forward, another punch at Atofe.

"Good!"

Atofe lifts up her great sword from an awkward position.

Another terrible noise, crunch, Atofe's leg twisted.

But her momentum remains, and her swing towards Zanoba.

"Grr."

Zanoba kneels in pain.

The first time I have ever seen Zanoba like this.

Zanoba doesn't even flinch when I hit him with Stone Cannon.

With a single blow...

Atofe looks over arrogantly, but a little short of breath.

"That body is not bad, but... remember. There's no perfect defense. This is what my husband Karum..."

"Hah!"

"Mm?"

While she was talking.

Using Zanoba's back as her springboard, Elinalise leaps over.

Using her momentum she aims for Atofe's throat, aiming for the exposed flesh.

But the attack and cut sound are both deflected.

Not the sound of skin.

The defense of touki.

"There's more!"

Elinalise's sword hand holds firm.

With her shield raised, she makes a sidestep and thrusts.

Invisible shock wave flies from the sword and lands on Atofe.

But Atofe looks undisturbed.

She wrinkles her brows unhappily, like sand got into her eyes.

"Your strike is weak! Fine, here, take this!"

Atofe raises up her great sword and slashes.

Elinalise steps back to avoid that swing.

"Psh!"

Hurriedly she raises her shield.

GONG. Elinalise spins around.

Elinalise rolls on the rocky ground, then pounced like a cat.

My eye sees, terror.

"But good footwork. With training at my place..."

"Aaah!"

Zanoba suddenly gets up while Atofe was talking.

More like a leap, with his hands stretched, he dives at Atofe.

"Ahh!"

Just like that, he grabs Atofe with a bear hug.

Both her hands restrained, he lifts her off the ground.

"Argh. How dare you hug me so shamelessly... Guards!"

Like a vise Zanoba holds on with all his strength. Atofe spits out black blood.

The combo worked?

No, the opponent is an Immortal Demon Lord, temporary damage won't work.

"Shisho! Now!"

"...!"

Zanoba's words confirm the situation.

Atofe is immobilized.

A chance.

"Cliff, now, go!"

With all my power injected into my staff.

An area of effect spell.

Enough to kill all the black clad soldiers at once.

"Got it!"

Cliff begins to run, the black clad soldiers surrounding us raise their swords in shock.

No, too late.

"Frost Nova!"

Cold air surges from my staff.

The ground cracks, frozen, masses of cold air reach the black clad soldiers that circle us.

"Nah!"

"Mm?"

The black clad soldiers panic as the ground below their feet begins to freeze.

I did it...!

It might be a sneak attack.

But this way, it can't be avoided.

While I was thinking.

A voice rang.

"Bursting flames cover my body, [Burning Place]!"

One man, like on fire hot air spreads from him.

Like he's challenging my Frost Nova.

The man, and the two soldiers next to him, manages to defrost.

That man is Moore.

The old soldier begins to recite as soon as I raised my staff, taking advantage of the time gap.

Even so, no matter how powerful, no matter how fast,

Even if it's me, I will show no mercy...

But Moore's magic only managed to defrost himself and the two besides him.

Everyone else is completely engulfed in ice like sculptures.

By pure power, I have won.

Also, I, have finally killed...

"Even freezing our black armors... what incredible power! Everyone, recite Burning place!"

"Yes! Spirit of fire, everywhere between the sky and earth..."

Moore shouted to his surroundings, and the black clads in the ice begins to sing.

Not dead.

No one died.

That black armor.

That black armor can resist water magic?

Curses.

I used the wrong spell?

"Mm."

Cliff squeezes pass Atofe's side.

"Moore, do not let him escape!"

"Ha!"

On Atofe's command Moore begins to move.

A moment later, the soldiers unfrozen by Moore's magic start running as well.

Elinalise dashes over, sliding in front of them.

And with her sword raised, stops them.

"Rudeus! Go!"

Moore chases Cliff without looking back.

Cliff lugging a large baggage and sapling.

Although Moore is wearing armor, he's fast.

He's only 7 steps from Cliff.

I point my staff towards Moore.

"Stone Cannon!"

<Moore recites [Earth Wall] to counter Stone Cannon.>

It's fine. I can make it.

I pour magic into my staff and fire.

"The earth... Grr!"

Moore runs with a hand raised while chanting.

But like a laser the Stone Cannon strikes his arm, sending his armor flying.

With one hand left Moore stumbles... but did not stop.

"Spirit of Water, become my strength – 'Icicle Field'."

Moore's magic surrounds him in mist.

Using fog to evade my attack?

Still, his incantation is short.

Almost like Roxy, chanting omission?

"Wind Blast!"

I form wind with my staff and clears the fog.

And maybe to blow him away too, but, without regard to pain he approaches Cliff.

That black armor, does it resist wind magic as well?

No, not just wind and water, but resists the others too.

What do I do?

He's only 6 steps away.

I miss the kill shot, and if he dodges, it'll hit Cliff–

Just now, my Demon Eye sees.

<Moore begins to chant as he runs.>

"Spirit of Earth all across the land! I call upon you, answer-"

"Disrupt Magic!"

Instantly released, the magic I have practiced at home.

The spell I trained with Sylphy.

Moments before Moore's magic is complete, it disappears.

"Seriously? Even Disrupt Magic?"

Moore looks at his hand in shock.

But his legs have not stopped.

Only 5 steps away.

I follow, like using my hand to block his way, and fires.

Of course, I should use what I'm used to.

My well worn tactics should work no matter how experienced the opponent.

Just like in practice.

"Quagmire!"

Between Moore and Cliff, a giant quagmire formed.

Moore steps one foot onto that sticky quagmire..

"Mm... The unknown God! Answer my prayer, bring heaven on earth! [Earth Lance]!"

Instantly, Moore releases magic under his feet.

From his feet, a great spear of earth appears.

Running on this spear, Moore quickly passed the Quagmire.

His legs have not stopped.

Only 4 steps away.

Countered.

I was stopped.

How unexpected.

"Rudeus, Cliff! Hurry!"

"I know!"

Elinalise screams out.

Glancing over, she's currently busy with the two soldiers.

Two versus one.

The black clad soldiers do not press the attack, merely to keep her busy.

"Hey, I said, you shameless person! Let me go! At least fight with your hands!"

"I won't even if I die!"

Zanoba headbutts Atofe. Trying his best even with blood flowing down his head.

I need to hurry too.

The other black clad soldiers are also unfreezing.

Steam rises all around, coloring the air white.

"Grr."

What do I do?

What do I do to stop Moore?

He is strong. In a magic fight he's far more experienced than I.

He parries basic magic like nothing.

Would stronger magic work?

No. If it's too strong, then even Cliff will get dragged into it. Then there's Moore's counters and the armor's resistance.

"...!"

Just then, I noticed my feet are wet.

The result of Frost Nova.

Due to defrosting from Burning Place, the entire area area is shocked in water.

The first to defrost, Moore too is soaking wet.

Of course, Elinalise and I, our feet are also covered in a water puddle.

This magic, Atofe only saw once before.

In other words, Moore has never encountered it.

But if I use it now.

I, Elinalise, even Zanoba will get hit.

Only Cliff would be spared.

Cliff is out of range.

He won't be hit.

In that instant, I had resolve.

"Electric!"

Not enough to kill, electricity comes flying out.

A purple lightning flies towards Moore.

BANG it rings loudly, a terrifying show of force.

Purple lightning indiscriminately licks the surrounding ground.

With the ground soaking wet, it easily spread out to all the water soaked people and electrifies them.

"Kyaaa!"

"Gaaa!"

"Ohhh!"

All the black clad soldiers collapse in a heap of smoke.

Elinalise as well; Zanoba as well; Atofe as well.

All the unfrozen people.

And Moore as well.

Me too.

"Ugh!"

My body too received a horrible shock.

A pain down my spine, all my joints feel like they're bent in the wrong direction.

It wasn't enough to kill.

So I know I won't die.

But my eyes went dark, and my consciousness went with it.

■■■■

By the time I came to I was already on the floor.

Unconscious for no more than two seconds.

My is body paralyzed.

But I can see.

How is it?

Cliff.

Raising my head, I see Moore kneeling with one foot on the ground.

Smoking rising from between his armor, yet he still points his remaining fingers towards Cliff.

Mumble mumble... incantation?

Magic Disrupt.

No, it won't make it in time.

I pour magic into my left hand.

Even if my body is paralyzed, I can still move my prosthetic hand.

With my palm towards Moore.

"[Wind Bind]!"

"[Hand, absorb]!"

Moore releases a whip of wind, but it instantly disappears.

"What?"

Moore looks this way.

His face hidden in the helmet, but he must be stunned.

Serves you right.

Without regard Cliff runs forward.

Only 3 steps away from the magic teleportation circle entrance.

No one can catch him now.

No one.

Even Atofe is still paralyzed.

But her eyes wide open, she stares me down like a tiger.

"You've done it. That's an incredible magic."

"..."

"Interesting. Taking you as my subordinate is indeed... Hahaha, a magician of your caliber, I shall cherish you, hahaha."

Unable to look away, I could only accept Atofe's hideous smile.

Well, it's over.

The immortals recover quickly, far faster than I.

It's too late to run.

Even resisting will be impossible.

Zanoba passed out.

Still clinging on, he slumps to the ground.

He seems to be vulnerable against electricity.

He probably lost consciousness because of the electric strike.

Elinalise, while still feeling wobbly, tries to make a stand.

She's in as bad of a shape as I am, but still wants to try.

Elinalise refuses to give up.

[Never give up.]

A white haired coach once said.

I will too.

I can do this.

Do your best.

Let's go home.

I want to go home.

Go home, go home and... if possible, sexy time with Sylphy.

And Roxy too.

And hug Lucy.

Not just sword practice with Norn, but magic too.

The rice Aisha has raised, I was looking toward to it.

If Zenith's memory returns, then, let's take everyone to visit dad's grave.

Then, just like before, a happy life.

A fun filled day, everyday in this other world.

Right, just like that.

Just like that.

... Alright, I can do this.

I can get up.

If my hand can move, I can use magic.

Staff, where's my staff.

I can't do without it.

Ah, good.

I was crushing it under me.

I'm sorry, Aqua Heartia, was I heavy?

Okay, I can do this. Hang in there until rescue arrives.

Just until then.

I don't need to win.

Cliff-senpai, get help.

Perugius, he's annoying, but I'm counting on you.

Please convince him.

Even if he refuses right away, at least this year, please!

"Eh?"

Elinalise makes a noise, her head raised.

Her eyes point forward.

Cliff.

Right at the prison entrance.

And from there appears a black clad soldier, face to face...

Black clad soldiers, from inside the entrance, came out...

"Seriously?"

... There's more inside.

"Ahh..."

Why didn't we realize it.

There's a hole in the ground, even Atofe would want to check it out.

"Damn it..."

A darkness grows in my heart.

Wanting to cry out, feeling powerless, an all too familiar feeling.

Despair.

Never again will I meet Sylphy; never again will I meet Roxy.

Instead I will train under that idiot Demon Lord for the rest of my life.

My strength left me.

The pain in my heart has robbed me of my strength.

At that moment.

A voice of shock can be heard.

"How...?"

That voice isn't mine.

Isn't Elinalise.

Isn't Zanoba.

And of course isn't Moore.

It's Atofe.

Looking at Cliff, she said.

"Ah! Atofe-sama..."

The black clad soldier pushes Cliff aside, staggering down the slope.

Somehow, he looks off.

"Over there, in front of the magic circle, Pur..."

In the next moment.

The black clad soldier was split in two.

Right down the middle, in exact halves.

Then, behind that cut body.

The outlines of a person.

Glowing white hair.

Golden Sanpaku eyes.

White cloth splattered with blood.

"Immortal Demon Lord Atoferatofe."

Speaking in fluent Demon God language, he walks out.

"You might not think it's important... but Rikarisu might disappear in a magic teleportation circle, that possibility exists, so please think for a moment."

Behind him, one by one others appear.

Arumanfi of the Bright, Sylvaril of the Void.

And others I don't recognize.

Six in total.

"Your soldiers' blood has dirtied my castle."

I see.

Atofe arrived here before us.

She already found the entry way to the magic teleportation circle.

She ordered soldiers to investigate.

When they found the magic teleportation circle, they obviously went in.

Thus, he appears.

The Sky Castle was invaded by the Magic Race.

"Perugius—!"

Atofe shouts.

Perugius Dola.

The Armored Dragon King is here.

Her mood changed the moment Atofe saw Perugius.

Up until now, it has been the pleasures of battle.

But now it's unbelievable killing intent.

Like seeing her father's killer, she stares and grimaces at Perugius.

"Perugius, you—!"

Atofe squirms her still numb body to shake Zanoba off.

Zanoba, out of strength, falls to one side.

Atofe rushes at Perugius, her back feathers shaking.

With a heavy push she intended to jump, but instead her knees gave out.

"Hahaha!"

Perugius laughs joyfully at this sight.

"Oh, how entertaining, Atoferatofe. Getting careless again? Does being careless run in the family for the Immortal clan?"

"So you are the one who sent them! You played dirty just to kill me... What happened to your promise with Karuman?"

Perugius sneers at Atofe with a smile.

The only thing Atofe can do in her anger is yell.

Moore tries to stagger near Atofe, but it was impossible.

Right now, only Cliff, Perugius, and his entourage can still move.

Perugius stares at Atofe, like a tiger finding the perfect prey.

"Don't be mistaken. I just came to save a few friends."

"Liar! Ughh!"

"I'll keep my promise with Karuman. He was a dear friend."

"I hate you even if you're Karuman's friend!"

"... I hate unreasonable idiots like you."

As he talks, Perugius raise his hands, holding something in each.

Atofe's face turns pale.

"You, you, no way..."

Ignoring Atofe, Perugius opens his mouth.

"That dragon lives solely while following the path of chivalry. The nails on his hands are long and sharp, for he never raises a fist."

That opener sounds familiar.

"The second dragon clenches his fist in anger. His nails broken, his teeth fell, but the feeling has been conveyed. He held chivalry in his hand, yet did he abandon chivalry?"

One by one the words come out.

And with each word, the surrounding magic gathers around Pergius.

"The third dragon that died. He who possessed the most ephemeral eyes Dragon General of Lustrous Green Scales. By the name of Armored DragonKing Perugius, I summon –"

Look carefully, two doors appear besides Atofe, sandwiching her.

Beautifully carved dragons mark those doors.

An ornate silver door.

An ornate golden door.

Slowly but surely, as if sprouting from the ground, the doors appear.

"Open [Back Dragon Door]."

"Summon [Front Dragon Door]."

Under Perugius's quiet command, the doors open.

Wind blew.

From the right door to the left.

But, it's not wind.

A flow of something, doing something.

Ah, I know.

This summoning magic is magic absorption.

I can feel magic peeling from my body.

But it's different from with Orsted.

It's even faster than back then, like both my magic and my strength are being sucked dry.

"Ah, Atofe-sama, get away..."

Moore slowly crawls over suddenly.

Atofe, her legs quivering, can only stare at Perugius in anger.

"Perugius–!"

Her body seems to have shrunk slightly.

Maybe the doors have been leeching her touki.

"You know this will break the promise!"

"So what? This is a once in a life time opportunity. I won't miss it."

Perugius holds up his right hand.

His hand covered in white.

Soon his right hand begins to shine, a dazzling light blinds the area.

"Armored Dragon Hand Sword [Break]."

Perugius swings down his hand.

Light leaves his hand, flying straight at Atofe.

"I'll remember this, Perugius–!"

Atofe looks stiff drunk.

Then, a moment later, flew off at a distance.

Her body cut in two, and soon disappears from my sight.

"Pssh, not like she'll die."

Perugius complains quietly, turns back like he lost interest.

"Sylvaril. Take these four, heal them."

"And the others?"

"Leave them."

"Great Demon Empress Kishirika spotted."

Just as Sylvaril said, I spy Kishirika at a distance.

She got hit as well.

Sorry.

"Leave her."

"Hah?"

Apparently he's letting Kishirika off too.

Thank goodness.

"Phew."

With Sylvaril approaching, I can finally take a breath.

... We are saved.

Afterwards.

Perugius's subordinates carried us back.

Outside of Cliff, everyone else needed a shoulder to cling on.

Cliff and Kishirika were discussing something in the meantime.

By the time I checked, Kishirika had already disappeared somewhere after her usual laugh.

Let's meet again at somewhere easier next time... okay?

After moving everyone back, Sylvaril stopped the magic teleportation circle.

The path to the Magic Continent is closed.

Greeting Roxy's parents will have to wait for another time.

Damaged by electric shock, we were sent to the infirmary.

Cliff was on call.

It was he that offered.

While saying [This type of burn, shouldn't be too bad...] he brilliantly cleared our wounds with healing magic.

It won't kill us, but the burns were quite far in and relatively severe.

Leaving it alone might even lead to complications.

But if I didn't go that far, it might not have crippled the Immortal Demon Lord.

Cliff was particularly careful with Elinalise's wounds.

Leaving a scar would be terrible.

Love struck from that kind of Cliff, once done, Elinalise and him disappeared together.

Zanoba is still unconscious.

This time he saved us.

No amount of thanks would do.

Friendship may be priceless, but I can't cheap out with gifts.

I need to properly thank him after he's up.

After the treatments are done and I can start moving, I head over to Sylphy.

Sylphy is reading on her bed. She looks worried when she saw me come in.

"What's wrong?" I didn't answer her question, only quietly climb on the bed and hug her.

Sylphy whines a little.

Like whine in refusal, full of grief. I hug Sylphy tightly.

I thought the only thing that's important is that she is here.

Atofe's laughter still haunts me.

Although the numbness has left me, that despair in my heart still lingers.

If I had died in battle, it would all be for naught.

Atofe showed mercy, and the black guards did not attack.

Moore used magic, but nothing lethal.

But, how terrifying.

If Perugius didn't come.

And Atofe captured and forced me into contract.

Then hugging Sylphy like this might be impossible.

Even after Lucy grows up, I might not see her.

Roxy too, Norn, Aisha, everyone, they would already...

This, only this scares me.

It makes me tremble from fear.

Suddenly, she rubs my head.

Sylphy runs her hand down my hair like a comb.

Her fingers, delicate, warm, and soft.

With a smile, Sylphy returns my hug.

Nothing needs to be said.

She, only her hug.

Only that is enough.

In Sylphy's embrace, I fell asleep at ease.

Two days have passed.

Zanoba woke up and has been cheerfully checking out the art pieces around the castle.

Doesn't look like the electric shock left any complications.

Thank goodness. If he stayed unconscious with his life hanging by a thread like that, I don't know how I would face Ginger.

There have been some changes for Cliff.

After the event, Cliff and Kishirika talked about something.

I don't know what they talked about, but he was rewarded.

Kishirika's reward.

In other word, a Demon Eye.

The Demon Eye Cliff received is the Identification Eye.

Up to the extent of Kishirika's knowledge, he knows everything he sets his eyes on.

From now on, even if a similar situation was to happen, he can handle it on his own.

Cliff is taking it like a man.

That man currently, unable to control his Demon Eye, is struggling along.

Everything in the world with name and explanations attached.

A world covered in words.

Even now he cannot walk about without Elinalise guiding him.

But he'll learn to control it eventually, after all, Cliff is a genius.

Until then, he should wear an eye patch.

Also, Nanahoshi's illness.

We brought back the tea.

A little after drinking the brew, Nanahoshi begins to feel the urges.

Then Nanahoshi with Yuruzu's help headed to the infirmary... To protect her honor, I'll omit the rest. In short, relieved.

"How's the body holding up?"

Nanahoshi is still bedridden.

Her complexion has improved but still weary. She looks obviously frail.

She probably still needs at least a month of rest.

"Much better now."

Looks like she's in a good mood.

Not stressing over work like usual, but looking rather drowsy like she just woke up.

Also, bed head.

She may live an unhealthy lifestyle, but she actually combs her hair everyday.

"This time, thanks."

With Sokasu tea warm in her hand, she bows at me.

How rare of her to be polite.

"Going through such danger for my medication. You... saved me."

Hearing her so polite makes me feel rather uncomfortable.

No, she's probably feeling fragile after her body weakened so much.

"Don't worry about it."

"You have always been looking out for me... Even after I said those awful things to you... You helped me without a complaint. I don't know how I can ever repay you."

Nanahoshi looks so apologetic.

Nanahoshi as a goodie two shoes, that's a first.

Did Yuruzu of Atonement's power manage to change her personality as well?

"Now that I think about it. Rudeus-san is my senior, yet I have been so impolite..."

"Over there doesn't matter. Here I'm only 18."

"How old were you originally?"

"Thirty... No, forget it. The age difference isn't important. Please drop the honorifics. Just like before."

"Okay."

Nanahoshi takes a sip of Sokasu tea, drinking slowly.

Looks like drinking works too.

"From what I heard, your sickness..."

"Can't be cured, probably."

Nanahoshi's Drain Syndrome has no cure.

Sokasu tea can temporarily eliminate magic from within, but if she leaves it alone, the magic will re-accumulate.

Because she's not of this world, there's no permanent fix.

But as long as she drinks Sokasu tea regularly, she should be fine, probably.

Even a little magic can create complications.

Who knows how long before she contracts another strange illness.

And next time, if it's a disease from time immemorial, then even Kishirika might not know of it.

To live in this world, you have to contact magic.

In the air, in your food, magic is everywhere.

"Nanahoshi. You must go back. You can't die in this world."

".... Yes."

"I will do everything I can to help, until you find a way."

"But I..."

"Don't worry about the reward. If you ever get in trouble, please come discuss it with me, no matter what."

"..."

Hearing that, Nanahoshi sniffs and start crying.

Under her quiet sobs, a [Thank you] can be heard.

Patiently, I wait for Nanahoshi to finish.

After a while, with a stuffy nose and swollen eyes, Nanahoshi said.

"But, if I go back."

"Yes, as soon as possible..."

"No, I won't be able to repay you once I get back..."

Ah, so she wants to repay me before then.

She's surprisingly earnest.

"Don't fuss over the details. Besides, it's not like I never got anything from you."

"What I mean is, a reward for helping my research."

"Then how about this, would you mind if I consult you sometimes with minor issues?"

"Minor issues like?"

"Like what do girls your age want? I live a married life with Sylphy, got married, our child was born, but I don't really know how a girl her age thinks. If it's you, since you're around the same age, maybe you can?"

"... How Sylphy thinks?"

Nanahoshi puts a hand on her chin, concentrating over a spot on her blanket.

Thinking seriously.

Dutifully.

"Don't worry about it today. Just that if some day, when we have a fight, please take responsibility."

"... Got it."

Nanahoshi nods earnestly.

Similar in age, but ultimately she's a person from another world, and she probably won't know anything about married life.

Of course, I also don't know what people my age think.

"Well then, that settles it. You're still frail, so take care of yourself."

"Okay. Thanks."

I exit the room.

If we stay too long together, Sylphy will get jealous again.

A jealous Sylphy is cute too.

But I don't want to make a hobby out of keeping her uneasy.

I wish Sylphy can accept my love without worries.

But just thinking isn't good enough.

Walking down a hallway, a beautiful sunset can be seen outside the window.

And under the window, an expansive courtyard.

No matter which world, sunset is always dazzling.

I don't like high places.

But looking from this beautiful courtyard, witnessing the sun setting amidst a sea of clouds.

I too want to lose myself in such scenery.

With that in mind, I head out.

Flowers I have never seen before line this manicured garden.

A fantasy landscape lit by the setting sun, shy behind the clouds.

If I whisper sweet nothings to Sylphy in such a scene, how will she react?

Will she lower her reddened cheeks and grip my hands tightly?

She would be too cute to bear.

Okay, I shall collect Sylphy and test this hypothesis.

And with Roxy too...

If it's her, she probably would say nonchalantly [You don't have to say that] or something.

Well, we don't have anything scheduled for tonight. That's the only time when she acts brazenly.

But it's fine. Not just sexy time, I also want to try normal couple stuff once a while.

Watching the setting sun together, [It's beautiful!] [No, you're more beautiful!] and watch Roxy blush.

Sigh, she's not here. She won't see this.

"Oh?"

Walking around while thinking about this and that, I spot near the edge of the courtyard.

A white table.

Three seated around it talking about something.

"That was Shisho's magic. Purple magic flies out of Shisho's right hand. Atofe was burned to a crisp, completely paralyzed."

"Oh, Atofe was so weakened because of his magic."

"The depth of Rudeus-sama's magic is truly astounding."

The three chatting around the table.

Zanoba, Ariel.

Also Perugius.

They're happily chatting away in the sunset.

Not participating in the discussion are two more individuals.

Luke behind Ariel, and Sylvaril behind Perugius.

Including the two standing, all five involved in Zanoba's conversation.

"Even Elinalise and I were taken out. Outside of Shisho, I don't think anyone else in the world can handle magic like that."

"That sounds like [Lightning]... But that kind of power is necessary if you want to stop Atofe."

"And then? How did the battle go?"

"Well, about that, at that moment I lost consciousness.. oh, speaking of the devil."

Zanoba turns to look at me.

It can't be helped if they spot me already.

I take a bow and walk over.

"I'm sorry to intrude. Everyone enjoying a tea party here?"

"That's right. Shisho! Perugius-sama wants to hear about the battle with Atofe, so I have been telling what happened."

"I see."

Looking at Perugius.

He looks much happier than during our audience.

"So I heard, Rudeus. That it's your magic that weakened Atofe to that degree."

"No, it was all thanks to Zanoba for keeping her still. If he didn't, then she might have dodged and avoided most of the damage."

"I see... Ha, I just recall the way she looked back then."

Perugius shows a crooked, loathsome smile.

Atofe is really hated.

Anyways, he seems to be in a good mood.

"You seem to be in a good mood."

"Of course. She had poured cold water on my plans more than once. I never thought I would have a chance at revenge like that."

"Revenge?"

"Indeed, a very old grudge."

What he refers to happened 400 years ago.

400 years ago, Perugius as a young adventurer supported the human side of the war.

On the front line of battle.

Atofe was commanding the front line on the Demon side.

Several times, Perugius met in battle with Atofe.

Still low in combat power back then, he never had a chance of besting Atofe, almost got himself killed a few times.

And every time, it was Dragon God Urupan and North God Karuman that came to his rescue. A memory that makes one grimace.

Afterwards Perugius swore revenge no matter what.

But North God Karuman ended up marrying Immortal Demon Lord Atofe.

At his death bed, the North God prohibited Perugius and Atofe from killing each other.

Also, an opportunity to visit the Magic Continent never presented itself.

He was forced to give up, but unexpectedly an opportunity for a beat down landed in his lap.

That makes him happy.

"You deserve my thanks. Well done."

"Didn't that break your promise with North God Karuman?"

"Karuman prohibited us from killing each other, but that was a one-sided beat down. So it should be fine, probably."

Beating down a defenseless opponent, what a brute.

But he has his reasons.

"I have misjudged you. What I mean is, you deserve a reward."

"Reward... is unnecessary."

Right now, I don't need any reward.

This is fine.

I don't desire strength.

"Indeed. Once Nanahoshi recovers, how about I personally tutor you in summoning magic?"

"... And I won't be home for 10 years?"

"I'm different from Atofe."

If I can go home, then I have no reason to refuse.

Especially since I am curious about summoning and teleportation magic myself.

Something like this might happen again.

Also, some combat skill will be nice too.

I am not good with fights, but living in this world, it's better if I learn a few tricks for surviving the next crisis.

I'm probably strong enough to protect my family, but after the Atofe fight, I can't help but feel a little inadequate.

Yeah, I never imagined a fight of that caliber...

I don't want to wait until it's too late.

"Then, Perugius-sama. After the summoning lessons, how about some combat lessons and practice as well?"

"Ha, inspired by the Atofe fight? Or has the match against Atofe whet your appetite?"

Ah, he seems annoyed.

No good, no good.

"No, I mean a few tricks for if I get into a sticky situation again."

"... Well then, I shall grant you a magic tool to get in touch with me. Sylvaril!"

Perugius said as he winks at Sylvaril.

Syvaril pulls out a flute in the shape of a tower with a dragon coiled on it.

"Use it at a location associated with me. When Clearnight of Thunder hears you, Arumanfi will come get you."

I accept the flute and put it away.

Given how the conversation went, I assume if I was ever in trouble, with this flute he'll come to my aid.

That works too.

"The sun has set."

Without realizing it, the sun set and night falls.

But it isn't dark.

Both the table and the surrounding flowers glow pale white.

"This table is made from magic light stone. Sit down, let's chat for a little more."

Being told that, I sat down as well.

"Dwarf craftsmanship really did reach its peak before the second Human-Demon Great War."

"Yeah. If dwarf homelands weren't destroyed in that war, then we might have witnessed more wonderful things."

Perugius is a fun person to talk with.

Well informed and a lover of arts.

And as a man of culture, he also appreciates creativity.

"But the Dwarf Race did not die out. That race has delicate hands, sooner or later a genius craftsman will reappear and make wonderful things once more."

"Say, aren't you training as a craftsman yourself?"

"Indeed. Shisho has profound knowledge in doll making. If he were to transmit that knowledge, then doll making may one day reach new heights."

"I have seen the figures Rudeus has made. They are very interesting. To clearly present the essence of man in such matters is truly stunning."

Those two are enjoying themselves.

With my inferior knowledge, I couldn't keep up.

But they're fun to follow.

"It's not that great."

"Don't be modest."

"No, Sylphy has told me of Rudeus-sama's talents."

This tea party.

Actually, we already had another participant.

She been trying to join the happy conversation with [Ah, speaking of which–] or [About the dwarfs–] but never got a word in.

Like a lonesome girl.

I as well. The topics are too specific for me to join.

"Not just great with magic, but Rudeus-sama is also a good man."

"Thank you very much, Ariel-sama."

Ariel Anemoi Asura.

Hearing such pandering from her, I can only smile wryly.

When it comes to dolls, she can only offer flattery and repeat what's said.

She wants to secure Perugius's cooperation, but does not know how to gain his favor.

Nothing will come from this.

Well, I'll be leaving soon.

"Speaking of which, Perugius-sama, we are considering putting this figure on the market. Mind giving us your expert's opinion?"

Zanoba suddenly brought up that topic.

Takes out a box from under his feet.

A familiar box.

"Oh..."

Perugius looks at the box with excitement.

But as soon as Zanoba opens it, his smile turns into a frown.

"A Supard figure?"

"As expected of Perugius-sama, you figured it out right away."

"..."

Inside the box is the Ruijerd figure that Julie made.

A very dynamic poise.

But, Perugius is not pleased.

"You know that I hate the Magic Race, yet you still want my opinion?"

"Ah! No, I don't mean, it's..."

Perugius sneers at the Ruijerd figure and spits out.

"Sale of this figure is... forbidden."

So it's no go.

Perugius truly hates the Magic Race.

He might be forgiving to an extent, but towards them, his prejudice runs deep.

Zanoba should have known.

What was he expecting?

"No, Perugius-sama. You too, to the model of this figure, owe him a great favor."

"A favor?"

Perugius frowns, then his eyes suddenly widen.

"Wait, this figure, is Ruijerd Supardia?"

"Indeed. Perugius-sama has said before, that during your final battle with Laplace... the one who had helped Perugius-sama, this is indeed Ruijerd."

Zanoba explains in detail.

Without me realizing it, Zanoba had planned out this entire conversation.

Then, he said it.

Well done!

"Of course I understand that Perugius-sama hates the Magic Race. But if Shisho's techniques spread across the land, then it will send the art world into a whirlwind. Wouldn't you want to see? A world full of art and dolls?"

"Oh."

Perugius looks troubled.

Just a little more, maybe I should help out?

"The Supard Race may be hated, but without Ruijerd's help, I might not be alive right now."

"Perugius-sama. Ruijerd regrets what he has done."

"Regret?"

Perugius looks bothered by my words.

What should I say?

"Yes. He was fooled by Laplace."

"Laplace, huh..."

Perugius's face looks distorted.

Is this right?

"It's true. Laplace gave him a malevolent spear and manipulated him. It ruined his race's honor, and even caused him to kill his own family... For that he felt ashamed and hatred for Laplace."

"..."

"He has been traveling the world to atone for his race's honor. This plan is also hatched to help him. I owe Ruijerd a great debt... If Perugius-sama also owes Ruijerd, then as repayment, will you permit this?"

After listening to me, Perugius crosses his arms, closes his eyes, and his brows wrinkle.

After some time, he mutters a single sentence.

"Supard Race's honor and such, I'm unsure but... a debt must be repaid..."

"Oh, really?"

".... Do as you like."

Perugius still has his objections, that is obvious.

But with this, Arumanfi won't come trashing the place when we put Ruijerd figures on sale.

Rather, if anyone complains, we can claim Perugius's approval.

Perugius is known in all the lands. His name holds weight.

Really, most impressive, Zanoba.

He knew exactly where to lead the conversation.

Zanoba is really shining recently.

Far more than for me to imitate.

"Thank you for your consideration!"

Zanoba bows his head.

With that, our marketing plan takes a big step forward.

Still, Ruijerd, where are you?

"Say, Shisho. Why not show off a little to Perugius-sama?"

"Of how my figures are made?'

"Yes, Shisho's specialty, the method of creating a figure from nothing."

Perugius looks this way and nods.

"See. He's interested in your magic."

Alright, figure making demonstration.

Just what I do regularly.

Use earth magic to form the general shape, then slowly trim the details.

This time I'll make it about "Roid" size.

{ C-Editor's note: Roid or Nendoroid is a palm-sized figurine in the design of various different anime characters but with a disproportionately large head. }

This way, I can relax, and it'll turn out well.

The quality won't be great, so just a spare.

On the face, I'll try to make a bird mask.

A Sylvaril figure.

"... Is this Sylvaril? How novel!"

Perugius watches my production process carefully.

Curiously, carefully observes my hand.

Can he see magic?

He can't, but maybe he understands the process.

After all, he's the man of legends.

"Earth Magic can be used in this way too, how unexpected."

"We can make anything by request!"

"Is that so? Alright, when you finished a particularly outstanding piece, I will take it."

We got a customer!

Badigadi has disappeared.

So we should at least secure this pipeline.

"In that case."

Finally Ariel joins in the conversation.

"We also have many fine sculptors in the Asura Kingdom."

She went on to explain how talented and skilled the sculptors in Asura are.

Even going as far as, that if she were to take the throne, what they'll make for Perugius.

Getting annoyed by the conversation, Perugius finally spits out.

"Asura Kingdom's sculptures, are they only made to satisfy the vanity of your nobility? How boring."

"... Eh?"

Ariel, speechless, but Perugius is relentless.

"Once you become Queen, don't you have more important things to do than make sculptures for me?"

"W-Well..."

Perugius isn't letting off.

"Or rather, you plan on a life of extravagance on your people's back?"

"... No, of course not, and sorry. That suggestion, please forget it."

Ariel looks downcast and readies the retreat.

She stands up and take a bow.

Not the usual charismatic Ariel.

Regardless, Perugius has been too blunt this time.

Does he really hate Ariel that much? Were those cruel words even necessary?

"Wait, Ariel Anemoi Asura."

Perugius stops Ariel before she can leave.

Looking at her with an overbearing glance.

"To you, what does it mean to be king? What does a real king represent?"

"He has... wisdom, but listens to advise of his ministers, and the stature of a king..."

"No."

Perugius stops Ariel, shaking his head.

"I know Asura Kingdom's real king, but, he is not that man."

"Perugius-sama knows King Asura?"

"That's right. Crowned king after the Laplace Campaign, my friend, Kaunis Freean Asura."

I know a little about Kaunis.

After the Laplace Campaign, the sole survivor of the Asura royal house.

A great king. He gave direction to the war-torn kingdom of Asura.

400 years ago, Asura Kingdom became the sole kingdom to rule the west.

He was the reason why Asura was spared of internal turmoil postwar.

"Kaunis-sama was a great king. I can't hope to imitate him."

Ariel's words make Perugius shake his head.

"He is not great. That guy is a coward, hates to fight, and always on the run. He's bad at studying, not an ounce of martial talent, and he would always sneak to the city to get drunk and ogle bar wretches. He's that kind of man. Indeed, he never had any ambition for the throne. Yet, he has the most important factor of a king. Because of that, I respect him as a real king."

"The most important factor...?"

"If you can tell me what that is, I will help you."

Ah. I see.

This is a test.

Ariel is being tested.

If she is worthy of Perugius's backing.

"King, the most important factor..."

Ariel places a hand on her chin, concentrating over a spot on the table.

She remembers what she knows of King Kaunis.

But King Kaunis was a fool.

Like Oda Nobunaga?

"Rudeus. What do you think?"

While I was thinking, Perugius says.

"Eh, I'm not royalty, so I wouldn't know."

"Don't worry, just say whatever."

Even if he says that.

King... What is a king?

In fantasy novels, what are kings like?

A great man, head of a country.

So basically a prime minister.

In my past life, I was never interested in politics.

Just the reactions on the internet of politicians, that's about it.

Basically, not even a clue.

"... Someone who uses his own strengths for the sake of country and people."

"Ha."

Perugius sighs at such a bland answer.

"Ariel. Even he gave a better answer.

... But concern for his people alone is not enough to be king.

Indeed. Kaunis wasn't just concerned with his own people. With some help, he managed to pacify the entire Asura.

Strength? Why would strength matter to a king?

You never thought about it? Why did a country raise a fool to be king? Was it really for the good of the country?"

"..."

Ariel looks a mix of sadness and regret.

What does Perugius want Ariel to say? I don't know.

Well, it's fine if I don't know.

I don't plan to be king.

Maybe Perugius just wants to know Ariel's resolution and personality, so he asked a question without answers.

Even so, a king?

What do you want to do, what do you want to be?

"Think it through, Ariel Anemoi Asura... Well, it's late, time to head back in."

With those words from Perugius, the tea party is over.

Seeing a dejected Ariel, with Luke following feebly behind, is particularly pungent.

After a few days, my strength recovers and I return to the Magic City Sharia with Sylphy.

By the time I reached home, the sun had already set.

Although it's only been a couple days, upon seeing my house, I was hit with a sense of nostalgia.

"I'm back"

"Coming, welcome back... eh? Onii-chan?"

Upon opening the door, I see Aisha coming from the living room.

Perhaps not expecting me to be back so soon, Aisha greeted me with a perplexed expression.

"Back already? Did you find a way to save Nanahoshi-san? Or ..."

I pat Aisha's head in reassurance.

A [Wah] slips from her mouth, but she doesn't seem annoyed.

"Onii-chan, what's the matter?"

"Nothing, Nanahoshi will be fine. I'll explain the details. Are Roxy and Norn home?"

"Norn-ane is still at school. Roxy is in her room. Mom...Lilia-kaasan is doing laundry. Zenith-kaasan is sleeping."

"I see, Norn is still at school... Sorry to bother you, but can you get Roxy for me?"

"Yes."

After a bit, Roxy came downstairs.

Was she sleeping? Her hair is a little messy and her face is red.

"Welcome back, Rudi. How did it go?"

"I'll explain now, but before that."

"Wha.."

I pull Roxy into a tight embrace.

I had promised to return safely.

Though she was a little surprised, Roxy circled her arms around and hugged me back.

"I'm home."

"Welcome back."

I'm finally home.

I told everyone the events of the past few days.

There was a lot to cover, so I just explained the important parts, focusing especially on the details of Zenith's curse.

Particularly signs to watch out for in the future.

"For the time being, I'll stay in the sky fortress, but I'll come home at least once every ten days."

Let's do this for now.

While Ariel is continuing her plans, Sylphy is also staying in the sky fortress.

She is also planning on doing the same (returning at least once every 10 days).

Not going to class, huh... I suppose it's fine if I just show up for the extracurricular studies.

That should count as class participation.

"I understand, Rudeus-sama. You can leave the housework and Zenith's care to me."

Lilia declared that she would take care of the extra work. Anyway, my report is over and the family meeting has finished.

"Phew, I feel tired. I'm going to go rest. What about you, Rudi?"

"I think I'll take a bath and go to sleep."

"Oh? Should I wait up for you?"

"No, not today."

"Okay"

I walk towards the bath.

Thinking about it, I haven't had a bath for a few days.

As I enter the room, I heat up the water in the bathtub.

I should clean my body first... forget it.

Taking off my clothes, I enter the bathtub with a small splash.

"Phew!"

As I soak in the tub, I can feel my fatigue melt away.

I suddenly realize how tiring these last few days have been.

But, ten days, huh?

My audience with Perugius was only ten days ago.

So much has happened in such a short time.

Nanahoshi collapsing, journeying to the magic continent, seeing Kishirika, aggroing Atofe.

Atofe was so strong.

I don't feel like I can beat her.

It is impossible for me to beat an opponent on such a level.

But lightning magic worked.

If I use it to catch her off-guard, I might have a chance.

I need to research and practice it some more.

At least to the point where I can use it while wet.

What should I do? I don't know.

Should I cover myself with rubber like Stretchman?

{ C-Editor's note: Stretch Man was a Japanese children's television program that promoted stretching exercises. }

Atofe's servant, Moore was strong too.

It feels like he can counter anything I try to do.

Up until now, with the exception of Roxy, I've never seen such a powerful magician.

Thanks to [Magic Disturb] and the prosthetic hand I had managed somehow, but how am I supposed to deal with this type of opponent?

A general strategy for fighting powerful opponents..... doesn't exist, does it?....

Regardless, I'm out of ideas. If only I could become a little stronger.

After all, this is the first time something like this has happened in the past few years.

Reaching Perugius's level is probably impossible, but somewhere around Sylvaril's might be.

But, Perugius's summoning magic, if I can learn to draw teleportation magic circles, no matter what happens, I'll be able to react quickly.

The fact that it is forbidden magic is scary, but that's all the more reason to learn it.

Knowledge is power.

And, communication too.

Ariel's ring.

If it is improved a bit then it can be used to send messages.

Maybe it is impossible to use it everywhere, but it might function as a pager.

What else?

It feels like I'm forgetting something...

"Ugh, this always happens."

Now I think about it, I'm always so forgetful.

I would have bouts of inspiration, and then promptly forget about them.

One good idea after another too.

I thought I had a good memory, but I really have too many weaknesses.

Not good.

I'm repeating my mistakes.

I was lucky this time, but what if I forget next time?

If I forget my mistakes, I won't improve.

But, what do I do?

I remember hearing that keeping a journal helps with memory.

"...alright, maybe I should start a diary?"

Not a bad idea.

Experiences, failures, weaknesses, important things.

After writing those down, I can reflect on them.

Determining priorities, stating objectives, deciding my next move.

Feels like this will be a good idea.

I should start writing now.

Thinking this, I dash out of the bathtub.

"But... where are diaries sold?"

After getting out of the bath, I go to my research room.

I reach for the stack of papers on the lowest part of the bookshelf.

If there are no diaries, I can just write on regular paper.

The most important thing is to write things down.

But, just writing is so lonely, I think I'll add something to it.

Though its appearance is not important, it doesn't hurt for it to look a bit better.

I place the stack of papers neatly on my desk.

First, I use magic to make small holes in the paper.

I loop the papers through some rings that I make with earth magic.

Next I prepare three boards and hinges.

I place them in a "コ" shape.

I place the ring in it.

My binder type diary is complete.

The boards and hinges were free. The only expense was from the paper.

What about a hole puncher? I wonder if I can sell this?

I'll write this down, too.

Ideas that aren't written down will probably get forgotten.

Hole puncher.. no, I should write about the diary first.

"What should I write?"

Speaking of diaries, when I was a NEET, I used to have a blog. But, I quickly gave up on it.

If I can turn this into a habit, it'll work, right?

No, I shouldn't think of this as someone else's problem.

As long as I make this into a habit, it'll work.

Okay.

I'll write about the events of the last 10 days.

"...Zzz"

I was asleep before I knew it.

I'm in an empty, white room.

I've seen this place before.

Just a couple days ago, when I was teleported by Perugius, I saw this place.

Just what is this place?

I've never wondered this before.

Does this place exist somewhere in this world?

That being said, is there anything I can do about this body?

Fatty, NEET, the body of the me that had nothing.

I don't plan on closing my eyes.

But I feel my irritation swell up.

I didn't feel this annoyance when I was summoned by Perugius.

"Yo"

I see, it's that guy.

A smooth, pale face.

A slight smile like a floating mosaic.

The instant I saw his face, my thoughts faded.

Hitogami.

"Long time no see"

How nostalgic... last time was... two years ago?

"You've become like that already"

Last time he gave me advice was right before going to the Begaritto Continent.

That should be two years ago.

"It's not like this is anything new"

There has been a time when he didn't show up for 3 years.

How nostalgic.

At that time, I was drowning in despair

"Yea, compared to back then, you seem to be doing much better"

Not bad, I guess.

Got married, living a peaceful family life.

Indeed, it is a life that I never would have dreamed of having in my NEET days.

"Being acquainted with Perugius"

Perugius is a truly amazing person.

In my previous life, I never would have imagined I would meet and be respected by someone like him.

The figures I made are selling well, too.

I never would have imagined this level of success in my previous life.

"And to be liked by Atofe"

That's not something I'm happy about,

But that's all thanks to the results of my training.

However, if I didn't learn king rank water magic from Roxy...I might not have made it back this time.

That lightning attack is very useful.

"Of course, that magic is very powerful. I'm sure it would be useful against Orsted, too"

Orsted, too?

"A magic that can ignore Touki and paralyze the body. There's no way to counter it, is there?"

There's no way to counter it?

But, if it's Orsted, he can use [Magic Disturb] to cancel it.

"He is stronger overall, but victory is possible"

No, no.

Most of my magic only have miscellaneous uses, so they can't do much against Orsted without tinkering.

Perhaps I don't have any motivation.

I don't hate Orsted.

"Is that so?"

Say, I made it through the Begaritto Continent somehow.

I would be lying if I said I don't regret it.

But, it wasn't a bad decision.

I couldn't follow your advice on that.

"Well, that's your decision."

What would have happened if I didn't go?

"If you didn't go, your father wouldn't have died. Additionally, you would have (married?) the two beast-clan princesses and be living a happy life."

...What the hell?

Because of me, Paul died?

"Yep, because you were there. Because he wanted to show off in front of you, he got careless."

No, but.

This...

"If you didn't go, he would have saved your mother anyway. Of course, Roxy as well."

How could that be?

The things I did... were meaningless?...

No, but when I found Roxy, she was already cornered.

You're saying that she would've been fine if I didn't save her?

"Yes, even if you didn't go, Roxy would have been saved anyway. Her survival is the will of fate."

How could that be?

What is this fate that you speak of?

"The merchant that you helped. If it wasn't for you, he would have been late.

The day the merchant arrived, there was a particular adventurer there.

The adventurer bought something from the merchant: a magic stone.

But, if the merchant had arrived late, he would have bought something else"

Something else.

"A map of the teleportation labyrinth"

How could something like that just happen to be sold there?

"Requesting something from the Adventurer's Guild, the Gisu that failed to convince the swordsman. Filled with enthusiasm he thought of a surefire plan to recruit adventurers, part of which was to sell the map for an extremely cheap price."

...So that's how it was.

Gisu was selling the map.

True, very few adventurers wanted to step in that labyrinth, but it's possible that there was someone who thought they could conquer it.

And so, the adventurer who bought the map would have went with them into the labyrinth and saved Roxy.

"Yep, he would've met your father at the entrance of that labyrinth and they would have entered the labyrinth together, saving Roxy."

And afterwards, with the increased party size, as they continue to explore the labyrinth, they would have eventually saved mother?

"Exactly as you guessed. Compared to you, it would take some more time... approximately 2 years. They would have just now saved your mother."

I can't believe it.

"But, that is exactly what fate is."

Is that so?

So that would've happened. No knowing what the future holds...

I...It would've been better if I didn't go...

Shit, I should have listened to you.

No, but, that means I wouldn't have married Roxy.

"Yep, she fell in love with the man who saved her, but it looks like he doesn't feel the same for her."

If it were like this, nothing bad would have happened.

I love Roxy.

...But, Paul died.

I married Roxy, yet Paul lost his life. I can't feel good about this.

I don't regret marrying Roxy.

She strives to be a good wife and she's happy about being married to me.

But, if Rinia and Pursena were like this too, I think I would be happy as well.

It's not that anyone will do, but under these circumstances, there's no way for me to marry Roxy.

Ugh, fuck....

"It's already in the past now"

Yea.

There's nothing I can do even if I regret it.

It's impossible to go back.

Right now, I have a happy life.

Perhaps I made the wrong choice.

Though I have some regrets, it's not all bad.

I'll just think like this.

"You sure are optimistic."

Back to the main topic, why have you called me here today?

Or, did you come to warn me about something?

"No, it's nothing serious. Rather than advice, today, I have a request."

Request?

You?

Odd.

This has never happened before.

"Well, sometimes even I need some help."

Hm.

Forget it.

Just tell me what you want to say.

Occasionally, I think it would be okay to listen to your advice.

Up until now, I've been overly suspicious of you.

"What a relief."

Well, since you've helped me so much...

Rather, I shouldn't have been so suspicious of you.

I thought I was being played with by a malicious prankster.

"That's just too much. I'm the Hitogami. I'm the God of Humans, you know? How could I have the leisure to just do things for amusement? I wouldn't hurt people for fun."

Ah, someone like that probably doesn't exist.

"Exactly"

Then, what should I do?

"It's nothing serious. I want you to go to the basement and make sure there's nothing abnormal. If you don't find anything, then that's fine. That's all I want."

Make sure there's nothing abnormal?

Why...

No, I understand.

This time, I'll trust you. I'll just do as you asked and see how it goes.

"Is that so... Thank you."

As my consciousness faded, I thought I saw the faint trace of a smile form at the corner of Hitogami's mouth.

I open my eyes.

In front of me, I can see the flickering light of the candle flame.

I can see the moonlight shining through the window.

I don't hear anything.

It's quiet.

Perhaps I fell asleep while writing in my diary.

There was a drool stain on the page of my half completed diary entry.

I'll rewrite it.

I rip out the page and put it at the corner of the table.

Afterwards, I copy it onto a clean page and continue from where I stopped.

When did I fall asleep?

It feels like I've been asleep for days.

As I stand up, something slid off my shoulder.

It was a blanket.

Was it Sylphy or Roxy who brought a blanket for me?

Well, whoever it was, I'm grateful.

"Well..."

I remember the contents of my dream.

I'm to go and check the basement.

I don't understand the reason, but there's nothing wrong with listening to him just this once.

Up until now, that guy has never told me to do something that would put me in a bad situation.

Occasionally, it has been mutually beneficial, too.

Even if he is the Hitogami, he probably felt annoyed by the antagonism I showed whenever he gave me advice.

We might have a give and take relationship, but I should try to get along when he gets in touch with me.

"Achoo... it's so cold..."

As I walk towards the basement, I put on the robe that I had hung on the wall.

Though it is already spring, not all of the snow has melted yet. The chill of early spring is in the air.

It's not good to sleep here.

I should get back to my room as soon as possible and sleep on the warm bed.

But, in this cold, the bed would be cold too.

Around what time is it right now?

Judging by how quiet it is, it must be late into the night.

If I go to Sylphy's or Roxy's room right now, I'll probably wake one of them up...

I just want to be warm, not erotic things.

I miss them.

This is Hitogami's fault.

If only I didn't hear about what might have been.

No, I was the one who wanted to know. Was it my fault?

My fault, I guess I'll sleep alone.

As I was thinking this, I open the door.

"...?"

Suddenly, feeling a presence behind me, I turn around.

The only thing in front of me is the chair I was previously sitting on.

Of course there's no one there.

"Probably just my imagination."

Besides the table and bookshelf, there's nothing in this room.

There's nowhere to hide.

The window is too small for a person to go though.

There's only one entrance: this door.

This room is small, just one candle is enough to show that there's no one there.

The only one in this room is me.

Why did I feel a presence?

There is clearly no one here.

I don't know why, but I still feel a presence.

Weird.

Maybe there's a bug under the table.

"Forget it, I still need to check the basement."

I open the door. As I am about to leave the room...

"There!"

I turn around, again.

No reason.

Just felt like doing it.

Just confirming that there's no one there.

But...

There...

A person...

"...eh?"

A man wearing a tattered robe is sitting on the chair.

An old man.

Deep wrinkles mark his face. His hair is completely white.

His unshaven face gave him a slovenly look.

This impression quickly disappeared.

He had the pressure of a man who has weathered countless battles.

Sharp, slightly mismatched eyes.

His mouth trembled in surprise.

"I...succeeded?..."

The old man fondly surveyed his surrounding with squinting eyes, deep in emotion and thought.

But, as he looked at his hands, touched the area around his abdomen, his expression changed to a self-mocking smile.

"No... I failed. There was no way I could succeed..."

He looks familiar somehow.

But, I can't remember.

Strange.

Who is he?

Paul? No, he's not.

Sauros? But he doesn't have the same presence as Sauros.

This old man is much more cowardly.

"Who...who are you? Unless... Hitogami?"

Upon hearing that name, the man stared daggers at me.

I remember this reaction.

Orsted.

Orsted reacted in the same way.

This part is the same.

But, this man doesn't look anything like Orsted.

"No."

The man shook his head and met my gaze.

A powerful gaze.

I can't turn away.

It's like I'm being pulled in.

Like looking into a mirror, but searching...

Staring at the door behind me, he made an expression as if he wanted to ask something.

He pointed his bony finger behind me.

In the short time it took to move his finger, the door behind me moved.

"!"

Suddenly, I heard a "bam".

What did this guy just do?

As his blinding gaze returned to the still confused me, he said.

"Don't go to the basement. You've been deceived by Hitogami."

"Eh?"

Deceived?

What's going on?

"Wait, before that, who are you? Where did you come from?"

"I am..."

The old man opens his mouth to reply, but quickly shuts his mouth.

He ponders for a moment and then begins to speak again.

"My name is '――――'"

Hearing this name, I receive the biggest shock I've ever felt.

The name the man used.

In this world, the only one who knows that name is me.

The name that I will one day take with me to the grave.

A name that I don't want to remember.

A name that doesn't exist in this world.

My name from my previous life.

"I come from the future."

He came from the future.

That's what the old man said.

Honestly, I don't understand what he means.

Certainly, it's not like the old man doesn't resemble me.

"You're... you're saying you're the future me?

"Yes. I am you from about 50 years later."

The old man clearly said that.

Even if he suddenly tells me that, I don't know whether I should believe him.

But this guy knows my name.

On top of that, I came to this world after reincarnating with my memories.

So I get the feeling it wouldn't be strange for there to be timeslips.

"Sorry, but I don't have the leisure to explain to you the principles of past teleportation magic."

"When you say you don't have the leisure to explain..."

"Sorry for the Hollywood movie-like words, but I really don't have time. Listen to me."

The words Hollywood movie flow smoothly.

In other words, this old man definitely has a connection to my previous world.

...Is he really me?

Those glaring eyes.

There's something gloomy in the depths of those pupils.

To speak frankly, they're the eyes of someone who kills people like it's a mundane thing.

Cold eyes which think nothing of a single person's life.

So I'll become like this in the future?

That's absurd.

It's completely unbelievable, but the old man's expression is serious.

For the time being, tentatively, I'll listen to the old man's story as if he's me from 50 years later.

"There is nothing in the basement."

The old man said that deliberately.

"I went to the basement, and thought there was nothing. And the next day, I heard the words [If there was nothing, then that's good] from Hitogami, and felt reassured."

The old man grimaced unpleasantly.

"But that was a mistake. I can explain it now."

He touched his finger to his forehead as if remembering something.

His left hand's index finger.

Hm?

He has a hand?

"Listen, most likely, there's a mouse in the basement. A sick mouse. Its peculiar feature ought to be teeth like violet magic stones. I don't know where that mouse came from or when it entered there. Most likely, one from the demon continent or the sky fortress slipped into some luggage. That doesn't matter."

The old man opened his palm, then tightened it into a fist.

"The mouse was frightened by you, and ran away. To the kitchen. And then it scavenges through leftovers of yesterday's meal, has died the next day, and gets disposed of by Aisha."

"..."

"Those leftovers are given to a stray cat the next day, and disappear."

His left hand isn't an artificial one.

Is he really me?

Or maybe in the next 50 years, it gets healed using impressive healing magic.

"But before that happens, a hungry Roxy goes down the stairs, and picks a little at those leftovers. As a result, she's infected with that mouse's disease."

"Roxy gets sick?"

When I heard the word Roxy, my concentration focused on the old man's story.

"Magic stone disease."

Magic stone disease.

I get the feeling I've heard about it from somewhere.

Oh, if I remember right, it's an illness that can only be healed with god ranked detoxification magic.

An incurable disease that gradually turns the body to magic stone.

"I didn't realize it at first. After all, magic stone disease is extremely rare. That virus dwells inside the body, and is only capable of infecting the other life within it."

"The other life?"

"That's right, a fetus. Only pregnant women can contract that illness. I did research later on and was shocked."

"Eh? No, but, Roxy is still–"

"She should be pregnant. But enough of that, you did the deed so isn't that natural?"

Roxy is pregnant.

Somehow I'm really happy, but with this explanation I'm not happy at all.

"Mice are carriers for magic stone disease, because a portion of them have resistance to it. You can identify a carrier at a glance, because their teeth have become violet crystal. And the illness spreads to what the mouse bites on. It only infects orally, and the virus doesn't persist for very long. It disappears after around a day at most, and the infection rate is low, and those infected are only fetuses inside pregnant women."

"..."

"The virus grows inside the fetus, proceeds to remold the fetus, and then turns the mother's body into magic stone."

...He's saying that Roxy will be infected by an illness like that?

"If you were to thoughtlessly go to the basement right now and let the mouse out, the next day you'll hear Aisha idly grumble [I found a weird dead mouse this morning], two weeks later you'll be told [A cat infected with magic stone disease was discovered], and right after that Roxy will come down with a fever. And it will be 30 years later before you connect everything together."

"...What happens to Roxy?"

"She dies."

At his merciless remark, I lost my words.

"Roxy gets a fever and becomes bedridden... You'll understand that it's magic stone disease once you see her feet start to turn to magic stone, but..."

"It didn't get healed? I tried to heal it, didn't I?"

The old man made a sad face and cast his eyes downward.

"I tried to save her no matter what by going to the holy country of Milis, and succeeded in obtaining the chant for god ranked detoxification magic, but... A lot happened on the way, and it took time. By the time I returned it was too late, half of Roxy's body was crystallized, and she had died."

But he quickly raised his face and sent me the fierce light in his eyes.

"Don't be misled by the words of Hitogami. If it's you who has knowledge of the previous world, you should understand that much. That guy is the source of every kind of evil. The last boss."

"But, why did he do that to Roxy?"

"I don't know. Even now. But it should be certain that he's acting with some kind of objective in mind. At the very end, he said that himself... [Thanks to you being an idiot, things have proceeded to my satisfaction.] ...Shit."

Hitogami said that himself?

But, umm...?

"Orsted or Laplace might know something about Hitogami's goal.. But I haven't met either of them for the past 50 years. Most likely, you won't be able to meet them either, even if you search for them."

"Nanahoshi didn't know where Orsted was?"

When I spoke Nanahoshi's name, the old man made a sorrowful face.

She didn't know?

Or could it be that Nanahoshi also...

"I didn't ask her, but certainly in this current era, it could be worth asking her. Even if she doesn't know where he is, she also thinks a lot about these kinds of things. She might come up with some kind of good idea."

"...What happened to Nanahoshi?"

"....."

The old man didn't answer.

He just had a sad expression.

But after a little while, he spoke while sighing.

"At the very end, she failed. And then became depressed, and I failed to support her... And then..."

Nanahoshi didn't return.

And then despaired, and maybe, to herself, by her own hand...

"I got it. Enough of that."

"Yeah, I don't want to talk about it either."

The old man raised his eyes, and as if pulling himself together, continued to speak.

"Listen. You'll learn about this around 10 years from now too, but... Hitogami isn't called Hitogami in this world.

"...What do you mean?"

"The God of Humans, written as Human God. There's nobody who doesn't know the name Human God, but only those who've met him directly know the term Hitogami. I don't know why he did something like that... Maybe just to toy with the people who know it."

...I see.

No wonder there's such an overreaction to the word Hitogami.

So that's a name known only to those who've met him and been deceived by him.

"At a glance, that guy seemed to only speak about things that were for my sake."

The old man clenched his fist again.

The light of hatred alone illuminated those pupils.

Incredible killing intent overflowed, but for some reason I didn't think it was scary.

"Even now, up to this moment, he hasn't told a lie. No lie that I can perceive."

His fist quivered. In the vicinity of the fist, I can see something. A crackling, coiling, purple lightning-like thing.

"Each and every thing has been for the sake of this one time, so that the suspicious you would obey him without hesitating at this moment!"

I felt blank amazement toward the flying sparks, but put myself on guard.

"Don't be tricked! You read it in manga, didn't you? Someone who talks about believing and not believing is definitely lying!"

"Well, I know that, but..."

The old man spoke with a strained voice.

"You don't understand. After Roxy is Sylphy. Heartbroken from losing Roxy, for a little while you'll stop thinking about Sylphy. Sylphy will be hurt and be in low spirits. That guy will manipulate Luke and take advantage of that."

"Luke?"

"Yeah, later on you'll hear from a woman who kept Luke's company at the time, [When he woke up the next morning, Luke acted flustered and started talking about how he'd heard an oracle from God or something.]"

"And then... what happens?"

"Luke gives advice to Ariel, and Sylphy abandons me and goes to Asura. Together with Ariel who failed to get Perugius's favor! From an inferior position, Ariel starts an internal revolt, and loses. Sylphy is killed in battle."

Killed in battle...

So she dies.

"You lose those two."

The old man shook his head while grinding his teeth.

"Yeah, even now that guy's voice when he revealed his tricks lingers in my ears. [You've done well], the feeling of having my shoulder clapped, and that shrill laughing voice... Shit, fucking hell!!"

The old man struck the desk with a thud.

At that instant, purple lightning scattered through the surroundings, lighting them up like it was midday.

The light quickly faded, but a burn mark remained on the desk.

The old man exhaled with a "fuu".

"I'll say it again. Don't believe in him. You'll end up regretting it."

After saying that, the old man suddenly clutched his stomach.

Looking at him, his complexion seemed a bit worse than earlier.

"So I'm out of time... But even if I say this, you probably don't know what you should do."

The old man's face was deathly pale.

Purple bags had appeared under his eyes.

The old man took a deep breath and then exhaled painfully.

It kind of feels like he's on the verge of death.

Maybe he suffers from some kind of illness.

"First of all, hmm, Eris."

When I heard Eris, I felt my brow furrowing.

"I want you to write and send her a letter immediately. Say [Well, I've been a bit unfaithful, but I love you.]"

"I don't love her. It's because of her that I became impotent."

"Forgive her. You're a man, aren't you?"

"..."

The old man grinned in self-derision.

"...Though I said that, I ended up not forgiving her, and was antagonistic with her for years."

"Antagonistic?"

"Time and time again, I was almost killed by Eris. She would chase me no matter where I went, and every time she found me it would turn into a no-holds-barred battle. Well, she took it easy on me. If she wanted to, there were plenty of ways to kill me. She would make sure never to pick a fight where she'd kill me.

On the contrary, if I was ever in a crisis, she'd save me from the shadows. Almost like Vegeta."

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Dragonball manga and anime series. }

'Vegeta'...

"Well, she's different from the prince of the vegetable country. She just wanted to be by my side. She had always loved me. She loved me and did her very best for me...

But she's bad at expressing herself, and didn't know what she should do, so the only thing she was able to do was hit me."

Even if he tells me that.

I'm someone with wives and a child.

It's true that there was a time when I loved Eris.

But, that's... in the past.

"But Slyphy and Roxy..."

"Not a problem. Sylphy's tolerant about that kind of thing, and Roxy doesn't think that she suits me, so she'll allow it. Even Eris, if you give her an explanation in advance, will agree. Oh, but prepare to get hit. Because she's that kind of woman."

"Even if you say that..."

"Protect all of the women who say they love you. Isn't that nice? What's wrong with that? A man should be reliable."

"Don't say it like it's somebody else's problem."

"I'm saying it because I was left with no one."

There was a strange sense of weight to the old man's words.

But you know...

"I have a responsibility toward Sylphy and Roxy..."

"If you're talking about responsibility, you have one toward Eris too. She's been persevering for your sake the whole time. She's a poor talker so it didn't get through to you, but the whole time. If you don't take responsibility for her, what about all her effort?

...You'll be condemned by Ghyslaine. In front of Eris's body."

Eris's... body?

"Eris... dies too...?"

"Yeah, to cover me. If I remember right... That was when I had a rematch with Atofe. A serious Demon Lord was stronger than I thought, and I let my guard down."

The old man said that nostalgically, the corner of his mouth twisted.

To be able to be inattentive toward Atofe, just how strong is he? This future me.

It seemed doubtful, is he really me?

"Listen, you must send a letter. If you don't want to regret it... If you do it now, it should barely make it there in time."

"Ah, aah, well, if you say that, I'll send it. But, where do I send it?"

"The Holy Land of Swords. You should have had some suspicions, right?"

The Holy Land of Swords.

It's not that far from Sharia.

Maybe I thought it might be something like that. So she was training there.

The Holy Land of Swords...

"Got it."

"Don't write it like you're pushing her away. If Eris despairs, you'll be killed."

"I know."

I think that I know what kind of person Eris is.

...Or at least, I thought I did.

If this old man's words are true.

She had no intention to dump me, and I didn't understand that.

Now that I think about it, there's no way an awkward speaker like her could write a letter well.

And thus, we passed each other by, which gave rise to unhappiness.

"Fuu"

The old man exhaled cumbersomely.

And then raised his face with a startled expression.

"Also, I forgot to say something important. Don't oppose Hitogami."

"'Don't oppose'? He deceived you, didn't he?"

"Yeah. But you can't win against Hitogami. I couldn't win against him. Someone like me couldn't arrive at the place where Hitogami is."

The old man said that as though mortified.

He didn't arrive at the place where Hitogami is.

In other words, as I thought, that place is somewhere in this world?

"When I realized that, I trembled. I couldn't even avenge Roxy and Sylphy. I worked this hard to defeat him, but I can't even reach him. I can even manipulate gravity, but he won't come within the reach of my hand."

After saying that, the old man pointed at the inkwell on top of the desk.

The inkwell gently floated up, then immediately dropped down again with a clink.

Drops of the ink flew onto the desk.

"I can float in the air and communicate with others over long distances. I regenerated my arm. Not to mention I can even jump through time and fly to the past... Well, this magic is a failure, though."

A failure.

Just what was a failure?

This man is actually right here, right now.

"You probably vaguely sensed it already, but what's called magic in this world is omnipotent. Once you realize that, you can essentially do anything."

While saying that, the old man raised his left hand.

In contrast to his proud behavior, the old man's face had gone past deathly pale, and was now pure white.

Black bags had appeared below his eyes, and his lips were dyed blue.

"But this power no longer means anything. I was too late. When I became strong, there wasn't a single person left I wanted to protect."

The old man's eyes were glaring as always, but the power was already gone from his pupils.

His breath was rough and thin.

"Listen, I'll say it again. I hate Hitogami.

But I can't beat him. There's no way to. I don't have the technique to arrive at his place. In the era I live in, the thing that's necessary to reach Hitogami's location does not exist. So don't fight with him. I don't know what his goal is, but it's fine if you even act servile, just don't oppose him. You'll just get done in by him, with everything still going as he wants.

In which case, right now, before anyone's died..."

The old man's hand suddenly lost its power and fell.

He raised his chin and gazed at the ceiling.

"There are three things you should do.

Consult with Nanahoshi.

Send a letter to Eris.

Doubt Hitogami, but don't oppose him. That's all."

"..."

I couldn't respond.

When he tells me all this suddenly, words can't come out.

But I somehow sensed that this old man was desperately trying to convey something to me.

"Y-You don't have any more concrete advice or anything?"

"How nostalgic. Come to think of it, the me of this era was quite a slacker... Well, of course, I'd like to teach you more details about various things, but... We're out of time."

"You've been saying you don't have time, you're out of time, etc., for a while now. Is a late night anime starting or something?"

"No... It's ending. By the way, don't depend on other people so much. When you first came to this world, in the early days, you didn't merely rely on other people, did you...?"

The old man looked at me as though seeing a grandchild.

Now that he says that, I do get the feeling I've been doing nothing but relying on other people recently.

"Also... Now that I've come here, history should have changed. No matter what I say, it's not necessarily true it will come true. And since past teleportation takes this sort of form, the history that I've walked won't change....."

The next instant.

The old man's eyes shifted and lost their focus.

His arms dangled downward, he lifted his chin, and he gasped with difficulty.

"You... will lead a different life than I did. Just as you always have, you'll have successes, you'll have failures, you'll have times you reflect, and you'll have times you regret."

The old man moved slightly, then fell from the chair.

"Hey, are you okay!?"

I rushed over hurriedly and helped him up... I shuddered.

The old man's body was light to an extent unthinkable from how it appeared so solidly built.

It might be even less than 40 kilograms.

What is this, what's going on.

"I... don't think that because I came from the future, I'll be able to recover from my mistakes. This magic is a failure..... There are no do-overs in human life..."

The old man let his blank gaze wander around while putting his quivering hand inside his robe.

"I jumped with the diary as a point of origin... so I brought it..... What I've experienced is written in it..... Do your best... so that you don't have regrets... Don't become like me, and have that guy laugh at you... please..."

The old man's glaring eyes moistened, and he took out a bulky file-like thing from the pocket of his fluffy robe.

It's worn out, but I know it.

It's the diary that I only just made.

Before I could take it, the diary slipped from his hands and fell to the floor with a thump.

But what stole my attention wasn't that.

When he removed the diary, I briefly glimpsed something caved in on the other side of his robe.

Almost as though there was nothing below his clothes...

"What's... with that body...?"

"Hah, it was... incomplete..... My past teleportation... wasn't able to... take my... entire body..."

"Eh, but, earlier, you said you could regrow an arm..."

"I don't have any more mana... Sorry... If only Cliff was alive, the past teleportation would've been better able to..... a little more, here, information for you..."

"...I'm sorry, it's okay, so don't speak."

"...You... have regret... as Hitogami wants... why in a place like this... what I should say... I came to the past, so at least a glance..."

The old man's eyes no longer saw anything.

His words made no sense, it was just vague phrases flowing out.

Before I knew it, the area below his eyes was dyed black, and the shadow of death had appeared on his face.

This is the face of someone about to die, no, of a corpse.

"Ah"

But those eyes suddenly focused on a single point.

He saw something over my shoulder and behind me.

He extended a quivering hand toward that.

"Aah, Sylphy, Roxy... Damn, you sure are cute as ever..."

A single tear's trail flowed down from the old man's eye... the light was gone.

The strength dissipated from his body, and his neck drooped down.

...He was dead.

I turned around.

The door wasn't open.

It had made quite a loud noise, so I thought that someone might have been woken up, but...

On the verge of death, I wonder what phantom the old man saw.

When I thought that, I heard the footsteps of someone coming down from the second floor.

"!"

I went out of the room in a hurry.

Right then, Roxy and Sylphy who held a staff and candle arrived there from the second floor.

"Rudi, I heard some kind of voice and sounds. Is someone there?"

"Is it a thief?"

The two of them spoke with relief after seeing my appearance, but didn't let go of their sense of danger, and were vigilant.

Should I speak to them about the old man?

.....No.

"No, I'm sorry. I was half asleep. I saw a weird dream, and ended up using magic. Looks like I woke you up, I'm sorry."

"A dream so you used magic while half asleep... I heard something like a shout too, is everything okay? Um, if it's tough, should we sleep together? I mean, obaa-chan said [Human warmth is the best when you want to forget something painful]..."

"No, it's fine. I'd probably do something lewd, after all. Sylphy's not back to her normal condition yet, right?"

When I refused Sylphy's attractive proposal, Roxy looked displeased.

"If you say it's really, really tough, I don't mind, but... No, but recently I've been thinking that it's possible, so if you can I'd rather you just limit it to touching..."

"No, I'm saying there's no need today."

At Roxy's words, I suddenly remembered the old man's words.

The old man said that Roxy was pregnant.

When Roxy said [Thinking that it's possible] maybe she was referring to that.

"...I'm really fine, so you two can return to bed. I'm going to sleep too, after tidying up the room."

"If Rudi says that, I'll do so, but... If it's not all right, tell me, okay?"

"We are married, so please don't be reserved. Well then, goodnight."

Sylphy and Roxy said that concernedly, then went up to the second floor.

After confirming that, I turn back toward the laboratory.

In any case, the first thing I should do is confirm the old man's words.

I don't really understand who the old man was.

Was he really me from the future, or was he someone else?

He did something dangerous enough to kill him when he came here.

There's credibility in that action, but it's all so sudden that I can't completely believe it.

"..."

But I thought.

I don't want to lose those two.

And, I don't want to die amid regret like that old man.

After that.

I returned the two of them to their rooms, and strictly ordered them to not go outside their rooms tonight no matter what.

I went around to the rooms of all of the family members on the second floor, and locked them from the outside with earth magic.

I went around to all the rooms on the first floor, and confirmed that nobody was there.

After that, I returned to the laboratory, and stripped off everything on the old man.

"...!"

His body had no stomach.

There was a large hole from his ribs down, and I could only see bone and skin.

There were almost no internal organs.

But aside from the stomach, it was a splendid body.

There was so much muscle that you wouldn't think he was in his late 60s, and scars from his history of battles remained in various places.

There was a welded-like scar on his chest, and a mole in a place slightly different from where mine was located.

From the looks of it, his body was the same as mine.

If I had to mention a difference, it would be that he has a left hand.

He said he grew it... So healing magic also has some impressive skills.

Aside from the diary, the old man didn't have anything in particular.

No ornaments, no staff.

Below the robe was just a shirt, trousers, and underwear.

There wasn't anything in his robe pocket or his pants pocket.

Although if it was me, if Sylphy or Roxy died, I think I'd at least carry around something that belonged to them.

But 50 years, huh.

It might have all been lost.

I gathered all that in the corner of the room, and wrapped the old man in a blanket that was lying around nearby.

Carrying the body, I headed toward the backdoor located in the kitchen.

"..."

In the kitchen, leftovers from last night's cooking had been placed on top of a dish.

So he was saying that the mouse would eat that.

In which case, I should dispose of it.

I go outside through the backyard, and went to vacant land in the neighborhood.

I dug a hole there, put the old man's body in it, and set it on fire.

The magic fire burned up the old man in the blink of an eye, changing him to ashes.

The unpleasant odor of burnt human flesh hung in the air.

The smell of my own corpse.

"Uugh..."

When I thought that, I became nauseous, and vomited in the corner of the vacant land.

After burning the body, I made an urn with magic, and placed the old man's ashes in it.

I'll bury these ashes in the same place as Paul.

If the old man is really me, that ought to make him most happy.

After collecting the ashes, I filled the hole and returned to the house.

I entered through the backdoor and went straight to the laboratory.

I set the urn next to his belongings, and picked up my staff.

I headed toward the basement.

I've already opened up my demon eye.

The old man said [Don't go].

He said that a mouse will come out, fish through the leftovers, and the fetus inside of Roxy will become infected with the mouse's disease.

Therefore, I have no choice but to confirm it for myself.

Whether there really is a mouse.

If I don't do that, I won't be able to trust the old man.

And if it really is there, I can't leave it alone.

"..."

The stairs to the basement were dark.

I took out a light spirit scroll from my pocket, illuminating the surroundings.

I descended the stairs, took a deep breath, and placed my hand on the door.

"...hm?"

When I did that, in the corner of the stairs.

Among the thin layer of dust, I found something that bothered me.

Footprints.

A mouse's footprints.

Those footprints continued toward the basement, and there were no footprints going out.

I did... not... open the basement door.

I opened a fist-size hole in the center of the door with magic, and stuck my staff through it.

I sent mana to my staff.

The image was ice, the scope was the entire room.

In the basement there was manure that Aisha used for the kitchen garden, and there were magic items and such, but I wasn't going to pay that any mind.

"...Frost Nova."

I muttered that, and it was frozen in an instant.

Just in case, one more time.

"Frost, Nova."

The cold was spread completely through the room, to every nook and cranny.

I let the light spirit go through the hole and light up the other side, and peeked through the hole to verify that the room was completely frozen.

I opened the door.

I opened the frozen door, entered, and quickly shut it.

"..."

I immediately found the mouse.

Close to the hidden door to the shrine, frozen pure white, dead.

I could see transparent violet teeth through its half-open mouth.

Teeth that were like magic stone.

I searched every corner of the room to make sure there wasn't a second one, made a box with earth magic, pierced the mouse's corpse with a rod, put it inside and completely sealed it.

I wonder if it would be better to dispose of the body with incineration.

Or if would be better to entrust it to the magic guild and have them study it.

The latter.

If I report it along with the information from the old man that it was magic stone disease, I'll be able to tell whether it really was.

Although in the first place, I don't know whether a virus can be obtained from a frozen corpse.

I left the basement and locked it with a key.

Furthermore, I filled in the portion that had a hole in it.

It seems like magic stone disease's germ doesn't infect through the air, and the infection rate is low, but I don't know what might happen.

For a little while, I'll make this basement a forbidden room.

I returned to the laboratory.

I was wide awake and didn't feel like sleeping.

First of all, what should I do?

What can I do right now?

Should I read this worn out diary?

If I read this, I might understand what'll happen from now on.

But he said that history had changed.

If I were to say like a certain game would, this is another world line.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Steins;Gate anime television series. }

It's a world changed by the me who came from the future.

Even if I read this diary and prepare for it, there's a high possibility that what's written won't occur.

I suddenly noticed the inkwell and the black stains on the desk.

The scar from the old man striking it with a fist full of mana.

I remembered the three things that the old man said.

Among them was one that I could do now, right here.

I sat in the chair.

"..."

First of all, I decided to write a letter to Eris.

Mushoku Tensei: Isekai Ittara Honki Dasu - Volume 16

The day after the man claiming to be the future me appeared.

Sleepily, I consider things. First, what is it that I should do? The future me had said it.

『Consult with Nanahoshi』

『Send a letter to Eris』

『Doubt Hitogami, but do not be hostile to him』

I wrote a letter addressed to Eris.

Just for now, the contents say that I'm fine accepting her. However, I'll talk to Sylphy and Roxy before sending it. Depending on how the discussion goes, the contents may change greatly.

Doubt Hitogami, but do not be hostile to him.

I'll declare this the next time he appears in my dream. I don't know when that'll be though.

Consult with Nanahoshi.

Though I want to consult with her, I wonder if she'll believe such a ridiculous talk. No, she's a Slider. Even if it's ridiculous, she should at least have the inclination to believe me.

But before that is――――the diary.

I've decided to read the diary. I didn't know what to do since it was left here. This is the life left by that old person after all.

The diary that the Future Me had brought was old and the earlier pages were dull and tattered. But I read it. Whilst skipping over parts that aren't important, I'll learn about the important parts.

―

■

I was thinking that I'd start a diary from today.

Still, a lot has happened these last few days.

What happened with Perugius, what happened with Zenith.

Teleport magic with summoning magic.

There are a lot of things that I have to do, so I thought to write a diary so I didn't forget.

■

In the morning, Aisha was down and said [A weird mouse died.]

I wonder if she hates mice.

■

It seems that a cat infected with the Magic Stone Disease has been spotted in the neighbourhood.

How scary.

I'd better tell everyone in the family to wash their hands properly.

■

Surprisingly, it seems that Elinalise is pregnant.

Though Cliff seemed uneasy, Elinalise looked happy.

I should get everyone together and bless them.

Times like these call for a loud celebration.

―

Up until now, it's all been normal diary stuff.

Like how they were taught summoning magic from Perugius.

Like how they went around the flying castle sightseeing with Zanoba.

Like how he found out Roxy's weakpoints in bed.

Like how Lucy looked like an angel when she slept, and would definitely become a beauty in the future.

And each day seemed really fun.

Though it had been dated at the beginning, that stopped somewhere along the way. I wonder if it's because it was annoying. Because of that, I don't know how much time passed, but I recall the old person's words, so it's probably within the span of 2 weeks.

However, after this point, it changes.

—

■

Roxy collapsed.

Around this time we thought that it was because she was feeling a bit bad, but she eventually gained a fever.

I'd better contact the school and tell them she's resting for a while.

We try using advanced rank detoxification, but it has no effect.

Could it be another incurable disease?

I'd better meet with Cliff soon.

■

Roxy's feet began turning into a purple crystal.

I immediately called for Cliff, and he used his Eye of Identification.

The name of the disease was 『Magic Stone Disease』.

It can't be healed without God Ranked Detoxification: an incurable illness.

■

To get our hands on God Class Detoxification chants, we headed to the Holy Kingdom of Milis using the teleport magic circles.

The group members were Cliff, Zanoba and I.

Sylphy had wanted to go as well, but I asked her to look after the house.

■

We arrived in Milishion.

It seems that the God Class chant was left inside the cathedral.

Though Cliff knew the location, it was somewhere that you couldn't enter unless you were archbishop level or something.

As a result, we decided to sneak in, deep in the night.

We'll just transcribe it, and then return.

■

We managed to enter.

However, the God Class Detoxification was a book as thick as a dictionary.

There was no way we could transcribe it there.

We took it with us, but during our escape, we were detected.

Right now, we're running from pursuers.

■

We were ambushed at the teleport magic circle.

During battle, the teleport magic circle was destroyed, and became unusable.

Cliff fell due to poison, and is seriously ill and unconscious.

.....I killed my first person.

I can still feel it on my hands.

It's disgusting.

Shit.

■

We move to another magic circle.

Cliff's consciousness isn't returning.

Our faces are being spread throughout the Holy Kingdom of Milis, and are now wanted.

It seems we've completely become the enemies of the Milis Church.

■

Cliff died.

I don't feel like writing for a while.

■

We somehow arrived at another teleport magic circle.

There's just a little more.

■

We were too late.

I don't want to write anymore today.

■

I think I should write about yesterday.

When we entered town, we met Eris and Ghyslaine. Eris screamed something, but I already had two wives,

so I told her that I couldn't be with her anymore and she left with a shocked expression.

In the end, Ghyslaine sent me an unpleasant look of scorn.

When I reached home, everyone had mournful expressions.

Half of Roxy's body had crystallized, and she died.

The chant was useless.

After that, I told Elinalise about Cliff's death.

I was hit across the cheek by Elinalise, and she left for somewhere, crying.

I feel like shit.

■

We had Roxy's funeral.

I didn't feel like doing anything.

All that came were tears.

I don't care about anything.

■

It seems that Elinalise disappeared from town.

Though she's heavily pregnant, I wonder where she went.

Well, whatever.

■

Sylphy tried to cheer me up, but I don't feel better.

Roxy isn't here anymore.

That Roxy.

Roxy who gave her best at everything.

Roxy who brought me outside, and who gently comforted me when Paul died.

Roxy who had become my guide in life. That Roxy.

（The pages were crumpled from tears.）

■

Lately it feels like I've been doing nothing but drinking.

When I don't drink, I remember Roxy and start crying.

Sylphy said that this was no good, but what would she know?

Even though Roxy had taught me very important things.

■

When I drank inside the house, Lilia would scold me.

I started drinking outside the house.

When I drink in the bar, I occasionally bump into Eris.

She says whatever she wants, and then hits me.

What's with that woman?

Ghyslaine doesn't stop her either.

Also, lately Norn hasn't spoken to me. She sends me looks of disdain.

Nobody understands how I feel.

■

Lately, Sylphy has been openly trying to seduce me.

She says stuff about forgetting about Roxy and sleeping with her.

Because she was way too persistent, I shouted at her.

There's no way I'd sleep with her after being told something thoughtless like that.

But that's not all.

If I slept with Sylphy now, I'd probably treat her with drunken violence.

She'd take Roxy's place, then after that I'd let out my anger on her.

That's... no good.

■

I've messed up.

While I was drinking in the bar, a prostitute called out to me.

I was drunk as well, so I went with her to an inn and slept with her.

As expected, women in this trade really are skilled.

It's a bit like, though I thought I've been sleeping with women until now, they were actually just girls, or something...

No, that doesn't matter.

The problem was that I made Sylphy cry.

She saw me coming home, smelling like a woman, and saying "Why aren't I good enough...?" and ran to her room crying.

I was lectured by Lilia, and even Aisha bluntly frowned at me.

I can hear crying behind the door even now.

She won't reply when I knock.

I've failed.

I might've been better treating her violently. She might've wanted me to vent out my sadness.

I'll apologize tomorrow.

■

Sylphy won't speak to me.

What should I do?

At these times, if Elinalise were here...

■

Sylphy has disappeared.

When I woke up, the room was empty.

Strictly speaking, only my clothes and belongings were left.

Lilia ordered me to immediately chase after her.

But I wonder if I'm qualified to do so.

Wouldn't it be natural to divorce a man like me?

■

When I grumbled, Zenith slapped me.

Though she didn't say anything, she slapped me again and again.

It's almost like she was criticising me.

■

I decided to chase after Sylphy.

When I gathered information, I found that Sylphy and Ariel had gone back to the Kingdom of Asura.

Though there should've been a few months left before graduation, I wonder why they left so quickly.

Though I don't know why they did this, something might have happened back in Asura.

I decided to hurry as well.

■

I met with Eris again.

She said some incomprehensible stuff about forgiving me now or something or other.

I didn't want to hear it so she suddenly hit me.

Because she was getting way too annoying, I sent her flying with magic, and she drew her sword and attacked me, so I ran.

Eris.....Even though you abandoned me, why now.....

■

I was stopped because of the snow.

I wonder if Sylphy has already left the snowy region.

I'm getting really impatient.

■

I finally reached the Kingdom of Asura.

But, I was stopped at the border by something troublesome.

It seems that because I was wanted in Milis, I was treated as a criminal in Asura as well.

They tried to restrain me, and I escaped in a panic.

I'll have to find smugglers somehow.

■

I managed to find a smugglers guild.

It seems that these kinds of organisations exist anywhere you go.

It seems like I was the talk of the guild, and they looked at me with envy.

As the thief that stole God Ranked chants from the Holy Kingdom of Milis, I was a celebrity.

When I explained the situation to them, it was decided that I'd be guided by a voluptuous female thief named Triss.

I'm worried that if Sylphy sees me with this woman, she'll get the wrong idea.

■

I entered the Kingdom of Asura.

I put on a hood and mask to hide my face.

From now on my name was Rude Ronumar, and came up with a lie about how my face was cursed, and people who saw it would be turned to stone.

It was decided that Ronumar was a magician working away from his home in Basherant, and was being shown around by his cousin Triss.

Because they thought about various things for me, I bowed.

■

I got hold of information about the King's death.

There was also a rumor about fighting between the princes for his position.

That's probably why Ariel returned here quickly.

■

We'll reach the capital soon.

However, I've heard nothing but suspicious things about Ariel.

It seems that she had assembled troops and staged a coup d'état or something.

It seems that people don't think that she has what it takes to win.

Well, Ariel probably isn't that stupid.

It's just a rumor.

■

We reached the capital.

When I left the role of gathering information to Triss and entered the bar, I spotted Eris.

Could she have followed me all the way here?

No, that's not it.

She was born in the Kingdom of Asura.

In the first place, our destination was probably the same.

■

It seems that Ariel's hidden herself.

Of course, Luke and Sylphy too.

Will I be able to find them?

■

I can't find them.

Triss thinks that they've already left the capital and moved to another town.

Places that Ariel seems like she'd go to... Luke's family's house, perhaps?

Tomorrow, I'll propose to Triss about going to the Notus family's territory.

■

We came to the Milbotts region, governed by Philemon Notus Greyrat.

At the same time, we managed to get hold of information that said that Ariel was hiding in the Notus home.

But how can I meet with Sylphy?

Should I break in?

■

When I entered the Notus home, for some reason Eris was there and I was beat up.

I was caught, thrown into a dungeon, there a person whose face resembled Paul, called themselves Philemon and verbally abused me.

It seems that for some reason, he thinks that I'm here to usurp the Notus house.

After saying that he'd execute me tomorrow and hand my head over to the Milis Church, he left.

After that, I escaped but... Ariel wasn't in Philemon's territory.

■

A coup d'état broke out in the capital.

『Ariel is in the Milbotts region』 was a false rumour.

It seems that Ariel was hiding in the capital, and waiting for her chance.

Will I make it?

■

At a place a day's travel from the capital, I heard that the coup d'état had been suppressed.

First of all it was too reckless, second of all, just as Ariel was thinking of killing the second prince,

she was stopped by the Water God and North Emperor and her forces were annihilated.

It seems that Ariel was caught, and the next day she was executed.

Her forces were annihilated.

Annihilated.....

And Sylphy.....？

■

.....I'm tired of it all.

Why did this have to happen.....?

■

I'd better write yesterday's events.

In a corner of the capital, at the place of executions, the bodies of Ariel's followers were displayed.

Among them were Luke... and Sylphy.

Sylphy's body was missing its arm, and it had a large cut down its face.

A number of people were throwing stones at them.

As one of the criminals who disturbed the peace of the capital, Sylphy had stones thrown at her.

Each time a stone was thrown, the crows would fly off.

I couldn't bear it any longer and burnt Sylphy and the rest.

I burnt everyone that got in my way as well.

This country should just disappear.

I closed the diary with a bang.

It's painful to read. I don't want to read it anymore. Did I really have no choice but to read this? Why did I read such a thing?

"Ueh..."

I feel sick. I'm sure this is just a story that the old man came up with in his delusions. I don't want to think that this kind of future is possible.

"..."

But I have to read it. Knowledge will surely be power.

So I look at the diary... But I don't have the courage to open it. I feel sick. I wonder what other suffering is written in that diary. When I think about it, I start to feel nauseous.

"I'll take a little break..."

I got out of my chair and headed to the toilet.

I threw up. Tears came out. It might be because it was my own handwriting, but I was able to imagine what I was feeling at the time.

The sadness when Roxy died.

The anxiety and hopelessness when Sylphy left.

The feelings when he chased after them.

Then the feeling of loss when he saw the dead Sylphy.

"Oeee..."

With my face buried in the toilet, I just threw up. My stomach is completely empty, but I have no appetite. I'll probably be fine eating nothing today.

When I was rinsing out my mouth with water magic, I found that Sylphy was standing there worriedly.

"R-, Rudi. What's wrong? Are you okay?"

With white hair down to her shoulders, she was wearing casual wear, and felt a little unguarded.

With a wound down her face, missing an arm, killed, cold, and exposed to the public... Such a scene came to mind.

"Wah-, what?"

I embraced Sylphy without a word. Sylphy's body was soft, and warm.

"Rudi, were you that influenced by the fight with Atofe?"

"...Mn"

"Guess it can't be helped, huh... There, there. Whenever it gets tough, I'll be there to comfort you, okay? I know that you're not that strong after all, Rudi."

Whilst tiptoeing a little, Sylphy pat me on the back.

[Whenever it gets tough, I'll be there to comfort you, okay?]

The Future Me ignored these words.

"Mn. Sorry, Sylphy."

"It's fine."

"In the future when things get tough, I might not depend on you, or do or say bad things."

"Ehh..."

"But please don't leave me."

"Umm... If that happens, I might get a little irritated at you, treat you coldly, and fight with you... But we can make up, right?"

"Yeah. Of course we can. Mn, we can make up..."

Sylphy really is gentle. I'll betray this gentle girl.

"Um, Rudi. The way your hands are touching my butt is kind of perverted."

"...Do you not want me to touch you?"

"Well I don't lose anything, so it's fine but... Wah-"

Since I got permission, I picked Sylphy up. I headed to the bedroom. I'm not particularly thinking of doing anything perverted. I was just thinking of flirting together with her like this.

How do I say this? Is it a bit like regaining something I've lost? I don't really get it. Because of reading that diary, I've become sentimental.

While thinking such things, I heal myself with Sylphy.

After Roxy came home, I started following her everywhere. I was sitting next to her on the sofa, and playing with the ends of her braids.

Enough that I was asked,

"What's the matter?"

"Umm, Roxy. Won't we talk a little?"

"Don't we always talk...? Or is there something in particular that you'd like to talk about?"

"No, like, in a more flirty way."

"Hahh... Well, it's fine with me, but doing 'that' today is no good, you know?"

"Right. I'm just clinging to you a little, but is that no good?"

"It's fine."

Roxy sat on my lap and dropped her head onto my shoulder. While embracing her shoulders, I meet her eyes up close. Though I said that, it's not like I had something to talk about.

"Umm, how was your day?"

"Nothing happened at all. It was just as usual... All that really happened was that the Principal's wig flew off due to the prank of some students, I guess."

"Ahh, I kind of wanted to see that."

"After that――――"

Roxy worked the whole day and was tired. Even so, she concerned herself with me. While we were giggling with idle chat, I somehow ended up giving her butt a feel, and was instantly slapped away. Even so, because I kept insisting on it, Roxy said [I guess it can't be helped] and permitted it.

After that, we entered the bathroom together and I cleaned her back and massaged her shoulders. I was almost like a child showing piety to his parents.

"You're a bit 'that' today, Rudi. Did something tough happen?"

"No, no. Nothing at all. I was just thinking [I'm really so happy that Roxy is alive] again."

"I see... Well, I really did think I was going to die in the Teleport Labyrinth after all. Feel free to confirm it as much as you'd like."

Said Roxy, sitting on my lap in the bath. Whilst massaging her slim shoulders, I asked,

"Roxy. Lately, have there been any weird changes to your body?"

I've avoided the Magic Stone Disease... or so I think, but just because I've taken care of that rat, doesn't mean that things are guaranteed to be okay. There's a chance that the investigation by the Future Me was wrong, after all.

"Ehh? I'm fine, you know. Why did you ask something like that?"

"Well, I was just thinking [It'd be really great if Roxy lived a long life] you see."

"If you think about the lifespans of races, I'll live longer than you after all. I should be the one asking you to live longer, Rudi."

"Of course."

Saying this, I gently smiled at Roxy. For now, things seem okay.

—

Sylphy and Roxy.

The two of them are alive.

Things won't become like in that diary.

I'll definitely avoid it.

With this in mind, I've gained the strength to read that diary again.

I'm ready.

The next day.

I've decided to read the rest of the diary.

Though I say this, it seems that after Sylphy's death, he didn't write anything for a while. The paper quality's different to the place that I read up to yesterday. Did he not write anything for a year? Two years? Or perhaps even longer. Five years or ten years? I don't really know what happened during that period.

But I do know that the contents of the diary have become more frivolous. For example how the breasts of a nee-chan he saw in town were, or how her butt was. About how he went around the red light district, and which brothel was best. It's almost like the diary of a delinquent. He's written some pretty sleazy stuff.

{ C-Editor's note: Nee-chan refers to a young women in Japanese. }

One day he wrote a ranking of all the women he's slept with so far. Is this really me? If I lose Sylphy and Roxy, will I become like this?

At any rate, I think he lived for a few years with this kind of lifestyle, where he just picked up women. Though it isn't clearly written where he is, since the names of a few shops are familiar, he was probably still in the Magic City Sharia.

Aisha, Norn, Lilia, Zenith and Lucy. Their names come out strangely little. Occasionally Zanoba or Julie's names will appear, and that's about it. Of all things, one day he had his eye on Julie. He had included Julie amongst those he could vent his lust on. Julie who had done her very best to follow Zanoba and my teachings. I don't want to think of this as me. No, I guess it's possible that it's me. Were it a situation where I had given into despair and my lower body, and I had my fame, my body, and my money, then...

There was also Eris. Around this time, he was running from place to place to escape Eris. It seems that Eris was also living in Sharia, and each time they met she'd look unhappy and start bashing him.

『I wanted to catch her one day and mess her up, but I'm scared of her revenge so she's a no go.』 was written.

Worthless. But I can also tell that he has complicated feelings towards Eris. I wonder if he felt a little bit like he wanted to start things over with her. I wonder if it's because of Sylphy and Roxy that he wasn't able to love her, so things became like this. I feel like there's a bit of a contradiction in the things that he wrote he did.

There were a few disquieting things written here. It seems that the Milis Church had placed a bounty on his and Zanoba's heads, and bounty hunters and assassins were popping up quickly. It seems that they weren't a big deal and all had the tables turned on them...

But as I was thinking, when I turned to the next page, the contents changed again.

It seems another year passed by. He didn't write what happened. I should also mention that the quality of each page was considerably different, and the dates that he wrote entries were indeterminate.

■

Norn's Ruijerd books and figures are doing well.

Also, in collaboration with the Magic University, I started officially teaching chantless magic classes.

The Holy Kingdom of Milis is demanding via the Kingdom of Asura that the Kingdom of Ranoa hand me over, but as long as I am of use to the Magic Triumvirate, they probably won't do so.

As long as the Central Continent is separated by the Red Dragon Mountains, the attackers in a war would be at an overwhelming disadvantage, after all.

It seems that the Kingdom of Asura still doesn't know that I was the culprit behind the fire murder incident. They're a stupid lot. They're probably filled with idiots.

■

Zanoba is close to completing his automaton research.

It took longer than expected.

However, I don't have the excitement that I did back in the day.

Just why have I been working on this?

■

The automaton was a success.

It's an automaton built in the spitting image of Sylphy.

She has her own will, and acts independently.

At the same time, she'll always listen to what I say.

She's gentle, and obedient, and gets a little jealous, so it's like seeing the old Sylphy.

But, this isn't it.

This really isn't it...

■

I destroyed the automaton.

I thought that Zanoba would be angry, but on the contrary he apologized to me.

The one who should be sorry is me.

I can't be thankful enough to Zanoba.

I'll make sure not to betray him at least.

■

We created a doll that was different from Sylphy and Roxy.

This one was named Fourtee by Zanoba.

When I asked why that name, Zanoba replied with his chest held up in pride that it was because it was the fourteenth masterpiece.

■

We mass produced Fourtee's sister machines and ended up deciding to sell them to the Magic Triumvirate.

Having the country as your regular customer sure is good.

Though I don't know how much use they'll be militarily, they're what Zanoba's and my skills have to offer.

They should be stronger than the common knight or adventurer.

Still, I've no goal now, huh.

What should I research next?

Though I don't really know why, it feels like I've been motivated for the first time in a long time.

___

It seems that Zanoba's research ended up in success. However, the theory behind the technology isn't written here. I guess there's no real reason to compile a research report. If that sort of stuff were written, I think our research would take a huge leap, but...

Well, I guess we don't need it anyway. Zanoba's having fun right now, and the process is important too.

While I was thinking this, the next page completely changed. Again, the page was wrinkled with tears.

■

Hitogami appeared in my dreams.

I can still feel his touch on my shoulder.

I loathe him.

I really loathe him.

■

I have to get stronger.

I have to kill Hitogami.

I definitely have to do this.

If I don't kill that fucker, Sylphy, Roxy and Roxy's child won't be able to rest in peace.

And I won't be able to feel better.

■

Speaking of which, I wonder if Lilia and the rest are doing well.

What kind of kid did Lucy grow up to be?

Did she end up as a beauty who looks like Sylphy?

Is she studying properly? Is she eating properly?

...Why didn't I do things better after Sylphy died?

Only Aisha returned and cared about me, but... even if I write it now, is there even any use?

It's regrettable.

■

How can I get stronger?

Should I train my magic?

Should I look for users of King Ranked and Emperor Ranked magic?

No, going by the trend thus far, those above Saint Ranked only increase in scale, and won't really be of use in combat.

The situation is that I have no King Ranked or above magic except the lightning attack, but even so I'm not lacking in offensive capabilities.

The problem is defense and mobility.

I can't wear touki, and my speed and defense fall behind others.

what should I do?

■

A certain book wrote about the Fighting God.

The Fighting God wore a golden armor over his body, which meant that his physical abilities were increased manyfold.

When I spoke about this with Zanoba, he came up with an idea.

Wearing 『Zariff's Prosthetic Hand』 over my whole body.

Thinking about it, though I can't use touki, as long as I fill mana into my prosthetic arm, I can display power greater than normal.

If I make the armor myself, and make it the absolute hardest, then covered my whole body in it...

Alright.

■

I gained Zanoba's cooperation and the full-body armour was a success.

It's a little over 2 metres.

It ended up quite large.

Moreover, the mana consumption is high, and no one can handle it but me.

It's halfway to a huge piece of junk.

Were Cliff alive, we might have been able to create a more efficient armor but...

There's no use in saying that.

At any rate, I've copied a certain game and named it 『Magic Armour』.

{ C-Editor's note: Magic Armour is a recurring suit of armor in the Dragon Quest video game series. }

After that, a story about me getting strong began.

With the Magic Armor, that is, a full-bodied Zariff's Prosthetic Hand, I was able to gain power, speed and defense on the level of the 7 Major World Powers. It seems that using it for half a day at full power was his limit, but even at 30% output, he wouldn't lose against common enemies. It really was a successful concept, huh? Though considering that it's written that the Fighting God wore a similar equipment, this idea has been around for a long, long time though.

...Though I also want a Magic Armor, would we be able to create one with our current level of research? No, it's not about being able or not. We'll do it.

At any rate, for the names of my other family members to show up so very little, I wonder if they left. Let alone Norn, to even use up Lilia's good graces... Just how far did I...?

No, though he didn't write the details, there's the possibility that they were in danger from Milishion assassins. Yeah, that's it.

Well anyway, I'd better start treating my family extra kindly. Yeah. If I remember correctly, Norn is coming home today, right? In that case, I wonder if we should all eat out for once. Well, it's always a good thing to spend time with family.

"Onii-chan, lunch is done! Let's eat together!"

While I was thinking, Aisha's voice came from behind me. When I got out of my chair and opened the door, I found my lively little sister standing there in a maid outfit. She probably just came from tasting the food, because there was a little sauce on her mouth.

"You have sauce on your mouth you know."

I took out a handkerchief and wiped her mouth clean.

"Mmguu, thanks."

Aisha was smiling. Even after the Future Me became a worthless person, it seems she still took care of me. The old man didn't mention Aisha, but if she was the only family he had left, she was surely his emotional support.

"Aisha. Do you have anything you want?"

"Eh? What's this all of a sudden?"

"Since you're always trying your best, I was thinking of rewarding you somehow."

"Ehhh, no wayyy. I'll feel bad about Norn-nee if only I get something. ...But you know, just recently I saw this cute hairclip. Eyes sparkling."

Eyes sparkling isn't something you're supposed to say, damnit.

Just who'd you learn that off?

Well, it was probably me, though.

"Alright. Let's go shopping next time. We'll keep it a secret from Norn, okay?"

"Eh-!?"

Aisha twisted her body into an exaggeratedly shocked pose.

"Whawhat? Really, what's the matter, Onii-chan? What's your purpose? Hah-! Could it be that you're after my body!? Would it be better if I cleaned my body and headed to your room tonight, Danna-sama? Uhun!"

"Yeah, yeah, let's just eat lunch first. It'll get cold, after all."

"Okaaay."

After having such a conversation, we moved to the dining room.

Though Roxy and Norn weren't here, eating with my family made the food seem really delicious. When I frankly said that today's food tasted better than usual, Lilia smiled just a little.

—

After lunch, I return to the diary.

The Future Me journeyed the world looking for a way to reach Hitogami. On his journey he met a great number of people, and was shocked at the lack of information. The chance of those who were long-lived having information on Hitogami was high. After realizing this rule, he focused on those who were long-lived. He steadily trained his magic, developed magic, and became stronger a little at a time.

Gravity magic, electricity magic, voice magic... He even managed to increase his healing magic to Saint Ranked. He concluded that magic was versatile, and as long as he had the right feeling for it, he could do anything. He wrote things like how the mouse was the carrier of the Magic Stone Disease, and how Sylphy's death was possibly at the hands of Hitogami.

At a glance he seemed to be doing favorably. But because he couldn't get even a little information, the Future Me started to grow enraged, little by little. In those days, it seems that he wasn't a very good person. Quarrels would arise wherever he went, and after defeating small fry he'd look down on and scorn them. He did whatever he wanted, and he'd even rape women who passed by. Though I thought he'd know better at his age...

I don't want to become like this.

Also, Eris would frequently appear. It seems that on his journey around the world he came into contact with Eris countless times. And because Eris was strong, he tasted defeat countless times.

Though you can't tell from the words, Eris may have been remonstrating me for turning into a piece of trash. But because Eris got in his way, he started misunderstanding her as a pawn of Hitogami or something. He arbitrarily decided that Eris was interfering with him whenever something was inconvenient for Hitogami. [There's no doubt that Eris is being manipulated by Hitogami] he thought.

As I continued reading, I found that he started hating Eris more and more. It was something without any proof that he arbitrarily decided upon. It probably counts as a type of unjustified hatred.

And it seems that Eris gradually became unable to beat him. Was it because he got stronger, or was it because of age that Eris became weaker? I can't tell from what's written. In the end, 'that' time came.

—

■

Eris was crying.

How long has it been since I've seen Eris crying?

I might have overdone it.

Could it be that she has nothing to do with Hitogami?

No, but if that's the case then it doesn't explain why she's been whole-heartedly getting in my way the whole time since Sylphy's death.

Moreover, when I questioned her during my journey, she would always keep her mouth shut.

She knows something.

Something.

■

Eris escaped.

There were bite marks on the handcuffs.

Are her teeth made of steel!?

Fuck.

■

I'll have an audience with Atofe tomorrow.

Though I don't think that muscle-brained idiot knows anything, as a long lived immortal demon, the chance that she knows something is high.

Even if I have to beat her half to death, I'll question her.

■

Eris died.

Ghyslaine blamed me.

I don't understand.

■

I'll try and organize what happened yesterday.

I ended up fighting Atofe. Atofe, Atofe's imperial guard, I fought all of them together.

I thought I could do it, but as expected, Moore got in my way.

I was careless and completely messed up. Even though I should've known that the man known as Moore was a terrifying master of magic... It was because I was too focused on Atofe.

When I was in dire straits, Eris leapt in.

She covered for me, and died.

Ghyslaine told me the reason.

She told me about everything from the day we met again, until today.

Eris had just wanted to be by my side.

I had always, always been misunderstanding her.

She had loved me all this time.

It was because of this alone that she'd been following me around.

It's like a joke.

The details aren't really written here, but it's probably the same as what the old man told me.

...I guess I really should marry Eris, huh?

How do I say this, I feel that she should be rewarded.

But would Sylphy and Roxy allow it?

Roxy wouldn't oppose it.

But what would Sylphy say?

Sylphy who was jealous of Nanahoshi...

No, at any rate I probably have no choice but to discuss it with them. Sending the letter comes after that. I'll discuss it with them tonight when Roxy comes home or something.

Let's continue reading.

After this, once again he didn't write anything important for a while. He moved here and there, and met this person and that, and fought with someone or other. All this was written indifferently. Amongst those he fought were brave people like the Water Emperor, or the North Emperor. However, it was like he didn't care in the least about defeating them, and didn't write the details. It was just stuff like,

[I killed ____. He didn't know anything about Hitogami.]

And the years flew by once again.

The next time he wrote anything long was on paper of plainly different quality.

___

■

Zanoba died.

At some point, I don't know when, The Order of the Temple entered the Kingdom of Ranoa.

When I came running, it was already too late for anything.

The mansion was burnt down, there were black scorch marks in front of the door to Zanoba's cellar, and inside were Ginger, Julie and Aisha who I had left with Zanoba, chopped to pieces.

In the Kingdom of Ranoa, I once again ended up massacring the Order of the Temple.

But by the time I killed them, there was already no point.

Even though Zanoba had always given his best for me.

Why wasn't I there when he was in trouble?

For what reason have I gained all this power?

I'm powerless.

■

In the end, everyone died.

The only one left is me.

There's no one left anymore.

I couldn't protect anyone.

■

It's because of Hitogami.

I have to at least kill Hitogami...

——

The contents suddenly became heavy. Zanoba and Aisha died too, huh? ...That's harsh.

But still, I wonder if he didn't search for our family? Well, I don't know how he'd be able to face Lucy after all this time though.

...Or could it be that despite not being written in this diary, Lilia and the others died as well?

For Norn not to be mentioned either...

...No, let's stop with this. Let's think of things that weren't written as things that didn't happen.

Still, Zanoba's death really didn't have anything to do with Hitogami but... It seems that he had already badly fallen into tunnel vision by then.

After this, he began searching for Hitogami like a madman. More severely than ever before, he proceeded with a vigor that massacred everyone in his way.

Then, he found it.

——

■

I'm excited.

I'm in the far reaches of the Begaritto Continent.

In a place that basically no one has stepped before, I found a certain ruin.

It's the ruin of the ancient Dragon Race.

According to the wall art left here...

This world is separated into 6 parts.

The Dragon World.

The Human World.

The Demon World.

The Beast World.

The Ocean World.

The Sky World.

Each of them is like one of six surfaces; in other words, they're connected like a die.

Inside them.

In the interior of the die, is the Void World.

If you want to travel from one world to another, you have no choice but to go through the Void World.

But unless you use a certain method, you can't pass through the Void World.

After this, the wall was broken so I couldn't read it, but at the very end, this was written:

『Hitogami... is the Void World』

I've finally found him.

I think I'll stay here for a while and research what's written here.

■

Written on the wall art is the history of the attempts at reaching the heart of the Void World.

It seems to be derived from magic like summoning magic or teleport magic that uses the Void World as a path.

I guess I really should research in that direction, huh?

■

I've studied the entirety of these ruins.

It seems that the ancient Dragon Race built something for the sake of reaching the heart of the Void World.

But, I don't know what it was.

The part of the wall art that described it was collapsed.

But there's no mistake that it's something related to summoning and transfer magic.

■

When you mention summoning, what comes to mind is Perugius.

That guy is informed on summoning magic.

If I ask him, he might know something.

■

Perugius didn't know a thing.

To start with, that guy didn't even know about Hitogami.

Besides the fact that Laplace would become enraged at the word Hitogami, Perugius didn't know a thing.

With this, I'm back to the starting point.

Though Laplace knew of Hitogami, he doesn't exist in this world anymore... Perhaps Orsted might know something.

■

I never even got close to meeting Orsted.

I guess I really should research teleport magic, huh?

Still, it might be because I've continued to fight over these past few decades, but the movements of my body are becoming slower.

I might be about to hit my limit.

No, while I can still move, I'll go search for another ancient Dragon Race ruin.

___

This world is a die, and in the hollow part inside is the Void World.

And Hitogami is literally in the heart of this world.

I see.

That feeling of being sucked underground when I'm being transferred. It's because I'm really being pulled underground and I pass through the Void World. Though I say 'underground', even if I dig into the earth, I probably won't reach the Void World.

Now then, the continuation is a few years later, huh. It's a diary with a lot of omissions.

___

■

I found a second ancient Dragon Race ruin.

It's deep in the mountains on the Magic Continent.

Just why did the ancient Dragon Race build their ruins in such an out of the way and dangerous place?

This area is filled with nothing but troublesome monsters.

Ah... Come to think of it, is Perugius's flying castle also a ruin?

Well, whatever.

I'll conquer the ruins starting tomorrow.

■

It bore fruit.

I found a complete version of the wall art that I found a few years ago.

This place had the missing parts of the method of reaching the Void World that was collapsed on the other one.

The ancient Dragon Race created 5 treasures. Using these, you can reach the Void World.

...Finally.

Finally, it seems that I'll be able to reach Hitogami.

However, I'm already over 60 years old.

My body is rickety.

Will I make it in time?

■

When I returned to Perugius's place, a certain matter was proven.

It was that the ancient Dragon Race produced 5 treasures.

Each one of the Five Dragon Generals held one, and it seems only the Dragon God held the secret to the door to the world.

But of the Five Dragon Generals, one has already died.

The treasure he held is missing.

The final member of the Five Dragon Generals is also missing.

According to Perugius, it seems that the final member will appear in a few decades.

I almost remembered something about the implications of his words, but in the end couldn't remember.

Lately it's getting harder to remember what I want.

I wonder if Perugius is still hiding something.

I'm irritated.

However, Perugius is the only person I can talk about the good days with.

I don't want to kill him.

Perugius said that if it was Orsted, he might know about the secret, but... I haven't the slightest clue where he is.

There are still a few decades until the final person appears.

Just that is enough to feel despair about.

I probably can't live that long. This body is already at its limit.

I can feel that I don't have much longer to live.

What should I do...?

I don't have any time left.

■

I can't obtain the treasures of the Five Dragon Generals.

Whether because they're treasures, or because they're secret, it doesn't seem like I can produce them.

There's too much I don't understand about their principles.

I... can't go to the Void World.

■

I'm tired of this.

Just how long must I struggle by myself?

For who am I even doing this for?

Even my hatred towards Hitogami is wearing out.

I'm tired.

I just feel tired.

I could feel that he'd really given up.

There aren't many pages left.

So I'd just read roughly 50 years worth, huh?

Without any results to show for it, he continued to do nothing but struggle, and the result was that he didn't get anywhere.

Even if he weren't me, he'd probably stop thinking about anything at all due to the weariness.

No, if it were the current me, I might have given up at an even earlier stage.

——

■

I think I'd better write my research notes separately here as well.

Among my transfer magic research was a certain hypothesis:

『Summoning magic』 and the magic recorded on the Dragon Race wall art. If I modify these two, I might be able to travel to the past.

However, on top of it being theoretical, just transferring back in time a few seconds should take a tremendous amount of mana.

If I leap back in the order of years, just how much mana would I need?

■

I've decided to go to the past.

I have my diary with me.

If I use this diary as the origin, I might be able to return to the moment I wrote this diary.

I'll go back to the time when I was tricked by Hitogami, when I let out that rat, and when I killed Roxy.

I don't know if I'll be able to go.

I don't know what'll happen if I transfer to the past.

I'm aware of the concept known as a 'time paradox'.

■

There are a lot of things I'm uneasy about.

Will it be a time slip or a time leap?

{ C-Editor's note: Time Slip = body moves to the past.
Time Leap = consciousness moves into past version of body. }

If it's a time slip, what is it that I should tell them?

I should tell them about the Magic Stone Disease, about Eris, and then about Hitogami.

Will I be able to get it across to them?

Will the me in the past believe that I came from the future?

If it's a time leap, how should I face Sylphy and Roxy?

I want to see them once again. I want to meet them again. I want to apologize to them.

But when I think that I'll overwrite the consciousness of the me from when I was happy...

Should I conduct more experiments regarding this point?

Considering that I don't know if I'll cause a time paradox, I feel that it'd be best not to experiment too much.

There's also the possibility that if I go back a few days, only my consciousness travels there and I leave my memory behind.

It's possible that I'd continue to loop meaninglessly, unable to even die, and continue to live in this world...

In that case, at the very least... Sylphy and Roxy one last time...

No, I guess it's fine.

Let's stop thinking about the difficult things.

I don't have anything left anyway.

I couldn't accomplish a thing. I've become a worthless man.

Even if I fail and it becomes the cause for some other incident, I don't care.

I'm already fine with whatever.

But if I manage to succeed, then... I might give Hitogami a hell of a shock.

—

The diary stops there. He probably leapt to me after that. He probably realized he didn't have enough mana at that point.

I don't understand the theory behind his slight failure to leap to the past using teleport magic. In the first place, based purely on what I've read, wouldn't he have been fine with mana consumption had he just leapt to the past bit by bit? I wonder if it's because he was senile that he didn't realize that.

No, that's probably not it, huh.

The me from that time definitely had confidence in his mana pool. The thought that he didn't have enough might not have even crossed his mind.

But somehow or other, I understood just what I needed to; if I don't want to become like this, I must take action.

"I've returned."

The moment I thought that, I heard Roxy's voice from the entrance.

The things that I can do right now...

First, I'll have a discussion with Sylphy and Roxy tonight.

About Eris, as well as what to do from now on.

— Sylphy's perspective —

Recently Rudi has been acting strange.

He locks himself all day in the study, and his face looks pale when I thought he was going to come out.

What is he doing? Even though I'm worried, but he won't tell even if I asked. Last night when I try to break the question, he instead takes me to bed.

Well, if taking me helps his distress, then that works too.

When I ask Roxy about this, she said.

"Sylphy has noticed too... Rudi when troubled rarely likes to talk about it... Let's just try to help him when the time comes."

So she's worried too. But if this continues, maybe I should take the initiative and try to force him to explain what's going on.

With that in my mind, after dinner, Rudi pleads with some difficulty.

"Ah, Roxy-san, Sylphy-san, can you come to my room after dinner?"

A strange tone, feels a little like Rudi that time when he had Roxy and I together.

But that's nothing to feel guilty about, he shouldn't feel like he's imposing.

That's the kind of guy Rudi is, even I have no choice but to forgive him.

Roxy doesn't seem to mind, and she takes good care of me, so I don't really mind doing it together either.

Why is Rudi so worried.

Regardless, since he asked, Roxy and I are busy preparing ourselves.

We went in the bath together, and spread on perfume specific for this occasion.

For panty, I picked one I recently bought, and nightgown... the high exposure one. Rudi really likes it soft and with sleeves, so I picked that one.

Also, I left two buttons unbuttoned in the front.

Even though I'm a bit flat chested, so that isn't very sexy.... But even if just a little, I want him to cherish me.

Wait, will he think I'm too naughty... No no, Rudi won't think so. It's fine, it's fine.

A few days ago I caught him peeking when I had two buttons unbuttoned as well.

Even though I caught him, since that seems to delight him, I let him have his fill, and that night he took me too.

Roxy wears her usual one-piece nightgown, but she isn't wearing any panties. That's her method of attack as well...

Regardless, since we're both ready, we head towards the bedroom all fired up.

Rudi sits on a chair in the bedroom, waiting on us. Roxy and I sit down side by side. Me on the right, Roxy on the left. There's no particular reason for this, that just seems to be the way it works.

"..."

Usually, Rudi will with a perverted face squeeze between us. But today, something's different.

He sits solemnly on his chair, his face serious. Like searching for a way to break the ice before Rudi said [Ah!] and faces Roxy.

"Ah-, Roxy."

"Em?"

"How's Norn doing in school?"

Feels like he's reciting someone else's line.

Roxy can only smile wryly.

"... Nothing in particular. Didn't you ask Norn herself a few days ago?"

"I thought it would be better if I get your judgement of it."

Rudi sounds off. I snicker slightly.

"Ah... Makes sense. Her studies and sword practice are so-so, but she's working hard for the Student Council. She's being recognized for her work on Public Morals. Even though there are many cheeky students, but they'll generally give her way when they cross paths. That might have to do with being Rudi's sister. Mostly, since she has many upperclassman admirers, no one gives her any trouble. She seems to have many friends, so I don't think there's anything Rudi should worry about."

"I see. Thank you."

Yeah, Norn is a hard worker. I haven't been to the school much lately, but I have heard some news from other Student Council members. Rarely do you see a kid so diligent.

I don't get to act like an older sister very much...

"Roxy, how about on your side?"

"Huh, what is it?"

"Anything in particular that's bothering you recently? Right, for example, feeling hungry so you sneak out for food or something?"

"Recently Rudi has always been sharing your meal with me. I'm actually worried that I might get fat."

"How about at school?"

"... School has been whatever. Once in a while someone will make fun of me because I'm small, and some students don't pay attention to class."

"What? How dare they? Who are these impudent imbeciles that don't pay attention to Roxy's lessons. I'll teach a lesson so the only thing they'll say from then on is [JesusBABUCHAAAHHH]."

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Sazae-san manga and anime series. }

Roxy bows lightly, a little shocked.

Feeling a little embarrassed, she plays with her hair.

How nice.

Having Rudi respect you so much. It makes me jealous.

"Well, there's one thing I'm worrying about..."

"Go ahead."

"That thing, I want to be sure before I announce it."

"... Then I look forward to it."

Ah, I think, I know what Roxy was going to say. Now that she mentioned it, her body has been acting strange recently.

Maybe I should prepare to congratulate her soon? No, she needs to confirm it still.

"Sylphy."

"What is it, Rudi?"

Suddenly getting asked, I try my hardest to look cute by tilting my head. Rudi's eyes focus slightly below my head, good, operation successful!

"Recently, em... Lucy, how is she?"

"Doesn't Rudi check up on her often? She's doing well?"

"She hasn't suddenly started yelling [I am my own Lord throughout heaven and earth.] or anything like that right?"

{ C-Editor's note: A phrase the Buddha is reputed to have said when he was born. }

"Heaven... What? Ah, but Lilia-san said she'll start to crawl very soon."

"Oh."

All thanks to Lilia-san, parenting has been going smootly.

Even though Ariel-sama has said to leave the child care to the maids, and that mothers don't need to be involved. But grandma said to give as much loving care with my own two hands as possible.

So I have been following grandma's advice. Rudi seems to want me to take good care of Lucy, so I will.

"Sylphy, anything in particular that's bothering you recently?"

"No, but if I can be honest, it's that my husband seems to be hiding something."

I finally said it, but I feel like I didn't say it well.

"Oh, ohh, sorry."

Rudi looks visibly shaken, sheepishly averts his eyes.

So he's hiding something.

But would he tell...

Right then, Rudi recovers.

Looking focused.

In these moments, Rudi looks so cool...

"That's actually what I asked you to come for today. That was it."

I sit back straight and stop unbuttoning my gown.

Roxy while puzzled also straightens up.

"Em.. Next, I don't know how I say this but... a few days ago, I met someone."

"Someone?"

"Yes, a miko that can predict the future... someone like that."

What Rudi said next even made us sense the impending crisis.

How a bad person has been eyeing Rudi and the family (us).

How that bad person might cause all sorts of misfortune on the family (us).

How because of that, Rudi might start doing many things that look very strange to us.

Honestly speaking, I'm worried that he's over thinking it, but Rudi seems to have some definite proof. He must have thought about the situation before talking to us, about what he can say, about what he can't.

Even though some of this doesn't make sense, but it'll be too late once something happens. I can understand Rudi's thought process here.

"I see. Then, is there anything we can do to help?"

"Not that there isn't, but for me, I just want you to stay as safe as possible."

That again, recently that's all Rudi says. When did this start... Was it when Paul-san passed away?

I know he's just worrying about us, but isn't he being too protective? I'm not a kid that can't do anything anymore...

"But what if Rudi faces danger while we're not looking?"

"It's too early to tell, but it's possible?"

"I don't want that..."

Rudi was hit hard during the Atofe fight.

Even though Rudi is strong, he doesn't actually enjoy battle.

Even though he still traveled far and wide, fighting, dying...

Even though I don't want to, I can only stay home and wait for Rudi, comfort him, encourage him...

Ugh-.

"I understand."

The person that said this is Roxy. Still twirling her hair, she looks at Rudi in the eye, smiling.

"When Rudi isn't home, I will protect Norn-san and Aisha-san."

Straightforward she answers. Like she wants to confirm her mission to Rudi.

"Roxy won't mind?"

Doesn't Roxy want to follow him? That's what I actually wanted to say. Roxy nods.

"Because Rudi would be more upset if his family fell to misfortune than himself."

"... But."

Speaking of which, Roxy was with Rudi when Paul died. I only heard about how depressed Rudi was by Paul's death. They said Rudi was at the worst he had ever been, so the situation must be really desperate for him.

Desperate enough to break our vows... Ah, I'm a terrible woman, forget it.

Rudi came back to me, that's all that matters.

"Sylphy, of course I don't want to just watch on the sidelines if Rudi is in danger."

What does that mean? Roxy will stay home?

"If we feel there's a time we have to lend him a hand, then let's make our own judgement on how to help Rudi, when the time comes."

Ah, so that's what she means. That makes sense if I think about it.

We don't need Rudi's permission to help Rudi. We should do it, as long as Rudi is safe.

"... You're right. Em, I understand."

Rudi can only smile wryly at Roxy's words. Not with rebuke, but looking at her with eyes of trust.

"Rudi, don't look back, please just do what you think is right. We'll protect you from behind."

Roxy said with a smile. Rudi's eyes sparkles. Roxy is amazing, to have Rudi's respect like that.

"Then, when I have it bad, please come to my aid."

With a sigh of relief Rudi finally smiled. No matter what, as long as it helps Rudi calm down, that's what's important.

If Rudi faces danger, I'll decide on my own to help him. Yes, that's right.

Maybe it has always been like this for me, be his support when he's in trouble, and be a good wife when he isn't.

That's fine.

"Then, there's one more thing."

At that moment I was clenching my fist with enthusiasm, when Rudi said in a meek voice.

Somehow the atmosphere is different. The stuff said earlier was difficult, but was with wording. This time it feels like we're back to the topic he has been avoiding.

"... This, is there even a good way to say this?"

"Is it really that bad?"

Roxy carefully prods Rudi. He nods forcefully.

"It's hard for me to tell you two."

"..."

What is it? Now I'm feeling anxious. Is it about Rudi looking unwell recently?

Don't tell me he has some incurable disease that even Detoxification Magic can't cure?

"I'm not sure yet, but, we might have to add another person."

"..."

"..."

Eh, add a person, so a girl? That's what he means?

Even though I told him to not add anymore...

No, I never asked him not to, forget it.

But Rudi doesn't keep his promises! What is he even thinking?

But I won't ask, I am the good wife, a good wife won't object to her husband.

"Who? Nanahoshi?"

I try my best to stay calm, pretending that I'm angry. I think I'm successful.

Speaking of the wench, Nanahoshi. She doesn't feel right to me. She doesn't seem to like Rudi, at most the only thing she feels for. If Rudi pushes the issue, I won't object to her. But just because I won't object doesn't mean I will welcome her... Em–.

"She's not Nanahoshi."

Rudi denies it, but Rudi furrows his brow, like he feels particularly apologetic.

"A girl by the name of Eris."

"Eris..."

Eris, who's Eris? I think I heard of her before, but she's not someone from school.

"I remember her. Rudi was her home tutor at Fortress City Roa back then, right?"

Quickly, like coming to my rescue Roxy answers. Now I remember her.

"... She's the one that gave Rudi that illness."

"Yes, ah, something like that."

Has Rudi already forgotten, what happened when we reunited?

It wasn't clear to me back then, but from how much Rudi changed after we got married, I know now how much that illness destroyed his pride as a man.

That pain, was that woman, even though I don't have a solid grasp of her, I know that to be the truth. Even at the start I suffered as well.

"Rudi suffered so much back then, yet, you still like her?"

"The person I like now is Sylphy."

He stares straight into my eyes and said bluntly. How embarrassing.

Ohh, Rudi is so cool, I want to roll around and yell.

If they're still here, I want to go show off to Rinia and Pursena.

No no, right now there's this person called Eris. I can't lie to myself.

"Then, since she left Rudi, will she still have any lingering feelings and want to make up with you?"

"No, leaving is my misunderstanding. Lingering feelings and such, I don't think her heart has changed."

"... But, Rudi suffered so much."

"Yes..."

"I still remember how savage Rudi felt in those days."

"Back then, not only could I not forgive Eris, I was even afraid of meeting her."

"..."

So it's different now? Is this the future-predicting miko's doing?

Maybe he gives those sorts of prophecies. Em, still, something feels wrong.

Well, if someone told me [In the future, you'll marry a boy name Rudeus and have 5 children] I'd look forward to it.

But for these things how the person in question feels is important. Getting married even though Rudi obviously doesn't like her. How does that work?

"If Sylphy objects to marrying her, then let's just stop here. But ultimately I still want to clear the air with her."

Rudi said, but he seems to come to some realization from his own words. What is it?

"But apparently, Eris, for me even till now, has been training at the Holy Land of the Sword. Isn't it pitiful for her if I reject her when she returns?"

"True, it might be as you said."

Always working, but finally get rejected. I can sympathize with that kind of fear, because back in Buina Village, I too was doing the same to chase Rudi.

"I'm not really objecting..."

If the Metastasis Event didn't happen, and Rudi never came back to Buina Village, I might have gone to search for him. If I saw him married with another girl... Then it would hit me hard...

"I have never seen her... but.... well..."

Yes. I have never seen her either. Because of the way she treated Rudi, I always thought she was a terrible person.

But, a misunderstanding, in other words she has always loved Rudi, in other words she never meant to hurt Rudi like that.

After some thought, Roxy finally speaks.

"Why not wait until you finally reunite with Eris-san before deciding on this?"

"Roxy?"

"I got a feeling that even Rudi doesn't really know where you stand on this. Until you meet with her again, there are a lot of things that you won't know."

What is Roxy thinking? A third player has appeared, yet she doesn't show any objection. Yet all I can think about is all my own concerns...

"After meeting Eris, if I can see no way for this to work, then... I might object as well."

Ah, so that's how it is, the same idea as before. Just an agreement. As expected of Roxy. She has thought this through.

It feels like she's a much more reliable wife than I am.

"Of course, this doesn't involve just us alone. We need to talk with the rest of the family as well... But for me, I'll support Rudi's decision."

"Thank you."

"As long as you won't forget about me, even if you add 3, 4 more, I won't mind."

"Forgetting Roxy is impossible."

"Promise?"

"Promise."

Rudi's complete trust, smart...

She makes me so jealous.

No, I have to work to be like her too.

My goal as a mature woman.

"Sylphy, I'm really sorry."

"No, rather, seems like all I do is complain. Sorry."

Rudi and I both lower our heads in apology.

Roxy laughs quietly at this sight.

This feels a little different than with Luke and Ariel.

It's a pleasant space.

But if there's one more.

How will it change...

It makes me anxious.

Will she steal Rudi?

— Rudeus's perspective —

Afterwards, the three of us sleep in a row. Even I'm in no mood for fun after those heavy words.

... Still, in my head I can't help but remember Eris's face, no matter how hard I try.

Even though I have long put her behind me, but from the depths of my guts I feel something rising.

Just like Roxy said, I don't even know what I really think about her.

No matter what, I need to settle the score with Eris.

But, to be honest, I'm scared to meet her. She'll definitely kick my ass. She seems to have become impossibly strong.

That Eris, if she saw Sylphy and Roxy beside me, what will she do?

... Well, the diary didn't mention anything about her attacking Sylphy.

But the diary might not always be right. Depending on how the topic and mood shifts, things can easily go out of hand.

Unease. The way it is, if I meet with Eris again, what will actually happen?

With my mind running in circles I eventually fall asleep.

Hitogami appears.

A white space. A place where people travel through using teleporation magic. In there, I stand, the body the same as from my previous life.

According to the research of my future self, this is the Void World. Like a 4th dimensional space in the center of the six worlds.

The old man said coming here is impossible. Yet, here I am.

What does it mean, based on my appearance, maybe only my consciousness is here, like a soul summoned.

"..."

Hitogami standing there, wearing a smile as usual. No, no smile.

Unhappiness streams from his mosaic body.

"This sucks."

He murmurs unhappily.

"You sure made a mess of things."

That frustration and attitude is almost completely unimaginable from before.

"Coming back from the future, isn't that cheating? Why the hell. Even though I almost won."

Looks like, from how unhappy you are, everything that old man said is true?

You lied to me? You killed Roxy and Sylphy?

So my future self found a loop hole?

Got you in a bind?

"Are you serious? Loop hole? Me in a bind? Pssh, really? The future you seems to have misunderstood quite a few things."

His words might be full of contempt, but I can hear some helplessness in his voice.

I can't let him lead me by the horns. I have to keep him talking.

"What's this [Keep him talking]? Even though you're second rate, you think you're so clever."

Are you done? Even if I'm second rate, I still have a brain.

Hey, you, tell me.

Why my family, why me, why do you have to harm us?

"Indeed, why? Maybe I just enjoy watching you squirm after killing your entire family."

Hitogami is off his game today.

He had me playing in the palm of his hand until now, but I made a complete mess of the board without thinking, and now his motivation is gone.

"Yes, it's all your fault. Not thinking about what you're doing is your fault."

Hey, answer me. I don't care about your goal, and I won't go interfering either.

My future me has said, I can't beat you, so even if I have to suck up to you I won't make you my enemy.

I plan to do that.

Up until now... well, I'm just dancing to your tune, playing in your hand, but up until now has been smooth sailing.

It's fine if I'm being taken advantage of, or you want me to be your arms and legs, I wouldn't refuse. But, at least, spare my family.

"Well, aren't you brave."

Since you really haven't done anything to me yet, or at least, as far as I know.

Relationships are important. Even though you tried to kill Roxy and her baby, but that was aborted. I can pretend aborted things never happen. Let bygones be bygones.

Before I feel I can forgive you, at least we should build a working relationship.

"Ha."

Hitogami seems to have thought of something. His mood changed, then he said.

"What if I say my goal is world peace? Will you believe me?"

Ah, world peace, very noble, I approve.

LOVE and PEACE is my motto, and if my sexy time can contribute to that all the better!

"No sexy time."

Oh.

"You know that Dragon God, that Orsted, right? His ultimate goal is to destroy this world."

Really? I can't tell.

"That guy has been in the background making various moves. When I die this world will also break apart. That's why Orsted has been working to kill me."

Maybe you did something to anger him? Like with me, kill his family or something?

"Didn't I say before? I cannot touch him, so, I do not recall."

Whatever, and then?

"Orsted is strong, but he's only one person, because he carries that curse. Moreover, as long as he's alone, he can never beat me!"

Then just ignore him?

"I thought so too... until you showed up!"

What did I do?

"Nothing.... But it appears that Orsted's curse does not affect your descendants. They'll come to Orsted's aid, and I'll be defeated by Orsted, your descendants, and their allies."

I see... That's why you took aim at the pregnant Roxy?

Say, Luke taking Sylphy to war, that was your doing too. Since you didn't get rid of Lucy, then the problem was the elder son and second daughter? Was that wrong? But if that's the case, then why don't you get rid of me earlier? Why not?

"After realizing your existence after the Metastasis Event, I made various attempts unsuccessfully. Your fate is unusually strong. Nothing I can do about it."

Fate? Why is that?

"Where do I begin? I can see several major paths towards the future, and at some levels I can make small adjustments. But when fate is strong, even I can't do as I please. You do not die against Orsted; no matter how much I interfere, you'll reunite with Roxy, get married, have a child."

Is this cause and effect?

Even if you go to the past to change the future, it'll end roughly the same way?

"Eh, something like that."

Really? Roxy and I getting married is also fate. That makes me happy.

"But that doesn't make me happy."

Ah, sorry. Well then, why do you have to kill my descendants? Why not wait for the distant future and get rid of my descendants... I mean the brats that help Orsted then?

"Those descendants that have direct contact with Orsted also have strong fate like you. Not just you and your descendants, Sylphy's and Roxy's and Eris's existences are also very strong. Their children, well, likely the same. But women's fates becomes particularly ambiguous at times."

The time when strength of fate turns ambiguous... Don't tell me.

"Indeed. When they're pregnant with a child."

Right now, my entire body is a whirlpool of desire to punch this person in front of me, but I force myself to hold back. Even if I fight him here, I don't feel any chances for victory.

"But that too was a failure."

But why did you kill Sylphy, even though she's not pregnant and already had a child?

"Is that what the diary says? Well, I haven't got that far yet, so I don't know either. Maybe I was just exterminating the weeds? Or maybe it had nothing to do with me, rather that Sylphy is fated to die if she's ever separated from you."

That's why... so she has that sort of fate.

"My plan was perfect, to bait you, who has strong fate, bit by bit, and at your weakest use the most effective tactics for the best result."

ARGGH... stay calm.

Don't get angry.

Roxy and Sylphy are both safe.

Good, good.

"Just go ahead and say it. You don't really think you'll win like this? Let me be clear, your children's fate is not as strong as your wives, you, or your descendants. I will not give up. I don't plan to die."

So you don't want to die, eh? So that's what it is. But, is there another way?

If it saves my family, I'll do anything. How about I make it my family motto [Do not cooperate with Orsted] or indoctrinate my children. Something like Hitogami-sama is great, Dragon God sucks.

"Useless. That alone won't change fate."

Then help me out here. My fate is strong, right? Then there has to be something I can do?

"... Ah."

You thought of something?

"No, I'm not even sure if it's possible. But it might... You say you would do anything right?"

... Yes, yes.

"Then."

Like he just came up with a new prank, Hitogami smirks.

"Kill Orsted."

"Rudi, it hurts, Rudi..!"

When I woke up, I was tightly hugging Roxy. My throat dry, my body chill, and for some reason only my back is warm.

"Ah... Sorry."

"Cough... Cough..."

After I let go, Sylphy places a hand over my face and rubs my forehead. It's covered in sweat.

"Are you okay, Rudi?"

From my back comes a voice. I turn around to look. Roxy's face before my eyes. From behind she hugs me tightly. My back feels warm.

"Sorry."

I sit up, it's late night. Was that a dream? No, that wasn't a dream. Without a doubt, it's Hitogami.

"Cough... What's wrong, Rudi, are you okay?"

Sylphy sits up as well, wiping my sweat with her sleeves. Still Roxy has me in her embrace, and now rubbing my chest.

"It's nothing... Just, it was a, strange dream."

Kill Orsted. That's what Hitogami said. But what does he mean? What was his plan? I need to think this through.

Orsted and Hitogami are enemies. But Orsted is one person, and one person can't beat God.

I don't understand why even someone as strong as him cannot beat Hitogami. Perhaps reaching him requires several companions.

Thus my descendants become Orsted's companions, and as a result Orsted finds Hitogami and beats him.

That's why Hitogami wants to kill my descendants, kill Roxy, kill Sylphy, to erase this entire line.

With that, Orsted can never reach Hitogami's location, and Hitogami wins.

Orsted is the mastermind, my descendants and Orsted, as long as one disappears, Hitogami wins.

But, can I kill him? Hitogami says my fate is abnormally strong, but the same must go for Orsted.

Even though, he makes Hitogami his enemy, and has always been fighting him.

Why will I kill him? What must I use in order to kill someone as strong as him... Is there anything?

My diary records several magic my future self has used.

Magic Armor, that item I can make right now, and once made it will probably be very useful.

My future self used several magic, gravity magic, teleportation magic, even electric magic.

Gravity and Teleportation I don't know... But in our previous fight, even Stone Cannon managed to deal some damage.

Electric shock can even paralyze Atofe, so I have some weapons that can work. Then, I just need some defense, enough to blunt the damage.

... Why am I seriously considering killing Orsted?

"Hey, Rudi, if it hurts, please tell us. Please say something?"

Sylphy looks like she's about to cry. With my right hand I embrace her head, and with my left hand I grab Roxy's hand.

Why else? To protect these two.

"There's, there's a person, I must kill him."

"... Eh?"

"Rudi... What are you even talking about?"

I did not answer Roxy. Separated from them two, I left the bed. Instantly warmth disappears, only chill remains.

"Sorry."

With that, I head out the room. My lights lit, my head heavy, I head to my study.

Right now all I can think of is rereading the diary and trying to find inspiration from that old man's battles.

Kill Orsted. Kill him to save my family's life.

Even if we're to perish together, even if my family would grieve, I'll do it.

"..."

Suddenly, I saw the letter I planned to mail together.

"..."

On that letter I added another line.

... Maybe I won't even get a chance to see Eris.

Be suspicious of the Human God's words, but don't show any hostility.

My future self said so.

Certainly the Human God has told me several questionable things.

The Dragon God plans to destroy the world, or if the Human God dies, the world will end.

Where do the lies end, and the truth begins?

There is definitely a lie somewhere.

However, I shouldn't start thinking that certain parts are lies while others are truth.

If I do so, I might end up in a contradictory situation of falling for his lies.

Honestly, I don't think his displeasure is an act.

The future me certainly dealt an unpredictable blow to him.

Even so.

On that point, the attitude he has taken of [Are you going to turn into my enemy?], has left me no choice.

I don't want to show the Human God any opposition.

Being able to attack the people around me from a place that I can't reach, I don't have the power to protect them.

Then, I can only choose to show my allegiance.

The Human God is detestable, and probably won't honor his promises.

But for the time being, if I try and do as he wishes, if I manage to settle things, there is a possibility that he might overlook me.

The Human God told me to kill Orsted.

Leaving out other parts, the fact that my descendants will join forces with Orsted and kill the Human God in the future seems credible for the time being.

Whether it's me or Orsted.

If just one of us needs to die for the Human God to win, then it's fine if it's me who survives.

I will protect my family.

The one aiming at my family is the Human God but, the Human God is in a place I can't reach.

Since I can't reach him, he will keep aiming at my family.

However, Orsted is in this world.

He's not an opponent I feel I can win against. Frankly, I have no desire to fight him.

However, compared to the Human God, if it's against him there is at least a possibility.

In the end, I want to avoid having someone die because I chose wrongly.

On the next day after I met the Human God in a dream, I went with Sylphy to the adventurer's guild and mailed a letter.

Afterwards, together with Sylphy, I returned to the Sky Fortress.

I separated with Sylphy at the entrance, and turned towards Nanahoshi's location.

Having been told to kill Orsted, I wondered who I should consult with and I remembered her.

Probably because of the words my future self left me; consult with Nanahoshi.

Besides, if it's Nanahoshi, she probably has an idea where Orsted currently is.

First, I need to go to her.

Sooner or later, I'll need to discuss this with Sylphy and Roxy as well but...

I'm worried that they'll start blaming themselves once they hear the story.

Whether it's Sylphy or Roxy or the children, neither of them have any fault in this.

That's why I should choose my words carefully.

As for the correct words to say, I have completely no idea however.

"Hey."

"Oh. You've surprisingly returned quickly, haven't you?"

A few days have already passed but, it looks like Nanahoshi still hasn't completely recovered and is still in bed.

Still, her complexion has improved somewhat.

"Nanahoshi, I've brought some get well presents."

"Sorry for troubling you."

I put the assortment of fruits I bought from the marketplace on the table.

In this season they were a bit expensive but, if you want to ask a favor of someone, there are certain rules of etiquette that need to be followed.

Even if we are in a give and take relationship.

"You're making a scary face. Did something happen?"

Nanahoshi asked with an uneasy look.

I wonder if I'm making such a scary face.

I probably am.

Surely, the face that I have right now is worse than Nanahoshi.

"It's a bit sudden but, I want you to return the favor now."

"What do you want me to do?"

"First I need you to listen, it might sound unbelievable at first though."

"I understand."

I slowly talked about how my future self came back to the present.

What we talked about, the events that will happen, what was written in the diary, and how, as if to support them, the Human God appeared in a dream with an irritated face. My descendants that, supposedly, will cooperate with Orsted to kill the Human God. Finally, about the Human God telling me to kill Orsted.

I told her everything.

"....."

After listening, Nanahoshi seemed as if she was brooding; putting her finger on her forehead.

"... sorry. Let me confirm.... Time slip?"

"Right. He said he came from the future."

"Any proof?"

"The diary had Japanese comments in it, and my true name from my previous life."

"Your real name, what was it?"

"I don't want to say."

"If you don't want to... But, can you really believe that person?"

"... what are you trying to say?"

"It's possible that he's another person who tripped into this world. He's probably pretending to be you from the future."

"That diary was similar to the same diary I made. It also had similar contents to mine."

"Even with that, it's possible it was duplicated while you were sleeping."

If you keep throwing out skepticism then there would be no end to it.

"... But I believe he's not a fake."

"That's fine but, the Human God probably sent him with that in mind."

"Then you are saying he fabricated the diary, and our entire conversation in my dream was nothing more than an act?"

"I won't say that but... is the Human God trustworthy?"

"No. he isn't."

"But you're listening to what he says?"

"But... there's nothing I can do about it..."

Nanahoshi sighed.

And then, as if resolving herself, said:

"To be honest, about the Human God, I also heard about him from Orsted by chance."

"... Something like that happened?"

"Yes. Immediately after he almost killed you, he talked about him a little."

"....."

"He didn't talk about it in detail but, he said he would definitely kill him. However, he said it was currently impossible for him..."

Orsted moved in order to kill the Human God.

Right now it was impossible. However, it will become possible in the future.

The reason it becomes possible, is it because of my descendants?

Or is it because of the revival of the last Dragon general?

Whichever it is, the Human God wants to prevent it from happening.

For the time being, should I go along with his plans?

The more I think about it, the more I feel there is some credibility to his words.

With that timing and his attitude, would he tell lies?

Did he also foresee that conversation between us?

I have no intention to see through his lies.

No, right now, his objectives don't matter.

"Well? Why did you talk about this to me? There are other people more suitable, right? Even if you told me, there's nothing I can do..."

".... My future self told me to discuss it with you."

"The future you... to me, did he?"

Hearing that, I was too embarrassed to reply.

Should I say it?

There was nothing written about it in the diary but; failing to the very end, the Nanahoshi whose fate I didn't know about.

No. I feel it's better to say it.

If she knew she would fail, she can prepare herself. And she can think about methods to avoid that.

"It seems that, until the very end, you failed to return."

When I said that, Nanahoshi's eyes opened wide.

However she closed her lips tightly and shook her head.

"Not that. The future you... why did he tell you to discuss it with me?"

"mmmm... about that... He didn't tell me you died but, perhaps because you know about Orsted's location, and then, you would be more knowledgeable about this type of thing than me, and would probably be able to think up a plan."

"This type of thing?"

"Probably, something like what the Human God's objective is or....."

If you think about it, the Human God's objective can be identified.

He'd probably say its world peace but, in short, it's all for the sake of avoiding his death in the future.

Well, it's probably a lie but...

".... Hey... can you show me your diary?"

"Sure."

I handed over my diary and, Nanahoshi opened it from the first page and started flipping through it.

She soon made a frown.

"This, is going to take some time. Your hand writing is dirty too..."

"It took me two days to read it all."

"Is that so, then, mind giving me a day?"

"You're going to read it in one day?"

"Reading is my strong point after all. I'll finish it by tonight"

I wanted to tell her to scan through it and just concentrate on the important parts but, if she reads everything properly, she might be able to understand something.

On that point, I'll just rely on her.

"Then I'll rest for awhile. Lately, I haven't been able to sleep much."

"I understand. Come back after you've rested."

"I'm relying on you."

Having said that, I left Nanahoshi's room.

In that moment, a load was lifted off my shoulders.

I felt relieved.

That's strange. Did I have that much faith in Nanahoshi?

No. It's different.

Nanahoshi is someone I confide in on things that I can't tell to even Sylphy or Roxy.

If I had to say it, it's because she's not as important to me that I can rely on her for this.

For me to think that, I'm a cold-hearted person, aren't I?

"...."

By coincidence I looked outside the window and saw Ariel, Zanoba, Cliff, Sylphy, and Perugius discussing something in the garden.

Luke is standing attentively at the back.

Acting as Ariel's intermediary, Sylphy talked with Perugius. Surprisingly, she has changed a lot from the withdrawn, bullied, Sylphy I knew.

However, according to my future self, in the end Ariel returned to her country without receiving Perugius's cooperation.

And then she lost.

Sylphy had joined her... and died.

Should I lend them a hand?

...No. I have other priorities.

Right now, I need to think about the Human God.

If I can resolve this, the incident where Sylphy dies will probably not happen.

While thinking that, I arrived at my room.

For now, I'll go to sleep.

When I awakened, Sylphy was already sleeping next to me.

A close-up of her usual cute, sleeping face filled my vision.

I didn't remember sleeping with her.

That means she probably snuck in sometime after I fell asleep.

If I move, I'll probably wake her.

She probably wanted to talk to me about the discussion with Perugius.

If that's the case, I'm sorry.

I unfastened Sylphy's arms that were wrapped around my waist. After caressing her hair, I left the bed.

"nn.... Rudi... let's kiss..."

With her adorable sleep-talking, and looking at her defenseless sleeping face, this is the part where I would usually get horny.

Unfortunately, I don't have time to think about erotic things.

Fixing my bed hair with my hands, in order not to wake Sylphy, I quietly left the room.

Outside the window, the sky was already filled with stars.

It has already become night time.

Since stars also exist in this world, does that mean space as well?

Thinking about such things, I walked along the hallway.

"Where are you going this late at night?"

"Waa?"

At the corner of the hallway, a man with a yellow mask suddenly called out to me.

".....Arumanfi."

"This is the time when humans sleep. Where are you going at this late hour?"

"To Nanahoshi's room. Has she already gone to sleep?"

"She just asked me for some pen and paper. She's still awake."

"Thank you."

With my heart beating a little fast, I left that place.

I wonder if spirits don't go to sleep.

Well, he's not human for sure.

A 24-hour security guard that gives peace of mind.

"If I remember correctly, the conversations inside the castle can pass through the walls, I think..."

That means, the conversation I had with Nanahoshi has also entered Perugius's ears.

That they aren't saying anything, means that they are just monitoring the situation?

And then not just Perugius's ears, but the Human God's as well...

While thinking that, I silently walked inside the castle and headed towards her room.

Outside her room, light was leaking out from the door's crevice.

It seems she's still awake.

For now, I'll knock.

"Who is it?"

"It's Rudeus."

"Coming this late at night, won't your wife misunderstand?"

"Should I come back tomorrow?"

"It doesn't really matter to me. Come in, please."

Being told to do so, I went inside.

Nanahoshi was still in bed, however, a large number of paper stacks were scattered around her.

"It's a bit disorderly isn't it?"

"It's a result of considering a lot of things."

"Did you manage to find anything?"

I asked while picking up pieces of paper and sat down on a chair.

"For the time being, thanks to your story and diary I have a hypothesis."

"Oh? A hypothesis?"

"I've thought about it for a long time, the reason why I came to this world, this place, this era."

Did that have any relationship with our conversation just now, I wonder?

No. It's fine.

For now, I'll listen.

"In the beginning, I thought it wasn't just me, but my friends as well, who were transferred to this world."

"....."

I wonder if it's fine for me to ask why.

Though I already knew why she wanted to say that.

In the corner of my mind— remained memories of my final moments in my previous world. A somewhat inexplicable phenomenon.

I tried to save three people who were going to be run over by a truck.

However, there was one person I could not save.

In the end, I ended up being run over by that truck.

And so, I was the only one who ended up getting run over by a truck.

Without being run into, Nanahoshi was transported to this world.

It would not be strange for someone else to be transported to this world other than her.

"But, no matter where I searched in this world, I couldn't find them."

"What's the possibility of them dying as soon as they were transferred here?"

"I thought about it but, even though I safely came here, they died?"

And so, roaming the world together with Orsted, she searched for her friends, did she?

No. That shouldn't be the only reason she traveled around the world.

"There wasn't anything special that happened to me as well."

"Truly? Nothing at all?"

"......?"

I wonder what she's trying to say.

Certainly, there shouldn't be anything.

My life in Buina village, together with Paul, Zenith and Lilia was peaceful.

"I, hearing that your future self came here to the past, hearing that your future self didn't have any internal organs, wondered if I also came from the future."

"Ha? What do you mean? Are you saying that in truth, this world's timeline extends into our previous world?"

"Not that. If I had to say, I wonder if I can explain it. We still don't know the reason for the teleportation incident, do we?"

"Didn't that disaster happen because you were transferred here?"

"Yes but, beyond that theory, normally that disaster wouldn't happen."

But, that should have been expected since you were transferred from another world.

"However, unlike your case, there was no disaster when my future self came here."

"Didn't it happen?"

"What? Where?"

"Didn't his internal organs disappear somewhere?"

"No..... that's....."

Is this what Nanahoshi wanted to say?

That there were similarities in the vanished organs and people being transferred in the teleport disaster?

"After time-travelling fifty years, your magical power dried up."

"...No, even if you say it dried up, he was still able to use magic."

"However, at the time he used magic, he also started weakening right? Even though he became a powerful magician, he gave up on healing his injuries."

Nanahoshi tapped on the front cover of the diary.

"Supposing I came from a hundred years into the future, I would need two persons worth of your magical power, right?"

I realized that Nanahoshi was trying to confirm something.

She probably learned something I still didn't know.

"Your future self fifty years from now, traveled through fifty years and lost his internal organs.

Where did those internal organs disappear to?

Did they remain in the world fifty years from now?

If the time he traveled was a hundred years, would it just end with his internal organs?

In that situation, would his entire body remain in the future?"

"....."

"It's different, right? The entire body would be sent to the same place the organs disappeared to."

"Where would that be?"

"I don't know. It's just, until a balance is reached, everything would be tweaked. This world's magical power should also be following the law of conservation of energy."

The law of conservation of energy.

"I haven't researched it in detail but.... In that incident, humans probably disappeared by the thousands, or tens of thousands."

"....."

"You, after that incident, did you feel nothing wrong with your body? Like your magical power suddenly being drained very low for example?"

After that disaster.

At that time, together with Eris, we encountered Ruijerd and became adventurers at the town of Rikarisu.

I don't think anything happened but....

No, now that you mentioned it, I got easily tired while we were moving towards the town of Rikarisu.

A sluggish feeling, isn't that the same as when my magical power is almost dried up?

"There was but.... then what's the difference between people who disappeared because of teleportation and those who didn't?"

"As the Human God said, there is probably a relation to how strong their fate is? It looks like those who had strong fates didn't disappear."

".... Is that your guess?"

"That and everything else. All of it was conjecture. Didn't I say it was a hypothesis?"

It looks like I have a strong fate.

And it seems the same could be said for the beautiful females around me; Both Sylphy and Eris survived.

In hindsight, my family also had strong fates.

"In short, you're telling me you also time-traveled from the future?"

"No, I'm just wondering if it's fine to think of it like that."

Nanahoshi scratched her head and groaned as if she couldn't explain it clearly.

"For sure, in the future, a situation in which the Human God is defeated will occur."

"...Would it?"

"Yes. That's why the Human God, in order to avoid that, made contact with you. Hey, when did you meet the Human God for the first time? Do you still remember?"

The first time I met the Human God was, right... immediately after the teleport disaster.

No, but, I feel he said something like watching me even before then.

Was that also a lie?

He said he saw me at the teleport disaster.

From which part did he start lying? And where does it end?

"Before the teleport disaster, didn't you see anything that bothered you?"

Something that bothered me.....

Nothing.

Wait... No, there was something.

In the Fedoa region, inside the room that grandfather Sauros used for sex, from that tower I saw a red sphere.

"That's a clue, right? Do you still remember when it first appeared?"

When.....?

There's no reason I would know that....

No, wait... I feel like grandfather Sauros said something about it.

Remember.

Remember.

This body has a good memory. I should be able to remember it.

Mmm... it should be...

"It was discovered just three years before."

"Around the time I was five years old, I think."

"When you were five years old, did anything happen? Did you encounter anyone?"

"If it's when I was five years old, that was the time I met Sylphy, after that, someone else who's special..."

Suddenly, something in my head connected.

I met with Sylphy and became close to her.

As a result, Paul pulled us apart, and I met with Eris.

And then on my tenth birthday.

I almost did it with Eris.

The teleport incident happened the next day.

And then, immediately after the teleport disaster, I started to have contact with the Human God.

In short, the future where the Human God dies was born because of that?

"Originally, you're not someone who should have existed in this world, right?"

"Yeah."

"What do you think is the reason you transferred to this world?"

"I don't know."

"I believe that holds some significance."

"Significance? Like what?

"Someone, in order to the change the future, sent you and me into this era."

"Someone? Who?"

"Surely, someone from the future. Someone who wants the Human God to die."

I don't understand this.

Then, is she telling me that I'm being manipulated by someone?

"I don't understand. In the end, what are you trying to tell me?"

"I'm saying that in order for the world where the Human God dies in the future to exist, the two of us are necessary."

This has become complicated.

"I was probably summoned to this world in order to create a method for your descendants to kill the Human God in the future."

"....."

"That's why, as long as I don't create that method, I won't be able to return to my original world. My return magic will fail."

"Why would that happen?"

"Because that's the reason I was called to this world. In short, my existence is a time paradox."

Hypothesis.

The reason the Human God dies, is because my descendants and Orsted will kill him.

In order for that to happen, I need to make children.

The moment I met with Sylphy, it was established that I would make children with her.

Looking at the time that the Human God was fixated on Roxy, probably with Roxy too.

The teleport incident happened during a time where I could have done erotic things with Eris. She's probably connected as well.

After that, it seems the Human God can't be killed with just my descendants and Orsted alone.

In order for that to happen, there is something important that Nanahoshi needs to do.

And so, Nanahoshi was summoned.

That's why she said [I came from the future].

Was this done because someone intended it to happen? Or was it some prank of causality?

We don't know.

Nanahoshi's hypothesis is that, as a result of what someone did in the future, we were created in the past.

Did the future come first?

Or was it the past?

Did the egg come first? Or the chicken?

"I understand your hypothesis."

"I'm sorry for being bad at explaining but, I'm glad that you understood."

It was an interesting conversation.

What comes after is an uninteresting one.

"In short; my descendants, together with Orsted, will kill the Human God. That extent is believable."

"Well, it seems that way."

"Then, let's return to our original issue."

"Original?"

"About killing Orsted."

"That's....."

Nanahoshi knitted her eyebrows.

"Even if your hypothesis was correct, the Human God is aiming to avoid that future. Practically, he's already done that once. Even if our fates are fixed, the future can still be changed."

".....I think it's better if you stop. More than that you should consult with Orsted. Perhaps —-"

"Please stop. The Human God is probably watching our movements at this very moment."

"....."

Hearing that, Nanahoshi looked at the ceiling.

Unfortunately, the void world lies below.

"Something like fate isn't certain. Even if you say that my and Sylphy's fate is strong, my father died, and my mother became an invalid. I don't think the Human God can do anything immediately, but he can see the future. Once he sees me trying to rebel, by the time I return home, there's a possibility Aisha and everyone else would be dead. One year after, two years after, I would continue into a path of misfortune."

"...But, the Human God shouldn't be able to just lay his hands on whoever he wants, right?"

"I wonder about that. If you think that way, then it's also possible he should be able to. It wouldn't be strange for him to hide how powerful he is."

"I can't deny that."

"Besides, in the end, Orsted can't win, right? If you can believe the Human God's word, that is. If my descendants don't help him, he'll lose, right?"

"Well, if we based it on what we know, then yes."

"I will protect my family. The one aiming at my family is the Human God but, the Human God is in a place I can't reach. However, Orsted is in this world. I don't know where he is but, if it's him it shouldn't be impossible."

"But, you can't trust the Human God to keep his word."

"Orsted is the Dragon God. If the diary can be believed, then he probably knows a technique to go to the void world. If I kill him, if the method to travel to the void world disappears, then in reality, the Human God should lose his reason to target my children."

"But, even if you kill Orsted, another method to go to the void world would probably be...."

"Then what should I do!?"

I, myself, was surprised that I shouted at Nanahoshi.

While wincing, once again, Nanahoshi repeated what she said.

"Like I said, you should discuss this with Orsted. Perhaps he can think of something."

"I've already thought about becoming allies with Orsted! However, once that happens the Human God will become my enemy. Going against the Human God by myself would only result in repeating what was written in the diary. If it's just me then I can't win. Then what about Orsted? He'll lose, right!? Since he can't win alone, he trespassed into my life and threw it into disorder to get a chance at victory; and so, in order to avoid a future where he is defeated, the Human God interfered with my life! Do you think someone like that would truly have the flexibility to protect my family!? Would he even have enough power to do that!? Since I don't know that, why should I make the Human God my enemy!? Taking on a losing battle and losing everything, it's too late for that!"

"But! Even then, Orsted is more trustworthy than the Human God."

"I wonder about that. I've been told that Orsted would destroy this world. Well, even I wouldn't believe in that entirely but... The Human God deceived me. He guided me into misfortune with his advice. Are you sure Orsted isn't deceiving you as well?"

"That... isn't something I can say for sure."

Once again, I looked at Nanahoshi's face.

Fear has been mixed into her facial expression.

"I, whether it's the Human God or Orsted, I don't believe in either of them."

All I know is how powerless I am.

Even if I go against the Human God, I won't win; I believe those words that my future self left me.

I can clearly imagine a future, similar to that old man, where I lose everything and die miserably.

If I fight with Orsted, I can't imagine a future other than becoming a tattered rag.

However the Human God told me my fate was strong.

Possibly, he saw a future where I defeated Orsted.

I'll place everything on that one strand of hope.

"Nanahoshi, since you told me to discuss this with Orsted, then you know a method to contact him, correct?"

"..... Yes. That's right."

"Then cooperate with me on killing Orsted."

"I, also received help from Orsted, you know?"

Nanahoshi became flustered and turned her gaze away.

When Nanahoshi came to this world, the first person she met was Orsted.

And from there, she was probably saved by Orsted numerous times.

In a manner similar to how Ruijerd saved me when I fell into the magic continent.

She doesn't want to betray him.

I also feel the same way about Ruijerd.

Even if she dies, she wouldn't betray him.

Even I can understand to that extent.

If it was the usual me, thinking about what would happen to our current relationship, I would pull back.

However, right now, I have no intention of holding back.

"Hey, Nanahoshi. (previous world name)Nanahoshi Shizuka"

"....."

"Did you know that, before I came to this world, I was nothing more than garbage? I don't know what you think of me right now but... If you saw my previous self, you would clearly look down on him as trash."

"....."

"But you know what? When I came to this world, I decided to start from scratch. I've had my share of failure and loss but, I've learned various things, and now I have something important to me."

"...."

"That is something I want to protect."

I got off my seat.

When you're asking from someone a favor, you shouldn't be sitting on something.

There is a proper way to ask for help.

Go down on both hands and knees.

And beg for help.

Bow down as low as possible.

"I beg you. Please help me."

The floor of the Sky Fortress was cold and hard.

"There's a possibility that the Human God would abruptly change his mind. I don't want to see a day where I discover that my entire family has been massacred because we hesitated...."

"Wait, what are you doing!? Stop that!"

"I don't want to lose anyone. Please help me."

Nanahoshi got off the bed.

Seizing my shoulder, she forced me to raise my face.

"I understand.... I'll help, so please don't stay in that pose anymore."

Seeing Nanahoshi's tired face, I apologized to her in my head.

At the same time, [It went well], I thought.

Inside my heart, I was assuming a triumphant pose.

"I'm in your debt."

I was probably in the wrong.

However, I no longer had any other option.....

In the far northwestern edge of the continent.

The Holy Land of the Sword.

It's a place where you can always hear the sound of wooden swords striking and yells filled with fighting spirit.

More than half of the people you'll find walking around in this place can be seen wearing martial arts outfits or similar styles comfortable for fighting in as well as holding a wooden sword and towel in their hands.

Sometimes, people who appear to be swordsmen stay in the city, and almost all of them end up in clothes that make it easy to move around for practice.

Near that town.

Sitting in a land full of snow is the entrance to a large dojo.

Standing there is a woman wearing a swordsman outfit.

Wearing black and flexible clothing from top to bottom.

Worn on top of that is a traditional coat given to Sword Saints from the Sword God Style.

On her waist were two swords of varying sizes, one of which you could tell was made by a very renowned blacksmith from the overwhelming quality it displayed.

Without a doubt, the person wearing a sword of this quality must be one of the best disciples under the Sword God Style and a person of great valor.

If you see her appearance combined with that deep crimson hair, it gives off the image of a lion.

If she were to walk down the road, nine out of every ten people would quickly move out of her path.

She is a Sword King.

Known as [Mad Sword King] Eris Greyrat.

However, putting aside her majestic outfit, she was wearing a face filled with anxiety.

"Hey Nina, is there really nothing strange about this?"

"Yes yes, it's not strange at all. It looks very elegant."

Standing in front of the red haired lion was another woman with dark blue hair wrapped in a martial arts outfit.

It was Nina.

She was starting to get sick of responding to the lion's worries.

"Anyone who looks at you right now will see a great and imposing Sword King."

"But, Rudeus always said he liked more frilly clothes."

"Listen here."

Nina sighed and let out a voice with a fed up tone.

"How should I know if your outfit is strange or what kind of preferences a man would be interested in?"

"I guess that is the case?"

"Why are you looking at me with such pitiful eyes. Even I have already with Jino... No, never mind that."

Nina shook her head and pointed out a finger.

"In the first place, there's no way they would be selling clothes as fancy as that in this area. Where do you think this is? If you want to wear that kind of frilly clothing, go buy some in the city."

"That is true."

Eris was satisfied with Nina's suggestion and nodded.

However, this was already the fifth time they had this back and forth exchange today.

"Even more so, there's no point in worrying about these clothes here. It will take you at least a month to get to Magic City Sharia no matter how fast you hurry."

"..."

"Rather than clothes, make sure you properly clean yourself up before you meet. Take a bath, brush your hair properly, those sorts of things, and... um... it's obvious a woman who just smells like sweat will be hated."

"Rudeus never once made a disgusted face even when we spent time together after sweating."

"Well, it's not as if I can't understand that to some extent, it's something between you and your partner right?"

"Instead, he seemed to be rather happy to smell the scent from my sweat soaked underwear."

"Isn't he just a pervert!"

Eris showed a bit of an offended face in response to those words.

"Rudeus isn't a pervert; he's just a bit ecchi."

"Though, to want to smell your scent? No matter how you look at it, he's a pervert!"

"..."

After hearing that Eris raised her arm and started sniffing around her armpit.

However, all she could smell were freshly worn clothes and the smell of soap.

She had just gotten out of the bath before starting to travel.

"He's not...a pervert."

"Well, maybe I said a bit too much just now."

"..."

The two of them went silent after that.

Their hair was blowing in the freezing wind caused by this cold weather.

"Ghyslaine is rather late."

"She might be having trouble deciding which horse to pick."

"That could be it."

Eris nodded to Nina's words.

"Come to think of it, I have heard a few rumors about your boyfriend."

"What kind?"

"If you see Rudeus Greyrat, your eyes will jump out of their sockets."

"It's quite possible if it's Rudeus!"

"Also, that he likes girls with small chests."

While saying that, Nina looked at Eris.

Eris as well took a look down at herself.

There was a rather voluptuous chest that had been well trained as a swordsman.

"It's alright."

Even though she said that, Eris's face was a bit blue.

"Then, there are more rumors that could be heard all around such as clearing some sort of legendary labyrinth, wiping out an immortal demon lord, and fighting a battle against one of the seven major world powers."

"That's right, as expected of Rudeus after all. It's got to be like that."

Eris's face turned a light shade of red.

She was happy to hear Rudeus had been giving it his all just like her.

"He sounds like quite the monster. Normally, most of these would be pretty unbelievable."

"Right?"

Eris stuck out her chest, broadened her lips into a smile, and let out a breath from her nose.

"Though, I have heard a bit of a weird rumor as well."

"What kind?"

"Rudeus Greyrat is a major playboy, and he's always wandering around with a different woman near him."

Eris's smile stiffened up.

"Somehow, it kind of feels like he's so strong that he's allowed to do whatever he likes?"

"..."

"Hey, Eris, just saying this as example, but could it be that..."

Nina said it with a small voice.

"You've been forgotten?"

Nina moved her left hand with high speed.

In the next instant, there was the sound of Nina catching Eris's fist.

"..."

After catching her fist and being glared at by Eris, Nina avoided her gaze.

"Sorry, sorry, it's just a rumor."

Eris withdrew her fist and crossed her arms.

She stood in a solid pose and turned her usually frowning face away.

"..."

"..."

"Ghyslaine is here."

Eris could see four horses coming in the edge of her sight.

Leading them was a beast race woman.

Sword King, Ghyslaine Dedorudia.

In terms of age, she had already passed 40, though her body was still the same as always as she led two horses by the reins.

Further behind her was a young beauty leading the other two horses.

Dressed in travelers clothes, with hair flowing gently in the wind, she would capture the hearts of anyone who sees her with that seductiveness.

Water God Style King, Isolte Cruel.

On one of the horses she was leading, Water God Reida Ryia could be seen.

"I've made you wait."

While saying that, Ghyslaine led the horses packed with luggage up to Eris.

"Another fight?"

"It's Nina's fault."

Eris made a frown, and Nina shrugged her shoulders.

After seeing that, Ghyslaine whispered [I see] and laughed a bit.

"Really now, Gull-boy isn't even going to come see you off it seems."

It was a despondent voice.

The strongest old woman here said that while looking towards the dojo with a displeased face.

"Great Shisho-sama. It's because the Sword God-sama is weak to alcohol."

"You're saying the alcohol from last night still remains? He should realize his age already and stop going overboard. Oh, that's right Nina. We might be able to win right now, so how about we try challenging him?"

The old lady said something to try and incite Nina, but she smiled bitterly.

"No, a swordsman should fight fair and square from the front."

"Such an honest and good child. Well, in the not so distant future, you should be able to win. Give it your best."

"Yes. I will work my hardest to make sure all of my teachings until now won't go to waste."

After bowing her head to Reida, Nina turned to face Isolte.

"Then, what are you guys going to do from here on out? You'll be traveling together with Eris until part of the way, right?"

"Yes. We'll be returning to Asura Kingdom. I was invited to the castle to act as a sword instructor."

"Ah, is that the case? It'll get lonely, won't it?"

After Nina said that, Isolte smiled gently.

"Nina, if you come to Asura Kingdom as well, stop by and pay us a visit. I'll guide you around the city."

"No way. If some country bumpkin like myself goes to Asura Kingdom, they'll end up laughing at me over some strange thing."

After saying that while her scratching her nose, Eris blew air from her nose with a [Hmph.]

"It would be fine to beat up anyone who laughs at us."

Nina laughed a bit after hearing what Eris said and remembered exactly who the three people here were.

A Sword King, a Water King, and a Sword Saint.

The only ones who would be able to laugh at them would be some strong being, out of their reach, or a fool.

"Eris, it's about time we head off."

"I know."

After replying in an energetic voice, Isolte made a bitter smile and jumped onto the horse.

Eris jumped onto her horse as well.

The horse started to struggle from how roughly it was treated, but it returned to being docile when Eris pounded its neck.

"Everyone stay well."

Before anyone had realized, tear drops started to appear in Nina's eyes.

These past few years.

She was remembering the times since Eris's arrival.

It was a bad meeting.

Starting with humiliation, she had been forced to understand bitterness countless times.

However, thanks to that, Nina learned to use the mortifying experiences as springs and learned from them.

Since Isolte came here, she was saved countless times by her gentle mannerisms and way of speaking.

If it weren't for these two, she would just be another one of those Sword Saints laying around all over the place.

Never able to rise up to the stage known as Sword King.

In other words, if it hadn't been for these two...

"Hello. Mailman here, could someone please sign here?"

Then, they heard a voice from out of nowhere.

After brilliantly destroying such a moving moment, Nina was a bit irritated and faced the voice.

There was a man wearing heavy winter clothes.

He made a face as if he didn't understand what was going on with the people gathered here and then took out a single letter from his bag.

"Jeez, who is it for?"

"Umm, Eris Boreas Greyrat-sama."

After hearing that, Eris raised her eyebrows and then opened her eyes after hearing the next words.

"From Rudeus Greyrat-sama."

"Rudeus!"

Eris immediately jumped off the horse and stole the letter from the man.

Then the moment she was about to tear open, the letter was grabbed by the man.

"Just a minute, please sign. If I don't have that, I can't get the compensation."

"Where?"

"Ah, please wait just a second."

The man then took out something like a receipt and a board out of his bag and handed it to Eris.

Eris took the board and thought for a few seconds.

Trying to remember how to write letters.

Then, with bad handwriting, she wrote the name Eris Greyrat.

After looking at those letters for a bit, she nodded and said [Alright.]

"Yes, thank you very much. It's a pretty good job after all."

After the man confirmed that, he quickly headed off and returned to the north.

Eris couldn't care less about the man at all and just took the letter.

After breaking the seal, she found the letters Eris Boreas Greyrat shown.

It was certainly Rudeus's handwriting.

(Jeez, Rudeus must have been in a hurry, my name is no longer Boreas. Ah, he must not know.)

Then on the back, she noticed Rudeus Greyrat written very thoroughly.

He's as methodical and complete as always, while it still gives the feeling that it's missing something.

Eris smiled a bit while remembering how she always used to learn by reading and repeating this handwriting.

Then, she used a nail to open the end of the letter.

It wouldn't open.

After crunching away at it, trying to tear it open three or four times, she put her hand on the sword at her waist.

After throwing the letter into the air she pulled out her sword.

"Hah!"

A flash.

The letter wasn't cut into pieces, but there was just a clean cut on the end as it fell down into Eris's hands.

Eris pulled open the cut end and took out the paper inside.

Then, with an excited expression, she started to read it.

Started to read it and continued to read it.

However, that expression gradually changed into something unpleasant.

"Hey, Eris, what is written?"

"...?"

After Nina asked, there was no answer from Eris.

She just kept staring into space with a scary face.

"Hey, answer me~"

"Shut up! There's just a few too many words I don't know, so I can't read it!"

"Ah, is that so?"

"Nina, you read it!"

"Eh? I can't read words either."

"What! If you can't read words when you need to, then you'll be in trouble!"

"Even though you say that so arrogantly, you can't even read it yourself!"

During that argument, Isolte got off her horse.

"Well, calm down a bit. I'll read it."

"Ah, yeah. Please do."

Eris obediently gave Isolte the letter.

Isolte let her eyes scan over the page. Slowly reading it to herself.

However, her face gradually changed into something grim.

"What is with this person?!"

"Wh..what? What's written?"

"Eris. You've been giving your best until now for this person? Ah, how pitiful. Milis-sama, please save this poor child!"

After saying that, Isolte started praying to the sky and looked at Eris with eyes filled with pity.

"I won't say anything bad, but Eris, don't bother going to Sharia and come with us to Asura. There's no reason for you to be cheated by a bad man."

"It's fine, just tell me what is written there right now, or I'll beat you down!"

"I understand. Listen carefully now, this is what's written."

Eris put her hand on the sword at her waist, and Isolte started reading the letter with a voice filled with anger.

"Dear Eris-sama,

This is Rudeus Greyrat.

Time has flown by these past five years since we separated.

Do you still remember me?

I will probably never be able to forget that time.

The first night together with you. I swore in my heart to remain together with you for the rest of my life.

However, when I woke up the next morning, you were nowhere to be seen.

The feelings of loss and collapse at that moment brought about a deep darkness upon my heart.

The next three years were certainly painful, miserable, and empty.

Naturally, I don't hold a grudge about that any more.

Still, I would be greatly blessed if you could comprehend how deeply sad I felt at that time.

Now then, the reason I am sending this letter is because a certain person advised me in regards to your feelings.

I thought without a doubt that you wanted to completely cut off ties with me and set off on a trip by yourself.

However, this person informed me that it was all my misunderstanding and your feelings were always directed towards me.

Currently, I have two wives.

Both of them saved me from the dark and deep suffering I was experiencing.

Even in the case that there was a misunderstanding about how you felt about me, it is still a fact that I was deeply depressed and that they saved me.

However, in the case that you honestly feel the same way about me,

If you still wish to marry me and still wish to live together with me,

I have made arrangements to accept you.

Though you might feel unhappy about this, I have absolutely no intention of separating from my current family, so you would become my third wife.

In the case that you feel unhappy about this, I have already resolved to receive your fist.

In regards to this, please forgive me after two or three hits.

However, if possible, I do not wish to fight with you.

I feel even if you do not wish to become a member of my family, we could form a fine friendship.

That is all.

From Rudeus Greyrat."

"..."

After hearing the contents of that letter, Eris stiffened up.

After seeing Eris stiffen up, Isolte started spitting out words in disgust.

"He's a cruel man isn't he! He already has two wives and takes the attitude of [It's fine if you become the third]! I can't help but think he is looking down on women!"

"Is that right? I think he put a considerable amount of thought into writing it."

Nina objected to Isolte with her opinion after hearing the contents of the letter.

"Consideration?! It's the first letter in a long time and not even a single word of love is mentioned?! That's not all, talking about somehow or other accepting her as if he's looking down from above! I can't bring myself to like this Rudeus person!"

"It's written that he thought he was thrown away by Eris and experienced three years of suffering isn't it? I think Eris has some responsibility for neglecting him as well!"

"That is obviously just an excuse! He's clearly just after Eris's body and her skill with the sword."

"No, if he's only after that, isn't it a bit risky considering that it is Eris?"

Isolte swelled up in anger, and Nina groaned.

Eris stood in a pose with her arms crossed staring at the sky.

There was no longer a single thing reflected within those eyes.

The sky is blue, and the heart is pure white.

"Oh? There was one more piece of paper."

Then, Isolte found another piece of paper in the letter.

After taking it out she started reading it aloud.

"Ummm, let's see what's written here."

"Postscript.

I am about to challenge the Dragon God Orsted to a battle.

I don't know if I will be able to kill him.

I may no longer be in this world by the time this letter reaches you.

In the case that I am able to return home alive, let us continue this conversation."

By the time Isolte had finished reading it her face had completely stiffened up.

Nina had also stiffened up.

That expression was filled with fear.

They felt nothing but fear towards the words [Challenge the Dragon God Orsted to a battle.]

However, a smile appeared on Eris's face.

Those eyes had already regained their light; they were filled with the flames of madness and resolve.

"I'll be late if we don't hurry."

After saying that Eris jumped onto the horse.

Only one thing remained within her mind at this point.

"Ghyslaine, we're going!"

Eris yelled while taking off on the horse.

The horse kicked away snow while running forward, and Ghyslaine followed after that.

The two took off in the direction of the man who sent the letter just now and, in no time at all, were too far to be seen.

Nina and Isolte just continued to see them off with nothing but a dumbfounded expression.

A month after the conversation with Hitogami.

Killing Orsted won't be a cake walk. He is the world's strongest!

Obviously, that means he is even more overwhelmingly powerful than Ruijerd, Atofe, and Perugius.

I can't even beat them, then how am I going to beat Orsted?

Thus, I come up with three plans.

Three.

Everything comes in threes.

Three little pigs, three good luck charms, etc.

1. Develop magic armor

2. Find a partner

3. Research battle tactics

First things first, develop magic armor. If what's written on the notebook is to be believed, then with that armor I can obtain superman-likephysical ability.

With that, the future me becomes incredibly powerful, so that's a must.

First I purchased a small house near the edge of Magic City Sharia. Originally I wanted to borrow a space at the Sky Castle, but Perugiusrefused.

About how the conversation went with Perugius, I'll talk about it later.

I requested the help of Cliff and Zanoba, even though I didn't explain in details, they accepted my request.

I asked Cliff to expand the Zariff's Arm system, and Zanoba to design the body structure and locomotion.

Their eyes glittered as soon as I said magic armor, and soon got the idea.

Even though power suits don't exist in this world... What boys long for, is probably the same in every world.

Next I asked Sylphy and Roxy to help.

Roxy became the project supervisor. Even though I can supervise the project myself, but only I could manufacture and refine the high strengthstone needed for the shielding of the magic armor.

A very time and magic consuming process, so I can't spare time for anything else.

Sylphy can do Earth Magic with voiceless incantation. She is also well versed in magic circles, probably as a result of her research into theMetastasis Event. What I mean is, she's really high-spec.

Since she can do everything, I had her be Roxy's assistant, helping out when anyone needs a hand.

When I asked for help, Sylphy happily replied, "You can count on me." Somehow it feels like ages since Sylphy was this happy.

Maybe she has been tolerant.

She put up with a lot of things recently.

I'm sorry.

Anyways, in parallel of the above, number 2 was find a partner.

Initially I thought about fighting alone, but I don't have the skill for that. Unlike the future Rudeus, I lack the combat experience.

But I couldn't find a partner of that caliber either. Badigadi is missing. Ruijerd isn't here, and Perugius obviously refused.

Perugius said this.

"In this world there are three people you should never fight: Technique God, Fighting God, and Dragon God. Among those three, Dragon God Orsted isthe strongest and the most ruthless. Even though I respect your determination to protect your family, and am curious of that Human God... I do notwant to get involved. Until Laplace revives, I don't plan on dying."

Even though I was hoping to trick him into helping somehow, but that looks to be impossible. On this side, I should just be thankful that he isn'tgoing to interfere.

Thus, outside of Perugius, I couldn't find anyone else capable of standing up to Orsted.

Even though I can bring Zanoba, but if Atofe can deal that sort of damage on the miko, then there's no question that Orsted could as well.

I don't want Zanoba to die. He is my closest friend.

Same goes for Cliff and Elinalise. I don't want them to die either.

When it comes down to it, there's no one that can fight with me.

Suddenly, I thought of Eris. I don't know when she'll come, but according to the diary, she was a match against me even when I wore the magicarmor.

If she arrives in time for my preparations, and we were able to settle things, then maybe I can beg her for help.

I might be too selfish.

For now, number 2 will have to wait. Finally number 3, research battle tactics and simulate the attack.

A solo fight to the death, there are plenty of ways about it.

Since there's no chance of collateral damage, as long as I can keep the distance, I can employ plenty of area of effect spells.

As long as the range is large enough, there should be no way to avoid it. A direct strike spell like [Lightning] might deal more damage, buta person like Orsted would probably avoid it somehow.

In that case, then my best chance is to stand at range and just keep throwing area spells one after another. You can't use [Magic Disrupt] if theopponent is beyond your field of vision.

If I sneak attack Orsted in a moment of negligence, then maybe I might break through his defenses.

Thus, my best bet might be to set up a trap, lure him into somewhere empty, put something there for him to pick up, and hit him when he does.

The problem is how do I lure him in... Maybe I can take Nanahoshi hostage, or maybe I can use Hitogami, anything as long as it works.

Next, of course, just range attacks alone won't be enough to take him. Well, maybe I could, but it's better if I plan for the worst.

Afterwards it's close combat in the magic armor, but this is uncharted territory. Can my mind even keep up in a high speed fight..? This Iwon't know until the magic armor is ready.

Thinking like this reminds me of when I just came to this world, when I busied myself with tactics to beat Paul.

Even though I wanted to beat Paul at least once, I never ended up getting my wish.

But tactics from then still root deep in my memories. I'll just go with those, a mix of magic and physical combat, a 3D fight.

No matter the enemy, the tactics remain the same.

Keep the distance, attack unilaterally.

Don't let up, force his every move.

That is the best.

But Orsted knows [Magic Disruption], and Dragon Gate too. He definitely has other moves up his sleeves. In a magic fight, I might not havethe advantage.

Traps, sneak attack, and what else? Can I beat him? I need to think this through.

I want to do 3 things, but only got to 2. Truth be told, I'm aware of how impatient I'm acting. I'm too shortsighted.

I know that ideally, if I spend more time refining and practicing my tactics, like for ten years...

I'm well aware that I should spend more time planning and testing my strategies. Like spend 10 years to come up with ways to drive Orsted into acorner, that might work the best.

But if I take my time, Hitogami might have a change of mind halfway through. If someone dies before I could notice, I'd regret forever.

While I was making those moves.

Hitogami reappears in a dream.

—

A snow white space. I'm in the middle of a empty world.

"Wow, it has progressed better than I expected."

Yes.

Just as you instructed, I will fight Orsted.

"Fighting alone isn't enough. If you don't kill him..."

You seem to be in a good mood.

Do you really enjoy having me dance in the palm of your hand that much?

"Even I can't tell the outcome, how exciting!"

Right.

By the way, since you're appearing like this, in other words, what you said before, that you can't appear without matching frequencies, thatwas a lie?

"Yep. I lied."

You shameless bastard...

Then I guess you can only contact specific individuals was a lie too?

"Yep. That too. But don't you feel special to be chosen by God?"

Pssh...

Well, forget it.

Eventually I will tell Sylphy and Roxy about fighting Orsted.

If I die, my descendants will surely consider Orsted their father's murderer and hate him, that's why...

"That alone won't be enough to change their fate. If you don't kill him for me, I will wipe them all out. No matter how long it takes."

Wipe out? Don't say something so scary.

Anyways.

Regardless, finishing the magic armor will take a while.

The principles are completely uncharted territory, even Cliff is feeling stuck.

I'm putting my all in development as well... but it would take at least half a year more.

"Cliff, let him concentrate on magic circles needed to strengthen the armor core. You just focus on the necessary stone shielding and joints. For magic circles for rest of the body, use the Arrestar method instead of Vindo ones. That should do it. Also, get Zanoba to design it a little bigger. That way, the consumption increases, but you can lay a redundant magic circlelayer under the first one. With the two layers repairing each other, you can still move even with major damage."

Eh, ehh?

Aren't you well informed?

"OF course, I'm Hitogami! Since I know about Fighting God's armor, I can give you some pointers."

Hitogami...

Say, people of this world call you Human God.

What's up with that?

Is Hitogami your alias?

"Human God is just a nickname. Hitogami is my real name. Somehow or another the Human God name becomes known instead."

That sounds like a lie.

Well, it doesn't matter what you call yourself.

Hey, will I win?

With magic armor, traps, and sneak attack?

"Well... your magic equals Laplace. If you put in the effort, who knows what might happen?"

How irresponsible.

Can't you give me your usual advice and help me win?

"Then, go pick up some magic tools. The sort that shoots when you pour magic into it. You can find those on sale anywhere. Those thingshave limiters for regular people. But if you really want to, you can channel as much magic through it as you like. Sky is the limit. Likethat Zariff's Arm you guys made, make a magic tool with enormous output that only you can handle."

Oh, I see.

You actually offered some pretty good advice this time.

"Since you have been a harder worker than I expected, I ought to offer a hand as well. My desire to see Orsted dead is true."

... Feels likes you have some hidden motives again.

Tell me the truth, for the magic armor too, nothing will blow up during the production process, right?

"... Whose life will you wager for the answer to the question? Aisha? Norn? Lilia? Zenith?"

Pssh...

I can't win.

"I cannot see Orsted's future. Of course, nor the result of your battle with him. That's why I do not know."

I see.

If you can't, then that means you don't know why you lost either.

"Indeed."

Say, if you can't see Orsted's future, then why did you know my descendants and Orsted will work together?

"Even though I cannot see Orsted's future, I can see my own. Your descendants and a man I never saw before had me surrounded, with Orstedpresent in that moment."

So you can see yourself. Then what happened? You got your ass kicked?

"Resists in vain and brutally murdered."

By the way, what did you do to Orsted anyways? Must be something awful for him to want you dead.

"What can I say? I don't remember anything about him."

Don't want to tell me, or you really don't know?

Well, whatever.

Your words are full of lies. Whatever you say, there's no way to trust them.

"How rude! I should have you know, my only lie against your interests was the basement."

So all the suggestions up till then was to build up to that one time?

"Yep, just as you said. But if Roxy and you don't leave a child, I won't have to lie in the first place."

Then you should have just told me not to have a child with Roxy! Why do you have to go through all that trouble?

"The child will be born. No matter what I say, Roxy will have your child. That is fated. Even if I adjust... no matter how I adjust, thatfuture will come."

So it was destined...

No, sorry for losing my temper.

Indeed, Roxy and I married and had a child.

In retrospect even I felt I made strange moves at times, so that must be fate.

If that fate makes you unhappy, I'll change it, Hitogami.

As you instructed, I'll kill Orsted.

But before that, let me ask for one more.

"What is it?"

Once I kill Orsted, please leave me alone, and please leave my family alone. Promise me that.

"Hey, do you really think I won't keep my promises?"

I don't.

I do think... what if killing Orsted is also a lie?

And when I thought that, it makes me wonder whether betraying you, and siding with Orsted, would be a better choice.

"Go ahead and try. Indeed I cannot kill you, nor can I kill Orsted, but prepare yourself. Do you really want to enjoy the wrath of God?"

But you could be bluffing.

Maybe you're just all talk.

Always so coy with me.

Maybe you're scared if I become your enemy?

"Your fate is strong. I was merely trying to nip the problem in the bud. Ah... forget it. Not like you'll believe anything I say. Go ahead and underestimate me and see. Goodbye, enjoy your regrets."

Ah... Wait. I'm sorry.

Just ignore what I said. Hey, wait up!

I just want some guarantees.

You said that if I lose to Orsted you'll kill my whole family.

On the other hand, if I did kill Orsted, what says you won't change your mind and kill them anyways?

Under these circumstances, demanding that I beat Orsted and etc, staying motivated poses a challenge.

"... Mm. You have a point. Fine, this is a promise. I, swear by my name as Hitogami, if you are to win against Orsted, thus eliminate my worries, then we shall cut all ties. You, your wives, your parents, your sisters, your descendants, even your body I shall not lift a finger, a toe, or a mouth against it."

Really, promise?

"How about, I throw a little help your way when your family is in trouble?"

... No, I'm done with your advice.

"Well, then, do your best."

A month passed since that dream.

Magic armor development has proceeded smoothly. Following Hitogami's advice, we enlarged the armor.

Standing some 3 meters tall, about half of an Aura Battler.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Aura Battler Dunbine anime series. }

The magic armor in the diary only covers my body, so this is even bigger.

We learned a lot by making it bigger.

The engineering got easier, but it also became more robust.

All in all, an excellent suggestion.

After hearing Hitogami's advice, Cliff had an inspiration, and quickly found solutions to previous bottlenecks.

I thought it would take six months, but it progresses far faster than I expected.

According to schedule, it'll take another month.

It'll only take three months....

Under different circumstances I might even thank Hitogami.

How ironic.

The magic armor my future self developed to fight Hitogami.

Now created with his advice.

Thinking of that, I can't help but feel suspicious.

But Zanoba and Cliff made it.

I believe in them.

—

We looked into magic tools as well, Roxy helped with this.

Just as Hitogami said, we found them rather quickly on the street somewhere, a tube shaped magic tool.

On a [Fire!] command, it can shoot off basic magic.

For a magic tool it's relatively popular, but not a particularly powerful one.

As a way to hit a running thief from a distance, it has occasional uses.

According to Hitogami, if we modify this so it can handle my magic power, then I should be able to use it to fire off my standard Stone Cannons.

Suddenly I had an inspiration. What if I increase my output, inject even more magic power, if I tie like 10 of them together, then maybe Ican rapid fire?

Maybe with that, my typical Stone Cannon can evolve into something like a gatling gun!

When I said that to Roxy, she only nodded with a deadpan expression.

"Rudi's magic is strong, but even you can only fire one shot at time. Good idea. I know a magic tool maker. Let me get in touch with her."

After saying that, Roxy went to contact the magic tool maker she only recently met.

She's a Long Ear Race not often seen in this region.

Even though Long Ear Race are all born beautiful, her nails are covered in ashes, her face caked black, a true professional.

She was shocked by the idea.

"Say, if I make it to your specifications, then the magic consumption each time would be enormous. If you're sucked dry by the magic tool, you could even die!"

That was a warning. I might die.

Is that Hitogami's real goal? But I can fire ten, twenty thousand Stone Cannon a day without feeling drained.... Well, who cares. I would be dead either way once I ran out of magic.

This time if I don't push my magic to the limit, I won't win.

"It's fine. I'm counting on you."

After that said, the Long Ear Race professional could only nod reluctantly.

Regardless, I got my close combat weapon.

I pray that it works.

On the way back, I talked a bit with Roxy.

"I don't know who Rudi plans to fight, but is making that really necessary?"

"I can win even without it."

I said that to give Roxy a peace of mind.

But Roxy pouted her mouth and looked back with suspicion.

"Rudi used to be a good kid that never lies, but recently there's nothing but lies and secrets."

Hearing that from her really hurts, but, lies and secrets, that has always been the case.

"Sorry..."

"No, it's fine. I have my own secret. But Rudi, I talk it out with other people. I don't mind if Rudi doesn't tell me, but please talk to someone? Don't try to carry everything by yourself."

"Don't worry."

I have some idea of Roxy's secret.

Recently, she has been avoiding sexy time with me.

Even though I haven't really pushed the topic, but I think she's intentionally avoiding the subject.

She hasn't had any morning sickness yet, and her appearance looks the same, but she's probably pregnant.

When will she finally announce it?

After the first trimester?

Or she's going to stay silent until my things are settled?

No matter what, I hope she will announce it before my Orsted fight.

I want to host a grand party for it.

Because it might be my last.

Next day, I went to visit Nanahoshi.

I thought I would be refused entry, but I was let through.

Perugius might fear Orsted, but he's rather lenient here.

"I thought I would be barred."

"Perugius is generous towards those about to die. Of course he'll allow you to say your last goodbyes with Nanahoshi."

Sylvaril answers like a matter of fact to my question. They really consider me a dead man walking. I guess this is just fulfilling my last wishes.

Well, that's fine. I accept their generosity.

Nanahoshi has since regained her old energy.

Seems like she brought out a few more personal items in her research lab. It feels less sterile than before.

A Ruijerd figure decorates the window. Must be a present from Zanoba. And the cross must be from Cliff.

Count on God when hardship comes. It won't hurt. Even though I didn't believe in God before coming to this world, but right now I can appreciate it.

"This is the situation. My prep work is mostly complete. All that's left is how to lure him in. I was hoping to discuss this with you."

"... I understand. But, I should have you know, Orsted is incredibly strong."

"Yes."

"He will show no mercy. I don't know how he selects his targets, but he won't hesitate to kill."

"..."

"During the several years I spent with him, I have never seen him struggle in a fight. Even taking gigantic dragons in one shot..."

"Please don't say anymore. You're scaring me."

"Sorry... but would you please reconsider? About killing Orsted..."

"I already..."

"Ah, sorry, I understand."

I'm a bit uneasy now. Can I really... win?

"Basically, I don't recommend you a straight fight."

"Right. Even with augmented strength, I don't think I can win."

"Lure him somewhere, then... while hiding you attack with magic. I think that's your best chance."

"Yes. Anything else come to mind?"

"Let me think... Ah!"

"Thought of anything?"

"... I only say this because I want to help you."

"Go ahead."

Nanahoshi swallows before continuing.

"Poison. It might work."

Poison.

Even though Detoxification Magic exists in this world, but there are poisons and diseases that those magic cannot treat also.

I don't know how well versed Orsted is in this area. Still, it won't hurt to try.

If I ask Ariel about this, will she help? As royalty, she should be familiar with this.

"Poison, traps, and attack from a distance... Oh yeah, Nanahoshi, will you be my hostage?"

"Hostage... that's not impossible, but whether Orsted will actually come for me, I don't know."

"That's true too... and if he found out you're in on it, then even Nanahoshi might get in trouble..."

"Ah, yeah, right. I haven't thought of that."

Well, forget it. Looking from her perspective, right now I'm basically acting like Hitogami would.

Even though I know it might be effective, I don't want to give the other side too much motivation.

In battle, suppressing the enemy's morale is important too.

"Any other ideas?"

"Let's see... in our old world, how do fights against a strong opponent in manga usually go again?"

"Don't bother. I doubt consulting manga will get you anywhere.."

...

...

After meeting with Nanahoshi, we come up with a few ideas.

Even I thought they're rather sly.

Although I don't think these little tricks would really work on Orsted.

No, even if they're basically pranks, but enough of them together might do something.

I don't think they'll all be pointless.

"Well... then... do your best."

"Yeah."

"If you don't come back, I might not either."

After talking with Nanahoshi, the plan to lure Orsted was ready too.

I went to Ariel to ask for help.

She looks bothered when I ask for poisons that can't be detoxed.

Regardless, she still introduced me to a shady organization she has contact with.

That organization started off as a thieves guild. Roughly speaking they're basically a gang or a mafia.

They traffic anesthetics and bootlegs, and even poisons for assassinations.

I was taken to the basement of a run down house somewhere in Magic City Sharia, a room with overwhelming fragrance.

Waiting there is an one-eyed man in charge.

"Welcome, Rudeus-san, nice to meet you."

He laughs like he knows of me.

"So what do you need? The slow kind? The fast kind? The kind that numbs the legs? Or the kind that keeps magicians from using their tongue? Or maybe the kind that would make your woman soaking wet, if your nights have been a bit dry. Why not give that a try?"

From poison to numbing agents to aphrodisiacs.

Perfect.

"All of it."

"All... Well, fine with me, but it's a little pricey?"

"That's fine."

"Haha, so you have someone you want dead... Even the aphrodisiacs? Want that?"

"Well-"

Suddenly, poisons won't work on Orsted, that thought flashes in my mind.

A poison that detoxification doesn't work on, anyone would have thought of that.

Since Orsted was cursed to be hated, he should also have been subjected to assassination attempts by poison.

Maybe he has built up a tolerance, or maybe has an universal antidote of some kind.

"That too."

"Hehehe, even you want to see that straight laced wife of yours go wild sometimes."

"My wife is playful in bed."

"That Silent Fitts... I can't imagine."

Well, I don't know what good aphrodisiacs would do, but I have some expectations. If it can effect the body just a little, it's worth a try.

Thinking that, I bought the drugs.

—

At the same time, I have been picking my battle grounds.

Since I plan to fight solo, it needs to be far from the cities.

Far from the city, not a soul in sight, then setup my traps there.

Collect information from the Adventurer's Guild, and once obtained, check out the location in person.

Also, on trap making, via Elinalise I was introduced to an adventurer to tutor me.

He was originally an assassin, because of that he knows how to construct traps for men.

Traps using psychology.

I tried a few traps myself, no matter how careful, I was always caught.

Even though I doubt their effectiveness against Orsted, but they're better than nothing.

I also was tutored in close combat by Elinalise.

Though her talent lies in group combat, so in 1v1 she's a bit lacking.

But, after living for so long, she has her share of experience. Until now she has fought many difficult opponents. Even though strength-wiseshe's middling, she still survived until now.

In my heart, I really wish I could consult Badigadi or Ruijerd for this, but complaining now is pointless.

Perugius won't help either.

Meanwhile, I start to think about combat with magic armor.

Attach the magic tool on the magic armor, spam Stone Cannon at will.

Likely a fight where I'm constantly on my back foot.

Spam my shots, use quagmire and fog to restrict movement, and when an opportunity arise fire off the big guns.

Straight forward.

—

Finally.

I lift the ban to the basement to pray for victory at my shrine.

Two months after killing the rat. I can trust my future self. After so long, any germs from Magic Stone Disease should have died off.

But, I still forbid Roxy from entry, and anyone who enters must do a thorough cleaning.

Mostly for my peace of mind.

While I was there, I dug around for anything useful against Orsted.

The magic tools in the basement are all junk.

They're soaked by [Frost Nova], but luckily they still work.

A hat that produces water after you wear and remove it.

A hat with a gemstone that glows when worn, a flashlight replacement.

A box that produces heavy smoke when opened.

A short sword that turns sticky when it strikes an opponent.

A really smelly shoe when worn.

Lots and lots of junk.

If they're, well, stored away like this, they can't be too useful.

Maybe if I ever need do tricks on the street.

The fog box might come in handy. But I'm not sure how to use it against Orsted. It would probably be difficult.

They're pointless if Orsted knows the trick, but some might be useful, so I'll take a few with me.

Before leaving the basement, I pray once more for victory at the shrine.

Serious this time. Do it twice.

—

Preparations progressed steadily.

But in my heart, doubt remains, too stubborn to leave.

Really, would it work?

Another month passed.

The magic armor is complete.

In only 3 months.

Halfway through, I began to throw around large amounts of money, employing workers to complete menial tasks to finish it in time.

It came out roughly as planned, about 3 meters tall.

Since the fight will be inside a forest, it was painted black and tea-colored, a dark green shade.

From top to bottom it is colored in my specialty made rugged plate armor, fat and round, not an ounce of sportiness.

Suit up from behind.

A man sized hole opens up in the back of the suit. It fits like a glove.

Once activated with magic, it moves like part of the body.

There's also a separate armor plate on the back.

A magic circle is inserted on the back plate. In case of emergency, I can quickly activate it with a simple chant to escape.

The magic gatling cannon is installed on the right hand.

Made to fire Stone Cannon.

When I use my full power, it can fire up to 10 rounds a second of my highest level Stone Cannon.

It can turn typical Magic Beasts into minced meat instantly.

Designed specifically to counter Orsted's [Magic Disruption].

On the left hand I installed the magic absorbing stone.

I don't know whether Orsted will use magic or not, but in case [Magic Disruption] fails, it should come in handy.

Since it can counter already completed magic, better if I have it installed.

For hand to hand combat, I have a weaponized shield.

Although I have some sword skills, but they're probably useless against Orsted.

Thus I decide to focus on defense.

Compared to a dull sword, brute force and blunt trauma should be much more effective.

Defense is the best offense, in other words the law of the tank.

While I was at it, I installed Paul's sword on the shield's peak.

Not the one he always had, but the Tantou that can ignore armor.

Although I have my doubts against Orsted...

As a result, it ended up rather pretty majestic, but that might be the wrong word for it.

Gatling cannon and a rough shield with sword attached, a complete mismatch with this world.

This monstrosity currently rests on the outskirts of Magic City Sharia.

Lying flat.

Too heavy to stand.

"Oh! Cool!"

"Not bad, a bit heavy, but quite nice."

"Really? I thought Rudeus would want something a bit more limber."

"Honestly, it looks like crap."

"... It looks like a monster, can't you have it in a different color?"

Zanoba and Cliff look satisfied, but the girls have their doubts.

I'll chalk that up to the difference between men and women.

But Julie has a face of satisfaction, so I guess I can't write off all women like that.

If I can return safely, I want to get Aisha's and Norn's opinion on this too.

Well, style points don't matter.

"... Next, I want to do a final test run."

I review my surroundings.

Sylphy, Roxy, Zanoba, Cliff, and Elinalise.

Julie and Ginger also came.

Nanahoshi isn't here.

She'll help lure Orsted for me.

But her primary goal is to return home.

Since the plan is [I coerced her to help me], it's better if we don't stay together when unnecessary.

Right now, she's studying Summoning Magic with Perugius at the Sky Castle.

There's still a chance that Orsted might come after her afterward, but with a pale face Nanahoshi accepts the unavoidable.

In the end, I never got to learn Summoning Magic...

Oh well. After this is done, I'll try asking Perugius again.

"Well then, show us what you got."

After saying that, Roxy sat down with Julie at a distance, on chairs prepared for the occasion.

Roxy's tummy isn't prominent yet, but it's obviously growing.

She won't be able to conceal it much longer. I hope she will announce it soon.

But this is a bad time for me.

After the battle is over, the kid will be born...

No no no.

Now is not the time for this.

I need to focus.

I will win, the child will be born, and I will name the child, and work hard on the third one.

The future awaits me, good.

"Alright, I'll suit up. Sylphy, Zanoba, and Elinalise, you three come at once. Cliff, please activate your Identification Eye. If you notice something, I'm counting on you."

"Got it."

"Understood."

Nods two of them, Elinalise lifts up her hands and retreats.

"Sorry. I'm just watching today. I'm feeling a little under the weather."

Now I remember, didn't the diary mention something about Elinalise being pregnant?

Looking carefully, I do see a bump around her tummy.

I'm a dummy.

"Ah, it'd be awful if I hurt the baby. Please enjoy yourself with Roxy."

"Eh! Baby?"

Cliff shouts in shock and turns around, staring intensely at Elinalise.

"Baby... Y-you got?"

"The curse has stopped, so nine out of ten."

"The curse stopped. Eh? But, how, up till now, we, we never stopped doing it!"

"Never did."

"Whose... Unless, don't tell me, Rudeus?"

"I'm going to get angry, Cliff. Yours truly, since coming back from Begaritto, has been yours and yours alone."

"But but..."

"If you don't believe me, then why don't you find out yourself? See if the Identification Eye can tell."

"Oh, okay."

Thus Cliff removes his eye patch and moves closer to Elinalise.

Almost kissing her, his face lowers near her lower abdomen.

Feels like he's seeing through her uterus.

Still unsure, Cliff slowly raises Elinalise's skirt.

"Kya, Cliff, honestly, not in public..."

"Shh, be quiet."

"Alright alright."

Seeing Cliff so diligent, Elinalise can only shrug.

Honestly though, sticking his head up her skirt... is a little obscene.

Next time, I should try this with Roxy or Sylphy...

Sylphy in a dress.

A perfect fit.

... Wait, I can't be distracted by those thoughts right now.

"... It's true."

Cliff pulls his pale face back out.

Identification Eye can even do that.

Or as the saying goes, [From the skirt comes a pregnant woman.]

"W-What? What do we do?"

"Don't do anything."

"B-but, you'll have headaches, right? Ah, for a woman pregnancy and birthing is..."

"Cliff, I been around the block a few times already. Don't worry. Let me handle it. I'll definitely give you a lively child."

"O-oh..."

Cliff looks blue, stunned by this news out of the blue.

"Rudeus, seriously... Did Roxy give it away?"

"... Ah, no, I just thought it might be like that."

"Oh, really? Now that it's done, it can't be helped."

"Okay."

Elinalise leaves with a wave.

Then she sits herself next to Roxy, busy discussing something.

Seeing that Roxy is rubbing her own tummy, they're probably talking about that.

Roxy and Elinalise must have gotten pregnant around the same time.

Oh well, I can't worry about that now.

"Well, let's begin."

Hearing that, Sylphy and Zanoba refocus.

—

A hour later, the test is over.

Performance wise, the magic armor is capable of maintaining 200 KM/hr.

It can leap a few hundred meters in the air, and even makes impact craters on landing.

Sylphy's magic can't even touch it. Even if it lands it would just bounce back.

Even Zanoba's punches are completely ineffective.

Not just that, he broke his fist and started crying.

Success!

If it can even damage the miko Zanoba, then even Orsted won't go unscathed.

It's unbelievable that I made this without any setback.

No, it would be odd to claim this.

It was all thanks to Zanoba and Cliff.

Still, I wonder if this is how wearing touki feels like in this world. Overwhelming power.

I can understand why Perugius and Atofe are so full of themselves.

With this magic armor, can I do it?

Yeah.

Probably...

Let's go with that.

—

Preparations complete.

The night of the preparations completion.

Roxy finally made the announcement.

"I think it's about time to say this. I'm pregnant."

Tonight Norn is home too.

Before dinner starts.

While the whole family's here.

"Congratulations!"

The first person to answer is Lilia.

Even though normally she's expressionless, but right now she's wearing a smile.

The first congratulations.

For a moment, I thought she was being considerate for Aisha, but then I have my doubts.

Roxy must have already discussed this with her.

It's easy to guess looking at the better than usual cuisine on the dinner table.

"Congratulations, Roxy."

Sylphy probably has a clue as well.

She accepts this reality with a smile.

Seeing at that smile, I feel something indescribable.

The current scene is different from when Lilia was pregnant.

Obviously, very different.

Zenith and Lilia are both present. Nor was I cheating with Roxy.

Sylphy has accepted Roxy.

Not like when Paul got slapped, nor when Zenith raised hell, nor Lilia in tears.

Pure happiness.

"R-Rudi?"

Roxy becomes uneasy with me so silent, with a delicate voice she turns to me.

My answer is the same.

"From the bottom of my heart, thank you, Roxy."

"Eh? Thank me for what?"

Roxy tilts her head and forces a smile.

But, that expression isn't one of unhappiness.

"Rudi please. You said the same thing when Lucy came, [Thank you.]"

Sylphy says giggling.

That's the case, eh?

But they might be right, why did I thank them?

Em...

"How do I explain this? Telling me when you're pregnant, I feel like that's proof that I have been accepted."

"I have always accepted Rudi... Wah!"

I pick up Roxy and put her on my lap.

Showing affection in front of Sylphy isn't a good idea, but please forgive today as Roxy's Day.

"Sensei taught me many things, helped me many times, and not just now, now has my child... Just thank you alone won't show you my gratitude."

"Rudi hasn't called me Sensei for a long time..."

Roxy rubs her tummy.

Around three months.

I can see a little bump.

The same thought as Sylphy's pregnancy: wow, amazing...

She has my child.

"Rudi is my husband now, and I also want Rudi's child, so I think saying [Good job] or [You did it] would be enough."

"Isn't that a bit bossy?"

"Well, you should spoil me once a while."

"Fine... G-Good job."

"Haha, of course!"

With that, Roxy presses the back of her head against my chest with a little roll.

How calm.

I remember how nervous Sylphy was back then.

Say, Elinalise already knew about Roxy's pregnancy.

By consulting people around her, Roxy has settled down in her own way.

But I was busy.

What I mean is, I feel like I'm not there for her.

Busy, busy, like a father who neglects his family.

... Well, I am a father.

And I'm not even busy making money either.

Thinking that, I hug Roxy tightly, burying myself in her hair.

Roxy's scent smells wonderful as usual.

Calming.

"Nii-san, please don't flirt so much during dinner."

Norn knocks on the table, her face flushing red.

"Once in a while is fine. For Roxy-ane it's service, today only."

The follow up came from Aisha.

Naughtily, she kept her elbows on the table, holding up her face.

A full smile on that face.

"Norn-ane, are you raising a fuss because Onii-chan hasn't been paying attention to you?"

"N-no! Not even. Just that Sylphy-ane and Lucy are present, it would be inappropriate to do as he pleases. What I mean is, they should just get a room."

"Ugh, Onii-chan, I'll tell you later, but recently Norn-ane has been rather popular at school. A few days ago, a boy even dropped off a letter here."

"Aisha! That's not nice, no telling!"

Yes. Norn is popular.

Cute, and a hard worker too, turns out there's a few guys at school with good eyes.

Norn will eventually find a boyfriend, get married, and move out.

When that happens I have no choice but to support her... But I will not allow anyone superficial to touch her..

Norn won't bring someone with dyed hair, earrings, and a teardrop tattooed under his eyes home that says, [Please allow my true love with your sister] right?

If that happens, I'd go crazy...

"Norn, do you have someone you like?"

"S-someone I like?"

Norn turns to hide her face.

"N-no."

She does.

She has reached puberty, and she's at that age, huh.

It's normal.

Even so, to be liked by my Norn, what a lucky bastard.

"Well, if it works out, bring him over to visit."

"I said I don't!"

If she did, I need to vet him thoroughly for Paul's sake.

For Paul, I will tell him [I won't hand my daughter to the likes of you!]

Obviously.

"Also... Aisha, didn't you say you have a good harvest of your rice crop recently? And how happy Nii-san is going to be?"

"Argh! I was going to announce it myself later, Norn-ane is the worst!"

"Ha, that was payback!"

Aisha stands up in panic. Norn stares at her like nothing happened. But I can't just pretend I didn't hear anything.

"Rice harvest from the yard... really?"

"Ah, um. For the time being. Maybe it's the cold, but it wasn't a lot. But if we recrop right now, by Fall..."

"By recrop, you mean you have... rice seeds? There are rice seeds?"

"Em. We do. It tastes a little weird, is that okay Onii-chan..."

"No, that's fine. So next year, and the next year too?"

"O-Onii-chan made soil with magic for me... Onii-chan's soil is the best!"

I gently pick up Roxy, place her back to her position.

Then I get up and follow the table until three steps before Aisha, I kneel with one knee.

With my arms raised, waiting on her like a knight.

"Aisha, you did it!"

"O-oh... Hey, can I, jump?"

Aisha spies at Roxy behind me, slowly walks up, and finally jumps into my open arms.

Then I lift her up, and we spin together.

"Wah! It's Aisha Rice!"

"Wah!"

I can eat rice!

Of course, a trifle compared to Roxy's child, but I really love rice!

Slow cooked, pure white rice.

With a side of well salted grill fish and eat a mouthful.

Those happy meal days will soon be upon us!

With a little exercise, happiness again blossoms inside me.

Roxy has a child.

Will she be Lucy's little sister or brother?

Lucy will be 2 soon.

A mixed blood with Migurd ancestry, will she get bullied?

What color will her hair be?

Lucy will be a good sister.

Norn and Aisha too...

Ah, I can't wait.

And the name... Right, I should decide on a name.

And, and...

All my words are jumbled together.

Afterwards, a modest celebration.

Rich meal, lively conversations.

Norn talks about what happened at the Student Council.

Aisha happily reports that the market started to recognize her name and face.

Sylphy busies herself with the crying Lucy.

Lilia quietly serves the food with a smile.

Zenith eats in silence, but also seems to be in a good mood.

Roxy seems a little peeved at how excited I was with Aisha's results, so I have been comforting her.

Also on the menu today, onigiri, looks like Aisha's contribution.

I ask her where she learned this.

She explains that Nanahoshi told her.

That's all Nanahoshi taught her. Her girl power is truly low...

Well, if you put me on the spot, I probably would make onigiri or porridge too.

Aisha's hands are small, so her rice balls are small and round.

Very experimental and unevenly sized.

Regardless, one for everyone, and everyone ate theirs.

Besides me, no one seemed to enjoy theirs, but I thought it was delicious.

Aisha worked hard to make this, worked hard to shape them.

Of course it's delicious.

So delicious that it makes me cry.

With this successful harvest, we will get more next time.

Next time if we got a bigger harvest, then the onigiri can be even bigger!

... But will I be there to taste them?

"I have something to tell everyone."

After dinner.

I take a deep look at everyone.

The sisters look bewildered.

"In a few days, I will fight someone, a very strong opponent."

I didn't say Orsted.

" I think everyone has noticed by now, that in the past two months I have been acting suspiciously. I'm thankful that you haven't pressed me, so I have a free hand to work. I'm very sorry that I can't tell the details."

"..."

"There's a chance that I might not win."

Everyone becomes rather nervous hearing that.

"So this night, might be my last night sitting here with everyone."

"C-can you choose not to fight?"

Norn says in a panic.

"... No. At least, I don't know."

Afterwards Hitogami did not contact me again.

But he has been keeping me under watch.

"Nii-san, you said you might not win... why... why then?"

"Norn."

She's a mess.

Lilia and Aisha were both home, so they probably know something is up.

They look serious, but no surprise or panic on their faces.

"If I don't come back, my room.."

"Not coming back, why? Don't say that!"

Oh.

Yeah, that's right.

I just want to say a line like cool heroes in those stories, but no point in acting cool right now.

That was too much.

"Well... When I get back, let's take a bath together?"

"... I don't want to, do it yourself."

Haha, this girl.

Well, that's more like Norn.

"Aisha."

"Here."

"If I don't come back, please let Nanahoshi taste the rice balls you made."

"... Onii-chan."

"That person would definitely be brought to tears and do whatever you asked."

"... I, rather than with Nanahoshi, want Onii-chan to spoil me instead."

Aisha murmurs those words with her head down.

Is that so? Aisha is still as playful as always.

When I get back, I will buy her something expensive.

A very expensive backpack, or a giant diamond ring.

"Lilia-san."

"Yes."

"Please take care of my mother."

"... I will, but-"

"But?"

"No matter how long, I will wait for Rudeus-sama to return."

Lilia said calmly.

Even though I knew her the longest, I have never seen her look so shaken.

Aisha is my sister, but Lilia doesn't feel like a mother.

"Mom."

"..."

"I'm going."

"..."

Somehow I imagined a little pain on Zenith's face...

I don't really know.

Maybe one time will come when her emotions return to her.

"Sylphy."

".... I'm here."

"Take care of Lucy."

"Okay. But, Rudi... Em."

"... What is it?"

"No, it's fine."

I feel like Sylphy wants to say something.

But no matter what I can't guess her thoughts.

I like her. But no matter how much I like her, I don't understand her. It makes me uneasy.

Under the table, I grab Sylphy's hands.

Pull her close, and whisper into her ears.

"Hey, Sylphy."

"Oh."

"I hope you won't get angry for what I'm about to say."

"Oh."

"If I come back, seven times in a night."

Sylphy's head drops.

Did I say something wrong?

"Seriously? Rudeus is such a pervert!"

Sylphy punches me on the shoulder.

I grab that hand and drag Sylphy over.

"Ah!"

Somewhat forcefully I kiss her.

Sylphy freezes up, but accepted me anyhow.

Cute as usual.

No matter when she's always so cute.

As expected of Sylphy.

When I am with Sylphy, I feel at home.

"Alright already, Rudi. Everyone's watching.. Eek."

Since I'm here, I licked her ear.

Licking that pointy faerie ear, and delicately bit to leave a mark.

"I'll come back, wait for me."

"Okay, please take care."

Sylphy, face red, can only nod.

Finally, I turn back to Roxy.

"Roxy."

"Oh."

"Tonight... let's sleep together."

"But, the baby in here... that's fine, okay."

Even though a little hesitant, Roxy nods to accept me.

That night, after a bath with everyone, Roxy and I head to bed.

Hand in hand, walking intimately to bed.

Last year, every time was full speed ahead, but not today.

"Em, be gentle..."

"No, today's fine."

I put up a hand to stop Roxy from stripping her nightgown.

Roxy grabs the hem of her shirt and tilts her head.

"Anyways, please sit down."

I have Roxy sit on her bed.

I sit on a chair rather than beside her.

"The basic situation, in case that I lose, I want to discuss it with Roxy."

"... Just me? What about Sylphy?"

"..."

"You would tell me and Nanahoshi, but won't tell Sylphy?"

"How did you know that I talked with Nanahoshi about this?"

"Because Sylphy asked me to. She said you probably talked to Nanahoshi... Rudi, why won't you tell Sylphy?"

"Why is that?"

Why?

I don't know.

But, for some reason, I don't want to tell Sylphy.

It's not because... I don't want her to worry.

Why?

I don't know.

Maybe this too is fate.

"From my point of view, I'm happy that you come to me for help, but I feel bad for Sylphy."

"You're right, then, I'll go call her."

"Okay."

Roxy is so reliable as usual.

Thinking that, I left the room and head to Sylphy's.

I freeze just as I reach for the doorknob.

Say, while I was busy with Roxy, I haven't been watching Sylphy.

Maybe she's crying right now.

She said I can like other girls, and she even forgave me for Roxy.

But looking at Nanahoshi, her jealousy runs deep.

Maybe she's crying.

Maybe she's pricking a voodoo doll with pins.

Maybe she's biting the edge of a handkerchief and crying about that slut.

No, it's fine.

My lovely Sylphy would never do something like that.

Right.

"Hey, Sylphy, I have something I want to–"

"Rudeus bit my ear. My ear! And said seven times a night... Eek... What's going to happen to me? Will I be messed up like our first time... What do I do Lucy, you might have a new sibling soon...!"

Squeaking, the door opens, and before my eyes is Sylphy rolling on her bed, hugging a pillow.

Her legs flopping about, rolling back and forth like an adolescent girl.

Although faint, but with the door open, I heard everything.

She doesn't look like the mother of a child.

But super cute.

So much so that I want to dive right in.

By the way, Lucy isn't here. She's in Lilia's room.

But the room isn't sound proof, so it might get noisy.

No no, Roxy is waiting.

"Ah!"

Our sights met.

Sylphy facing up and suddenly froze.

Like up painting on a wall, in a similar pose, a happy self-satisfied smile.

"..."

I quietly close the door.

No one wants to be seen in their private moments.

"Ah, wait. No, Rudi, wait up, don't leave!"

Rapidly Sylphy got up and sticks her hand between the door.

"No. I'm not leaving. I just thought it might be better if I open the door again."

"Again? Why? What's the matter? Isn't today Roxy's day? Oh, is she feeling sick? Am I at bat?"

Sylphy looks flustered.

There's no reason for Roxy to feel sick today...

How unusual.

No, how usual.

Well, let me settle her down.

"About my opponent this time, and what happens afterwards, I have some things to say. Please come over."

Hearing that, Sylphy stayed silent for a few seconds, and nodded with a serious face.

And perhaps a hint of happiness too?

Somehow I feel a little relaxed as well.

The explanation didn't take long.

Those two listen quietly the entire time.

The enemy is Dragon God Orsted.

I talked about the existence of Hitogami, his revelations, and that I have to fight Orsted.

Then, that if I were to die.

That Orsted is the enemy, but never confront him.

Never believe in revelations from the one who calls himself Hitogami.

These two points are to become our family motto.

If I were to die, tell the rest of the family the truth, and protect each other.

Basically in those words.

We start talking sitting up, but somewhere along the way, we end up lying down together.

"And... if I lose. Disaster might await Roxy's child and Lucy.""Disaster... in other words, the one called Hitogami will do something?"

"Yeah."

"I see.. So that's why Rudi has been constantly telling us to protect the family..."

Sylphy nods like she understood something.

Maybe she got lost along the way.

She might just be patronizing me and telling me not to worry.

"I know. But Rudi, I can protect myself, and even if you don't tell me to, I will protect Lucy with my life."

"Me too. I can protect myself. Just like I always had. That won't change in the future. I might be weaker than Rudi, but don't underestimate me."

What? Not even a little discouraged?

Roxy and Sylphy are really great.

"Still, Orsted is one of the Seven Major Powers... A big deal. Do you have a chance?"

"That I don't know. I only fought him once."

"Back then, what happened?"

"I could do nothing."

Just remembering my initial meeting with Orsted makes my knees weak.

Ruijerd was dropped to the ground; Eris was sent flying.

He even shoved his hand straight through my body.

... Terrifying.

"... Rudi. Wouldn't it be better if we all go together?"

"No. I must go alone. Only with that do I have a chance. Hit him with my strongest magic. It will work out somehow."

"Hey... but Rudi, you're shaking?"

"Oh."

"Hey, wait, Rudi quit touching weird places."

I wasn't touching to distract her.

I touched because I want to.

If I die, then I can't touch here anymore.

So I can't touch here, then how about there?

No good. How about here?

No good. How about there?

"... Stop. Really, we're talking about serious stuff right now."

"Oh."

"Hey, recently Lucy started to crawl everywhere. We can never find her."

"Oh."

"Lilia said that reminds her of when Rudeus-sama was born."

"... Soon, she will start talking, and in a year, she'll start to walk."

I haven't taken care of Lucy too much.

I left her all to Lilia and Sylphy.

But, Sylphy.

You really are so cute.

"I can't wait."

"Oh."

"If you're about to lose, please run?"

"Oh, even though I don't know if I can escape, I will do that."

Lucy, you probably don't understand yet.

But if I die, then she won't even remember how her father looks like.

What is she thinking?

If I ask Lucy, will she tell me...

"... Rudi."

From my left a voice.

It's Roxy.

My hand reach for her breasts.

She caught me.

Ow, she's really strong.

Sorry, I'm sorry. Serious topic.

"Well. I thought after meeting Rudi, marrying Rudi, now having Rudi's child, how I'm the happiest girl in the world."

"Right."

"But, because of that... if you die, then I will become the most unfortunate girl."

"... Right."

"Well, this is a little embarrassing to say, but..."

Roxy takes a breath, and finally says.

"Please let me be happy."

Indeed, I'm doing nothing wrong.

Roxy and Sylphy, I fight for them.

Nothing wrong with that.

Fight for the sake of them, come home. That is my decision.

That night, I slept soundly, more than I have for a long time.

—

A few days passed.

All set to go, I left Magic City Sharia.

Alone.

A full two days north-north-east of the magic city Sharia.

There was a deserted village.

The village was buried in a forest.

The forest expanded due to a calamity 40 years ago that was caused by an abnormality in magical power.

The village was immediately overrun, and those who lived there were forced out of their homes.

Since then, those who visited this forest had essentially only been monsters or adventurers who have business with monsters.

A single man walked toward that village.

He had silver hair and golden pupils.

Wearing a white coat made from some kind of hide, while vigilantly looking around, not riding a horse, just walking.

He walked through the forest in a detached manner while checking the compass in his left hand that he gazed at with sharp dot-like pupils.

No monsters attacked him.

Although their eyes shined from gaps in the deep forest's thickets, whenever the man approached them they would flee like small animals.

"...Here, then."

Looking at the deserted village pointed to by the compass, he halted his footsteps.

"Why a place like this..."

While grumbling that, the man slowly walked into the deserted village.

A place that used to be a road was covered in weeds, and a place that used to be a field had become a forest.

Buildings that used to be houses were pierced by large trees, or turned into masses of green by ivy.

He walked through the village that had been overrun by the forest, but then his feet stopped before a certain place.

It was the center of the village, where there probably used to be a well.

In that place was an obviously suspicious building.

A light brown cylindrical building, and the only one that wasn't surrounded by vegetation.

A stone structure that one couldn't help but think had been constructed recently.

The door looked brand new.

He looked at the compass in his left hand, confirming that where he was heading was that tower.

And then, although somewhat cautiously, he laid his hand on the doorknob.

"...Nanahoshi, are you there?"

The tower's interior was simply made.

There were no windows or corridors.

The floor was slick, painted with something like oil.

Next to the wall had been set incense and a jute bag tightly packed with something.

The source of the strange smell filling the air was probably that incense.

"...What is this place?"

Looking around, he identified another door right in front of him.

He grabbed the doorknob, this time without hesitating.

At that instant, he felt pain as though something had pricked his hand.

"Mu? I wonder if that was just my imagination."

He looked at his hand, confirmed that there was no blood, then went inside.

On the other side of the door was another room with the same layout.

Seeing how the floor slanted, it seemed that the building itself had been constructed underground.

While puzzled by those thoughts, he proceeded toward the interior without being particularly wary.

En route, he became more wary due to the uncanny posters reading [Please take off your footwear here] and [Guests, please put on this hat] and the like, but he ignored them all.

While remaining watchful of occasionally trivial traps set on the doors that seemed intended for mice, he slowly continued inward.

The place he finally arrived at was a strange space.

It was a cylindrical room and an atrium.

The wide open sky in place of a ceiling was roundly cut off.

It felt like being inside a chimney.

"...What is this place?"

He furrowed his brow and confirmed that the compass's point indicated the center of this space.

In the place that was indicated lay a single box.

A single piece of paper had been spread out beneath the box.

He carefully approached it, then looked at the paper.

Letters had been written on the paper.

[Hitogami]

He immediately picked up the box and opened it.

"Mu!"

When he did so, smoke started to pour out of it.

As he dropped the box, now on guard, he heard a metal sound.

Right next to the box, which continued to spew out a incredibly large amount of smoke, a silver ring had fallen to the ground.

It had been in the box and flown out when he dropped the box.

The ring was faintly blinking red, and his compass pointed to it.

"...Nanahoshi?"

As he went to pick up the ring, the following instant.

The sky shined.

"!"

He immediately kicked the ground strongly and tried to dodge.

But the oil-covered floor didn't allow him to do that.

The sole of his foot quickly lost its grip...

A thick bolt of lightning fell toward him–toward Orsted.

—Rudeus's View—

Upon high ground which overlooked the deserted village that Orsted had been lured into.

I lay in wait there, and the instant I saw the smoke rise, I sent a full-powered "Lightning" toward the target site.

It should have hit him.

I practiced over and over again for this day.

I even made sure to cover the floor in canola oil for the sake of him not being able to avoid it immediately before it hit.

But this wasn't the end.

If he could be taken down with this, he wouldn't be called the strongest instead of Atofe and various others.

I stood my staff upon the ground and gathered magical power.

I imagined a giant cloud, a supercell.

The Saint-class water spell "Cumulonimbus".

The sky instantly became covered with dark clouds, as lightning and heavy rain began to fall.

I gathered even more magical power.

I sent magical power into the staff, not trying to oppose the sensation of it being dragged out from the depths of my body.

What I visualized was ice.

Centering on the deserted village, I stopped the movement of every molecule.

I steadfastly lowered the temperature.

[Frost Nova]

I loaded the maximum scope and maximum force into the spell I'd used countless times, and released it.

The downpour of heavy rain steadily became frozen.

The ice layered and stacked up.

Once the ice had become like a mountain, I stopped casting.

The next move.

I loaded magical power into my staff.

I created a rock in the sky above the deserted village.

I focused all my magical power into increasing its size, creating an inescapably large rock, directed its acceleration downward, then fired it.

The rock struck with such a speed as to make one think that its large form had suddenly teleported.

The ground shook.

A little later, a rumbling sound reached my ears.

A little after that, the sudden gust of wind and shock wave reached me.

While holding my arm in front of me to protect my eyes, I gazed at the rock's landing point.

The ice had been smashed, and two thirds of the rock had been buried underground.

If that was a direct hit, I don't think he survived, but...

"...Did I get him?"

I tried saying that.

No reaction.

Could it be over?

That would be nice, but...

The moment after I thought that, the rock broke apart.

"Hiiu!"

An unbelievably terrifying killing intent was sent to my location.

Fear ran through my spine.

My legs trembled, and my eyes watered.

I dived toward the magic armor that I'd set immediately next to me.

I fed magical power to its parts as I'd practiced hundreds of times, set up my posture, and grasped my staff.

I felt the killing intent approaching.

Activation complete.

In order to deal one more blow, I gathered magical power in the staff held in my right hand.

I visualized a nuclear explosion.

With the intention of putting all my magical power into it, I sent magical power from my arm into the staff.

I pointed the staff, yelled out, and shot out the spell, and at the same time held my left hand out in front of me and concentrating magical power into the absorbing magical stones.

The center of the deserted village lit up.

Slightly later, flashes of heat ran across the ground as though they were licking it.

I confirmed out of the corner of my eye that all the trees burst into flames and turned into black shadows.

Slightly later, the explosion came.

But this magic armor that contained my magical power weighed several tons.

I withstood the blast without flinching.

After carefully waiting for the destruction to settle, I lowered my hand.

An enormous mushroom cloud had risen from the center of the deserted village.

I couldn't see the ground well because of the smoke, but I had loaded enough force to blow away everything.

That was probably the highest class of force out of everything I'd ever used.

"..."

And yet.

And yet, my body wouldn't stop shivering.

The killing intent which had been inevitably drawing closer since earlier hadn't disappeared.

It was drawing near at a fierce speed.

It had been so far away, and now it was already so close.

My teeth were chattering.

I clenched my hand that was shivering with fear, placed my staff in the holder on my back, mounted the Gatling gun on my right arm, and held the shield in my left hand.

"Fuuh... uu... haaa... aah."

I took a deep breath.

My throat trembled.

Forcing down the anxiety and terror that rose from my abdomen, I faced toward the densely rising smoke and prepared my right arm's Gatling gun.

"...Fuu! Fuu!"

That was the first move.

If I ended up losing the initiative, I would definitely lose.

In the first place, did I do any damage?

Was there any effect from the poison set on the door, or the narcotic that was set to burn, or the traps on the way there?

I put in as much power as possible into the four offensive spells I used just now.

If he was completely unhurt by all of that, wouldn't this Gatling gun-like magical tool be unable to scratch him?

No, in the first place, did I even hit him?

There's no way I wouldn't hit him with a spell of such vast scope.

I shot it out with the highest class of force and scope to make sure he wouldn't avoid it.

From a place so far away it couldn't even have been seen by an eye of foresight.

From a place that Orsted wouldn't be able to predict, no matter what magical eye he might have.

<I saw the figure of a person.>

"Take thiiiiiiiiiiiis!"

While yelling, I activated my right hand's Gatling gun.

The magical power ran through it, generating and firing Stone Cannon bullets at a tremendous rate.

The cannonballs cut through the air, an incessant [Kyuinkyuin] shrieking sound echoing through the surroundings.

The mass of cannonballs with overwhelming speed blew away the clouds of dust.

I caught sight of the silver-haired man with a tattered cape and soot-filled face.

Was there any damage?

None?

There was blood on his chin.

Aren't those burns around the base of his neck?

It's all right. Although it wasn't much, he definitely did take damage.

"!!"

Our eyes met.

The hawk-like sharp glint of his eyes perceived my figure.

The eyes of a hunter who'd discovered his target.

<He began to sidestep in order to avoid the downpour of rock cannonballs.>

I opened my eye of foresight as much as possible and tried to read Orsted's movements.

His movements were fast, seeming blurred as they stacked on top of each other.

I aimed the Gatling gun so as to obstruct him from evading it.

The time lag from firing to impact was essentially non-existent.

Even so, Orsted evaded all of them as though he could see their trajectories, gradually approaching me.

One step, two steps.

Orsted steadily closed the distance while maintaining an expression like that of a bird of prey.

Occasionally he'd grimace as a rock cannonball grazed him, but that was all.

As if to say that even a direct hit wouldn't be fatal. As if to say there was nothing to fear.

As if to say that he always fought against enemies with this level of attack.

That wasn't the case for me.

I felt a shudder toward that zombie-like unsentimental way of fighting.

My heart fractured at the sight of that movement which seemed to tell me that all of my attacks were futile.

But for now, I still had the advantage.

While telling myself that, I stepped in order to match him.

If Orsted came from the right, I'd move back and to the left.

If he came from the left, I'd move back and to the right.

If he came from the front, I'd load onto him with the Gatling gun.

If he fell back, I'd load onto him with the Gatling gun.

That way he'd never be able to close the distance between us.

The fight would continue with me in a position of complete advantage.

Just as I'd simulated it.

In order to further corner him, I cast magic with my left hand.

My aim was beneath my and Orsted's feet.

The spell was Quagmire.

The moment I raised my hand to activate the technique after having immediately completed it.

Orsted raised his left hand toward me.

"Disturb Magic!"

The magical power I'd finalized was stirred up by his magical power.

He was trying to transform meaningful magical power into meaningless dregs of magical power.

"Kuh!"

I forcibly used the technique formula for Quagmire.

That was possible for me.

I'd been doing it for a long time.

While teaching Sylphy Disturb Magic, I would practice trying to counteract that by completing the technique.

I might have been doing that all for this day, this time, this moment.

Orsted's eyes opened wide.

Looks like it was the first time somebody checked his Disturb Magic... Uoh.

The instant it became muddy at Orsted's feet.

He activated magic in order to coat it.

The portion that had been mud was covered in a plate of earth.

And then he moved his right hand toward me.

As I instinctively began to use Disturb Magic on his right hand...

<My vision was covered in light.>

I shuddered.

I stopped the Gatling gun and took a huge leap to the side.

My field of vision was filled with scenery that wasn't light.

The ground in front of where Orsted had pointed his hand had sunk greatly inward.

I didn't see what kind of spell it was.

Fire?

Maybe some other kind. Could it be gravity?

Was what I saw just now not light, but... death?

I didn't have any time to think about it.

Orsted ran toward me with his hand out.

Disturb Magic doesn't work.

He can negate Disturb Magic too.

I activate my left hand and right hand at the same time.

While restricting his movements with the Gatling gun, I would use the absorbing magical stones to negate his magic.

I held both of them toward him with that intention...

I realized my mistake.

Orsted's magic disappeared.

But at the same time, the barrage of rock cannonballs heading toward Orsted also lost their effect, turning to sand and disappearing.

Orsted closed in.

Still directing his right hand toward me, with his left hand held at his waist defensively, he swung it down aiming at my heart.

"...!"

My instincts had me choose to evade with all my power.

Attempting to escape to directly behind me, I used both feet attempting to leap backward, but...

I didn't make it in time.

Orsted's fist struck my chest area.

The sound of metal coincided with Orsted disappearing from my vision at a terrifying speed.

I heard a [Hagyan] sound from behind me as tree after tree passed by through the corners of my eyes.

(Aah, so this is the sensation of being blown away.)

The moment I thought that, I struck a large tree and stopped being blown away.

At the same time, my full body received the full g-force, giving me pain as though my internal organs were being torn off.

My vision went black for a moment, but it recovered right away.

The magic circles that Cliff had inserted into the magic armor instantly healed my body.

But when I looked at my chest.

The chest plate was dented and cracked.

The crack was being steadily mended, but slowly.

In any case, I withstood a single blow.

I'm so glad that I made that part of the armor particularly thick.

The killing intent followed me.

He chased straight after me and arrived in front of me.

I activated the Gatling gun.

I pointed it toward Orsted and let out a barrage.

But Orsted once again brought his right hand toward me.

No good, at this rate it'll be a repeat of what just happened.

The armor is in this state from one hit.

If it's hit over and over, the armor will eventually be pierced.

What should I do?

Magic doesn't work.

Even if I block Disturb Magic, Orsted has a technique to resist it just like Moore.

In contrast, I have no idea what magic Orsted is using.

Could I be at a disadvantage in a long distance battle?

In that case, I'll go forward.

I'll believe in the power of the magic armor, and hit him hard.

"Uoooooo!"

"Nu!"

I charged at him with a yell while shooting out a barrage with the Gatling gun.

Orsted brought back his right hand in defense.

I moved both legs.

I brandished the shield in my left hand and rammed him with the weight of my entire body.

<Orsted assumed a Water God Style defense.>

The instant my eye of foresight grasped that, I pointed the sharp end of my shield at Orsted.

In order to stab Orsted with the sword whose force increases exponentially proportional to the strength of the enemy's defense.

Our bodies clashed.

The heavy sound of metal rang.

I felt the lingering sense of having struck something very heavy, as Orsted blew backward.

Orsted's arm scattered blood in midair as he gazed at me like he'd discerned something annoying.

I can do this.

I immediately set up the Gatling gun, pointed it, and fired.

A tremendous number of rock cannonballs flew out, hitting Orsted in midair.

His clothes were shredded, and below them was a body full of wounds.

There were burn-like scars, cuts, and scratches.

They received the rock cannonballs, and fresh blood scattered.

Orsted made a huge sound and fell to the ground.

I can do this.

He'll be killed.

If the rock cannonballs land a direct hit, he takes proper damage.

His skin repels them, but it breaks and blood comes out.

In which case, he'll eventually die.

Right now, if I deal as much damage to him as possible...

"...No other choice, huh."

Amid the sound of the rock cannonballs cutting through the air, I heard that voice.

In an instant.

The atmosphere changed.

A chill ran through my body which made me feel like it had become winter instantly.

At the same time, my eye of foresight lost track of Orsted.

My other eye was able to see him.

Just what...

Orsted disappeared from my other eye, too.

"Iih!"

Feeling an indescribable terror, I tried to twist my body and jump to my right.

I heard a sound from my left arm.

When I turned to face it, Orsted was there.

He was there, swinging a katana-like sword.

And then, the left arm of the magic armor made a large noise as it fell to the earth, displaying the cleanly amputated surface.

"Gaaaaaaaaaoooooaaaaa!"

Orsted let out a roar.

At the resounding yell like an electric shock, my body became numb as though paralyzed.

Voice magic.

A magic particular to the beast races.

In that instant, it seemed like I'd lose consciousness.

But I barely endured it, and jumped to the side.

While indenting the ground, Orsted broke into a rush.

The moment I aimed the Gatling gun and tried to activate it, Orsted swung his sword.

It was cut to pieces and fell to the ground.

I still have my right arm.

There's a slash mark on the armor plate, but he can't cut it from that distance.

Orsted is right in front of me.

His posture is still that of having slashed.

I concentrated magical power into my fist.

Holding nothing back.

I drove my fist toward Orsted's face while firing "Electric".

I felt a wet slipping sensation.

When I looked, I saw that Orsted's sword was lodged in my arm.

He had deflected it.

Both my fist and the electric shock inside my fist.

Behind Orsted, purple lightning licked the forest.

A large tree split and burst into flames with a great sound.

Orsted's arm, and the sword lodged in my arm, moved slightly.

"Uaaaah!?"

The armor's right arm, along with my arm inside of it, was cut short.

I felt sharp pain.

But with no time to grimace at the pain.

Orsted pressed toward me, swinging his sword.

I had no time to consider what I should do next.

He landed a kick into my stomach.

Alongside an unpleasant noise, my body floated for an instant.

The impact was delivered completely internally.

"Boeeh!"

I spat out gastric juice at the shock which seemed to rupture my stomach.

My view was blurred with tears.

While falling on my backside, I turned my broken off right arm toward Orsted and fired off a shock wave.

Orsted slashed upward.

I heard a loud sound and nothing more.

By the time I realize that the shock wave had been cut apart, a kick had landed in my face.

Pain ran from my neck to my shoulder.

"...!?"

I suddenly noticed that I'd fallen down.

When I straightened up and tried to stand in a state of panic, Orsted was right in front of me brandishing his sword.

I'm going to die.

"Purge!"

I yelled without thinking.

At the same time, the back plate popped off, and I was ejected from the magic armor as if pulled.

An instant later, the magic armor was cut in half.

I struck the ground and rolled roughly.

I can't see him move.

I can't do anything.

I can't follow Orsted's movements.

"Gaha... geho..."

My entire body hurt.

Even though I'd only been struck through the armor a few times, pain ran through my body as if my entire body had been struck.

My chest hurt, my stomach hurt, my right arm hurt, my neck hurt, my back hurt.

It was difficult to breathe.

It felt like my body couldn't move well.

An incredible exhaustion.

Huh?

Could it be that I've... run out of magical power?

"Aah... haah..."

Orsted's eyes were directed toward me.

I shuddered.

I don't have the armor anymore.

I need to escape.

Or I'll be killed.

Before that, my right hand, where's my right hand.

"Goheh!"

Before I knew it, I'd been kicked flying.

Pain assaulted each part of my body.

Face up, my chest was stomped on.

"Uguh..."

A groan leaked from my throat.

Something cold was pressed against the hot nape of my neck.

I saw that Orsted had thrust his sword before me.

Am I going to die?

I couldn't win after all.

I'm going to die.

"I was wondering who it was. So it was you, Rudeus Greyrat. I heard that you were living peacefully, so why did you go after my life?"

It looks like Orsted isn't going to kill me right away.

Maybe because he spared my life once.

Maybe because I've already lost the ability to fight.

Well, whatever.

"Hitogami said..."

"...Hmph, so you really were Hitogami's apostle. Die."

Orsted took his foot off my chest, and held up his sword.

"He said you'll destroy the world, and my descendants will help you kill him."

"...What did you say?"

Orsted stopped moving.

"Hitogami said to fight you to stop you from destroying the world."

"..."

"He said that's why, if I kill you, he'll overlook my kids, my family..."

Lying face up, I clung to Orsted's legs.

And then rubbed my head against them, and cried out my words.

This is the only thing left that I can do.

"I'm begging you. Please don't destroy the world. It's fine to kill me. Don't take away my kids, my future. I'm begging you. This is the first time. The first time I've been so happy. I'm begging you. Give up on Hitogami. I'm begging you."

I cried.

I'm powerless and pathetic.

Uncool.

What am I doing.

Shit.

"...I can't do that."

The instant I heard that, I bit Orsted's leg.

"Fuguuuuaaa!"

Still biting, I lifted my right arm that was spurting out blood, loaded all of my remaining magical power into my fistless arm, and let it all explode at once.With the intention of killing him even if it killed me too.

"Disturb Magic!"

I was kicked away, lost my concentration, and my magical power dispersed.

My awareness became distant.

The next time I used magical power, I would definitely faint.

"Even if you possess an element of Laplace and have vast magical power, if you keep using large spells like that one after another, you'll still run out of magical power."

Orsted extended his hand.

I'll going to be killed.

I'll be killed.

If I'm killed, Orsted won't die.

If Orsted doesn't die, Lucy will...

Roxy will... Sylphy will...

They won't die.

I won't lose.

I need to win no matter what.

But my body won't move.

I have no magical power.

Blood is pouring out of my arm.

My consciousness is dim.

My vision is dark.

Orsted's hand covered my view.

Ah, ah, aah.

Aah...

I should have at least decided on a name.

"Mu!?"

Orsted jumped aside.

"...?"

Before I knew it.

A single human was standing there, as if to separate me and Orsted.

She was a tall woman.

She wore dark clothes and a stylish coat.

In her hands was a single-edged sword with a seemingly transparent blade.

I was looking at her from behind, so I couldn't see her face.

Aah, but I know that hair.

That wavy hair long enough to reach her waist.

Deep crimson hair, as if someone had thrown unmixed paint on it.

"Looks like I kept you waiting, Rudeus."

Eris Greyrat stood there.

Explaining why Eris Greyrat appeared before Orsted isn't difficult.

A few days ago.

2 females arrived at the entrance of magic city Sharia.

A female of the Beast Race with grey hair.

A female of the Human Race with majestic red hair.

The female of the Beast Race was one head taller.

Wearing similar tunics, both of them had swords hanging from their waists.

Eris Greyrat and Ghyslaine Dedorudia.

They have finally arrived at their destination after a long journey.

The journey wasn't easy.

In order to meet with Rudeus as fast possible, they chose a shortcut through the forest and got lost.

While lost they stumbled deep inside a goblin nest and ended up fighting.

When they finally exited the forest and entered a nearby city, they got into an argument with hoodlums.

As a result, a large number of enemies appeared ensuing into a brawl.

And so, they lost time fighting while leaving the city.

As a consequence of constantly getting involved in battles, even though they managed to get to Sharia, it took considerable time.

In any case, both of them are adventurers.

Along the way, they gradually regained their bearings. Once they entered Ranoa kingdom, the journey went smoothly and they finally arrived at Magic City Sharia.

Inside Magic City Sharia, everything went smoothly as well.

When they went to the adventurer's guild to gather information, there were a lot of people who knew where Rudeus lived.

In this city, almost everyone knew the name of Rudeus Greyrat.

They were told that, a rare magical beast from the Begaritto continent and a suspicious Treant cultivated from the Magic continent could be seen from the gates, so it was easy to recognize.

Their destination was easily located.

If you compare the Rudeus estate to Eris's former home there is a world of difference but, it is still large enough to pass as an inn.

The garden was so big that you could even use it as a training area.

While conversing with Ghyslaine, in a rare case for Eris she hesitated to go inside.

She silently stood still for awhile in front of the gates.

Imposingly she stood still before it.

Raising her chin, she silently looked up at the house.

As if by doing so, Rudeus would notice her and come out.

What was inside Eris's mind were the rumors she heard about Rudeus while travelling.

Rudeus Greyrat the Quagmire.

Defeated a stray dragon, repelling a demon king, holding the title of strongest in the magic university. Feared by those around him and displaying an overbearing attitude, he was still an ally of the weak. Along with comical rumors that continued on and on, it looks like he was a magician that wasn't hated.

A strength that couldn't be described with words, delighting Eris each time she hears it as if it was about herself.

In all the rumors about him, what caught Eris's attention most was not related to Rudeus's strength.

It was the comical parts.

For example; "Rudeus was a devoted husband, returning from school, he would go shopping with his wife."

or "While shopping, he will start caressing his wife's butt and get scolded."

or "He married a girl who looks like a child."

or "He married twice, a disgrace to all Milis believers."

In other words, it's the rumors about Rudeus's wives.

Each time Eris remembers it, her eyebrows would meet and a deep wrinkle would form on her forehead.

Around the time she entered Ranoa kingdom, she also found the names of the two wives.

Sylphiette Greyrat and Roxy M. Greyrat.

When the time comes to meet those two, Eris doesn't know what to do.

She learned about them from the letter, and heard rumors about them while travelling. She had thought about several things during the journey but, when the time comes to talk, she didn't know if the conversation will go accordingly.

To the Eris who stood still in front of the gate.

The one who called out to her was a single maid, Aisha.

At the time Eris appeared in front of the gate; [Is that Eris? You're Eris, right?]

While answering her own question, she was already prepared to immediately respond when Eris knocked on the gates.

However, after waiting for nearly one hour, in order to save Eris the effort, she moved instead.

For Aisha, Eris was her benefactor.

Although there was none she respected as much as her brother Rudeus, Eris was definitely part of the group that saved her in Shirone Kingdom.

A debt of gratitude should be repaid, is something her mother taught her.

At the time she heard the conversation of the three, she privately thought that if Eris loved her brother, she would support her.

With Aisha's lead, Eris quietly went inside.

She was warmly received by both Aisha and Lilia. While Aisha went out to call Sylphy and Roxy, she heard about Rudeus's situation from Lilia.

Lucy, who is Rudeus's daughter.

While looking at her Eris wore a complex facial expression, but realized no unpleasant feelings occurred.

If it's children she can also give birth. A boy if possible.

She was able to have such composure because of Aisha and Lilia's support.

After Sylphy and Roxy returned along with Norn, the meeting went calmly.

While Rudeus's two wives shuddered at the sight of Eris's well-bred breasts and butt, they displayed no signs of lunging at Eris.

It was thanks to the mood that Aisha and Lilia created, but in the first place, with Rudeus gone there were a lot of things to talk about.

Norn also had an unsympathetic attitude but she soon joined the conversation and didn't show any antagonism.

Both understood that Rudeus planned to accept her and intended to respect that.

As Eris started speaking, her love and respect for Rudeus was such that, even with a bitter smile the mood was still pleasant.

Having someone they loved to be praised and admired, anyone would be happy.

However, it was only calm at the beginning.

When Eris asked, [And so, where's Rudeus?] the atmosphere changed.

He went to kill Orsted.

Hearing their response, Eris blamed them, [Why did you let him go alone? Do you want to kill him?]

If you're both living with Rudeus, then you should have gone and fought with him.

Towards the adamant Eris, Sylphy replied while crying, [We wanted to but he told us not to follow since we would just be a burden.]

While Eris was shocked at her tears, thinking deeply she remembered how she trained in order not to be a burden.

And so, with no one helping Rudeus while she was gone, having a letter written to her, towards the women in front of her she felt, together with a small amount of jealousy, a feeling of superiority.

And so Eris is here.

Hurrying to her destination, almost passing by, then turning back after seeing a huge explosion. Hearing the sounds of a battle she searched, andsearched, and continued to search in a frenzy.

After finding Rudeus on the verge of death she jumped.

Right in front of Orsted.

Eris confronted Orsted, raising one of the Sword God's seven swords [Phoenix Elegant Dragon Sword] above her head.

"Ghyslaine, I'll leave the rear to you!"

Orsted wasn't in a fighting stance.

He only looked at Eris with a dubious face.

No, he was looking at what was behind her.

Reflected in his eyes were two females who were rushing towards the collapsed Rudeus.

Eris carefully observed Orsted while looking at his eyes.

The upper half of his body was laid bare, with blood everywhere.

Blood was flowing down his head, and his entire body was listless.

The tips of his hair were burned, and there were bruises around his shoulders.

The damage had piled up.

He was still holding a curved sword in his right hand.

She had never seen such a sword before. She didn't think she had discernment for swords, but she understood that it fit him.

Even compared to the Sword God's cherished sword, it was hiding a dreadful energy.

During their past meeting, he didn't use such a sword.

He didn't need to use it and won with just bare hands.

For Rudeus to damage him this far, even forcing him to use that sword, an indescribable feeling permeated her.

("Like Rudeus I'll... but, I shouldn't hurry. First I need to buy some time...")

Eris told herself.

She couldn't defeat Orsted alone.

She realized that the moment she confronted him.

She naturally understood.

In the past, she wouldn't have recognized it as beyond her.

Simply looking up a tower a hundred times higher than her, crudely thinking it was just tall.

Believing that it was climbable.

But now she was different.

She recognized the gap between Orsted and her.

Even so Orsted was high, very high.

At a height high enough to dazzle.

So high to the point it's impossible for Eris to climb.

"Eris Boreas Greyrat, huh? Is he that important to you? Someone who isn't Luke."

".....Luke?"

"The man fated to become your husband."

"I don't know anything about that."

Eris ignored Orsted's words.

She didn't know anyone called Luke.

The only one important to her is Rudeus.

Rudeus, just that one person.

She doesn't need anyone else.

"It seems so."

Orsted didn't take a fighting stance.

He observed Rudeus who is being healed.

His stance is full of openings.

Eris understood.

He was showing a lot of openings.

On purpose.

While doing so, he was waiting for Eris to move.

"..."

Eris was reminded of her last meeting with the Sword God.

Sword God Gull Farion invited Eris to his room, lined up three swords and said,

"Which do you want?"

Eris tried them one by one.

Before, she would have said the sword she received from the magic continent was enough. As her body grew, however, the sword no longer fit her body and she started wanting a longer sword.

Moreover, that sword would probably not be effective against Orsted.

[Relying on swords, you don't have enough pride as a swordsman], is something a master swordsman would probably say.

However, Eris knew.

Just having pride is worthless.

"This one."

What Eris chose was the most simple sword.

A thin and slightly curved single-edged blade.

A sword that didn't release any sinister feeling and just felt refreshing.

"Phoenix Elegant Dragon Sword, huh?"

This is definitely the sword that the skilled craftsman Dragon Emperor bestowed upon the first generation Sword God; Phoenix Elegant Dragon Sword.

Able to push the Sword God's techniques to the limit. A sword for a Sword God.

"That's a good choice."

"Tell me the reason."

"That sword is cursed. It doesn't seem special at first glance, but magical power has been tempered into the blade, and you can nullify your opponent's Touki [Fighting Spirit] defense."

"The Dragon God's fighting spirit has a defense so strong it can't be nullified, but you can weaken it."

Defense Nullification.

That is the ability that Phoenix Elegant Dragon Sword possesses.

"It didn't fit me, but you can probably master it."

Of the seven swords, one is with the Sword God. The two Sword Emperors each have one. Finally, the Sword King Ghyslaine holds another. The remaining 2 swords will be given to master swordsmen when they grow a little more into adulthood.

"Now then, to the main problem. First, your tactic against Orsted..."

The Sword God's forewarning.

"Don't ever move first."

There was no need to ask why.

Eris also knew the reason.

"He has reached god-rank in the Water God style. His counterattack will surely kill you."

What came to mind was her past self.

She was blown away with one hit, an unpleasant memory.

"That's the first phase."

The Sword God style always takes the initiative.

Do the reverse.

The Sword God told her a simple strategy against Orsted.

And so, Eris chose not to attack.

The Water God style would definitely wait and show no aggression.

The aggressive Sword God, and the defensive Water God.

Their affinity is the worst.

The Water God style's counterattack will not fail.

As long as there is no difference in ability, the Water God style will win.

Eris has experienced it with her body.

By training with Water King Isolte.

Therefore Eris chose not to attack first.

For the girl labeled as the Mad Dog, who has always been aggressive, that was a bitter experience.

"Nnn... You're not going to approach?"

Just bracing herself and showing no signs of aggression, Orsted was puzzled at the scene.

The Sword God style would definitely attack first, that was the basics of their technique.

"I'm fine with waiting. I'll attack together with Rudeus."

Eris quietly replied.

"... That's surprising. Eris Boreas Greyrat will fight together with her companions. Is this also a part of your madness? Certainly, if Eris Boreas Greyrat held a little more judgement, if she were to study under a suitable master, I see... So this is what happens?"

"I'm no longer a part of Boreas. It's just Eris Greyrat."

"The Eris I know, is a different person, is she..."

While speaking, Orsted slowly adjusted himself.

Easing down his left hand, he slowly raised his right and pointed the tip of his sword at Eris.

"Well then, let me start off."

With both of them doing nothing, the fight has entered the second phase.

Eris once again remembered her conversation with the Sword God.

"Shaping his fist like a sword, he can release a Sword of Light. In order to deal with the Sword of Light, you've sparred with Nina several times right? He won't be faster than you using his wrists, aim at it and chop it off.

However, left or right, which one will he release it from? If he readies both hands, which one will you gamble on? Will it come from above? or below? This is the second phase"

The Sword God definitely said that.

Eris grimaced.

Orsted already drew his sword.

He was no longer using his fist as a substitute.

He'll be using a complete Sword of Light.

Eris wonders if she can still cope with that.

She assumes positively.

Orsted isn't perfect.

His breathing is slightly rough, and his body is full of wounds.

Blood is flowing from his sword hand.

Furthermore, Orsted has only readied his right hand.

As planned, from below.

Even though he's injured, he's just using one hand.

(He's looking down on me...)

Usually, Eris would be enraged by it, but strangely she's calm.

She never thought a day would come when she'd think being underestimated is convenient.

<Sword God style hidden technique; Sword of Light>

At the same time Orsted moved his hand with frightening speed.

<Sword God style hidden technique; Light Reversal>

Eris swung her sword.

In a single pattern that she repeated over a thousand times.

A method to counter the sword of light.

In a situation where you couldn't be the fastest, countering with a bisecting action.

Orsted's severed hand and sword separated and whirled in midair.

("I did it!")

Eris thought.

However, in the next moment, Orsted performed a surprising action.

With his left hand, he caught the severed limb and immediately reattached it.

At the same time, he made use of his upper body and performed a roundhouse kick.

Eris was able to evade this attack.

She was told by the Sword God that it would probably turn out this way.

"....u!"

Retreating half a step backwards after evading, she was pursued by a handsword which she knocked away with her blade.

They weren't used as a Sword of Light.

As a result, Eris's slash couldn't injure Orsted.

With a clang, the handsword was deflected and Orsted stood there uninjured.

A bit later, Orsted's sword dropped with a woosh and pierced the ground behind him.

Looking at Orsted, his hand that should have been severed has finished healing.

Similarly, the damage Rudeus gave him has been completely healed.

Healing Magic.

In the course of that brief exchange, Orsted used healing magic.

And in an instant, everything was healed.

("A monster...")

Eris deemed silently.

That slash she had used right now wasn't a sword of light, but it had considerable speed and power.

And yet it was repelled.

Besides the sword of light, there was nothing that could smash Orsted's, the Dragon God's, Holy Dragon Fighting Spirit.

Even if the sword is the Phoenix Elegant Dragon Sword.

"This fighting method, was it suggested by the Sword God? You're cherished, Eris Greyrat."

Eris returned her sword to an overhead position.

She sharpened her mind and calmed herself.

The ensuing words were spoken loudly.

"Did you train inside Gull Farion's bedroom? "

Towards the three people behind her.

No, he spoke loud enough for Rudeus to hear.

In words that could be easily misunderstood.

Usually, those were words Eris couldn't forgive.

No matter what Eris says, she respected the Sword God.

In the past few years, the one who trained Eris to the brink of death was Gull Farion.

He entrusted his dream to her.

Their relationship wasn't that of a man and a woman.

But of a master and his student.

A teacher and a student with a similar objective.

But.

But.

That master also told her.

[If the fight goes smoothly, sooner or later Orsted will probably start provoking you. Will you let him?]

The Sword God expected provocations to occur.

And so she wasn't disturbed.

She will not get angry about anything.

Right now, Orsted was inside Sword God Gull Farion's palm.

"Hnnn"

".... Oh. You've truly grown strong, haven't you?"

Orsted murmured lonesomely.

He adjusted the shape of both his hands into swords.

Seeing that, Eris remembered the final words of the Sword God.

[That person, for some reason won't fight seriously.

Even though he knows sword techniques and magic, he'll limit himself to just fighting spirit and barehanded techniques whenever possible. Especially when he knows his opponents skills. Fighting spirit and barehanded techniques, if these aren't enough he'll use magic.

He'll try to win as efficiently as possible, but in unfamiliar situations...

Seeing a technique for the first time, he will try to study it. That is probably his weak point.]

Eris visualized the first time Orsted and Rudeus fought.

As if tormenting a weak mouse. The childish actions of Orsted.

He didn't finish him off, and just toyed with him.

[Gri]

While Eris grinded her teeth, she removed her left hand from the Phoenix Elegant Dragon sword. Her aim is the beloved and inscription-less sword she received from a town in the Magic continent, placed on the left side of her waist.

The Phoenix Elegant Dragon sword raised overhead with just her right hand; the inscription-less sword still stored in its scabbard.

An irregular two sword style.

But the Sword God style didn't have any dual wielding techniques.

Only the North God style had a dual wielding pattern.

Still not enough.

It's still not enough. No matter how strongly the Phoenix Elegant Dragon sword is cursed.

She couldn't release a sword of light with just one hand.

Even with Sword Draw techniques, she can't perform an IAIGIRI with a reverse grip.

A futile posture.

A futile action.

This isn't a posture a Sword King who mastered the Sword God style should have taken.

"Mu..."

And that's exactly why Orsted's movement stopped.

With his handswords at the ready, he observed Eris.

His eyes no longer reflected Rudeus who was receiving healing magic.

He was only looking at Eris.

However, he won't just let time pass by.

If Eris doesn't start doing anything, Orsted will start attacking.

For such a situation, with the intent to deceive, Eris practiced a single technique.

The North God style's technique which she learned from the North Emperor, Auber.

A technique which she only witnessed once.

Eris trained to draw a sword from the scabbard with one hand as fast as possible.

It was incomplete but, it was a technique that can be relied upon to steal a person's life.

(A cornered North God Style practitioner will throw his sword.)

Though it was rough, Eris moved her left hand in a direct path.

Hooking her finger to the sword guard, she unsheathed it, and threw it while aiming at Orsted.

The sword that spent a long time and experienced countless trials with Eris, with its tip pointing at Orsted, soared towards him.

Eris's left hand, without slowing its throwing momentum, continued to the sword she held in a overhead position.

As fast as she could, she moved her left hand towards Phoenix Elegant Dragon sword.

Upon reaching it, the sword was held with two hands and she instantly released a sword of light.

"!"

The sword of light that was released using the force of her whole body, overtook the nameless sword she threw away in mid-air.And then, travelling the shortest distance at the fastest speed possible, it should have drilled into Orsted's forehead.

A clinking sound could be heard.

"...tch"

Having released a longsword of light, Eris clicked her tongue without re-positioning herself.

Orsted deflected her sword.

The sword she had thrown seriously.

Even though the nameless sword hit Orsted's body, his holy dragon fighting spirit repelled it, and sent it rebounding far behind Eris's back.

"Better than expected. But, is this all you have?"

"No."

Before the nameless sword could fall down,

Before Eris could look behind her,

Rudeus was already standing.

He has already finished healing.

"We're just starting!"

Eris turned around, his figure reflected in her eyes.

Rudeus.

Rudeus is there.

His lower eyelids have turned completely black.

His bright brown hair looked white.

With legs that trembled,

a pale face, violet lips,

and looking like he could die at any moment, he stood up while being supported by Sylphy and Roxy.

"....."

"What do you mean, just starting?"

Even as a compliment, Rudeus was in no state to fight.

His magic power has been depleted, his strength already left him, even his willpower was gone.

He was ragged all over his body.

"I meant exactly what I said."

Seeing that, Eris made her resolve.

"Take Rudeus and escape!"

Eris called out.

"I'll stop Orsted even if it costs me my life!"

That resolve was comprehended by Sylphy.

She already witnessed something similar.

Once before, Ariel's travelling companion had the same resolve.

A resolve with no regard for one's own life.

"I.. I'll help!"

Sylphy shouted.

Her legs were trembling.

Ever since the first time she laid her eyes on Orsted.

In front of an existence that can be called a symbol of terror.

She was prepared to die.

For the sake of protecting Rudeus, deciding wasn't hard at all.

Even more scary than Orsted, was the regret of no longer being able to see the one she loved.

[Do you want to kill Rudeus?] Eris's words from the time in Sharia still lingered in her ears.

She didn't have that intent.

Even though Rudeus was worrying, it was the same as always. She thought it was fine.

Rudeus will return as always. He had power that was beyond imagination.

Even his magic armor held an amazing power.

She didn't think an opponent that could win against that would exist.

That she was mistaken was something Sylphy never even thought about.

"......!"

Eris looked at Sylphy, saw the resolve in her eyes, and then nodded.

".... then, I'll be relying on you to guard my back! Ghyslaine! Escort Rudeus and Roxy away from here!"

"Eris! Protecting you is my duty!"

The one who refused those words, was the Sword King of the Beast Race.

She had seen Eris's struggle.

She had seen Eris's effort.

That's why she didn't say or do anything and just watched.

For Eris's grandfather who had died...

She believed it was her duty, and payment for the debt of honor she owed Sauros.

"Are you listening?! I'm telling you to protect the most important person to me!"

"... I won't! If you die, I won't be able to face Master Sauros and Master Philip!"

She couldn't permit her dying an untimely death.

She will not let her die needlessly.

.... Ghyslaine hasn't thought that far yet. In any case, she replied reflexively.

"... right now, we should run!"

Roxy understood that fighting with a pregnant body is too much for her.

Even though she followed this far, she knew she would just be a hindrance when it came to a fight.

And so, she sought to drag Rudeus outside the forest where horses waited and then run away at full speed.

Even if she had a miscarriage, as long as Rudeus escaped.

She didn't think of what would happen after. Right now, she believed running away was the priority.

Seeing Eris's and Ghyslaine's argument.

Seeing Sylphy's and Roxy's determination.

"..... fuu"

Orsted breathed out a protracted sigh.

Towards that sigh, everyone except Rudeus reacted.

Orsted didn't ignore what he saw.

In a loud voice, he spoke.

"Rudeus Greyrat!"

Rudeus's body trembled with a start.

"As long as you're allied to the Human God, I will not let you escape! Even if I have to kill everyone here! Even if I have to murder each and every person inside the city! I will hunt you down and kill you!

Rudeus's trembling became even more severe.

With his legs trembling, he pointed his gaze at his feet.

"I don't believe in anything the Human God would say but... if what the Human God told you is true, then after killing you, I will kidnap your children!"

With those words, Rudeus's body stopped trembling.

His eyes burned with renewed vigor.

He slapped his left hand onto his trembling leg and reached for Roxy's staff with his right hand as if to steal it.

Without realizing it, his hands failed him, and he began to lose his balance.

While a panicked Roxy supported him, he glared at Orsted.

With bloodthirsty eyes.

"However, with your armor that imitates the Fighting God, and with magical power that's comparable to Laplace, along with a constitution that is immune to my curse, you are somebody who is useful!"

"...?"

At Orsted's words, Rudeus's bloodlust decreased.

Towards a puzzled Rudeus, Orsted continued.

"Betray the Human God, and join me!"

Two people immediately responded to his words.

"That's just dumb!"

"Rudi, don't!"

Eris and Sylphy were convinced he was telling a lie.

They didn't have a basis.

But they were still confident.

Ghyslaine and Roxy remained silent, however they started to search for any hidden intent in Orsted's words.

"If you do, I'll forget about this ambush of yours, and I'll heal your injured arm!"

"....."

However, Rudeus was different.

He realized there was something in Orsted's voice.

He realized that his inner throat trembled.

"If you have my.... the Dragon God's divine protection, the Human God shouldn't be able to easily lay his hands on you."

Inside Rudeus's eyes were, doubt and hesitation.

"Right now, even this conversation, will not reach him!"

"....."

"If you unwillingly followed the Human God, this shouldn't be a bad deal for you!"

"....."

"Choose! Rudeus Greyrat! Side with the Human God, and lose everything to me! or follow me, and fight the Human God together! If it's you, since it's you who is immune to my curse, then you should be able to choose with your own will!"

Rudeus and Orsted stared at each other.

Rudeus slowly exhaled.

As if trying to confirm something, he stared at the other's face.

Trying to find the truth under his facial expression.

Of course, there's no reason Rudeus could see such a thing, and several seconds passed.

"Rudi?"

While stumbling, Rudeus let go of Roxy's hand.

Looking like he could fall over any moment, he walked slowly and clung to Ghyslaine's shoulder, staggering towards Sylphy he clung to her, finallyarriving on Eris's side.

He dropped down in front of Orsted.

While on both knees, he raised his face towards him.

"Is it true, a method to protect my family from the Human God, exists.....?"

"There is! His ability to see the future is powerful but, there is no reason that he should be able to see everything. His ability shouldn't be omniscient or omnipotent."

"And that method... is absolutely, absolutely, effective?"

"..... it's not absolute. Even I, don't have a complete understanding of his power."

Orsted couldn't give a guarantee.

He didn't say it would be safe or it would be alright.

Rudeus, with eyes similar to someone wanting to be saved looked at Orsted on the verge of tears, what was he thinking about?

Rudeus made his decision.

"... I, put my life in your hands. Please help me."

On that day.

Rudeus Greyrat became the Dragon God's subordinate.

After waking up in the morning, I run and train with Norn.

When I return home, I give Sylphy, who is busy taking care of Lucy, a tight hug.

I drop by the living room to greet Aisha and Lilia good morning.

I help the still sleepy Roxy braid her hair.

I call Zenith, in the midst of a staring contest with Beet, in to eat.

All of the family eats breakfast together.

As if nothing actually happened, life returns to normal.

But the truth is, something did happen.

I did indeed have a duel to the death with Orsted.

I got my ass whupped... yet I'm alive.

The proof of that is — I look at my hands.

If I curl them up into a fist, I can feel my fingertips in both hands.

After that.

After I prostrated myself before Orsted and swore loyalty to him...

As promised, Orsted cast healing magic on me.

Both of my hands grew back, and I finally regained all my limbs.

After casting another magic on me, he handed me a bracelet he was wearing.

Then, he said, [After your magic has replenished, contact me again] and left.

I'm wearing that bracelet right now on my left hand.

I don't know what effect this bracelet has.

Maybe it helps to replenish magic power?

Or perhaps it helps to prevent Hitogami from spying on me?

It's been 10 days since then, but Hitogami has yet to reappear in my dreams.

Orsted said that under the protection of the Dragon God, Hitogami's interference could be prevented, so maybe the latter.

Then again, it could be meaningless, just a symbol of being a subordinate of the Dragon God or something like that.

Regardless, I lost to Orsted and joined his camp.

I betrayed Hitogami and joined the other side.

I won't take off this bracelet.

I don't regret betraying Hitogami.

Honestly, I feel great.

Rather than [What have I done?], I feel more like [I did it!]

There's no going back.

In the future, no matter how annoying Orsted is, I can't betray him.

We're on the same boat.

Even if this was within Hitogami's expectations, what's done is done.

Still, in my personal opinion, Orsted seems to be more trustworthy than Hitogami.

Somehow, he somewhat reminds me of Ruijerd.

He doesn't have Ruijerd's high pride, neither does he seem to care for children like Ruijerd.

Still, compared to the Hitogami that just stares down from above doing nothing, he feels more like someone who puts his all into what he does.

In any case, a load was taken off of my shoulders.

The pressure in my chest has been relieved.

Maybe it really hasn't been relieved, but it feels like having climbed a mountain and seeing beyond.

Afterwards.

I talked with Sylphy and Roxy, who were at the place.

Sylphy cried, and Roxy reprimanded me.

They regretted not knowing how dangerous an opponent I was facing and felt anxious that I became Orsted's subordinate.

I told them it couldn't be helped, that there was no other way, and they consented for the time being.

I returned to Sharia.

After safely returning to my family, I reported to those that helped how I lost to Orsted and joined his camp.

By the way, Perugius looked the most relieved out of everyone.

Well, I guess nobody really wants to make an enemy out of someone like Orsted.

Everyone I met on the way seemed startled.

When I asked what happened, it looks like my hair has turned white.

I don't really get it, but maybe it's a similar phenomenon to what happened to Sylphy.

If my hair keeps growing with its original brown color, maybe it's a transient thing.

Even if it's permanent, since Sylphy and I match now, I don't really mind...

It's been ten days since I returned to my original lifestyle.

Though I'm vigilant of Hitogami's next move, for now, he's done nothing.

My body condition has gotten better.

I think that my dried up magic has been replenished.

Speaking of which, it seems that Orsted knows some secret about my body's magic power.

Laplace Factor or something like that...

Well, if there's a need, I'll ask Orsted to tell me.

For now, I'll wait.

By the way, speaking of good things,

There was one change to my comfortable everyday life.

"Another bowl!"

"Eris-sama, we're out of soup already."

"Eh, it wasn't enough!"

There's a new addition to the dining table, a tall woman with red hair. That tall woman is Eris.

As a matter of course she came home; as a matter of course she took the guest room; and as a matter of course she began to live here.

By the way, Ghyslaine booked a room at a nearby inn instead. Maybe she was shocked at how Eris was acting, or maybe she's trying to be considerate for us.

In any case, Eris stayed.

She would go out sometimes, but basically, she's always home. She'll watch Sylphy make the meals, or watch Roxy prepare for classes, or watch Aisha and Lilia take care of the house, or spy on Lucy and Sylphy when they're together.

In any case, when she's not doing anything, she would just watch. Especially when Sylphy or Roxy are busy with one thing or another, she would look with a troubled expression and へ.

Eris has changed since when we last met. What I mean is, she's prettier now. She's tall for a girl, her body is well-proportioned, and appropriately dressed with a leather jacket like Ghyslaine's, and a light black undershirt and trousers that are easy to move in.

Anyone can see, at a glance, the muscles chiseled on her well toned body. They're not at all budging, but layered tightly. It's hard to look away.

Particular to note are her chest, thigh, and waist. Explosive, tight, explosive. The childish face from five years ago has disappeared, and what's left is a cool beauty.

No longer a girl, Eris has now transformed into a mature female.

For some reason or another, I could never find a chance to talk to her. While rushing back and forth to report about my battle, I lost all opportunity. Even with an excuse, for whatever reason, just seeing her from behind makes my heart race.

On more than one occasion, I tried to make conversation with her, but my timings were always off... As soon as I try to come up with a topic for conversation, her piercing stare would make my chest pound. By the time I recovered, she would have already looked away. For awhile after, I couldn't stay calm, and only with time would my heartbeat return to normal.

Is this... fear? Nah, a joke, it's a joke.

This must be, yes, a crush. Looks like I fell for Eris. Once again I have fallen for her. Maybe I'm that simple, but at death's door, to suddenly see her valiantly arrive to my rescue, push back Orsted, and even bet her own life to protect me, with her outline still carved vividly in my memory, it would be odd if I didn't fall for her.

Right now, I'm but a maiden in love, Maiden Rudi, who has transformed into an angelic high school sophomore.

Yet.

I heard this from Sylphy after coming home. In the past few years, Eris has been single-mindedly training at the Holy Land of the Swords for the sole purpose of fighting Orsted by my side. The cause was the fight with Orsted at Red Dragon Lower Jaw. Seeing me practicing [Magic Disturb] afterwards, she mistakenly assumed that I intended to challenge Orsted. Although I never felt a tremendous difference in strength between us back then, Eris thought otherwise and decided to leave and train.

From Eris's perspective then, it was I that betrayed her. Almost like she left overseas to train, only to return to find her lover with another woman.Unfaithful, cheater.

How our opinions differ on this point, we have already talked about it, so she should understand.

Still, her heart must be in turmoil. With a temperament like Eris, even coming at me with a knife isn't exactly out of question.

If I just tell her, [I have fallen for you again, please be my wife], it doesn't feel exactly right.

Besides, I really am scared of what Eris would do. I don't get what she's thinking at all. Like, what's she keeping to herself? The Eris I used to know would just inconsiderately say whatever she wants.

[Rudeus! I love you! Let's get married! Come to my bed tonight! Don't even think about getting any sleep! Rudeus belongs only to me!]

Things like that.

Yet, she said nothing. Not even talking to herself. Just silence.

Unless...

Several days ago, she put her life on the line to save me from Orsted. Up till then, she had placed me upon a pedestal. For five years, she trusted that I have been just like her, working constantly to become stronger. Yet I didn't. Even though I was working hard in my own way, but not like her. I got my ass whupped by Orsted. Eris must have seen how pitiful I looked back then. Not only that, but I already have two wives. The Eris, who had already reached Sword-King at the Holy Land of the Sword, must have fell disillusioned by what I became.

She said nothing. So maybe, she's just getting ready to leave in a couple days and is just trying to figure out how to break up with me.

With those thoughts in mind, I'm even more scared of talking to her, scared of getting dumped. To hear from the cool Eris, [You're nothing now!] I'll feel hurt.

If that happens, it would only be right, but I would be dejected. Well, if that's the case, please just go ahead and say it already... Ugh, sigh.

Anyways, we should really talk this out. Have a good heart-to-heart, and then consider the future. Having said that, the timing is off, and I'm getting nowhere.

I say nothing, and Eris also says nothing. Each day just drags on and on. If possible, I want to settle this before Orsted contacts me again. But I don't know what to do. Do I just keep dragging on and live with Eris like this?

With those thoughts in mind, Roxy suddenly asked.

"So, when's the wedding reception with Eris?"

She said.

"Wedding reception?"

"Yeah, I had one too, so shouldn't she get one too? I need to ask for a day off that day, so if you can tell me when..."

I fell silent listening to Roxy. Roxy furrows her brows watching me.

"Don't tell me, you haven't said anything yet."

I can feel my embarrassment. Everyone in the family has already talked about it, and they're all set to welcome her in.

Aisha of course, even Norn has begun to treat Eris as part of the family. Not just that, Norn and Eris always chat with excitement over stuff about Ruijerd. Unexpectedly, those two got along really well.

Nobody had any objection, only I have yet to pull the trigger.

"Rudi, you can't keep running away. Eris has been waiting for you."

Roxy points with a finger, putting up the air of an older sister.

"Waiting?"

"That's right. She has been waiting for Rudi to say, [Leap into my open arms!] the whole time!"

Roxy spreads her arms as she said, how cute!

"Eris would never say something like that... Rather, isn't that what Roxy wants?"

"Hey! I'm being serious here. Quit joking around!"

Roxy puts up a serious face while keeping her arms spread.

... What a joke, is that really the case? Eris has been waiting to hear those words from me. Is she really someone like that?

No, Roxy would never lie. This is a true revelation, a sign from God!

If even Roxy is giving me a push, then I really can't hesitate anymore.

Courage, come to me, I must go. I'll properly say it, we'll talk, and if she rejects me, I can find comfort in Roxy's and Sylphy's bosoms.

Okay.

But before that. Abruptly, I spread my arms to test.

"Roxy, leap into my open arms!"

"I said quit joking around already..."

Roxy stops herself and looks into my eyes, then looks around, checking to make sure no one's around.

Then, she wraps her raised arms around my shoulders. A simple leap, right into my embrace.

Her slightly prominent tummy pressed up against me.

"You should be more careful leaping around like that with a child inside you, princess!"

"If I don't give him some exercise, he'll be born weak, so it's fine."

Roxy murmuring by my ears is quite stimulating.

Is that how it works?

...Is that how it works?

Of course, that's how it works.

I feel like staying intimate for a little longer. So I sat Roxy on my thighs and myself on a chair. Meanwhile, I suddenly spy...

"...Eh?"

Someone in a maid outfit is spying at us from the shadows outside the door with her eyes sparkling and a penetrating stare.

— It's Eris.

"Yah!"

"W-what's wrong, Rudi?"

Seeing me tightly embracing with Roxy, Eris looks away unhappily and disappears into the hallway darkness.

Terrifying. Nothing was said, but it was still so terrifying.

Eh, tomorrow, we'll talk tomorrow.

Next day, I look around for Eris so we can talk.

Soon, I found her at the yard practicing sword swings, but for some reason, she was together with Norn (not going to school today?)

To Norn, Eris says, [No, not like that, like this] teaching her how to swing a sword.

"I said like this! Why don't you understand?"

"Even if you say so, I don't know what's wrong with it."

"How should I say..."

Eris is the instinctive type, so teaching Norn must be hard for her. These genius instinctive-types won't know how they do things. In spite of my assumptions...

"Your left hand lacks power, so you only swing with your right. Your blade's edge is tilted."

Eh? Am I imagining this?

"Be more conscious of your left hand ..... try with the intention of swinging it only with your left hand in mind. If you do that, it will make your swing more beautiful."

Could it be that it was Eris who said that?

Not Ghyslaine who dubbed over a lip-sync'd Eris?

"So that's why. Makes sense."

"As long as it makes sense."

After that conversation, those two restart practice merrily. Feels like Norn's swings got a little better.

Well, no matter what, Eris is also a Sword-King. Ghyslaine once said that one cannot become Sword-King on instincts alone. Eris must be the same. In the process of becoming Sword-King, she learned the logic of it.

Still, Eris's swings are fast. From the shaft of the sword onward, I can't even see a blur. Beautiful too, her wavering figure is mesmerizing. Looking alone makes one's breath hoarse – watching sweat drop from that imposing profile, that firm body with those muscles flexing...

Ah! Found something incredible! Every time Eris makes a swing, her chest would bounce with vigor, yet not violent, but with a subtle shake nevertheless.

Probably because her style has no margins, her upper half is almost entirely unmoving, leaving only light vibrations. Speaking of which, the sleeveless shirt she's wearing looks almost like a gym wear. Don't tell me she's not wearing any chest armor? Every swing imposes itself in my eyes. Those are some iron grips...!

"...?"

Suddenly Eris's chest... I mean her swings, stopped. I look back up to her face wondering what's wrong, but she's already looking back at me.

Her mouth is in a へ shape, her feet are shoulder-width apart, and her chin is slightly raised. Ah, if she crosses her arms, it would be just how I remember it.

While those thoughts crossed my mind, I suddenly noticed that in her hand. The sword she once battled Orsted with, it looks really sharp.

So I backed up and walked away. Talking over difficult stuff with her holding something so dangerous... Seriously?

... Two hours later.

With the training period over, I tried to find Eris once again. She has left the yard. Where did she go? Maybe she changed and left the house? Maybe I should wait for her. No, no reason that we have to be home to talk. If she leaves, then I need to go after her. With that in mind, I head to the restroom and swing the door open wide.

"Ah"

"...!"

It's Eris, a perfectly proportioned beauty, standing in shock before my eyes. Her wavy, red hair drapes over her shoulders, wet, like a river flowing towards her chest.

Her shirt is soaked in sweat, and through it, I can see a ravine, and from that deep ravine, two mountains peaks. The deeper the ravine, the greater the heights, and there rests two majestic mountains.

Sweat contours her shirt tightly around those mountains, and at their peaks arise prominent protrusions. In other words, those are what dreams are made of.

"W-wwwhat are you doing..."

Eris looks completely lost for words. Red-faced and adorably cute. Unconsciously, I held out a hand and touched those meaty mounts. In particular, I pressed against that slightly harder portion. Ah, but it's soft.

–In the next moment, a flash came from Eris's shoulder, and I lost consciousness.

Coming to my senses, the back of my head was wrapped by something firm yet soft.

Harder than my usual pillows, but warmer and full of bounce along with a gentle rustle over my head.

Ah, a lap pillow.

I see, I'm still in bed.

"Mmm, I can't eat anymore."

Pretending that I'm still asleep, I turn around and bury myself in the Bermuda Triangle between those thighs.

I take a deep breath of that crevasse, and at the same time, rub that behind.

"Yah?"

Eh?

The shape of these buttocks... not Sylphy's.

Sylphy's are small and slender, with so little fat that you can't grip them in your hand.

That smell isn't Roxy's either.

A whiff of Roxy would calm me, yet this smells a bit of sweat.

Alarms ring danger from the back of my head as soon as the smell reached.

It's not bad at all, actually rather nostalgic.

Slowly, I turned around and open my eyes toward the owner of these lap pillows.

Two mountains tower above, and above that, a pair of sharp eyes glare.

Eris.

Eris grabs my cranium.

It's going to break–

Sylphy, Roxy.

Please forgive me, for this is goodbye.

Yet, suddenly, my head was rubbed by a strong but gentle hand.

I curl up into a ball looking at Eris.

She's pouting, her face red, but she isn't angry.

"Excuse me, Eris.... sama?"

"Just Eris."

"Eris... Em, I'm sorry."

For that apology, my head was grasped forcefully.

Ahh, please forgive me, for this is goodbye.

"...To be honest... I was also in the wrong."

"Oh, well... yeah."

"The letter, I read it. Rudeus must have had it hard too."

With my brain firmly locked in place, I nod lightly at Eris.

I'm not mature enough to say that Eris did nothing wrong.

Back then, we misunderstood each other.

I was hurt, and now Eris is hurting.

"Hey, Rudeus."

"What is it?"

"..."

Her mouth shut. Eris looks uncertain about what she should say.

Things that must be said, but are so difficult to put into words.

For me, for Eris, these five years have been too long.

"Rudeus, those two, do you love them?"

"Yes, I love them."

With those words, Eris's grip grows stronger.

"Even more than me?"

"...Yes."

Hearing that from me, sorrow overwhelms her features.

It's over; I should have picked my words more carefully.

They can't be compared.

I like Eris. I have fallen for her all over again.

"Do you... hate me?"

"Of course not, it's just... we've been separated for too long. So maybe, I don't know how I can face you."

"Even now, I still like Rudeus. I want Rudeus to love me."

Eris, red faced, was that a...?

No, of course that was a confession.

How should I respond?

The answer has already been decided. But before that, I should make sure.

"But, I already... have two wives."

"..."

With a face of fury, Eris stands up suddenly.

From the lap pillow, I fell over onto the floor.

Looks like I'm in the living room, but there's not a person in sight.

Even though Norn and Aisha should both be home, they're nowhere to be seen.

Those clever girls must want to give us two some personal space.

Towering over me, Eris crosses her arms, staring me down. Her feet are shoulder-wide, and her chin is raised in the exact posture when we first met.

"Rudeus, outside, duel!"

"Eh! Duel?"

Nervously, as I stand back up and dust myself, I asked.

"That's right! Duel; you win, I leave! So, if I win..."

Eris points at me and declares:

"If I win, you have to love me too!"

Feeling something wonderful, I could only nod.

Right now, I stand facing Eris, outside of Magic City Sharia by the city wall.

Although lacking an audience, Ghyslaine stands nearby. On the way here Eris asked her to be the judge. With a judge present, she probably doesn't plan to kill me. Hopefully.

"..."

Eris stood in silence with her sword raised toward me. No, her hand is shaking, a warrior's shivers?

I don't know what to do, are we really going to fight?

To be honest, I don't really mind losing. Losing is great, I like Eris, although like I just said not as much as Roxy and Sylphy, but that has nothing to do with it.

Sylphy has Sylphy's strengths, Roxy has Roxy's, Eris has Eris's. I like them all.

Fickle and indecisive, but I'm that sort of man. Unfaithful, overly lustful, but that's why I covet such a feminine Eris.

If she wants me to love her, I shall love with my all. This is no longer unfaithful or an affair, this is love. It's only natural! To desire such a charming woman is the law of nature! Not like any Church of Milis people would show up suddenly.

But if I lose on purpose, won't she feel insulted? She hates those kind of people, right?

Eris trained, in order to protect me, in order to gain strength against Orsted. That's why I must demonstrate the strength fit to be Eris's husband. I really ought to show an equal share of effort too.

... Even though I may not have worked as hard as Eris, but that's fine. As long as I gave my all, without knowing which of us will come ontop, win or lose, I'll ask her to marry me once more.

If I win, then I'll tell her [You belong to me. Quit complaining and come home!] Alright, let's do that.

My armored magic core lay broken and discarded in the forest. In close combat, Eris the Sword-King and Orsted fought to a stalemate. Againstsomeone like her, I don't have any confidence of winning at this distance... If I lose, it can't be helped.

"Rudeus."

Ghyslaine called for me after deciding on something.

"What's up?"

Although it's been a while since I saw Ghyslaine, she hasn't changed very much. All in all, a woman with some years behind her. We greet each other at our reunion, and chatted as well, but never about the current situation. We didn't have a lot to say to each other, but therewas no animosity either. Ghyslaine has always been that way, according to Elinalise.

"Eris-sama hasn't changed. Treat her with an attitude."

Ghyslaine's mannerism hasn't changed much either. The subtleties of her words make me a bit uncomfortable. Wondering to myself, am I doing the right thing right now?

Looking at Eris, she's waiting for me to get ready in her usual posture. Her arms crossed, feet apart and her chin raised. The same posture, but so different from the Eris from memory. She's taller, her chest got bigger, and exudes from her an aura of a carnivore.

Five years passed, I changed, Eris changed too. Yet Ghyslaine said she hasn't. Five years ago, how would the me from then face Eris? Facing a stubborn Eris, what would I have done?

"Ready, begin!"

The signal from Ghyslaine came, but I did not raise my staff, nor did Eris move her hands.

After a while Eris slowly moves forward, unsheathes the sword from her waist, it dangles powerlessly, heading towards me. That sword with an almost transparent body, a gift of the Sword God, one of the legendary seven swords.

Eris arrives before me, her sharp eyes looking straight at me.

"..."

"..."

Eris arrives before my eyes, raises her sword still.

"What? You're not going to fight?"

"Eris, I... If you losing means you leaving, then I admit defeat."

Eris pouts, her mouth へ.

"..."

"Also... I didn't have a chance to say it earlier, well. I... also like you."

I thought her hairs would raise, I thought she would get angry. It might be better if I fought for real. At this moment, Eris's swordcomes down.

"..."

I instinctively close my eyes, my body stiffens, but what hit my head is the hilt. A light tap, that's it.

Reopening my eyes, Eris's face before mine.

"I... can't cook like Sylphy."

"It's fine."

"I'm not as smart as Roxy."

"It's fine."

"I'm not as cute as those two."

"Eris is a cool beauty."

"... With my body like this, it's far from Rudeus's tastes."

"No, not true at all, your body is enchanting."

Eris sheathes her sword. Gently her hand wraps around my waist, her full blossom pressed tightly against mine.

With strength far greater than mine she hugged me tightly. The little sweat fails to conceal her aroma, that smell is Eris.

My arms around hers. Her muscles have toughened, but not bulky, just right, feels great.

"Then it's fine to consider it my victory, right ?"

"Yeah."

"If Rudeus was serious, in rejecting me... I would have given up, you know?"

Her voice was trembling. Don't tell me, if I seriously fought, her plan was to intentionally lose.

"You don't have to give up."

"Then, can I be part of Rudeus's family?"

"Yes, along with Roxy and Sylphy, if that's okay with Eris..."

Say it. Say everything. With that in mind I take a deep breath. If too quiet, she might not hear me.

"Please marry me."

Eris opens her eyes wide when she heard me.

"F-Fine! I'll marry you!"

As if disgusted she turned her head, thus Eris and I got married.

That night during dinner, I announced Eris as my wife. Unlike that time with Roxy, since I did the prep work, no one had any complaints.

Although I didn't think Norn would object, I expected at least some harsh words from her, but none came. She probably had given up on me when it comes to multiple wives already.

Roxy and Sylphy both gave us their blessings.

"Eris, the three of us, let's do our best together."

"Let's set the rules in order."

Eris trembles nervously in front of those two.

"T-then, I'll be in your care..."

Those words are strange too, although it's strange to see Eris so nervous, but she probably understands that's their own way of showing acceptance.

If possible, I hope they can live together in harmony, but I don't have a right to say that, right?

To cement their relationship, the three of them went in the bath together, as a way of smoothing things over as well as explaining how to use the bath. Although I want to join in as well, but I'll hold back for today.

Left behind are me, Lilia, my two sisters, Zenith... and Ghyslaine.

"..."

After Eris left, Zenith starts beating me on my head. Even with Lilia asking [Madam, please forgive...] does nothing to stop her. Zenith is a follower of Milis. She can forgive two. But with a third one, she couldn't find it in her to forgive her son again.

"Oww, it hurts mama. Please stop, I won't do it again."

With that said, Zenith finally withdrew her fists and returned to her seat. My two sisters watch me with suspicion beside her.

"You know, Brother, you said the same thing with Roxy-sama too. Even if you say so, who knows how long before you bring another girl over.More laundry for me to wash. It's too much."

Aisha's words are harsh. Seems like my value in their eyes have took a hit for welcoming in Eris. But I'm serious! Even with those words, Ifeel like she's just messing with me.

"Brother."

The other sister speaks. This one isn't someone who would mess around. I need to listen seriously.

"Oh, what is it Norn?"

"Well, as a follower of Milis, I cannot feel happy with brother's actions."

"Yes."

"But, I also understand the love Eris has for brother, so I won't say anything this time. Even if brother doesn't like Eris, but please loveher properly anyways. That's all."

"Okay, I'll give it my all."

Norn seems to really like Eris. In the mornings Eris teaches her swordsmanship, but Norn also was proactive in approaching her. I guess in the past few years Norn has become more sociable. Is that the effect of joining the student council?

"Rudeus-sama."

Lilia spoke up quietly.

"Oh, what is it, Lilia?"

"Now that you married Eris, the house is a bit full. I plan to rent somewhere nearby and move there with Zenith–"

"No."

Lilia's proposal is unacceptable.

"Please let me take care of you two... Well, really it's Lilia that has been taking care of me."

"No, not at all.. But, if Rudeus-sama says so, then I'll comply."

Kick out my two moms just to welcome in another wife? Paul up in heaven would definitely come back to haunt me. It's only natural for a son to care for his elderly parents. It's true that with Eris, we no longer have a guest room, but who cares. We'll figure something out.

"Rudeus."

Finally, Ghyslaine speaks.

"Ghyslaine-san."

"Ghyslaine is fine."

She's in her 40s already, but her muscles haven't weakened a bit, result of a lifetime of training perhaps.

"Eris-sama, can I leave her in your care?"

"... Yes, I swear to God."

"Right."

Ghyslaine smiles gently.

"You grew up. Those eyes are same as Paul's when he married Zenith."

That should make me happy, right? Yes, I'm happy.

Right, the same eyes as Paul. That's great, I have grown up...

Eh? But that's the Paul that Ghyslaine knew.. should I really be happy?

"Ghyslaine, what do you plan to do next? Will you stay around?"

"No, once I leave Eris-sama with you, my work here is done. I plan to head back to the Asura Empire."

"Asura Empire? Going to help rebuild the Fedoa Region?"

Her eyes shone when Ghyslaine heard me.

"No, I will go hunt down those that killed Sauros-sama and kill them."

The mood suddenly grew heavy. What a terrifying answer. For so long she has been taking care of Eris, now that she hands over her, her job is done, so all that's left is revenge.

"... Find them, in other words, you don't know whom? It was probably a political plot, so I don't think it's just one guy."

"Then I'll just kill them one by one, all of Sauros-sama's enemies, until it's over."

That's too naive... How do I stop her? No, no matter what I say she won't stop. No matter what, that's Ghyslaine for you.

No, on the other hand, I should give her a hand and support her instead... Now I remember, in my diary, when Ariel was assassinated, Water God and North Emperor were involved.

"Ghyslaine, according to my sources, Water God and North Emperor are hired by Asura Empire."

"Them..."

"You know them?"

"Yes, Eris-sama actually knows them better. What of it?"

"They might be your enemies. In that case, even Ghyslaine might not survive, right?"

"True, I alone cannot defeat them."

Ghyslaine nods and stares into my eyes, as if asking me to get to the point.

"... In that case, I know of someone that also took the fall in the chaos that took Sauros's life. Although Boreas might be her rival too, so she can well be Ghyslaine's enemy too. But if you work with her, then you can kill those enemies with impunity."

"Who is she?"

"Ariel Anemoi Asura."

Ghyslaine's ears raised. Ah, how nostalgic. In class, whenever there's something she does'nt understand, Ghyslaine would do something similar. Well, better if she doesn't know her.

"Princess of Asura Empire."

"Oh!"

But is it really okay to introduce Ghyslaine and Ariel? Ariel will head to the Asura Empire eventually during the time of political strife. Is it okay to involve Ghyslaine in that?

No, the future can change, with this diary, I can offer her a lot of advice. Besides, the strife was part of Hitogami's plans. Now that I'm a subordinate of Orsted, so who knows what'll happen as a result.

In that case, if Ariel is to win, then gaining Ghyslaine would help. In that case, I'd probably help too... But I probably need to consult Orsted on this matter.

"In any case, why don't you have an audience with her and see?"

"If you say so, okay."

Ghyslaine said without a second thought. For now, at least, I stopped her from her naive actions. Good.

"Aha~"

Aisha and Norn look at me blankly.

"What?"

"Well, I was thinking, brother really was the teacher of Sword King-sama before."

"Wait, you didn't believe me?"

"It's not like I don't believe you. I was just thinking, that Sword King-sama is really obedient."

Ghyslaine and I stare at each other. Did we say something weird?

"You know, brother. At school, there's a Senpai that wants to become an adventurer one day. He said [There are two Sword Kings coming to town. The super scary kind] things like that. Even though usually adventurers in town would never give a second glance at strong people. Yet when it comes to brother... What is it, that Aha~ kind of feeling."

Hearing Norn, Ghyslaine suddenly laughs.

"Rudeus is far stronger than I am. No matter what, even that Dragon God recognizes his abilities."

"Really~"

Norn seems impressed. With that, maybe brother's stocks can rise a little. Even if it rose, only the upper half did. Really feels like my lower half just keeps dropping.

Anyways, thanks to Ghyslaine, I can keep some face.

That's good, really good.

That night.

Ghyslaine returns home. Sylphy, Roxy, and Eris talk among themselves. What could the three girls be talking about? Despite my strong interest, it's better to leave the girl talks to girls. I'll have to pass.

The mood seems good, and Eris is listening diligently. This should be fine, Eris is a different person now.

I went back to the study and watch Norn study. After she left to sleep, I fill in my diary. A lot of memorable things happened today. Thinking about the future and Orsted though, I couldn't help but feel a little unease.

Anyways, the moment of crisis has passed, I should let loose a little.

By the time I left the study, the house has quieted down. Looks like the girls' meeting is done. Whose room are they staying at tonight? Or maybe they'll all camp out at the living room instead? Probably not.

With it being so quiet, I can't help but feel a little uncomfortable. That night when I met the future me was a quiet night like this. Maybe something's coming? For example, that guy with a body full of mosaic might suddenly jump out of the hallway shadows.

No, nothing will happen...

Entering the bedroom but no one is around. No light is on either, guess I'm sleeping by myself tonight.

As I was thinking of these things, the bedroom door suddenly swung open from the inside, and a great power pulled me inside.

"Oww!"

Immediately I raise my hand and gather magic towards my opponent, but my wrists are held back. My entire body is pressed against the door.

It's over!

Thinking that, I suddenly noticed who my opponent really is.

"... Oh, it's Eris."

Ah, Eris. I guess that's her in her nightgown holding down my wrists.

"S-say, Rudeus..."

Her eyes bloodshot, her face red, and her breaths heavy, she looks angry. Did something bad happen? I have to be careful with my words.

"We, us, are husband and wife, right?"

"... Oh, yeah. Ah, would it be better if we have a wedding ceremony? Get everyone together and make it lively?"

"I don't care about that. I don't even remember how to dance anymore... More importantly, as husband and wife, so it's okay right?"

What's okay? Before I could think I feel an arm bar against my shoulders, and I was kissed. BAM our teeth slammed into each other, and the pain spreads throughout my body.

I want to retreat, but the door blocks my path, Eris forces herself all over my face.

"Puhah..."

Eris puts her arm around my waist and starts dragging me over. By the time I regain consciousness, I'm already in bed. What is this, what's going on? Eh? Are we doing it? Eh?

"Em, Eris, em, these sort of things, shouldn't we, well, have a schedule, maybe discuss with Sylphy and Roxy first."

"It's done. They will let me have today."

"Roxy didn't say anything? Like hold back while she's pregnant or something?"

"She said don't worry about it."

Somehow, I'm already in bed, and Eris is really strong. I don't think I can get away.

"Hey, Rudeus, I want a son."

Eris's breaths are rough, not of anger, but animalistic passion.

Violently pursued like this. No, I'm actually really happy, pursued like this is worth feeling happy about.

Two bodies so close together, little Rudeus has already become like that, at least the body is honest.

Wait, isn't this backwards? Aren't our roles reversed.

"Rudeus, I like you, so, it's okay right?"

"Eh, yeah, it's fine, but please, calm down a bit. We should get in the mood first, maybe a little wine, let's talk about the past five years, and after the mood is right, we can embrace and confess our loves."

"I don't care about those things. I've been waiting to do this!"

Eris presses me down as she said. Her thighs clamp my legs firmly in place, both my hands squeezed, unable to move. With her nose she presses against my chest and begins to breath in deeply, like a dog, do I smell?

"Hahh... Hhha.. Rudeus. Now that we're married, you belong to me, right?"

"Eh? Well, I'm not just yours. I'd be thankful if you all get along and not fight."

"But tonight it's my turn, so you're mine?"

No matter what I say, Eris wants to make me hers.

"... Well, yeah I am."

Her hands squeeze even harder. It hurts, it hurts. My wrists are broken, so broken that #1 needs to come over to heal it.

"T-then, I get to do whatever I want, right...?"

What does she want to do? What'll happen to me? It's definitely XXX. Am I unwilling? The answer is NO, then the answer is YES.

"I, I guess?"

In that instant, Eris became a beast.

Next day.

Chirping sparrows woke me. I immediately looked for Eris. I immediately found her. Right before my eyes, Eris resting peacefully right before me.

"Ho..."

I let out a sigh of relief and reflect on last night.

I ended up really enjoying myself last night. Technique-wise I held the advantage, and I dominated the first half. [Like I'd lose to Eris] I was thinking, so I tried my best. But by the second half, the tables were turned.

It's a difference in stamina. It was like this the first time too. Eris has seemingly infinite stamina. What can I say? I can't beat her...

Once exhaustion took me, she violated me to her heart's content. [I'm sorry dear, this person has made me her play thing]... that sort of feeling.

I can't become a bride anymore.

Yet when she's asleep like this, Eris looks strangely adorable. Even though she was so wild last night, right now she has become so serene. It brings a smile to my face. I wonder if this is how Sylphy feels when she sees my sleeping face.

"... Still."

Right now Eris is giving me an arm pillow. I'm not usually on the receiving end, but it's strangely refreshing. Her arm is slender, yet strong, and I feel really safe for some reason.

Anyways it's been 5 years, Eris has grown up. How muscular has she become? Last night I recall some alluring contours, but it was too dark to know.

I squirm a bit to touch Eris's tummy.

"Wow, amazing..."

Not particularly bulging on the surface. Or rather, there's some fat, but tightly coiled around that layer of fat are heavily compressed layers of muscles. With just a touch, it's obvious which is which.

Even though I also have a six pack, but Eris's seems far more incredible, I want them. So much muscle but not bulky, and such a thin waist to boot...

Only god-like techniques could train such an amazing balance of external oblique, abdominal oblique, and the Psoas major muscles.

Even so, a woman's muscles, why are they so enticing, I can't stop touching them.

Not just the muscles, my hand reach upwards, towards those mounts clearly marked even under the blanket. Last night I was groped but never groped... It's fine if we're husband and wife, right?

"Amazing..."

Incredible! Those foundations! Pectoralis muscles! How firm, how muscular, simply wonderful.

And there, riding on top of this dish is a just desert. The balance between soft and hard is the important part of life, thus H SKETCH ONE TOUCH.

It grew magnificently, like a honey melon. Sylphy and Roxy are both lacking. Theirs aren't bad either, but as expected big has an entirely different appeal.

God, I'm grateful that I can touch this from here on out. Thank you Roxy, Sylphy, I did it! I successfully climbed Mount Eris, a new dawn awaits for all mankind!

"Ho ho ho."

Just now, a white haired, old man come to my mind. It's the hermit! The Oppai Hermit! How have you been! Look, this is the real deal! Hallelujah!

{ C-Editor's note: The hermit is Rudeus' old imaginary oppai-sage. }

"Ho ho ho, I have nothing left to teach you... Do your best."

Ah, hermit! Where are you going, hermit! Please! I need your guidance!

"..."

"Ah."

In my daze, Eris and I suddenly caught each other. Who knows how long she's been staring at me, rubbing her all by myself. Is she going to beat me up? Just then, Eris grabs me by the throat. She's mad.

"Let's talk it out. Rather than fight, how about we talk this out, baby. Just a little pillow talk, about how we used to wrestle. Just now, my curiosity got the better of me and I wanted to rub your abs a bit..."

"..."

Eris did not let go of my hand, rather, she turned around and pushed herself all over me, natural instincts in her eyes.

So she's not really angry, rubbing her chest in the morning just relights her passions. If it was me, waking up to ecchi stuff, I would want it too.

Men and women are different, but Eris is an exception. O-okay, let's do this. Eris can be my appetizer for breakfast!

"B-be gentle, it's morning already. Even last night you were.. Kya~!~"

I made the voice of a maiden, and was ravaged a second time.

Getting out of bed in the afternoon, Eris is already gone. Empty bed, a chill by my side, but I feel no loss, only a little shame and satisfaction.

Stood up while massaging my sore waist, I walked by a window. The sun is particularly yellow, and so is my face.

I spot Eris outside the window, a perverted smile on her face, in a happy mood. Still moving around after all that, what a monster.

Sylphy and Roxy both have less stamina than I, to be squeezed dry like that is a first for me.

If Sylphy is passive, and Roxy is technical, then Eris is the aggressive type.

My masochistic qualities seem to have awakened. Tokugawa, Toyotomi, Oda, something like that.

Eris brilliantly earned the title of Sword King, because Orsted kicked my ass. Just kidding, she might kill me if we got carried away. I can't just keep troubling my Hideyoshi here.

Next time, maybe we decide on a safety word first. I should talk with Eris while she's still exhausted from last night...

With those thoughts in mind, I went to cleanse myself in the bath. After cleaning, I enter the basement and offer a prayer to my shrine. Another holy object is necessary, because God of Wisdom, God of Love, and God of War... A wooden sword would do.

Thinking about this and that I entered the living room, Aisha, who's sweeping the floor, jumps up.

"Hey, brother, good morning! A mail came! It doesn't say from whom, but there's an emblem here. Do you recognize it?"

That letter stops me in my tracks.

On it drawn a very obvious emblem.

Dragon God's.

This letter is from Orsted.

Mushoku Tensei: Isekai Ittara Honki Dasu - Volume 17

[To Rudeus Greyrat. Ever since then, how is your physical condition? Has your magic recovered? I wish to talk about the future. I will wait inside the hut located in Sharia city's suburb. Due to our circumstances, I wish for you to come alone. Orsted.]

After I read that letter, I asked Aisha to prepare some food.

After getting the food, I went back to my room and changed clothes.

Choosing the best clothes possible, I showed them to Aisha and asked her to confirm whether there were any weird spots.

Then I left the house, taking with me Aqua Hartia and the diary from the future.

On the way I called out to the baby treant Beet and the playing Zenith.

"Mother, I'm off."

Zenith was waving her hand as if saying [Take care].

Next to her, Beet was also shaking his leaves and branches.

I did not call out to Sylphy and the others.

If I did, they would probably insist on coming along.

The letter said to come alone.

Thus I would go alone.

This time was not to go to fight.

I had no intention to destroy the hut Orsted was in with magic, because if it came down to a fight, I would definitely lose my life.

If I was asked whether I trusted Orsted, it would be a difficult question.

But from the letter I could somehow feel his consideration.

Even Nanahoshi emotionally felt that it was better for me to avoid fighting Orsted, and personally I also think that he is someone who can be trusted more than the Human God.

"But, after all I'm nervous."

While talking to myself, I took the path to Sharia.

On the way I found a pool of water and confirmed multiple times whether there were any weird spots on my face.

I decided to work under Orsted.

In other words Orsted is my boss.

It was unpleasant to appear before the boss in a weird fashion.

"I wonder if it would be better to apply perfume or not?"

Perhaps I should have cleaned myself with hot water, since there might be Eris's lingering scent from last night.

I wonder what the president would think if an employee was called to his office with an erotic smell?

While I might not suddenly be fired, his view would definitely not be favorable.

I wish to give Orsted a favorable impression.

Orsted.

Someone capable of fighting and winning against Human God.

Apparently with the help of my descendants he will kill Human God.

While I feel sorry for the Human God...

But I was the one who was first betrayed.

He's somebody who laid his hands on Roxy and Sylphy.

Sympathy cannot be shown.

I will wag my tail at Orsted.

Wagging my tail like an electric fan while bearing fangs towards the Human God.

Doing what will definitely protect my family.

"All right."

Renewing my determination, I head towards the suburb.

While being careful not to get splashed by the carriage with dirty water.

A weird atmosphere was drifting around the hut in the suburb.

Somehow it was different.

It could not be expressed in words, but something was different.

Surely something like sound effects and other effects seen in manga will come out from the hut.

Ah, with one glance I understood that Orsted was in there.

I took a deep breath.

"Haa~, fuu~..."

And knocked at the door.

"Rudeus Greyrat! Entering!"

"Ah...quite early."

Even though I knew he was here, I shivered when I received a reply.

As expected, it seems my fear towards Orsted still remained inside.

"May I please come in?"

"Why do you ask for permission. Isn't this the hut you have prepared?"

"Yes! Please excuse me!"

When I opened the door and entered, Orsted was inside.

Sitting on one of the chairs inside, he was glaring at me.

No, he wasn't glaring at me.

He was just looking. It was quite the scary face.

I closed the door and moved towards Orsted as briskly as possible.

Standing right in front of the chair and taking an attentive pose.

Orsted was making a suspicious face towards me.

"I thought you would come with a large number of comrades...two people, huh."

"Yes, I came alone...eh, two people?"

Hearing those unexpected words, I doubted my hearing.

Unless Orsted had presbyopia and was seeing me doubled, I should have been only one person.

"Eris Greyrat! Come in if you want!"

As Orsted shouted, she vigorously blew open the door.

It was Eris.

She had drawn the sword that she was carrying.

And released blood thirst.

"Orsted! If you lay a hand on Rudeus, I will kill you!"

She declared while pointing her sword at Orsted.

With tremendous determination enough to cause you to wet yourself.

Orsted was composed before her.

"I do not have such an intention."

"You can't be trusted!"

"I suppose so."

Being told that, Eris positioned herself in a corner of the hut and crossed her arms.

While I became stiff with Eris's appearance, I compared Eris with Orsted.

I guess I should give an explanation.

That I did not bring Eris with me. That I came alone.

That I'm not an enemy.

But, how should I explain Eris, who appeared with a sword?

What should I do, how can I do it?

"What are you doing, Rudeus Greyrat. Sit down. Let us talk."

While I was thinking, I was rushed by Orsted.

"Ah, yes. Please excuse me."

Even if I sat down on the chair, I was still concerned about Eris.

Eris who was holding a drawn weapon.

"Eris is..."

"I can tell from your behavior. It seems like you have been tailed."

"Ah, yes. It's that kind of feeling...so, before the talk, can I have a quick word with Eris?"

"I don't mind."

He didn't seem angry.

While being seated, I turned towards Eris and beckoned her.

"What."

"Eris, why did you come here?"

"Because Rudeus dressed up, I was just wondering where you were going."

Dressed up.

Indeed, I was choosing clothes and was carefully doing my hair.

From another perspective, it might have looked like nothing else.

"You understand that I came to work under Orsted, right?"

"...I understand, but with that kind of guy, who knows what he's planning. It's possible that he might deceive Rudeus."

"Maybe. But it's still too early to judge that. If possible, it would be good if you're quiet and don't disturb us."

"..."

"If we're deceived, let's fight together, Eris. I'm relying on you."

"Tsk! Understood!"

After coming to an understanding, Eris sheathed her sword and sat down next to me.

Quite simple.

...Now.

"I am very sorry."

"I don't mind."

"Anyway, Eris still doesn't seem to be able to trust Orsted-sama...but it can't be helped because of the curse."

Having said so, it felt like Orsted-sama's eyes flashed.

"Where did you hear about my curse?"

"...From the Human God. About how at some point Orsted-sama's body received the curse."

I answered honestly.

What I was told and informed by the Human God.

It would be better if I let out everything I was told.

"Is that so..."

Orsted rested his chin in his hand and looked in the direction slightly above.

There was nothing above his line of sight.

...Is that his thinking pose?

"Anyway, let's do as promised."

"Eh?"

"Why are you making such a surprised face. I am different from the Human God. I keep my promises."

"That's not it, what kind of promise did we make?"

"The way to protect your family from the Human God."

Ah, I see.

That's right, how could I forget that.

No, I only forgot what kind of promise we made.

Rather, it felt more like a contract.

A contract with the devil.

I see, a contract-like promise.

"I still haven't done anything, is that fine?"

"Are you not also anxious if your family was exposed to danger?"

"Well, that's true."

It somehow felt like receiving a favor.

Or rather, it was a far kinder feeling than I thought.

I thought it would be more like being ordered around.

Though his face may be scary, unexpectedly he might be someone who takes his subordinates' feelings into consideration.

To the point where the edgy Eris couldn't believe it.

"It is not that difficult. Summoning a guardian magical beast possessing a strong fate and letting it protect them."

"Summon, is it? However, right now I still cannot use summoning magic."

"Then I will write the magic circle. Put your own magic into it."

"Ah, yes, I will be troubling you."

A guardian magical beast possessing a strong fate, huh.

Fate, I think it was about the law of causation.

"Are you sure just this is enough for protection?"

"The Human God cannot manipulate inhuman beings. Further, he cannot manipulate a great number of people at the same time. As long as we move, he will have his hands full with our interference. Based on his personality, that will be more than enough prevention."

Talking about personality...

Still, not being able to manipulate a great number of people means in the worst case at the very least he can manipulate two people.

While I was being manipulated, I wonder if he was manipulating someone else.

"But do not let your guard down. We do not know what the Human God is doing. Instead of just leaving it to the magical beast, checking up on them frequently is better."

When Orsted said to [Check up on them frequently], something felt wrong.

It seemed his talk was literal.

I knew that you shouldn't judge based on appearance.

Whatever.

Being told that he will prepare it, for now let's continue.

Then, to the main topic.

"Then, what should I do from now on?"

There were many things I wanted to know, but it was only polite to answer questions regarding myself.

It was showing your character.

"...Do you not have more things that you want to know?"

Or so I thought, but I was questioned in return.

"There is a lot."

"Why do you not ask?"

"I thought that asking without answering any questions would not be good..."

Having said so, Orsted let out a sigh.

"You have become my comrade, thus――"

"Subordinate. Let us keep the hierarchical relationship in mind."

Beating me to a pulp, giving me a method to protect my family.

Then being told that we are equals, I am not insensitive.

"It is fine if you want to think that way...regardless, you and I will work together for the sake of overthrowing Human God. You must know what you want to know."

"Despite saying all this, what will you do if I am a double agent for Human God? I might be telling Human God every night information about Orsted-san."

"I trust you."

With a strong glance I was told so.

"Your stance is that of someone desperately trying to protect his family."

I was a little embarrassed being told that.

I was indeed very desperate that time.

But, well, saying so means he takes me at my word.

The things that I wanted to know.

There are several.

Regarding the discord between Orsted and Human God.

Regarding the Laplace Factor.

Regarding the mana calamity.

Regarding what's with fate.

For now it's such things.

"Then, please tell me one by one."

Regarding the discord between Orsted and Human God
The relationship between Orsted and Human God.

I decided to hear about that first.

I also wanted to know.

"About myself?"

"That's right. Please."

"Didn't you hear it from Human God? Though it seems you have heard about the curse?"

"E~hem..."

What was it, it was five years ago.

Recall, recall.

What Human God said at that time.

"You have four curses."

"...Continue."

"First, the curse of being hated and feared by all living creatures in this world. Second, the curse of being invisible from Human God's view. Third, the curse of being unable to go all-out. About the last one, he said something about not being quite clear."

"I see."

Having said that, Orsted was quietly nodding his head.

"About the first one, ever since I was born, I was indeed shunned by all living creatures."

"But I don't seem to hate you that much..."

"That being said, there seem to exist some like that, for example Nanahoshi."

"I see."

Apparently there are exceptions.

It may be related to the fact that Nanahoshi and I were not originally humans from this world.

Should I mention this or should I remain silent.

Because Eris was sitting next to me, I hesitated a little...

But it would not be wise to keep it a secret.

"Orsted-san. I did not intend to hide it but... originally I am a human from the same world as Nanahoshi. It's possible that they are related."

"...Then is Rudeus Greyrat an alias?"

"That story will take very long to tell, but I am different from Nanahoshi, that is...before I knew it, I was reborn as Rudeus Greyrat in this world...and ehm, I wonder how to talk about it."

"Reincarnation, huh."

I was surprised.

For reincarnation to come out of Orsted's mouth.

No, it was written in the diary, something about the dragon-tribe knowing the method of reincarnation.

Even if they die, they will come back to life in a few decades.

To them, reincarnation would be something major.

"It is probably related to your reincarnated body as for why you do not fear me."

"Are there any other people who do not fear you?"

"Except for special exceptions, only those who have the blood of the ancient dragon-tribe."

So such as Perugius.

No, I remember that even Perugius was quite scared.

...Or is it not related to the curse.

Apart from the curse, there are also other reasons to fear other people.

"The second curse, regarding the curse of being invisible from Human God's view...it is not a curse."

"Then that is?"

When asked, Orsted was thinking a little bit.

While thinking, he looked into my eyes and said.

"It is a secret technique the first generation Dragon God came up with a long time ago while fighting Human God...it is a technique allowing one to see fate and at the same time allows one to deviate from the law of the world."

"Ooh."

"Human God also can see into the future and possesses the power of foresight. However, it can not see the ones who have deviated from the law of the world."

I see.

I didn't know what it means to have deviated from the law of the world, but being able to escape from Human God's sight is phenomenal.

"What is it, the power to see fate?"

"Let's see..."

Orsted was making a pose as he was thinking.

It couldn't be that he's thinking about it right now.

"It is to know the rough history of the path an individual should have taken."

The rough history.

"That means Orsted-sama can see the future."

"No...what I can see is the past, not the future. The one pre-ordained by fate."

Hm?

Somehow it was quite philosophical.

It was quite hard to tell it apart from seeing the future.

For now I will think of it as being one rank lower than Human God's future sight.

"Are you going to teach me that technique?"

"No, it is better not to."

"...That is to say?"

To become invisible to Human God is a very attractive advantage.

I wanted to hear the reason for not teaching it.

"When receiving the secret technique, there are side effects...that is the speed at which magic recovers becomes tremendously slow."

"When saying tremendously slow, exactly how much?"

"You have recovered from your drained state in about 10 days, you can think of it as becoming 1000 times slower."

1000 times.

That is about 10000 days.

Roughly 30 years.

"Thus I cannot freely use magic. [Being rarely able to go all-out] means that."

I see, if you cannot recover magic, then you would not be able to go all-out.

While I didn't know what magic quantity Orsted has, if magic hadn't recovered in a few years time, he couldn't go all-out.

He must conserve power.

"Although I cannot teach you the secret technique, if you work under me, a similar effect can be granted."

I took a look at the bracelet worn on my left hand.

Apparently it had a jamming-like effect.

"Is there no side effect to this? If you mass produced it..."

"It would have already been done if it was possible. Together with breaking my body's curse."

Was that so.

"Rather, I have used up a considerable amount of magic in our fight. For a while I will not be able to seriously fight."

"Eh, seriously. But wasn't it more like instant kill?"

"I resisted your magic three times head-on and even drew the God sword. A reasonable amount of magic was used up."

Orsted bitterly said.

From my perspective I felt that I was beaten around without being able to do much, but surprisingly it was quite a balanced fight.

So it can be said that I have given my best. Ufufu.

"Not much of my magic is remaining. Thus you will move, becoming my hands and feet."

"...Yes. I will do my best."

Working for the amount I have deducted.

It is appropriate.

"Then, for what reason is Orsted-sama fighting against Human God?"

"That is...ah..."

As Orsted hesitantly said so, he faced towards the day after tomorrow.

Since earlier, he was thinking about what to say and was often in a thinking pose.

I was wondering whether he was spewing out lies.

No, that couldn't be.

It may be that while I may be trusted, I have yet to prove worthy of his trust.

For now I will move based on his partial truth while also investigating tendencies...such a possibility also exists.

"Human God is... my father's ruin."

"Hoo."

Father's ruin.

The future me was burning for vengeance as a result of Roxy and Sylphy.

While the me in the present, who has not lost anyone, can say that vengeance will not give birth to anything...

In fact, it is clear from the diary, that being consumed with feelings for vengeance I changed into a demon.

"And, overthrowing Human God is the ancient dragon-tribe's dearest wish. Our, the Dragon God's sole reason for existence is to defeat Human God."

This was what you would call, for a great cause.

Wait, we?

"How many Dragon Gods were there?"

"I am the 100th generation. A hundred Dragon Gods have studied on how to overthrow Human God."

"I see."

"However, Human God has defeated Dragon Gods with weaker blood."

Orsted looked at me with glinting eyes.

"Thus my father, the first generation Dragon God, has sent me to the future using the method of reincarnation."

Orsted off-handedly said so.

Let us reorganize a bit.

First, Orsted.

He is from the ancient dragon-tribe, who came from an immemorial past to the present by using the method of reincarnation.

His body was harboring a curse and an ancient technique.

The curse was to be shunned by all living creatures in this world.

The ancient technique caused magic to recover at a slow rate, but in return it is possible to escape from Human God's sight as well as obtaining the ability to roughly see the future.

Why was such a curse brought to the present.

Because it was caused by the death of the first generation Dragon God at the hands of Human God.

Starting from the second generation, the reason for existence for all subsequent Dragon Gods is to defeat Human God, which was also the ancient dragon-tribe's dearest wish.

Thus the son of the first generation Dragon God, Orsted, was trying to defeat Human God.

"Is every thing until now correct?"

"Ah, exactly. It is a great help that you quickly understand it."

"Exactly how many years ago were you reincarnated?"

"Let's see...about 2000 years ago."

2000 years...he seems to have lived for quite a long time.

Although everything seemed to be consistent, somehow there is a feeling of something being out of place.

Hm, I wonder what it is.

Like the point about magic recovery.

Orsted seemed to be using something similar to Perugius, that summoning magic that absorbs magic.

If he absorbs magic with it, would that not solve the magic problem...no, if he could, he would have done so already.

It may not be possible to stock up on the absorbed magic in his body with that summoning magic.

Hm.

Then the abnormal hostility Orsted holds towards Human God?

Although having killed his father was reason enough, there was still the feeling that the hostility was too great.

Orsted's attachment for his father also seemed weak.

"From my view point, you seem to hold a great grudge towards Human God, what is the reason?"

"Is there someone who does not hold a grudge against that piece of trash?"

"...That's true."

Ah well, Orsted seems to have lived for a long time, surely there must have been bad blood between them.

Although he cannot be seen, messages can still be delivered.

Ah, although Orsted became like this, it may not be related to the discord between the first generation Dragon God and Human God.

There are still many things I didn't know, but the person Orsted is probably like that.

Regardless of the specifics, he had a reason to fight against Human God.

The enemy's enemy is an ally.

Also, there are still many things to be heard about other matters.

Regarding the Laplace Factor
"In our previous battle there was some talk about me possessing the Laplace Factor, what does it mean?"

"How much do you know about Laplace?"

"The one who was responsible for the war 400 years ago and who pushed the human race into the corner. Also that he had a tremendous amount of magic and was unable to use Fighting Spirit. He was also extremely strong, but was ultimately sealed by Perugius-sama and two others. ...And that he caused the downfall of the Supard-tribe.

I have heard various other things, but these were the main points I guess.

"So about that much?"

"Also that he will soon revive."

"Have you heard that the method he uses to revive is the method of reincarnation by the dragon-tribe?"

"Ehm. No, I do not think I have heard this...ah no, it feels like Human God mentioned something like that...or was it something different."

The memory is somewhat murky.

But still, the method of reincarnation again.

"You...no... later I will hear the details about what you and Human God talked about and what he revealed."

"Yes."

"But now it is about Laplace."

Eris's atmosphere became tense when talk about Laplace arrived.

Both Eris and I are Ruijerd's friends.

Laplace was Ruijerd's enemy.

His enemy was also our enemy.

Thus I could understand the tenseness regarding the existence of Laplace.

But I will calmly approach this.

It's Eris's role to get angry, mine is to remain calm.

"[Demon God Laplace]'s identity is... the shadow of what was once [Demon Dragon King Laplace]."

Orsted revealed this without being pretentious.

"Demon Dragon King?"

"Yes, in the past he was part of the dragon-tribe."

Laplace was the Demon Dragon King.

Part of the dragon-tribe.

But he's the Demon God?

"The Demon Dragon King Laplace is the only one left of the first generation 5 Dragon Warriors."

5 Dragon Warriors.

If I remember right, they were the five subordinates of the Dragon God, who in the end all rebelled against him.

"That guy escaped the collapsing Dragon World and drifted to this world, to carry out a certain mission. He became the second generation Dragon God."

From Dragon King to Dragon God to Demon God.

Wait a minute, it's all confusing.

It feels like my head is splitting.

"He researched about methods and techniques to overthrow Human God. He taught to those who called themselves Dragon God techniques he had developed over a long time. All for the sake of passing down the power to me who came to the future, me who possessed the greatest strength among the dragon-tribe."

Calling yourself the strongest.

"However, Laplace started the Human-Demon race world war and fought against Fighting God, who was Human God's apostle, and had his soul split into two halves."

It felt like I have heard this story somewhere.

The story about how the Golden Knight Aldebran fought against the Great Demon Empress.

According to Kishirika, there was a story about how Dragon God and Fighting God fought against each other.

So the Dragon God was Laplace and the Fighting God was Aldebran.

So Laplace was fighting on the demon side.

"Laplace, who was split in two, lost his memory and became two, the human-hating [Demon God] and [Technique God], whose aim was to overthrow god."

That was how the Demon God came forth.

And also Technique God.

Though the Technique God was indeed ranked first among the Seven Great Major Powers...

"Eh? That means Technique God was also Laplace?"

"Indeed."

Somehow I felt I just heard an unbelievable story.

I wonder if it was good for me to have heard this story.

There was too much information, it became confusing.

Orsted was the son of the first generation Dragon God, and Laplace was the second generation.

Ah.

In other words it's like this.

First, the first generation Dragon God sent Orsted to the future in order to overthrow Human God.

Laplace was one of the Five Dragon Warriors and fought against the first generation Dragon God, and perhaps realized that Human God manipulated him, then became his subordinate again.

The first generation Dragon God died, while Laplace survived.

To teach Orsted techniques, Laplace traveled around the world to study them while also teaching them to previous Dragon Gods.

Human God used Fighting God to interfere.

Laplace was unluckily...split into two and lost his memory, though I didn't know whether that was on purpose to survive.

Something like this?

There is no confidence whether it is correct.

I wonder if my head was always that bad...

"Hmpf...!"

While looking to the side at Eris, her mouth made a 'へ' and made a frustrated face.

She didn't seem to understand anything.

Great, there was some comfort.

Orsted's explanation continued.

"[Demon God] Laplace lost the power of dragons. He only remembered the enormous amount of magic knowledge and that he must definitely kill 'human'. For that purpose, he rallied the demon race to exterminate the 'human race'.

[Technique God] Laplace who lost the power of magic. He only remembered the enormous amount of techniques and that he must definitely teach and pass them down to someone. Thus Technique God created the Seven Great Major Powers ranking and devoted himself in studying those techniques."

The Technique God created the Seven Great Major Powers ranking.

I felt I have heard this before.

After all he is ranked first.

Ah, but the Human-Demon race world war was 2000 years ago.

"...How did Orsted-sama know about these facts? If you came 2000 years ago, the Human-Demon race world war should have already ended. By then Laplace has already lost his memory...If so, there should be no one who should know this?"

"I have read about Laplace in the ruins of the ancient dragon-tribe."

"Ah, I understand."

So before he lost his memory, he had already left a record of them.

Quite ironic that Laplace, who lost his memory, could not find those.

"Now, let's trace the conversation back a bit. About why you possess magic."

"Yes."

"The first generation Dragon God invented the method of reincarnation. Sending oneself's soul into the future, taking over another being's body and ultimately reviving."

"..."

The method of reincarnation.

Taking over another being's body...

Wait, don't be deceived.

"However, originally body and soul are as one. You attach yourself to a foreign body, but if there are signs of rejection, the revival will fail."

"..."

"Thus the first generation Dragon God came up with the idea to plant his factor into multiple people, and when they make children, their bodies will have been slightly changed.

"..."

"He tried creating a vessel that matched my soul by adapting the whole body of the people over hundred, thousands of generations."

"..."

"The reincarnation will occur when an adapted body possessing the factor perfectly matches with the soul. Taking over the body of the soul it was originally supposed to be in and be born while pretending to be it. Many from the ancient dragon-tribe have been reincarnated into the present by using this method of reincarnation. Perugius is one of them. Furthermore, he does not remember about his previous life because he reincarnated with his vague childhood memories."

Taking over the body of the soul it was originally supposed to be in, and becoming that person.

Hearing these words, I looked at my own hands.

I'm also a reincarnated person.

I wonder if I robbed the person known as Rudeus Greyrat his life.

"Hey, are you listening?"

"Eh? Ah yes. I am."

Before I noticed, I was looking into Orsted's face.

For a while he looked into my face and then let out a breath.

"Returning to the topic. Although Demon God Laplace had already lost his mind, he seemed to remember about the method of reincarnation, or there may be some remaining records of it. Being defeated by Perugius, he distributed his factor before his body was sealed and sent his own soul to the future.

"..."

"Currently, those who have characteristics similar to his and possess the Laplace factor, have slowly started to appear. Having an aptitude towards magic and possessing a great amount of magic, green hair and being born with demon eyes."

Aptitude towards magic and possessing a great amount of magic.

Green hair.

With the exception of demon eye, a certain person comes to mind.

"Perhaps, Sylphy is?"

"Ah, Sylphiette is one of them. Though for some reason her hair turned white."

"But she is not Laplace himself, right?"

"Of course, he can't become a woman."

I felt a little relieved.

However, thinking about it, the most suspicious person is not Sylphy.

"Then, me?"

"You are likely the same. A body that can harbor such a great amount of magic is usually not born."

"...I thought I managed to expand my amount of magic with my own efforts."

"Of course. It is only because your body has the characteristic to harbor such a great quantity of magic. If you did not train your magic since childhood, you would only have a little more than an ordinary person. Maybe about the same as Sylphiette. That tremendous quantity of magic is the crystallization of your effort. You can be proud of yourself."

Somehow I was praised.

I wonder if it was fine to be proud.

"Ehm, so I am not Laplace himself, right?"

"No. The time until Laplace will be reborn is a little farther ahead in the future."

I see.

I was a little bit relieved when I heard that I was not Laplace himself.

I'm also glad to know of the origin of my magic.

Though I did feel a little bad for Ruijerd because it was Laplace's power.

However, power is power.

It is up to oneself how to use the power.

But that is not what I was worried about.

"..."

Orsted was looking at me for a while, but let out a sigh and said.

"You can relax. Although you are also a reincarnated person...according to my memory the person known as Rudeus Greyrat does not exist."

"...That is?"

"The fact that you have the Laplace factor, means that before you were born you possessed an aptitude towards magic and a big magic quantity. It would not be strange if the soul could not handle harboring all that amount of magic in your body."

"Not being able to handle it means?"

"It means originally it was probably stillborn. Then you entered inside."

Stillborn.

I see.

Then it's good.

The fact that I did not kill Mr. Rudeus is good.

I did not want to think that I robbed him of such a great, happy life.

It was good that it did not become a sad history, with Paul and Zenith's first child being dead.

Hence it's good.

All right.

Let's change it.

I am Paul's and Zenith's child, Rudeus.

The one and only Rudeus Greyrat.

With that mindset, let's move on to the next question.

Regarding the mana calamity
"I heard that the mana calamity was the result of summoning Nanahoshi, but can I hear the specific details?"

"...There are still many things that are unknown regarding the incident. It was the first time something like this happened."

"As a reincarnated person, I was at that place. Thus I think there exists the possibility that I caused that incident..."

"You were...?"

While saying so, Eris touched the area around my thigh.

When I looked at her, she was weakly shaking her head.

To reassure myself, I moved my hand――and touched Eris's buttocks.

The soft yet well-built buttocks was very attractive and ah, it hurts, it hurts, it hurts!

"The possibility cannot be ruled out. Nanahoshi, you, that incident, they were all unprecedented incidents."

I thought the flesh around the thigh would be ripped off.

Eris glared at me with a serious face, saying [Wasn't this supposed to be a serious topic!?].

I was happy that she became a child that could read the atmosphere.

Anyway, it seemed like he did not have information regarding the mana calamity.

Even though Nanahoshi made a weird hypothesis...well, I guess it's fine.

Regarding things from now on
For the time being, these questions were enough.

If I heard too much, I feel like my head would split.

In fact, my head was already at the brink of splitting.

"...First, I managed to obtain information about the future."

"Is that so?"

"Ehm, please have a look."

Having said so, I handed over the future diary to Orsted.

Orsted opened the diary and read a few pages.

And, making a frown looked up.

"It will take some time. The characters are too messy."

"I do not mind..."

I wonder if my writing really was that messy.

I was also told that by Nanahoshi.

Well, it's a diary, even if it's messy, it can't be helped.

But...let's just be careful showing others my writing.

"Ah, right, before we continue, may I first confirm something?"

"What is it?"

I wonder if it was fine to ask about it.

I felt like because Orsted was much more benevolent than I expected, I was pushing the line.

"I, no, I——"

{ C-Editor's note: In the Japanese translation, Rudeus here is switching from using the informal pronoun 'I' to using the more formal pronoun 'I'. }

"You do not need to be so formal."

"I, from now on will become Orsted-san's...-sama's subordinate. Having said so, is that acceptable?"

"...Ah. But only as long as you intend to."

"So, it is a rather difficult topic to talk about."

Taking a look at Eris, I said.

"It is regarding the terms of employment?"

"Terms, of...employment...?"

"Yes. I do have wives and children, I would like to regularly have rest days, time to see my family, if they are possible, I believe, I would feel very grateful. Yes."

Rest is very important.

It is necessary for any human to rest.

I am of course someone who will put forth all my efforts into working, when I have decided to work.

But still.

Exactly for what reason I work, isn't it necessary to regularly remind yourself?

To see the growth of Lucy.

To tell Aisha and Norn to study.

To savour Lilia's dishes.

To bask in the sun with mother.

To do erotic things with Sylphy.

To do erotic things with Roxy.

To do erotic things with Eris.

Right.

"That is up to you. Rudeus Greyrat."

"Ah, is that so."

As expected it was no good, huh.

I'm sorry Lucy, daddy will be working away from home.

Until I defeat Human God, save the world, and return, grow up healthy and be a good kid.

"But I am different from Atofe. I do not think I could separate you, who risked his life trying to protect his family, from them. To take you away for so many years...at the very least, right now I do not have such intentions."

"Ah, is that so? Hearing that I can feel relieved."

It seems I will receive rest.

Whew.

I'm glad.

It would be hard to be separated from everyone.

Even saying that I absolutely must protect them, I want to be together with them.

"Is there anything else you require?"

Orsted's eyes were glaring.

I wonder if it would be fine to ask.

I hope he won't be angry.

No no, it is not good to ask for such a thing afterwards.

Don't we have a contract, we have to be firm and decide this first.

"...Is it really all right for me to make a demand?"

"I plan to make it as convenient as possible."

Are you serious.

Then is it fine to push the line and demand salary?

It should not be a bad thing.

Money was in other words responsibility.

Paying money means to give responsibility.

Receiving money means to take responsibility.

A work that doesn't involve money will become an irresponsible work.

Or so I have read in a manga.

From now on I will receive responsibility from Orsted.

It could be said that getting money from Orsted was a form of proof.

"Ehm, that is.... If I am not at home, there will be one less person, working to support the family. Although it cannot be said that I earn much...previously to fight Orsted-sama, a lot, that is, has been used up. Even the reserves...though there was still some left, it can be said that the bottom can be seen. Thus, if I do not work, the dinner will have one less dish. And, we still have young ones in the middle of their growth spurt."

"...In other words, it is about money."

"To put it in simple terms, that is it, hehe."

While I made an embarrassed, vulgar laugh, Orsted took something out of his pocket.

It was a dagger in its splendidly ornamented sheath.

No, a short sword.

It was put on top of the table.

"This is one of 48 demon swords, crafted from the bones of King Ryuuou by the demon realm's craftsman Yulian Jalisco. It is the demon sword Yubi Ori[Prominent]. If you sell it, you would probably receive about 100,000 Asura gold coins. It will be your current budget."

"Oh, yes..."

100,000 Asura gold coins.

In this currency, one Asura gold coin is worth about 100,000 yen...ehm, ehm.

So it's equivalent to 10 bi, billion yen!?

Is this not an amount that allows you to play around your whole life.

It may be enough to build a castle.

"So it is not enough?"

"N, no, how is that possible."

This is bad.

That guy, he gave me such an expensive item, exactly what is he going to make me do.

Ah, to fight against Human God.

...But, it became a little more scary.

But, even if he says it is my current budget, exactly who would pay so much money to buy one sword.

Asura's royal family?

Am I going to squeeze one of Ariel's brothers dry?

"B, but, it would be extremely hard to turn this into money, I think."

"Hm...I see. That is true. Then, is something like this better?"

Saying so, Orsted took out a leather bag.

It was casually put on the table and made a sound like stones were rubbing against each other.

I stretched out my hands towards the leather bag to see what was inside.

Colorful and transparent stones were inside.

They were blue, red, green, yellow, black and white.

"These are gems...?"

"They are magic stones. They may be small, but I have chosen ones dyed in a color. If you sell them at the magic guild, they will become a large sum of money."

Colored magic stones.

And so many of them...

Unlike the demon sword, you wouldn't be able to build a castle, but it would be enough to play around for 10 years.

I wonder if it's all right to receive something like this.

While I was thinking, I took a glance at Orsted's face.

"Do you still need more."

Is more coming?

No, but.

Receiving any more.

Would be somewhat scary.

"No...for the time being, this is enough."

The magic stones and the short sword were placed in the pocket while answering.

Somehow it felt like receiving dangerous items, it was itching.

I think I will have Eris take the short sword...

"Then, I will read this diary, but what will you do?"

"Let's see. I will wait."

"It will take a day."

"Ah...then, what to do. Today is still early...is it better to continue the story?"

"No, if you believe that this diary is important, it would be better to read it first."

Though whether it was important or not was difficult to say.

Just, I felt that it was better to read it at least once.

Orsted can roughly see the future.

Thus if he took a look at my diary, he may come to some kind of realization.

"Then, I will come again tomorrow to this place."

"Ah."

"...Do you intend to sleep here?"

"Ah."

"I understand."

Saying my farewell, I left the hut and returned to the house.

On the way home.

In the evening, Eris was walking one step ahead.

Somehow I ended up hearing about many difficult to understand topics.

My head felt heavy.

My tired head was only looking at the incredible buttocks before me.

Eris's butt was amazing.

There was a perfect harmony between muscle and fat.

It gave off an incredible feeling.

What can come out will come out.

It would be what was known as sex appeal.

Eris was perfectly wearing her bottoms where the buttocks line appeared.

It was a very impressive line.

You could understand that it was just about to burst out.

Whether it was spats or leggings.

Hm, exactly what leather was the material made off, I don't think I have seen such an odd animal.

No, that elasticity may come from the cloth.

I felt that if I touched it, I would understand.

That's right, I should just touch it.

If I touch it, I would unravel one of the mysteries in the world in exchange for momentary pain.

All right.

Eris could use the [Sword of Light], I will also show that I can use the [Touch of Light].

"Rudeus."

Suddenly Eris turned around.

I hurriedly raise up my face.

"...Rudeus is Rudeus, right?"

As usual, Eris's face was shaped like the character へ.

She somehow understood all the talk regarding reincarnation.

"Ah. I am me. I seem to have the Laplace Factor, but I'm not someone entirely different."

"Then, nothing will change from now on?"

"That's the intention. Only something that was not known became clear, nothing will change."

I declared without making excuses or apologizing.

Eris seems to have kept up with the topics from before.

I wonder if she understood it.

To Orsted, reincarnation seemed to be like a daily occurrence, while I, who read Sci-Fi in my previous life, was somehow able to understand it.

But I wonder if someone without any prior knowledge would be able to keep up with the topics just now.

No, even Eris is supposed to be around 20 years old.

It's not an age where you never need to think.

It's my own selfish wish for Eris to forever remain an idiot.

"Fufun~."

In the situation where I didn't know whether Eris understood it or not, she said.

"You want to keep it a secret from Sylphy and Roxy?"

"If possible, but if you want to reveal it, I will say it."

As I answered, Eris was running two, three steps and stopped.

The sunset was right behind her.

Her beautiful proportions were cast in shadow by the light behind her.

As her red hair was basking in the sunset, it shone like rubies.

Even with back-light, her well-defined facial features and the sharp glint in her eyes gave off a strong sense of presence.

How beautiful.

"Then, let's walk while holding hands."

Eris held out her hand.

I silently took her hand.

Contrary to her beautiful appearance there were sword calluses, and it was slightly rougher, which was a big difference compared to Sylphy and Roxy.

The hand that wrapped around mine was warm and strong.

I grasped it tightly in return and began walking.

To walk side by side with Eris after such a long time, made me happy for some reason.

The next day.

For the second time, I proceeded towards Orsted's place.

Today, I went alone.

I asked Eris to guard the house.

Right now she is the watchdog.

If a suspicious guy comes, she is to help Aisha send them away.

With this, the security of my home is perfect.

I had her protect the house, at least until the guardian magical beast is summoned.

Since Eris came along, it should be fine to take Sylphy and Roxy along as well...

But due to Orsted's curse, they will most likely become hostile towards him.

In the end, going alone was better.

Outside the hut, Zanoba was dead.

Leaning against the almost 3 meter tall metal mass, he was lying on his face.

"No way...!"

I rushed towards him in a hurry, put my hand on his shoulder and shook it.

"Are you serious, hey, Zanoba...hey!"

Pulse——was beating.

Pupil——was moving.

Breath——was there.

Body temperature——was warm.

Looks like he was still alive...!

I was too hasty. He was not dead.

He was just sleeping.

"Haa...I was perplexed..."

Jesus, I almost cried.

Why was this guy sleeping in a place like this.

He should just sleep like royalty on a soft bed...He is already at an advanced age.

While I was relieved, Orsted came out from inside the hut.

"You came, Rudeus."

"Ah, yes, I have arrived."

He moved his eyes and stared at Zanoba and me.

"Last night, Zanoba Shirone suddenly came and brought that along."

"That?"

"The armor that you used."

Ah, when taking a closer look, wasn't this wreck the magic armor.

It couldn't be recognized with one glance, because it was divided into parts.

Come to think of it, when I gave back the report saying they should just leave it alone because it was broken, I also said that I would come back for it soon.

"So did you fight when you encountered each other?"

"Ah."

Surely Zanoba never imagined to run into Orsted in this place.

Maybe it would have been better to tell him about this yesterday...

Ah well, no external wounds can be seen, it seems Orsted went easy on him.

"In the end he could not take it because of the curse, so he said he will leave it to you and crawled over to there. You sure are highly cherished."

"Zanoba~!"

Without thinking, I rushed towards Zanoba and started using healing magic.

Because there wasn't an external injury, there was most likely no meaning in using it, but at the very least I wanted him to have a peaceful sleep.

Or rather, when he fell down here, did he land on his head.

Orsted has no mercy.

"Then, he will open his eyes again, right?"

"I put him to sleep with hypnosis magic that is passed down in the Nuka-tribe. He will wake up in a few hours."

I see.

With hypnosis magic.

I wonder what kind of magic it is.

Could you freely manipulate your opponent with it.

For example, if I gave Sylphy the order [Roll up your skirt], would she do exactly as told.

No, even if hypnosis wasn't used, she would do so.

Then again, to make that order Sylphy has to first wear a skirt.

A miniskirt would be great.

A miniskirt like those fairies wear would surely suit Sylphy.

Though in this country they do not sell something like a miniskirt.

But well, if you could freely manipulate others, Orsted would use it more often.

It looks like the best it could do was to make others fall asleep.

"Let us go inside and continue yesterday's conversation."

Orsted immediately went inside after saying that.

After putting a jacket over Zanoba and creating a roof with magic, I went inside.

On the way back, I will bring him to Ginger's place.

"Then, it may be sudden, but let us move to the main topic."

Hearing Orsted's words, I sat at the table.

Orsted took out the diary from his breast pocket and put it on the table.

"It was a rather interesting diary...while I have some interest in the time travel magic, but since we cannot replicate it, let us leave it alone for the time being."

"Yes."

"Although there are still some things to be worried about... Before we start talking about the contents of the diary, first tell me about the conversations until now between you and Human God. I will have you spit out everything."

"With pleasure."

I then recalled and recited everything, from when I first met Human God and everything afterwards.

Until now, I have met with Human God...

Directly after the teleportation.

In the town of Rikaris.

In Wind port.

In East port.

Directly after almost getting killed by Orsted.

Before enrolling into the magic university.

Right before I went to Begaritt continent.

Just before the me came from the future.

Right after the me came from the future.

During the preparation to fight against Orsted.

These ten times.

I went into detail in every one of them.

As well as the outcome, exactly what and how it happened.

Just after the teleportation. Being told to rely on Ruijerd.

As a result, we become adventurers.

In the town of Rikaris. Being told to accept the request to look for the pet.

As a result, we met with Jaril and Veskel, but were eventually forced out of town.

In Wind port. To go into a back alley while holding food.

As a result, I met the Great Demon Empress and gained a demon eye.

In East Port. Being shown a prediction and being told to go to Shirone.

As a result, I became acquainted with Zanoba and rescued Lilia and Aisha.

Directly after almost getting killed by Orsted. I did not receive advice.

Before enrolling into the magic university. Being told to go to the magic university and research about the mana calamity.

As a result, I reunited with Sylphy and married her.

Right before I went to Begaritto continent. Being told to not go to Begaritto continent.

As a result of going against his advice, Paul died, Zenith became disabled and I married Roxy. Human God said that if I hadn't gone, Paul would have survived.

Just before the me came from the future. Being told to go to the basement.

The moment I tried to go, the me from the future came and told me what would have happened. The rat was definitely inside.

Right after the me came from the future. He appeared with a displeased face and told me to kill Orsted.

I accordingly did so and started the preparations to kill Orsted.

During the preparation. He was talking freely about the armor. As a result, the completion was hurried.

Orsted was quietly listening to the story.

While neither adding to the conversation or asking questions.

He was just quietly listening.

"——That is all. Did you understand something?"

Orsted nodded when being asked.

"Ah, I understood exactly how he used you."

Oh. So it was a fact.

As expected it was Orsted's area of expertise.

"He has used you to change the history."

"Hm, the history."

"Originally the history preordained by strong fate was not supposed to change."

"...Is that because my fate is strong?"

"Yes."

It seems my destiny power could change the history.

"But, if Orsted-sama intended to change it, it would change, right?"

"Ah."

As he nodded, he tapped on the diary lying on top of the table.

"But I do not grasp the reason why Human God has changed history to this degree."

"Is the reason not to prevent his own death?"

"Do not just blindly believe in his words."

"Ah, yes."

Well, there was the possibility of being lied to.

"Anyway, I understood one thing."

"What would that be."

"The fact that after changing history this way, in the end a favorable future for him awaits."

"I see."

In one beat, Orsted said.

"Thus I will make you change history, to a future that will be favorable for me."

So it's not to return it to its original path.

It makes sense.

What has not happened is not part of history.

History is what you make.

"It is a rather tedious way."

"I am already preparing and moving while thinking about what will happen in a 100 years time. What has happened and what will happen, everything is strategic preparation. Because of Nanahoshi and you, things have become distorted..."

In a 100 years time.

It appears he has started preparing a long time ago, to now change his strategy seemed no longer viable.

"...Just for confirmation, it appears we cannot go to the place where Human God is and beat him up together, right?"

"Until we have collected hidden treasures, we cannot reach Human God."

"And we cannot collect them right now?"

"It is possible to collect 4, but the last one is in Laplace's possession. Laplace's revival is about 80 years from now. ...I will retrieve the hidden treasure. Be sure not to act in a selfish manner?"

Selfish or not.

It was not like I knew where those hidden treasures were located.

Though it was written in the diary that they were in the possession of the five dragon leaders.

But the only place I knew was Perugius's place.

Hm? But isn't the plan compromised by the fact that the Mad Dragon King Chaos has died?

"I have heard that the Mad Dragon King Chaos has passed away, is it still all right?"

"Chaos's part has already been collected."

I see, so the preparations have already been done.

"But, the plan to have me change the future may have already been predicted by Human God."

"Hm?"

"Is there not also the possibility that by moving this way, we will dig our own grave?"

"None. The possibility is high that he possesses the characteristic to be unconditionally trusted by the living beings in this world in addition to his strong future sight...on the other hand, he is not good dealing with irregulars."

Is that so.

I wonder whether Human God also possesses a curse...

But no, there would be no trust.

After all I did not trust him.

Then again Orsted's curse does not work on me.

Thus Human God's curse would also not work on me.

There was a feeling that Human God was struggling in his conversations with me.

But thinking back, in the beginning I did seem to trust his words a lot.

So it can be said that the curse was not completely working?

So there was also the possibility that one day I will become fearful towards Orsted?

No, Orsted's information may be not completely true.

The fact that he is unconditionally trusted by all living beings, there is the possibility that it can be ruled out.

In the end, I had no clue what was correct or not.

Unexpectedly, that [Curses do not affect me] may only be half-true.

At first I was quite scared regarding Orsted.

On the other hand, on the way I began trusting Human God more and more.

Ah well, I didn't know about this. Let's put it aside.

"Even if you look ahead...you may not win."

"I can."

Orsted declared so.

"He is not omnipotent, it is just one more step."

Those words were not directed towards me.

It was as if Orsted was persuading himself.

Orsted intended to win.

Even if I was inferior midway, I will be the one to win in the end, such mettle could be felt.

How dependable.

"For the time being, we will change the most recent history."

"The most recent?"

"That is right."

Continuing, Orsted said this.

"To turn Asura Kingdom's second princess, Ariel Anemoi Asura, into the Asura Kingdom's queen."

"Ooh."

"If it is necessary, we will manipulate her like a puppet."

"Ooh?"

Like a puppet.

How to say, they were words that caused a bad feeling.

"I wonder if that Ariel-sama can be so easily manipulated."

"Even though I said like a puppet, it is not such an exaggerated thing. It is enough if there are ties to the Asura Kingdom in the future."

"I see."

When saying ties in the future, it is in anticipation for the next 100 years.

If we started something now, the results will show themselves in a 100 years time.

For example, to help regarding the study of magic.

For example, to strengthen the armaments.

For example, to extinguish the spark that will lead to the collapse of the kingdom.

"I wonder if doing something like that will be all right."

"There is no problem. In the first place, in the history that I know of, Ariel was supposed to become queen."

"Ho, is it possible to hear details regarding that history?"

"All right."

Orsted nodded and began to narrate.

"According to the original history, Ariel Anemoi Asura should have become queen. This was protected by a considerably powerful fate...it was a settled matter."

"One would not think so if one saw the current Ariel-sama."

"I suppose."

The fortune of Ariel as of late has started to wane.

Even I could see and understand that, she was getting nowhere when speaking with Perugius.

It may be because of that, that Sylphy seemed to be busy going here and there.

Though they gave their best, it felt tough.

"To make Ariel queen, the power of three people are required. The first one is the guardian magician Derrick Redbat."

Guardian magician Derrick.

He was the magician that acted as Ariel's escort before Sylphy.

He seemed to have died because of the mana calamity.

"He was a shrewd man, possessing a strong ambition. If the mana calamity had not happened, Ariel was fated to encounter Perugius. And the one who at that time would have persuaded Perugius was Derrick."

That is to say that if that Derrick fellow was alive right now, the situation right now would not be like this.

"Even after this, Derrick would have remained as Ariel's advisor and would eventually become the prime minister."

Prime minister.

No wonder he was such an important person.

"Such a person disappeared due to the mana calamity?"

"That is right. Though he was supposed to have been protected by a strong fate...he died."

Even with fate, it didn't seem to be infallible.

It would be better to not think that because I possess a strong fate, I could not die.

"In other words, it would be fine to find another person."

"No, if we are to manipulate, a prime minister would become a hindrance instead. He is not needed."

"Without a prime minister, will Ariel be able to do it?"

"With Ariel coming to the magic city Sharia, there has been a change in talented personnel. There is no problem."

Then it's fine.

If we tried to follow that path, it seems it will backfire.

Well, that being said, it's better if I didn't become the prime minister.

I was not particularly smart.

"The second one was Eris Boreas Greyrat."

"Eris?"

I wonder how she was related to this.

Apart from being nobility from Asura, they don't have anything else in common.

"Originally, after training her sword arm, Eris was supposed to enter the Asura's chivalric order. There she would meet Luke and they were fated to marry."

"Hee~....."

There was a tingling sensation in my chest.

"Wait a minute, the image of Eris and Luke marrying does not seem possible."

"For Luke it was love at first sight."

"You serious."

So Luke was that, huh.

The descendant of a hero or something?

No, it wouldn't be weird for him to fall for Eris at first sight.

She was incredibly beautiful.

Her chest was huge.

Her body was quite erotic.

It wouldn't be weird for someone to be suddenly deceived by her appearance.

"No matter how many times he was hit, against Luke Notus Greyrat's relentless attacks, Eris Boreas Greyrat eventually gave in. But after marriage, they were a rather happily married couple."

Hm.

A happily married couple.

Hee~, haa~...if you properly looked deep enough, even Eris has some cute spots.

...But there was a feeling of being NTR'd.

Right, once I'm back, let's rub Eris's breasts from behind.

I will most likely be hit, but everything, everything has its price.

To touch those breasts, even becoming punch-drunk would be fine.

"To you it would be an unpleasant topic."

"Ehm, to be honest."

"I see. Then let me summarize it."

I do not know about any other history.

The history where Eris and Luke stuck together did not exist.

In the current history, the one receiving Eris's love is only me.

Eris is mine only.

"Unlike now, the Eris Boreas Greyrat I knew was a swordswoman, whose sword arm had the potential to become Saint-ranked. Because she was from a good family, had beautiful looks and coupled with her harsh personality, she was called the Red Lion."

The Red Lion.

If I remember right, since young Eris was called wild monkey or something like that.

If I compare them, she seemed to have risen up.

Though she was known as Mad Sword King right now...wait, in the end she was still a beast.

"Together with Luke, Eris protected Ariel from assassins countless times, and helped pave Ariel's road to become queen."

"So it is the position Sylphy is in right now."

"That's right."

"...And in that history, what was supposed to happen to Sylphy?"

Though it wasn't related, let's hear it.

"Sylphiette became Roxy Migurdia's disciple and became an adventurer. Due to her green hair, she seems to have been disliked, but she eventually managed to conquer several dungeons and became world-famous as a Dungeon Traveler[Dungeon Explorer]."

"Ohh."

Incredible, Sylphy.

As expected from my Sylphy.

When I return, let me lick your ears.

"And, who did Sylphy marry with?"

"The reason I talk is not to satisfy your intellectual curiosity."

So I was told directly.

I'm sorry.

But when I became dejected, Orsted let out a sigh and continued.

"To my knowledge, Sylphiette and Roxy Migurdia did not marry anyone and lived their lives as singles."

Is that so, thank you very much.

I see, I see.

So Sylphy and Roxy were singles.

Ah~, so those two only belong to me.

I was somehow happy.

Especially after being told that Eris and Luke were supposed to be married.

So this is what's known as possessiveness, huh.

Those two belonged to this one.

I will definitely not hand them over to anyone.

"Is there anyone else from your family that you want to know the history of?"

"No, let us continue with the story."

Though I want to hear...

A story about a world where I didn't exist, even if I heard it, nothing could be done about it.

Then, hearing only the necessary parts was fine.

Let that be enough to satisfy my curiosity.

"Instead of Eris, Sylphy took on that duty, that should be fine, right."

"Ah. The fact that Ariel is alive is proof of that. Furthermore, because Eris was accompanying Ariel, Philip Boreas Greyrat and Sauros Boreas Greyrat joined the faction of the second princess."

Hm, more people who passed away.

Both Philip and Sauros have already died.

To think that those two should have become Ariel's comrades...

Wasn't the current situation rather severe.

"Then the third person?"

"Tristina Purplehorse."

Tristina Purplehorse?

...Someone I didn't know, huh.

"Tristina was a child from Asura's upper aristocracy's family Purplehorse, but was abducted when she was 8 years old and became a sex slave to senior minister Darius Silver Ganius."

Darius.

Wasn't he the minister holding the most power in the Asura kingdom right now.

He was in the first prince's faction.

To make an 8 year old child his sex slave, he sure has an interesting taste.

Then again, the first prince...what was his name again?

"Tristina was supposed to be disposed of in secret, but was fortunately helped by Ariel. Though he was a senior minister, he could not escape the charges after imprisoning a child from the Purplehorse family for so many years. As a result, the senior minister lost his position and the first prince Gravel lost influence."

The first prince's name was Gravel.

Right, remember it.

"Understood, then where is Tristina in the current history?"

"Her position is unknown."

"She was not dead?"

"Because a big incident happened, Darius had to immediately reorganize his surroundings. To dispose of his sex slaves, the possibility that they died is high."

So it's a problem of possibility.

It seemed the probability of her being dead was higher.

"Darius sold the sex slaves, who should have been disposed, at the slave market to raise money. Thus the women who became slaves were most of the time bought by someone else and continued as a slave, or were taught techniques, if they were not adults yet, and became thieves."

At that moment, Orsted tapped at my diary.

"I am intrigued about the woman called Tris, who is mentioned in the diary."

Tris.

If I remember right, she was the thief woman the me in the diary met when infiltrating the Asura Kingdom.

Though the diary wasn't written any further.

"But the name Tris is not an uncommon name in Asura."

This and that.

That was because there were all kinds of -ris in Asura.

"True, but as far as I know, a thief woman called Tris does not exist in that region. Also, the characteristics of Tristina and the thief woman mentioned in the diary seem to match."

Ah, I see.

A person, whose history wasn't known by Orsted, suddenly appeared in the diary.

So because the names are similar, there's a chance that they are the same person.

Even so, Tristina and Tris.

If they were the same person, I wonder if she named herself Tris because it was easier to call.

It was a feeling as if the rest was spirited away.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Spirited Away anime film where a character's name was changed because part of the name was stolen. }

"So by obtaining that person, it is possible to ruin the senior minister."

"It's because she is a live witness."

Then for Ariel to become queen, she was someone we had to get in contact with.

"I wonder why she did not return to her parent's house."

"Officially it was a kidnapping, but she was sold by Purplehorse behind the scenes."

"If it was revealed that she was sold away as a sex slave by her parent's house, they would lose their power?"

"Because the supposed kidnapping was revealed. As long as a reason exists to attack others, anything would have been fine."

I see.

Since Darius had many enemies, who and where had what circumstances, anything would have been fine.

For a girl from upper aristocracy to be abducted and violated against her will, if that was the truth, it wouldn't be difficult to ruin Darius.

"It is a rather disturbing country."

"True. But because it was full of such people, they hold the most power in this world. Disregarding the fact that they live on rich lands."

Well, there were likely many good diplomats or so.

Though it may be bias, even if internally they pull each other's legs, their connection with other countries seemed to be good.

"Regardless, as long as Tristina exists, we can force senior minister Darius's downfall. Once he is gone, the rest will somehow fall in place."

"Is senior minister Darius such a powerful person?"

"Ah, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the current king only became king because of Darius."

Is that so.

I wonder if he was the kind that was good at collecting money and laying the groundwork like ***sawa.

"If we fail to cause his ruin...you will kill him."

"Eh, I am to kill him?"

"Yes. With your powerful fate, killing him should be easy."

It seemed that whether or not you are able to kill your opponent was decided by the strength of your fate.

Ah right, wasn't this also Human God's argument on whether or not I could kill Orsted?

"...Understood."

Though there was some resistance towards killing people.

But if it was related to protecting my family, I will try my best.

The opponent was an evil minister.

Then it was fine.

If the opponent was scum, he couldn't be regarded as a human.

"But if I followed the story correctly, wasn't there also the faction of the second prince? Is it fine to leave him alone?"

"The second prince Halfaus. A path that would lead him to become king does not exist. If he was not a possible candidate to become king, there were few who truly thought of him becoming king."

"However nothing is certain this time, even if the chance was low, he may become king."

The second prince. Halfaus was the name.

I neither knew his face or personality, but if he was considered as a candidate, he should be excellent.

We don't know what could happen.

"There is no problem. If we happen to fail, we will succeed next time."

"Next time? Is it about the next move?"

"A-...Ah, that is right."

"What will become of Ariel?"

"She will die."

Having been alive for 2000 years, I wonder if one or two failures are tolerable.

After all in a long, thought-out plan, not everything can be successful.

So for a strategic move in a 100 years' time, it would be fine even if one or two things were missing.

But still.

"Let us stop here, saying such momentary things will only make Human God snicker."

Being told so, Orsted had a furious look.

It was a scary face.

But I still continued.

"It is possible that afterwards the failures will continue. As a result, the final conflict might be influenced."

While I agreed that it was fine as long as you win in the end one way or another, if Ariel were to die, there existed the possibility that Sylphy will be involved.

I also promised Ghyslaine to introduce her to Ariel.

The followers' misfortune was my misfortune.

I did not wish for misfortune.

"Let us take care of each and every one. To win every single challenge with the utmost caution."

"...That goes without saying."

Orsted firmly nodded.

"Anyway, the first objective is to make Ariel queen. Orsted-sama will give instruction and I will be the one moving...so to say."

"That is right."

So this was the feeling of being backed by someone.

The feeling of being backed by Orsted's Dragon God association.

But revealing this was a little troublesome.

"Let us also make plans on how to deal with the second Prince Halfaus."

"Very well. Regarding him, leave it to me. I will cause the downfall of the major nobles that follow him. Although he did not have the desire to become king, that will be enough to weaken his will to fight."

From his tone, I noticed something.

It may not matter who became king from Orsted's view.

Even if Ariel died and Halfaus became king.

In that case, it would be fine to insinuate myself into his faction.

"The start of the operation will surely be soon."

"In January, the information that the king fell ill will arrive."

"Until then?"

"Until then, complete your preparations."

With Orsted's words, the objective for the time being was decided.

Well, then, preparations.

Even if he said preparations, exactly what should I prepare.

While establishing contact with Ariel and Luke was obvious, there were also other preparations to be made.

"Exactly what should I prepare."

"First it will be your equipment. Most likely you will have to fight against Human God's apostles. Although just your body should be enough, it would be better to have protective equipment."

Orsted looked outside the hut when saying so.

There was the magic armor, the parts of which were in pieces, and Zanoba, who was sleeping peacefully.

When looking closely, even the right hand's gatling was brought along.

"Although it was far from the Fighting God's armor, it is a terrific armor. It must have been hard work to build something like that."

"Well...I did receive a lot of advice from Human God."

"Is that so...so he also dug his own grave. So, what is the epitaph?"

"Epitaph, you say?"

"The name of that armor."

"Magic Armor[Magic-driven Armor]."

"I see...a rather boring name. Should I give it a new one? Let's see..."

"No thank you."

Orsted squinted his eyes and laughed.

Even this guy's smile was eccentric.

Leaving the name aside, I wonder what Cliff and Zanoba would think about receiving praise from Dragon Orsted regarding the performance.

"If you plan to keep continuing it in the future, it would be good to improve it a little more. With that, you will use up all your magic with only one use."

"Even so, if we miniaturize it, it will not be ready in a month's time."

"Then we will leave it out this time..."

After saying that, Orsted put his hand on his chin and nodded.

I wondered if he planned to help with the production.

Is he going to give our armor the mark of the Dragon God?

"But it's a problem that you can not wear fighting spirit. For now, wear this robe."

"Ah, yes. Thank you very much."

That robe was surely very valuable.

"Let us also prepare magic items that you seem to be able to use."

"..."

The best environment, pay and equipment.

Did Orsted plan to prepare all of them.

There was a big difference compared to Human God's lousy pitches.

"Come to think of it, I have heard that the Fighting God's armor was the most powerful, exactly what was it?"

"It was Demon Dragon King Laplace's greatest masterpiece, as well as his greatest failure."

Laplace's greatest masterpiece.

So it was Laplace that created it.

"On the surface the magic released will have a golden shine and the person equipped to it will gain the strongest power. However, because of the massive magic it is self-conscious and will take over the mind of the one equipped to it, it is a cursed armor."

A cursed armor...

Ah, was that what the dragon-tribe was good at making.

It felt like all Laplace was making were cursed items.

Supard tribe's spears, the armor...he didn't seem to have made any useful things.

"Furthermore, right now it was sleeping in the middle of ocean rings, deep underneath."

"..."

Orsted seemed to know just about everything.

There was nothing he didn't know.

"And, let me give you this."

While saying so, Orsted took out something like a scroll from his pocket.

Receiving and opening it, a magic circle was inscribed on it.

"This is?"

"What was mentioned yesterday, a magic circle to summon a guardian magical beast."

"Oh~."

"Imagine a being to protect your family while pouring magic into it. Even words are fine. Then something corresponding to it should be summoned."

"Is an image good enough?"

"Your magic is vast. Even without going into full details, you should be able to summon someone good."

Even if I was told that someone good will be found.

But well, if it was like that, I will give it a try.

"I hope something weird will not be summoned. Like a little girl, starting with demon and ending with emperor."

"It is up to you exactly what will be summoned...but Kishirika Kishirisu possesses vast magic. Such a small magic circle could not summon someone like her."

So the problem is size.

Oh well.

"Anyway, regarding the guardian magical beast, I will summon it tomorrow."

"Ah."

"First I should deepen friendly relations with Luke and Ariel and prepare for battle."

"That is right."

"Understood."

For now, this should be it to the discussion.

Ah, right.

I forgot to ask one more important matter.

"...Come to think of it, it seems my descendants will be helping Orsted-san. It should be better to create many of them, right? And, if I have [too many] children, will Laplace be among them?"

"...Laplace will not be born amongst your children. Do as you like."

"Understood. I will do as I like."

Then let's give birth and increase our forces a little bit.

Even Orsted would be happier to be surrounded by a great number of comrades.

"Then, please excuse me for today. Unless this summoning magic circle is used, we will not know whether it works."

"Ah."

"Then, until another day. If something occurs, please contact my house again."

While standing up.

I remembered one more thing that needed to be asked.

"Come to think of it, Orsted-sama. Have you visited Nanahoshi yet?"

"...No I have not."

"Although it is not something I should say, but if you are anxious to be called by her, it would make me happy if you could forgive her. It was me who grabbed hold of her weakness and forced her to become my comrade."

"..."

Orsted did not say a thing.

Even I did not want others to be in discord because of me.

"Nanahoshi was against me fighting you. It was because she was indebted to me."

"..."

"She still seems to regret manipulating you, if Orsted-san still has room in your heart to forgive Nanahoshi, could you agree with meeting with her once more, even if only to hear her apology?"

"I know. I will do so. Only because Nanahoshi was...was a useful woman."

That's true.

She was very useful.

Hm,hm.

"Ah, right. I remembered because of the topic right now. Ignoring my side for now, it would be inconvenient if it was not possible for you to contact me. Take this with you."

Orsted took out from his breast pocket a single ring and put it on the table.

I have seen it somewhere.

It was very recent.

Or rather, wasn't this what Nanahoshi had and I used for the trap.

"If some emergency comes up, use it to call me."

When you used this ring, for a short time magic will be released.

While it released magic, it will become a compass, with the other pair pointing towards the direction of the other.

If this was a magic tool, it seemed like it would be possible to create a radar...

Unfortunately it seemed reproducing the effects of magic items was very difficult.

Even so, for him to give me this...

He was confident in repelling another one of my surprise attacks, so to say.

Or alternatively, he had enough trust in me that I will not attempt another surprise attack.

...Let's assume the latter.

Even Orsted would not want to go all-out a second or third time and use his sumptuous magic.

If he places his trust in me, then I have a duty to respond to it.

"I have received it. Then, until another day."

Taking the ring, I left the hut.

Afterwards I carried Zanoba and took him to Ginger's room.

I left a message saying [The request to repair the magic armor will be at a later date].

When I returned home, Sylphy was sullenly waiting.

I explained to Sylphy, who was angry that I left the second time without telling where I went, about meeting Orsted.

While hiding the future course of action, I told her that I will be moving here and there for the next month.

Then I carried out my duty to increase Orsted's future allies by inviting her to the bed gradually.

The one thing necessary for this duty was love.

While making some excuse, that day I slept soundly.

A postponement of one month was granted.

During this time I had things that had to be done.

Even so, the time of one month was short, there were few things that could be done.

I could not get carried away just because I had Orsted's backing.

Though it may have been said in the heat of the moment, he seemed to think that even if we failed this time, there will be a next time.

Maybe he was even thinking of developing a magic to return to the past after reading my diary.

...Alternatively he may have already experienced a time slip himself.

In hindsight, when Orsted used the word [next time], he made a face as if saying [damn it].

Not just once or twice, the possibility existed that he repeatedly time slip'd.

If that was true, why didn't he reveal it to me.

Even so, the me, who has kept various things hidden from my family, could somehow understand.

Things that were hard to explain would be hidden underneath lies and deception.

...In fact, he may be hiding unfavorable things from me because he still doubted me, so even if he was betrayed, I could not do anything about it in the current situation.

For now I wished to conduct myself in a way to not be hated by him.

Thus let's first forget his secrets.

Even if Orsted had a next time, I did not have that.

You only get one life.

Though I said that, it wasn't very convincing.

I have listened to the story of the me who came from the future and in the end read the diary.

I could feel with my skin that it was a life filled with regret.

I did not have the feeling that as long as I could redo, it was fine.

...Or rather.

If I thought that way, I felt like I would betray everything I have done so far.

So let's put forth as much effort as possible.

Exactly what to do in specific terms.

Strengthening the body.

Training your magic.

After that, continuing with what I have always done.

It was not as if by increasing the amount of training, I would suddenly get stronger.

Continuing would become strength.

Let's do what I have always done.

Apart from that, it was agreed to have mock battles.

Until now I have thought that something was missing.

Although practice and training were important, to learn how to effectively use the trained techniques, mock battles were necessary after all.

In sports it would be called sparring.

An outdoor match called a fighting game.

Although it was only a simulation, such a thing will become combat experience.

The opponent was Eris.

Eris was a Sword King and in close combat she was already overwhelmingly stronger than me, there was nothing to complain about.

Well, there may be some dissatisfaction with me being Eris's opponent.

By having Eris frequently fight against tricks like quagmire and dense fog, I thought I would give my best to have them become her experience.

She seemed to be somewhat weak against tricks.

By the way, she had almost forgotten everything that she was taught a long time ago.

Though she was still able to use simple beginner magic and could also speak Demon God language.

But language, mathematics, science and etiquette in society did not remain in her head.

In the end there were only things she liked to learn, so to say.

Though I thought it was enough to have at least one Merit[Sword Technique].

Anyway, training proceeded in that way.

It would be terrible to be attacked when taking a bath in the bathroom, because holding mock battles with Eris was very tiring, but for now there was no problem.

But still, Eris was a mysterious woman.

Even though she herself would excessively touch me, when I was touching her, I would get hit for some reason.

It was illogical.

Regarding equipment, I asked Zanoba and Cliff to repair and improve the magic armor.

Like miniaturizing and making it more efficient.

Performance-wise it would be detuned.

Although it would not be completed within a month, I will look at it in the long-term.

There was also some talk about Orsted providing some technology, they will somehow manage it within a few years.

For this job in Asura Kingdom I will wear the equipment Orsted had prepared and given to me.

Surely I will be wearing equipment that was enough to cause the downfall of a country.

It was not as if I disliked the robe Sylphy selected, but I was a boy after all.

My heart was dancing at the thought of new equipment.

Well then, training and equipment were continuously reinforced...

Regarding the other matter.

To do things that needed to be done in a short amount of time, a schedule was needed.

For that, this month's schedule was put up.

On the first day I was thinking of calling the guardian magical beast.

And then to see for a week whether the guardian magical beast was useful or not.

If it was all right, then I would contact Cliff next.

In addition to improving the equipment, there was one more thing I wanted to ask him.

It was mainly about curses...something like experiments.

While that was being prepared, I'd use Sylphy's connection to introduce Ghyslaine and Ariel.

During that time, use some excuse and then lead the topic into helping Ariel.

Then take one or two weeks to persuade Perugius.

It would be good to run that parallel with the request to Cliff.

For now I planned to move according to this schedule.

Although the main event, Ariel's matter, turned out to be the last...since both the guardian beast and Cliff seemed to be all right, if I go in a winding way it should be fine.

Thus the first matter was the summoning of the guardian magical beast.

The next day after I was called by Orsted to hear the future plan of action.

The entire family was brought together in the garden.

The ones who were usually in the house, Aisha, Lilia, Zenith and Eris, who recently became family.

Roxy and Norn went without saying, but even Jirou and Beat were there.

Lucy, who recently became able to walk, was in Sylphy's arm.

"I will now begin the summoning of our house's guardian magical beast. Applause please."

"Wa~."

Thunderous applause from everyone assembled.

Tonight it will become a legendary live event.

Oh my, why are Jirou-kun and Beat-kun not applauding.

That is not good.

We are going to summon a fellow comrade of yours?

"Regarding this time's summon, it is unknown exactly what will be called forth. But there is no doubt that we are going to summon something powerful. That being will then protect the safety of the family."

"Hey, since Orsted made it, will it be all right? It won't devour everyone in the family when Rudi goes out?"

Sylphy's anxious voice.

What a scary imagination.

But wait, wasn't such a thing written in a book I once read.

Summoning an uncontrollable magical beast and being devoured, something like that.

"No, but. The magic circle itself is guaranteed by Dragon God."

"That's why I'm worried."

Is that so.

However, I did not think that Orsted would use such indirect methods.

A strategic move for a later betrayal...?

But I thought that there was a rather low chance.

"Understood. For now I will call it. If it is dangerous, everyone will help defeat it and then we'll make an objection to Orsted."

"Understood!"

The one who replied cheerfully was Eris.

She spiritedly drew out her sword, making a sound.

By the way, the demon sword I received the other day, Yubi Ori[Prominent], was at Eris' hip.

Two she originally possessed were at her left, one was at her right hip.

I wondered if it was heavy.

"In that case, let us fight against Orsted together this time!"

We're not going to fight.

Only to complain.

If we fight, we may be wiped out this time.

Or rather, Eris seemed to be quite happy.

Was she looking for an excuse to fight against Orsted?

"Though we are no longer fighting against Orsted, there are opportunities to fight together with him from now on. Until then, please keep storing your energy."

Being told so, Eris was making a face as if saying [How boring].

It was fine if you wanted to fight anyone else, but Orsted was off-limits.

I never want to fight such a hopeless battle a second time.

At that time I may piss myself.

"Regardless, will that magic circle really be all right? Wouldn't it be better to show it to Perugius-sama and get confirmation first?"

Roxy's words.

She was probably wary because Orsted was the one who made it.

The curse Orsted was under was truly powerful.

I could easily conclude that the curse was authentic, judging from the too sensitive reaction of the surroundings.

Let's take another look at it.

"Hm."

From the looks of it, it was a normal summoning magic circle.

The summoning conditions were written using a technique that I didn't know of.

But I didn't feel anything strange about those.

It would be good to show them to Nanahoshi.

No, in the first place Orsted drew this summoning magic circle up because I couldn't.

What will I do if I doubt it.

"It's all right."

"If Rudi says so, I will believe it...but just a minute, I will be taking out my staff."

Roxy seemed to be doubtful.

Though she said she will believe me, she went back to the house and took out her favorite staff.

"While I don't know why the sisters are so cautious...Nii-san, is it really not something dangerous?"

Norn was a little bit anxious.

The one who tapped her on the shoulder was Aisha.

"You're a fool, Norn-ane. Onii-chan wouldn't use something truly dangerous so close to us."

Aisha's trust struck me in the chest a little.

When I truly, truly thought about it, I did not know about the safety check in this magic circle.

Was it really a good idea to use it.

Even now, asking Perugius [Is this magic circle really safe] would have been better.

In such a case, Aisha would look at me with sad eyes and I would be suspicious about Orsted.

No, no.

I believed in Orsted.

He said that he trusted me.

"When it comes down to it, I will become your shield. You can do it without reserve."

Lilia said some dangerous words.

Although I thought you shouldn't be doing such things.

With the surroundings saying such gloomy words, it truly seemed like it was something dangerous.

Is this really a good idea?

But all right.

"Then, I will be using the magic circle."

At those words, everyone nodded.

I put the said magic circle on a table that I created with magic.

"Right."

Gathering my spirit, I put my hand on the magic circle.

Concentrating my mind, with a feeling like letting magic into my blood stream, I sent out magic from my fingertips.

Thus I sent magic from my hand into the magic circle.

I was not stingy with the quantity of magic used.

After all its existence was to protect my family.

Even if too much, I was pouring all my magic into it.

Incidentally I also wanted Orsted to pour all his magic into it as well.

But even so, pouring all that magic into it didn't guarantee that a strong magical beast will be summoned.

Anyway, I will pour as much as I can.

Orsted also said that imagination was important.

An image to protect the family.

Even having said so, it was rather vague.

Hm, first and foremost it should be strong.

Strong enough to protect others even if someone comes.

It should also have strong feelings of loyalty.

Someone not defiant.

Also not someone vulgar since he was to protect the family.

It would be bad for my sisters' and Lucy's education if some Roper covered in viscous liquid appeared.

{ C-Editor's note: Roper - a monster from the Dungeons & Dragons role-playing game. }

Ah right, someone noble to become Lucy's knight.

Someone noble, with high loyalty and strong.

That's good.

Come forth~~.

"Come forth, guardian magical beast!"

The magic circle unleashed dazzling light.

Colorful lights were overflowing, not only white, but also green, red, blue and yellow lights.

Then suddenly there was a feeling as if the hand caught something.

What was it.

Anyway, I put in magic.

[Oooohhhh~~~]

A grumble could be heard somewhere.

Was this the voice of the guardian magical beast that will protect my family.

A bizarre voice like it was resisting something.

However, I put in more magic to drag it out from the magic circle.

"Oooohhhh~~~!!"

His voice could now be clearly heard and at the same time the supply of magic stopped.

The light was also dying out slowly.

What appeared from the dazzling light was...

"Damn..."

A yellow mask.

A familiar uniform, white clothes.

At his waist was a somewhat large dagger.

He was on his knees on top of the earth table, in a pose as if both his arms were hugging his own shoulders.

"Impossible...for me to...be severed from Perugius-sama..."

In that pose, he looked at this surroundings.

His eyes focused on me, even though his line of sight should not be known because of the mask he wore.

"What is your intention..."

He was whispering.

I couldn't tell him.

The splendorous Arumanfi.

Perugius's first servant was summoned.

A pose as if he was a fallen angel.

It could be described as having fallen from nobility.

Only splendor.

Or so~...ha.

"I asked what your intention is, Rudeus Greyrat!"

He jumped off from the table and tried grabbing my collar, but in the middle of it his body trembled and he suddenly stopped.

Seeing this, Eris prepared her sword.

For now she controlled her hand.

House, Eris.

But still, are you serious.

Possessing both splendor and nobility, that Arumanfi was summoned.

But this person was a spirit possessing a human form, so those could be summoned as well?

I couldn't understand that.

Or was I double-crossed by Orsted?

Like in fact Orsted wanted me to kill Perugius?

Do it yourself.

"...Well, no, even I don't know. The current situation was because the magic circle I got from Orsted-sama was used."

"Orsted's magic circle, was it...what is it used to summon?"

"My house's guardian magical beast."

Arumanfi picked up the magic circle on the table.

And raised a shocked voice when seeing its content.

"What a complex technique..."

"Ehm, what kind of techniques are they."

"It says to have absolute obedience towards you and to continue fending off disaster targeting your family."

It looked like it was like a slave contract magic circle.

But Orsted did not tell any lies after all!

"Anything else?"

"The summoning target was decided by the summoner."

Then it was me who summoned you.

All right.

"A change then."

"Change...?"

"Arumanfi-san, I messed up a bit, I will call someone else."

"Then quickly annul this contract. This Arumanfi is Perugius-sama's proud servant."

"Ah. Yes."

But it wouldn't be bad to be protected by Arumanfi.

It was somewhat staggering.

He would be incredibly useful as a communication link if something happened.

...No, he was also useful to Perugius, it would quickly become a fight.

"Ehm...how do you absolve it?"

"...Order me right now to go to Perugius-sama. Dotverse of Destruction will destroy the contract."

"I see."

"You must order it."

Because of absolute obedience, could he not move if I didn't give him the order to.

"Then...please take the magic circle and go to Perugius-sama's place, relaying that I would like to receive advice on how to summon a guardian magical beast."

Having been ordered, Arumanfi picked up the magic circle on the table, turned into light and disappeared.

"Sorry, I made a little blunder."

Looking back, the family was dumbfounded.

After a while, Arumanfi returned.

He conveyed Perugius's message as well as in the end added in a resentful voice [Next time will not be forgiven].

To him, being Perugius's servant was a status to be proud of.

To take that from him was something inexcusable.

The magic circle seemed to have lost its ability after annulling the contract, so Perugius appeared to have drawn up a new one.

Such a service after that treatment.

Perugius-sama was truly such a lenient person.

But still, the quality of this magic circle from the Dragon God was truly horrifying, making such a thing possible.

Or rather my magic, I guess.

Or it could have been both.

Both may only be small embers, but combining both together create a fire.

Anyway, I pulled myself together and tried once more.

According to Perugius's advice, rather than using ambiguous images like splendor, omniscience or omnipotent, it would be better to use images of animals.

That Orsted, I wish you had said something like this from the start.

Surprisingly he may say something like having Arumanfi was fine.

"Then, once more."

I looked at the surroundings and put my hand on the magic circle.

Let's go with a clear image this time.

A strong, proud animal.

A lion.

While I didn't know whether lions existed in this world, but I heard the word lion, it was surely somewhere.

The king of beasts.

Imagining the strongest animal amongst beasts.

Ah, but when considering loyalty, rather than a cat, a dog would be better.

No, it already had absolute obedience, let's focus more on its strength.

The greatest animal in this world.

I gathered all my body's magic in my right hand.

I opened my eyes and poured magic into the magic circle as if I was slamming it in.

C'mon~~.

"...!"

The magic circle released dazzling lights.

Just as the last time, colorful lights were overflowing.

This time there was no feeling that something was out of place.

Something has responded to my call from the smooth flow of magic.

A feeling like a hand was reaching out and I grabbed and pulled it.

I was certain that it succeeded.

"All right, come forth!"

"Waa~aauu!"

When I unintentionally called out, something let out a howl.

The howl gradually became stronger, resounding in my earlobe.

At the time as the summoning took place, a question emerged whether some voice must always be raised.

Ah well, either way was fine.

While I was thinking about that, the light subsided.

A white lion was there.

The size was about 2 metres.

Because there was no mane, it was likely female.

Incidentally its lips were long and when comparing both, it resembled a dog more than a cat.

Or rather, this wasn't a lion.

It was a dog.

And from the short limbs, it was a puppy.

Finally its fur wasn't white, but silver.

It was like a large-sized Mame Shiba.

Hmm...

Guess another failure.

"Wa~, so cute!"

"But isn't it a little unreliable as a guardian magical beast?"

Aisha and Norn let out a shrill and a discontented voice respectively.

"But for a puppy it has a pretty good look to it?"

"At the very least a pure presence can be felt you wouldn't expect from a magical beast."

Sylphy's and Roxy's reaction were fairly well.

Lilia wore a poker face so I couldn't tell, but she wasn't frowning.

Zenith was as usual.

I couldn't very well tell Beat's, but Jirou was already showing his belly and making a pose of obedience.

The first impression of the family wasn't bad.

But still, haven't I seen this puppy somewhere.

"Hey, wasn't this the one who took a liking to Rudeus in the Dorudia village?"

"Ah~."

Being told by Eris, I remembered.

How did Beast God language go again.

Ehm, like this.

"Are you by chance Holy Beast-sama?"

"Waffu"

Being asked, the brutish dog seemed to nod and licked my face.

This damn beast~.

Shit, I was being made a fool...

But I got it now.

"I see."

It was Holy Beast-sama.

The one in the innermost part of the Dorudia village and was taken very, very good care of, that Holy Beast-sama.

E~...what should I do.

If I said that he was summoned and put to work, wouldn't everyone in the beast-tribe be extremely angry?

Wouldn't it be dangerous to become a wanted criminal of the beast-tribe.

Can I also change this...

But if this contract was also annulled, wouldn't it be another annoyance to Perugius or Orsted.

In addition, even if it was changed, there wasn't a guarantee that a better guy will come.

Hm...

"Holy Beast-sama, do you possess the strength to protect this family from disasters?"

"Wafun!"

A reply like [Leave it to me].

It was full of motivation.

But wasn't this guy also kidnapped.

I wonder if it will be all right.

There was also a feeling that Orsted said that Human God wouldn't be able to meddle that much with my family.

"Uuhnn?"

While I was indecisive, Holy Beast-sama jumped off from the small table, rubbed my body and licked my face.

Ah, so soft.

Fur conditioner was definitely used.

If he became our guardian magical beast, I would be able to enjoy this coat of fur every day.

(No, we're mistaken. He wasn't Holy Beast-sama.)

Yes.

This wasn't a Holy Beast.

It was definitely not the guardian deity of the Dorudia-tribe.

There was no way Holy Beast-sama would come to a place like this.

It was a similar looking dog.

Yes, this was a lion.

It was a lion cub I called forth from one of the countless worlds.

Yes, it was decided.

It had now become so.

Or rather, they were going to become angry after today's summon.

If it couldn't be done no matter what, I will ask Perugius-sama for help and change it.

Until then, he was employed for now.

"Good, your name from now on will be Leo."

When I held out my hand, Holy Beast-sama was licking and let out a snort from his nose.

And raised his face as if he suddenly noticed something.

In his line of sight was Roxy.

Leo trotted towards her...and dived inside her skirt.

"Wa! Wait! What are you doing."

Roxy was lightly hitting Holy Beast-sama with her staff, the ero dog let out a sigh from his nose and licked Roxy's feet.

Then he lay down his massive body as if to embrace Roxy's feet.

"Ehm, Rudi...what to do."

A flustered Roxy.

I didn't quite understand what was going on, but it would be right to say it took a liking towards Roxy.

Oh well.

"Leo. Since you have been summoned this way, you are now my servant and your duty is to protect my family here. Understood?"

"Wan!"

Asking him, Holy Beast Leo replied energetically.

I don't know how helpful this damn dog would be.

But now that he has been summoned, he is the guardian magical beast.

Surely it would be useful.

"Leo, I will explain the employment details mentioned earlier. You may have lived a carefree lifestyle previously, but such selfishness will not be allowed here. You will be attached to a collar and live in the dog house. If suspicious persons

come bark, bite and take their ability to resist. In the case the opponent was strong, I don't mind if you kill him. You will have three meals a day. You can freely take naps. If you desire it, you will also be taken for a walk. If those sound fine with you, bark wan."

"Wan!"

Great, a good reply.

The message certainly came through.

The talk was in Beast God language, right?

"Needless to say, in the case you yourself harm the family...

"Ku~un."

Leo let out an offended sound from his throat.

"Good. The contract is complete then. Paw."

I held out my hand with the palm facing upwards.

When doing so, Leo put his front paw on top of it.

Thus the pets in our house increased by one.

One week has passed since the guardian magical beast has been summoned.

The big dog was given the name Leo, a genuine leather collar with his name on it and a big dog house.

The role of Leo in our house was that of a guard.

In the morning he was waiting in front of the entrance and met Eris and me, who were training.

Then for a while he waits in front of the entrance on guard duty and later on goes for a walk.

After coming back from the walk, he watches my family, who were inside the house.

He then patrols inside the house, checking whether there were any problems and if there were, he was told to resolve it.

If Lucy cried, he would calm her, if Aisha went out shopping, he would tag along as an escort.

He would travel to the magic university, seeing and picking up Norn if asked.

He was like a home guard.

Leo was extremely smart, he was properly following the instructions of the family.

He went to the toilet at the designated place.

The orders were wait, down, shake, beg, repeated until he barks three times.

He was very obedient towards the family, when Aisha and Norn were timidly patting his head, his tail was waving like an electric fan.

Especially towards Roxy he behaved like an extremely loyal knight.

Holy Beast Leo's favorite person seemed to be Roxy.

The attitude Leo showed towards Roxy was clearly different compared to others.

When Roxy woke up, his tail was wagging around in a circle and his face dived between her legs.

Although he fell silent and stopped when I became angry and said [The only one allowed to lick that place is me], he was doing it again the next day.

Furthermore, even though Roxy went to school on top of the armadillo Jirou, a scene could be seen that looked like Leo was telling something to Jirou while barking.

Not only was it unknown what he was telling Jirou, but also whether or not Jirou was carrying that out.

There were also the times when Roxy was going up and down the stairs, he was worriedly looking up the stairs to make sure she didn't lose her footings.

This overprotection was enough to make me, the husband, feel it was excessive.

Why did he go so far for Roxy...but I concluded it was because he was a dog.

His nose picked up who was the greatest person in this house.

Leo was showing subservient behavior towards Roxy, but his affinity with Eris was bad.

Though saying their affinity was bad, Leo gave off a feeling like he was aware that the other side, Eris, was difficult to deal with.

Eris was fond of dogs and cats.

She liked to bury her face into their soft fur with all her strength.

That was why maybe Eris has enjoyed Leo's fur to her heart's content when I wasn't looking.

The Mad Sword King's strength was extremely intense.

I also had experienced that, to be hugged by Eris with all her strength reminded me of feeling hugged by a bear.

I could feel the danger to my life.

Though I didn't hate to be hugged like that by Eris, it wasn't like I couldn't understand the reason Leo avoids Eris.

The only time Leo drew closer to Eris was during the time of the walk.

It was only during this time he wasn't keeping clear from Eris and went out together, confirming their territory.

The reason was likely physically related.

Leo's walking range was wide.

Its range was so wide that one might question whether the distance was one trip around the city.

Considering emergencies, to finish this in a short amount of time requires a fast pace, and the only ones having enough physical strength to run at that pace in our house are only Eris and me.

It was at a pace where Sylphy could also barely make it.

Anyway, Leo often chose Eris as the walk's partner.

Otherwise, to Leo, Eris may also belong in the same category, being in charge of security.

By the way, it appeared that everything in a 1 kilometre radius around our house became Leo's territory, stray cats no longer were around.

It seemed that Leo was serious in protecting the family.

Somehow a guardian magical beast allowed others to feel secure.

As expected, a dog was good.

The problem was that this dog was the guardian deity of the beast-tribe.

The one who said something like this was Ghyslaine who came to see Eris, but was surprised to see Leo.

"Though I can't understand Holy Beast-sama's words, it seems that Holy Beast-sama is here of his own will. Thus the Dorudia tribe can't complain either."

So it seemed it will be fine.

I thought it was about time to move to the next stage of the schedule.

On the day I thought so.

Cliff made a visit.

"Hey Rudeus, if you are free tonight, want to have dinner outside? Me, you and Zanoba, the three of us."

An invitation to dinner.

The three of us, me, Cliff and Zanoba.

It may have been the first time with only men.

Usually Sylphy, Elinalize and others tag along.

Or rather, this time we might even go to a slightly pink shop.

Or it could be that it was a difficult topic to talk about when having women around.

"Alright."

Regardless of which, I agreed without a second thought.

There was no reason to refuse and I also wanted to ask Cliff for a favor, it was a godsend.

At the time when the sun began to set down.

I went to the earlier appointed location and met up with Cliff and Zanoba.

The store we went to was more classy than usual.

When entering, I glanced at the store's signboard to confirm the name, apparently it was called [The Red Steller's Sea Eagle's Arbor].

In the Three Great Magic Nations, shops that used eagle in their name were restaurants, shops that used falcon in their name were liquor shops, shops that used bats in their name had girls, shop that used horses in their name were inns, and there were many shops that provided those.

However, saying that there were many did not always guarantee it to be so.

There were also patterns like a shop that originally provided good alcohol and before one knows the shopkeeper became better at cooking.

It was only a rule of thumb.

The [The Red Steller's Sea Eagle's Arbor] Cliff chose was a refined restaurant.

Customers seemed to be mainly lower class nobles and wealthy merchants.

When we continued, there was a high-class private room.

According to the waiter's explanation, it seemed to be the restaurant's third best room.

He apologized that if they had known that Rudeus-sama was visiting the store, they could have prepared an even better room.

This was almost like a traditional Japanese restaurant.

When I was told we were going out for dinner, I thought it would be like the usual dinner, but it seemed to be a dinner to the letter.

Each of us sat down at one end of the square table and were facing towards each other.

"Now then, Rudeus. Do you understand why such a place was prepared?"

Cliff said so with a very serious face.

Somehow I felt that you were angry.

Though I did have an idea.

"Today was Cliff-senpai's——birthday, right?"

"My birthday already passed by."

Cliff said so in an unamused manner.

Was Cliff now 20 or 21 years old.

In this world he was already a splendid adult.

It wouldn't be strange for people to have 2 or 3 children.

Though due to his baby face, Cliff looked like a 15 year old.

"That's not it."

"Yes."

I straightened myself.

It seemed like a serious talk.

"Actually..."

Cliff's talk.

It was probably about Orsted.

When I reported back, I told them that we will talk about the details later and left it as it was.

It wouldn't be strange if they ran out of patience.

"For the time being, we think the name of Elinalize's child should be Clive if it was a boy, and Eleaclarice if it was a girl, what do you think?"

...Name?

Hm, are we having such a talk today?

Did I misunderstand?

"In other words, if it was a boy it will be in Milis style, if it was a girl it will be according to the long ear tribe's style. What does Rudeus think about this?"

"Ehm...Clive sounds very smart and it looks like he will become a good politician, but seems to give off a somewhat difficult impression. I don't think Eleaclarice is bad. It is pleasant to the ear and a good name. But it sounds like a master thief would steal something very important away..."

Giving my honest thoughts, Cliff looked up at the ceiling saying [As I thought].

Then he faced towards me and said with a straight face.

"...Well, it was a joke. The name was already decided. It was good to hear your opinion, but today's talk isn't about that."

Ah, a joke.

It was incomprehensible.

If it was a joke, laugh more.

No one laughed earlier.

"Surely you know by now, Rudeus. It's about your recent course of actions."

Zanoba nodded when Cliff pointed at me.

It felt like he was also a little angry.

"Shishō. Whatever Shishō intends to do, I intend to follow you. However, has the recent Shishō not been keeping too many secrets?"

"Is that so?"

"Suddenly, just when we were constructing that dreadful armor, in the middle of it you revealed especially detailed techniques and on top of all that, you kept it a secret who you were going to fight until the end, to think it was that Seven Great–"

Just before Zanoba could finish, the private room's door opened and drinks were brought in.

Zanoba shut his mouth and waited until the table was set.

When the waiter left, Zanoba opened his mouth once again.

I wondered if the private room was chosen because it was a secret talk.

"The opponent was the Dragon God Orsted of the Seven Great Major Powers. Furthermore, wasn't that forest wiped out because Shishō was fighting seriously!"

"No, it's still there. About half of it."

"In the end the white flag was raised..."

"There was no other choice but to do that."

"He can't be thought of anything other than a monster, not killing but incapacitating Shishō, who wore that armor and went all out."

Well, Orsted could be considered as a monster.

Magic used from a great distance was nullified, in close combat neither hand nor feet were of use.

I did not think of myself as strong, but even so I had the intention to do it.

"Because Shishō did not make a tragic face, I thought he was unexpectedly a nice guy...but that guy was..."

Zanoba looked down, his body trembling.

Then suddenly raised his face and cried out.

"Wasn't that guy...wasn't he just like the devil himself? Just the other day, seeing his figure with those eyes was enough to confirm that he was an enemy!"

Just last week Zanoba met Orsted and was put to sleep.

At the time he met Orsted, he was under the influence of his curse...

Hm?

But until now he wasn't thinking that he was a bad person?

In other words, unless they actually meet in person, the curse won't activate.

Thinking back, I remember that neither Aisha nor Norn were harboring ill feelings towards Orsted.

I wonder if the curse was harmless as long as it wasn't direct.

"To work under someone like that, I couldn't think this as anything but insane..."

Zanoba was shaking his head because he couldn't understand the reason.

To say such things about someone you just met, the curse's effect was incredible.

"I don't know because I haven't seen Orsted in person."

Then Cliff opened his mouth and followed up.

"But Zanoba, Sylphy, Roxy, everyone views Orsted as dangerous. Since their views of him are all consistent, he is surely an evil person."

It was a declaration you would have never thought to come from Cliff, who doesn't listen to other people.

Comparing this however, means that after all Cliff was outside of the curse's effect.

"To work under someone like that, it isn't an action you'd expect from the intelligent Rudeus."

Though I wasn't particularly intelligent.

However, I have been had.

Receiving objections from all kinds of people about working under Orsted, it looks like moving in the future will become hard.

"But...when I heard to repair that magic armor, it came to me."

Cliff said in a tone as if he got it.

Then looked at me with challenging eyes.

"You're going to fight once more, right? Against that Dragon God Orsted..."

"...Eh?"

"First pretending to work under him, then defeat him when you see an opening. Wasn't it that kind of strategy?"

"No, Orsted-sama was――"

"It's fine if you don't reveal it to everyone."

Cliff pushed his palm towards me.

"Asking to improve by controlling the amount of magic consumed...that means that we would also be able to use it? In other words, you intended to ask us to fight together with you some day..."

At this revelation Cliff was grinning and laughing.

"Am I right?"

No, you weren't.

Though I wanted to say so, I had a feeling that this was somehow good enough.

Leaving aside [We will someday fight~] and [This is preparation for that reason~], I had a feeling that they will gradually understand that in fact Orsted wasn't a bad person.

"...Cliff-senpai."

But it wasn't good to shower someone who looked after you with care with convenient lies.

While he may not believe me, I should tell him the truth at least once.

"What is it?"

"Will you believe me if I said that Orsted was actually under the influence of a curse, and is thus hated by everyone?"

"Eh? Is that so?"

"Will you believe me if I said that I was deceived by a certain Evil God and that I had to fight against Orsted?"

"Evil God? Then, is it that guy that is deified through some blood-stained panties or clothes?"

"I'll slaughter you."

"Ah, eh? So, sorry. That was different, yes, I got it. Please continue."

Not good, I got fundamentally angry.

But it's not good to belittle someone's beliefs.

Leaving that aside.

"The result of having met Orsted. For some reason that curse doesn't affect me and after talking to Orsted, we settled our differences. In return for being forgiven, I am to fight against that Evil God together with Orsted. If I said this, would you believe me?"

"Hmm..."

"I myself will not believe this."

Zanoba declared so with his seemingly shining glasses.

"It was absolutely impossible to believe, that THAT Orsted was someone who asked others to fight together with him."

"Hm, now that Zanoba said so."

Because Zanoba stuck to his beliefs, Cliff was also confused.

He crossed his arms and was pondering.

"Think of it from another view. The Zanoba who doesn't show interest in anything but dolls, that Zanoba was so adamant about someone else. Don't you think this as strange? This is the effect of the curse."

"Ha. now that you mention it...But no, Zanoba does think properly when it's about you and of course he will worry if there was someone too strange."

Was it like that.

Was he that worried.

While I was thankful...on this particular occasion I couldn't be candidly happy.

Orsted was definitely still hiding something from me, so he may not be someone you could completely trust.

Even so I wanted to avoid making both of them my enemies by moving between Orsted and Human God like a bat.

No other choice.

Let's tell a lie.

"All right...let's stick with Cliff-senpai's theory."

"My theory, what do you mean by that?"

I cleared my throat once.

"It is exactly as Cliff-senpai has said. Before long I plan to defeat Orsted. However, the time is not ripe yet. Thus now is the time to endure and I will do as he tells me to."

"...Eh? Is this fine? What happened to the talk earlier?"

"The talk earlier, my wish was that it would be nice if it were so."

If Cliff saw Orsted, he would become like Zanoba.

Then I will leave it like that.

"With that course of action, from now on I wish to ask for Cliff-senpai's and Zanoba's assistance."

"...Leave it to us, Shishō. Until the next time, let us create a armor that even Julie could equip."

"Oh, I leave it to you."

Though I wouldn't allow Julie to fight, it is better to show at least that amount of spirit.

"And, I have a favor to ask of Cliff-senpai in particular."

"What was it?"

I put what I was going to ask him today into words.

Let's change the way of asking a bit.

Ehm, how to say it.

"Actually Orsted is being protected by a certain barrier."

"Barrier? As in a magical-based barrier?"

"No, as in curse-based."

Hearing the word curse, Cliff frowned.

"When seeing Orsted's figure, anyone's body will be inhibited and thus will be unable to bring out his usual strength."

"Was that so."

"Yes. I lost because of that. Even Zanoba, right."

"It felt like I myself was defeated by something I didn't know, but now that you mention it, there was definitely a feeling when my body couldn't move."

That was definitely his imagination, though I won't say it.

"I see, that curse seems to be difficult to deal with..."

"Eh. It already is difficult to deal with. Thus I want Cliff-senpai to do something against Orsted's curse."

"But my research is exclusively aimed at Elinalize. Whether that will lead to Orsted..."

"Well, if it doesn't lead to him, let us search for a different method. Since Elinalize-san is pregnant, research isn't possible. During this time, at least please give it a try whether the effect can be weakened or not."

Cliff was an expert regarding curses.

It wasn't perfect yet, but he succeeded in weakening Elinalize's curse.

If he was doing research in weakening Orsted's curse, it could be that the curse's fear might be mitigated.

Or so was the plan.

"But will Orsted agree to this research? How will we deceive him?"

"Orsted is a man who fights like he is a bloodthirsty wolf. In fact, he also laments about that curse a little bit."

"Are you sure? Doesn't that allow his fight to proceed in an advantageous manner?"

"He used to say this. For once he wishes to fight against someone at their full strength, not someone being inhibited by the curse."

It was a downright lie.

But sooner or later I would surely ask this of Cliff.

I'll tell him the real reason later.

The round wind is a yaku.

{ C-Editor's note: A yaku is a specific combination of tiles that increases the value of the player's hand in Japanese Mahjong. }

"Are you sure...?"

"Eh, I'm sure. That's why Cliff-senpai can research about Orsted without worries."

"Hm...all right. Although I feel ashamed to deceive people, if you insist on it, I will give it a try."

Great!

Cliff-senpai is fabulous.

Elinalize-san, please embrace him!

All right, let's convince Sylphy and the others using this way as well.

After all, making the dispelling of the curse come true was like this.

...Ha~.

Somehow the sense of guilt was incredible...

I wonder why I was telling such a lie.

I wasn't trying to say that telling lies was bad.

In some cases, sometimes telling lies was better.

But Cliff, Zanoba, Sylphy, Roxy and Eris.

Everyone was seriously worried about me.

I feel like I was betraying them by telling them lies.

I didn't have any intention to hurt or trick anyone...

If one day Orsted's curse was solved, would I be able to turn this lie into a funny story...

"That's how it is. Zanoba, Cliff-senpai...I'll rely on you."

"Hm. I feel relieved that Shishō has a definite plan."

"Understood. It is an important task. Leave it to me."

When the two nodded, the meal arrived.

The preparations for the dinner were complete, splendid dishes were lined on the table and the alcohol cups were distributed.

I raised the alcohol-filled cup.

"Right. The important talk was over! Make a toast, then let's eat."

"That's true."

Zanoba held a cup.

"What are we making a toast on?"

Cliff was also holding a cup and asked a question.

"Today there were no women around, to the friendship of men...is what I was thinking, how about it?"

Was it too nauseating?

Oh well.

I knew about it.

Both Cliff and Zanoba would not betray me in times of emergency.

Even if it would turn him into an enemy of his home country, Cliff would help me.

Even if I turned into scum, Zanoba would not abandon me.

They were irreplaceable companions.

Though I lied this time, I thought that I wanted to be their ally until the the day I died.

While thinking this way, just for a little bit it felt like tears were coming out.

It was fine even if it was nauseating.

It wouldn't be weird for my body to already let out the distinctive body odour of the middle-aged and the elderly based on age.

Let's go with something appropriate for my age.

"Then to our friendship."

"To friendship."

"Cheers!"

When they clinked their cups, a little alcohol was spilled.

"But friendship of men...what are you supposed to talk about in such a time."

"Shall we talk about erotic stories?"

"Erotic huh, ah, speaking of which, Rudeus. You went and welcomed a new wife, haven't you."

"Yeah, for the time being that would make Eris my childhood friend."

"Eris-dono huh, how nostalgic, I wonder exactly how she became known as Mad Dog...when I greet her this time I will ask her."

Zanoba narrowed his eyes in nostalgia.

In Shirone Kingdom Zanoba didn't converse much with Eris.

But well, he still remembered that time.

It wasn't possible to forget about Eris's existence.

"...Hm? Thinking about it, Cliff-senpai knew of Eris, right? You were mentioned in the past."

"I, I just met her for a little while in the past. I don't have any lingering feelings left."

I see, a little, in the past.

...It was possible that Eris has forgotten about Cliff.

It was Eris, it couldn't be helped.

"Rather about that, it's about you, Rudeus. I said it before, but women aren't a collection. TO be waited upon by so many――――"

After this, Cliff-senpai's sermon continued.

When the three people were in a good drunken state, Zanoba began telling the erotic talk.

Initially it was about Zanoba's first marriage and his partner, but from the middle onward it became a horror story and in the end it became the kind of complaint about how women didn't understand dolls.

After that Cliff and I were talking.

How Eris and Elinalize were like beasts on the bed, we found a kindred spirit in each other.

But with us two talking, Zanoba was bored and changed the flow of the conversation to the magic armor.

Their eyes were shining when I talked about fighting Orsted while wearing the magic armor.

Giant Robots vs Large Monsters fights seemed to be interesting after all.

That night three men until they were dead drunk, and after the closing time of the shop, we purchased only alcohol, rented a room in the neighborhood and continued drinking.

Somehow it felt good to only have a drinking party with three men.

If there was another chance, I wanted to go drinking with three men again.

At the time when Rudeus was drinking alcohol together with other men and, while intoxicated, cried out [How many has it been].

Inside the bedroom on the second floor of Rudeus's house.

On top of the big bed, three women were sitting face-to-face to another, having nothing on other than the nightgowns they were wearing.

"Then, we will begin the Greyrat house's 26th regular meeting. Applause."

In response to the white short haired girl's words, the blue haired girl was clapping her hands.

The red haired girl followed the applause with a serious face while sitting in seiza.

Although the age of one of them has already quite exceeded the realm of girl, caution must be paid however, because saying this would make the master of Rudeus's house as angry as a great demon god.

As long as the appearance is about that of a middle school student, isn't it fine, was the master's sentiment.

If this wasn't an alternate world, that manner of speaking would be retorted with [That's exactly the problem!]

Well then, the red haired woman – Eris made a blank face and took a look at the faces of the remaining two women.

This woman was pulled over by Sylphy when she was doing training at night in the garden, and was brought to this bedroom.

Without receiving a single explanation, she was slightly confused.

The white haired woman – Sylphiette cleared her throat with a cough.

She was wearing a night gown that was to Rudeus's liking as always, the top and bottom were made with soft fabric.

"Then, we will give an explanation for Eris's sake, who joined our group a few days ago."

"The explanation will be from me."

Then, the blue haired woman – Roxy came forward without hesitation.

She was wearing a one-piece night gown and to people who didn't know it would only look like a charming design for children.

"This meeting was planned by Sylphy to allow us to easily be in a position to break up discord, allowing us to get on good terms with another. Respectively, there will surely be feelings of speculation, envy and the desire to monopolize, however Rudi does not want us to quarrel over such things. As wives, let us put great effort into making this house especially comfortable to live in for Rudi."

Eris looked down at her own garments.

It has a plain, rough appearance.

Eris decided in her mind to buy night gowns tomorrow.

"Eris, are you listening?"

"N, No problem!"

Eris steadily nodded.

It has been approximately 20 days since she came to Rudeus's house.

Recently, Eris has been feeling a sense of defeat.

Primarily against the height of Sylphy's femininity.

Starting from cooking, to laundry cleaning, to Rudeus's clothes and finally to the furniture in the house, everything was chosen accordingly to Sylphy's sense.

Gallantly looking after Rudeus, helping him out with the practical side of life.

On top of that, she helps Rudeus out financially by working as the princess's escort.

For the short time Eris and Rudeus were together, she could not help with either.

For her to be Rudeus's wife, as expected even Eris could not throw in an objection.

On the contrary, [For her and me to be treated equally] was an uneasy sense of feeling.

"Anyway, if you have anything to say, please say so in this place. Let's not bring forth our quarrel before Rudi. Lately, Rudi seems to be busy. Let's not bother him with our matters as much as possible."

"I understand."

Eris earnestly nodded.

Do not fight inside the house.

Do not trouble Rudeus.

Recently, Eris has only thought about being together with Rudeus.

She blindly believed that by doing so, she'd obtain happiness.

Come to think of it, she has only sparsely thought about matters after that and while reminiscing so, Eris felt like hitting her own head.

"That is why today's topic of discussion is about each other. We do not know very much about Eris and Eris doesn't know very much about us. Then, let us deepen our friendship by learning more about each other."

Saying so, Sylphy took out a bottle of strong alcohol from underneath the bed, it is a typical drink around here.

Roxy took out cups and a tray prepared in advanced from the shelf and put them in the middle of the bed.

Sylphy placed the alcohol bottle on top of the bed and said.

"For the time being, let's talk frankly. About how respectively each one met Rudi until now. About how much we love Rudi, let's let it all out."

"Just as I wanted!"

Eris stuck out her chest with confidence.

She believed that she wouldn't lose to anyone regarding how much she loves Rudeus.

"Then, I will start. It was still in Buina village when I first met Rudi. If I remember right, I was about 5 years old――"

Thus is how the women's meeting in Rudeus's house was opened.

The women's meeting in Rudeus's house continued until late-night.

As Roxy was pregnant, she refrained from the alcohol, whereas Eris was at a level where she was slightly tipsy.

The only one who was drunk was Sylphy.

"You know. That was when Rudi and I first became friends. Since then, I have a~always liked him. So nostalgic. You see, Rudi was hugging me so~ close. He didn't say anything, but he just, just hugged me...Uhehe."

With her breath smelling of alcohol, such a Sylphy was clinging and hugging Eris.

"So what. Even I have been hugged by Rudeus."

"I heard it just now. Eris sure has it nice. You were together with Rudi at the best period~. You even received his first time~. How was Rudi's first time? My first time was somehow amazing."

"N, Nothing particular, it was normal? But, S, Sylphy gave birth to Rudeus's first child, even married him...Your situation is much more enviable."

When the conversation proceeded in a worrying direction, the one who forced her way into the conversation was Roxy.

"Well, even if it wasn't his first time, isn't it fine. Even though I have not received any one of Rudi's first times, I'm happy."

"Pfffft! Roxy's out! Because, Roxy's first. Are you not the number one person Rudi respects?"

"Respect...I wonder why Rudi respects me so much."

"Rudi said so [Roxy taught me the number one most important thing]! Surely you have told him something amazing! Something to Rudi's liking, something ecchi!"

"Rudi was already ecchi even without being taught. He was peeping when I was taking a bath...or rather, I only taught him normally...hm."

Roxy went into deep thought when saying so.

Seriously, exactly what part of me did Rudeus like so much.

Somehow, I had the feeling that our first meeting was quite awful...

I wonder what I might have taught him.

I really have no idea.

"We~ell, even if Roxy is special, Eris is also a bit different~. I have somehow lost confidence..."

"What do you mean, slightly different...?"

"I mean, Eris and Rudi have...about the same strength? To be able to stand and fight next to each other is enviable. I meant to try hard and become strong, but I am not even close to Rudi. I feel that Rudi tries to protect me. That I am happy about..."

Due to the alcohol, the troubled Sylphy has become hopelessly drunk.

However, when seeing this, Eris did not feel a sense of superiority.

Eris went to the Holy Land of the Sword with the purpose to match up with Rudeus.

In fact, she has successfully managed to achieve skills rivaling his.

Even in a mock battle allowing magic, she could win against Rudeus.

That was her aim, and she has finally managed to reach this. This is something she feels proud about.

But, after all she felt a little jealous regarding Rudeus and Sylphy's relationship.

All the more because she knew that she could never become like that.

Sylphy in distress, Roxy tilting her head, Eris crossing her arms.

The bedroom's door was opened.

"Excuse me. Madams."

"Ah, Lilia-san."

The one who entered from the door was a middle-aged woman wearing maid clothes —— Lilia.

With steam rising up, what was on the tray she was holding was something like potato hodgepodge.

"I have brought you a late night snack."

"This, sorry to have troubled you, Lilia-san."

"No, Roxy-sama. Naturally, it is a maid's duty to be of assistance to the Madams."

To the bowing Roxy, Lilia returns the bow.

"S, so, t, thank you very much."

"No, Eris-sama. There is no need for gratitude. Since you have become Rudeus-sama's wife, you have also become my master."

For Eris, she is a little bit uncertain regarding exactly how to treat Lilia.

There were many maids in Fedoa region's mansion.

However, Eris was somehow able to guess that she couldn't treat Lilia the same as those maids.

She is the mother of Rudeus's sister.

It seems she was a wet nurse, or something like a second mother.

In Eris's mind, she was resolved to work hard to not be hated by Rudeus's mother.

"And, it is fine to not be so formal. I have heard many things regarding Eris-sama since the time in Buina village..."

"A, About what?"

"Well..."

Lilia hesitated.

The news regarding Eris that could be heard in Buina village were quite awful.

"About how you were quickly becoming violent with your hands, about how it was deemed impossible for you to live as a noblewoman.....and how you were like a wild monkey."

"....."

Eris pouted.

To be honest, nothing has changed much since those days aside from her sword arm.

There was a time when she did try her best, but in the end was left abandoned.

"But, you have become a fine person. A Sword King-sama...if Fedoa region's feudal lord-sama saw the current Eris-sama, they would have surely been proud."

"Is that so...but Otou-sama and Ojii-sama are no longer..."

"Ah, I beg your pardon."

Lilia bowed while making a sad face.

"It's fine. It was that kind of incident. No matter where you go, the unfortunate have been ruined. Even Rudeus's Otou-san and Okaa-san..."

"..."

In an instant the atmosphere inside turned sad, only the steam from the mother's warm dish was rising.

The one who felt the uncomfortable atmosphere was Sylphy.

"C, come to think of it, Lilia also knows about the time when Rudi was born."

"...Yes. Originally I was hired to be Rudeus-sama's wet nurse."

"How was Rudi before he met Roxy and me?"

"About Rudeus-sama when he was just born?"

Having said so, Lilia remembers things about the past.

"Let's see, at first I thought Rudeus-sama was eerie."

"Eh? Why?"

"Well, why...I guess because there were many times when Rudeus-sama was in unexpected places and when you thought he was finally found, he would make a creepy laugh."

Lilia laughed when she recalled those times.

Even though Rudeus-sama was such a cute child, I wonder why I avoided him.

At that time there were indeed bad feelings, but they were forgotten with time, leaving only the good feelings behind.

"Ah, but he hasn't changed much even now?"

"That's true. But for the most part in those days, he made an expression with an unpleasant smile when he was rubbing your chest when being held...."

"...but he hasn't changed much even now?"

"......When being told so, it seems true."

Since long ago Rudeus was an ecchi kid.

After hearing this story, only one person was laughing through her nose in the atmosphere that has become slightly complicated.

"If he liked Lilia's chest, then he won't have any problem with mine."

That was the statement of a red haired woman who possessed an extremely voluptuous bust.

"I was a little worried about it. Sylphy and Roxy are quite small, I wondered whether mine would be fine."

"R, Rudi doesn't care about such a thing."

Though Sylphy said so, her voice was slightly trembling.

"Come to think of it, he was always staring at a woman's chest in the middle of our journey."

"Eh, even during the journey? Ah, speaking of which, immediately after our wedding, whenever there was a chance he was rubbing my chest. During rest day, he was touching them all day long."

"Mine weren't rubbed that much...I wonder if he doesn't like them..."

Roxy rubbed her own chest while being slightly dejected.

However, unfortunately, they were not in the right size to properly rub them.

It was a sad matter.

"With this, I will..."

"Lilia-san, let us drink together. Occasionally."

Sylphy stopped Lilia who tried to leave the room.

Roxy was also in agreement.

"Come to think of it, during the time in Buina village, I do not remember seeing Lilia-san drinking alcohol...I'm unable to drink on this occasion, but after going through all the trouble, how about it?"

"However, there is a need to take care of Madam Zenith."

"Then, together with Zenith-san."

"That's right. If you're an adult, at the very least drink alcohol."

Sylphy and Eris made flattering remarks.

Drunkards are life forms with vigor.

In an instant Sylphy coaxed Lilia and involved even Zenith to serve the drunk party.

Elinalize felt lonely the night Cliff was not there.

Today, Cliff went out.

In a manly way, he declared that he will have a man to man talk with Rudeus and went out.

Without trampling on his male pride, Elinalize raised her voice and said [Have a nice trip].

She was immersed in thinking to herself that she was such a chaste woman.

However, she immediately became bored.

Even for Elinalize, who embraced Cliff despite being pregnant, with him not being here, she could not satisfy her sexual desire.

In the first place, during pregnancy her sexual desire does not grow that much.

Even if she did not do it for a day, she would be fine.

To see the appearances of Sylphy and Roxy, Elinalize started walking towards the Greyrat house.

What she saw was a happy drinking bout between the 5 women of the Greyrat house.

"My my, it looks like an interesting event is occurring.

"Ah, it's grandma. Lize grandma, your stomach sure has grown big~, is it a brother, is it a sister? Hm? But Cliff being the father, Rudi is...ehm ehm."

By the time Elinalize arrived, Sylphy was already near Eris and massaged her chest from behind.

Eris didn't react to that, only silently sitting, eating food and drinking alcohol.

Zenith continuously pouring alcohol into her cup, as if it was a dinner's drink.

At her side was Lilia, also drinking.

While having Roxy serving her sake, Lilia was picking a quarrel.

"Roxy-san, why does my daughter not receive Rudeus-sama's affection!?"

"I do believe she receives his affection."

Roxy replied earnestly to Lilia's words while thinking that not getting drunk was quite a shame as she had a child in her stomach.

"It's just that she is his sister..."

"Isn't a woman's happiness to receive a man's love!?"

"It's indeed my happiness, but I do not think it's necessary to receive Rudi's love...Aisha is excellent, I'm sure one day she will find a good partner."

"Someone better than Rudeus-sama!?"

"There are not many men better than Rudeus...thinking that way, it's not like I have made a mistake. Although it is true that it feels like it was a bit premature.

The moment Elinalize saw this, she immediately recalled the meeting of women in the adventure guild, who could not marry.

Despite that in this case everyone here was married, she remembered such a meeting.

The ones who caused this, Paul and Rudeus.

She realized the depth of the parent-child karma, but leaving it aside for the moment.

"Seriously, even Rudeus would cry when seeing this. A woman should only show her drunken state when she and a man are alone."

Elinalize happily entered the meeting.

There was nothing for her to fear.

"Oh grandma, saying such a thing~. Ah, right. Isn't grandma a~always teaching Roxy some ecchi techniques. Why do you not teach me such techniques? He~ey, why?"

"Ah, for Sylphy to have already drunk so much...the reason why I do not teach you techniques is because making Rudeus believe that you are a naive young girl who doesn't know anything excites him more..."

"The~en it's already fine, because I want to know various things. Because I'm already sick to let Rudeus do as he please on the bed! It's about time to make Rudeus gasp!"

Seeing this disastrous scene, Elinalize abandoned any rational thoughts for a few seconds.

Her brain made the decision to drink and join them.

"For now, give me a cup."

Elinalize took an empty cup with one hand and rushed it down with one gulp.

Seeing this, Sylphy held up one finger.

"Ah! That's a no go. You can't drink alcohol that way because of the big one in your stomach~!

"Leave such matters for Roxy to say."

"No proble~em, because Roxy isn't drinking, there's no proble~em. Even if you drink, there's detoxification magic, there's no proble~em."

It was something that the sober Sylphy would not say, but today she's drunk.

Elinalize joined the conversation and sat on an empty chair somewhere.

"Even I have learned about detoxification in school."

"I can do it without chanting~."

"Ah, yes yes, very impressive, as expected of my grandchild."

Elinalize easily dodged Sylphy's boastful speech and began opening her mouth.

"Rather than being grandma's grandchild, it's thanks to Rudi's education. Whether it's magic or on the bed, I'm below Rudi by a considerable margin."

"But men are also aroused by such women?"

"Right~? It will be a different time for me to show Rudi my other side. Uhehe."

It took approximately one hour for Elinalize to completely catch up to the amount Sylphy has drunk.

That day, five women were intensely drinking.

Drinking, drinking and keep drinking and threw out the matters in their mind.

The anxiety they felt because recently Rudeus was moving behind the scenes.

Suspicion towards Orsted and the Human God.

The optimism that they'll somehow deal with it.

With the addition of alcohol, while talking about such things, it gave them a momentary feeling of joy.

With everyone else falling asleep after getting tired from drinking, only Roxy was left sober and while grumbling, applied detoxification magic to everyone in the end.

She then returned to her own room and went to bed, to be ready for school tomorrow.

She still had work tomorrow.

Not until the following morning did Roxy remember the one girl who was not able to take part in this meeting and went to bed while sulking.

When I woke up, I was hugging Zanoba.

Though I obviously wasn't homo.

It was the result of having drunk too much last night.

Yesterday's alcohol was good.

I honestly thought in my previous life [What would I gain by drinking with guys?]

But I was wrong.

There was nothing more delicious and enjoyable than to drink alcohol with male friends.

Anyway, we parted ways after we cleared our headaches with detoxification magic and sluggishly ate breakfast in the inn.

The season now was summer.

There was already no more snow.

Very soon the beast-tribe's mating season will come.

Since my Beast[animal]'s oestrus was all year round, the season didn't matter much.

But as expected the surroundings were restless, I became restless as well.

Roxy's stomach has already become big, so it was about time she took a break from school.

Though deciding on the name of the child yet to be born was fun, in one month's time I would have to follow Ariel to the Asura Kingdom.

By using the teleport magic circles I could probably return immediately, but it wasn't known exactly how many months we will spend there.

I definitely didn't want to absent during the birth.

Because in order to give birth to my child, she had to put up with 10 months of discomfort.

Halfway through there was little I could do, feelings of gratitude and the like had to be expressed by actions.

A child with Roxy.

Was it a boy or a girl.

Lucy was a girl, I wonder if a boy would be better this time.

No, a boy or a girl, either was fine.

Come to think of it, Eris said that she wanted a boy.

In the previous world, how exactly was the gender determined again?

If I remember right, I heard that doing something made it easier for boys or girls to be born.

Using vinegar or something like that...

I wonder if it was possible to control it with magic in this world.

Whatever, either was fine.

Whether it was a boy or a girl, it was fine to give it love in earnest when growing up.

In the near future surely even Eris's one will be made.

Rather the problem was whether Eris was going to behave herself during pregnancy.

But even so, Eris has after all become a little impatient.

During the middle of it, she confirmed it so many times, [This will have done it, right?] or [There was no mistake, right?].

Though Eris's own sexual desires could be said to be strong, when seeing Lucy or the pregnant Roxy, she might be thinking that she got a late start.

In the Asura Kingdom, to no small extent the perception was that to properly call yourself a wife, you had to give birth to children.

I didn't know what Eris thought of that, but if bringing forth a child will make her relieved, then I wanted to allow her to feel relieved soon.

While I was thinking about such things, I was now near the house.

I didn't say yesterday that I was spending the night away from home, I guess they were going to be angry.

No, it wasn't that strict of a home.

But spending the night away or curfew, it was better to properly clarify such rules once again.

In this world there's a kidnapping boom going on and I didn't know what Human God may do.

Even Lucy was gradually becoming bigger recently, and also for the sake of the coming children.

Yes, rules for the sake of children.

"Hm?"

Then I noticed that someone was in front of the house.

The man was talking to someone in a somewhat loud voice.

The voice of the other person couldn't be heard.

When taking a long, hard look I understood who the man was.

Possessing silky brown hair, looking like an ikemen.

Rumored to be the most popular in the magic city Sharia.

Luke Notus Greyrat.

"..."

I remembered Orsted's words and the diary.

Orsted said that Human God could manipulate people.

The diary had something like, Luke was manipulated by Human God and implicated Sylphy, written in it.

The me in the diary possessed quite a strong persecution complex.

But to implicate Ariel and Sylphy, it would be effective to manipulate Luke.

Somehow, even Sylphy seems to trust Luke's words.

In the fight against Human God, it was without a doubt very important to discover Human God's apostles and to ascertain their objectives.

Thinking like that, I decided to wait and see for a little while.

I lowered my waist, moved from shadow to shadow and continued shifting positions until I could hear his voice clearly.

"Ah, to think such a wonderful person has come to this city! You are magnificently cute. These determined, beautiful eyes, the seemingly flowing hair. Truly an angel...no, it is as if a goddess of beauty has descended! I have fallen for thee when I first laid my eyes upon thee!"

I heard a voice that seemed to hurt my head.

My head ached.

Even I did not say such shabby things.

But in this world such words were fine.

When told such things, Sylphy would blush and laugh bashfully while saying [Even without such ardent seduction, I was already Rudi's, ehehe].

"Ahem, I beg your pardon. I am very sorry for my delay. I am Luke Notus Greyrat. I am the second son of Notus Greyrat, of the Asura Kingdom's four feudal lords."

...Assuming Luke was an apostle of Human God.

The possibility was high that his enthusiasm regarding courting women was Human God's advice.

After all Luke was not someone who never got the women.

Sylphy seemed to have recognized Luke as someone who regarded women as the same as facial tissues.

Or rather, who was he wooing.

From the gate's shadow, the other person could not be seen.

Of the ones inside who fitted the adjectival equivalent of angel best was Sylphy, but Luke would not woo Sylphy.

The one who fitted the expression of goddess precisely was Roxy, but this also didn't match.

Thus it was...Aisha?

"If possible, would you not grant me your name please? Ah, of course it is not a problem if you do not wish to give your family name. But please, I wish to hear and engrave your beautiful name into my heart, at the very least as a comfort."

While I didn't know who he was trying to coax, I needed to know the name of the other person.

Exactly who was Luke trying to make his own.

If that person was known, Human God's objective may be understood.

...Well, that was only assuming that Luke was indeed Human God's apostle.

The possibility that the simple-minded Luke fell in love at first sight and was just courting was not impossible.

"Ah, thou will not tell me thy name. Then at the very least, please grant me the honor of giving a kiss to this beautiful hand. With only that, I..."

Luke then lowered his waist and extended his hand towards the other person.

In an instant Luke's head shook.

He stopped moving.

Something happened.

But I didn't know what happened.

Hitogami attack...?

Maybe, right now, in this moment, he received a revelation from Human God.

"..."

But while I was thinking that, Luke went down to his knees and suddenly fell down with a thud.

He was not even twitching.

He has lost consciousness.

What had happened.

I felt like I knew this kind of scene.

Shaking, falling down and losing consciousness...ugh, my head...

"...Hmpf."

Looking down at the fallen Luke, one woman came out of the entrance.

She glanced at the fallen Luke and kicked the head of the fainted person with her tiptoes.

It was Eris.

Eris was the one who beat down Luke.

"What's with him, suddenly appearing and talking about nonsense..."

With a displeased face, Eris kicked and rolled Luke over to a place where he didn't get in the way of accessing the house.

And then went back inside the house as if nothing has happened.

I left the shadows and drew closer to Luke.

He fell down and the white of his eyes could be seen.

To hit on the wife of another person, I wonder if this guy had no morals.

Ah no, come to think of it, I did report back to Ariel and Luke, but I didn't think I mentioned that I got married.

It was the first meeting with Eris.

But still, to think Luke would hit on Eris...

So this guy was Human God's apostle after all.

Or was this the influence of the original history.

I couldn't come to a conclusion.

"..."

Regardless, it was bad to let him keep lying here, let's leave him inside the house.

I will question him when he wakes up.

"I'm back."

"..."

While carrying Luke, I entered the house and Eris came to welcome me.

Though she made a happy face once she saw my face, but when seeing Luke her eyebrows frowned and she crossed her arms.

"...That guy, was he an acquaintance?"

"Ah, rather than mine, he was more like Sylphy's colleague."

"I, I see...sorry, I hit him."

Oho, somehow Eris was quite meek.

"It's fine. Surely this guy must have said something strange."

"He did."

"Then this guy was the bad one."

He laid his hand on my Eris, this guy did.

But even if he was bad, for now I will lay him down.

Hm, he'd be a hindrance in the living room...,let's throw him into an empty room on the first floor for now.

"Hey, Rudeus."

But I was stopped by Eris.

"What is it, Eris?"

"Does Rudeus also think about kissing my hand?"

I looked at Eris's hand.

It was a rough hand, full of sword calluses.

It was a good hand that suited Eris.

"Rather than that, I want to eat it up."

Saying that, my stomach got hit by Eris.

There was not much power in it, but it was a precise liver blow.

"That sort of thing, is only at night."

With a flushed face, Eris went back to the living room.

I see, I see, so today was Eris's day.

I'm looking forward to it.

"Ah right, where are the others? Did everyone go out?"

"They are still asleep, because we stayed up late yesterday!"

What's this, stayed up late.

A party without me?

So one worth to leave someone out?

...So during the time I was walking the flowery path of man to man, a meeting of woman to woman was held.

I hope they didn't badmouth each other so...

"Ah, Onii-chan, welcome back—"

Then Aisha came out of the kitchen.

"Who is that...it's Luke-sama. What happened?"

"Aisha. It's fine to not use -sama for Luke."

"But Norn-ane said that if you didn't call Luke as Luke-sama, the female senpais would get angry."

"You serious."

So there were such agreements.

But to think they made such strange rules in the school.

And then they'd bully the ones who didn't uphold that.

Norn was giving it her all to not get bullied.

...It couldn't be that the person Norn liked was Luke, right.

Onii-chan won't allow that, you know?

"Ah right, hear me out Onii-chan. Everyone is terrible. After I went to bed, everyone was drinking alcohol and being noisy."

"Ah, so you didn't participate in that."

"I was sleeping together with Leo...ah, and also listen to this, Onii-chan. While I was sleeping with Leo and when morning came I thought it was somewhat chilly, Leo wet the bed. When I scolded him, he was whimpering, whimpering you know. Even though Leo looks grown up, he's still a child."

Aisha seemed to enjoy every day.

As I carried Luke to an empty room, I decided to listen to Aisha's story.

I felt like I didn't hold that many conversations with her.

No, that couldn't have been.

"Then, what happened next? Did you wash it?"

"Of course. Ah, then Eris-ane helped me out. Because I had that experience myself, she would keep silent. She didn't believe me when I tried explaining that I didn't do it. Onii-chan should also explain it. In addition, I have never wet the bed in my whole life..."

"I see, I see."

While talking with Aisha, we moved to the living room.

There was nothing better than Eris getting familiar with us.

Before Luke woke up, I went to take a look at the condition of Sylphy and the others.

Leo was sitting at the stairs of the second floor in a good manner.

He was making a well-defined face, good enough that you wouldn't think he had wet the bed.

I took a look at the rooms.

With the clothes scattered all over the place, Roxy's room was empty.

When I saw that Jirou was also gone, she must have already gone to school.

Come to think of it, was Roxy also drinking alcohol?

Although in this world there was detoxification magic, I wondered about pregnant women drinking alcohol.

I was a little worried.

Sylphy was sleeping in her own room.

For some reason together with Elinalize.

It seemed that last night Elinalize came to our house.

She probably had time to spare because Cliff wasn't at home.

Anyway, waking them up would be bad, I quietly closed the door.

Lilia and Zenith were also sleeping.

Zenith was sleeping like a child, rolled up like a ball, and Lilia was sleeping right next to her.

Because there was still the smell of alcohol lingering a little bit, it seemed both of them were also drinking yesterday.

Normally these two wouldn't drink alcohol, I wonder if the drinking bout was that pleasant.

For a moment I felt the urge to crawl into that bed, but I went back downstairs for now.

When taking a peek into the living room, Eris was dandling Lucy.

Lucy was standing on the sofa and tried to catch Eris's hand, while Eris was supporting her with a nervous look.

After witnessing such a heart-warming scene, I returned to the empty room.

Luke had already opened his eyes.

"I saw a dream. A dream about an angel with red hair. A beautiful angel, and although she was lovely, you could also feel her strength. She was indeed my ideal angel and when I tried giving her hand a kiss, I woke up."

Luke's upper body revitalized, and he was repeatedly mumbling something I didn't understand.

Surely some brain damage must be still remaining when he was hit by Eris.

No, he said something about an angel from before he was hit.

"Please calm down, Luke-senpai. There was no angel with red hair."

"Ah...Rudeus...."

Luke looked at me with an absent-minded face.

"Why was Rudeus here. Hm, here was...inside Rudeus' house? Just now, at the entrance, an angel, was?"

Memory disorder.

While he lost his memories, the feeling that he met Human God was...not there.

"Aahh!"

Luke cried out when he looked behind me.

Looking back, Eris was there.

She was taking a peek inside from the door, that was left open.

"Hmpf!"

When taking a glance at Luke, she made one snort and returned to the living room.

I wonder if she was worried for the time being.

It couldn't be that Eris became interested in Luke, right...?

The alarm bells of my inner maiden Deus sounded, but it was all right, right?

"Ah, please wait, your name, please let me hear your name! While at it, also your address and what flower you like! And the type of men you like!"

"Please calm down, Luke-senpai. Her address is here."

I held back Luke, who tried to jump out of the bed.

Luke grasped my shoulders, got closer and said with a desperate face.

"Rudeus, the fact that she was in your house means that she was your acquaintance, right!? Tell me, exactly who was she?"

"She is Eris Greyrat. She is the woman, who became my wife just the other day."

"Wha...a wife..."

Luke froze.

"Then she is your...woman?"

"Eh, that could be said so."

It might have been more accurate to say that I was her man.

"Is that so..."

"I'm sorry."

When I apologized on reflex, Luke was puzzled.

"Why are you apologizing? This would be [First-come, first-serve]."

"Well, that may be true."

This may be because I heard Orsted's story, but somehow there was a sense of guilt.

The history, where Luke and Eris should have been together.

There was a feeling like I received home deliveries that I shouldn't have gotten, but still arrived at my place.

No, even so it doesn't change the fact that I became Eris's home tutor, traveled through the magic continent together and had our first times together.

As I worried, Luke let out a sigh.

"It was often the case that multiple men fall in love with one good woman. It was also often the case that multiple women fall in love with one good man."

He suddenly began talking.

"Men would keep as many women as they could handle. But there was no reverse. God didn't create humans that way. After all, a man could teach multiple women at the same time, but women could only make a child with one man at a time. Among some demon races, there seemed to be women who could make children with multiple men at the same time, but human race wasn't like that."

Well, it was a rather man-orientated way of thinking.

Though I thought that the opposite could also exist.

A single woman with multiple men, it was a reverse harem.

"And then good women go to the sides of men who possess the most capabilities. You possess strength, money, position and honor. I can completely relate why Eris-san, who is like an angel, would go to your side. That's why..."

Luke, who was talking up until now, shook his head.

"No, that's not it. I didn't come here to talk about something like that."

And he let out a big sigh.

"Today I came to ask you for one favor."

"Hoo."

I sat straight up on the chair.

Contact at this time, this timing.

Human God's apostle.

A change in history.

There was no way this wasn't related.

Now, what kind of favor will you ask for.

Something that will lead to my downfall.

Otherwise, to now allow Ariel to become queen, Human God's first strike.

"With us...will you not consider working together with princess Ariel?"

Hearing those words, I couldn't help but be confused.

What do you mean.

You will let me cooperate?

Not the opposite?

"Your magic skill and your conversation ability, allowing you to deepen friendship with people that are hard to deal with. Surviving a fight with the Dragon God, as well as enough combat ability to be welcomed as a subordinate. They are something frightening."

I felt a little itchy from being praised that much.

"But if we involve you, Sylphy's happiness will be destroyed."

Luke hesitated, then looked up.

"That's why, it can't be said now that you haven't actively cooperated with us that much. I, and also Ariel-sama, don't wish to involve Sylphy any further in the dispute of the Asura Kingdom."

I believe that was said before.

It was during the time I dueled Luke.

"But..."

Luke looked down.

The pose of an ikemen's shadow.

It seemed that somehow women would suddenly be deceived by it.

"Ariel-sama has given up on persuading Perugius-sama."

"Well, given the situation, I suppose so."

"Over these 6 years, by promoting ourselves in the Three Great Magic Nations, we have managed to win over many nobles and technicians. Among them are nobles from the Asura Kingdom and those who possess great political power in the country, but...it's not enough for a decisive blow. After all, they are people who are outside of the Asura Kingdom."

"Hm..."

"But, Perugius-sama is a person, who could become that decisive blow. He possesses overwhelming political power, forcefulness of speech and combat ability in the Asura Kingdom. If that patch existed, Ariel's path to become queen would make a great leap forward. Of course, it could still not be said with certainty..."

Luke was serious.

At the least I could not feel that he was deceiving or telling lies.

A necessary person that was needed in order to make Ariel queen, Perugius was thought of highly.

"However, originally it was a plan that came down. Even without Perugius-sama, we believe that we can manage one way or the other. The time of preparation would take a few years more...But even so, I believe that the chance of victory was still there."

I wasn't so sure about those words.

According to Orsted's story, the news that the king fell ill should still take 20 days.

If you had heard Human God's advice beforehand, I think the words [Just a few more years] wouldn't have been said.

"And then...I want you to lend me your strength, in order to become the decisive strength to ensure our chance to win."

"...I have absolutely no understanding of politics? There's also the possibility that I won't be useful for anything."

"You are a man of a much larger caliber than we thought. I'm sure that just by being yourself, you will become an appropriate strength."

"I'm not that great of a person in particular."

"Even without being someone great, your military power is dependable and you have personal connections. Perugius-sama, Dragon God, Demon Lord, a foreign prince, the grandson of Holy Milis Pope, Dorudia tribe, Silent Seven Star. Just your personal connections as an individual is quite something. I won't ask to allow us to use those personal connections. But, a person with those personal connections possesses 'something'. I want that 'something', no matter how small, to turn towards Ariel-sama."

"..."

Thinking that there was something lying underneath all those words of praise, was probably because my association with Luke was rather shallow.

But still, which way was it.

Was Luke an apostle of Human God or not.

There were also Orsted's instructions, so even without Luke asking for a favor, I intended to support Ariel.

But was it within Human God's expectation or not...

...For now, should I see how he reacted?

"Was that...on whose instructions?"

"Instructions...? No, it is not Ariel-sama's will."

"...Were you given advice by someone else?"

"It was on my own judgement."

"Does the name Human God sound familiar?

"Human God...I heard it at Perugius-sama's place, what is that?"

Well, supposing he was Human God's apostle, he wouldn't honestly answer me.

During my time I didn't say a word to anyone...

I wrote it down in the back of my head that Luke had a mysterious face.

"Indeed, it may sound contradicting. We also want Sylphy to be happy. If we involve her in the dispute of the Asura Kingdom, that happiness will be destroyed. If treated as a insurgent by the Asura Kingdom, even the Three Great Magic Nations will probably not offer protection."

That was also scary for me.

In the diary, Zanoba was killed by the Holy Milis country.

To make an enemy out of a country means you didn't know what they might do.

I was certain that I would be able to fight all right.

If I hit them seriously with magic, I could annihilate a rather great number of enemies at once.

If the magic armor's repairs are finished, to a certain degree I would be able to overwhelm them in close combat.

Even Orsted said that he didn't intend to go all-out.

On the other hand.

It would be all right to be hostile if you can win in a head-on fight, that was the logic of children.

There were idiots, who would challenge a wrestler to a fight with empty hands.

Being stabbed in the back with a knife, being poisoned or otherwise use money to apply pressure.

If you couldn't defeat someone by using force, it was fine to win by ways other than force.

The me in the diary was strongly linked with the country and had self-protection.

Fortunately I wasn't chased by the Asura Kingdom, but when asked by Milis to hand me over, they were told [No], because to an extent I was useful to the country.

I wonder how it will turn out this time.

Because Leo was here, I wonder if they will refrain from laying their hands on us, because other countries feared their relationship with the Beast race would deteriorate.

I wonder to what extent Leo will protect my family.

Orsted said that it would be fine if I had a guardian magical beast.

He said something along the lines of letting a guardian magical beast with a strong fate try to protect them, my family would be protected.

But I still wonder if just one dog would really be all right...

"...But if it's you. I think that even if we involve you, who has the backing of the Dragon God, wouldn't you be able to keep Sylphy happy."

I wonder about that.

Orsted had weak influence in various places.

Even though all people living in this world knew of the existence of the Seven Great Major Powers, they didn't seem to completely understand exactly how strong or amazing they were.

"Even if I have the backing of the Dragon God, there still exists personal danger to my life."

"...Well, that's true."

Luke said in a single breath.

He looked straight into my eyes.

"That's why, right now, this is nothing but an appearance for appearance's sake. I want to make Ariel-sama queen, even if Sylphy's happiness will be destroyed."

Luke was staring at me with glaring eyes.

I received his gazes without averting my eyes.

Strangely enough, I didn't think of it as unpleasant that Sylphy was slighted.

Luke's eyes might have been unexpectedly strong.

From the strength of his glinting eyes, that was enough to make you think that to achieve his objective he would throw everything away, I could feel a sense of ghastliness that reminded me of Ruijerd.

"I ask of you, will you not lend Ariel-sama your strength?"

Since there wasn't a talk about what would be awarded if Ariel became the queen of the Asura Kingdom, it was probably because this talk was not through Ariel, but based on his own judgement.

That's why it was [Ask of you].

"..."

Thinking back.

For example, even when I was manipulated by Human God, I was still myself.

On top of receiving advice, I also desperately thought to go towards a better direction.

Luke might be the same.

In his own way, Luke might be frantically giving his all.

Thinking about it, I do want to lend them my strength by all means...

But what I'm fighting against is neither the Asura Kingdom nor Ariel.

It was Human God.

If I went to Ariel's side, there was the possibility that it was according to the expectations of Human God, and in that case, I must definitely consult with Orsted.

"Let me consult with my surroundings for a bit."

Having said so, Luke made an expression as if he wanted to cry and laugh for an instant.

He must have thought he would be refused.

And then he slowly stood up.

"....Understood. I'm sorry about it, saying something impossible."

"No, the official answer will be at a later date. I will definitely give a reply."

With his shoulders dropping, Luke left the room.

I followed him to send him off.

From the small room, passing through the corridor to the entrance.

On the way I looked up the stairs to see Leo, whose position hadn't really changed much since earlier.

Sitting at the stairs of the second floor and making a small growl, as if saying you wouldn't be allowed to pass here.

As expected, Luke was black.

Though I didn't know if Leo's sense of smell could discern whether or not someone was Human God's apostle.

"Ah..."

Probably because she heard the growl, Eris's face appeared from the living room.

When Luke saw her, he promptly placed his hand on his chest and made an elegant bow.

"Madam, even if I didn't know, please forgive me for earlier. May the day come when we meet again."

"..."

Eris grasped the end of her skirt and intended to lift them, but noticed she wore trousers, made an awkward face and crossed her arms.

"Next time, I will properly provide hospitality for a guest!"

"Thank you very much, now then, please excuse me."

But at that moment.

"Fuah...Eris, everyone is still sleeping, don't let out such a loud voice."

Just then Sylphy came down from the second floor.

Looking sleepy, she stopped moving when she saw the figures of Luke and me.

"Ah, welcome back Rudi...ah? Luke has come. What's wrong? Did something happen to Ariel-sama?"

"...I just dropped by, because of some small matter."

"Hm...Well, take your time. Do you want to have some tea?"

"No thanks, I was just about to return."

"I see. I will also go back in a short while, until then please take care of Ariel-sama."

"Sure."

Luke made a lonely laugh, then left my house.

Sylphy and I were seeing him off until he left the entrance.

Luke's back gave off a sorrowful feeling, like a tired salary man.

"..."

Something has started to move.

My heart felt such a premonition.

Preparation time was already over.

Speaking of what was done, the guardian magical beast Leo was summoned and I asked Cliff to solve Orsted's curse.

What was done was little, the feeling that there was a lack of preparation couldn't be denied...At the very least, let's say that I will go with fighting spirit.

While thinking like that, I decided to call forth Orsted.

Using the said ring to call Orsted, a letter came telling me to come to the hut in the suburbs.

Surprisingly, he seemed to be nearby.

In that case, it would have been fine to call me directly...

Regardless, I went to the hut in the suburbs as I was told to.

Orsted was waiting, with his arms crossed, his pose was as if he were asleep.

His waiting pose was as if it embodied the word waiting.

Somehow I had the feeling of being sorry to have made him wait.

"I'm late."

"No, I've just come."

Our greeting was like a couple, who have just started going out with each other.

After I greeted him, I told him everything about what happened this one week.

First was about Leo, who became a guardian magical beast.

It looked like there were no problems with this.

Rather, he was surprised that such a big shot came out.

Because the Holy Beast was summoned, the safety of my family was guaranteed, it was a sealed deal.

The Holy Beast seems to have been such a significant existence.

Impressed, he whispered in a small voice [As I thought, Roxy's child was special].

After being told that your own child was something special, I smiled a bit.

I also told him about asking Cliff to solve his curse.

Orsted also gave me his approval regarding this.

Every once in a while, Cliff will come to this hut to develop a magic tool for Orsted's curse.

While I didn't know whether results would come out, with the curse still remaining, I told him about the pose I will assume, [I'm forced to follow Orsted, because he took my family as hostages].

While Orsted's expression did not change, he let out [I see] and gave me his approval.

I received quite a scolding, because I had no contact with Ariel over these last ten days.

That I was worried about Eris and Leo, as well as that I intended to wait for the right timing to introduce Ghyslaine, using that as an excuse to get in contact, sounded like nothing but excuses.

Because there was a one month postponement, I seemed to have taken it too lightly.

I will admit that I was careless.

During the time I had been careless, Orsted seems to have visited Perugius in person one time.

Though he asked him for cooperation to make Ariel queen, it looked like he was refused.

In a stubborn attitude, Perugius said that until he ascertained that Ariel was worthy of becoming queen, he himself won't move.

Amazing, Perugius-sama.

Although he should have been quite scared of Orsted, to think he would clearly refuse him.

I admired him a little bit.

But, leaving that aside.

I also talked about, how during the time, Luke came to my house to make contact with me.

That Luke came to ask for support.

The possibility that Luke was Human God's apostle.

About how he uneasily asked for me to support Ariel.

Considering these three matters, when I asked whether there were any changes regarding our future actions, Orsted replied decisively.

"There are no changes regarding our objective to make Ariel queen."

The theory that making Ariel queen was within Human God's expectation was denied.

It looked like it was very important to Orsted for Ariel to become queen.

But Orsted was in thoughts regarding how to deal with Luke.

When he was thinking for a few minutes, he suddenly said.

"I guess, kill Luke..."

I was astonished.

Suddenly very dangerous words were muttered.

"Are we going to kill him?"

"..."

Orsted was making a scary face.

No, it wasn't scary.

It was his default one.

With that face, he pulled in his chin while thinking and was glaring at one point on the table.

...Scary.

"I do not know what Human God's apostles will do."

"...Is, that so."

Kill Luke.

Regarding those words, even though I should have been prepared, I felt a little uneasy.

Killing Luke, who so desperately thought about Ariel.

One way or another, I have not killed people from this world.

While there may be some who I have indirectly killed, but I have not laid my hands on anyone.

And the first one is going to be Luke.

The first murder is going to be an acquaintance.

Thinking that way, it became a feeling beyond description.

But at the same time there was a feeling like [Well, it couldn't be helped].

Becoming my enemy, and if you were going to become a danger, then it would be better to kill him.

I could not allow losing myself in momentary feelings and then be caught in a predicament.

It was that kind of feeling.

But still, I wonder if it was acceptable to kill people, just because it couldn't be helped.

I did not intend to worry about morals regarding murder.

But regardless, there was still some reluctance.

About murdering people, I was much more evasive in that regard than I thought.

"But still, it was not decided yet that he is Human God's apostle, right?"

Though they were words filled with hope, Orsted shook his head.

"No, if he called you out with such a timing, it is certain."

"Timing, that is to say?"

Hearing that, Orsted nodded deeply.

"Neither have the negotiations with Perugius completely broken down, nor has the information regarding the King's illness arrived yet. In that situation, he called out to you. I can completely see through Human God's intentions."

The tone of the last words Orsted uttered, were indeed filled with hate.

As expected, Orsted held animosity towards Human God.

"...If so, why did he say to cooperate with Ariel. Shouldn't it be the other way around? If he didn't wish for Ariel to become queen, it would have been better to keep me away."

"The objective is to control someone in the Asura Kingdom and make you fall in a trap. Human God right now cannot see your figure. Thus he is using Luke. He intends to observe your actions similar to listening to sounds through a wall."

"So Luke is a spy."

"A miserable spy is a possibility. When thinking about the risk of something happening while traveling, it would be better to leave out Luke."

The possibility that my actions and conduct will give away Orsted's objective.

Taking these into consideration, it was indeed better if there was no spy.

It would be difficult to guide Ariel and the others, while hiding important matters only from Luke.

"But, killing Luke...wouldn't that for example have some influence on Ariel-sama or other people?

"...What do you mean?"

I took the talk from a few days ago into consideration.

It was about the issues that would follow after killing Luke.

"Derrick Redbat, was it? The one who should have become the prime minister in the original history. Right now, he no longer exists. Thus the possibility exists that Ariel emotionally relied on Luke."

If Luke was killed, Ariel would be alone.

Well, there were still her servants and Sylphy...

It indeed felt like Luke's portion was the biggest one.

It wasn't love or affection...it was rather close to the feeling between Zanoba, Cliff and me.

They were guys, who no matter what happened, would never betray me.

"When making Luke into his apostle, Human God may have already taken into consideration that it would be found out, and is either daring Orsted-sama or me to try and kill Luke."

If Luke died, there was no knowing what would become of Ariel.

People are weak.

They may look strong, but there were also times when they suddenly turn useless.

I knew many cases, who became like that.

If she was manipulated as a puppet, that was still fine...

As I thought so, I read Orsted's facial expression.

"...That possibility also exists. To the Ariel I knew, Luke was also a useful person. If he wasn't there, Ariel may not have managed to become queen."

It seemed that Orsted was troubled if Ariel became a good-for-nothing puppet.

"Perhaps, for now, it would be better to let Luke go free."

Of course there was also a feeling of not wanting to kill.

Luke was also Sylphy's close friend.

And he was also my cousin for the time being.

The relation may be weak, but he wasn't someone I wished to see dead.

But at best they were just words, regarding my own feelings, the part where I shirked from killing people was strong.

Maybe taking that into consideration, Orsted quietly replied.

"That's true, let us do it this way."

"Yes."

When it comes down to it, there may be a need to kill Luke in the end.

If I killed him, I wonder if Sylphy will resent me.

I wonder if she force a divorce.

Just thinking about it, my stomach hurt.

But if it came down to killing him no matter what...I will be prepared for it.

For now, this was enough regarding the matter about Luke.

"You have told me before that Human God cannot manipulate a great number of people, right?"

I dug deeper into the matters I wanted to hear.

"That is, exactly up to how many people can he manipulate?"

Previously, Orsted once said that Human God [Could not manipulate a great number of people at the same time].

In other words, doesn't it mean that he could manipulate more than one person at the same time.

"It is not certain, but in the past I once fought against three apostles at the same time. Thus, it is probably up to three people."

Three people.

It was surprisingly few.

"The possibility that the number of people he was manipulating beyond that?"

"Only three people were prepared to kill me and there were no direct attacks afterwards. Thus, it was fine to think up to three people."

"Who were you fighting against?"

"They were the Sword God, North God and a Demon Lord."

Orsted has killed them in return.

Two in the Seven Great Major Power class, and a Demon Lord.

Even after he amassed such war potential, they were unable to eliminate him, Human God could only give up.

Honestly, if something like that was sent I would stand no chance...well, I intended to do what I could.

Just like in my case, he would have to spend a long time to change fate.

Human God seemed to like PythagoraSwitch.

"I just wonder why it is up to three people..."

"That is because that was the limit of that guy's future sight ability."

"So although he can see the future of three people at the same time, any more was impossible?"

"That is right."

So in other words, if he didn't use his future sight, it was possible that he could manipulate four people.

No, it was unlikely for him to gamble on humans without using cheatfuture sight.

Basically, it was fine to think that they could not increase to more than three people.

Based on that assumption, let's confirm regarding this time's case.

"Assuming Luke is one, so there are two more."

"Though it is not certain that there are three people manipulated at the same time."

"That is true. But I think the possibility that there is going to be at least one in the Asura kingdom is high, how about it."

"Why do you think so?"

"If Human God doesn't want Ariel to become queen, wouldn't it be a good plan to manipulate the people hostile towards Ariel as well as the ones near her, doing something like selling information?"

"Even without doing something like that, Human God could...no, there is meaning in telling the others about your actions."

Orsted nodded, convinced.

Well, when thinking it through, Human God could read people's minds, so there was no need to do something like selling information.

Enough was already told from Ariel's progress, who became unsteady because of me.

"There is also the possibility that in some completely different place, he is doing something. For example, like attacking my family while I am away.

"Since the Holy Beast became the guardian magical beast, even Human God cannot lay his hand on them that easily. That beast holds that much power."

"More than Arumanfi?"

"It cannot be compared to Perugius's created spirits."

Just by looking at the dog, who wet the bed, those words were hard to believe...

However, since it was Orsted who said it, it will surely be all right.

Regardless, there was no way to confirm it.

"Anyway, just like how you expected it, Human God has one apostle in the Asura kingdom."

"Uncovering that person will be the key in the fight against Human God, right."

"That will be so. I do not know the last person. Though it is possible that he is moving on a completely different matter than ours...do not loosen your guard."

In order to achieve our objective, in the fight against Human God we had to ascertain the three apostles and defeat them.

I guess it will become something like a repetition.

On this occasion, it was to make Ariel queen.

Luke was one apostle (high possibility).

The second and third person were unknown.

"Is there a person, who can be said to not be an apostle with certainty?"

Even if it was useless, I still asked.

Regardless of who becomes an apostle, there was no change in what had to be done.

But still, if Zanoba or Cliff became apostles and it becomes where there was no choice but to kill them...

I will most likely become lost in what I have to do.

"Your family is safe. In addition to the bracelet, there is also the guardian magical beast's influence."

"Cliff and Zanoba are...?"

"...There is a possibility for them, be careful."

You serious.

I don't want that...

"By any means, isn't there a method for them to not be manipulated?"

"There is no such thing. If necessary, you can warn them about following the advice of whoever calls himself Human God. Though I think it would be useless..."

Useless. Is that so.

This is unfortunate.

Well, it is a question of possibility.

Even Human God wasn't manipulating just about anyone.

Zanoba and Cliff were not targets...let's pray so. Any god apart from Human God.

"In the meantime, for Ariel to become queen, I will request Perugius's cooperation. This course is fine?"

"Aah. Do not be neglectful of Human God's apostles."

"Yes."

For now, the course of action remains unchanged.

Let's put effort into contacting Ariel this time.

In the end, magic items were lent out by Orsted.

They were a loan.

Though Orsted said that he would give them to me, I decided that it would be advisable to treat the equipment as a loan.

What was lent out was the promised robe.

The color was of the robe was grey even though I didn't ask for it.

It was close to the grey color similar to what I used to dress in until now.

"This robe is something that the Great Sage Titiana wore 1000 years ago. The material makes use of the Death Adder Rat's skin and was sewn together using a thread imbued with magic. It has considerable magic resistance and is highly blade proof. This is also a magic item that has been in a labyrinth for a long time and when wearing it, the weight of the

wearer is reduced by half and it is possible to move like the wind. For you who cannot wear fighting spirit, it suits you well."

So was Orsted's explanation.

When listening to the story, it sounded like it was amazing.

"Are you interested in how much it is worth?"

"Over these few days I have brought them over from the dragon tribe's vault. If sold, it would be worthless in its own way...this is to protect yourself. Use it by wearing it."

These words stabbed me like a nail.

What was the dragon tribe's vault like.

Was it overflowing with items like this...

Surely it was.

Like boots when opening a treasure chest or like a wrapper found in a hidden door.

For now, with this robe the fighting power would rise.

There was a big difference when comparing it with the magic armor...

Let's make up the difference with courage and wisdom...

Though I had neither...

Hm, let's give it my all.

On that night.

I called Sylphy to the bedroom.

If I were to support Ariel, then I had to first talk it through with her.

As if she had guessed from my serious expression, she didn't change into nightwear but entered the room wearing day clothes.

If we were having a serious talk, it would be fine with those.

"Then, Rudi. Wanting to talk, what is it about?"

I heard that while Sylphy was making a strongly alerted expression.

"Sylphy. I will be straightforward."

"Mm."

"It was decided that I will provide help to make Ariel-sama queen."

Hearing those words, for a moment Sylphy made a puzzled expression.

She then laughed happily, but made a puzzled expression again.

"Decided?"

"Ah."

"In other words, it isn't Rudi's will?"

"It was Orsted's order."

After saying that, Sylphy's complexion clearly changed.

As I thought, it would have been better to not have mentioned Orsted.

No, the other way, maybe I should tell everything.

That depending on the situation, there was the possibility of killing Luke.

But should that be said?

The possibility is at an early stage.

When hearing that, what would Sylphy think?

Wouldn't she recognize Orsted as an enemy after all?

While I was hesitating, Sylphy said.

"What do you think is the objective of Orsted by making Ariel-sama queen? Doing something like that, is there some benefit for Orsted?"

"Through me, he can make a connection to the Asura Kingdom. It looks like there was nothing in particular he wanted to receive right now, but there seems to be something he wants help with."

"But it's the Dragon God? He is someone who can beat up Rudi when equipped with the magic armor? Even if Asura Kingdom was the world's strongest country, would he want to enter a partnership with it?"

"Authority is something that can resolve things that brute force cannot. Even Orsted would want that. To use it someday."

This time's case was a strategic move.

Making Ariel into queen would pay off in the future 100 years from now.

Though I said that, it was difficult to explain.

Orsted knew the rough history.

Following that history, I didn't know how Orsted would use Ariel's existence, or whether he would use her at all.

From what I understood from the diary, at the very least it was unfavorable for Human God to have Ariel become Queen.

He wanted to prevent that.

When the harassing side was strong, not allowing what your opponent wanted to do was one way of fighting.

For Orsted, it had a great meaning.

But there wasn't much of a meaning for me.

By helping Ariel become queen, there was no doubt that I will be affiliated with Ariel's faction.

And then I will be dragged into the muddle amongst nobles.

There was demerit.

To be honest, I didn't think there was much to gain from balancing [Asura Kingdom's connection] with that demerit.

According to my own feelings, I didn't want to help Ariel.

But let's be positive this time.

Ariel becomes queen, Ariel banzai.

When her best friend achieves her objective, Sylphy banzai.

Hampering Human God's purpose, Orsted banzai.

{ C-Editor's note: Japanese people shout 'banzai' to celebrate a victory. }

Sylphy will fall in love with me again, Orsted will make sure that I am a useful guy.

All right, it was full of merit.

"Well, even if Orsted is plotting something, it shouldn't be a bad subject for Ariel."

"Hm...well, that's true. There were many bad people in the Asura Kingdom, when thinking about having bad people clash with bad people, it may be a good idea."

Sylphy was bitter.

I wonder how Orsted is reflected in her eyes.

In my eyes he looked like quite a bad person, but I wonder if it looked like it was even worse.

I wonder if he looked like someone who would kill the other person who bumped into him.

Well, I couldn't refute that.

"It is up to Ariel-sama to decide whether or not to accept Orsted's assistance..."

Sylphy narrowed her eyes when saying so.

"As for me, I want a guarantee that Orsted will not betray us."

"A guarantee."

"That's right. Why is Rudi thinking that Orsted won't betray us?"

It wasn't like I was thinking he isn't going to betray us.

In fact, it looked like he was still hiding something.

But when compared to Human God, I believe him.

When calling him, he will come immediately.

"I don't think he won't betray us. But Orsted's correspondence was sincere. He will not turn into an enemy if I continue showing him no hostility and prove that I am useful."

"Is that so..."

Sylphy was still making a slightly incomprehensible face.

"Understood. Whether Orsted could be trusted or not will be seen on this occasion."

"Is that fine?"

"Because even if we argue now, there is no point to it. It looks like Rudi decided to trust him."

"Well, true."

"Then it will just become repeated arguments."

Sylphy took one deep breath when saying so.

She straightened her back and looked into my eyes.

"Rather than that, it would be good to talk about the future from now on. Rudi...no, how does Orsted intend to make Ariel-sama queen?"

She said that with a sharp expression.

This was usually a face she didn't show before me, it was the face of Ariel's escort.

Making such a face, her boyish look was fully brought forward and became very dignified.

"First, he intends to convince Perugius-sama."

"Dragon God and Dragon King, in that case Dragon God, in other words I think Orsted's position is higher, but he intends to convince Perugius-sama?"

"Perugius-sama's influence in the Asura Kingdom is great and he also has political influence. In comparison, Orsted doesn't have influence in Asura Kingdom."

Rather, I was echoing Orsted's words.

"But Perugius-sama will not give in that easily. He doesn't listen to anything Ariel-sama says and it was also useless for Luke and me to convince him."

"So it seems."

Even though Orsted made a request, Perugius didn't seem to honestly do as he said.

Because he is rather scary, I thought Orsted's words would be sufficient...as expected, there was something he was thinking about.

"But Zanoba seems to have successfully gained Perugius-sama's favour. Rudi also seems to be well-liked...what's the difference."

"Regarding differences, maybe it is that neither Zanoba nor I aim to become king."

"Aiming to become king, did that offend Perugius-sama?"

This way of thinking was probably too narrow.

But it felt like Perugius had his own opinion regarding the existence of a king.

"I wonder if from the beginning, Perugius-sama never had the intention to support Ariel-sama?"

"No, if he never had the intention from the beginning to support her, he would have firmly refused her. He is testing Ariel-sama about something."

"Is that so...hm."

Sylphy folded her arms and tilted her head.

"Anyway, over the next days, I would like the opportunity to talk with Ariel-sama. Would that be fine?"

"Understood, then I will arrange the setting. I'll also tell Luke...I will share a table with Luke, is that okay?"

"Ah, no problem. Just, can we keep quiet regarding Orsted as well as make it appear as if Luke and Sylphy persuaded me into supporting her?"

"Why hide the matters related to Orsted? Rudi became Orsted's subordinate, and if you say that you are following orders from above, Ariel-sama might feel relieved?"

The Dragon God's backing.

...But I didn't want to give Luke, Human God's apostle more information than necessary.

Though it wasn't confirmed yet that Luke was Human God's apostle.

"Because it isn't known where Human God's men could be listening from, I want to keep Orsted's instruction and objective hidden as much as possible."

"...Orsted is fighting Human God, right? Is Human God such a bad guy?"

"Leaving aside whether he was bad or not, he attempted to kill Roxy as well as targeting Sylphy, and tried to kill me by making me clash with Orsted. He is an enemy."

"Eh, I was also targeted..."

Saying that, Sylphy looked at the surroundings.

"Even now?"

"I wonder, but I don't think he has given up..."

"Then, it's best to watch your back."

"Also on the road at night."

Being told that, Sylphy laughed out.

"In this city, the only one who would attack me at night is Rudi."

Haha, she took an ippon.

{ C-Editor's note: An ippon is a full point scored in judo and karate. }

Then, let's attack her tonight without reserve.

Thus I managed to meet with Ariel together with Sylphy.

"...and so."

However, the talk didn't end yet.

"When saying you would help Ariel-sama, Rudi will also be going to the Asura Kingdom, right."

"Well, that will be so. It's not like I can say [Right, goodbye] just after the persuasion."

Surely there will be some in the Asura Kingdom, defeating Human God's apostles must be done.

Finding the woman called Tristina must also be done.

And this didn't need to be said, I will have to go to the Asura Kingdom.

"I also wish to be taken along."

"...eh?"

"I know that Rudi wants me to look after Lucy. I also know that both Ariel-sama and Luke want me to live happily in Sharia. But still, after all I want to help. Because until now, I have always been together with Ariel-sama."

As Sylphy said that, she held my hand.

Her soft hand was grasping my hand.

It was a strong grip.

"Please, Rudi. Please take me along as well."

I returned the grip on Sylphy's hand.

To be honest, I wanted Sylphy to stay at home.

It was my ego, but I wanted Sylphy to look after Lucy in a safe place.

A wife should walk three steps behind the husband, I wasn't thinking about something like that.

But still, Sylphy was...I couldn't put it in words, but I felt that I didn't want to expose her to danger.

But Sylphy has been together with Ariel and Luke for years.

They have been like this, ever since the mana calamity.

To me, that would be Eris and Ruijerd.

Eris...leaving her aside for the moment.

If Ruijerd was in a pinch, I intend to run to him no matter what.

There was such an obligation for Ruijerd.

Though I would hesitate when weighing the lives of my family.

But even so, helping Ruijerd occupied a high rank in my order of priorities.

Surely Sylphy also felt that way.

Surely she was also thinking that family was of course important and that Lucy must be brought up.

But if her close friends were in danger, it was natural to try hard to help them.

"Understood. Sylphy will also help out."

"...Yes!"

Sylphy smiled broadly and nodded happily.

Seeing that, I suddenly recalled what Human God said.

The talk about how Sylphy's fate was to die in the Asura Kingdom.

Though I didn't believe it, if Sylphy was going to help out, wouldn't her life span be shortened.

...I wonder if I am thinking too much.

History has changed.

It will not necessarily unfold as the diary said.

But after all, it would be better to say it.

"...Sylphy."

"What?"

"Human God hides his appearance, he will manipulate someone to try and hinder Orsted and me."

"...Like how Rudi and Orsted were made to fight each other?"

"Ah."

"Then, we also have to be careful of the one being manipulated."

"...Hm. Also, it seems that a familiar person is being manipulated."

"A familiar person, such as?"

"Luke or so."

Being told that, Sylphy's face became stern.

"...Rudi. That can't be. Orsted was moving to make Ariel-sama become the queen, while Human God was moving to prevent Ariel-sama from becoming the queen, right? In other words, Luke is taking actions to prevent Ariel-sama from

becoming queen. Something like that is impossible. It was impossible for Luke to turn around and become Ariel-sama's enemy."

"But, it was possible that he was taken in by Human God's honeyed words. Like that, he ensnares people."

"..."

I was glared at by Sylphy.

It wasn't to the extent where it was tinged with blood thirst.

It may be the first time being glared by Sylphy like this.

"If Luke loses himself and harms Ariel-sama...I will kill Luke."

Sylphy said so with a strong tone.

She said she would kill.

It was the first time I thought Sylphy was scary.

"Neither me nor Luke are thinking of betraying Ariel-sama. If someone is deceived and betrays Ariel-sama...it would be better to be dead."

However, I could understand Sylphy's feelings.

If I seriously tried to injure Ruijerd, it was possible that even Eris would become my enemy.

It was the same thing.

"I see...sorry. Saying something strange."

"Hm. There's no need for Rudi to apologize. Rudi was properly on guard and gave me advice..."

Sylphy said so while laughing quietly.

Seeing that smile, for some reason inside me, my stomach tightened.

If the time comes when there is no choice but to kill Luke...

At that time, I couldn't let Sylphy do it.

I will do it.

When I arrived at the Sky Castle, Ariel was having a tea party in the gardens.

Sylvaril was hosting, but Perugius was nowhere in sight.

Instead, Nanahoshi was sitting across from Ariel.

Ariel was having the tea party in a composed manner.

That was my initial impression, but that wasn't the case.

Ariel was wearing the look of an exhausted salaryman.

She looked weary from top to bottom.

On the surface she may appear as graceful as always, however the faint signs of bags under her eyes could clearly be seen.

She really looks cornered.

In that condition, she was sending an aura saying [Won't you ask me? Ask me what's wrong?] to Nanahoshi.

As for Nanahoshi, she was ignoring Ariel.

She just looks very uncomfortable.

Most likely, she didn't refuse the invitation to drink tea together, but she didn't want to have to deal with the complicated sentiments between Ariel and Perugius.

She's like an apathetic-type protagonist.

Yet she stayed, maybe because Ariel also lent her a hand during her illness?

Ariel only lent some magic tools, but the intentions were there.

"Ah, Rudeus!"

Perhaps because of the awkwardness, she looked relieved when she finally saw me.

"Come sit with us for a while?"

I followed Nanahoshi's instructions and sat down between Nanahoshi and Ariel.

Sylvaril poured me tea while I found my seat.

She placed my cup down rather roughly, quite out of character for the usually graceful Sylvaril. I could feel her cold gaze even behind that mask.

Is she mad about when I summoned Arumanfi?

Sorry....

"... Well, Rudi. I'm counting on you."

Sylphy, who came along as well, quietly whispered to me before taking her position behind Ariel.

Ariel looks relieved to have Sylphy here.

Taking a sneak peek, I also spot Luke here.

I sent Luke a message before coming here.

He flashed a bright smile when I told him that [I'll help Ariel.]

"It has been a while, Rudeus-sama. Becoming subordinate of Dragon God Orsted, should I offer you my congratulations... or?"

No confidence in Ariel's voice.

Minced words.

Perhaps Sylphy had been talking to Ariel about Orsted behind his back.

"Thank you. No matter what, it's reassuring to have the backing of someone that powerful."

"Rudeus-sama is very powerful as well... might just be that birds of a feather flock together... Maybe it's impossible for me."

What? Ariel is deprecating herself?

She really is in a bad place right now.

"Hey."

Nanahoshi said that and poked my side.

"Orsted came by yesterday."

"Ah, how was it?"

"After I apologized, he forgave me. He said [I'm counting on you from now on too.]"

"Good to hear."

A simple conversation, but it looks like a weight came off her shoulders for Nanahoshi.

If everything could be resolved with an apology, we wouldn't need police in the world.

If I was deceived and a victim of attempted murder, an apology won't be enough.

From this I can conclude that Orsted is truly magnanimous.

"I also had the privilege of seeing Orsted-sama."

A tinkle in Ariel's voice.

It's really soothing to listen to.

A charismatic voice that you want to follow.

She's also beautiful.

The most beautiful blond hair I ever seen.

She is the embodiment of beauty.

Although I am surrounded by pretty girls and ladies, but from an objective perspective, Ariel is probably number one.

Beyond natural beauty, rather an artistic beauty.

But, because she lost her confidence, right now she gives off the charms of a weary widow.

... This charisma may also be a curse.

"Orsted-sama is a scary person. So much that even though I just saw him from afar, I felt a sense that I was in danger."

"He's not a bloodthirsty enough person that he'd suddenly attack someone, so it's fine."

I see.

Ariel also saw Orsted.

So it would be better not to say that I'm operating based on instructions from Orsted.

But she already knows that I have become Orsted's subordinate...

"I suppose so. He came yesterday and had tea with Nanahoshi-sama and then returned, but even though he seemed to be in a bad mood the entire time, he didn't even get angry when Sylvaril-sama spilled tea."

Sylvaril spilled tea on Orsted?

Well, it wasn't on purpose.

Sylvaril must be terribly frightened.

"I could feel the tension in the air, but Nanahoshi-sama was strangely open and cheerful and helped lighten the mood, so maybe he's a very tolerant gentleman in contrast to his appearance and atmosphere."

... Huh?

She got that impression?

The curse was not as effective on Ariel?

Well that's convenient, but.

Maybe this is Hitogami's doing?

If I think about it, for Hitogami, wouldn't manipulating Ariel be the most convenient?

Rather than using Luke to get to Ariel, going for Ariel directly seems more straightforward.

But Orsted didn't warn me of this possibility...

Maybe he has proof that Hitogami isn't controlling Ariel?

"Regarding that, it seems that he's just hated because of a curse."

"Really? If so, I should have called out to him at least once. He's terrifying just from afar, I might piss myself if I hear him nearby."

Ariel said so and snickered.

"Piss..."

"Well, pissing in front of people is rather pleasant, but..."

"Ah?"

"Ariel-sama!"

Sylphy coughs to air her grievance.

I did hear something about pissing but...

Maybe I should pretend I didn't hear it?

Well, the nobility at Asura Kingdom are full of perverts.

Even so, it feels particularly perverted to hear those words coming out of this art-like person.

"Rudi! Don't grow your nose in front of Ariel-sama!"

{ C-Editor's note: Growing your nose is a Japanese idiom for acting perverted. }

"Yes, mom."

I touch my nose to check involuntarily.

Is it growing...

I may be a pervert, but I know my limits.

Like Sylphy, for example?

But I shouldn't say that, obviously.

"Ugh..."

Nanahoshi is creeped out, but for the time being I'll set her aside.

"Regardless, I can understand why Orsted-sama took Rudeus-sama under his wings."

"Eh, how so?"

"Because I thought one capable of managing Rudeus would be an influential person of that level."

I wonder about that.

I think that it's easy to manage me, though.

If Sylphy crawled into bed at night and asked [Hey Rudi, I have a request...] I'd do everything that she asks.

Of course, Ariel will never come begging that way.

She only asks for minor things.

I'm a man who acts for women and money.

Anyways, back to the main topic.

Give Ariel a hand.

"When you say influential person... for example, someone like Ariel-sama?"

After saying that indirectly, Ariel covers her mouth and squints.

"Rudeus-sama sure knows how to flatter a girl..."

It's not just flattery.

She might be cornered, but Ariel is still a princess of the Asura Kingdom.

Her stature can be compared to the Crown Prince of England in the past world.

From her etiquette, language, or how we're seated together, she might not look it.

Only because we know each other well.

We're good acquaintances only by chance.

Everywhere else, Ariel has been working hard in various ways.

Right now, very few key positions in Magic City Sharia have not been touched by Ariel.

Principal and Vice-Principal of the Magic University.

Notables of the Magic Guild.

Head of the Magic Tool Workshop.

President of the Merchant Association.

Branch Manager of the Adventurer's Guild.

Everywhere I go, all I need to mention is Ariel's name and I'm set.

Well, all I have been doing was taking discounts from Magic City Sharia businesses by name dropping Ariel.

Basically, what I want to say is this.

She is really capable when it comes to networking.

Ariel truly is capable.

"Once, I also considered asking Rudeus-sama to work for me, but..."

"Really?"

"I gave up right away. There are plenty of reasons, but the greatest was..."

Ariel looks straight ahead.

Forward, across the cloud cover sky on the other side of the beautiful garden.

Even further away, towards the edge of the blue sky.

As she stares, she murmurs.

"[You, who desire power beyond your means, shall face ruin.]"

For an instant, I thought that was meant for me.

But, no.

Ariel follows up that line.

"A line from my younger days, from a play I watched at Asura palace, Great Demon Empress Kishirika Kishirisu said that."

That's definitely a lie.

Who came up with this bullshit history.

Kishirika could never come up with a line that cool.

"It was the curse Kishirika placed on Golden Knight Aldebaran before her death."

"... Oh."

"Afterward, Aldebaran became the King. He was feared by all, and was ultimately rebelled against and killed."

How dramatic.

Wait, this sounds completely different from the history I knew.

"That play was a required watch by Asura royalty for our coming of age."

Coming of age? So their 5th, 10th, and 15th birthdays.

In Asura Kingdom, these must be major events.

For royalties, plays are probably a must.

"Of course the truth differs, but it was crammed with all the ideologies of the Asura line."

So it was different to historical fact after all.

I see.

It's entirely different from what I knew as well.

The Golden Knight Aldebaran and Kishirika Kishirisu fought to a stalemate.

But wasn't it really the battle between Demon Dragon King Laplace and Fighting God?

Well, it doesn't matter, but still.

"All of the ideologies?"

"Yes. Like war, victory, governance, and kingship."

"..."

"Even so, why was Aldebaran betrayed and murdered? Did some king write this play to warn his descendants of our ruin? I wondered about that when I was young. I was 15 when I finally realized that, the line [You, who desires power beyond your means, shall face ruin] covers everything."

With that said, Ariel looks toward the distant sky.

"Power beyond one's means leads to destruction. Thus, only handle what you can control, what you can master. The power to manipulate all is the way of the king. Right now, I still think so."

... Ariel looks downcast.

Her long eyelashes cast a shadow.

"I understand. Perugius-sama and Rudeus-sama, both are more powerful than I."

A gentle smile reappears on Ariel, her usual one.

But she looks like she's about to cry.

"One more time, and if Perugius-sama refuses, I'll give up."

"Give up?"

"Yes. Of course, I won't give up on becoming king even if I don't have Perugius-sama's backing. Because I still believe that Asura's throne is not too much for me, at the very least."

"..."

I can feel it.

The sigh.

But it did not come.

"Ariel-sama."

"Yes, Rudeus-sama?"

"How am I powerful?"

Powerful, being special.

Indeed, I once dreamed of being such.

In my past life, I thought so, and that's why I failed.

That's why in this world, I try to avoid thinking that I'm special.

I haven't forgotten that.

"Rudeus-sama excels in many areas, but... more than anything else, your magic power."

"Magic power."

Indeed, in that area, I might be special.

All thanks to my Laplace Factor, my magic potential are higher than most.

It's at a level most people can't possibly reach, regardless of how much effort they put in.

Of course, that's also because of what I had done with my life.

But that alone can't solve everything.

Whether it can solve my problems is a different story.

"Indeed, if all my worries can be solved with magic power, I might have thought of myself as powerful as well."

"Your worries?"

"I worry daily. Particularly, there are so many thoughts of [How do I explain this to my family...] that it's suffocating."

Fear of Hitogami.

Used as Orsted's bait.

I tell my family nothing but lies and deceit.

I'm powerful?

Quit joking around.

"Perugius-sama may be different but... at least, I am not powerful. Your best friend Sylphy's husband might have a bit more magic power than usual, a bit more esoteric knowledge than usual, but he's just another average magician with his own private worries."

Even I feel embarrassed for saying this.

But that was my honest thoughts.

I grab Ariel's hand from the table.

A soft hand.

So small, her fingers feel like they would snap at any moment.

From the corner of my eyes, I can see Sylphy burning up.

"Ariel-sama, actually today, I came not to chit-chat."

"Oh, have you come to court me?"

Ariel's mood didn't change when I suddenly grabbed her.

A gentle smile.

A weary smile, but.

This is her neutral face.

"Court... it's an interesting proposition, but no. The ones who asked me were Sylphy and Luke."

Ariel looks around behind her in rare panic.

Sylphy looks calm, Luke slightly droops his head.

"I want to help Ariel-sama."

As I said that, I felt her grip suddenly tighten.

An unbelievable strength from those delicate fingers. It almost hurt.

"How could you two, do such a thing...?"

"Asking help from this Rudeus Greyrat? I do not intend to look down on you. What I want to say is different."

Suddenly grabbing her hand, talking about that.

How would the normal Ariel react?

"Can I be your support?"

Honest tears flowed from Ariel's eyes when she heard those words, moved.

A beautiful tear.

This surprised me, that it would make Ariel cry.

Why?

Ariel, with her free hand, wiped away her tears and forced a smile.

"It's the first time in my life I was told a pick-up line that touched my heart this much."

She jokes, but her face is honest.

She isn't blushing, nor crying.

The face of a princess.

"Indeed, that's an incredible proposition... but."

Ariel did not agree right away.

Holding her chin, looking towards me with slightly upturned eyes, her eyes narrow.

As if to search my true feelings.

"I heard that Rudeus-sama became Orsted-sama's subordinate, would he allow it?"

"I already informed Orsted-sama of my intentions."

"Perhaps Orsted-sama ordered Rudeus-sama to do this?"

It's possible that Orsted's curse is less effective against Ariel, and she herself said that it doesn't bother her.

But as planned, I lie about Orsted's motives.

"That's not the case. He simply gave me free rein when I asked if I can help Ariel-sama."

"Really... Well then, I understand. I offer Orsted-sama my gratitude."

I can see Sylphy pouting from the corner of my eyes, but it can't be helped.

"Well, I'm in your care, Rudeus-sama."

"Likewise."

I hold Ariel's hand once more, but different than before.

A handshake.

Well then.

Now that we have agreed to cooperate, let's begin.

"Getting Orsted-sama to help Ariel-sama win the throne is possible, but... he has little influence inside Asura Kingdom, so there's not much that he can do."

After that brazen talk, I start off this time with a preface.

"That's why, I think gaining Perugius-sama's support is still vital."

"Indeed."

Ariel with a serious expression, settles herself.

Maybe it's just me, but Sylphy and Luke look more serious as well.

Convince Perugius.

Orsted also mentioned how important that was.

Because Perugius wields enormous influence inside the Asura Kingdom.

But, how?

Probably it comes down to what Perugius said.

Let me try bringing that topic up again.

"[What is the most important factor of a king, Ariel-sama. If you know, you'll have my support.]"

And...

Ariel's eyes twitched.

It's the question she worries over the most, but the answer won't come to her.

"The most important factor for a king, what the hell is it?"

I was asked as well, and my answer wasn't good enough.

Anyways, I don't think I have the right answer either.

If what Orsted said was to be believed, an individual named Derrick Redbat would have helped her find her answer.

But history has changed, so the question might have been different.

Asking about this Derrick person might be a good idea.

But, how do I approach this?

I am not supposed to know this Derrick person.

"Ah, well, before we discuss this topic..."

Ariel bends over and glances at Sylvaril.

"Perugius-sama will hear everything, is that okay?"

"... I'm sure he doesn't mind."

"But that kingship question, is it alright to discuss it with others..."

Ah, of course.

Since it's about becoming king, maybe only that person can think it over?

Then what?

Taking a glance at Sylvaril, she gently shakes the wings at her back.

"Perugius-sama has said to Ariel-sama that no matter how she works out her answer, if her answer is correct, he'll lend you his strength."

Because he is generous.

She said it in a matter-of-fact attitude.

"So I could have consulted others from the start?"

"Rather, Perugius-sama has been wondering why you haven't."

Ariel can only cast a wry smile to that response.

"I was too narrow minded."

Ariel murmurs, but she looks suddenly refreshed.

With her hands she begins to comb her blond hair, after it's straightened, she stretches out her hand.

She then turns her head left and right until it crackles and slaps her cheek.

Behavior unbecoming of a princess.

"Got it. Then, Sylphy, Luke, sit down."

"Yes!"

"Understood."

Happily those two sat down, but Nanahoshi's uncomfortableness doubles.

"Well, let's begin the meeting."

A voice of confidence from Ariel, like in our first meeting.

Should I applaud?

No, probably not.

But I probably should raise my hand to speak.

"Before we begin, let's reach a common understanding?"

"Understanding?"

"What I mean is, I don't know anything about Ariel-sama."

"Eh... What do you want to know?"

Ariel blushes slightly, and I can feel Sylphy glaring.

It's not like I'm asking for her three sizes.

No, stick with serious talk.

"First, I want to know why Ariel-sama wants to be king, if you please."

Why Ariel wants to be king.

I might have heard of that before.

Something about those that died for her sake.

Along the way, maybe the name Derrick will pop up.

"Haven't I mentioned this to you before?"

"Huh, did you?"

"Yes, at Rudeus-sama's and Sylphy's wedding."

"If possible, please tell me again."

Hearing that, Ariel says nonchalantly.

"If I failed to be king, I won't able to face those that died placing their trust in me."

"So, trust, of those that died... Can you tell me the details about them?"

Ariel smiles slightly hearing that, but I also feel some concern.

"Does this have to do with our topic at hand?"

Ah, that's a rejection.

She doesn't want to talk about it?

"I don't know if it will, but I think Perugius-sama is giving Ariel-sama a test. If we look into Ariel-sama's personal relationships, maybe we can find some clues."

"I see."

Good enough, actually, that actually sounds plausible.

But, I was honest too.

I really have no idea what a true king is about.

I remember reading in a light novel from my past life,

[King lives for his people, no, to lead his people] and junk like that before.

But as much as I try, I can't find a serious answer.

"Well. Those that died are many. Especially during my escape from Asura Kingdom, 13 died then... Four knights: Alistar, Callum, Dominic, Cedric. Three magicians: Calvin, Johann, Babette. Six attendants: Viktor, Marcelin, Bernadette, Edwina, Florence, Corinne. The names of these 13 people, I will never forget during this lifetime. The painful journey together, fought together, and overcame hardships together. In hopes of me becoming King, they died."

Huh?

One name did not come up, Derrick's.

Strange...

According to Orsted, he also died, but...

Perhaps he wasn't anyone important to Ariel?

There's a possibility I find a hint if Derrick survived from these thirteen.

"Do you mind talking about each of them in detail?"

"Understood. But it'll be a little long. Is that okay?"

"That's fine, as there's not a single person who isn't important."

With that said, somehow the mood became more relaxed.

Ariel smiles, while Luke looks somewhat surprised.

Sylphy glows with a sense of pride.

Only Nanahoshi looks somewhat peeved.

"Well then.."

Ariel, slowly but surely, talks about those thirteen.

Their origins, where they grew up, the circumstances of how Ariel met them.

Their personalities, their likes, their dislikes.

What they took pride in.

The way they talk, what made them smile, what made them angry, what made them cry.

Who got along with who, who liked who, who hated who.

And how they met their ends.

Each of their lives worthy of a drama.

Ariel's narration alone was more than sufficient to convey their persons.

Luke and Sylphy chip in here and there.

Certainly, those thirteen live on within these three.

Of course, if the other two came, Ariel's other followers, they would know as well...

Sylphy in my future diary, because of my incompetence, left with Ariel.

But maybe she would follow Ariel regardless?

Thinking that, I realized how strong their bond is.

But now is not the time to be jealous.

They died for her sake.

They died to protect her.

That burden I can sympathize with.

Sylphy knows the weight she carries.

"That's about it."

"I see..."

But, unfortunately, I wasn't able to discern the most important factor of a king from those thirteen's stories.

Maybe their bond in and of itself is proof of a king?

Say, The Round Table in King Arthur has thirteen seats.

Well, if you include those who survived, the numbers don't fit.

"Rudeus-sama, did you figure out something?"

"Well... Sorry."

"Is that so..."

Ariel sighs in response.

Right away Sylvaril pours her another cup of tea.

I too drank a cup during the conversation. It had a deep aroma and a bitter-sweet taste, resembling coffee.

By the way, Nanahoshi excused herself for the toilet and ran away.

Maybe talking about the dead was too much for her.

"What should we talk about next?"

"Well..."

I want to hear about Derrick Redbat.

Very much.

But that name never popped up, so I couldn't.

Maybe I should just drop the name and pretend that Sylphy mentioned him before?

I can just suck it up.

During my hesitation, Ariel suddenly put a hand on her chin.

"Ah, it's unrelated, but, I just remembered something."

"... Oh?"

"Luke, do you remember? Back when I was 10, in the palace gardens, I'd always have tea on days like this."

Sylphy looks doubtful, but Luke narrows his eyes from nostalgia.

"Ah, that's right. Not every day, but once every three days or so?"

"That's right, back then, I was always rushed to this lesson or that. So during lunch breaks, I liked to have tea by the garden under the sun. It became a habit. Just me, Luke, and Derrick..."

I can't let that keyword pass.

"Derrick? Who is that?"

"Ah yes, my guardian magician before Sylphy, from the Redbat house. An excellent magician, but he died protecting me during the Metastasis Event."

"Ah... Can you tell me about him in detail?"

Finally, this Derrick person appears.

So he died during the Metastasis Event.

Was he involved with the Fedoa Region?

Maybe I can find the clue through his story.

"..."

But Ariel remains silent, looking shocked.

"Something wrong?"

"... No, now I think about it, it was Derrick's death that caused me to want to be king."

Ariel seems to realize something, placing a hand by her mouth.

"Then, can you discuss that in details?"

"Details, but it was almost 10 years ago. I might have forgotten a lot about Derrick..."

"Please try."

Ariel chugs down her tea, holds down her chin, closes her eyes.

Searching her memories.

Staying like that for some time, suddenly Ariel reopened her eyes.

"Derrick Redbat was my Guardian Magician. He would always lecture me on the path to kingship."

"Yes."

"Back then, I didn't care about fighting against my brothers for the throne, and to be honest, I hated Derrick's lectures."

"So you didn't want to be king Back then."

"Yes. Back then, I would rather have tea like right now, and scheming with Luke on how to bed the palace girls. That was enough."

"Huh?"

10 years ago, wasn't Ariel-sama only 10 then?

Luke too?

Are all Asura Kingdom nobles this... advanced?

Well, that's fine. To each their own.

"Right. There were others that offered plans to make me king, but they were all pushing me for their own interests."

Yeah, I had friends like that too.

"Back then, only Derrick was earnest about it. He believed that if I were to become king, the country would change for the better. Only now do I realize that..."

"Oh?"

Ariel talks about what happened.

What happened in Asura Kingdom.

Before Sylphy was teleported.

Ariel was having tea in the garden when the Metastasis Event happened.

Derrick went to the toilet, so only Luke was guarding her.

Of course, they never expected a magic beast to appear.

But a magic beast did appear.

The first to notice was Derrick, who's returning from the toilet.

He began an incantation as he rushed towards Ariel.

He prepared a magic attack as soon as he saw it.

But he stopped his incantation to yell and get Ariel's attention.

That's how Ariel finally noticed the magic beast and managed to avoid a fatal blow.

But it was too close.

The magic beast pressed in.

Luke made a move, but it was too late.

It was Derrick that rushed in, squeezing himself between Ariel and the magic beast.

Derrick died instantly due to the blow by the magic beast.

Apparently, the transported Sylphy managed to subdue the magic beast, but... that's a different story.

"If Derrick didn't stop his incantation, he might have subdued the magic beast, and wouldn't have died."

"But if so, Ariel-sama might have died instead."

"Indeed. Death, or at least a serious injury."

Sounds like Derrick bet his life to protect Ariel.

"Derrick's final words were, [No matter what, please be king.] I get the feeling that at that moment I finally realized that Derrick wanted me to be king out of sincere feelings."

Ariel continues.

"Not only that, at death's door because of the magic beast. It was my first time that I felt in the depth of my heart, that I must be king, I can't die here."

Ariel clenches her fist over the table.

Her pupils dilate, focused on that clenched fist.

"How, why did I forget that... something that important."

Ariel, her shoulders shaking, looks downcast.

Regret.

Regret for forgetting what set her on her path.

I don't know how I should respond.

Neither does Sylphy or Luke.

But Ariel, saying nothing, raises her head.

Like casting off a shadow.

Has remembering her beginnings helped her recover what was lodged in her heart?

That's a good thing.

"..."

But right now, the most important factor of a king is still missing.

We're back to where we're started.

Maybe Sylphy and Luke have another idea?

"That's great, but, we still don't have an answer for the king factor. What could it be..."

"No, Rudeus-sama."

To the troubled me, Ariel slowly shakes her head.

An almost invisible smile shines through her radiant face.

A face you can't help but lose yourself in..

To the fascinated me, she says.

"I know the answer."

Oh?

Audience Room of Sky Castle Chaos Breaker.

12 Familiars standing in a row.

Sylvaril of the Void.

Arumanfi of the Bright.

Yuruzu of Atonement.

Karowante of Insight.

Sukeakoto of Time.

Clearnight of Thunder.

Dotbath of Destruction.

Trophimus of the Wave.

Harkenmail of Life.

Gall of Earthquake.

Furiousful of Fury.

Paramount of Darkness.

And sitting before them, their king.

Armored Dragon King Perugius Dola.

Facing him, the Second Princess of Asura Kingdom.

Ariel Anemoi Asura.

"..."

After our meeting, via Sylvaril, Ariel requested an audience with Perugius.

Sylvaril immediately went to work, and in the meantime Ariel changed outfits.

Sylphy and Luke changed their outfits as well.

They were good-looking, stylish outfits worthy of the titles of Second Princess of Asura Kingdom and her guards.

As for me, I wore the robe Orsted lent me.

Well, since it's Orsted's, it should be fine.

Ariel walks up proudly between the twelve familiars.

Unfettered despite being the center of attention, she offers an elegant curtsy towards Perugius.

Sylphy and Luke both kneel.

This time I kneel as well.

"Thank you once again for making time for me."

"Let's be clear. What shall we have today? From the looks of it, this isn't an invitation to a tea party..."

Perugius pretends like he doesn't know.

With Clearnight of Thunder's power, he should be able to hear everything in the castle.

Just putting on airs.

Well, the question might also be part of the act.

"For becoming king of Asura Kingdom, I'm here to request Perugius-sama's support."

Ariel, unshaken by Perugius's act, declares her purpose.

"Well then.. let me ask again."

Perugius places an elbow on the throne's armrest, a hand on his cheek, tilting his head he asks.

"What is the most important factor of a king?"

Ariel raises her chin up.

"The most important factor..."

I don't know her answer.

So I don't know if it's right.

Ariel said she knows, but there's no guarantee that it's right.

Well, even if she told me, I still won't know if it's right...

Maybe it would be better if I had checked.

No, let's trust Ariel.

Seeing how confident she is, the possibility does exist.

"Is 'to inherit wills'."

Her words echo.

Only silence responds.

A silence that seem impossible for this audience room with 17 in attendance.

"Ha."

Perugius answers like he's just taking another breath.

No way to tell from his expression whether the answer is correct.

To inherit wills.

I can understand why this was Ariel's answer.

Death litters on Ariel's path to the throne.

Since Derrick, 13 of her followers have died.

Who were they? What sort of future did they wish for?

In their death, they entrust their will with Ariel.

That became the foundation of Ariel's will to be king.

And Perugius's friend.

Kaunis Freean Asura was a man at war.

Rumors are he's easy to get along with despite being royalty.

That person became king.

So maybe, he also inherited the wills of those that died in battle?

I sense a connection in this answer.

So this must be the answer.

But somehow.

For me at least, it felt a little cheap...

"... Hah. Inherit wills?"

Perugius jeers at Ariel and laughs.

"In other words, your intention to become king is just something you were influenced by other people to have. Can that person be called a true king?"

Contempt in his voice.

In other word, wrong answer?

But Ariel looks unshaken.

"Yes, that's right. Perugius-sama. The likes of my intentions are just something I was influenced by other people to have. I am far from what the public views a true king to be. However..."

Ariel inhales, her voice remains resolute.

"If I'm a king with regard to those who've entrusted their wills to me, then even if I'm not a true king, I don't care."

"Ha..."

Perugius looks disinterested.

While resting his chin in his hands sullenly, he asks a new question.

"So you're telling me, that I should lend my powers to a foolish king?"

"Yes, because I'm a fool, that's why I request your assistance."

"Ha!"

Is this going well?

I thought Ariel responded well.

A true king isn't a concept you can grasp, nor an answer you can find.

Just aim to be one as king.

Govern them and become the king they desire.

I don't know if it's right, but that sounds splendid.

But maybe the answer Perugius seeks is different?

"So you thought that with that answer, you'd really receive my assistance?"

"No, Perugius-sama. But those are my true feelings. I have not lied. That is why Ariel Anemoi Asura seeks the throne."

With a strong, unwavering gaze Ariel looks toward Perugius.

"If that is no good, then Perugius-sama's power is unnecessary."

Words of repudiation.

Perugius's eyes widen, his twelve familiars visibly agitated.

Sylphy and Luke too, look in shock.

I'm also shocked.

"So you don't need me to become king?"

"If my ideals and Perugius-sama's ideal are too far apart, it would just become a hindrance."

Perugius stops supporting his head and slowly stands up.

That look, is it anger?

His lips tight, eyes wide.

His fists are unclenched, but he looks overbearing.

Then he suddenly raises a hand.

For a moment, I thought he was about to issue an attack order to his familiars.

"Well said, Ariel Anemoi Asura! Your conviction, I have received it!"

I was already pouring magic into my staff, but stopped... when I heard those words.

"I, Armored Dragon King Perugius Dola, swear on my departed friend, Kaunis Freean Asura, to lend you my support!"

Perugius roars.

"Ready the magic teleportation circles! Return immediately to Asura palace. Prepare for my arrival, and call for me!"

"Thank you very much."

Ariel offers her gratitude to Perugius.

Sylphy and Luke both bow their heads even lower.

I grasp my staff still stiffly.

Honestly, I didn't think it went well.

The answer was wrong.

Ariel picked one that Perugius didn't approve of.

Yet, Perugius still lends Ariel his power.

Did he realize something in his conversation with Ariel?

Regardless, Perugius swears Ariel his support.

Thus, Ariel gained Perugius's backing.

Ariel takes her leave from the audience room.

Ariel looks composed, but Luke and Sylphy look accomplished.

"..."

I was leaving with them... when I suddenly turn around.

Perugius and his twelve familiars remain behind.

Perugius was watching us leave, and we inevitably exchanged a glance.

"What is it, Rudeus Greyrat."

"Nothing..."

I turn back and plan my retreat with Ariel.

But it still bothers me.

"So in the end, the most important factor of a king, was that the right answer?"

Perugius answers with a snort,

"That wasn't what I hoped for."

"Then, why?"

Perugius laughs happily when he heard my question.

"Ariel Anemoi Asura does not at all resemble Kaunis. But the way she talks, how she stands up for herself reminds me of something. Wasn't Kaunis, the so called [Ideal King], also someone like her?"

Kaunis, the Ideal King?

"Everyone regards Kaunis as the ideal king, but even he thought that he was far from ideal. In his youth at the bar, in our war encampments, even after becoming king of Asura, he often talked about what it meant to be the ideal king."

Perugius speaks with nostalgia.

In the end, Ariel is far from Perugius's ideal.

But maybe she's closer to the ideal for Kaunis, something like that?

The ideal differs for everyone.

"I see ... For Perugius-sama, then, what is the ideal king?"

Perugius stares me down when I asked.

"I have no reason to tell you."

"Indeed. Apologies."

I take a bow and decide to leave the scene.

If he doesn't want to tell, I don't need to know.

But suppose he did?

Suppose I tell Ariel the answer later.

Maybe Ariel will lose her hard-earned confidence again and become lost again.

So if I don't need to know, he doesn't have to tell me.

"Rudeus Greyrat."

But Perugius stops me in my tracks once again.

When I turn around again, Perugius is already up and heading towards the other exit.

"Let me ask you a question."

"What is it?"

"Why did you not mention Orsted? I dislike him, but I cannot ignore his name. If you had mentioned him in that situation, wouldn't the conversation have gone more smoothly?"

Orsted has asked Perugius himself and was refused.

So I thought mentioning Orsted wouldn't do much good.

Am I being tested?

What did he want me to say?

"Because the one who wants to be king wasn't Orsted-sama."

"But he does want Ariel as king, correct? And you agree as well? If so, then why not bring that name out as much as possible?"

"Even if we did that, Ariel-sama still needs Perugius-sama's support if she is to be king. Orsted-sama and I do want to help, but we're mere outsiders. I think it's counterproductive to bring him up to force the topic."

I think it's a good idea.

Ultimately, it's ideal to let the person in question be involved.

I don't have anything in particular planned for after Ariel becomes king.

I mean, I don't expect anything from her.

I don't know what Orsted has planned though...

Regardless, since this isn't my responsibility, I don't need to force anything.

"Your way of thinking is too timid."

Perugius acts like he spat out something and returns to his room.

"..."

Unable to stand the gaze of the remaining twelve familiars, I take my leave.

It's a little embarrassing.

So in other words, he's saying that it's no good for me to say noncommittal and insincere things.

I head towards Ariel's room after leaving the audience room.

I apologize for my lateness as I enter.

A snow white, almost transparent shoulder comes into view.

Ariel is changing.

Sylphy is stripping that gorgeous outfit off her body, showing a loosened corset underneath.

"Ah! Hey! Rudi!"

"It's fine. Rudeus-sama has done me a great service this time. No matter what time it is, he has no need for permission to enter the room."

"Hold on, Ariel-sama..."

"Ah.. Sorry, Sylphy. I wasn't considerate. Rudeus-sama, please, you'll do me a great favor if you just wait for a moment."

Before that line was said, I have already left the room and shut the door.

Ariel seems to have misunderstood my intentions. I was not shameless enough to spectate on a girl changing.

But Ariel's figure sure is something.

Eris has a nice figure too, but that's because she honed her body.

Ariel's figure is a gift from god, I got the feeling that you can't train a body like that.

Maybe it's in her DNA?

But when it comes to proportions, Sylphy won't lose either.

She has neither the boobs or butt.

But her proportions are ideal.

I love that about her.

Of course, Roxy is a God, so no comparisons.

"Next time, I'll learn to knock."

When I don't, I get an eye full of a man doing dirty deeds with dolls.

From those experiences, I should have known better.

I'm too forgetful.

Eh?

Say, wasn't Luke in the room too?

And that guy was okay?

... Probably.

When it comes to who Ariel feels the most secure with, it has to be Luke.

"Rudi, it's okay now."

After a while, the door opens a crack and Sylphy appears behind it.

Despite what she said, I can see the unhappiness on Sylphy's face.

"Ariel's, did you see?"

"Um. Her panties are white."

Sylphy puffs her cheeks.

By the way, her panties are also white.

I confirmed this yesterday, so I'm confident.

After poking her puffed cheek, I strut in the room.

She pinches my butt on my way in.

"Sylphiette-san."

"What is it, Rudeus-san."

"Let's leave the flirting for when we get home."

"... Seriously!"

Sylphy swats my butt, and still pouting, she trots across the room and violently sat down on a chair in the corner.

Her rosy cheeks are also very lovely.

Well, enough about that.

Now changed, Ariel sits in the middle of the room.

Even her everyday wear she looks of a princess, maybe that's the difference of a price tag?

No, enough about that.

First I'll apologize.

"Earlier, when you're changing, sorry."

"No... So how was it?"

"How was what?"

"My body."

Eh, do I have to answer?

Oh, this is also a test.

Today is test day.

I won't make a mistake this time.

"Wonderful... I think, in various places, but I love Sylphy the most."

"Really? Sorry to be an eyesore."

Ariel giggles and Sylphy lets out [What are you saying...] with her face glowing red.

Luke can only shrug.

Is it because of the success in convincing Perugius? The mood is rather relaxed.

"Please sit."

She puts on a serious face and offers me a seat.

I oblige.

"It's all thanks to Rudeus-sama that we can move forward."

"No, I didn't do much."

"No need to be modest. Wasn't it just as Rudeus-sama said? The answer was within me."

It ended well.

This might also be fate, but...

According to the diary, without Derrick here, Ariel would not be able to convince Perugius.

With my help, Ariel found the answer with her own strength.

I think so.

I think it turned out well.

"However, the next step. Perugius-sama said to head immediately back to the palace and prepare the venue. I plan to follow his instructions and head back to Asura palace."

"Prepare the venue?"

"In the literal sense."

I don't understand it in the literal sense, though.

Oh, let me think about this.

If I read between the lines, this means Perugius does not plan to travel with us to Asura Kingdom.

So, Ariel heads back first and prepares a place suitable for Perugius's arrival.

For example, a party venue where many nobles will gather.

Get that ready for him, and call for Perugius.

And Perugius and the Twelve Familiars will arrive with much fanfare.

All the nobles will scream [OMG, it's Perugius] and pant while prostrating themselves before him.

Something like that?

"... Well, what's the hurry? Shouldn't we take more time to get ready?"

"That can't be done. I already received word of my father's illness."

Ariel looks surprisingly composed while announcing such a serious news.

Well, I expected the news to come later, but Ariel already received the news?

If so, that reduces the chance that Luke is apostle of Hitogami.

Because it's less likely that he heard it from Hitogami.

Well, the possibility exists that Hitogami told Luke, and Luke in turn told Ariel?

Hold on.

Then it's also possible for Ariel to hear this directly from Hitogami?

Ariel might be an apostle of Hitogami.

It's checkmate for us if Ariel is an apostle.

Maybe Orsted got the timing wrong.

Regardless, I should consult Orsted about the possibility of Ariel as an apostle.

"Looking at Rudeus-sama's reaction, you already knew."

"Ah?"

"Or maybe, now that you're an subordinate of the Dragon God, even the illness of Asura's King doesn't bother you."

"That's because... after seeing Luke-senpai abruptly requesting my aid and Ariel-sama in such a hurry, I had a premonition about the situation."

I tried saying that.

Ariel looks convinced, nodding her head.

Good enough.

"Since Rudeus-sama probably also expected it... Then, will fourteen, fifteen days to get ready suffice?"

Ariel only needs two weeks to get ready.

Pretty rushed.

Well, my diary doesn't have any exact dates recorded.

Maybe this was the right timing.

And Orsted got his timing wrong.

"Luckily, we can request Perugius-sama to prepare a magic teleportation circle for us, so our travel time might not be long, and we might have time to spare. But with my father ill, if I don't hurry back we might miss our timing. By the time I arrive, my brothers might have already solidified their position."

Sounds like the king will die from this illness.

Then, the successor will be christened.

If we drag our feet, Ariel might not get a chance to join the fight.

Even so, I also worry.

Orsted spoke of a troublesome character in Asura Kingdom.

Senior Minister Darius Silva Ganius.

According to Orsted, as long as he lives, Ariel's chances of victory remains slim.

That's why we need Darius's Achilles Heel, by getting in touch with Tris.

If Tris is here, we can take down Darius.

A mere Senior Minister of a country should be nothing when we have Perugius's backing.

That's what I think, but if that's the case, Orsted wouldn't need to point him out in particular.

With Perugius's support, we're evenly matched against the First Prince.

But if we get rid of Darius, we will have the advantage.

Victory comes to those who make the first move.

"Ariel-sama. About the magic teleport circles, how about we ask whether there's one by the borders of Asura Kingdom?"

"Eh, why?"

"As the princess of the kingdom, if you don't cross the border formally, wouldn't that raise a lot of questions? Moreover, teleportation magic is a forbidden technique. It would be obvious if we use it in the kingdom. I think, we are better off traveling by foot from the borders to the capital and showing your person to the public."

"I see, that does make sense."

Alright.

Well, then all I need is an excuse to make contact with Tris's organization.

I haven't thought about the details on how to make contact yet, but that shouldn't be hard.

When it comes to those organizations, money talks.

"I disagree."

The person that interrupted the conversation is Luke.

"His Highness is ill. We don't know what traps First and Second Prince will set for our route back. Magic teleportation circles may be forbidden. But as long as we're not seen, we can make up excuses."

"Right... that also makes sense."

"This wasn't like before. We'll have Rudeus-sama's support as well, so we're fine combat-wise. But according to rumors, the First Prince has hired North Emperor as mercenary. We should be safe once we reach the palace, but on the way we'll be in danger if attacked by North God Style assassins."

I can sense the fear in Luke's words.

"Being targeted... I'll pass..."

From looking at their expressions, Ariel's and Sylphy's feelings lean toward Luke's argument.

These three struggled in their escape from Asura Kingdom.

They must be scared to be targeted again.

In that case, what then?

Can I find an excuse somewhere, as early as possible, and make contact with Tris?

No, Ariel won't be pleased if I disappear anytime in the journey.

I still have not determined whether Luke is Hitogami's apostle.

His suggestion might also be under Hitogami's guidance.

"Both Rudeus-sama and Luke make good arguments, so.. Sylphy, what do you think?"

While Ariel was worrying, she drew Sylphy into the topic of conversation.

"Well, for me, I think it's better if we teleport in the country. I don't know where we'll arrive at, but if by avoiding the border crossing we can avoid the First Prince, I think it's worth the risk."

Yikes, Sylphy leans toward Luke too?

"Besides, we didn't make a huge scene when we left either. So I think it's fine to return quietly. From the border to the capital will take at least a month... so there's travel fatigue to consider as well."

"Is that so... Understood. Then, accordingly, let's teleport inside Asura Kingdom."

Those are good reasons.

Hard to disagree.

Did I make a mistake by not sharing what I know with Sylphy?

It can't be helped.

I'll just have to figure out another way to make contact with Tris.

Maybe I can ask someone else for help?

Ghyslaine... will probably fail in negotiations.

Speaking of which, I need to introduce Ghyslaine to Ariel before we head out.

Elinalise... is pregnant.

In that case, I can't ask Cliff either.

Who else do I trust and can negotiate?

Zanoba doesn't seem to have much negotiating skills.

Maybe if he brought Ginger along...

No, I shouldn't involve the prince of another country in this.

While I was thinking.

'Knock knock,' a rattle from the door.

"Come in."

"Please excuse me."

The one that entered is Sylvaril.

She examines the room and lightly fluffs her wings.

Then, she says.

"We have just confirmed that all the magic teleportation circles inside Asura Kingdom have been destroyed."

"What?"

That came out of nowhere.

All the magic teleport circles, destroyed.

"How did that happen?"

Sylvaril explains plainly.

After the audience with Perugius, she received immediate orders to activate magic teleportation circles.

Inside the Sky Castle, there are many magic circles pointed inside Asura Kingdom.

But when Sylvaril checked them, the magic teleportation circles were unpowered and unresponsive.

Finding this strange, Sylvaril requested Arumanfi to investigate, and he discovered the magic circles there destroyed.

Accordingly, Arumanfi investigated other locations and found all of the ones Perugius can access inside Asura Kingdom destroyed.

Thus, Sylvaril says.

"It is impossible to teleport into Asura Kingdom."

The closest available magic circle is near the border of Asura Kingdom.

From there we will have to travel by foot.

Someone did this on purpose.

But who could have done this?

Is it Hitogami, or Orsted?

Tomorrow I should check with Orsted about this.

But right now, it's hard to clear my name on this.

Luke looks at me suspiciously.

This happened right after I made my proposal.

As if to say, [Do you know about this already?]

Sylphy too, looks nervously in my direction.

Their distrust of Orsted grew.

Only Ariel looks unwavered.

"In that case, it can't be helped. Let's go with Rudeus-sama's proposal instead."

"Yes, but Ariel-sama..."

Luke has a voice of dismay.

Ariel ignores him and continues plainly.

"Luke, inform Elmore and Kleene and prepare for travel. Sylphy will come with me to make our rounds with the luminaries in Ranoa Kingdom. Rudeus-sama, I'm counting on you. Everyone, please make your goodbyes."

"... Yes."

Luke quietly nods.

We disperse, each holding our own reservations.

A cabin on the outskirts of Sharia.

My third meeting with Orsted there.

Ariel successfully persuaded Perugius.

I report that to him, as well as the news that the magic circles to Asura Kingdom are broken.

Orsted smiles when he heard the news.

A wicked smile.

Or maybe that's his normal one.

"I see, well done."

I was praised.

But problems remain.

"About the magic teleportation circles, what do you think?"

About the magic teleport circles he seems to doubt me momentarily, but soon looks convinced of my innocence.

It's expected that he would suspect [What's he hiding] from me.

"It was probably Hitogami's doing. That idiot made a bad move for his opener. Let's hope that continues."

Orsted seems to have realized something.

Quite merry.

Murmuring [With this, just one more] or something.

What he means by that, I hope he will tell me.

"If possible, can you explain the mistake?"

"Mm, indeed."

Orsted sits back down and stares at me.

His glare is blinding.

Any more and his eyes might start glowing.

"Perugius confirmed that he can't use the magic teleportation circles?"

"Aye, boss."

"Boss... In Asura Kingdom, there are not many magic teleportation circles available. They're mostly emergency escapes for the nobility and royalties. Some of which are defunct, which Perugius takes advantage of."

I see.

Royalty's escape route.

"And that's where the error is."

I see, that's how it is.

No, I don't.

"What is? Explain a bit more! Please!"

"... Basically, magic teleportation circles are not places regular people would have access to. They're protected by soldiers. To enter and hinder the magic circles, only royalty or upper nobles have the power to do so."

"Oh, of course. And then?"

"... Think a little on your own."

"Yes."

The power of royalty.

For them, stopping magic teleportation circles is equivalent to cutting their own life line.

Because of the possibility of Perugius using them, the defunct magic circles were destroyed.

The chances are high that this happened under instruction of Hitogami.

Which means chances are an apostle exist among the royalty or someone who advises them.

And he is?

"So First Prince Grabell or Senior Minister Darius are likely Hitogami's apostle...?"

"Indeed. Moreover, the manpower necessary to destroy all the magic circles within the entire Asura Kingdom, there isn't anyone but Senior Minister Darius who wields a private army of that size."

Oh.

So that's how it is.

Him wielding a large private army is news to me.

"Basically, [Senior Minister Darius is an apostle of Hitogami] has been confirmed?"

"Yes. The possibility exists for the First Prince as well, but... that doesn't matter. He's a target to kill either way."

The First Prince is an enemy to Ariel, so kill him.

Part of me doesn't want to be involved with regicide, but...

It can't be helped.

If it ends up being something I have to do, I'll do it.

"With this, there's one more person."

"You mean... Luke is also a sure thing?"

"No doubt about it."

"What about Ariel?"

"Impossible."

Enough with that kind of joke.

{ C-Editor's note: That was a pun. The Japanese pronunciation of Ariel sounds similar to the Japanese word for impossible. }

"What do you base that on?"

"There are people Hitogami can't manipulate."

"Ariel is someone he cannot manipulate. You have a way to determine that?"

"......My intuition after many years."

Intuition...?

But it seemed like he said it after thinking, so he might have some certain basis that he won't say to me.

I won't ask for an explanation for now.

There are more important things to talk about.

"If we're wrong, and that Ariel is an apostle, then what?"

"If that happens, I'll take responsibility and settle things."

He'll settle things?

Well, that's not necessarily killing.

Anyways, for now I will ignore the possibility that Ariel is an apostle.

In that case, maybe I should inform Ariel of Orsted's intel?

Ariel seems to have some resistance to Orsted's curse.

If she isn't an apostle of Hitogami, wouldn't it be better if we gain her full cooperation by telling her everything?

...Oh, never mind.

Sylphy as well, they both trust Luke.

They believe Luke would never betray them.

Luke, also, might think he's working in Ariel's best interest.

Right.

Manipulated by Hitogami, that possibility exists.

He may have convinced himself that, given the situation, he's making the best move, but only makes things worse.

How troublesome.

Orsted is thinking that Luke has the role of intermediary.

Luke's role is to inform Hitogami of my movements.

But there's a possibility that when push comes to shove, Hitogami will give him advice that appears to benefit Ariel and actually leads her to ruin.

Very troublesome.

I can understand why Orsted wants to kill him immediately.

"... Orsted-sama."

"Yes?"

"I want to confirm our fight against Hitogami. Just to make sure I understand the situation. Is that okay?"

"Oh?"

I begin to recite.

Summary of Hitogami's and Orsted's battle tactics.

First, Hitogami can see the future.

The future he sees is both extensive and detailed.

And he has the power to change that future by manipulating someone.

But he can't see futures that are influenced by Orsted.

Compared to Hitogami's foresight, the Dragon God's secret art is stronger.

When Orsted influences things, Hitogami ends up seeing an incorrect future.

When he discovers something out of place in that future, or possibly when there's a clear change in the future, Hitogami knows Orsted is interfering.

But he cannot see how Orsted changed that future.

He can only estimate.

So long as he does not know what Orsted is trying to arrange or what Orsted's objective is, Hitogami does not have a sure fire way to change the future as desired.

Because of the curse of being hated, Orsted is able to take action with Hitogami not discerning most of his hand.

But also because of the curse, Orsted has few help available to him, limiting his reach.

But now with me in league with him, his reach increased.

My existence could be called an invisible chess piece.

But if this piece moves too brazenly, then Orsted's intentions would be exposed.

So I should act prudently.

And avoid leaking information to Hitogami's spy – Luke.

And also those that trust Luke, that would confide to him, Sylphy and Ariel.

You can't stop people from talking, so it would be better if I talked about this to others as little as possible.

Do what I can to hide Orsted's intentions and actions.

I might look suspicious again.

But it's fine as long as we succeed.

Our goals here are to not let Hitogami know our intentions and defeat Hitogami's apostles.

I will work until I die and help bring Orsted victory in a hundred years.

"Is that... right?"

"Yes. It is."

Orsted nods heavily.

Got it... Now I know what I must do.

Perugius may call me timid, but...

No matter what, we'll move towards our objective.

Likely candidates for Hitogami's apostles.

Luke and Darius.

That's two.

"And the final one?"

"Unsure. But, based on Hitogami's habits, likely someone with talent with the sword or magic."

"Talented in sword or magic..."

Well, they can't be someone from my family.

So no Sylphy and Eris.

So maybe like my diary said, North Emperor or Water God at Asura Kingdom?

"How about the North Emperor and Water God?"

"Auber and Reida... Indeed, very likely. On the way to Asura Kingdom, stay vigilant."

"Orsted-sama is not coming along?"

"Of course, I'll be tailing you. We won't be taking the same actions, though."

Following behind us...

That really sounds like I'm manipulated from the shadows.

Well, since I can consult him as needed, that doesn't sound so bad.

"Understood. Then... Luke, Darius, Reida, Auber. I'll pay attention to those four."

"Right. Darius, Auber, Reida, are fine to kill... Observe Luke, if necessary, kill him."

"It's okay to kill him based on my judgment?"

"Yes, your judgement."

He really trusts my judgement?

He probably thinks I can kill easily.

Since my fight with Orsted was a rare occasion when I was relatively serious...

That's fine.

I'm serious this time.

Next day.

Sylphy and I, after waiting for Norn to return home, held a family meeting.

Feels like that's all we do together these days.

The trip will take 3~4 months.

The destination is Asura Kingdom.

Because it's work related, Sylphy will go to help Ariel.

The family reacts nonchalantly to the announcement.

"Ah, do your best. Can you leave some soil for the garden?"

That was Aisha's response.

She's more worried about soil than me.

"Ariel-sama is leaving school, so... should we have a farewell party...?"

Norn is more concerned with school.

Weird.

The previous time was... gloomier.

I want to have a wet farewell like that time.

I thought Aisha would be in tears, and I'll hug Norn and say I'll be back.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Terminator catchphrase 'I'll be back.' }

"But Onii-chan, every single time you say something like, [I'm leaving and won't come back...] yet you always come back, don't you?"

Ah, I see.

Even at death's door I come back every time, so my sisters have faith in me now?

Or maybe they are putting up a front to reassure me?

Regardless, if Aisha and Norn feel safe when I try my best, that's fine too.

"Also, you keep bringing back new women."

"Hey, I'm worried too, but this time Eris-ane and Sylphy-ane are going too, so it should be safe."

Eris-anesan too?

Speaking of her, as soon as she heard Asura Kingdom she went back to her room to pack up.

Unilaterally declaring [Oh, I'm going too!]

Without any hesitation.

"Who do you think she'll be this time, Norn-ane?"

"I'm not sure. Maybe Ariel-sama's attendants? Kleene-senpai, also Elmore-senpai?"

The impolite conversation continues, but... there won't be more.

I want to loudly declare, but, my lower half no longer has any credibility.

It's not my fault I'm so popular in this world.

... But I think it should be fine this time.

Sylphy and Eris are coming.

Right.

I can't go alone.

Because I'll back up.

So as protection against me backing up.

I will ask Eris and Sylphy to be my reservoir.

That way, I should be safe even against the flood.

"May the fortune of war be with you."

Lilia and mom are the same as always.

Speaking of which, I forgot to consult Orsted about mom's memory.

I have my doubts that he can help since he couldn't do anything about his own curse either. After we're done with this maybe I can check again?

"Lilia-san, then, I'll leave Lucy in your care."

"And Madam too. Leave everything to me."

Sylphy probably doesn't regret her decision, but she takes a deep bow toward Lilia.

"Leaving the girl behind is probably not a good thing, but this time..."

"It's fine. That's what a maid is for."

Recently Lucy added new vocabulary.

Simple words like "mama," "asha," "lila," "oki," "bibi," "jiro."

She looks so endearing when she tries to pronounce them.

But still no "papa."

She says "Ru- di-" once a while...

Recently I haven't been paying attention to her, so she'll surely remember me last.

That girl's parents are both going on a long journey and leaving her behind.

I'm aware that we haven't been proper parents for her.

I don't know when we'll improve.

Lucy is so cute.

She's an angel in my eyes.

But feelings alone aren't enough...

"It'll feel lonesome these four months."

Only Roxy looks lonely.

I feel guilty about going on a business trip and leaving behind a pregnant woman and her child.

"Sorry, we'll try to hurry back, but..."

"Take your time. Even though Lilia-san and Aisha said Rudi doesn't need to be here when I go into labor... but remember to bring me souvenirs. I want fruit candy, that sweet and sour dessert. Okay?"

Roxy looks deadpan as always.

She is nervous about her first child, but she isn't showing it.

"Don't make that pitiful face, Rudi. I'm concerned, but men hunt; women protect the home and children. That's the Migurd way."

Roxy proudly explains.

She's a reliable woman.

It's okay if you leave.

So go without worries!

"Still, I finally got a long vacation, so it's a little unfortunate. I was hoping to spend some leisure time with Rudi."

"Yeah, that's right."

Looks like Roxy took a maternity leave until she goes into labor.

This country's tradition allows for a leave of absence during pregnancy and childcare.

But Roxy does plan to continue her teaching career.

She persuaded Vice Principal Jinas and took a long vacation.

She probably dropped my name for that.

It might be after the fact, but if my name can help Roxy do what she wants to, she's free to name drop as much as she likes.

For the time being, before we head out, I decide to spend more time with Roxy.

That night, in Eris's room, a noisy exchange can be heard.

Sylphy's and Eris's voice.

Eris argues against something Sylphy had said.

Eris's loud [Why?] and [Why should I?] sandwich Sylphy's calm responses. Slowly Eris's voice quiets, and finally she ends it with [I get it.]

And later that night, Eris came to my room.

I was in bed, ready to sleep.

"..."

She quickly hides herself in the bed.

And made me her hug pillow.

The area around her chest presses tightly against me.

Pressured by such a matter at night, even a gentleman can hardly sleep.

Well, tonight I'm also a gentleman.

I don't mind doing it either, however.

I want to check something before doing the deed though.

"You... got in a fight with Sylphy?"

"We didn't."

"Is that so."

I didn't hear any actual fighting.

Well, if I leave right now and check Eris's room, I might find an unconscious Sylphy there.

But I'll trust Eris for now.

"Starting tomorrow, we'll be working with Sylphy. After Ghyslaine has her audience with Ariel, we need to prepare for the journey together."

Introduce Ghyslaine to Ariel tomorrow.

Sylphy said [Let me handle it] for that.

Sylphy can probably take care of this by herself, but considering Ghyslaine's aims, it's better if I make the introduction myself.

I thought about refusing Sylphy then, but either way she'll be alongside Ariel.

And Eris should come too.

So it ends up that tomorrow, the four of us will visit Ariel together.

Sylphy really wants to introduce Eris and Ghyslaine.

Why?

"So she said, now that it's settled, Rudeus wants to spend more time with Roxy."

"Is that what Sylphy said?"

"Yep."

That's the reason?

It was for Roxy?

If my responsibility decreases, then Roxy gets more time... I can understand her reasoning.

Sylphy was being considerate.

Say, Sylphy actually persuaded Eris without resorting to force.

No, Eris has grown up.

Before, she was a girl that let her fists do the talking.

If you lay out the reasons, she would listen.

"That's why, she gave tonight to me."

Oh, so she made her demands.

But I can understand, Eris has needs too.

This selfish side of her is rather nostalgic.

That inconsiderate girl died.

The Eris with fangs is gone.

She is no longer a wolf and lion...

Well, maybe only for today.

It wouldn't be strange for Sylphy to have her own needs.

Or has she put herself aside for now?

Well, I can appreciate her properly in our journey together. So I will.

Putting those thoughts aside, I return a hug to Eris.

And Eris, in frightening speed, strips me naked.

"It won't do if you're found pregnant in the trip, so let's hold back..."

"Worry about that later!"

The night was messy.

Family Planning isn't part of Eris's vocabulary.

Next day, preparations begin.

While packing up for the trip, I also try to spend more time with Roxy.

Of course, I can't always be with Roxy.

Introduce Ghyslaine and Eris to Ariel, meetings with Orsted, carefully making preparations.

What skills North Emperor Auber and Water God Reida possess, and how to counter them.

How to approach Tris and her band of thieves.

Just in case, memorize the general geography of Asura Kingdom.

And the layout of Asura Royal Silver Palace.

Help Cliff begin his research on Orsted's curse.

Doing everything I can.

With that thought in mind, days passed.

One day.

Roxy and I sat together on the sofa in the living room.

Recently, we always spend the end of the day chatting there, just the two of us.

The conversations are endless.

From what happened at school for Roxy, to recent research in magic tools.

To what happened in our individual journeys after the Metastasis Event.

Nothing of importance, just relaxing conversations between Roxy and I .

"Well, Rudi. Before you head out, decide on a name for the baby."

Today's topic is the baby's name.

"Deciding on a name before going on a journey, isn't that bad?"

I respond after hearing Roxy.

"Is that how heroic tales go for Human Race? That doesn't matter to Migurd Tribe."

How frank.

In other words, a jinx is a jinx.

But if my god says so, then there's no need to worry.

This is God's command.

"For Migurd, the village elder decides the name, but... our village head is Rudi. So please make up your mind."

"Can I really make the decision?"

"Of course. Every day I can rub my growing belly and say the name Rudi picked. Those will definitely be happy times."

Roxy rubs her growing belly as she said.

I also put a hand on it.

Unbelievable.

I met Roxy over 10 years ago, and she now carries my child.

Sylphy's was unbelievable too, but Roxy's even more unbelievable.

Joy wells up in my chest.

How amazing, this feeling, I can't get enough of it.

"Uhehe."

"What is it, Rudi? You laughed like Sylphy just now."

Like Sylphy?

"Oh, Roxy's tummy is wonderful."

"It's not as small as Sylphy, and not as tight as Eris, but... if you like it, enjoy to your heart's content."

"Really?"

As instructed, I begin to enjoy rubbing it to my heart's content.

"Inside, half of it is Rudi's."

"And the other half?"

"... The outside belongs to Rudi."

"So it's all mine?"

"The child is half mine. I won't budge."

How straightforward.

Roxy-Sensei sure is smart.

Yes, the child is ours.

But Roxy is mine.

"The child's name, what should it be.."

"Well... a Migurd name... should roll off the tongue."

Migurd names are generally based on initials.

But since our child is mixed, we don't have to follow tradition too strictly.

"Then, how about we base the name on Roxy and Rudeus?"

"Really?"

"Our affinity can't go wrong."

We can't just copy them though.

No "Ru-" or "Ro-," so "Re-" then.

Let me think about names starting with "Re-."

Re-, Re-, Re-

Sounds like a kid that likes to sweep all day.

Liking to tidy up isn't bad.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to an old lady's catchphrase in the Tensai Bakabon manga series. }

Then a name that rolls off the tongue as Roxy suggested.

Reminds me of a girl who desires a fiery love.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Yuukyuu Gensoukyoku ensemble 2 video game. }

But that doesn't feel right either.

Something with more Roxiness.

Hmm.

"La," "Ri," "Ru," "Re," "Ro," which of these sounds more like they would suit a child of Roxy?

That would do.

"If it's a boy, Rollo. And if a girl, Lara?"

"Alright. Rollo and Lara. Both sound easy on the tongue."

In that case.

Will he or she end up kidnapped by a demon lord, or become the rescuer?

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Adventures of Lolo video game. }

Roxy still has the exterior of a middle school girl, but her face is of a saint mother.

It's divine.

Why so divine?

She'll definitely give birth to the child of God!

"Rudi."

"Yes?"

"I know what I said a few days ago, but... please come back safely? I want Rudi to hold this child together with me."

"Yes."

That goes without saying.

The day to leave arrives.

Three days after Perugius Dola entered a partnership with Ariel Anemoi Asura.

At an auditorium slightly far away from the magic university's women's dormitory, prepared for nobles, a place that has a variety of uses.

Currently, this place was reserved by Princess Ariel in preparation to move.

In front of the auditorium's room, there were four figures.

There were three women and one man.

Quagmire Rudeus, and Silent Fitts – Sylphiette.

The other two were Sword Kings who had recently started to become famous in the neighborhood.

They were Eris and Ghyslaine.

"I'll say this first, I've forgotten about etiquette."

"I'm also ignorant in manners."

In front the auditorium's door, those two declared squarely.

Before their attitude, Rudeus shrugged his shoulders and Sylphy made a bitter smile.

"Ariel-sama isn't a person who makes such a fuss about etiquette. For an escort attendant, no more than the necessary etiquette is required."

As Sylphy said so, she picked and removed a piece of thread she saw on Eris's shoulder.

In front of that attitude, Eris's mouth formed the character 'へ' and crossed her arms.

"But, I'm also Rudeus's wife, if my attitude is strange, won't I trouble Rudeus?"

Hearing Eris's words, Rudeus was blinking his eyes in surprise.

He did not think that such words could come out from Eris.

"I'm not particularly troubled. However, I want you to keep polite speech in mind. If not, Sylphy will lose face."

"......No, I don't particularly mind. I've become accustomed to such things."

Sylphy scratched the back of her ear while her mouth made a pout.

Being bullied, having experience in dressing as a male escort, she got used to being called this and that by other people.

Of course, even if she got used to it, it was tough.

But, after living together these 10 days, to expect such understanding from Eris was unfair.

"....."

On the other hand, seeing this, Eris thought that after all she should try her best.

Her feelings regarding Sylphy were still complicated.

Frankly, she did not yet hold an image of her place in the 'family'.

However, she did not identify her as an enemy.

The feelings of being comrades, or rather the feeling of being compatriots was closer.

"Hm....."

While Eris's face made a frown, she looked down at her attire with no self-confidence.

There were no funny places.

It was not formal attire, but Nina assured that it was not an attire that would bring shame to a Sword King.

However, she was a stubborn Sword King.

"The attire is not weird?"

"Yes. It's fine. That form is very cool."

Having received Sylphy's approval, Eris nodded with [Alright].

Somehow, having Sylphy say it's all right was enough for approval.

"Or would a dress be better? After all, Eris is an Ojou-sama from a respectable family. To say, looking like an Ojou-sama would be better?"

"If there's no problem, this is fine."

Eris has also bought clothes and accessories since coming here, but she hasn't shown them to Rudeus yet.So far, the opportunity to wear them wasn't there.....

Somehow they did not feel suitable, not once were they put on.

What was shown was only a negligee for night use.

Furthermore, at night the period of time to show it to Rudeus was short, as a matter of fact it was soon taken off.

"About etiquette, until we arrive at Asura Kingdom it is fine to learn from Sylphy."

"......Well, I'm not reluctant to teach."

Eris took a deep breath.

Become a wife.

Become a woman suitable for Rudeus.

While thinking she had persevered well, after all just training the sword was not good.

"All right, let's go."

Following Sylphy's words, Eris and Ghyslaine nodded deeply.

Sylphy knocked at the door in front of them and raised her voice.

"Ariel-sama. Eris Greyrat and Ghyslaine Dedorudia-sama have come for introduction!"

"Please enter."

Sylphy opened the door and entered inside.

Due to packing, the inside of the room was more messy than usual.

Ariel was seated in the middle of the room.

Sylphy moved to stand next to Ariel.

Rudeus stood in the middle between Ariel and Eris.

Rudeus first placed his hand to his chest and bowed, then gestured with his hand towards Eris.

"Ariel-sama. This person is Eris, Eris Greyrat. I'm sure Ariel-sama already knows, she is the swordswoman with the alias Mad Sword King. For this journey, she will accompany me, Rudeus Greyrat, as an escort."

Rudeus said so far, then called her out in a low voice with [Hey, Eris].

Eris noticed her arms being folded, placed her hand to her chest and bowed.

It is an imitation of Rudeus.

"Eris Greyrat."

It was an attitude that could be considered poor, but Ariel smiled gently.

"I am delighted to make your acquaintance Eris-sama. I am Asura Kingdom's second princess, Ariel Anemoi Asura. I have heard many things about you since a tender age."

"Hmpf, anyway, surely they weren't good rumors."

Hearing those words, Ariel laughed slightly.

"Indeed, the rumors reaching the royal palace were certainly not good rumors. However, I do not intend to judge a person based on rumors. Rumors are, after all, just rumors."

"....."

"Above all, standing next to Rudeus-sama is evidence enough. People who gather near Rudeus-sama tend to have one or two peculiar traits, but they are not bad people."

Nodding in satisfaction, Eris crossed her arms.

Spreading her legs to about shoulder width, it's her usual pose.

The greeting of a noble's young daughter was already forgotten.

"That's it. Rudeus is amazing. It seems you do understand."

"Yes..... Regardless, it may be for a short time, please be at ease."

While being seated, Ariel expressed her thanks.

Seeing this, Eris breathed out with [Hmpf] in a single breath and bowed once again.

[Cough]

Scratching the back of her ear after seeing Eris's attitude, Sylphy cleared her throat.

Before the cough, Eris made a small [Ah] and opened her arms.

Then, making a troubled face, retreated to the back.

Seeing this, with a wry smile, Rudeus indicated to Ghyslaine.

"This person is Ghyslaine, Ghyslaine Dedorudia. The famous Black Wolf Ghyslaine. I'd like to introduce her as Ariel-sama's escort."

Ghyslaine came one step forward and kneeled down on one knee.

Facing Ariel with one eye, sending a sharp glance.

"Ghyslaine."

"I am delighted to make your acquaintance Ghyslaine. I am Asura Kingdom's second princess, Ariel Anemoi Asura. Ever since you came to Fedoa region—"

"I want to ask one thing."

Interrupting Ariel's words, Ghyslaine asked,

"I heard by working under you, I would be able to fight against Sauros-sama's enemies. Is it the truth?"

"It is the truth."

Ariel replied immediately to this insolent question.

She has already heard from Sylphy why this person would want to become her guard.

Ghyslaine will take revenge for Sauros.

In name, Eris is Rudeus's escort, but she seems to join for a similar reason and aim.

"If you follow me to Asura's royal palace, the perpetrators responsible for tricking Sauros-sama.....will surely be found. No, I will find them. At that time, please swing your sword until your heart is content."

Ariel seems to know things regarding Sauros Boreas Greyrat's death.

To take responsibility for Fedoa region's disappearance, he was executed.

One of the four feudal lords, in order to weaken the power of Boreas, it is the result of a scheme to weaken the forces of the first prince.

Of course, Ariel does not have any memory of issuing such an order.

However, Ariel thought that there was the possibility that a person in her own faction had a hand in this.

In that case it would become a difficult situation.....

Even so, the neck of that noble will be presented without hesitation.

To save Rudeus's face who introduced Ghyslaine.

"I entrust it to you."

Ghyslaine said so with a single word and quickly stood up.

Moving her tail and sending a gaze to Sylphy.

"Then, what should I do?"

"Ehm. From tomorrow on, Ghyslaine-san will become Ariel-sama's escort. Today's meeting is intended to make introductions, once the preparations for the journey are complete, please come to my place again."

"Got it..... and Ghyslaine is fine."

Ghyslaine said so in a short amount of time and retreated to the back with one step.

"....."

Once again, Ariel took a look at the three figures in front of her.

Mad Sword King Eris, Black Wolf Ghyslaine.

The one who summoned those two was the most powerful magician among Ariel's acquaintances, Quagmire Rudeus.

Powerful they may be, but these three people have not sworn fealty to her.

And, the one standing behind Rudeus was Dragon God Orsted.

While Rudeus himself denied this, it seems it was on the instructions of Orsted for him to contact her.

To be honest, it is not known exactly what Orsted is plotting.

Ariel has only once seen Orsted.

With just one glance, inexplicable fear was experienced.

Based on the conversation with Nanahoshi, without knowing the reason for cooperation, a sense of anxiety exists.

Even so, Ariel remembered feeling a mysterious sense of security.

Is it because a great amount of forces were assembled before her eyes?

Despite knowing that an unmanageable force could very well ruin herself?

Wrong.

"Then, everyone, I leave it up to you."

Ariel stood up and expressed her thanks to the three people.

Replying in kind, Rudeus.

Seeing Rudeus, hurriedly returning the expression of gratitude, then Eris.

Lastly lowering her head and returning with a bow, Ghyslaine.

"....."

With the expressions of gratitude ending, Ariel glanced at Sylphy.

The reason she didn't feel uneasiness was because they had a connection with her.

It is unknown what Orsted was plotting.

However, Rudeus followed Orsted to protect his family.

Hence, Rudeus will not hurt Sylphiette.

And, Sylphiette will not hurt Ariel.

This fact gives Ariel a sense of security.

(Special thanks to you, Sylphy.)

In her heart, Ariel lowered her head to the peerless best friend standing beside her.

On the night of that day.

In one of the countless taverns existing in the magic city Sharia.

In the bar overflowing with great noise, there is a particularly quiet corner.

In that corner, a tall woman sat near the counter's corner, drinking from her cup quietly.

A dark brown, muscular beast-race woman.

Although she was a middle-aged woman, from a bystander's point of view she was a beauty.

Having said so, there were none who approached her.

Rising from her was a dangerous atmosphere.

As the Mad Sword King was an existence that called forth fear, this was what kept her from being popular.

Furthermore, although she was the teacher of the Mad Sword King, she was not the person known as Mad Sword King.

In that tavern, a new customer arrived.

Arriving by tingling the door's bell was a woman from the long ear tribe with magnificent hair.

A beautiful face, possessing a stimulating body with the exception of her chest.

However, from her slender appearance, her stomach had gotten unimaginably big.

She is a pregnant woman.

Seeing such a woman, some people in the tavern let out a delighted voice.

[Hey, hasn't it been a long time.]

[Is it already fine to not men hunt?]

[Oh yeah, heard you've gotten married.]

[C'mere and have a drink!]

As she was treated with such happy voices, she walked inside the tavern.

Towards the tavern's corner.

To the counter's inner part.

She sat down next to the seat everyone did not dare to approach.

The surroundings held their breath.

"He~ey Ghyslaine. I've kept you waiting."

She – Elinalise, called out to the beast-race woman sitting at the end of the counter in a cheerful voice.

"You're late."

Ghyslaine indifferently stated the situation.

"It couldn't be helped. I'm pregnant... ah, for me beer and snacks to go with it."

Elinalize requested so from the storekeeper.

Hearing that a pregnant woman is drinking, the surrounding men frowned.

Ghyslaine was also one who thought so.

"Is it fine to drink?"

"To celebrate our happy reunion and to talk about the sad topic. A drink is required for either of them."

Having said so, Ghyslaine could not decline.

"Don't worry, I won't drink so much as to affect the child inside. We finally did it, it's my beloved husband's child."

Elinalize stroked her stomach with a charming expression.

Seeing this, Ghyslaine made a surprised face.

"I heard that you became a couple, but to think for you to concentrate on one person."

"It's also a little bit surprising to me. But Cliff is quite splendid. I'd like to ask for a little more flexibility, he doesn't listen to conversations, but he knows what he wants, he feels a strong sense of responsibility towards himself. When we're doing ecchi stuff he tries his best, he moves and tries hard to make not only himself but also me feel good. That is very sweet....Ghyslaine should also try to find someone somewhere soon!"

"I'm fine."

When faced against that fond speech, Ghyslaine replied quickly.

She has already given up living as a woman.

She thought to walk the way of life of a swordswoman.

"Well.....I won't pressure you into it."

At that moment, Elinalize's beer came.

In this area beer was slightly more expensive, but the alcohol content was low.

For Elinalize, it was more like juice.

"Now then, to the reunion of dear friends, cheers."

"Cheers."

Ghyslaine clinked the cup in her hand with Elinalize's cup.

A satisfying sound echoes.

Ghyslaine and Elinalize.

Thus original members of the Black Wolf's Fang managed to reunite.

"It would have been great if only Gisu and Talhand were also at this place....."

".....As well as Paul and Zenith."

When that was said, the enjoyable alcohol became immediately sorrowful.

However, Elinalize originally came to hold such a conversation.

It would have been easier to become a little more intoxicated before starting that conversation, but it was nothing to worry about.

"About Paul.....it's unfortunate. Originally, it should have been me to fall first....."

"That guy lived life in a hurry. I did think it would lead to an early death."

"Ah, come to think of it, such a thing was said in the past."

"It was you who said it."

"Did I?"

"Ah.....in fact, I did not find it too strange that he died."

"Paul was splendid to the end... want to listen?"

"Please tell me."

When asked, Elinalize started to talk about Paul's final moments.

About how he was separated from his family, and how he was desperately searching for them.

About how despite being such a womanizer, he abstained from women and was wholeheartedly faithful to Zenith.

About his reunion with Rudeus, as well as the conversation with him.

About the happy face Paul made when talking.

And finally how he died protecting Rudeus, Paul's final moment.

"I see, that guy has also changed. I recall the time when he and you were fooling around together."

"Oh my, the number one fool must have surely been Ghyslaine? I remember the time when you were shaking your tail when looking at Paul."

"That was a delusion. That was during the oestrous cycle. And, I'm not from Adorudia. Even when happy, the tail doesn't shake."

"It's a metaphor, a metaphor."

"Hmpf."

"But, the Ghyslaine at that time sure was cute. Whenever something happened, you were worried about Paul."

"It's in the past. Forget it."

As Elinalize was laughing, she tossed the seasoned snack into her mouth.

Making chewing sounds when chewing the hard meat.

Seeing this, Ghyslaine did the same thing.

"Ah, then one more, let's split it between us two."

Elinalize pushed her own plate towards Ghyslaine.

Two people poking the same thing.

For a while, those two were controlled by the sound of chewing.

"For me, Zenith was more shocking than Paul."

When the dish was finished, Ghyslaine muttered this.

"I would have never thought that Zenith would become like that."

"That's true. But Rudeus seems to be searching for something like a cure, she also seems to recover little by little."

"....."

"Surely one day the Zenith we know will come back."

"Is that so?"

"Well, that will probably take many years."

Ghyslaine lightly laughed and stirred her cup.

"At that time, I hope we can once again drink together."

"That's true. At that time, let's call Gisu and Talhand, it will surely be a noisy time."

"What happened to them?"

"Ah, after the party with Talhand was disbanded — "

Afterwards, the two talked about various things.

About what happened after the party was disbanded.

About what happened after the mana calamity.

About what happened after Rudeus was met.

And not only about that. What happened during their time as adventurers.

What happened when they entered the dungeon.

What happened when Gisu gambled, lost their money and every member of the party was extorting him.

What happened when Paul took advantage of Ghyslaine's mating season.

What happened when Elinalize took advantage of that situation and for a short time the three of them were leading a sordid lifestyle.

In general it was an embarrassing enough memory to get a red face.

However, everything felt nostalgic and the memories caused their hearts deep down to tremble.

In a tipsy state, Elinalize spoke while narrowing her eyes.

Ghyslaine also became dead drunk a while ago, resting her face in her hands with vacant eyes.

"Oh my, it's unusual for you to drink until dead drunk, are you going back to your room?"

"It's all right. The wolf won't attack me anymore, because it is no longer here."

Ghyslaine said so while looking back over her shoulder.

The rowdy adventurers who received Ghyslaine's gaze averted their eyes.

"This way, I should have accepted Philip-sama's invitation."

"Philip? Ah, the one from Fedoa region."

"Ah, once I was asked whether I wanted to become his concubine or not."

"That is quite a shame. If you had accepted, you would have married into money."

In front of Elinalize's teasing voice, Ghyslaine made a lonely smile.

"I would have been unable to face Eris Ojou-sama."

"For you to say that to face another, I'm surprised such words came out from you..... oh my!"

Saying so while looking at Ghyslaine, Elinalize tilted her head.

Ghyslaine's eyes were still.

They were eyes full of blood thirst.

"Philip-sama is also already dead. He did not survive the mana calamity. The corpse was buried, the one who killed him was also killed."

".....Oh my, is that so. That's quite unfortunate."

"Eris Ojou-sama married into Rudeus's family....."

Ghyslaine stared intensely at the ceiling.

"And next is Sauros-sama's enemy."

With Ghyslaine exhibiting blood thirst, some of the tavern's guests felt danger.

However, Elinalize was not the slightest bit disturbed.

She knew that the woman before her had a personality that would suddenly release blood thirst and suddenly cut somebody down.

But she also knew that she would not be cut down.

"To do so, I have become the princess's escort for this reason."

"Ahh."

Elinalize let out a sigh and stared at the same ceiling.

"Ghyslaine has also changed. In the past, you weren't such a knight-like woman with such great loyalty."

With these words Ghyslaine quickly stopped moving and looked into her cup.

Amber-colored alcohol.

Reflected in there was her own face.

She immediately came to a conclusion.

".....After all, I am also part of the Dorudia tribe."

Ghyslaine said so and stood up.

She left her seat, walking in a manner that one would not think her being dead drunk.

"Where are you going?"

"Returning."

"My oh my, as always it's very abrupt."

Elinalize shrugged her shoulders and stood up.

She took out silver coins from her pocket and tossed them towards the counter.

"Ghyslaine!"

Elinalize, who finished counting, raised her voice towards Ghyslaine, who was about to disappear into the night street.

Ghyslaine's ears moved and she turned around.

"Please protect Rudeus and Sylphy in the Asura Kingdom for me! They are both my cute grandchildren!"

"......Leave it to me."

Ghyslaine gave a reply, her tail stood straight up.

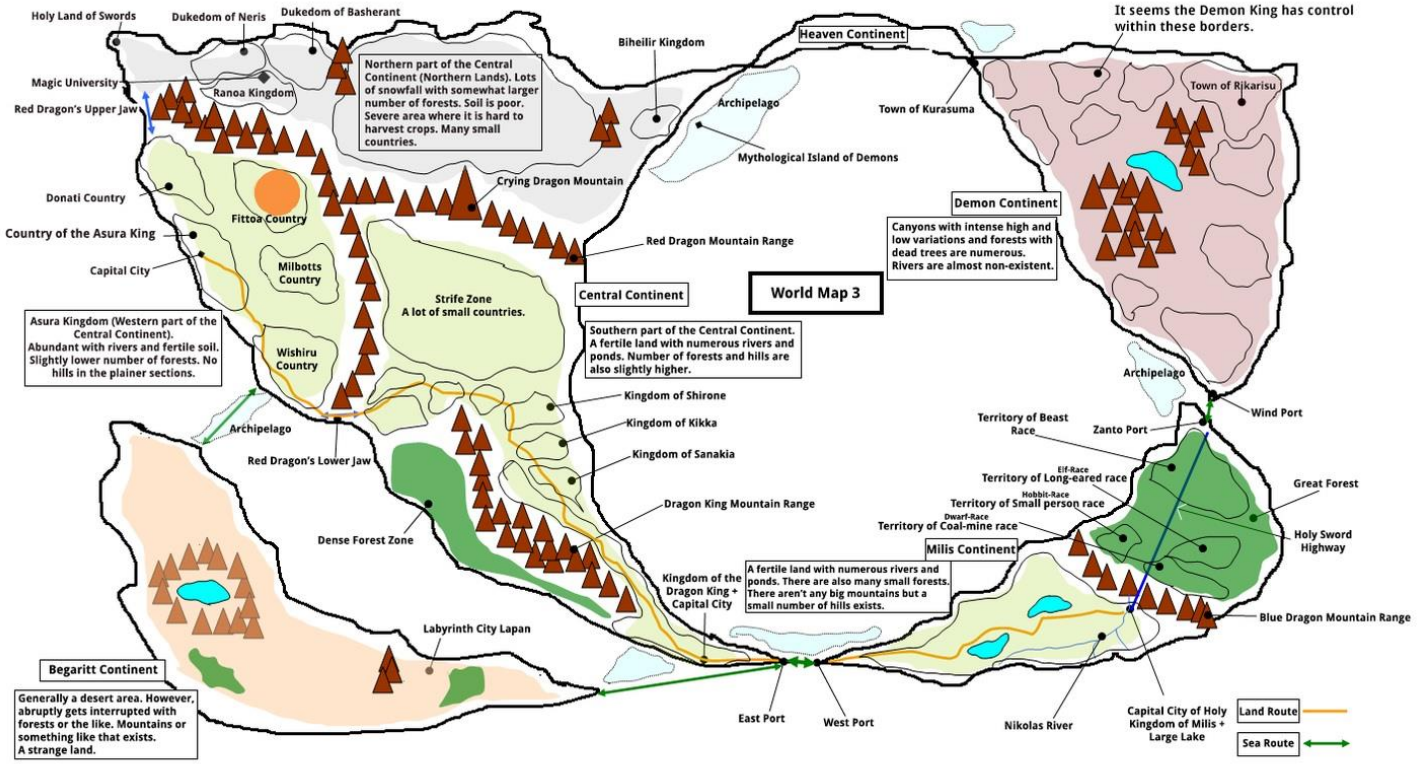
Elinalize went in the opposite direction, her feet turned to the direction towards the home where Cliff was waiting.

She believed that since it was her close friend, it goes without saying that she would naturally protect the people around her.

Author's Note:

The map was created extremely rough.

Please only use it as reference to get a rough image.



Supplementary news regarding the Asura Kingdom.

Asura Kingdom

The country holding the world's greatest national power.

Naturally abundant, a fertile earth where starvation isn't an issue. The land doesn't become infertile.

King’s Country

Feudal Lord: Asura

Habitat : Nothing in particular

Area that governs the royalty. Population density is high, gathering of goods takes place within the Asura kingdom.

In addition, for the sake of commerce with Begaritt Continent, glasswork, etc. are also being sold.

Fittoa Country

Feudal Lord: Boreas

It was famous as the land of perfume but after the Metastasis event almost the entire area vanished.

Milbotts Country

Feudal Lord: Notus

Famous as the land of alcohol. There is a gigantic brewing site.

Although beer is drunk ordinarily in the Asura Kingdom, most of the wine drunk in celebrations are produced in this territory.

Donati Country

Feudal Lord: Zephyrus

Famous for sugar and knitting wool.

The export of arms for the northern adventurers and mercenaries is carried out as well.

Wishiru Country

Feudal Lord: Euros

Though there is no special mention of it's local specialty, the circulation of money or goods is prosperous because it is a doorway for the merchants that come from the south.

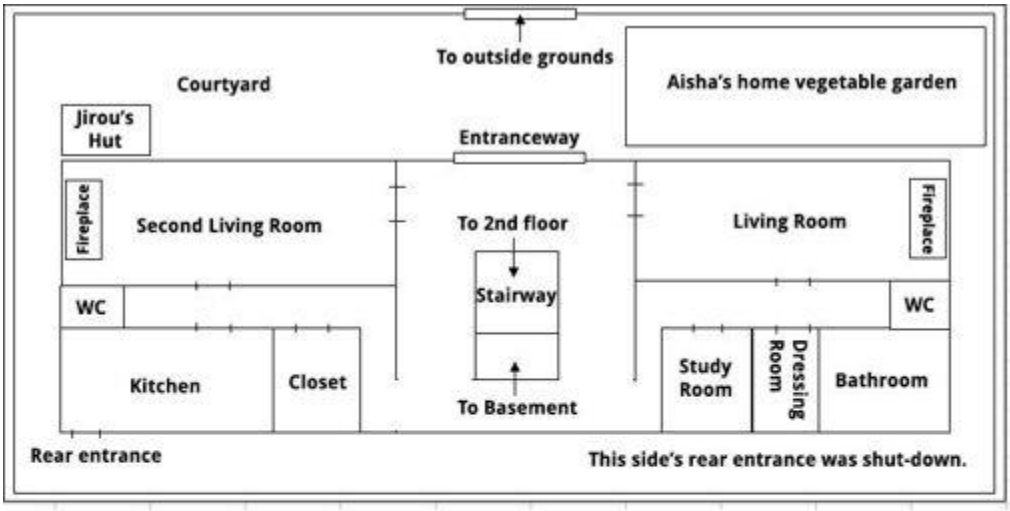
The Rest

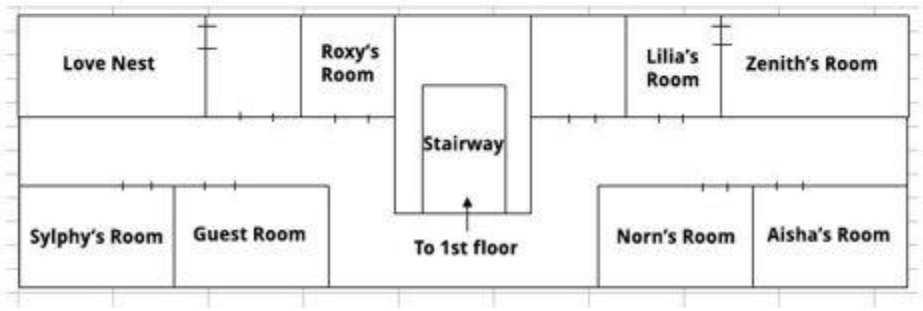
Every feudal lord is governing a small territory.

An Extra

A rough sketch of the Greyrat Mansion.

(Artist's impression)





Rudeus uses the 『Study Room』 and 『The room next to the Love nest』 as a private room for himself.

Leo is basically an indoor dog and often seems to sleep in Roxy's room.

Mushoku Tensei: Isekai Ittara Honki Dasu - Volume 18

There are eight members for the journey.

Ariel, Luke, Sylphy, Elmore, Kleene.

Ghyslaine, Eris, and I joined as part of the princess's escort

A huge two wheeled carriage, and five horses.

Unexpectedly the preparations for the voyage of Second Princess Ariel Anemoi Asura, who hailed from a country as great as the Kingdom of Asura, were rather simple.

Ostensibly, it was because we were returning incognito.

Hiding the truth that we are returning via teleportation from the public.

However, in spite of being incognito, many people were lined up at the entrance of the Magic City Sharia.

The principal of the Magic University, along with members of the student council.

General Manager of the Magic Guild.

Head of the magic tool atelier.

Among others, heads of various organizations, members of royalty from the Magic Triumvirate, and representatives of nobles, came to see Ariel off one after another.

I wonder if these guys don't know what incognito means.

Out of all its possible meanings, none of them included a big number of farewells, escorted in such a grandiose way.

... Well, even if this send-off causes a problem, it's the fruit of Ariel's labours.

Orsted is mighty, but his connection with the human race is almost nonexistent.

There may come a time when he will need these connections.

It was my duty to deal with them in his stead.

Now, it's time for departure.

We will travel by teleportation, horseback, and carriage.

Take the horse carriage to the Sky Castle via magic teleportation circle, which teleports the entire group just north of the [Upper Jaw of the Red Dragon], at which point we will travel southward by land.

Perugius also set up a magic circle where the horse-drawn carriages can enter.

If Perugius can do that much, I wanted him to send Arumanfi to Asura Kingdom to draw the magic circle.

I tried to voice my suggestion, but Perugius said that out of the thirteen people including himself, only two are able to draw the teleportation magic circle.

They're Perugius and Sylvaril.

In addition, it looks like the teleportation circles can't be installed anywhere.

The teleportation magic circle in the Sky Castle is fueled by Perugius's magic, but to activate the teleportation magic circle that acts as the receiver, a certain condition must be met.

As for the condition, it's magic.

In the past, taking advantage of places that possesed a high magic density, the genius that created what came to be called teleportation magic produced a magic tool that semi-permanently activated the magic through absorbing magic from its surroundings.

In other words, teleportation circles cannot be made in places that did not possess a high magic density.

The fact that teleportation magic circles I used to travel to the Begaritto Continent were located deep in a forest and the desert, were due to such reasons.

Of course, from later research, it became possible to keep the magic circle active by attaching magic crystals periodically.

In the case of using a magic crystal, it's called manual feed type magic.

Because 『The magic density is thin.』 in most of the area around Asura Kingdom, most magic circles are the manual feed type.

The magic crystal is installed during an emergency and is removed when not in use.

Only a select few accurately know where to place the magic crystal.

in our situation, both were destroyed. The type that didn't require a magic crystal along with type that did require a magic crystal. Everything had been blown apart.

The location, the equipment, and the magic circle.

If the three factors previously mentioned are not known, it is impossible to create a magic teleportation circle.

So how does Perugius intend to come to the Asura Royal Palace?

For now they told me: [You don't need to worry about that.]

Because of Ariel-sama, it looks like they intend to make a surprise appearance.

"Amazing. It's amazing! Rudeus! Look! The town is so small!"

The moment when we transferred to the air fortress, Eris raised her voice.

After jumping off the horse to look down on the sky and up at the castle, she raised a voice of admiration.

It was an unexpectedly childish reaction from a twenty-year-old woman. We could not help but cast wry smiles.

Still, it's really heartwarming.

One person's mood somehow became better after seeing Eris's reaction.

It's Sylvaril who has been waiting before the magic circle.

Looking at Eris go crazy, she was feeling proud in her mind.

Enough to even be seen as such with the mask over her face.

"I hope you like the scenery from the Sky Castle, Chaos Breaker."

"It's the best! First time I've seen something like this!"

Seeing the carefree smile of Eris, Sylvaril's favor for Eris increased.

Honesty is the best policy.

"Is that so, then allow me to introduce myself. I'm the first familiar of Perugius-sama, Sylvaril of the Void. Pleased to make your acquaintance."

"Eris Greyrat!"

Eris seemed to be itching to go into the castle.

Was it just my imagination or did it look like Sylvaril was showing her around with a happy mood and she even explained this and that?

While watching that charming scene, we followed them.

While explaining this and that to Eris, Sylvaril guided us to the audience room.

We planned to greet Perugius before our departure.

"So you've come."

As always, Perugius was proudly sitting on a chair while surrounded by his familiars.

This time only a greeting was done.

And so when Ariel came forward, and started to make a formal statement... Eris swiftly stepped forward.

"Who are you?"

I was horrified.

In my mind floated the image of Eris clenching her fist and hitting Perugius. Even if it's Perugius, he will not be so forgiving if we tried to pick a fight with him.

When I quickly tried to stop her, Eris knelt down to her knee.

"Nice to meet you. My name is Eris Greyrat, and I've become Rudeus's wife a while back. Pleased to make your acquaintance."

I was taken aback.

Wait a minute, the person kneeling respectfully there is who again?

"Armored Dragon King Perugius Dola. Eris Greyrat. I know about you. Trained in the sword holy land and challenging Orsted, as befitting of your nickname [Mad Sword King]."

"I am still immature....."

"Oh."

Although Eris is trying to be humble, but she's speaking in monotone.

Possibly, she only memorized the words without knowing the meaning.

"Eris Greyrat. Your attitude is admirable, I like it."

Perugius looks happy.

"In this case, I too need to apologize for my subordinate's actions during the incident eight years ago."

Eris looks up and she made a quizzical look.

That face. It was the face of [I don't remember that].

"Do not worry about it."

"Is that so? ..... I appreciate it."

Perugius laughed and shook his hand carelessly.

Eris stood up, she walked towards me with a fully self-satisfied expression.

It was a face that seemed to say: [I can do this much if I want to, you know.]

She might have been practicing this a lot.

In any case, Perugius seems to like Eris.

His attitude towards her is different from the one towards me.

As I thought, everyone would be fond of a honest person without a hidden side. Getting along with each other is a good thing.

"Everybody, please follow me."

After Ariel gave her greeting, Sylvaril guided us out of the audience room.

The teleportation magic circle was located in a place reached by looping around after going through the entrance.

The teleportation magic circle was emitting a faint light from the inner part of a currently empty large hall.

Sylvaril explained this and that regarding the hall, but I'll omit that.

We step on the magic circle.

The teleportation circle's destination was a ruin.

The ruin used to house the teleportation circle on the other side.

The same type in Begaritto's mainland and near Ranoa kingdom.

According to Orsted, there were many more of these ruins in the past, a variety of races seemed to have been moving freely between the continents.

It became totally prohibited to prevent it being exploited in the event of war.

A certain dragon tribe hated this rule, thus they hid the ruins they were using on their own by putting barriers around the ruins.

All over the world, there will always be guys that stand against the world only for their convenience.

Since we can move comfortably thanks to that, I am not going to blame such desires.

The ruin was within a dense forest.

From the valley called [Red Dragon's Upper Jaw], it's a little northwest on the map according to the information received that was confirmed in advance.

However, that is where the problem was about to occur.

Although it's good that we can move the whole carriage using the magic teleportation circle, we can't move the carriage out of the ruins.We have this many people, yet we didn't think of that.....?

While I was still dumbfounded by that, Ariel's two servants began to disassemble the carriage carefully.

Two people disassembled the carriage in a fluid motion and carried the pieces outside the ruin.

And while I was thinking that they seemed to have assembled the carriage into small packages.

From there, loading the parts of the carriage on horses, we move to the vicinity of the highway.

There the reassembly of the carriage was finished in no time.

Since it was getting dark when we got out on the highway, we decided to camp the night there near the highway.

"Whew ....."

Surrounding the campfire, we prepared food.

There was no need to worry about kindling or food in this place with woods nearby.

I mean, it's been collected from the demons that attacked us in the forest.

Beast type monsters and firewood (Treants), also some wild grass.

Firewood (Treants), they really do exist everywhere.

There is even one living in my house, so maybe Treants are the next ruler of the world.

Normally I would just sit on the ground, but one of Ariel's group had brought a carpet.

Should I say as expected of the princess?

Sylphy and two servants were in charge of cooking.

I offered to help, but I was gently turned down.

Well, with Sylphy's skill even if I help I will just get in the way.

Just in case I told them that I can make tableware and cookware if there's not enough.

During the cooking I was feeling bored.

I thought about patrolling the surrounding area to alert the party for incoming danger, but Ghyslaine and Eris are already doing that.

It looks like my turn won't come.

In this journey, there is no work for me.

This is the first time it's been like this.

I've never experienced this, not even during the time when I was traveling alone and intruding on other parties.

In those days I, having a surplus of magic, was treasured as a person useful for various chores.

From the purification of water to the production of tableware.

Since there are several servants here who can use magic, the work that was usually mine seems to have disappeared.

Well, my job is not to look after Ariel.

Since I am fighting against Hitogami, I need to determine who his apostles are and defeat them.

Our current conjecture is Luke, Darius, and one more person.

The possibility of the North Emperor or Water God being an apostle is high.

I have heard ways to deal with them from Orsted.

I simulated in my mind what I was taught many times, but I should try it out in actual combat.

"......Anyway."

I look at Luke while muttering.

A splendid armored figure, he stood close to Ariel.

He's in a position to immediately protect Ariel at a critical moment.

.....if Luke is an Apostle of Hitogami.

And if I decided to not kill him.

I wonder what Orsted would do about Luke.

Luke's important to Ariel.

When Orsted requires Asura's assistance after Ariel becomes king, it would be bad if there was an apostle of Hitogami advising Ariel.

No, Asura Kingdom will be coming to Orsted's aid far into the future.

Which means that Luke will probably be dead by that time.

So it probably doesn't matter.

But, if Ariel died immediately there wouldn't be a meaning for her to become king.

No, the event 『Ariel becomes the king.』 would surely become a turning point.

Or the event 『The First Prince becomes king.』 might be our Bad End flag.

Yes..... Just in case, I'll ask Orsted about it at the next opportunity.

I don't know if he will tell me though.

Orsted does not tell me in detail about the events 100 years in the future.

I asked him about how Hitogami said [The world will be destroyed if I die], but he just replied [That possibility exists.]

It feels like he will be fine with whatever happens afterwards as long as he can kill Hitogami.

Well, even if the world is destroyed in the future, the me in the present can't afford to worry about it.

My goal for now is to protect my family as best as I can.

It would be irresponsible, but I can't be so hard headed.

The events of the future must be settled by the people of that generation.

But would my descendant lend their hand to Orsted even knowing the world will be destroyed beforehand?

Or maybe they will lend their hands without knowing about it.

If it is the latter, it's a little pitiful.

To prepare for that possibility, it would be better if I leave some words for them for the time being.

"Rudi, the meal is ready. Ghyslaine and Eris too, let's eat!"

My thoughts were interrupted after hearing those words.

Well, after I get back from the Asura kingdom, I should write about it in my diary.

I have a tendency to forget things.

Dinner was delicious.

As expected of Sylphy.

And the other two attendants are also amazing.

Even though we don't have a lot of food supplies in this situation, they could make it this delicious.

I should ask them to teach me the next occasion there is spare time.

Night.

Ariel is the only one that is using the tent while the rest of us are on watch duty shifts.

We watch in sets of two.

That said, there's seven people excluding Ariel.

So there are three shifts.

At that time, one person patrols the surroundings.

Me, Sylphy, Eris, and Ghyslaine.

All of which have the ability to defeat a demon alone.

"I'm going to patrol the surroundings."

The first day is my turn.

As I say that to others, I begin to walk away from the bonfire.

Towards the deep forest ahead.

In total darkness, the only light source is the torch that I am holding.

However, I know that there are no monsters in this area.

But being cautious is never a bad thing.

"....."

Then after walking for about five minutes.

And quite a distance away from the campfire.

A guy abruptly appeared in the dark.

A flowing silver-haired man with golden Sanpaku eyes.

A man with a scary face akin to a devil, he appeared out of the darkness.

"Eek!"

I screamed involuntarily and was about to let the torch fall from my hand.

"Ha.....Excuse me. Thanks for your effort. Orsted-sama."

"Ah."

While I was greeting him, I sat on the nearby tree roots.

Orsted also sat down on the tree root on the opposite side.

Orsted is following us.

It seems that Perugius also knew about this.

Since the magic circle was used to follow us.

Thus we scheduled a period of contact during the journey.

Since it will be suspicious if we meet too often, we only meet once every few days and only during my turn to patrol around.

"What's the news?"

"Luke isn't making any suspicious moves. The journey is also going smoothly."

And, I finished my regular report.

Since it's the first day, there is not much to be said.

Orsted also didn't seem to expect anything and didn't pursue this matter any further.

"That's good. Maybe there won't be anything for a few days."

"Right."

"Just be extra careful after passing through the [Red Dragon's Upper Jaw]."

"Okay."

The Red Dragon's Upper Jaw.

It is a connected valley at the Red Dragon Mountains that separates the northern part of the central continent and the Asura kingdom.

An unforked valley, wide enough that big carriages can pass each other in the valley area.

By the way, I was nearly killed by Orsted in the Red Dragon's Lower Jaw.

After passing the valley, there is a large forest.

It's a famous forest in the Asura kingdom.

That forest is called the [Red Dragon's Beard.]

But, it is often lumped together with the valley to the north and called the [Red Dragon's Upper Jaw].

Also, although it was part of the Asura kingdom, to the south from the forest is the border of the Asura kingdom.

As if to surround the south side of the forest, there is a rampart like the Great Wall of China built there, with a few hundred soldiers stationed there.

It was to stop the monsters from entering the south and also to prepare for an invasion from the North.

There are all kinds of reasons.

And the most important point.

This deep forest is often used to deal with important people.

Once you enter the forest, it becomes a place where there will be no witnesses.

In some areas of the forest, there are powerful monsters, and there are bandits prowling along the northern and southern paths.

It's a great place to secretly assassinate someone.

If Darius had received advice from Hitogami, this is where he will send his assassins.

After all, sending soldiers to the northern part of the Upper Jaw of Red Dragon would be considered as invasion of another country.

If they attacked the Princess after passing the southern checkpoint within Asura Kingdom, it will surely become big news.

It will become bad press for Darius under these two circumstances.

Therefore, the first chance to kill the princess is here.

If it is here, they are able to kill Ariel with the least possible risk.

Orsted predicted so.

"So, it will be as planned."

"Yes."

If there is an attack, taking the highway will probably be risky.

Since the highway is dangerous I will suggest an alternative route.

And, at the same time we could go and scout for Tris and her band of thieves.

If there is no attack, Orsted will move at that time.

A self directed play.

For that end, we stashed away a bunch of summoning scrolls along with magic crystals.

We will find out that the magic beasts in the area are being controlled by some individual.

That's the plan.

"If there is an attack, the possibility of the North Emperor Auber Corvette appearing is high. Be careful of that guy."

"Yes. Just as planned."

"Oh ....."

If Asura Kingdom has hired the North Emperor and the Water God.

Orsted saw that the possibility that the North Emperor is dispatched as an assassin is high.

The swordsman named Auber, it seems he is good at those kinds of jobs.

An unpredictable swordsman that symbolizes the North God Style.

From his hairstyle and clothes to his way of fighting, everything about him is unique.

A man gifted in surprise attack.

『Peacock Sword』 Auber Corvette.

Eris has already been informed beforehand about the possibility of fighting him and the Water God.

If I'm right, Eris had learned swordsmanship from Reida and Auber for some time.

Surely it will be difficult to fight against your former master.

Although I thought that, she only folded her arms and answered, [Yes! I can't wait.].

Those two people, I wonder if she didn't build any close relationships with those people like with Ghyslaine.

What I mean is, Eris, you don't have friends in the Holy Land of the Sword? I'm a little worried.

"I'm concerned."

"About what?"

"You."

"....."

"I have to say, for this upcoming battle, you're being too optimistic."

Optimistic.

I wonder if he's right.

Maybe so.

But, I am prepared.

I also heard about instructions for what to do.

Although there is a chance that Auber won't come, I still simulated several ways to deal with him.

Also, I know in my head that he is a terribly strong opponent.

All that's left is to just deal with it calmly.

While I can't say that it's a perfect plan, there's no reason to feel more nervous than necessary.....probably.

Rather, I should relax at this stage, it is more efficient.....probably.

"Just in case, take this."

Orsted took out several sheaves of papers from his bosom.

They were scrolls with complex magic circles drawn on them.

"It is a magic circle for the king class healing magic. You mentioned that you could only use healing magic up to advanced level. In case of emergency, use it."

"Yes ....."

The healing magic of the king class. To what extent could it heal?

Even for major injuries like missing limbs, such magic can regrow them perfectly.

My defensive and evasion ability, and the enemy's offensive ability.

Based on those factors, it would be best to have at least this level of recovery.

"So even king class healing magic has magic circles."

"Almost all magic in this world can be reproduced with magic circles."

"Almost.....then there is magic that cannot be reproduced?"

"As long as it's not a unique magic with a special invocation."

"Such as?"

"The howling magic that the beast tribe uses and the gravity magic used by the dragon king. Those things, without understanding the logic behind them, cannot be reproduced."

Howling Magic, what I've been calling Voice Magic?

Once, I surprised someone with it.

The level I can use it at is more or less able to scare people, but I don't know if it's because of the actual magic or not.

"Although I read that your future self has mastered gravity magic, it probably would have required considerable time to master it. Researching, understanding, and training."

"..... Orsted-sama, I've heard that you can use all the techniques in this world. Can you also use gravity magic? "

"That's right, although it's not a very user friendly technique."

Oh, so you could.

That's expected.

"But I assume you don't know from the moment you're born... You too have to learn them one at a time, right?"

"It is so."

I see.

At the moment, I can't even imagine the basic principle even if I heard it.

With time, maybe it'll naturally come to me, how anti-gravity and the like would work.

Well, rather than pursuing what I do not know or if I can learn it, it's better to do what I can do right now.

Such things could wait for when I had more space to breathe.

All right.

Now the next matter to discuss is ..... Luke.

"Come to think of it, Orsted-sama. Assuming that Luke is an apostle of Hitogami, it's up to me whether or not I need to kill him, right? "

"That's right."

"In the event that I don't kill Luke and princess Ariel still becomes King, what will happen to him?"

"Nothing will happen. When that time comes, he will also escape from Hitogami's grasp."

"Is it safe to assume that only three apostles of Hitogami will appear? Can we leave him as it is?"

"It will not be a problem. Humans will remain as apostles of Hitogami only until the result of his future prediction comes."

Until the result of a future prediction?

Something this important should be said earlier!

What the hell, what if I thought the apostles could change in the middle of a fight?

"And a certain turning point acts as a boundary for Hitogami's future sight. In this case, the turning point is when Ariel does or doesn't remove Grabell and Darius and becomes queen."

"So until then, the apostles will not change?"

"That's right."

Muu, you keep such important things until later .....

Well, that's alright for now.

Let's say it is good just to know about this now.

Until this is over, the apostles will not change.

On the contrary, once it's over, the apostles will cease to be automatically.

Well, there is still the possibility of them becoming an Apostle again.

And judging from Orsted's tone,

If any apostles die before the prediction comes true, Hitogami cannot replace them.

That's the reason to kill them.

".....Now, return. If you don't hurry back soon, it will be suspicious."

"Okay."

With that, I finished the scheduled contact with Orsted.

I quickly returned to the campfire and reported that there was nothing of note surrounding the camp.

I finished my shift and covered myself with blankets.

In this way, the first day of the trip to the Asura kingdom passed.

The Red Dragon's Upper Jaw.

It is a valley with just one continuous road.

It is not as straight as the Holy Sword Highway.

But, it's a single path without any forks.

It's between two different country's borders, a neutral area without an owner.

We passed by a big caravan while traveling there.

There were ten wagons and more than fifty horses carrying the cargo.

It's a big caravan carrying cargo from the Asura kingdom to the Magic Triumvirate.

The caravan is travelling in a single file escorted by adventurers.

These adventurers have been glaring at us with sharp eyes.

Seeing that, I suddenly remembered about my old days.

There was also a time when I was part of the escort of a caravan heading to the north.

It wasn't as big as the caravan we passed, but if I remember correctly it had many young merchants in it.

I think if they came to greet me, I wouldn't remember any of their names.

At that time, I was alone.

Solitude.

I was so lonely.

After all, at that time I was under the impression that I had been abandoned by Eris.

During that time I thought my life as a man was over.

During that time I thought nothing mattered anymore, and there is nothing to believe in this world.

In those days, strengthening my body and worshiping God were my only truths in this world.

Since then, I have done all kinds of things.

I got my confidence back through Sylphy, and now I'm a father of one.

I'm not one you would call 『Venerable』, but I am a father.

Clearing my misunderstanding with Eris, making her my wife.

Roxy also came along and married me, and now she is pregnant with my second child.

With those three wives, my night life has also become merrier.

If the me in the past saw my current situation, what would he say?

In my situation, if I wanted to rub some tits ... maybe one of them will let me?

".....Hey, why are you suddenly so quiet?"

I heard Eris's voice from my side.

I suddenly noticed, unaware that Eris and I were side-by-side.

By the way, since I cannot ride a horse, I'm stuck sitting behind Sylphy.

"Hey Eris."

"What?"

"Can I grope your tits?"

"What are you saying so suddenly..... of course not."

Was it no good?

Is asking so casually out of bounds?

..... Well.

The me in the past probably wouldn't have much to say.

He would just laugh coldly to himself and say congratulations.

The me in the past, was one of those guys.

I would keep my distance while congratulating them, acting like that happiness is unrelated to me.

"....."

"You know, Rudi."

A voice came from the front, it's Sylphy.

"Even though you asked to grope Eris, why didn't you ask me.....? "

Before I was aware of it, my hands were already massaging Sylphy's chest.

No wonder my hand started feeling good.

"Oh, my bad. I did that unconsciously."

"It's fine for now since there aren't really any monsters here, but hold it in until after we leave the valley, okay?"

"Thank you, thank you, Sylphy. You're a good girl, truly, a good girl."

"Getting thanked for rubbing my chest is a bit..."

While scratching the back of her ear, Sylphy gave a wry smile.

I rubbed her chest at every opportunity after I married her.

Sylphy got used to me fondling her chest all the time pretty much.

I also formed a close attachment to her breasts.

"Rudeus, you can sit behind me tomorrow!"

Eris is burned up with jealousy, saying that while blushing, and ran up to the front row.

Haha.....I am quite popular.

Well ..... we will be exiting the valley soon.

An ambush will definitely come. With that in mind. I became more serious.

Upon exiting the Red Dragon's Upper Jaw, a huge forest appeared.

The valley exit is located on a slightly higher altitude.

In the distance from the spreading forest below, I could see a wall.

But because of the forest's height, I can't see the road in the middle of the forest. I can't determine where the ambush will happen.

Whatever happens here, it won't be seen by anyone.

Or so Orsted says.

From here, it seems he can see the exit of the forest from the walls.

In other words, anyone can confirm who is entering and leaving the forest.

On the other hand, from the forest entrance here we can't see the wall.

To an attacker, this is a geographical advantage for them.

A perfect place to ambush us.

"At last, I have returned to this place."

At the entrance to the forest, Sylphy stopped the horse.

Luke was also stopped.

The horse-drawn carriage was also stopped.

As for Ghyslaine and Eris, they also stopped their horse.

One of the servants got down from the driver's seat.

Luke and Sylphy also got down from their horses.

From the horse-drawn carriage, Ariel came out.

She held a small bouquet.

On the roadside, five people walked up to a stone.

It looked like an ordinary stone.

There was nothing decorative about it.

However, on the surface, there are × marks engraved.

Ariel acted first, placing the bouquet on top of the stone, and I followed suit.

The pose of prayer of the Millis church.

Ariel is not a devout believer of Millis.

I've never seen her praying to god.

The same goes for Luke.

I don't know about the attendants, but Sylphy is also different.

In other words, the ones that are resting under the stone are people who served Ariel.

Dead in this forest, in the Red Dragon's Upper Jaw, her Knight escort, her art teacher, or her servant.

I heard that in the Red Dragon's Upper Jaw, many of her escorts died, especially near the border.

So, I will also pray for the time being.

"From here on out, we will be at at a greater risk of being ambushed. So, let's camp here for now and continue our journey tomorrow."

At Ariel's words, Sylphy went back to her horse.

Her face seemed to be stiffer than usual.

In the evening of that day, I went over our formation once again.

After that, we should take some time to review each member's specific role to avoid getting disoriented during any upcoming battles.

Ghyslaine and Eris are our main attackers.Sylphy will be our support, who's able to quickly respond to any situation,and I will be the rear guard, with the Demon Eye of Foresight.

My role is to basically oversee the battle.

Since my eye of foresight can't see something that is outside of my field of view.

In addition, Elmore and Luke will be protecting Ariel.

I wish that those three could also be better equipped, but it can't be helped since their power in combat is lacking.

Even if they did fight alongside Ghyslaine and Eris, they would just get in the way.

In any case, to prepare for a surprise attack, they must be at Ariel's side to protect her.

Using a magic tool to mimic Ariel, Kleene acts as Ariel's double.

It is a magic tool that can change hair color and facial features.

To make the disguise more convincing, she trimmed her hair to about the same length as Ariel's.

Their heights and figures are different, but ... that can't be helped.

Anyway, for the sake of Ariel's life, those two remaining servants will act as sacrifices.

I know nothing about them, but I'd like to finish this without anybody getting murdered.

Tomorrow, we will move on the assumption that there will be an attack.

"We moved here using the teleportation circle, so won't the assailant be expecting us much later?"

To that someone's question, Ariel replied.

"Senior Minister Darius is a very thorough person. He had already made preparations the moment Father became ill."

Like that.

Who or what kind of enemy will we face? No one knows yet.

But I already shared information about the North Emperor and Water God who were hired by the Asura kingdom.

On top of that, the North Emperor Auber will also become our enemy.

I'm telling them with that warning in mind.

I thought about how to fight him so we could handle this problem more efficiently, but if Auber and Luke are the apostles of Hitogami, there is a possibility that they've already made countermeasures.

Making preparations to fight him, while they make preparations to counter that.

If that happens, I can't even count on my demon eye.

So I will deal with it personally this time.

Warning everyone of Auber's surprise attack, while protecting everyone's safety.

Well, rather than me protecting Ghyslaine and everyone ... I feel like I'm the one being protected.

Anyways, let's do our best so that no one dies.

The next day.

We're moving based on the formation discussed at the meeting.

On horseback were Ghyslaine, Eris, Sylphy and I in the front.

Riding the horse-drawn carriage are the two servants and Ariel, followed by Luke at the back of the horse-drawn carriage.

While travelling cautiously along the forest road, we encountered a bend in the path that prevented us from seeing beyond it.

Just before the bend.

On a certain small tree, I found a mark carved into it.

A mark that looks like a $, a signal that Orsted and I came up with in advance.

It means『There's an ambush ahead.』

Good, we don't need a self-directed play then.

Pushing the capability of my foresight eye to the max, I tighten the grip on my staff.

I also activated Zariff's Arm, so I'm ready to use the magic absorbing stone at a moment's notice.

Blowguns and poison darts may suddenly come flying, or showers of advanced magic may rain down towards the horse-drawn carriage.

In either situation, if I can see it with my demon eye I can avoid it.

However, there wasn't a need for that.

Ghyslaine and Eris are at the front.

Blocking the way of those two are figures of armored soldiers standing shoulder-to-shoulder.

Numbering more than a dozen.

"Halt!"

Slightly ahead, Ghyslaine and Eris stopped their horses.

"Who is it?"

The armored soldier did not answer Ghyslaine's question.

Because of the full face helmet, I cannot see his facial expressions.

Among the armour-clad shoulders there's one wearing flashy conspicuous feathers.

He should be the captain.

"....."

They were silent.

In silence, they just blocked the road.

"Rudi.....get down."

In response to those words, I jumped off the horse, and walked towards Ariel's carriage.

Sylphy is still riding a horse, going ahead.

Taking a position in between Ghyslaine and Eris, she stares at the captain.

"I am Fitts of the Royal Guard!

The one behind me in this carriage is known as the second princess Ariel Anemoi-Asura from the Asura kingdom!

Whose soldiers are you?! State your name! "

A manly voice shouted high.

So cool.

"....."

But the captain does not answer.

Instead, he silently draws his sword.

"!"

Following suit, the other soldiers also draws their sword.

A high-pitched *Jakin* echoed through the forest.

At the same time, soldiers armed to the teeth emerged from the forest making a *Karawarawara* noise.

Most of them have swords, but I only have a staff and we're considerably outnumbered.

"Enemy attack!"

Getting off of his horse, Luke is already taking his stance.

Elmore sitting on the driver's seat is clutching her whip with tension.

Inside the horse drawn carriage, Kleene disguised herself as Ariel.

"Uraaaa!"

"Gaaaaa~!"

Already Ghyslaine and Eris have engaged the soldiers up ahead.

Their swords cut down the soldiers so fast that it didn't even leave an afterimage.

The two are so fast that the soldiers were defeated before they could even unsheathe their swords.

"Leave the magic to me!"

Sylphy had to precisely control her magic so as to not hit Eris and Ghyslaine.

I can't see, but it appears there are magicians behind the soldiers.

The number of enemy soldiers is almost thirty.

Yet troops continue to pour out of the forest, it looks like there are still more of them.

Despite this, it seems such an advantage in numbers means nothing against Ghyslaine and Eris.

The enemy troops are being decimated in the blink of an eye.

Eris is moving freely on her own.

Ghyslaine moves to covers her blind spot.

Furthermore, Sylphy supported them both with magic.

The trio constantly repositioned themselves to avoid being surrounded, and they're slaughtering the armored knights.

They are strong ..... Those three people.

It will be alright even if I leave them alone.

"Luke-senpai! Are there any enemies behind us?"

"No!"

Response from Luke protecting the back of the horse-drawn carriage.

It's look like the enemy wants to lure us into a retreat.

A trap?

It's a trap.

"What will we do, withdraw?"

"No, it seem that it's possible to break through, so ....."

Looking ahead, the flood of soldiers have parted in two.

Then, a person appears between them. Ghyslaine and Eris stopped moving.

The person was smaller than I expected.

Only about a meter tall.

Hobbit Race.

His small body wrapped in full body armor.

His armor polished clean, so clean that it shone brilliantly in the light.

With his short stature, he totally looked like a disco ball.

I felt when he came out in front, the soldiers surrounding him felt fairly relieved.

The feeling of being in a Sensei's presence.

Apparently, he seems to be powerful.

Can he be Auber?

"My name is the North King Wii Taa.

One of the Three Swords of North God.

『Light and Darkness』 Wii Taa. "

..... Who?

"I see you are 『Black Wolf』 Ghyslaine.

I challenge you to a duel! ! "

Disco ball draws his sword.

Fitting his short stature, it's a short sword 30 centimeters in length.

But the blade shines so brightly as if it was reflected with a mirror.

However, a man-to-man fight at this moment?

It is a situation of dozens versus three already, I wonder what kind of intention he has?

"Hmph."

Ghyslaine pointed her blade, letting out a snort.

It was directed to the Wii Taa that pointed his sword.

"Very well. I, Ghyslaine the 『Black Wolf』 Sword King, shall be your opponent."

While holding a reserve sword on her waist, Ghyslaine was facing the North King.

So, the flow of time has stopped.

The grunts stopped moving, after while checking their surrounding they began to fall back.

Sylphy also fell back glancing warily at the soldier's movements.

What remains is an atmosphere for a duel against the man called North King.

But Eris can't read the mood.

She lunges ahead toward the retreating soldiers.

"Daaaaaaa!"

"Ah! Hey! Eris!"

Sylphy also enters the fray haphazardly.

Covering Eris's back, a helter-skelter battle started.

Are those two people alright?

The number of enemies is great.

I look at them for a moment, they aren't taking any attacks. Seems there is plenty of room for comfort.

..... Alright, it's okay to leave them for now.

I want to support them, but I can't move from this place.

Due to Eris's rampage, the distance between the horse drawn carriage and her widened a bit.

Still, Auber has not shown himself yet.

Until he appears, I cannot move.

Auber is skilled at surprise attacks.

If we divert our attention, he may launch a surprise attack from behind us.

It's a very textbook tactic, but it would be the best time for it.

A moment of distraction.

He would strike during that split second opportunity.

Especially against powerful magicians, he would hit them during their incantations.

Therefore, Orsted said.

If it turns into a skirmish, don't use any magic until that guy shows himself.

Even if your ally is in a pinch, don't give them any support.

If you're patient, Auber would change his target, he will launch an attack on those who are most off guard.

In that moment, you could snipe him.

Therefore, I cannot move.

I need to be alert of my surroundings with my eyes wide open.

Even so, I feel concerned.

Instead of the North Emperor, the North King Wii Taa appears out of nowhere.

If another strong guy comes out and it's not Auber, I guess I'll need to give the order to retreat.

"Ugh, kut!"

"Hahaa~! 『Black Wolf』 Ghyslaine! Your skill is rotting!"

And against Wii Taa, Ghyslaine is being pressed back a bit.

Or rather, Ghyslaine's movement is strange.

When Ghyslaine tries to go in for an attack, she stops for a moment and turns her face.

Wii Taa doesn't miss a chance like that.

He dashes into Ghyslaine's body at a speed you wouldn't expect from his short limbs and launches a shower of attacks.

His thrusts only made shallow wounds on Ghyslaine's skin, it looks like she avoided a fatal blow.

Since the beginning of their duel, Ghyslaine has yet to take a step forward to attack.

She would ready her stance and motion an attack, but turns away each time for some reason, allowing Wii Taa to counter.

Something happened.

But, I don't know what it is from my position.

What did you do?

I try to observe Wii Taa.

He is as sparkly and shiny as a disco ball, and is hard to keep an eye on.

While he moves in to strike Ghyslaine, he puts out his left hand.

His left hand is not holding anything.

Then, is he using magic?

Ghyslaine turns away her face.

Was it sand?

You're trying to blind her?

No, It doesn't seem that way.

I don't see anything coming out from his hand.

But, there's no doubt that Wii Taa's left hand causes Ghyslaine to turn away.

Ghyslaine couldn't look at him whenever his left hand pointed towards her direction.

..... Oh, is that how it is?

Light.

By reflecting sunlight with that mirror-like armor, he robs Ghyslaine of her sight.

Every time Ghyslaine goes in for an attack, he blinds her.

What a dirty trick!

However, Ghyslaine looks like she's having difficulty.

If she continues on like this, she might lose.

Should I cover for her?

What should I do?

If I don't act now it will be too late.

First of all, is Auber really here?

Do I keep guard or leave Ghyslaine to die?

.....

All right.

I began to pour magic into Aqua Hartia.

Using Earth and Water magic.

In other words, the usual quagmire.

Melded magic -.

" 『Mud Rain』！"

In a moment the clouds cover the sky.

The falling raindrops are brown like chocolate.

It quickly covers the battlefield.

Rain that contains mere mud.

It did not have any offensive power.

As it falls on the ground, it turns the ground slick and loose which robs the soldiers of their mobility.

Some slip and some fall over.

Since Eris and Ghyslaine trained their lower body, the mud has no impact on them.

As for Sylphy, it dyes her hair brown, but let's set that aside for now.

"Nuooo?"

As Wii Taa's polished armor becomes muddy, the disco ball loses its light.

"Gaaaaaaa!"

The yell of Ghyslaine's fighting spirit resonated through the woods.

From the blade near her waist, Ghyslaine fires off a sword of light.

Wii Taa tumbled to avoid it, but blood was gushing from his shoulder.

With this, the winner has been decided.

I continued to be vigilant against Auber.....

Then, I looked back.

"What?"

"?"

Right behind us, there was a man.

I saw a strange person.

Wearing a rainbow colored jacket, knee length pants, with three sword attached to his waist. There is a peacock tattoo on his cheek, and his hairstyle was like a satellite dish.

He's wearing a dirt-colored cloak on his back.

And from that cloak, a trail of silky sand spills down.

At the end of this trail, a hole was spotted in Luke's blind spot, who was supposed to be watching our back.

This fellow, he was hiding in the hole he dug up in the road.

"....."

His features and clothing matched the description.

This guy is the North Emperor Auber.

" ..... You found me."

The next moment, my foresight eye saw Auber's movement.

<He draws a sword with his right hand>

"At this distance against a magician.....sorry for the sneak attack!"

<Auber swings the sword downward.>

I immediately react with my left hand.

The left hand where Zariff's Arm is attached.

Although the arm feels no resistance from the weight, Auber is still faster.

"『Arm, Fly』!"

"Fuooo!?"

My artificial arm flew off at a ridiculous speed.

Despite that, Auber barely evaded it with a backflip while tilting his neck, dodging the arm.

Making a [Badzun] sound, the artificial arm lodges itself in a distant tree.

While holding the sword, Auber glances back and forth between the arm that flew and me with rounded eyes.

"W, What.....the....."

My heart is beating rapidly.

I knew that Auber would attack with his tricks.

Even though I knew about it from Orsted.....damn.

Is this the result of not following his directions?

Now I have to fight Auber one-on-one.

My opponent is a North Emperor.

While he isn't necessarily weak when fighting normally, his specialty is in surprise attacks.

But... I have heard of the actions that I should take after exposing this figure.

It is possible to win, I'm fine, calm down, I'm strong, I'm strong, I'm Strahan, I'm Stallone.

"Rudeus the 『Quagmire』."

Auber did not attack immediately.

While standing there, he spoke to me.

"Although I have heard the rumors, you are indeed strong."

Why are you not coming at me?

Although this method cannot be used if you are not coming at me.....

"..... Where did you hear my name?"

"From a certain beast over there. When I was teaching sword art to that beast, she always said [Rudeus is awesome!]."

So it was Eris.

"A man who could tame that beast, would be a praiseworthy man. Really, like the rumor said.....even his arm can fly."

It seems he is fascinated by my Rocket Punch.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Mazinger Z manga series. }

And I'm being watched with a vigilant eye, as if I will try some other weird trick.

What a bad-mannered guy.

It's not like I'm some kind of rare animal.....

But, it's good that he's being cautious.

After all, in the edge of my vision, Ghyslaine has defeated Wii Taa and is coming towards us.

It's not a far distance, she should be here soon.

If it's two-on-one, our chances of winning will increase tremendously.

"Eris, and Ghyslaine.

Silent Fitts, and Rudeus of the Quagmire.

As a precaution, we have brought Wii Taa but.....

Since I couldn't kill Rudeus, this will be hard on us."

Auber convinces himself and nods.

I wonder if he'll come.

"But, there is no shortage of opponents!"

He's coming.

But, in the current situation, if I can hold him for even a few seconds, I can attack him with Ghyslaine in a pincer maneuver.

And, I know roughly what technique Auber uses.

I can do this.

I can bring him down.

"My name is, North Emperor Auber Corvette!"

Auber drew the sword with his left hand and sheathed the sword in his right hand.

I also started pouring magic into my staff in response to that.....

"This is..... Goodbye!"

Auber started running.

Not toward me, but toward Ghyslaine.

Huh?

Did he just say goodbye?

"Auber!"

"Oh, it's ..... Ghyslaine! Long time no see!"

"Gaaaaaaa!"

"As expected, you haven't changed at all."

Before anyone noticed, Auber had thrown the bag that was in his hand.

The bag flies to Ghyslaine in a smooth arc.

Ghyslaine promptly cuts the bag while it is still in mid air.

Upon being cleaved, some kind of smoke suddenly scatters from the bag.

Ghyslaine face is ..... showered by it immediately.

This is bad.

"『Stone Cannon』!"

"Uooh~~!"

Auber easily avoided the rock cannonball that came flying from behind with a fluid movement.

Can Ghyslaine give chase ..... no, that's impossible.

Flour was showered on her face, making her eyes shed tears uncontrollably and causing her to sneeze repeatedly.

Mixed with spices, it's a special tear gas from Auber.

Slipping around Ghyslaine like a cockroach, Auber was getting close to Sylphy and Eris who were slaughtering the soldiers.

"Retreat! Retreat! Redo again!"

With those words, men begin to escape into the forest all at once.

And, Eris noticed Auber at the same time.

Moving her body to protect Sylphy, she was trying to intercept him.

"Ugaaaaaa!!"

"『My sword, ablaze!』"

At the same time the chanting stopped, Auber's sword was covered in flames.

While sidestepping in and quickly removing something from his waist, Auber put something in his mouth.

I also know this trick.

I can make it.

"Buuuu~~!"

"『Water Wall!』"

Oil gushes from Auber's mouth to ignite the flaming sword, and attacks Eris.

But the magic I launched managed to stop it.

The fire hit the water wall and was extinguished in a moment.

Eris does not care about the water wall in front of her.

So as to tear to pieces both the opponent and my magical attacks, she slashed her raised sword diagonally downward from the shoulder, assailing Auber.

"Taaaaaa!"

A sound of *Zan~tsu*, was heard.

With a thud, the upper body of Auber, who was divided, fell to the ground.

"Alright!"

"Che."

While I was delighted, Eris clicked her tongue.

When I looked closely, what fell to the ground was not Auber's upper body.

It's a log.

Without realising it, a log had fallen on the ground.

The log wrapped in a sand covered cloak.

N .....?

I wonder what happened.

It should have been seen with my Foresight Eye, but I do not know what happened.

And at that moment, I thought that something was flying towards the log. A Talon Claw.

A claw with a rope flew toward the log.

Catching onto the cloth and pulling it from a distance.

The cloth flew lightly in the air and settled into the man that was holding the tip of the rope.

In the forest, there was Auber, wearing a cloak and hiding behind some flowers.

Auber, that he would recover his cloak with that claw...

Is that cloak some kind of magic item?

To allow the party wearing the cloak to instantly swap out like that...

Was it Utsusemi no Jutsu [Substitute Art]?

I didn't hear about this, boss!

"You've improved your skills, Mad Dog! I'll be leaving first! Let us meet again!"

"Wait!"

"Wait, Eris!"

Eris tried to chase Auber, but she was stopped by Sylphy.

"There are still soldiers in the forest, don't chase after him alone!"

After hearing these words, Eris looked back towards me.

Then, to the direction where Auber disappeared.

And clicking her tongue, she sheathed her sword.

"Hmph."

Eris walked back towards me unhappily,

Sylphy continued to vigilantly search for remaining enemies while holding her wand.

For now, there seems to be no signs of any enemies nearby.

Only corpses remain.

"Whew....."

For now, the raid will end with this.

But, Auber may launch another surprise attack, so we must stay alert.

We should at least stay vigilant until the night.

After the battle.

The enemy: nearly destroyed.

Damage against us: almost nil.

The only damage was Ghyslaine's sneezing and tears that did not stop for almost an hour.

Since detoxification and healing magic didn't work we were a little bit impatient, but the symptoms subsided when flushed with water magic.

I often feel the weakness of healing and detoxification magic.

Maybe it doesn't cure hay fever either.

It seems that there is no hay fever in this world...

I immediately helped to clean up the corpses we had piled by the roadside.

Normally it might have been okay to just leave them, but right now we were still in the forest.

If you leave dead people alone here, their bodies will be revived into the undead.

Basically, leaving corpses in a place like this is forbidden.

We stripped the armor, piled up the remains together, and then burned the corpses.

"....."

While going about the work, Luke's complexion became grim.

The more he worked, the grimmer his expression became.

This wasn't because he knew the identity of the corpses. Rather, his focus was on the armor the corpses were wearing.

I wonder if there is something on it.

"Hey, Luke. This crest is....."

I found the reason immediately..

As for what it was, it could be found on a lot of the corpses.

On their armor, a crest was emblazoned.

The crest symbolized a certain lord from the Asura Kingdom.

That crest was from a place known as the Milbotts territory.

It is a territory that is owned by one of the four major noble families that had a strong military force in the Asura Kingdom.

The soldiers who attacked us came from the faction that ruled over that territory.

That means...

Luke muttered what I had already guessed.

"Foolishness ....."

The lord of Milbotts territory...

Philemon Notus Greyrat has betrayed Ariel.

One hour after the ambush.

After dealing with the dead bodies, we've set up camp in a secluded part of the forest.

Surrounded by a stone fence, we're in the middle of a war council around a bonfire.

"Foolishness .....such a foolish....."

Luke had a stupid look.

From hearing that Philemon turned his back on us, he murmured rashly with vacant eyes.

Was it a surprise?

No, only to Luke.

Ariel and the others look nonchalant.

It seems like they have considered that possibility.

Only Luke is shocked, since he is Philemon's relative.

Or was it from the lies Hitogami fed him?

What did Hitogami tell him?

And has the lie already been exposed?

Knowing him, I doubt he'll do something so convenient.

Should I... prod him for answers?

No, I should wait for an opportunity.

"Ariel-sama."

"What is it Rudeus-sama?"

"I think Auber will attack again whether we are in this forest, before we cross the border, or after we cross the border. I think he will attack us on a regular basis."

Ariel was puzzled.

"I suppose so?"

Such a situation, we have no choice but to face it. That was our assumption from the start.

"I was able to fight him this time, but Auber was a more formidable enemy than I thought, on top of that, the number of enemies in this raid are greater than I thought..... Apparently, the other side is going all-out to kill you, Ariel-sama. For the next attack, they will definitely come more prepared than the last time."

"..... is it that difficult to just fight them off?"

Hearing Ariel's word, I nod.

"I won't say it's difficult.....but. Perhaps, the border checkpoint will be the next ambush. It might be a trap I think "

"But without teleportation magic we can only move onward."

The conversation is going exactly as I expected.

Talking to Ariel is so easy.

It feels like she already knows what I want to say.

"Yeah, but if you already know they will lay a trap all we need to do is avoid it."

"Well ..... Then, is there another way to cross the border without walking into their trap?"

"Yes"

"How?"

Before I realize it, all eyes are focused on Ariel and I.

I feel that it a little hard to talk.

"Around the border, there are bandits and slave traders whose main occupation is smuggling. Let's negotiate with them. If all goes well, we may cross the border without passing the checkpoint."

After hearing my suggestion, Ariel was posing thoughtfully saying [Hmm].

Sylphy is giving a somewhat quizzical face.

Neither Ghyslaine nor Eris have heard about this.

"Rudeus-sama, didn't you said earlier that we shouldn't be doing guilty things?"

"Yes. It does not change that regard. But, I seem to have misjudged a little about the severity of the situation. My intention still won't change."

"..... Is that so?"

I was nodding while saying that, Ariel seemed convinced.

She stared at Sylphy and then looks at the surroundings, while her eyebrows are making a '/ ' shape.

"Sylphy, What do you think?"

"....I think it is a good idea. I do not know how credible the thief band is, but if Rudi suggested it, I think it is less dangerous than crossing the checkpoint."

"I'm not satisfied with Rudi's suggestion. Why didn't he suggest that in advance? Also, why did you give that suggestion only after we were ambushed? It seemed as though you were waiting for this attack? "

"Luke?"

Luke gulped, and Ariel looks at Luke.

He slowly raises his head, as if he saw a ghost.

Looking at me with pondering eyes.

"You, what are you plotting ... ?"

He said clearly.

His voice is trembling.

With a face full of doubt.

He watches me.

"Your movement, it was as if you already knew that Auber would launch a surprise attack."

"I had already predicted this."

"It looked like you also knew his fighting style."

"That's thanks to my foresight eye"

Just Luke.

Shouldn't you be grateful that I checked your blind spot?

"Auber's retreat seems too suspicious."

"If I was killed by his first strike, then I guess he would've pressed the attack without retreating."

"I know, but why didn't you stop that guy from escaping?"

".....I could have stopped him if I used a large scale attack magic. But in that case, Sylphy and Eris would have been in my line of fire. Also, there's a possibility that he has some magic items to evade my magic attack."

"......Really?"

Hey.

Your tone sounds like I've joined hands with Auber.

..... Oh, is that so?

It was this sort of scenario?

I joined hands with Auber, and Darius and orchestrated that ambush. That's the first conclusion most people make.

You've got me.

If you just think a little bit you will surely see that I'm not allying with Auber and Darius....

"..... Luke-senpai. Didn't I help Ariel-sama under your request?"

"I certainly did request your aid..... But your actions are strange. My father would not betray me. Father is..."

Luke's behavior is suspicious.

So this is the the work of Hitogami.

Just what kind of advice did Hitogami give to Luke ..... ?

Wait, maybe Luke is not visible to Hitogami right now?

That should be the case with Orsted nearby.

The presence of Orsted acts as a jammer for Hitogami.

It's possible that his advice for Luke has missed the target.

..... Or maybe that Hitogami has already discarded Luke.

".....What the heck are you saying now?"

Eris looks frustratedly at Luke.

Like she's ready to beat him down anytime.

Sylphy looks alternatively between Luke and I with a sharp look.

Ghyslaine looks like someone with a huge [?] on her head.

"Ariel-sama."

With a stern face, Luke turned his face toward Ariel.

"I don't agree. Rudeus's recent actions have been strange."

"Is... that so?"

"Also, I worry about the credibility of the alleged band of thieves. Although I agree that we should avoid the checkpoint, but I think we should head back, and request help from Perugius-sama "

Asking for Perugius's help, huh....

Indeed, you have a point.

To ask for one or two of Perugius's familliars to act as escorts, this will enhance our strength and will enable us to force our way through.

Yeah, I also feel that this is quite a good idea.

I'm fine with anything as long as Ariel is safe.

But I must get in touch with Tris and her band of thieves.

Besides, I don't always have to stay together with Ariel.

However....if I leave her there is the possibility that Ariel might die.

"......Elmore, Kleene, what do you think?"

"I support Luke-sama"

"Me too."

"Is that so?"

The two servants are likely to support Luke.

With this it's 2 to 3?

But, this party is not a democracy.

The leader of this party is Ariel.

Everything was decided by Ariel.

Well, if it can't be helped, I will try to contact Tris alone.

I'll make the excuse that I want to do reconnaissance in the country beforehand or something.

But will it be suspicious if I go alone?

..... Maybe I should bring Eris or Sylphy.

"....."

Ariel did not consult with Ghyslaine or Eris.

A shadow covered her face while she takes her time to consider the situation.

She narrows her eyes, staring at the bonfire, indulging in deep thought.

"Okay."

After a while, she looked up.

Looking alternately between Luke and I.

After looking at us twice, she stopped her gaze at Luke.

"I will go with Rudeus-sama's plan."

"What!"

Luke begins to get angry.

"Why?"

"Perugius-sama won't be so generous as to lend a hand to the king that fled from her own kingdom. If it's only at this level, I won't rely on him."

Saying that, Ariel winks at me.

..... You mean, you intentionally sided with me?

I wonder why?

Perhaps Ariel wanted me to owe her a favor.

Although it was convenient for me.....

"But, that's putting the cart before the horse. Working with the likes of thieves! We won't know what they're plotting against Ariel-sama – "

"Luke."

Luke is blindsided by Ariel's decision.

"What's wrong with you all of the sudden? Suspecting Rudeus-sama suddenly?"

"But father is ....."

"Didn't we already discuss the possibility that Philemon would betray us from before? Didn't you say that if it's father it may happen?"

"I certainly did think so before. However, I am certain that I've heard....."

And, Luke shut his mouth before he spoke.

Ariel also seem a little surprised by his reaction.

Luke was wide-eyed, and lips trembling.

"Luke, by chance ..... did you hear it from your brother?"

Ariel stops abruptly.

Then, in a different tone, she asked Luke.

"Luke Notus Greyrat, who are you?"

Luke looked at Ariel with an understanding look.

Then he shifted his gaze to Sylphy, me, and rest of the party.

After seeing the anxiousness in our eyes, he looks back at Ariel.

Kneeling without diverting his gaze, Luke said looking up.

"I am your knight."

"And I am your princess."

Luke looks down, Ariel nodded.

Like a shadow has been casted off, those two share a satisfied smile.

All that needs to be said has been said.

That was all that was necessary.

With such satisfied smiles on them, Sylphy and the others looked relieved as well.

"Let's depart. Rudeus-sama please lead the way."

"Yes."

Anyways, with this we're contacting the bandits.

I will not betray Luke.

But anxiety remained.

With this conversation, there's no doubt that Luke is an apostle of Hitogami.

Returning to the highway then entering the forest again.

I already knew the location of the band of thieves.

Enter the forest from a certain mark on a rock, then head straight to the East.

The band of thieves in question is located in the East side of the forest.

Apparently under a cliff at the foot of a mountain.

However, our pace is slow.

Since our horse-drawn carriage was disassembled.

Ariel tried to ride a horse at first, but after seeing how high up it was she came down immediately.

Since there is a risk of falling from the horse.

We're moving through an area that's usually impassable while leading horses.

If you clear the way with magic, you won't have to take a detour.

Although in that case, it will be easier for the enemy to track us.

However, if we're fighting against demons on the way, we will leave a trail no matter what.

Well I guess we don't need to care about it too much.

Along the way, we rested many times.

Because Ariel complained that her feet were sore repeatedly.

It's because she is not familiar with walking through the forest.

Fortunately, Ariel did not voice any complaints aside from that.

Sylphy repeatedly applied healing magic to Ariel's feet, and waited for her to catch her breath.

"....."

There is no conversation in particular.

Concerning the Apostles of Hitogami.

What made them apostles is the advice given by Hitogami.

Luke, Apostle of Hitogami.

He has gotten some advice.

No doubt about it.

But it is unclear when he received it, or what the advice was about.

Looking at my example, Hitogami did not give me advice often.

He came out frequently on occasion, but on average he comes about once a year.

If Luke's situation is similar, he would've received advice maybe once or twice.

Most likely, Luke received advice just before he came to my place.

It's to make me an ally for Ariel.

Right.

That advice is directly linked to Luke's action.

But after this attack, I feel that it is a little different.

Perhaps, Luke received advice about the Notus house.

And now, he has been treating me awfully.

Like before, he is giving me a threatening attitude accusing me as the culprit.

For example, 『I'm trying to take over the Notus house.』 or ...?

No. Stupid.

If you just think about it a little, you'll know that I don't want that.

If I'm really interested in that, I wouldn't live in the Magic City Sharia and I would've been more aggressive towards Ariel.

People value things differently.

If you value something, you tend to assume it's coveted.

And if you're told that someone's aiming for the same thing, you're prone to believe it.

If you're Luke what would you want the most, perhaps he wants to become the Head of the Notus house.

Although I don't know for sure.

This time, Philemon betrayed Ariel.

This might or might not be due to the advice of Hitogami.

The diary didn't say anything about this...

No, Eris was at Philemon's mansion in that world's diary.

Eris in Boreas, Boreas belonged to the first prince's faction.

If you think about it, even without Hitogami's intervention, Philemon would have most likely betrayed us.

So Philemon isn't an apostle after all.

Given his influence and ability, Darius is still the most likely candidate.

That's right, Darius.

Another apostle.

Senior Minister Darius Silva Ganius.

I wonder what kind of advice he received.

At the very least, he would have gotten information such as 『Ariel is heading to the Royal Palace』.

Ariel had said, 『Darius is supposed to have predicted our return at the time the king became ill.』.

However, our enemy's force is powerful.

The North Emperor and a North King.

Both should be valuable forces.

How would you prepare against an opponent of uncertain strength?

In regards to the second prince, I'll discuss that another time.

We've reached here through teleportation magic.

I don't know how long it takes for information that 『Ariel is heading to the Royal Palace』 to reach the Asura kingdom from magic city Sharia.

But, the information shouldn't be fast enough to allow Auber and Wii Taa to ambush us.

That explains why Auber came straight for me.

Instead of targeting Ariel, he chose me.

When I think about it.

..... There is a possibility that Darius's target is not Ariel, but me.

Either way is fine.

For Hitogami and Darius, Ariel and I are both hurdles.

His advice must be something like that.

It's easy to understand.

The last apostle remains unknown.

I'm still pondering about Auber's last sentence.

Auber knew that I was in the party. He mentioned that [Wii Taa was brought].

Does that mean .....

No, Darius might have known about it.

I can't determine from this attack alone who could be an apostle of Hitogami.

It seems the North Emperor knew of my participation, but he might have also heard it from Darius.

Either way, Auber's an opponent I have to defeat.

Even so, facing Auber's mysterious fighting style.

As well as his mastery of a variety of tools.

Such as oil and tear gas.

I'm sure that he still has some tricks up his sleeve.

This time he gave off a very dazzling impression, but according to Orsted, he's strong even if it comes down to a regular sword fight.

Although I've heard about him, it is a big difference when you're watching it with your own eyes.

I wasn't caught off guard covering for Ghyslaine. But all it takes is one mistake, one bad choice, and he could have taken me out from behind.

I want to take him out for sure next time...

Though Orsted said that killing this guy is hard.

Even though he stood out so much, he disappeared so easily into the forest.

The name of North Emperor isn't just for show.

Well, rather than Peacock Sword or North Emperor, he gave off the feeling of a ninja.

No, he is a NINJA.

A NINJA in a parallel world.

..... Using oil and tear gas, I wonder if I should try to imitate him.

Midnight.

I contacted Orsted.

Since the battle just ended, there was a lot to report about.

"Was Auber hard to catch?"

"Yes, I'm sorry. Even though you told me how to counter him....."

"No, It is fine. It's easier said than done. Besides, if Auber is determined to escape, then he cannot be killed."

Auber's movements after he decided to withdraw were fast.

His pattern was complex, I cannot predict what he will do.

But Orsted seems to know most of his patterns,

I wasn't able to counter them at all.

Well, in that case, Orsted can just kill him if he wanted to, but...

..... No, let's not go in a direction that relies on him so much.

Faith alone can't solve everything.

Leave Auber to me.

I need to do it.

I believe I can.

"Anyways, who is Wii Taa?"

"Someone might have called him. Perhaps at Hitogami's proposal."

"..... Well, what kind of guy he is?"

Just in case, I should learn about my enemy's war potential.

"『Light and darkness』 Wii Taa.

In the North God Style faction, he is a disciple of Kalman III. Indeed, he has been the bodyguard of the Notus house for a long time."

Notus?

Perhaps he's Luke's, or maybe Paul's home tutor?

"As his name suggests, he is good at blinding his enemies using light from his polished mirrors and armor in the daytime. At night, he inks his entire body, using fog and a magic tool that emits black smoke to blend into the darkness."

Thus, in the daytime, dirty his armor, during the nighttime, light up the battlefield, that will counter him.

Supposedly.

"His sword skills aren't bad, but... Ghyslaine and Eris should able to handle him."

That makes sense.

Although he uses a cheap technique, it seems that it only supplements his skills.

There's no way anyone can become a North King using cheap tricks alone.

"Still, we don't know who else the enemy has employed."

"At King Rank?"

"No Sword King of course... but how many more Water Kings, Water Emperors, or Sword Emperors might be involved?"

"How many does he need to hire to crush us?"

"No, Darius probably only needs one or two guards with the Water God there."

Because the enemy has the force of someone as strong as the Water God, the enemy might have become complacent.

Hitogami might have suggested all the additional hires in that case...

But it's only advice after all.

"Since the Three Swords of North God were all present inside Asura Kingdom, the possibility exists that all of them have been hired."

"Three Swords of North God, who are they?"

"Ah, about the counters to them, let me tell you."

Three Swords of North God.

Self proclaimed leaders of the North God Style. Four in all.

Each with their own unique set of skills and particular features.

After teaching me how to counter each of them, we proceed to the next topic.

"What about Luke?"

"It's a good sign. Hitogami can see the future, but because of it, his predictions are not always accurate. If you manipulate multiple Apostles, fractures often occur."

In short, Hitogami does not give advice with the thought of cooperation between the Apostles.

This time, Luke was upset about Darius or there might have been a discrepancy with the advice about Auber.

Hitogami's advice might be accurate in some part, but the rest are full of lies.

For Luke, the advices that he was given might have been mostly decorated with convenient lies.

"Do you think there's a possibility that Hitogami has discarded Luke?"

"There is a great possibility. Luke's fate is weak. Hitogami isn't expecting anything from him as a pawn. Just that, in order to see your action, he was used as a watchdog. However, with me nearby, his monitoring ability is extremely limited."

"... But, since he can only control three pawns, doing that seems like such a waste."

When he hears that, Orsted makes a frown.

"For Hitogami who is omniscient, what he fears most is an invisible opponent. Since he is fulfilling the role of surveillance, there is no need for more."

"......I see."

From Hitogami's point of view, the ability he relies on the most is being sealed.

Without Luke, he won't even be able to predict the changing future.

He would have to weakly tackle us without even any hints.

Considering that, he probably won't release Luke.

It's also a form of control.

Uh-huh, it's too complicated, then let's leave it alone for now.

"Is it safe to leave Luke alone for now?"

"Yes. But be wary. When Hitogami gets reckless/careless, he will make the apostles do excessive things without thinking of their consequences."

"Yes, that's right, isn't it."

For example when he sent me to attack Orsted.

"Kill him before he makes a big move."

"......Before I do that, may I talk to Luke?"

"What will you talk about?"

"Whether or not he is in contact with Hitogami and whether or not he received any advice. So as to convince him to not believe the words of Hitogami. Perhaps he will become a double agent for us."

"Hou ....."

I feel like it will be a wasted effort.

Luke is suspicious of me.

It must be from something Hitogami has said to him.

When it comes to trust, I've never really made the effort to get him to trust me.

My relationship with Luke is just that.

"I think it's a waste ..... but try it."

I was given permission.

Consider the timing, only to talk afterwards.

I might just be looking for trouble, but still.

"So far, things are going well. Hitogami hasn't made a good move yet. Let's hope it stays that way."

"Haha!"

Thus, the regular report was completed.

I left Orsted's place.

The plan is on track.

At least I think that's the case.

After the fight with Auber in the Red Dragon's Upper Jaw, the next step is to make Tris our companion.

A few things are different from what we expected, but it doesn't affect the plan that much.

In that case, I should move forward with confidence.

Despite saying that, I'm a bit scared at how smooth things are going.

Especially when it comes to Luke, everything might come apart at the seams before I realize it.

Though Orsted apparently doesn't think so.

Probably because he hasn't personally witnessed the situation.

Or maybe he's thinking the issues are somewhat negligible.

Or perhaps I'm just overthinking things.

What Orsted is thinking, I do not know.

He didn't make a move because there are no problems.

Although I understand.

When you move recklessly, things turn for the worst.

[It's better to regret doing it, than to regret not doing it.] A phrase I've often heard in my previous life.

But I might regret no matter what I choose.

The status quo is an option as well.

I want to make a choice that leaves me with as little regret as possible.

As I recall Luke's conversation with Ariel, Luke might have continued his line with just a little push.

I will try to bring up the subject when the opportunity arises.

I haven't decided on the details of what to talk about yet, and I might be stirring up trouble.

However, it might be good to mention the risk caused by Hitogami.

Not speaking to him might be good, though.

"....."

While thinking that, I head back to camp.

I report that the surrounding area is safe.

The people who were on patrol today were Kleene, Sylphy and I.

My patrol was short, it didn't even take 30 minutes.

During those 30 minutes, the silhouettes around the bonfire increased by one.

Three shadows.

Did someone wake up?

If there is a monster attack while I'm not here, Ghyslaine or Eris might have woken up.

But the figure wasn't that big.

Though it was larger than the delicate and petite Sylphy.

And about the size of an average woman, about the same as Kleene.

Her back is higher than those two, but she wasn't Eris.

Could it be Elmore?

Why is she up?

When I approached thinking that, one of the silhouettes got up.

"It's a nice night. Rudeus-sama"

Behind the campfire stood Ariel. The light from the campfire casted a shadow on her beautiful face.

She has a face that made Kleene and Sylphy worry.

"How about we take a little stroll?"

Ariel said, flashing a fearless smile.

Under the moonlight.

I am taking a stroll with Ariel in the forest.

Just the two of us.

Sylphy, the two servants, and Luke aren't here.

Ariel was holding a torch, she led the way.

If we go too far, we'll end up going to the place where I just met Orsted a while ago.

"Rudeus-sama, I've been meaning to have a talk in private for a long time now."

Kleene and Sylphy didn't follow us.

Ariel stopped.

She says she has something important to tell me, so she has brought me into the forest.

A midnight tryst.

I wonder what she needs to talk about.

It doesn't seem like she's making me into her attendant for going to the toilet.

I won't be surprised if you're going to show something to me that you usually didn't show to others, but I don't know why you're taking me along.

Ariel and I walked for about five minutes away from the campfire.

Making sure we were far enough away, she looked back.

"Rudeus-sama, I want to keep the contents of this conversation a secret, that's why I'm doing all this."

Let's stop the jokes for now.

Ariel wanted to talk about a serious matter.

"......What did you want to discuss?"

Although I've already expected this, but to be safe, I asked her.

Showing a fearless smile, Ariel caressed my chin.

Hey, touching is NG!

{ C-Editor's note: NG - no good. }

"Well, we can take our time since the night is still long."

"Even if the night is long, the time for us to sleep is short."

"Don't be that way, I just want to be able to talk to you freely, Rudeus-sama."

After she says that, Ariel let go and sat down by the nearest tree root.

For the time being, I should fully activate my demon eye.

It's not that I'm wary of Ariel.

It's just in case if something were to happen to Ariel.

"That reminds me, about Sylphy and Eris-sama. They get along surprisingly well."

Is this what we're going to talk about?

No, it's just a conversation starter.

"Well .... originally I thought they would be quarreling a lot, but it seems to me that they're getting along really well."

To be honest, I always wondered if taking Eris as a wife might lead to conflict and chaos in my family.

I was wondering if Roxy and Sylphy ought to be quarreling more.

But you shouldn't quarrel with family.

"The other day, while Rudeus-sama was out patrolling, I met those two and talked about this and that."

"Such as?"

"She said, [You'll be fine if you leave it to Rudeus.] For Eris-sama, staying silent and hearing all you say is important. Rudi also make mistakes, and, I'm no good unless I'm following Sylphy's guidance."

Being relied on is nice, but honestly Eris, you really are overestimating me too much.

It's nice of you that you're trying to help me behind Sylphy's back.

I think those two are still anxious about me becoming Orsted's underling.

Without making a complaint or disagreement, you two are willing to follow me.

"Those two are exact opposites. Eris-sama will fight and stand in front of Rudeus-sama. Sylphy will support Rudeus-sama from the back....."

"Doing all they can to cover for me, I can only offer them my gratitude...."

My love and gratitude for those two.

It's something that I won't forget even until my death.

"What's interesting is seeing Sylphy scold Eris-sama like a little sister that has done something wrong."

"A bad little sister?"

"Yes. Eris-sama has taken the lecture to heart, even though Sylphy was reluctant."

I wonder.

I didn't notice until she said that.

I mean, now that I think about it, I haven't spoken much with those two recently.

I'm being too narrow minded.

I thought that I was familiar with how Eris thought, and so I ignored it.

..... I have not seen Sylphy looking after Eris with half baked feelings.

"It's interesting how Sylphy is looking after her junior."

"Ariel-sama even notices these sorts of things huh?"

"Unlike Rudeus-sama who misses small details like that."

While saying that, Ariel sends me an alluring glance.

She's bewitching.

Stop blatantly showing such temptation.

"Well, I know that Rudeus is busy every day, gazing here and there and thinking about everything from what can be seen to what can't be seen."

Ariel looks at my eyes, playing with the topic.

Perhaps this is what she wanted to talk about?

"One thing I would like to ask Rudeus sama ....what do you think about Luke?"

Luke.

What do I think about Luke?

So it's not about Orsted.

"Even if you ask me now."

Well, Ariel, what sort of answer are you hoping for?

"Rudeus-sama, your bad habit is showing."

"What?"

"Answer me honestly. I'm a master at the art of conversation. Such a skill is a staple for someone in my position "

Habit.

Do I have such a habit?

Although I feel that we've been talking and thinking about just such a thing these days.

About Orsted, about Hitogami.

That's not all.

My family also.

"I think that ——— Luke is betraying us."

And suddenly, Ariel decisively said it.

Luke's betrayal.

Oh, that keyword.

"Although I haven't said it to Sylphy and the others."

I bet.

But, that's a little shocking.

".....I thought that Ariel-sama trusted Luke."

I was wondering about that, about Ariel's trust in Luke's loyalty.

Sylphy, just like Luke, will not betray Ariel.

The two attendants as well.

"I do."

"....."

"There is no reason for Luke to betray me. If he wanted to betray me, he would have done so a long time ago. Luke would have been able to take my life during my sleep whenever he wanted."

"..... Then, why?"

"Even someone as loyal as Luke would betray me if he were forced into a situation where he had no choice but to do so. Like for example..... since he cares deeply about his family, maybe his family was taken hostage....."

Ariel said so quietly.

Family taken hostage.

I see.

If you're convinced, even without knowing about the existence of Hitogami, the words and actions of Luke can be explained.

Darius taking Luke's family hostage, and forcing him to betray Ariel.

On top of that, with Notus soldiers attacking Ariel, the promise was broken.

If you look at it that way, it all makes sense.

But Luke has remained eerily silent.

Does it appears to Ariel... that he's troubled about whether to return to Ariel's side or stay on Darius's side?

"That's why I want to hear your opinion. What do you think? I'm asking Rudeus-sama since he has recently offered his help to me. "

Also, it's possible that Ariel also suspected me.

Because of Luke, suspicion against me has grown.

By those words, she assumed that I'm teamed up with Luke.

"Is discussing a matter like this alright? In a place like this? I could turn out to be a traitor and take your life here and now, Ariel-sama. "

"It will be a shame if that were the case.... After all, it would mean that I lack the eyes to discern a person's true nature. I'll accept my death obediently."

Maybe I should test that courage?

No, that won't be good, it's not as if I got betrayed.

It's easy to enumerate the reasons that I will not betray her.

".....I don't think Luke is betraying you. It's just that he is being manipulated."

"By who?"

Her question is not easy to answer.

I wonder how would she respond if she hears Hitogami's name.

It's easier to just reveal the truth, but .....

Wait, looking at this conversation, perhaps Ariel is actually an apostle of Hitogami?

Although Orsted said that was impossible.....

Calm down.

The advantages and disadvantages of informing Ariel.

Let's consider them all.... first of all.

"Though I'm asking you that, it's probably difficult for Rudeus-sama to answer. If there was an easy answer, you'd have given it a long time ago."

Ariel's following words stopped my train of thoughts.

"So, could you introduce me?"

Ariel was laughing.

In the dark, I see a friendly smile.

"To the person that Rudeus-sama occasionally contacts..... Orsted-sama."

"What?"

That.

What do you mean.

This is getting complicated.

Did Orsted's name just come out?

Wasn't it about Luke?

Was this her real intention?

"It's not too much of a surprise, is it? After all, Rudeus-sama is the subordinate of Orsted-sama."

"....."

"Also, I would like to ascertain 『which side』 Orsted belongs to."

Is Orsted on Ariel's side? Or is he on Grabell's side? Is that what you mean?

Damn, I don't want to have such a roundabout conversation.

What happened to the Ariel-sama who's always easy to talk to?

"..... Even if you ascertain it, what do you intent to do about it?"

"If he is on 『this side』, then no matter how terrifying he is, I plan to endure it."

"Endure it, you say?"

"It is necessary for the royal family to get along with people even if they are unpleasant if it will be beneficial. Therefore, it will probably be okay."

I see, so thats how it is.

Though I wonder if it will be that simple with Orsted's curse.

"What if he belongs to『that side』?"

"Then I will bring him to my side."

Ariel said that brimming with confidence.

You are really amazing.

"He's nearby, isn't he..... ? Orsted-sama or someone who can contact him."

However, I have some reservations about this.

I'm not sure if this is something that I can decide at my discretion.

Even if Ariel intends to endure it, Orsted's curse is too strong.

He gets recognized as an enemy just by being looked at.

If she says she'll endure it, but then when she actually meets him, the result is that Ariel sees me as an enemy, it would be too painful to watch.

That said, if I refuse, refusing might seem like I'm declaring that I have something to feel guilty about.

At the very least, he isn't going to interfere with Ariel's path to the crown.

It's Hitogami that would like to disrupt Ariel's path, and we would like to interfere with Hitogami.

It will be difficult to explain.

Uh-huh.

"Don't worry about it."

A voice came from behind me.

Looking back quickly, he stood there.

A silver-haired, golden-eyed demon ..... I mean Orsted.

"Ariel Anemoi Asura. If you wish to speak to me then I won't reject it. "

Orsted's sharp glance silenced Ariel.

Facing his eyes as if she had received a shock, Ariel's leg trembled and she starts leaking.

"Oh ..... Oh ....."

As if her nightmares had been materialized, her face distorts in fear.

With a reaction like that, I'll probably be labeled a traitor .....

"Aa ....."

As I was thinking that, Ariel's expression changed to one of ecstasy.

Looking like she was feeling good, I thought.

Seems like she's going to be fine.

After a while, Ariel recovered.

Now, as if putting on airs, she's wearing a normal expression.

I washed her dirty pants and panties with water magic and dried them with my original magic 『Dry Steaming』, a melded magic of fire and wind.

In exchange for the rapid drying, the fabric gets damaged.

Aisha gets angry if I use it, thus it is designated as a forbidden technique in my home.

There's no choice, it can be said that this time is an emergency.

.....Even so, although I intended to live a relatively long life,

I never thought that there would come a day where I get to wash the princess's panties.

As expected of a princess, even her panties are made of this world's high quality silk.....

While I am washing her panties, Ariel is wearing my robe that I gave her.

Length is it limited to those long robes again.

Currently, Ariel is wearing the dried trousers and pants.

While wearing the robe that has touched the naked nether regions of a princess, I get excited over the sweet smell that floats in the air.

Maybe because I haven't done anything erotic in the past few days, my gauge has accumulated a bit.

I'll expend it later.

Since Eris and Sylphy are nearby, I'll hold back for now.

Orsted watches me suspiciously while I was busy thinking this.

"I apologize Orsted-sama, for I have shown you such an unsightly appearance."

"No, it's alright."

After things settled down, Ariel spoke to Orsted.

Her face is slightly pale, but it doesn't show her fear of Orsted.

"....."

"Please don't show such a scary face."

"It's my normal face."

"Oh, this must be the effect of the curse."

"That is right."

Even so, I wonder why Orsted came out.

Never mind that.

It is the boss's decision.

Now, your job is to watch the conversation between these two people.

"I see. Although I've met many Mikos and cursed children.... I can see that there is an exceptionally strong curse on you."

"However, you seem to be able to overcome that. "

"Being able to negotiate diplomatically under any circumstance is the forte of the Asura royal family."

"Though, deep down you don't trust me."

"Yes, therefore I hoped for the opportunity to be able to talk to you."

Conversation, such as mutual checks and balances.

Now, it's my turn to feel uncomfortable.

No, being a good audience is fine.

The sweet smell that's wafting from the robe makes me anxious and lose concentration.

"Let's go straight to the point. Orsted-sama, why do you lend me your support?"

"Because the person behind Darius is my enemy."

"Behind Darius.....is it my brother? The first prince Grabell?"

"It's someone else."

"Then, who could it be?"

Your question is hard to answer for now, even for the boss.....

"It's the Human God 『Hitogami』."

Oh, you said Hitogami's name.

I wonder what Orsted intends to do by revealing that much.

Although I think it's unnecessary, since Ariel won't become your enemy.

"When you say Human God, do you mean the one from the myths or one of the gods of creation?"

"That Human God and my enemy Hitogami are not necessarily the same, but that's what he calls himself."

"For what reason would such a God team up with Darius?"

"In order to kill you, and make Grabell the king."

"Haa ....."

Ariel had a face that was taken aback.

With that face, she slowly looks at me.

".....I see. Although it sounds unbelievable, it doesn't appear to be a lie now that I look at Rudeus-sama's face."

My face is being used as a lie detector.

Am I so easy to read?

Even though I was putting on my best poker face.

I'll consult with Sylphy about this.

What she thinks about my face.

..... I wonder if she will say that I'm handsome.

"But, why does such an exalted deity favor my brother.....? Is it because he is more suitable to be the king?"

"No, Hitogami operates for more selfish reasons."

".....May I hear more about those reasons?"

Orsted looks at me.

After making a slightly troubled face, he turned to face Ariel.

"In about 100 years, the Asura Kingdom will be exposed to danger."

"!"

"Whether you or Grabell becomes king will affect how the Asura Kingdom responds to that danger."

Hey, I've never heard this story before.

"If Grabell became king, it will try to resolve the crisis through military weaponry. If you became king, it will resolve the crisis through magic."

"When you say 100 years later, will we still be alive...?"

"The policies made by you two after you become king are different. Grabell will head down the path of weapon development and you will pour resources into military magic development."

Boss, why didn't you tell me this story?

"If you rely on military power, Asura Kingdom will fall. In the case of relying on magic, Asura Kingdom will survive. "

"....."

"Hitogami wants the Asura Kingdom to perish."

Perhaps, Orsted is lying?

And made up a story that is convenient for Ariel.

.....But, if Ariel tries to check the truth by looking at my face, won't the lie be exposed?

"Why does Hitogami want the Asura kingdom to perish..... ?"

"Because the person who will defeat him is born in the Asura Kingdom."

"Then those people are obstacles to him?"

"That's right."

Ariel looks convinced.

"Then, Orsted-sama needs that person?"

"That's right."

Ariel places her chin on her hand and strikes a thinking pose.

She peers at me with a somewhat troubled face.

Stop! Don't look at me!

Don't use the lie detector!

No, this poker face of mine will cover for Orsted.

"Well, I couldn't even fathom an answer like that, so I'm a little confused. I wonder if I can believe it ..... "

It seems she thinks it's lie.

Damn it.

"There is no need to believe me, though I'll tell you what you want to know."

"What I want to know, you said?"

While Orsted said that patronizingly, Ariel seemed surprised.

"Luke Notus Greyrat did not betray you. However, he is being manipulated by Hitogami."

From Ariel's face, her smile disappeared.

The smile that had been stuck as the default expression has disappeared.

"He is being manipulated?"

"He was told by Hitogami, [It's for Ariel's sake], and went down the wrong path."

"Luke is a wise man despite how he looks, do you think he'd be deceived that easily?"

"When people are given beneficial information by someone, they will trust that person easily."

Although Orsted has not given any beneficial information to me.

Well, that and believing it are different things.

"It's a sudden and unbelievable story, but..... Rudeus-sama, what do you think?"

I was suddenly shaken.

I think it's a good play.

Orsted is telling such crazy lies,

If I can't back those up with a satisfactory answer, then she will see through the lie on the spot.

However, to this question, I answered.

"I was manipulated by Hitogami for a long time. That guy appeared in my dreams and gave me advice many times which yield immediate results. Thanks to that, I obtained many things.

As for Hitogami, in the very end, it was all a strategic move to betray me at the last moment. I acted in accordance with the advice of that guy, and believed him. Then, I was betrayed. In the end, I was forced to fight Orsted-sama last time.

I believe that Luke's situation is similar."

As a matter of fact, I'm surprised at my own speech.

Listening to that, the smile on Ariel's face disappeared, and Ariel turns to face Orsted.

Her mouth is opening repeatedly, while she shook her head to and fro.

Once again, she looked up after she decided on what to say. I think.

"That means ..... Luke is not on Darius's side right?"

"Yes, although he's been made to cooperate unwittingly,

Luke himself isn't conscious about it."

Putting aside everything else, what Ariel wanted to hear about the most was Luke.

From the authenticity of Orsted's words.....

".....I am relieved to hear that."

"Do you believe me?"

"If it were any other situation, I would not believe it. Though, there are things that made me convinced. Rudeus-sama ... frequently takes glances at Luke."

I was taking that many glances at him.....?

"Although everything feels too convenient ..... You might be deceiving me, but I will try to believe it."

Ariel replied while looking towards me.

Orsted aside, I wonder if she's believing it because of me.

It's good news, but it's complicated.

"So, are there others that are Hitogami's apostles?"

"Darius is a candidate."

"That's probably for the best. Anyone else?"

"There is a high possibility that either the North Emperor Auber or the Water God Reida is an apostle."

"..... The apostles, there are only three?"

"Yes, no more that that."

"I see."

Ariel nodded.

"In other words, Rudeus-sama and Orsted-sama. The reason that you fight the apostles is so you can stop Hitogami's plans?"

"Yes. You learn fast."

"There's a reason why I take pride in being an understanding person."

Although Ariel says that proudly, she didn't smile.

Ever since earlier, her facial expression has been stiff.

"So, Orsted-sama. I have a proposal."

"What?"

"Since our purposes are aligned, I think I will also follow the instructions of Orsted-sama."

"..... Even if you have that intention, those around you won't listen."

"It's all well and good if the others don't know about this. Even if I sold my soul to the devil, it's impossible to complain if no one knew."

"....."

Ah, Orsted just looked a little down when she called him a devil.

"I will do anything to win. The stronger the allies, the better."

".....Didn't you consider the possibility that I lied and would betray you at the last moment?"

"I'm not stupid enough to miss a chance because of fear of risks."

Ariel-sama, what you're saying is cool but, you probably actually feel like you're swearing allegiance to the Great Devil King of Evil.

When I was also kneeling to Orsted, I had the same feeling.

However, the Orsted Corporation is a good company with great benefits.

Just because an evil-looking guy is the CEO, doesn't mean his treatment towards his employees is necessarily bad.

"For now though, Orsted-sama, I want you to leave Luke to me."

"Em."

"You should dedicate yourself to fighting against the apostles of Hitogami with Rudeus-sama, and I will focus my efforts on gaining the support of nobles and Luke. If we do this, the burden each person carries is also reduced so it's the most efficient thing to do "

".....I guess that's okay. Then I leave matters regarding Luke to you. Persuade him if possible, but if necessary, kill him."

"As you command."

Ariel knelt before Orsted, Orsted greeted it with a scary face as usual.

Is this how it feels to be betwitched by a fox?

Now that I think about it, Ariel has also become Orsted's subordinate.

And Orsted decided to reveal his future plans, in order to present a united front.

Him and Ariel.

"Rudeus-sama. Keep this matter a secret from Sylphy and the others."

"Yeah, more importantly, are you fine with this?"

"Yes. At last I felt refreshed. Oh, is it about that toilet matter?"

As she said that, Ariel had a refreshing face.

"Now I've finally established cooperation in the truest sense with Rudeus-sama."

"Right."

As for me, I still feel uneasy about some of this.

Still, I will obey Orsted for now and leave it be.

"Ariel-sama"

"What is it?"

"I should tell you now, in your attempt to persuade Luke, should he try to harm Eris or Sylphy, I will kill him. "

".....You're not following Orsted-sama's decision?"

"I'm only following Orsted-sama because that's the only way to protect my family."

I decide to warn her beforehand.

Of course, I don't know how it'll actually turn out.

Although I've confidently conveyed my resolve to kill Luke,

Let's believe in Ariel.

Rather than me trying to convince Luke one-on-one, Ariel might have a better chance of success.

"I understand, Rudeus-sama. Please take care of me in the future."

"Likewise."

Thus, Ariel became Orsted's subordinate.

She's become my colleague.

When we returned to camp with each other,

Sylphy puffed out her cheek, of course.

The next day.

We entered the territory of the band of thieves.

There's no one tailing us.

There is also no sign of Auber, or any soldiers.

Regardless, it looks like the enemy hasn't considered the possibility of us taking an alternative route and just waited on the road ahead.

Usually, Hitogami would have foreseen such an outcome.

However, I'm wearing a crested armlet.

The crested armlet engraved by the Dragon God.

Thanks to it, the future is altered in a way that Hitogami couldn't see.

In other words, by taking a different route we will be outside of Hitogami's prediction.

Hopefully.

It may be possible to predict Hitogami's moves by memorizing the contents of the diary.

But from Orsted's tone, that's probably not a good idea.

I might inaccurately recall the diary's content as well.

While I'm in deep thought, the wind suddenly changed.

".... Stop!"

Ghyslaine who was walking slightly behind me grabbed my shoulder at the same time.

"I'll go first."

With Ghyslaine's short words, Eris appears before me.

I stopped her.

If Eris participates, any negotiation will end up with her fist on the other party's face.

Eris falls back quietly.

However, she was looking at me instead of forward.

"They are surrounding us ..... We can break through now."

"Didn't you hear? I'm going to negotiate."

"..... I see, I'll protect the Princess."

With that, Ghyslaine moves back.

When I look behind me, Ghyslaine is speaking to Sylphy about something.

I catch Ariel's gaze.

Ariel gives me a [Take care] signal.

She's acting as if nothing happened yesterday.

She said to leave the matters regarding Luke and the other nobles to her.

Along the way, it appears that she was speaking to Luke, but the result is still unknown ....

Regardless, Orsted allowed Ariel to handle Luke's matter.

I just need to follow his word.

"....."

Under that assumption, I considered negotiation with the thieves first.

Taking the initiative to achieve victory.

Starting from self-introduction.

That's what my plan is, but I can't stop the party from showing themselves.

"..... Hmpf."

Right behind me, Eris is looking around.

Tracing her line of sight into the forest, a black shadow occasionally appears.

Today is this first time something like this happened.

No, since yesterday.

Immediately after the possible attack, her distance to me is surprisingly close.

Since Auber caught us by surprise yesterday, Eris is properly prepared now.

After a little while.

Eris stopped scanning the surroundings.

Apparently, we've been surrounded.

"There's about five people, at least. Be careful."

Eris tells us in a low voice.

When did you learn searching skills like that.

As I was thinking that, pushing his way through the bushes, a man showed up.

At the same time, from the shadow of the surroundings, from the top of the trees, figures appeared one after another.

One ..... Five ..... Ten .....

Hey, Eris-san, there are Twenty people.

Five people? That is bit too sloppy, you know?

The man in the front.

A bearded man wearing the best fur. Armed with machetes on the waist, holding an unlit torch in one hand. He appears to be the leader.

He looks like a bandit from every angle.

To be heard in this place, that person raised his voice.

"What's returned by the echo?"

Orsted informed me of the password.

"The rabbit's cellar isn't bright. "

The bandit's phrase means, [State your business?]

[Smuggling, we have some business with a member in the band of thieves.]

That was our reply.

For slave trades the answer would be, [Fox raises a child].

If you're searching for someone, [Your cat.]

If you wanted to assassinate someone crossing the Red Dragon's Beard, [Waking up the bear.]

It feels like it is subdivided. And wandering in without knowing this code, into their territory, they simply change jobs to highwaymen.

"Ah...?"

In response to my reply, Mr. Bandit made a quizzical look.

"Tina Thrush?"

"Striped Pattern Acorn "

It was the code for Tris.

Hearing that, the bandit makes a quizzical expression.

Then shrugged as if to say [Oh well], then raised one hand.

The shadows of the people surrounding us suddenly disappeared.

"Follow me."

The bandit told us that and ignited the torch.

When I gave the [Okay] signal to the back, I could see Ariel relax.

Before I turned around and continued, Eris was looking at me with wide eyes.

Somehow, she looked excited.

"As expected of Rudeus."

I'm wondering if that exchange just now is really that amazing.

Meh.

"Let's go"

"Okay!"

We followed the bandit into the forest.

We were brought before a single hut built within the forest.

There was a stable outside, a storehouse and bedrooms inside.

Three bunk beds were lined up in the bedroom.

The damp sheets and blankets are likely infested with insects, but a bed is a bed.

Could this be the feeling of a lumberjack's hut?

Mr. Bandit.

I don't know his name since I didn't ask, but I gave him some money.

"I will bring Thrush here before dawn tomorrow. In the meantime, you can stay here...."

He reported that and left.

He'll head back to headquarters, and bring Tris for us.

No questions asked.

In this place, he doesn't pry into a customer's business.

Only if you pay a premium, though.

"Whew."

I set down our luggage for the time being, and explained in detail our plan for the future.

Such as crossing the border at dawn.

And asking for assistance from the woman who's coming here.

Tonight, we'll stay here.

"We can only pray that Darius doesn't catch wind of this before dawn."

Said Luke with a hint of sarcasm.

About that, I also want to pray.

It's only a gut feeling since everything is going too well, but I have a feeling that everything is going to turn bad at any moment.

Regardless, it's just a gut feeling after all.

"Having our dreams collapse and becoming playthings for the thieves, is it? Rudeus-sama. If that happens, please spare Kleene and Elmore okay? "

Ariel said jokingly.

Since she knew what's going to happen from now on, I guess.....

Oh, hey, Kleene and Elmore are glaring at me.

Please stop it, it was just a joke.

"It seems that for now I can sleep in a place with a roof tonight..... Crossing the border tomorrow with a new route is going to be harsh, let's get some rest tonight."

At Ariel's words, everyone started to move.

Ariel's face is dark with the color of fatigue.

She is not accustomed to walking through the forest.

I thought it would be the same for the two servants, but they seem to be energetic.

The two are massaging Ariel's feet now.

It seems like the servants have been training for seven years just for this time.

Luke is beside the window looking out of the hut vigilantly.

Occasionally, he would send a sharp glance towards me.

Is he still suspecting me?

Maybe that fellow got tipped off by Hitogami, about who the enemies are.

Though, rather than Luke's, it would be Hitogami's enemies.

Regardless, it's been decided that Ariel will handle this matter.

Let's look forward to her skills for now.

Ghyslaine is standing in the corner, in a position overlooking the whole room.

As usual.

I gave her a glance, she returns with a nod.

Maybe, there is no meaning to this assent.

Sylphy went into the bedroom and started cleaning.

Although I'm okay with it, I wonder if we're going to sleep in that sheet and blanket.

No, I have brought spare cloth, so I'll just use the bed only.

Behind me, Eris is maintaining her sword.

Giving a satisfied smile as she polishes her sword.

With the sword giving off an eerie glow, Eris looks like a downright dangerous guy.

Well, it means she's reliable.

Although I wanted to get in touch with Orsted now.....

I'm not stupid enough to come out and say [I'm going out for a bit.]

For now, let's just check our equipment.

Has it been two hours?

Outside, the rain has started to fall.

It is not a downpour like the rainy seasons of the Great Forest, but the sound of large droplets of rain hitting the ceiling of the cabin can be heard.

Ariel fell asleep.

Using the bed that was prepared by Sylphy, her sleeping breath is soon heard.

Elmore is also turning in, while Luke was stationed as gatekeeper at the front door.

Three people, Kleene, Eris, and Sylphy, are talking about something in a low voice.

From the way Kleene and Sylphy occasionally laugh, the subject is probably not serious.

Relaxing is important since they can't be on edge all the time.

Ghyslaine didn't move from her earlier position.

She isn't standing anymore, but sitting near the entrance, with her eyes closed.

I don't think she is sleeping.

There is no conversation.

I've finished inspecting my equipment, so I have some free time.

I should do something with this free time.

"...!"

As I was thinking that, Ghyslaine's ears twitched.

"Someone is coming."

In response, Eris rises.

Two people had their hand at their sword.

The room froze.

A little time after that, there was a knock at the door.

Loud pounding.

"....."

Ghyslaine winks at me.

I return with a nod, Ghyslaine opened the door.

Then a person came in, it was a woman covered with a hood.

She was dressed in rain gear made with demon leather.

Even covered with her rain gear it was apparent that she has a curvy figure.

"Geez.....open it quickly, stupid."

While cursing, the woman takes off her rain gear.

Light brown hair which isn't rare in Asura Kingdom.

Clothes that covered her huge chest which is rare in Asura Kingdom.

Great breasts.

I wonder if they're bigger than Eris?

"Then, who is the one that has business with me?"

Overlooking the room, the woman said in a loud voice.

"Please don't tell me it's something dumb like replacing a prostitute, now state your business quickly! I'm busy you know! "

A loud intimidating and frustrated voice is heard inside the whole cabin.

Eris frowned and Kleene sent a reproachful gaze.

Before she could say anything, Sylphy spoke first.

"I'm sorry, but there is someone sleeping in the back, so let's keep it down?"

"Huh?"

As soon as she heard that the woman's mood soured.

"Who would want to talk quietly after being called in this rain!? Are you trying to make fun of me!? Just so you know, this Tris is an 『Impatient Person』 "

This woman should be Tris.

Her impression is a little different from the diary.

I had expected her to be a more quiet person.

However, suddenly I feel annoyed.

She seems to have respected me a fair bit in the diary, but only because I stole the sacred writings from the Millis sect.

To the current me, I have nothing in common with Tris.

However, in regards to that problem, Orsted has already made arrangements.

"Ah, ah... Tch, What's with that. Don't screw me with.

I'm in a bad mood.

I lost at dice and Donovan let it get to his head!

I got spit on me from that woman who recently became a slave!

I got called during a rainy day and got sopping wet!

If you don't tell me your business, I'm returning, you know!

Because today's a bad day!

Next time I'm going to make it a day where I'm in a good mood!"

Except for the call, the rest of her complaints had nothing to do with us.

But, letting her vent her anger now is the first priority.

While I was trying to calm her down, Luke suddenly comes in from the front. He took Tris's hand, and wipes the water that was flowing on her forehead with a handkerchief.

"I apologize for calling you suddenly, Miss Tris. Please, calm down first. And could you give us some of your valuable time and listen to our story?"

Gesture and speech that was filled with affectation.

Tris got her hand taken, opening and closing her mouth.

She blushes instantly, but her eyes are downcast.

"Well, if you put it that way ..... I will at least hear you out."

Super effective.

This is amazing..... Is this the power of popular guys?

"....."

Luke looked back, he sends a wink to me.

As if to say, [Now it's your turn.]

As Luke makes his exit, Tris immediately stops and greets him.

".....Oh before that, I haven't heard your name yet??"

"......It's Luke."

Luke doesn't say his family name. After stating his name, he moved to the back.

No ..... hearing that name, I see Tris wearing a quizzical look.

It's a face says that she's heard that name from somewhere.

All right, now it's my turn.

"Nice to meet you, Tris-san"

I greet her with my best smile.

"Who are you?"

Then, Tris's quizzical face changed into an overly unpleasant face.

It's a look that's full of suspicion.

It looks like my smile isn't very effective.

From now on, I must practice my smile in my spare time.

So I can ask for favors ..... Aisha is very adept at this.

Okay, I'll go with that.

"My name is Rudeus."

Lowering my head while saying so.

Tris raised her eyebrow, looking all over my body.

"Rudeus.....where have I heard that.....Oh."

In the middle of her thought, it seems she remembered something.

Both eyebrows went up, her look changed to one of surprise.

" 『Quagmire』."

Muu, I'm more famous using that name?

"The worst and the cruelest magician in Sharia, why are you in a place like this.....?"

The worst and cruelest?

What kind of rumor has been spreading about me?

And, when I thought of that.

Click.

A sound rang.

When she heard the sound, Tris tightened her mouth.

I feel something itching around my back.

"....."

A [Click, Click] rhythmic sound is heard.

Looking at my field of view, Eris is the one that is making that sound. She is hitting her sword handle with her finger.

To issue a warning by the sound.

To show her irritation by the sound.

Like a rattlesnake, whose territory has been invaded.

When I hear that sound, chills run down my body for some reason.

From head to toe, I tremble in fear.

"Ah, my bad."

And, the one that's shivering is not just me.

Tris's small shoulders are also shaking a bit.

"I didn't mean to pry into your business."

Rather than a word with me, it was more like an excuse to Eris.

With one snort, Eris stopped tapping her sword handle.

What was that about?

"When you're in this business, information is everything. Knowing the name and appearance of a dangerous person."

"I'm not as dangerous as it sounds."

"Oh, that much is clear. We understand. Though the name Rudeus isn't that famous, 『Quagmire』 on the other hand is well known on the street. The woman over there is also known as 『Mad Sword King』. The Beast woman over there, isn't she 『Black Wolf』. Is that right?"

".....Well, that's right."

If she was by herself, those words might have been careless.

Even so, she knew about Eris.

Don't tell me that you're also Hitogami's Apostle?

..... No, that's unlikely.

While she knows the information about 『Quagmire』, she didn't know about my name Rudeus.

The information about 『Mad Sword King (Eris)』, 『Black Wolf (Ghyslaine)』, and 『Quagmire (Rudeus)』 is already widespread.

If I tried to tie everything to Hitogami, it's likely that I will make errors in my judgment.

"So, what does the infamous Rudeus want from Tris, a countryside bandit?"

Now, talking about the matter of her imprisonment.

Finally getting her help to [Overthrow the seed of evil, Darius.]

Though, if I suddenly open with such a topic, she will reject it immediately.

So, it is not like I can say [You're Tristina Purplehorse, a true Asura Noble.] and go straight to the point from there.

My opponent is one of the most powerful nobles in Asura.

If I talked about straight facts, I won't have a chance for victory.

Because of that, we have to take things one step at a time.

First of all, we have to get along first.

Then, during our travels, I will drop hints regarding the path to victory.

Then, when the time is right, I'll say something like [..... I wish to put an end to the noble that enslaved you .....I want to overthrow Darius.]

That will be my plan.

If she refuses after such a thought out plan, then I will have to employ more forceful methods.

All right.

"You, you're Lady Tristina Purplehorse, right?"

A voice was heard from behind me.

My plan was crushed.

Looking back slowly, a beautiful blonde stood there.

Ariel.

She just got up, so her hair is more frayed than usual.

But, her voice is as charismatic as always.

Looking at her, Tris's eyes was wide open.

"W, Why do you know that name..... "

"Well, it's Tristina after all..... Hey, have you forgotten? Didn't we meet at my five-year-old birthday?"

While I wondering about what I should do, Ariel took the initiative from me.

I sent her a wink.

And entrust it to her.

"Oh..... Ariel-sama.....!?"

Facing her, Tris is looking at Ariel with a look of surprise.

Perhaps she was checking her memory, looking at Ariel intently,

Thinking if she looked familiar, her surprised expression remained.

"W, why is Ariel-sama ..... At a place like this...?"

While her legs are trembling, Tris immediately kneels down in place.

I move away and Ariel stood in front of her.

"I came back in response to the information that father was sick, but ... apparently my brother didn't welcome my return very much."

While smiling in self-ridicule, Ariel replied.

I wonder if it's alright to say things like that.

While guys like me are hard to believe ... but.

Being truthful will often gain another's trust.

"Oh, I see. ... So in an attempt to cross the border safely, you're making contact with us."

Tris nodded as she felt convinced.

Maybe she heard about the information about our ambush in the forest.

"Why is Tristina in a place like this .....I had heard that you were missing? "

"That was ....."

At that question, Tris was troubled.

But she resolved herself, and opened her mouth.

"To tell you the truth ——"

After that, the story advanced by leaps and bounds.

I am not needed after all.

As if in confession, Tris revealed most of her life up to that point to Ariel.

Kidnapped at an early age,

she lived as Darius's sex slave,

then sold to bandits,

and then lived as the thieves boss's woman for a while.

She began training as a thief at the whim of the boss.

Became a free woman when the boss changed, and that leads to now.

There were some colorful passages in her story, but Tris without laughing nor crying finished her story indifferently.

Ariel shed her tears at the tragedy of Tris's life.

They were sincere tears from her heart.

Ariel promised in tears, [Although I may not understand your suffering, I will bestow upon the one that made your life hell a befitting punishment.]

And she then asks Tris, [I want you to testify against Darius about being his sex slave.]

What a convincing performance.

Tris did not understand immediately.

The Asura Kingdom is powerful, and Darius is a cunning man, which is why Ariel's victory is not guaranteed.

In contrast, Ariel thought otherwise.

She is convinced that by using Perugius's name, Sylphy, Eris, Ghyslaine, and I, she would be able to topple Darius, and take the throne.

Tris was at a loss.

She needed time to think, one hour.

After a long silence, in the end, she nodded her head.

Then she swore to God that she will send Ariel to the capital safely, and help us get revenge against Darius.

Tris became Ariel's companion.

I did not do anything.

Skilfully weaving her words, Ariel made Tris into her companion beautifully.

Of course, it was Orsted who during our meeting suggested bringing Tris to our side.

But in that retrospect, it wasn't discussed in detail.

My roundabout plan turned out to be completely unnecessary.

Should I say as expected of Ariel?

True to her word, she dealt with the noble on her own.

Well then, I should also concentrate on my work.

From tomorrow, the journey begins.

Next morning.

After finishing preparations, we left the hut.

The morning sun has yet to rise.

The forest looks dark, quiet, and thin.

"Well then, follow me."

With Tris leading us, we proceed deeper into the forest.

As the sun is not out yet, it was hard to tell where we were headed.

Looking at the inclined ground, it seems we are moving towards the mountain.

Without any chatter from anyone, we moved quietly.

I think we're already pretty deep in the forest, too deep to be followed.

But after emerging from some bushes.....

"Ooo....."

The forest abruptly opened up in front of us.

There is a large lake in the middle of the forest.

I can say that it's more like a swamp, but it's still a lake.

The half-moon shaped lake, flanked by a tall cliff and the tall forest behind us, had a clear blue color.

There is no waterfall nor river.

I wonder if it's fed from spring water.

"This area isn't charted on the map yet."

"This is a position that can't be seen from far away, you guys wouldn't have managed to come here without our map."

"Hee."

Tris said as she explained this to us.

We walk along the lake shore, heading towards the cliff.

When we reached the vicinity of the cliff, Tris casted some sort of spell towards the stone tablet.

Then, part of the cliff that was facing the lake disappeared, revealing a cave.

"Over here. Be careful, the floor is slippery."

Under the cliff, Tris stepped into the lake while walking on its edges.

The part of the water near the cliff seems to be shallow.

The water is about knee deep.

"Rudeus! Let's hurry!"

Eris is looking at that scene with her eyes sparkling brightly.

It seems she wants to go into the cave quickly.

Even though she's already 20 years old, this part of her didn't change at all from the old days.

Well, as a matter of fact, I'd also like to go into that small cave.

"It's okay if you hurry along, but don't let your horse slip and drop you into the water."

"I know."

Eris makes a face like she doesn't understand, and forcefully pulls the horse Matsukaze into the lake.

Matsukaze doesn't seem to want to enter the lake, but tugged by Eris, he gets pulled into the water.

She's almost like a Kappa...

Eris seems like she'd be good at sumo.

Does she like cucumbers?

I haven't seen her be picky about things often.
"Rudi, we're next"

"Ah"

Prompted by Sylphy, starting with Eris, we form the horses into a line.

The water is cold.

If it's already this cold now, what about during winter?

I wonder if the horses will die in such a low temperature.

No, since the lake freezes in winter, you might be able to move more easily.

I mean, it was raining yesterday,so it's possible that the volume of water increased.

The water probably only reaches the calf normally.

The entrance to the cave goes uphill, so we got out of the water immediately.

"Stay behind me, the road is very messy and disorienting."

Tris, leading with a torch, went through the dim cave.

Just in case, I also summoned the spirit of the lamplight.

Looking back, I see Ariel looking rather troubled by her wet pants.

"Ariel-sama, if you wish I'll dry it for you later."

"Yes, I understand."

Ariel, with a troubled face, forces a sweet smile.

"....."

Looking back on yesterday, the fact that Tris became an acquaintance of Ariel so quickly could only be explained by good fortune.

Ariel's charisma was effective as usual, even if the two had met by chance.

Because of that, there was a feeling of [As expected of Ariel-sama.] that spread throughout the cabin.

As for Eris, she seemed annoyed for some reason

Eris's cranky mood aside.

Ariel seems to support me earnestly.

".....Rudi."

When Ariel and I looked at each other, Sylphy's voice comes from my side.

"What is it Sylphy, my lovely wife?"

"Don't stare at Ariel-sama too much, or I'll pull your ear."

"I understand. I guess I can only stare at Sylphy."

My ear was pulled.

It's no good even though Sylphy gets along with Ariel.

If it was Eris or Roxy then it would have been alright, but Ariel is no good for some reason.

....Let's just say the situation is similar to that with Nanahoshi.

Looks like she thinks I might cheat again.

In retaliation, I licked her ear from behind.

The cave floor was beautifully tiled.

It appears man-made.

"It will turn into a complicated maze up ahead, so please do not get lost.

Magic beasts do not appear often, but be careful as sometimes they may come from behind.

If you see a light in the distance, absolutely don't go towards it.

Thats because the territory outside belongs to the Red Dragons."

We move on after listening to Tris's various warnings.

The cave has a ceiling that is very wide and high.

Tris says it has tortuous paths, with many branching roads.

However, it's not a labyrinth, just a man-made tunnel.

"Somehow, it's incredible."

Sylphy said suddenly.

"Rudi, is this not a labyrinth?"

"What? Oh, yeah. This is not a labyrinth."

"Such a big tunnel, how was it made....do you know?"

Asked by Sylphy, I was puzzled.

"Well.....from what I heard, the Red Dragons began to live in this mountain around 400 years ago. Looking at the remnants it looks like the ones that lived here before the Red Dragons were the Dwarf race."

"Oh, is that so ..... this tunnel is quite old then."

Sylphy and I walk in the cave while holding a conversation between us.

In the front, Eris is looking curiously down a strange passage, before getting pulled forward by Ghyslaine.

Just for the worst case, we stayed overnight in a place with roof, mind might loosen a little.

"Come to think of it, Rudi....."

"What?"

".....No, it's nothing."

After Sylphy said that, she glanced back.

While slightly apart, Ariel is right behind us.

.....The party must not fall into disorder.

I guess it's better not to widen the distance from each other so much.

Demons seem to be few and far in between, but getting lost in this place is definitely no laughing matter.

We passed through the cave.

Looking at the position of the sun, it's just barely around noon.

Counting from the time we departed, about 8 hours have passed.

Like the entrance, the exit is also hidden by magic.

Speaking of which, we're still in the middle of a forest.

Tris says, the time for smuggling into the border is from morning to evening.

And from the evening to middle of the night, it's for smuggling out of the border.

This way the smugglers won't get in each other's way.

We were made to wait in that hut due to the timing.

"Yes, we have now reached Asura Kingdom."

Our current position should be southeast of the border.

If you head south of here, you'll hit the Donati territory.

If you head southeast, you'll hit the Fedoa territory.

"Ariel-sama, you have crossed the border, congratulations!"

"Eee .....Thank you."

Tris said so as a joke, but Ariel was exhausted.

Even compared to Luke and the other attendants, Ariel's physical strength seems low.

Well, Ariel had reigned as a charismatic figure in the magic university.

Even if she can't train her magic and perform physical exercises, she should do things such as jogging.

Even in everyday life, stamina is important.

Despite her muscle pain, she could move around.

It would be solely thanks to the healing magic.

Healing magic works well with muscle pain, back pain, and also stiff necks.

However, it can't alleviate fatigue.

We continue while taking a break several times, and aimed to exit the forest.

The journey from there went smoothly.

Tris knows all the back roads in Asura Kingdom.

Even though they're the back roads, they weren't any harder to traverse on.

Also, other than the highway connecting the city and town, the back roads exists as an alternative route for convenient use.

The princess's carriage, traveling on dirt roads normally reserved for village handcarts, unfortunately draws a lot of attention..

While we moved quickly, though we expected it, Auber's attack never came.

.....Though it can also be attributed to the routes Tris chose, but there's no way to know if Hitogami had already known about these routes.

I guess the enemy is concentrating its forces near the Royal Palace or Imperial City instead.

Well ..... whether it's Darius's judgment or Hitogami's judgment, it was a mistake on their part.

Along the way, we pass near the Fedoa territory.

A few years have passed since the beginning of the reconstruction, wheat fields are visible here and there.

The people have also become more and more lively.

But the golden sea of wheat from our memory was absent.

It would need another ten years for that to be regained.

Sylphy and Eris, with their horses in a row, are watching the wheat fields and grassland spreading before them.

The face of the two contrasted each other.

Sylphy has a nostalgic face.

Eris has a grumpy face.

"There are more fields now than when we came before."

"Really? I don't remember."

"The reconstruction is going well."

"......Hmph, it doesn't matter."

Eris turns away with a frown.

"Don't say that you don't care about this. After all, it's our hometown. Even knowing about that, you still didn't want to come back ..... Eris? "

"No. I was hated."

"Come to think of it, I was also hated....."

Saying that, Sylphy's eyes narrowed down in nostalgia.

How nostalgic.

Both of them were born here, but into vastly different situations.

Bullied, Sylphy could only coop up like a turtle.

Eris was bludgeoning her opponents before bullying them.

If these two met at the same time, things would have just gone wrong.

..... No, that's no good.

The scene of Eris bullying the crying Sylphy floats before my eyes.

Somewhat different from the present Eris, the past Eris seems more fierce.

If Sylphy was hanging out with Eris, it would be a day-to-day hell for Sylphy.

It's day-to-day, such as Nobita was beaten by Gian every day.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Doraemon manga and anime series. }

It might also have iron fist made Su ○ oni, if Sylphy now.

"Sylphy. Just so you know."

"What, Eris"

"Even if I remained here, there is nothing I can do anyway."

"......?"

Sylphy tilted her head.

It was lovely like a squirrel.

"Oh, that's right. Eris was the Daughter of the Lord of this area. I've forgotten about it."

"Hmph, just a figurehead anyway."

"But, I think Eris would be more uncomfortable with such a life style?"

"..... Right."

Eris's mood has improved.

The wonder of simplicity.

"On top of that, I don't necessarily want to be a lord. There are people who deemed me unfitting for that role anyways."

"I guess Eris is more suited towards swinging the sword."

"Right?"

Eris's chat with Sylphy does not stop.

"But, if things happened differently, there's a possibility that Eris would have become a noble of the Asura Kingdom."

"There isn't."

"And I feel that Rudi would have married Eris, and helped her from the shadows. And with Rudi's help, Eris would become the Head of Boreas in no time."

Sylphiette, that delusion is an overestimation.

"So, Rudi abandons me, approaches Ariel-sama. The House of Boreas becomes Ariel's faction, Rudi's and Eris's companion, and as a result of that they wage a battle against Darius and Grabell."

I disagree.

If that were the case, did Sylphy intend to abandon me?

If that were the case, Sylphy and I wouldn't meet again.

Well, it is just a delusion, but it's quite good.

"What else would be different?"

"Eris is the head of the Boreas house, Rudi is the lieutenant. I think you would be a match..."

"I'm only good at swinging the sword every day and making babies with Rudeus."

Eris said so frankly.

Even though I was listening, I felt embarrassed.

Sexual harassment.

"Sylphy, are you not satisfied with just that?"

"Honestly, I'm satisfied. After marrying Rudi, I was allowed to have a fulfilling life."

"....."

"Soon after marriage, Rudi and I were also like monkeys in heat. Rudi carried me into the bedroom with an erotic face when we were home alone. As for me, my heart would beat quickly thinking [I wonder if Rudeus will make me his today too] and...Ah, this isn't something to talk about during daytime, is it."

Oh, that's right, we should probably stop.

Starting from a while ago, Eris was watching jealously and stealing glances at me.

I'll probably be kidnapped into a bush by someone with an amazing naughty face tonight.

Although I welcome it, I'm worried.

There is no time for such things right now.

"Although I'm fine with things as they are now, I might become paranoid about the possibility of another wife."

"..... I also wonder about the possibility of having children."

"Huh, the child of Eris and Rudeus will most likely become naughty kids."

"What you mean by that ....."

If they inherited my genes, they're going to be a lustful guy without exception.

If its like that, I'm worried about Lucy's future.

Even if Sylphy isn't too lewd, her grandmother is Elinalise after all.

Those tendencies might become worse by mixing with my genes, my child could grow up into a man eater of innocent, honest boys.

All right, this requires moral education, and continued vigilance of her growth as closely and as early as possible.

"I want a child soon."

"You will be able to soon. Eris is from the human race, so your affinity with Rudi is better than mine."

Why would Sylphiette-san say something so self-depreciating?

The affinity between our bodies is outstanding.

Even now my inner beast is on alert and it'll be ready to make a second child with Sylphy.

"Though, instead of a child, right now it's more important to protect Rudeus."

"That's right."

The conversation lasted since then.

It's a silly story.

When we get back home, Sylphy is going to teach Eris cooking, what Roxy would be doing by now, such as making delicious rice from the Fedoa territory, without content, a suitable story.

Eris and Sylphy got along well, though Eris might be feeling a bit reserved, the conversation became light hearted.

Though, listening to their conversation soothed me, I embraced Sylphy from behind.

In such a state, even if I think there might be an attack, I'm able to sleep soundly.

After travelling for about ten days, we arrived at a town called Rickett.

It's a great town that connects the end of the Donati territory to the Asura capital.

The flow of traffic stretched from northern to central Asura.

Though, there are more merchants traveling northward than southward.

Therefore, people such as village chiefs from the Donati territory are attracted here.

Selling their crops into the south, as well as buying crops from other regions.

It feels like an important trade hub in the Asura Kingdom.

Saying that, I wonder how important this place is to Asura Kingdom.

Trading towns such as this are larger than the Magic City Sharia.

Normally, we try to stay hidden on the way to the capital.

We collect information from each village, but always hiding our tracks from our pursuer.

In a city as large as this though, hiding places and places where we can be attacked are both hard to come by.

Rather, its the opposite, this is a good place to hide.

Although I think that, unfortunately we stand out from the crowd.

It's a given for Ariel, but Ghyslaine, Eris, and Sylphy also stand out.

Their appearances as individuals are too unique.

Also, Luke is a celebrity in the Asura Kingdom.

Unfortunately, it's impossible to avoid this town.

Though Tris is familiar with the roads, she can't make new ones.

Furthermore, one of the roads, we use to connect somewhere and somewhere.

And, I tried a poetic expression, but not of what it is.

Basically all roads from the capital city to the Donati territory pass by this town at some point.

This town being such a convenient choke point, the possibility to get ambushed here is high.

It's the next checkpoint after crossing the border.

And, although I thought that.

We didn't get stopped by guards at the entrance to the town, and there were no soldiers in armor setting up roadblocks inside the town either.

Guided by Tris, we're moving to her recommended hotel.

It's an ordinary inn at first glance, but it's an inn that consists of only gangsters and those who were in organizations similar to Tris.

The buildings that surround the inn are all properties of the organization, and in an emergency, we can also escape using an underground passage.

It's just like a Ninja House.

Ariel stays inside the inn and Tris went out to gather information.

The rest of us act as Ariel's guards.

Currently, Ghyslaine and I are near the stairs on the first floor.

Sylphy and Eris are near Ariel's room on the second floor.

We are all guarding our respective locations.

In the room with Ariel are Luke and the two attendants in disguise.

Though I think it's unlikely, I hope that Luke doesn't go berserk and stab Ariel.

Even if he did go mad, it will give me a reason to knock him down....

Even so.

Then, I saw Ghyslaine.

"....."

Standing to the side of the stairs, she was looking towards the entrance while her ears stood up.

Recently, I'm not having many conversations with Ghyslaine.

She is engaged in the role of escort more seriously than I am.

I tried to make conversations.

But she said it interferes with her hearing and stops the conversation.

Maybe she hates me?

Such a feeling even sprouts.

But she doesn't even hold conversations with Eris, always diligent.

"Rudeus."

This time, she suddenly spoke to me.

"Yes, what is it"

"I was saved the other day."

..... The other day, when?

"When I was blinded by Wii Taa."

Oh, that fight in the forest.

"No need to thank me, supporting you is the role of the rear guard"

"Your quick wittedness remind me of the old days."

When she says old days... that would be ten years ago.

Comparing to back then, I've changed quite a lot about myself.

Though in the eyes of Ghyslaine, I did not appear different.

"Your quick wit will get you into trouble one day. When that happens, rely on Eris-ojousama."

Oh.

That's what Ghyslaine is talking about.

The fact that I always try to do everything myself.

"Eris-ojousama worked hard for that."

"..... Right."

I wonder why.

I want Sylphy and Roxy to sit tight at home.

But I don't think the same about Eris for some reason.

As you say, Ghyslaine, it's probably because Eris has been working hard for that.

That effort is showing its results.

An image of Eris that stays still at home never crosses my mind.

I mean, Eris says she wants children, but I wonder if she is going to sit still.

..... I'm worried.

"....."

Afterwards, the conversation dropped.

What should I do?

I wonder what I should talk about.

Old things, uh, uh.

"Incidentally, Ghyslaine do you still practice your reading and writing?"

"Oh sorry, after I learned it, I've never practiced again. Now I have forgotten most of it. Sorry, despite all of your hard work. "

What a great attitude.

I want Eris, who also didn't remember most of it, to emulate that.

"The guys from the Holy Land of the Sword didn't believe that I was able to write letters."

"But it should've been easy to prove?"

".... No, because most of the guys can't read or write either, so they think it's just scribbles."

"Haha."

I want to see that sight a little.

"What about you? Are you still practicing the sword?"

"A little. When I have time, it's part of my exercise routine, practice swings."

"I thought because you're a magician you've stopped training them."

"Even for a magician, muscles are necessary. Right?"

I am not aiming for the top in sword skills.

Paul who also had that goal, is gone.

Though I was able to teach a little swordplay to Norn.

But, in this world of swordplay, not being able to wear touki is deadly.

"Do you remember the promise of the old days, Rudeus?"

"Promise of the old days?"

"Did you forget? About making a doll of me."

Oh, come to think of it there was such a promise.

One made on my 10-year-old birthday.

How nostalgic.

"I heard from someone that you're still making dolls. When you have time, make one of me again."

"Yeah, of course"

"I do not know much about art, but I like the dolls you make."

Those were some moving words just now ....

Why do the people of this world like this kind of talk before battle.

Although somehow I became anxious.

It's not a death flag.

No, it can be seen.

It's the opposite.

Since I've retained the knowledge of my past life, to speak like that before a decisive battle would be considered a death flag.

However this is different.

You have to gather each and every reason that gives you a reason to survive, and when push come to shove those reasons can decide life or death.

"Nn."

Then, Ghyslaine twitches her nose and ears.

As I tighten the grip on my staff, becoming alert, Ghyslaine waves me down.

"No, it's all right."

A person walked through the door of the inn, it was Tris.

Holding a bag in each hand, she closes the door with her foot.

As she walks steadily towards us, she holds out one of the bags.

"Good work. Here, have some rations."

"Thank you very much."

"Be grateful to Tris-neesan as you accept this."

Inside the bag are pear-like fruits.

She took one, and tossed it to Ghyslaine, who began to eat it without peeling off the skin.

"Well, good luck."

While waving her hands, Tris went up to the second floor of the inn.

I think in the past ten days, she has fit in quite well.

Personality-wise she's similar to the two attendants.

A fellow Ariel believer.

A little cheeky, but not a bad person.

Though her dress is quite revealing, I'm troubled about where to look.

In terms of how revealing it is, Ghyslaine's clothes are comparable, but in Ghyslaine's case it's the style of a warrior.

Muscle is an art.

"Tris's mood is good today."

"That's true, I wonder if something happened."

While talking, I also picked up a pear.

I peeled off the skin with a knife and took a bite.

It tastes crunchy, but less sweet, and sour.

The fruits of this world aren't always suitable to be eaten.

Well, it's not that bad.

"She might have gotten some good information. Gisu is like that too, in times like these, his mood would improve tremendously."

"I see."

Ariel constantly made Tris collect information about one thing or another.

From the location of Darius's private army, Auber and everything else.

She reports everything that has caught her eyes to Ariel.

After organizing such an enormous amount of information and sifting through them, she comes to me for consultation.

I mean, there is a possibility that I've also missed important information... but.

There's probably no other option than to give up for that matter.

Because I'm not talented enough to control everything.

"Come to think of it, Gisu had said that he's going to Asura Kingdom. Possibly, we might meet up somewhere "

"If he's here, he'll be the one to find us."

True.

Gisu is that type of guy.

He discovers you, but he doesn't make contact then and there, he instead takes action to set up a passionate reunion.

He's probably trying to produce an exciting reunion.

"A guy like him. Being bad at gambling, he would have left to another country anyway."

"Gisu is bad at gambling?"

"He is only good when there is no money."

This was a story I heard from Roxy, though.

Asura Kingdom seems to be a country where an adventurer can't easily live.

In addition to the small number of demons,

Knights are sent to rural places,

Court magicians and Knights are sent to do monster hunts on a regular basis which also serve as training and exercise.

Hence, the number of monster subjugation requests is next to nothing.

Because the major guilds have something like collection teams, there are no gathering and harvesting quests.

Guards are not requested since the danger zone is small, so it's a relatively safe place in many cases.

Speaking of quests that are available, there are time-consuming tasks such as plain delivery quests or search quests.

Though there seems to be something like farm helpers that are needed now and then.

Anyway, the work for adventurers is almost nothing compared to other countries.

This trend increases as you move closer to the Imperial City, the capital Ars,

Even if there is a small number of young adventurers going to the local territory Donati and Fedoa territory to increase their rank, when their rank goes high enough they would move to the north or south.

If you are strong or educated, I hear you will be employed as bouncers and tutors, but jobs like that are only a handful, since in the first place there is no need to be an adventurer.

In short, because Asura Kingdom already has many specialists for various tasks, there aren't many jobs available for adventurers.

Mysterious meat-heads are not needed here.

The Holy Kingdom of Milis also have an Adventurer's Guild, but the story is similar there.

"....Hn?"

Ghyslaine voiced, whilst twitching her ears.

Her expression is a little tense, maybe an actual enemy is coming this time.

I hurriedly throw away the core of the pear, grip my staff, and stare at the entrance.

However, Ghyslaine's gaze isn't at the door entrance.

It's at the top of the stairs.

My ears hear the voice of someone arguing from the top of the stairs.

What?

"For now, I will take a look."

"Okay."

If you go up the stairs, you can see Eris and Sylphy are watching the door with an anxious look.

Did something happen?

"Sylphy."

"Oh, Rudi. A while ago, after Tris-san came back, for some reason Luke and Ariel-sama started arguing."

"....."

Luke and Ariel fighting?

Hey hey, even though she said things like [Entrust Luke to me]...

No, maybe fights are important to have every once in a while?

"Excuse me, it's Rudeus. I'm entering."

Just in case, after I knock once, I enter the room without waiting for a reply.

There, Luke stood with a pale face,

Sitting on a chair, was Ariel with a straight face.

And, there was Tris with a troubled face.

"Rudeus-sama, you've come at a good time."

Looking at me, Ariel's face remained calm as she said that.

"Did something happen?"

"Yes. Tris brought some information."

Tris who brought that information had a troubled face.

"What information?"

".....Information regarding Sauros Boreas Greyrat."

Sauros.

So, it's concerning the promise with Ghyslaine.

Did she make Tris look into it?

"Events in the Asura Royal Palace, rather than in the capital, the people from this region are more knowledgeable about that. If you know things you're not supposed to in the capital, the royalties will have you silenced."

I guess it's something like that.

"I see. And the person who arrested Sauros-sama, who is the main culprit?"

"Main culprit ..... you say? "

"....."

Luke's face is scary.

Ariel wears a Noh mask.

It is a face with no emotion.

"Again, that person was from our faction. Moreover, that person has had a personal grudge against Sauros-sama ....."

Ariel said without putting on airs.

"It's Philemon Notus Greyrat."

Philemon killed Sauros.

Well it would be likely.

The Notus house was the largest noble house in Ariel's faction.

The Boreas house sits opposite of the Grabell faction.

They're enemies.

On top of that, Philemon personally hated Sauros.

There is no reason not to act given the chance.

I guess that's to be expected.

Whatever you say about Sauros, he was still a lord at that time.

Even if he lost his territory, he had the protection of the first prince's faction, he wouldn't have been able to lose his standing if the person responsible wasn't a noble with the same level of power as him.

"...So, what do you intend to do Ariel-sama?"

"As promised, I will leave him to Ghyslaine"

Luke chewed his lips.

Well, someone is angry about it.

Ariel knew how much Luke values his House.

In this case, prioritizing Ghyslaine over Luke.

"Ultimately, Philemon-sama... and whether the Notus house has really betrayed us. I still can't confirm the credibility of this information."

" ....."

"Supposing that we've been betrayed, then I will execute Philemon. Then I will appoint Luke as the head of the Notus family at that time "

"If you have not been betrayed? "

"I will persuade Ghyslaine and we will settle for another person's head."

" ..... Who is that other person? "

Ah, I see, even if Philemon is the main culprit, she still has uses for him.

Keep her tools alive, kill others.

Selfish, but it can't be helped.

I am no saint either, I can't afford to care for people outside of my circle.

"Luke, that's alright with you, right?"

"...Whether it's betrayal or murder, there isn't a shred of evidence."

Luke had a sour face.

I understood at the beginning, but now it's a face that I can't read.

He's not giving much of a reaction even when he hears that his parents are going to be killed.

"Someone might be trying to lure us into a trap..."

Saying that, he looked at me for an instant.

"Luke, rest assured. As I said before, Rudeus-sama will not take over the house of Notus."

"Ariel-sama, talking about that in front of Rudeus is...!"

"No, exactly because he's in front of us, I need to be clear about it."

Said Ariel while inhaling a big breath, as if to make a declaration.

"No matter what achievements he accumulates during this fight, I have absolutely no intention of granting nobility to Rudeus-sama."

I have no intention of accepting it either.

I've never thought of such a thing.

" ....."

But Luke's face when he heard this.

He made a face as though I've become a mortal enemy to him.

The next day, there was a report from Ariel.

Thanks to the fight yesterday, Luke finally confessed.

As it turns out, Luke had indeed received advice from Hitogami.

As for the advice, Luke received just one.

The timing was while preparing for the trip.

What he heard is basically『Beware of Rudeus's betrayal.』

Hitogami said:

Desiring to be a lord of the Notus House, Rudeus will defect to Darius's side.

The purpose is status, money and Ariel's body.

Without being discovered by Sylphy, I acted behind the scenes.

Pretended to be Ariel's ally and led her into traps by the day.

Passed information to Darius by the night.

All of it has been secretly planned by me from several years ago.

Marrying Sylphy is also a part of my plan.

That Rudeus sure is talented.

So talented that I wanted to trade places with him.

If I can be so cold blooded, my life would be much easier.

At first Luke thought, [There's no way Rudeus has interest in social status] and didn't believe it.

I didn't think that he had so much confidence in me, but I suppose that matched my usual behavior.

However, with the transfer magic circles' destruction recently, then the betrayal of the Notus House, Hitogami's prophecy began to hit the mark.

With these things happening, Luke's trust in me began to wane little by little.

So he readily believed in Hitogami, and came to look at me suspiciously.

By the way, It seems that even now, he still doubts me. Ariel ordered him to prove his doubts with action.

Ariel had to say it with confidence in order keep Luke from trying anything in the future.

Well, if the degree of advice Luke had received was just that, we could probably take it easy for the time being.

In fact, I've never even seen Darius's face,

I'm not interested in Paul's former home,

And it's not like I need Ariel's body, either.

No matter how much Luke is suspecting me, it's all a baseless lie anyway.

It's lousy advice from Hitogami.

I understand very well, that guy didn't expect anything from Luke.

Anyway, even in such a lousy story, it would not be polite if I suspected him.

With things like the right man in the right place, you're still important.

I went out to town the next day.

Luke was standing around acting hostile towards me, and acted in a way to separate me from Ariel as much as possible.

Since Ariel declared that I won't be made a noble, he probably thinks that I will kill Ariel and deliver her neck to Grabell.

However, being separated wasn't that bad.

Knowing Luke's way of thinking, his actions are limited.

Now the number of things to be concerned about in this journey have decreased by one.

I don't know if she anticipated all this, but Ariel's ability should be praised with [As expected of Ariel].

Oh yeah, as for avenging Sauros, Ariel told everything directly to Eris and Ghyslaine.

"And that's why, the one who took down Sauros-sama may be someone from my faction."

"Is that so?"

"Fuun."

Eris wasn't interested even a bit, but Ghyslaine's eyes were filled with murderous intent.

But, that doesn't mean Eris didn't take interest at all in the conversation, I understood that when I saw her hand gripping the sword on her waist.

Her finger lost color and turned white, she is trying to restrain herself.

"Ghyslaine, do you wish to kill me?"

" .....No, I will kill the enemy that you've prepared for me."

Ghyslaine seems to be obsessed with killing Philemon.

I wonder if she can be persuaded, but this was Ghyslaine's aim all along.

Eris was silent.

But, nodded so as to follow Ghyslaine's words.

"Well, I will also kill the enemy that's trying to attack Rudeus."

Eris is as usual.

After that, all that remains is the capital.

It should take about 20 days.

While taking several detours, we headed to Asura Kingdom's capital.

We arrived at the Imperial City Ars.

The Imperial City Ars.

The world's largest capital.

The city was named after the hero who led the Human race to victory in the Magic War.

A city that takes your breath away.

High up on the top of a hill sits a majestic castle, the Silver Palace.

Surrounding the castle are the huge mansions belonging to the higher nobles.

Boulevards extend out of the surrounding city wall.

A huge coliseum.

A gorgeous training ground for knights.

Beautiful temples for the Saint Milis religion.

An aqueduct system that spread throughout the city.

Headquarters to the world's largest trading companies.

Dojo and headquarters of the Water God style.

A packed opera theater district.

A Tavern district filled with decorations and the scent of beautiful women.

A Gate that was made to commemorate the victory of the Laplace Campaign.

Spreading far without end in sight, no matter how far my eyes can see.

Beyond the Aruteiru Mother's river, and on and on....

It is said that this is the oldest city of the Human race in the world.

Excerpt from 『Walk the World』 written by adventurer Bloody Kant..

When I saw the Imperial City from a small hill in the distance, Eris and I were shocked, with our mouths agape.

The Imperial City is huge.

Bigger than any other city I have seen in this world.

First, about the castle that was built on top of the hill.

This silver shining castle is as big as or bigger than Perugius' Castle.

Surrounding it are thick fortress-like walls.

Walls high enough that they appear to be more than 20 meters in height.

Even if a stray dragon were to attack, it would not be able to break that wall.

Surrounding the wall are many extravagant mansions.

It is a place where a majority of the high nobles live.

Brilliant mansions the size of castles.

This district is also enclosed by a wall.

Ordinary streets extend from there,

And every so often, a new wall encloses everything.

The city has probably expanded gradually over the years.

Layers of new walls were added to accommodate the expanding city.

However, the city walls stopped after the fifth layer.

From that point on, the buildings simply sprawled out in all directions.

Going beyond the horizon.

It was getting too expensive to build new walls,

So in lieu of walls, knights are instead assigned the work of subjugating the monsters regularly.

Compared to the mega cities in my previous life, this city seemed small.

I felt this in my chest as I take in the view of this fantasy-esque city in the horizon.

"....."

"I'm home."

However, each one of us wore a different expression

In a solemn mood, we all glared at the castle.

Even Ariel got down from the carriage, and looked at the castle.

"Let's go."

At Ariel's request, we entered the capital.

The city seemed intimidating from the outside, it wasn't the case inside.

The city entrance is the same as anywhere else.

There were peddlers and adventurers everywhere.

Compared to the other towns though, the adventurers in this city seem to be younger.

While veteran adventurers were visible, they looked like they didn't have any energy or heart left to continue adventuring.

Speaking of the differences, the roads here are considerably wider.

At least six wagons can pass each other.

That's three lanes in each direction.

This road seems to continue until the city's main square.

"We'll head to my second house, that will be our base. We must have everything ready before we enter the Royal Palace."

At Ariel's words, we continue on.

Our destination is located in the high noble district.

Having said that, just moving through the city takes about half a day.

With Luke leading the way, we press on in the order of Eris, Sylphy, Ghyslaine, the horse-drawn carriage, and I.

Traveling in a single file.

Although the road is plenty wide,

we don't want to get in the way of some noble and cause trouble.

Although one usually doesn't give way to lower nobles, Ariel wasn't displaying her crest on the carriage.

Showing each other's crest would simply take too much time.

Like that, we continued to move into the city.

At some point, the surroundings changed.

From a city of adventurers, to a city of civilians.

At that point, curious townspeople appeared and looked our way.

"Hey..... Isn't that Fitts-sama and Luke-sama .....?"

"You're right.....then that carriage must be.....?"

"Is Ariel-sama inside it?"

"She probably returned after hearing about his Majesty's illness!"

Sylphy and Luke's faces gave away the contents of the carriage.

In other words, hiding our identity was no longer necessary.

Nor did we intend to hide Ariel completely.

For someone like me to represent a princess would seem unfitting.

Even if Darius doesn't catch wind of her sighting, I wonder if he is ready to launch an attack on Ariel.

Right now, we're not in a hurry.

"Kyaa, Luke-sama!"

"Fitts-sama!"

"Ariel-sama! You have returned!"

Still, they're very popular.

From here and there, cheers come flying.

Sometimes, flowers are thrown.

Not everyone, but about one in five people reacted when they saw us

Ariel is idolized more than I thought.

Luke also waves back.

Ariel has been away from the royal capital for 10 years already, and yet they are still this popular.

She is amazing.

What's really interesting is that our path is suddenly cleared.

I wonder if there's a rule that says a path must be cleared for a noble's carriages.

Those that interfere with the Daimyo will be cut down immediately.

"Look, it's Fitts-sama!"

Every time she receives a cheer, Sylphy scratches and plays with the back of her ear.

That's Sylphy's habit when she gets flustered.

I'll tease her later.

When we passed the square, the cheers became even louder

People rushed here hearing of the news about Ariel's return.

With the increase in commotion, I wonder why the guards haven't come out yet to calm things down.

What if Auber takes advantage of the commotion and attacks from behind.

... Scary.

Though I was afraid of that possibility, no attack came.

That doesn't mean there are no soldiers.

They're cheering with the civilians.

Guys like the commanding officers took the initiative.

Including the common soldiers, it seems that these people are Ariel's supporters.

Even in the Asura Kingdom, there are those unhappy with the current political situation.

We're receiving a hero's welcome.

I don't handle attention well.

"I feel great!"

Though, Eris gave off a different impression.

—

As we enter the noble's district, the cheering subsides.

I guess Ariel is popular with commoners but not with the nobles.

Perhaps the nobles have no interest in cheering on the street.

Which one is it?

When we enter the noble's district, groups wearing armor walked around.

They wore silver body armor and a full-face helmet, it must be heavy for these guys.

Compared to the soldiers that were cheering earlier, their atmosphere is more serious.

If the soldiers before were the police, then these guys give off the feeling of the army.

"I wonder who they are?"

"They're apprentice knights"

When I ask that unusual question, Eris explained to me.

"A way to become a knight without attending Knight Faction by joining as an apprentice first."

"Oh ....."

"The role of patrolling the city seems to be the job of apprentice knights as well."

"You know a lot about this."

"Fufun, I heard it from a friend."

I was surprised that Eris had friends.

Though from her tone it's probably not an imaginary friend like Tomo-chan.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to a character in the Haganai light novel series. }

"Friends from the Holy Land of the Sword?"

"Yes."

That is, a swordsman friend.

Or Ken Tomo [Sword Friend].

"I'm happy that my Eris has friends. You may fight, but if you hold back sometimes, then you will get along fine."

"But, that child ....."

Then, Eris stopped talking.

Her gaze snapped elsewhere, and at the same time grabbed her sword.

In Eris's line of sight.

She notices that one of the apprentice knights is staring over here.

Due to the full-faced helmet, I can't tell his expression.

I wonder if he's an enemy.

I feel that something is off.

That person said something to the commanding officer and ran over here.

".....!"

Sylphy, Ghyslaine, and Luke all drew their weapons.

Sylphy is amazing.

She was able to draw her wand faster than Ghyslaine.

"Wa..... !"

Surprised at the three people who suddenly drew their weapons, the person wearing armor stopped walking.

It seems that he couldn't hide his confusion, and he lifts his hand up and takes off his helmet.

What was underneath was a beautiful woman.

There's no words to describe her beauty.

She has flowing hair, forehead wet from sweat, full of sex appeal.

"Eris! Ghyslaine! It's me!"

Behind the horse-drawn carriage, her gaze was directed at us.

To be precise, to Eris.

"....."

Eris is staring at the woman on horseback.

"Eris. So you've survived. Master had said that you were as good as dead if you fight against the Dragon God..... Though, why are you in the Asura Kingdom? If you had contacted me ——"

"Who're you?"

"!..... "

The woman swallowed a breath.

Then she made a somewhat sad face.

It's a sad face, but also a [If it's Eris, then it can't be helped] face.

It is a face people who know Eris well are familiar with.

"..... Kidding."

While joking, Eris quickly jumps off her horse.

"It's been a long time, and since Isolte is wearing a strange armor, I thought it was someone else for a moment."

"A strange armor ..... This is the Asura Kingdom Knights' formal armor, isn't it cool? "

"It looks hard to move around in."

"Since the Water God Style doesn't need to move a lot, this is perfect."

Realizing it's Eris's acquaintance, Luke lowered his sword.

Sylphy also relaxes, but still held onto her wand.

Ghyslaine's sword remains readied as she is overlooking the surroundings.

The moment you let your guard down is your most vulnerable moment, her judgment is correct.

"Are you serving the person inside this horse-drawn carriage? There was this rumor about how the Second Princess has returned around the town, so it's probably her.....But why is Eris..... Oh, there was a story that Ariel was studying in the Magic City Sharia.....then when you met her.....you were hired since you're a [Sword King], something like that?"

Contrary to her seemingly meek appearance, she is surprisingly talkative.

Eris is quiet.

Showered by her rapid fired words, Eris folds her arms and takes her usual pose.

She says.

" .....Yeah, something like that."

Apparently, she stopped listening in the middle of it.

I'm sure that the conversations between these two women were always like this.

"By the recommendation of my Master, I decided to become a knight. With the appointment of becoming a formal knight, I plan to obtain the title of Water Emperor."

"Really, that's good."

"Yeah."

Luke turns his horse around.

And heads towards us before he comes to a stop.

He asked with a gentle face.

"I'm sorry to interrupt your time of reunion.....are you acquainted with Eris-san?"

"Yes, that's right."

"Sorry but we're in a hurry, let's continue this conversation later so we won't lose time now....."

"I understand."

Saying in a soft demeanor, while facing Isolte, Luke bowed gracefully.

"Then please excuse me, milady. I'm sorry but we are in the middle of our duty. There's a time and place for everything. Until next time, please accept my humble apology."

"That's fine."

"Thank you? Then, allow me to excuse myself."

Luke does not even show a wry smile towards Isolte who turns him down coldly. He maintains his soft smile and mounts his horse.

Luke then moves to the front with his horse.

Isolte was looking at his figure in disgust.

"Was that Rudeus? Like I've imagined, he has a perverse attitude.....even though he is a mage, he carries a sword, is he trying to look cool? Eris, did you marry such a guy? "

"..... I'm married with Rudeus."

"Hah.....? He is indeed good looking, but I don't like his way of greeting another woman in front of his wife. Is Eris's taste bad?"

"......?"

So as not to let Luke hear it, Isolte said this in a hushed tone.

Eris has a puzzled face.

Apparently, Isolte mistook Luke for me.

At a position to hear such gossips clearly, I wanted to move away a little.

While I have no intention to look cool, occasionally I also want to wield a sword.

"I'll be going now."

"Right. I apologize for delaying you when you are busy..... Will you be staying here for a while?"

Hearing that, Eris glanced at me.

At least, we'll probably stay in this city until Ariel takes the throne.

I return with a nod.

Isolte saw me for the first time at that moment.

She has a puzzled face.

"Um, that person is?"

This is awkward.

Should I tell her that I am Rudeus?

Though there is no reason to take a false name, the other side had just ..... gossiped about me too, the air seems to be unpleasant.

"Hihin!"

And, then Matsukaze moved.

He moved towards Eris's side against my will, and used his head to nudge her back.

Hey, don't move without my permission, I'll give you some cabbage later.

"Oh sorry, you're in a hurry."

However, when she saw that behavior, Isolte got the hint.

"Well, when I'm off-duty, I will show you around..... At that time, please introduce this person."

She said this person, and sent me a glance.

If someone said, [Let me introduce you to Rudeus] here, what kind of face will she make?

"I'm not very sure but okay."

"You're not very sure... as always it seems. Well then, may you have the protection of Saint Millis."

After bowing gracefully, Isolte went away.

Hmm, so she is a believer of the Millis religion.

Eris kept looking at the figure in her back, but soon faces forward and mounts the horse.

After confirming Eris is ready, Luke starts to move and the horse-drawn carriage begins to follow suit.

"She is [Water King] Isolte. We met in the Holy Land of the Sword a while back."

" I see. It's good that you get along with each other well."

"Well, but..."

Cutting her words in the middle, Eris looked at Isolte.

The silver armored platoon moved away and disappeared into the alley.

"She may become our enemy..... "

Oh, is that so?

Water King Isolte Cruel.

I heard from Orsted that she is a person that may show up as an enemy.

In the first place, I have already informed Eris about the high possibility that the Water God Reida will be our enemy.

At that time, Eris might had already presumed that Isolte will also become our enemy.

Since her position is that of an apprentice knight, I don't think that would be the case..... but anything is possible.

Her position may be low, but her skill is still King rank.

If it becomes a battlefield, the possibility that it'll come to that is high.

" ..... Eris, are you okay with that?"

"I can't wait. The debt I owe her in the Holy Land of the Sword shall be paid."

"Is that so?"

I don't know myself, but those kinds of words came out without hesitation, in other words, these two people have such a relationship.

It's a rivalry.

I don't understand it that well.

However, when it comes to giving up your life, it's not something I understand at all.

If possible, I want both of them to survive and continue to compete.

Because it will all end if one of you dies.

We turned right in the middle of the road and continued uphill.

Huge walls are being guarded by soldiers, but when Luke showed his crest, we're allowed through easily.

After we passed through the district of intermediate nobles, and under a wall again, we were surrounded with houses that were as large as the castles of a small country.

It's the district of the upper nobility.

The second house of Ariel was in a somewhat distant position from the royal castle.

Despite being located within the city, it is five times larger than my house.

Not as big as Eris's family home that doubled as a fort in times of war, but way too big to be a private home.

It was already evening.

Since we entered the city in the early afternoon, we've spent half a day already.

When we were entering the building's garden, people that looked like butlers came out.

Seeing Luke, they immediately went inside and collected the maids in a hurry to greet us.

In total, there are around five or so people.

Even during her absence, they continued to manage Ariel's house.

We are greeted by the servants and moved into the building.

Inside, it was gorgeous.

Although the furnishings in Perugius's castle are also top tier, it gave off a vibe of being a fine arts gallery, this feels like a villa belonging to an Asura noble.

The rank of the place is on par with Eris's castle.

After being assigned a room, I wash away the fatigue of travel by bathing.

The bathroom had decorations made of metal, even on the pail that is used for bathing, was glittering.

There is a bathtub right in the room, but there is also a bathroom as well.

I probably wouldn't use that.

After bathing, I had a meal.

Present are four people, Ariel, Eris, Sylphy, and I.

Ariel's attendants seem to be dining at a different location.

"Well, Rudeus-sama"

"Yes"

"With your help, Rudeus-sama, I was able to come here safely"

After the meal is over, Ariel called me again.

"I will begin my operations from tomorrow.

To welcome Perugius-sama, and to prepare the 『Venue』 where I will bring down Senior Minister Darius.

To verify the nobles' request during my absence, and to gather information.

Make contact with allies that have been lying in wait for us, strengthening our foundations.... We will be busy "

"Yes."

"Before Darius makes his move, let's get the 『Venue』 ready as soon as possible. Fortunately, the powerful nobles have already gathered here in the capital at the news of father's illness."

Soon, there will be a decisive battle.

"How much time will you need to make your preparations?"

"Ten days"

"OK."

..... Ten days.

That's fast.

"I have all the pieces gathered here.

It'll depend on how the other side plays this, but I believe our victory is assured.

Although I think that the possibility is low,

but the possibility exists that the 『Venue』 might unfortunately become a battlefield."

Honestly, we should try to preserve our strength, but that's determined by what the other side has planned for us.

"I think our strength here is enough, but you can't be too sure. Before that, lets reduce the enemy's main force as much as we can first."

"Right."

"Rudeus-sama, Eris-sama, and Sylphy, I would like you to play that role."

Preemptively depleting the enemy's forces...

Indeed, our opponent may have employed many from the North God Style.

"However, it will be difficult to launch an attack and ensure the safety of Ariel at the same time."

In this city, Ariel has many allies.

But, there is no one at the North Emperor level.

Eris, Sylphy, and I are the offense team, while only Ghyslaine and Luke will protect Ariel.

Ghyslaine is dependable, but if they send more than a North King, she might be in trouble.

"Therefore, I will act as the bait."

"The bait..... ?"

"I will reveal an opportunity for them to attack this place on purpose. I'll be safe thanks to the magic items in my possession"

Like that substitution magic ring, for example.

Someone can use it to impersonate Ariel.

Create a situation where we look vulnerable and strike the opponent back.

In that situation, Ariel will make her move.

Returning from meetings with nobles and behind-the-scenes work.

During morning, evening, late at night.

It would be possible to feint vulnerability in our movements.

If the other side comes to us, it saves us the trouble of finding them.

"But Sylphy, it means that you will have to play a little dangerous role....."

"I have no objections."

Sylphy answers back immediately.

"This is the last push, so let's do our best."

So Sylphy will be Ariel's double...

Well, if it becomes a battle there is no safe place anyway.

After coming this far it doesn't matter where you are.

Since the person herself is willing to do it, I will protect her with all my power as well.

"Will they take the bait?"

"It's about... 50-50 I'd say."

After all, during our journey to the capital, we weren't attacked a single time.

Although we were on alert and the journey lasted almost a month. There must have been a chance to attack.

If it happens that Ariel's 『Venue』 is not anticipated and the enemy is crushed with overwhelming force, I would feel highly motivated.

"It'll be good if we can bait them out. If not, you'll at least be safe."

"Unless I get caught ... if I do, it will be an all-out war."

"I think in that case, Rudeus-sama will be more burdened."

I will be.

..... I wonder if it will okay.

"Do you not have reinforcements here?"

"The Ranoa Kingdom have prepared some in advance. But, they are only advanced level swordsmen, and advanced level magicians at best. Since the other party has the North Emperor and the North Kings, at the day and place of the 『Venue』, we will be under-powered. "

That's true.

"If it comes to that point, we will borrow that person's power."

"That person?"

Is it Orsted?

I wonder if he has already arrived in this town.

We still keep contact, but there is only a few thing to be reported since he is a man of few words.

Since Luke is wary of me, Ariel may not meet Orsted again.

"Well, when it comes to that, I will request his help."

Sylphy had tilted her neck at this exchange, but well it's fine.

"I will need your help in that regard."

"Okay."

Things to do in the next 10 days were also decided.

Starting tomorrow, the battle for the Asura Kingdom begins.

The next day.

I left for the palace with Ariel.

Tris is waiting for her turn to act back at base.

The two servants are not with us.

So, it's six people now.

The two servants will just get in the way when the fight breaks out.

They also have their own homes to go back to. Their Houses are both important allies to Ariel.

Besides, those two have already been assigned their job by Ariel.

She really intends to finish everything in ten days.

Seeing the Royal Palace for the first time.

Looked at from afar, the royal castle of the Asura Kingdom is certainly big.

Perhaps even bigger than Perugius's Sky Castle.

Nestled at the back of the castle is where the royal palace is located.

That is where the Royal family lives, and it's a place filled with palace gardens.

Supposedly, the palace is forbidden to everyone except the royal family, but that is not important right now.

I'm a little curious about the King's harem, but I have no business with them for now.

But today's business is paying condolences to the ill king and make preparations for the 『Venue』.

There's an interesting thing about the royal palace.

No, it might not be that amazing.

Since it's this place, it's not so strange for such a thing to be here.

Though I say that, I couldn't help but look twice when I see it.

A portrait of Perugius.

One of the three lined portraits.

The unique features of the Dragon Race are extremely prominent.

The beauty of Perugius in the portrait seemed to be exaggerated, making him look 10 years younger than he actually is.

Honestly, I didn't recognize it to be Perugius at first.

Since I didn't recognize it right away, I looked away from it for a moment.

However, because the plate just below the portrait caught my eye, I did a double take.

His name is written.

Perugius Dola.

I'm surprised.

I'm surprised because Perugius's portrait hangs right next to the portraits of various Asura kings throughout history.

Beside him hangs a portrait of a human race I've never seen before.

A portrait of a man with silver hair with streaks of blonde.

Perhaps it's because Perugius told me, I immediately recognize the portrait.

That person is the North God Kalman.

And this Dragon race that looks to be half-human would be Dragon King Ulpen, I guess.

They are the three heroes who defeated the Demon God.

If it was the me from before, I might've looked down upon them for not finishing the job.

Though, after hearing Orsted's story I won't make fun of them too much.

After all, they had defeated the full powered Demon God Laplace in battle.

A long time ago, the Demon Dragon King Laplace was considered as the strongest being in the world, and Demon God Laplace is a fragment of that being.

That's why these portraits are decorated in such a place.

To remember and honor the legend of a hero.

He's a great person.

Geez, I was even worried about Perugius's appearance at the 『Venue』,

Now that I see his portrait hanging next to the king's though.....

All right, it should be safe.

It's been three days already.

The plan was on track.

Ariel's 『Venue』 preparations are progressing smoothly.

According to her, the number of nobles who are looking forward to her return is increasing.

While being her escort, Ariel introduced me to dozens of the nobility.

Honestly, I didn't remember all of their names.

The first prince Grabell and Senior minister Darius.

I haven't been introduced to them yet, but I had the chance to see them from a distance.

If I had to describe Darius with one phrase, it would be, he's an old timer.

A fat body, flabby cheeks, and disgusting eyes.

With such an ugly figure up close, he looks like a pig monster.

When he sees me, he looks afraid.

It was as if he's looking at the grim reaper.

Though I can't be sure based on his look alone....

Since his reaction is so easy to read, I don't even need to check whether he is Hitogami's apostle or not.

The first prince Grabell is a normal looking old man with fluffy blonde hair.

He's not a prince in his teens or his twenties like I imagined.

The feeling that I get from his 30-something year old looks combined with his mustache is a little far away from the image of a prince.

But, when I saw him, there was a feeling of [I want to work under this person.]

This is probably his charisma at work.

Come to think of it, I've heard rumors that the second prince Halfaus lost a power struggle with the first prince, and that he is currently under house arrest.

I wonder if Orsted did something about that?

Maybe it's because Orsted knew this, he told me not to worry about the second prince?

Anyways, the people who backed up the second prince faction had given up on victory, and with any luck, they will flock to Ariel's side after hearing of her return.

They seem to help me and Ariel on the 『Venue』 preparations.

Ariel has her own fight.

While my opponents are the ones that attack Ariel.

We are attacked several times.

We haven't caught any big game yet, but assassins were sent on a daily basis.

Their target has been only Ariel thus far.

More specifically, Sylphy who is impersonating Ariel.

Whether we are moving, eating or sleeping.

We can't afford to relax even during meals and sleep.

Also, the real Ariel is wearing a wig and is masquerading as a maid,

She eats the plain meals (but still better than that of lower class knights') of a poor maid,

and sleeps soundly in the shoddy bedrooms of the maids.

"The number of assassination attempts is much higher than before, but it's not a big deal since Rudi is here."

Are Sylphy's words.

Although the assassins are small fries, it's good practice for Eris, Ghyslaine, and me, although I suffered a shortage of it.

If I was alone, I would have struggled a little.

Indecisive about whether or not to kill.

If I think about it like that.

I'm glad that I called Ghyslaine and Eris here.

Fortunately, an enemy that can beat Eris and Ghyslaine did not show up.

If it became an all out war at the 『Venue』, it would be a little troublesome.

I should be able to handle the North King and the North Emperor if they come at me one at a time.

All that's left is the Water God. Sylphy can take care of the rest.

However, if there is another strong opponent, Ariel's safety may be jeopardized.

I hope Orsted can figure something out if that's the case. I couldn't manage to contact him ever since we entered the capital.

First of all, we don't even know if he is in the city or not.

Anyways, faith alone won't solve anything..

Also, just in case, I want to reduce the number of enemies.

Ariel nods to acknowledge the situation when I consult her.

"Let's set up a trap."

That day, Ariel was talking about something with a noble from the first prince's faction.

The topic is quite vulgar, Ariel is talking about how Ghyslaine and Eris were both having their time of the month that day.

The noble looks really interested in Eris.

Eris puts on a very uncomfortable look.

Passing rumors that the escorts are in poor form in order to bait an attack.

In the end, this strategy was unsuccessful.

It might have been too obvious.

Even the next day, assassins did not appear.

The fifth day.

There is no attack.

Instead, the influential nobles supporting Ariel are targeted.

Mostly those who promoted the construction of the『Venue』.

However, they also seemed to have their own means of self-defense, so it's nothing to worry about.

Although, those attacks might just serve as a warning.

Only the attempts from a few small fries of the First Prince faction.

On that day, I meet a person.

Philemon Notus Greyrat.

Just as the information said, he had defected to Grabell's side.

Philemon.

He's in about his mid-30's.

He had a face that was very similar to Paul's.

But, he doesn't have the sense of self-confidence and aloofness that Paul had.

He gives off the impression of a fearful and hungry rat.

Afraid of risks, taking the safe alternative, he's the type of man that flees at the first sign of trouble.

I don't hate people like him, but this old man likely hated Sauros.

Facing him, Luke talks about this and that.

It would not be an exaggeration to call it a fight.

About why he betrayed Ariel, and what about their own efforts.

Philemon ignored Luke's questions by saying [You wouldn't understand even if I explain it to you].

Luke's face is full of disbelief.

However, Luke pleads to him that it's not too late to come back to Ariel's side.

Even so, he didn't listen.

And finally he said with certain disdain, [You think you're a better successor as family head than your brother or something?] He spurs Luke and walks away.

I think it's a terrible attitude.

At least, it is not an attitude he should have towards his son, who had been struggling in a foreign country for more than ten years.

However, Paul was also like that once.

I can understand his pain.

Asura nobles have their own set of morals, I shouldn't one-sidedly judge them.

Assuming that Ariel wins over Luke.

And Grabell wins over Luke's older brother.

Regardless of who takes the crown, the Notus House will survive.

Considering that, and their attitude, in some ways, it might just be jealousy towards Luke,

or he might just simply hate Luke.

Putting my personal feelings aside...

More likely than not, Ghyslaine will kill Philemon.

Then Luke's family will be put on the brink of collapse.

If Luke cares, he'll have to take on as the house head.

But he might also consider his own feelings.

It's a bad situation.

Day nine.

Preparations of the『Venue』 have been completed.

The party itself will be located in the royal castle.

All of the famous nobles of the Asura kingdom will be participating.

Ariel wanted it that way.

For the Second Princess Ariel to host a party to nominate the First Prince Grabell as the next king.

If it were me, I would not participate in such a party, which obviously looks like a trap.

About the reason why the Asura nobles are attending.

Participation of such parties is a noble's duty.

It seems that there were a number of interferences, but Ariel overcame them all.

All that's left is the actual show.

Now, it's my turn.

Tomorrow, it's going to be a tough day.

Someone might die.

Will it be Eris? Or Sylphy? Or Ghyslaine?

I will do everything I can to make sure that doesn't happen.

I might not be able to sleep with all the excitement today.

Maybe I should ask to sleep with Eris tonight...

It happened on the eve of this night.

It was a moonless night.

All preparations are complete, and the only thing left to do is to wait for the real thing tomorrow.

Tonight, just sleep and rest up.

With that thought in mind, we head back to base.

A man stands in the middle of the road.

If you look at his head, he looks like a man from the beast race.

Rabbit's ears ..... Certainly from the Mirudetto race.

It's a bunny if it's a woman, but I wonder what I'd say if it's a man.

"....."

Wearing matte black armor, he stands with a straight sword in hand.

Blocking the way of the horse-drawn carriage.

"Who is it!"

Luke on the side of the carriage is out in front, it was a challenge.

He keeps quiet.

I didn't expect an answer.

The assailant's name is ——

"One of the Three Swords of the North God style, the North King 『Twin Swords』 Knuckle Guard."

He actually answered.

"....."

The next moment, Knuckle Guard splits into two.

Slowly, as if it's a mirage, he splits up in two....

"Knuckle-niichan. Is it a good idea to say our name at this time?"

"Haha, probably not? What a surprise.... Guard is smart."

"Hehe, it's because I have been studying in recent years."

Never mind, he didn't split.

They're twins.

It was actually two swordsmen with identical faces.

"Certainly, when our employer is someone like Darius, it's no good to say anything."

"Come to think of it, since we're assassins. We shouldn't have said our employer's name."

"Knuckle-niichan. Oh yeah, we definitely shouldn't have."

"I know."

Well, to be honest, it's obvious who hired them even if they didn't say, but.

And, at that slightly anticlimactic moment, Eris came forward.

She dismounts from the horse, and unsheaths her sword.

"Eris Greyrat."

In response to the massive amount of killing intent, the twins' ears twitched.

"Oh, I've heard the rumors. 『Mad Sword King』!"

"Her sword skills sharp like a fang and a temper violent like a demon beast!"

"We of the weak Mirudetto tribe express our gratitude!"

"There is no shortage of opponents!"

Eris has set her sword in an upward position,

The twins stand side to side in mirrored stances.

"We are each half of a man."

"Thus both of us are one."

"Even if it's two on one."

"We won't call it cowardly."

No, but two against one is unfair.

As I think that, another figure appears from behind the horse-drawn carriage.

It's a small shadow.

The shadow wore an armor of black as though it was filled with ink.

Wielding a black sword and a black shield in his hands.

"....."

He does not say his name.

He didn't need to say his name, but he took a stance.

Facing him is Ghyslaine.

Naturally, she draws her sword against the man.

"I will pay the debt from the other day."

".....Dorudia's eyes are good in the night..... I'm at a disadvantage now."

It is Wii Taa.

Last time, Ghyslaine was cornered by him.

But the other day, I already told Ghyslaine about Wii Taa's trick.

I do not know whether she understood me, but I guess she will be alright this time.

The rabbits at the front and the hobbit at the rear.

Speaking of this, this situation is strange because it seems to be very simple,

It's the North King Gate in action.

Who should I support?

I will assist Eris, while Luke and Sylphy will be backing up Ghyslaine.

That way, I can level the playing field against the two rabbits.

That's what I think, but I must not move yet.

Auber is not here.

This situation is constraining my movements.

Ariel isn't in this place.

Using a different route, Ariel has been moved to the second safe house from the royal castle.

Therefore, it is better to take the formation of Luke covering Ghyslaine, while Sylphy covers Eris respectively.

However, if we do that, the enemy will also realize it.

That Ariel isn't here.

Then, they will retreat.

Since the target is absent, it's the obvious move.

Tomorrow, they will ambush us in a more perfect position.

At that time, they would bring reinforcements.

Now's the chance.

It's a chance to kill two North Kings.

If they are not defeated here, tomorrow will be harder.

If Luke covers Ghyslaine, then I will cover Eris.

In that case, Auber would engage Sylphy.

Sylphy can't win against Auber.

I can't say that with certainty, but Orsted said so.

Again, I'm stuck.

"......No."

Think.

The last time, where was Auber lurking?

We aren't in a forest this time, so he's not in the ground.

This time, he is lurking somewhere nearby.

If he is lurking nearby, he's surely in our line of sight.

So, I only need to spot him.

Find out his hiding place and finish him with a single blow.

That way, I can assist Ghyslaine and Eris without worry.

"It's all right Rudeus, I can win by myself."

Eris's voice resounds in the dark night.

Indeed, no swordsman can stop Eris, even for that Knuckle Guard or something.

Since they call themselves each half of a man, I wonder if they're each at the North Saint level at best.

If only to that extent, Eris should be able to suppress their swords with a single blow.

If she strikes either side, one of them will die.

Being capable of it, it doesn't seem to require much effort.

Ghyslaine also has the advantage in reach.

Ghyslaine, with her tall stature, and Wii Taa the Hobbit, there is too much of a difference in their reach.

Still, she won't find a gap that easily.

But they will not withdraw .....

Again, probably because they're after one person.

Three pieces, our opponent is committed.

They intend to kill us here.

Auber is somewhere.

Where could he be hiding around here?

It's hard to say whether this place is suitable for an attack.

A wall on the left, and a noble's residence on the right.

The right of us appears to have many places to hide.

The garden there is surrounded by high walls.

There is an alley between the houses.

But since it's wide enough to allow passage for horse carriages, it's not an easy place to hide in.

Maybe he's hiding in the garden and intends to break through the walls?

No, that's stupid, he is not Badigadi.

What about the wall?

It's high enough for me to have to turn my head up to see the top.

Perhaps jumping down with a rope from there?

Or come jumping off?

If it's the North Emperor, it's possible to do that....

Then, from below?

Just like before, did he hide himself under the ground?

No, that's not it.

Given what happened last time, we'll obviously check the ground for movements.

I don't think that was overlooked.

Where's ....

Is there a blind spot?

I left the rear of the horse-drawn carriage.

Luke is located right in front of the horse-drawn carriage.

There are only two light sources.

Torches were equipped on the horse-drawn carriage.

Thus I summoned a Spirit of Light.

The light's intensity is strong, I can even clearly see the figures of the assailants in black.

There is no place that's not visible.

Or still on the wall?

..... he can snipe us with magic from the wall?

I send the Spirit of Light towards the wall,

"......!"

Found it.

When I first saw the wall, I did not notice.

I wasn't paying attention to the backgrounds.

In the middle of the wall, a cloth pattern that closely resembles the color of the walls had been laid there.

If it was during the day, it would have been obvious.

Or if we had the light from car headlights, it would look peculiar.

But with torches on the horse-drawn carriage, chances are that we won't notice the difference.

However, if illuminated by the Spirit of Light, the difference can be seen.

I win.

I point my staff at the wall.

"......"

There is no chanting.

Usually I will yell out my spell to inform my surroundings, but I won't this time.

Stone Cannon.

Full force.

..... Do it.

Farewell, Auber.

"Kuoo!?"

Was it a gut feeling?

Or intuition as a warrior?

I did not hesitate even for even a second.

Despite that, he seems to have sensed something.

Releasing the camouflage just in time, Auber manages to evade my magic.

No, he didn't completely evade it.

The Stone Cannon pierced through Auber's leg and left a big hole there.

While taking a passive defense stance, he fell from the wall.

"Nuguua!"

It marked the start of the battle.

"Chi!"

I shoot another round of Stone Cannon at Auber.

Now that he has better footing, I was sure Auber would parry it without difficulty.

"Toaaa!"

Luke approached from behind.

Shifting his body weight to his left hand, Auber deflected Luke's sword.

While still lying down, he knocks Luke off balance and tries to stab him.

I intercept it with the Stone Cannon.

"Nukku!"

Auber jumps up and stands up on one foot.

With one of his leg incapacitated, most of Auber's mobility is gone.

While steadily standing on one leg, he looks at the front, back, me, and the horse-drawn carriage.

"....."

Following his line of sight.

During that moment's exchange, I managed to grasp the flow of the battle.

Exactly as Eris declared, she defeated those two people alone.

But Eris wasn't unscathed, her shoulder is injured.

Her left shoulder is hanging loosely.

But, Eris didn't care about her own wound and turned towards here.

Her line of sight is on Auber.

Ghyslaine had overwhelmed Wii Taa.

Wii Taa had already lost one arm.

Wii Taa had lost his shield while Ghyslaine is uninjured.

Ghyslaine is delivering the final blow to Wii Taa when I looked her way.

"Aubeeer!"

Wii Taa shouts.

And, at the same time he threw something on the ground.

A powder-like [bafun] sound is made and we were instantly wrapped in black smoke.

Was it some kind of magic tool? Or magic item?

Wii Taa used the black smoke at night for blinding.

But, even if I understood it, experiencing it felt different.

I could not see anything.

In this dense fog, the sound where Wii Taa was running to can be heard.

Following him is Ghyslaine's footsteps.

<A sword abruptly swings down in front of me.>

I quickly avoid it.

Wii Taa ran by me.

Was he aiming at me?

No, he was aiming at the horse-drawn carriage.

"Leave it!"

The next moment, the door of the carriage opened and while Sylphy was coming out, a magic was released.

Melded magic 『Flame Tornado』.

The melded magic of wind and flame blew away the black smoke and shed light on the surroundings.

Status check.

Ghyslaine, alive and well.

Luke, alive and well.

Sylphy, alive and well.

Eris, also alive and well.

Wii Taa disappeared into the alley.

Did he run away?

Fair enough, even if we failed to catch Wii Taa, I only need to kill Auber.

Auber.... is not here?

Where is he?

"Rudeus!"

Eris shouted.

Looking at her line of sight, Auber was using claws to climb the wall like a cockroach.

He disappeared into the top of the wall at an incredible speed.

The others cannot follow him.

And, now is not the time for hesitation.

"We will follow Wii Taa!"

The decision was made immediately to enter the alley.

Can we catch up?

A small part of me thinks, is this the wrong decision?

When Wii Taa fled to the back alley, should I immediately give chase?

That guy is missing an arm.

His body is out of balance, you cannot run quickly like that.

But, since it's North God Style, their training might...

And, when I stepped into the alley to think, I stopped walking.

Wii Taa is dead.

A large hole is agape in his small body, and he fell into a pool of blood.

This method of death felt like a deja vu.

I've experienced being killed in that manner.

No signs of anyone around.

However, he ought to have been here.

And he did it.

Orsted, that is.

"Rudeus.....you did it."

Looking back, Eris was there.

From the roughly slashed shoulder, Eris shed blood and got sluggish while laughing and grinning.

"Oh, right ..."

For now, I cast healing magic by touching Eris's shoulder,.

It is a terrible wound.

Although it didn't sever the tendon.

Seeing you injured like this makes my heart ache.

"Thank you."

A simple thanks from Eris before she turns around.

She yelled out after returning back to the road.

"Rudeus killed the little one just now!"

At her words, sighs of relief flowed around.

"I'm sorry, I was a nuisance."

"No, I know Rudeus obviously did that so he can focus on Auber but ....."

"It was a good opportunity when he got attacked by me earlier, but I was a little slow."

"I also missed a chance, it happens!"

While talking to each other, we dealt with the corpses.

If I had used a different magic, Auber might not had a chance to escape.

Alternatively, I should have used Quagmire beforehand to rob him of his mobility.

Well, it's pointless to think about it now.

The fight ended in an instant, a fluid situation.

All that matters is that we won, things said now won't change anything.

This time,

The North King Wii Taa.

The North King Knuckle Guard.

We succeeded in killing two people (actually three).

We have succeeded in reducing the enemy's forces as planned.

Auber had escaped, but I can claim victory here.

All that's left tomorrow is the main event.

『The incredibles! Three Swords of North God.』

Auber of the 『Peacock Sword』. He is skillful using an irregular fighting style, taking advantage of terrain and magic tools.

With simple skills and flashy outfits, he was named the Peacock.

Wii Taa of the 『Light and Darkness』. In order to overcome his handicap of a Hobbits' small body, he excelled at blinding the enemy.

He also has a way to fight even when he is deprived of sight.

Dead.

Knuckle Guard of the 『Twin Sword』.

Twin Swordsmen. To overwhelm their opponents with a mirror-like combination.

Two people as one.

Dead.

Four in all, The Three Swords of North God!

The party is held in the royal castle.

In one of the halls that was made for large-scale parties.

A long table.

The seating arrangement is predetermined.

It is a venue that I thought would be impossible to prepare in only 10 days.

With all the preparations complete, the only thing left is to welcome the guests. I steady my resolve.

As members of the entrance staff, Eris and I stand guard near the waiting room entrance, keeping an eye out on the attendants.

The waiting room is not particularly small, in fact there is a buffet party here.

Those who have a look of expectation.

People who held an expression of anxiety.

Such people had arrived at the venue early.

They're in the waiting room. What will they do after they hear Ariel's story today,

or what kind of response for support in the Grabell Faction will result from it?

The outcome of this story amuses them.

They're just here for the entertainment. There's not a person of note in the midst.

They have less impact in either case, merely small fries.

The first big fish appeared somewhat late.

Philemon Notus Greyrat.

He is accompanied by his escort and eldest son. He has the eyes of someone who's likely to curse me who is at the entrance.

And told me.

".....Fun, did you think that you can return to the Notus House now, after abandoning it?"

It was an unexpected question.

"I've never even thought of that."

"That much should be obvious, and don't think you can throw that Greyrat name around willy nilly."

"Eh, oh, yes"

After speaking those prearranged words, Philemon made a short appearance in the waiting room.

Before disappearing into a private room reserved for the upper nobility.

"What was that about ....."

Eris is angry.

Come to think of it.

Some time ago, when I was in Eris's house.

I was told to keep my head down as well.

Well, back then I never thought much about that.

What if the House Paul bowed his head to wasn't Boreas, but Notus?

And what if I was the home tutor for someone on Notus's side instead?

Those people would probably want to keep me down...

Just as well.

Indeed, Philemon is the younger brother of Paul, and thus my uncle, but he will be killed by Ghyslaine later.

Since he's an asshole to me, that won't hurt.

Starting with Philemon, the main stars of this 『Party』 appeared one after another.

Parents and two attendants from Tris's house also came.

Then the rest of the four major lords.

Euros, Zephyrus.

And, Boreas.

Boreas's current head ..... What was his name again?

Is it Thomas or was it Gordon....?

I remember it being the same name as a certain locomotive train.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Thomas & Friends children's television series. }

Ah, that right. It was James.

He also brought his eldest son along.

As for the face, I guess he is more like Sauros than Philip.

He also has a stocky figure.

But his face was considerably haggard.

According to Ariel's story, he resigned his ministerial desk job, and seems to have become a lord.

As a lord who lost his territory, I heard that he has been in a considerable predicament.

Still, it takes more than that to crush the house,

Perhaps because the land remains even though the territory is lost.

Or, it's thanks to James' hard work.

..... Do your best.

The reconstruction of the Fedoa territory has not progressed.

However, James has been doing everything he can, it can be seen from his haggard face.

He was also impacted by the Metastasis Event.

A desperate man, but he survived.

A person who was directly involved with the Metastasis Event would understand the meaning of survival differently.

Anyway, I don't know him, and he doesn't know those involved in the Metastasis Event.

"....."

Rather than to me..... he gave a glimpse to Eris who is standing next to me, before going back towards the private room again.

And finally.

Senior Minister Darius came later than anyone else.

He's followed by one escort.

When Darius sees me, he quickly looks away in fear.

The escort sees me and approaches me.

Finally seeing him in a well lit area, he really has a funny looking head.

In casual wear, with a hair shaped like an inverted satellite dish.

Four swords lined his waist.

"It's the first time meeting you.

My name is North Emperor Auber Corvette.

I go by the name of 『Peacock Sword』 on the streets."

When I took a glance at his feet, I confirm that he is standing firmly with both feet.

There is no sign of him limping when he walks.

He seems to have fully recovered.

If he used a healer from Asura Kingdom, I suppose that level of injury is recoverable.

"Pleased to meet you. I've heard of your name. I'm Rudeus Greyrat."

"『Quagmire』..... No, I wonder if it would be better to call you『Dragon's Dog』?"

So in other words, Orsted is the 『Owner』.

A nostalgic name.

Woof~woof.

However, to say something like 『Dragon's Dog』,

Doesn't sound what a sleeper agent of Hitogami would say...

"Whoops, pardon me..... I heard that you have been ambushed several times on the way here."

"....Ah, yeah."

"To assassins who used foul tricks, you've fought them off brilliantly."

You're calling it foul yourself...?

In a joking tone, he is laughing.

But Auber's eyes are not smiling.

"Next time, in a head-on match."

For a brief moment, he shows a serious face that doesn't match his looks, after that Auber takes his leave.

Just now seemed like a declaration of war.

I think that he made me his #1 or #2 target.

In that case, maybe he is the third apostle after all.

First Prince Grabell won't come to a waiting room like this.

He'll head straight to the venue.

With this, the cast is complete.

The time is ripe for the party to begin.

The nobles file in and sit in their assigned seats.

I look towards the guards lined against the wall.

Today, thanks to Ariel, the number of guard soldiers in the vicinity of the party hall is small.

Therefore, most of the nobles have come with their escort.

Ghyslaine and Eris stand beside me, keeping watch of the surroundings.

Sylphy isn't here.

She has a particularly important assignment for the party, thus has stepped out.

Seeing the nobles filling the venue, Ariel stands up from her seat and makes her first move.

"Thank you for gathering here today, despite your busy schedule."

Ariel started her greeting.

She began to talk about his majesty's illness, this and that of the domestic situation in recent years,

She talks about her thought of Asura Kingdom while studying abroad.....

Then the attack began.

"Now then, today, to those who have gathered here. I have found two people that I would like to introduce to everyone."

Showing up simultaneously at Ariel's words is a beautifully dressed up woman emanating an irresistible appeal.

She comes out from the entrance and crosses the hall slowly,

And stands beside Ariel.

Looking at her face, Darius' eyes opened wide.

Among the nobles, there are those who stand up with pale faces.

They are the Purplehorse family.

"On the way of my travel, I met her by chance. The second daughter of the Purplehorse House, Miss Tristina"

The lady was introduced.

Tris picks up the hem of her dress and curtsy so perfectly that Eris could never imitate.

"As introduced, I am Tristina Purplehorse."

The venue was in shock.

She should be missing.

There is also a gossip that she is dead.

And yet she turns out to be alive.

And grown up beautifully.

From a specific direction, there is a little uproar.

"But how, why here.....?"

"When she was found, I protected her since she had been very weak. As such, towards someone present here tonight, she has a few particular words for him, as a result, she came."

Following those words, Tris steps forward.

She sits herself near Darius, who has the honored seat.

Tris ..... started to talk while looking at him like seeing a pig.

Not in a manner of speech that was natural for an everyday thief, but with beautiful words befitting a noble daughter.

She was betrayed by the house and was bought by Senior Minister Darius.

She talks about how she was kept like a dog by Senior Minister Darius.

And that she was almost killed back in the Fedoa Metastasis Event.

Luckily she was picked up by thieves, and became the boss's woman.

Then Ariel came to her aid.

A story with some dramatization, but spoken indifferently.

It's a story designed to make the one who hears it cry.

As a thief, Tristina survived with her own power.

Enduring in that place, and helped by Ariel that she met by chance.

It is a touching story.

In the crowd of nobles, there are those who shed tears blatantly....but they are shill nobles which were prepared by Ariel I guess.

There are those, particularly from Darius' side, who can not hide the puzzlement on their faces.

Nervous sweat drips down the head of the Purplehorse House.

But the main suspect Darius looks quite composed. He must have survived predicaments like this countless times.

The speech ended.

"Now, then....."

Ariel came out to the front.

While wearing the usual cool smile, she opens her mouth.

"This was surprising. Darius-sama. I also did not think that it will suddenly be known by the public.

No, surely. Using your power, Darius-sama, you kidnapped children of nobles, ... and treated them as your sex slaves "

Ariel's tone suddenly heats up.

Denouncing Darius, with her pounding like voice.

"In addition, such a thing is done by the hand of the Senior Minister who is the backbone of the government! In this Asura Kingdom, evil shall not be tolerated! There will be no excuse! "

Darius, made a sound of plates cracking with a snort and laugh.

He stands up slowly.

"Ariel-sama, isn't your joke a bit extreme today?"

As he says that, Darius directs his eyes to Tris like an old friend.

"And to bring a woman, whose origin is not certain, to be passed off as a child of the Purplehorse House. No, for this Darius who will not stand for such a rumor to be spread about him, it is the first time being told a lie like that face to face."

While laughing, Darius looks around his surroundings.

[Tris is a fake], he gestures to those around for support.

"So Darius-sama, you said that talk just now was a lie?"

"Exactly. But, allow me to question Ariel sama. If this lady Tristina is really a child of the Purplehorse House, can you prove that?"

"Tristina."

In Ariel's word, Tristina took out something from her breasts.

It was a ring.

A ring with a beautiful purple gem.

On the jewelry, there is an engraved horse.

"This is used for someone from the Purplehorse House to prove kinship. The picture of the horse engraved on amethyst."

Even with such evidence, there is no change on Darius's face.

Rather, he has a more disgusting smile than earlier.

"I see, I see. With that thing, she is certainly a child of the Purplehorse House....."

With disgusting eyes, Darius looks at Ariel and Tris while licking.

"And, there is something I wish to say."

Darius laughs.

"Oh dear! The other day, Miss Tristina from Purplehorse House had been discovered."

"Discovered?"

Ariel tilted her head.

"Everyone also remembers about the operation in the Royal Capital earlier this year. The roundup of the bandits that plagued the Royal Capital. At that time, she was found. Miss Tristina's corpse."

"!?"

A month before.

So that means he was ready.

"Of course, it seemed to have been washed away in the city already, so it's difficult to authenticate someone with the ring. But, on Tristina's body, there is a characteristic known only by her family. The feature is, on the chest..... she has a birthmark in the shape of a crescent moon."

That is a lie.

That shouldn't be the case.

There is no such birthmark on Tristina.

There shouldn't be.

At least, that what I thought when I saw her in a more revealing outfit.

"Isn't that right? The current family head of the Purplehorse House, Freitas Purplehorse-dono? "

But even if it's a lie, there is no way to confirm it.

Now the Purplehorse family head is speaking to Ariel, to confirm it.

If Tris is instructed to show the birthmark, there wouldn't be anything there.

What are you going to do.

Ariel.

Do you have another card up your sleeve?

Such as giving her seven wounds on chest beforehand.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Man with Seven Scars from the Fist of the North Star manga series. }

Although she's still composed, I wonder if she's flustered on the inside.

"....."

The figurehead of the Purplehorse House stood up.

If I look closely, his face indeed resembles Tris's.

His figure is shaking and he's twitching at the edge of his mouth, slightly different to the vixen that is Tris-ane.

"So, Freitas Purplehorse-dono. Did you not confirm her corpse. Tristina is no longer missing, but confirmed dead. "

Darius smiled while whispering like a devil.

"Therefore, declare that the woman standing here is a fake Tristina.

Could you say that? In order to let this nonsense end. If you don't, then there will be no choice but to command a lady to bare her skin in front of this many people."

Darius's composure

Ariel's smile.

The shivering Freitas.

An intense atmosphere flows through the venue.

Even by just watching, my mouth has dried up.

"M, my daughter ....."

Freitas opened his mouth slowly.

"My daughter was stolen from me by Senior Minister Darius..... "

"Freitas-dono! What!?"

"The one standing there is definitely my daughter Tristina! Ariel-sama, bring judgment down on Senior Minister Darius who kidnapped, confined, and disgraced my daughter!"

Darius rises.

"Don't speak nonsense, Freitas! You should have it! The sealed contract for the sake of confirming her identity!"

"Darius-sama. Something like that does not exist."

"...!"

Ariel is giving a small smile.

Oh, I see.

That's right.

I should have known.

Ariel has already contacted the Purplehorse family.

Anticipating Darius' plan, and taking a step ahead.

I want to learn from her in that regard.

"Well, Senior Minister Darius.

.....What was said by the Purplehorse family head is a matter of fact "

Somehow, Ariel's smile also seems indecent.

"Kidnapping, imprisonment, and humiliating children of nobles.....

As stated by the King, a crime is a crime. You won't escape from your sin. You'll be judged under the Law of the Kingdom."

Darius' face distorts.

It is distorting in ugliness, overlooking the surrounding enemies.

At this point, Darius no longer has any allies in this place.

If you're cornered to this point, all that remains is to fall.

Although, if someone speaks out for Darius, he might survive.

However, those who speak for him will automatically become his accomplice, that's likely what most thought.

Most likely.

In the current situation, even with Darius gone, the First Prince Grabell's victory remains high.

While Ariel was away, Grabell had consolidated his support.

Right now, Darius is only a hindrance to him.

In the future, he will be a nuisance.

So, it's the end of Darius.

Ariel has won against Darius.

Even without doing anything, Darius will be ostracized by the other nobles.

Even if it went unresolved in court.

If there is dirt on Darius, the nobles would no doubt bring him down.

But in this place, against the trouble of losing Darius, one person spoke.

Darius is someone with a strong political ability above others.

"It's a surprisingly noisy party."

As if he had chosen to appear at a suitable time.

That man appeared.

With a no-nonsense face, a middle-aged blonde prince.

First Prince Grabell.

He walks towards the best seat in the room, and glares coldly at Ariel.

Second round begins.

Grabell Zafin Asura.

He moves straight towards Ariel.

"Ariel, what are you doing? Causing such huge commotion when Father is still sick?"

"What commotion ... I did nothing except protect the honor of the royal family."

"If that is the case, then think about the time and place."

Grabell shook his head while frowning.

"Now that Father has fallen ill, without Darius' skills what will become of Asura Kingdom?"

"Even so, a crime is still a crime."

"Even then, it's between Senior Minister Darius and the middle-ranked Purplehorse nobles. I shouldn't have to tell you that there are more important business the kingdom must attend to. "

Speaking about social standings so openly.

In my previous life, cries over fairness and condemnation would be heard, but this is the Asura Kingdom.

Social status is part of life, so the people of this world accepts it.

"Yes, of course brother. But I will still repeat it again, a crime is a crime. If no one passes judgement, the kingdom would fall in decline. "

"Crime huh..... ? Indeed. Indeed, That's right. But Ariel. There are many people in this place who ought to have their crimes exposed and receive punishment like that. I wonder, do you intend to punish all of them? "

"Yes, of course. If it's necessary."

She's implicitly saying [If it's unnecessary to me, I won't punish crimes.]

If this spreads, the Asura Kingdom will rot enough for the smell to linger.

"I think your judgment against Darius is unnecessary, however you say that it is necessary."

Grabell laughs scornfully and directs a composed smile to Ariel.

"Looks like we won't be able to come to an agreement on this."

"That's right."

Grabell shook his head and sighed.

He looked over the surroundings.

"There will be no conclusion if we're debating with only two people. Until we settle this matter, Senior Minister Darius will remain troubled by this... "

And, Grabell is overlooking the surroundings.

How will things proceed, I wonder.

"In accordance with normal conventions, these things are usually decided by majority votes. Since you have put so much effort in gathering most of the stalwarts of this country. Why not let them decide who is right, Ariel or I?"

Democracy .....

When there is no other way, it will come to that.

He is asking the nobles around.

Go to Ariel's side, or stick to Grabell.

Yet, he thinks either way he will win.

With this, he also wants to confirm.

To confirm the allegiance of each nobles.

Thus, if you're the enemy, you will be purged.

"....."

The nobles were not in turmoil or anything.

They've thought that someday this moment will eventually come, in the near future as well.

Or maybe it has already happened once between the First Prince Grabell and the Second Prince Halfaus.

Regardless.

The nobles have to decide.

Now, in this place, you can either go to Ariel's side, or you can join Grabell.

It is not a place where they could keep their allegiance a secret.

They will choose who to support face to face.

Looking at the situation of this opportunity to make a decision.

Darius sank.

For Grabell's Faction, it is a big blow.

However.

For the Grabell Faction, a number of influential people still remain.

Two of the four great local lords, Notus and Boreas.

Besides them, several upper nobles are aligned with Grabell.

If you look at the strength ratio, Grabell will most likely win.

"Very well, brother. But, before that, I would like to introduce one more person to everyone."

"What?"

Ariel sent a signal with the snap of her fingers.

To servant Elmore, who was outside at the terrace, that in turn sends a signal using the ring.

The next moment.

Along with a roar, a pillar of fire rose up from one corner of the castle.

Intermediate fire magic 『Flame Pillar』.

While scorching the walls of the castle, the flame that has been amplified to maximum power with chantless magic rose towards heaven.

It goes without saying that was Sylphy's doing.

"What...Ooo!?"

"....."

"No way... !"

The nobles saw the fire go up.

But, they weren't surprised at it.

Because magic at this level can be seen as much as you like in the royal capital.

What they saw was behind it.

There was something which you could definitely not see as much as you wanted in the capital.

Lit by the flame pillar, floating in the night sky.

Is a huge shadow.

"The Sky Castle!?"

"..... When did it get so close!?"

The Sky Castle, Chaos Breaker.

A majestic castle steadily approaches at a steady speed which inspired fear.

Flying so low that you might think it would collide.

All of the aristocracy trembled when they gaze out the window.

It stopped.

Just above.

Directly above the Royal Castle Silver Palace, the air fortress stopped.

"....."

Silence.

Even so, I wonder how Perugius will descend.

No way ..... There's no way he'll jump from that height.

No, come to think of it, he knows how to perform teleport and summoning magic.

If it's simply to teleport below, he can do it.

"No way..... Did he come ..... "

"....."

"That, no, but...."

And, someone muttered.

With looks of excitement on the nobles, forgetting the earlier tension, they were looking out the window.

Servant Elmore stands in front of the door squatting.

Or not a seat of honor.

Although some nobles wonder, nobody is able to answer the question.

Before long, footsteps can be heard.

The footsteps of a single man.

But among the entourage of escorts of the nobles, some have detected more than one presence.

13 in all.

Those that realize this begin to tremble.

Just like in the legend.

The footsteps, stopped in front of the door.

"He has arrived."

With Elmore's word, some gasped.

Then, the door is opened.

The air in the room changed.

".....!"

Wearing a white cloak, a silver-haired, golden eyed man appears.

His appearance is slightly different from his portrait, but with the overwhelming presence, that person has appeared.

He led 12 attendants.

Horror, fear, respect, and longing.

While receiving a variety of feelings, he proceeded into the venue.

And, going to the place of Ariel and Grabell.

The 12 Familiars split into two teams consisting of six, they moved to the end of the hall.

Group one is standing in escort of Ariel.

and the other stands as escort of Darius, next to Auber.

Sylvaril, who has changed her dress, comes next to me.

I can't tell by looking at her mask, but today she looks like she's in a good mood.

"I'm very pleased with your invitation today. Ariel Anemoi Asura. ..... Have I arrived a bit late?"

"No, there is a saying that the main actor always comes late."

Perugius laughed happily.

Ariel also put on a big smile.

Grabell is taken aback.

And looking up at the tall Perugius, his eyes widen.

"Everybody, let me introduce him. One of the 『Three Heroes Who Defeated Laplace』, he is the 『Armored Dragon King』, Perugius Dola-sama."

Perugius did not bow and sends a glance at the surrounding.

The surrounding nobles stand up in panic, kneel, and bow.

"I am Perugius Dola."

Almost like a caricature, with behavior befitting of a king.

Perugius is great.

Possibly more so than the current king...

Enough to make you think so.

"Well, everyone. Raise your head. Tonight, I am just a guest. Although for a brief time, we'll be sitting beside one another. There is no need to humble yourselves so much."

Hearing his command, the nobles still in a daze, return to their seats.

At that point, Perugius raised his voice, saying [What's this?]

Among the seats reserved for the nobles, there are three vacancies.

Three lined up starting from the seat of honor.

Three people standing up.

Ariel, Grabell, and Perugius.

"Ooh, this is confounding. There are three empty seats. Well, Ariel Anemoi Asura. Grabell Zafin Asura. Where would it be best for me to sit?"

"....."

Grabell has his breath taken away.

Voices like the nobles swallowing their saliva can be heard.

This is a farce.

Not just me, everyone knows.

Who Perugius called out to.

With this timing, he called out to them.

"That is... of course... please sit at the highest ranking seat."

Grabell said so in a trembling voice.

He could not help but say so.

He is choked by Perugius' presence.

Even though Perugius does not have the power to choose the king.

Even though Perugius does not have the power to decide the seating.

Why would they need to yield to him?

People with the composure to point that out had originally been in this place...

But they weren't here now.

They existed in a physical sense, but thinking of their own positions, they hesitated to open their mouths.

The nobles had noticed.

Why Darius has been accused immediately before this farce.

Perugius said.

Without being interrupted by anyone.

"No. I have been away from this country for too long. I can't allow myself to steal the seat of the king of the next generation."

Perugius pushed Ariel's back.

While being referred to as the king of the next generation, he pushed Ariel forward.

"Ariel. You will take that seat. I'll allow myself to sit adjacent to you."

At that time, the nobles who are in this venue has realized it.

The king of the next generation would be Ariel.

Ariel is victorious.

I suppressed Auber,

She suppressed Luke on her own,

We suppressed Darius using Tris,

We suppressed Grabell using Perugius.

Well, her fight will continue a little more now, but the momentum flows her way.

Grabell and Darius have nothing stronger than Perugius.

They don't, that is.

"..... Perugius-sama!"

The moment Sylvaril cried.

The ceiling fell down.

Caught up in the chandelier, one of the nobles was crushed.

In the scattered rubble, some of the nobility got injured.

The damage wasn't huge.

Destroying the center of the table, the ceiling fell.

No.

It wasn't the ceiling.

What fell was a single human.

She smashed through the ceiling and fell.

A small body and skin with deep wrinkles.

She stabbed a beautiful golden sword into the ground like a cane.

That old woman stood up.

"Whew, so it's just as my dream foretold..."

She murmurs.

She landed in the [Field].

Then, by looking down around, she said.

"Come on, I've come to help you."

Water God Reida Ryia.

Toward Darius, she said that.

Hitogami's trump card has appeared.

The Water God Style has five secret arts.

The Water God Style founder is the one who created the strongest secret arts.

If you can use three of those five moves, you would be considered as a [God] rank.

Throughout the history of the Water God Style, there were individuals who had mastered four of them, but.....

Only the first generation [God] rank mastered all five of the Water God Style's secret arts.

Water God Reida Ryia was one such individual having mastered three of the secret arts.

She is an old woman.

Her prime is long past, her abilities are degrading with age.

Regarding this, there is a bit of uncertainty.

About why has she retained the title of Water God.

She was chosen for teaching swordsmanship in the Asura Kingdom for many years.

She has not named a successor even after a dozen years.

Why does she continue bearing the title of the [God] rank of Water God Style?

Is it because she has exceptional talent?

That much is true.

The Water God Reida is unmistakably a genius.

Enough not to be inferior to any of history's Water Gods.

But, be that as it may, she doesn't have so much talent that she'd win over old age.

So is it that there's no other talent left?

That's not the case.

Currently, there are several individuals who have mastered three of the secret arts of the Water God Style.

But why didn't those few consider taking over Reida's burden as [God] rank in Water God Style.

[They weren't suitable for that], said one with [Emperor] rank in Water God Style, entrusting that position to Reida.

Why?

That's because Water God Reida used the two most difficult of the five secret arts.

By combining those two mystic arts, a phantom art is created, which could be called a sixth secret art.

『Deprivation Sword Kingdom』

She strikes from a single stance, be it a swing striking down, up, left or right.

From where she is, it's possible for her to kill all of her opponents in every direction.

If anyone moves even a step, she will respond to that movement, capable of cutting down everything.

"Nobody moves. I want to avoid this if possible."

Perugius' subordinate, Arumanfi of the Bright, moved as soon as Reida had appeared.

He was behind Reida in an instant ..... and was sheared in half in the next moment.

He did not leave a corpse, but disappeared in particles of light.

Then Perugius' underling Trophimus of the Wave also moved.

He points his hand towards Reida, as if to fire off something.

Looks like he will.

But Reida only tilted her sword slightly for just an instant and Trophimus was sheared in half.

He too disappeared, becoming particles of light.

Next, she moved to me and sliced off my wrist the moment I sent magic power to the ring I was wearing.

No, it only seemed to have been cut off.

What I lost was the wrist of my prosthetic hand.

My left hand is alive and well.

But, looking at my hand that abruptly disappeared, I couldn't help but shudder.

The next one that moved was a senior noble.

In an attempt to escape by himself, his leg's tendon was sliced as a result.

He let out a scream before collapsing from the strike.

It was a strike with the back of the sword.

None of the guards were able to move.

Neither Eris who is prone to strike first, nor Ghyslaine.

Ariel, Perugius and his subordinates, as well as myself had all been nailed down by Reida.

Everyone in the room was aware that they were in Reida's range.

They understood that if they took action, it would result in an instant death.

".....It doesn't seem that anyone dares to move. Well, Auber."

When Auber was called, he was stiff.

Even a swordsman of his level, cannot escape from Reida's pressure.

"W, why are you here.....? "

"Ariel, Perugius.....and Quagmire, right. Hurry up and take their necks."

Auber alone was able to move.

He sent a puzzled look to Reida.

"M-Me?"

"That's right. Who else will do it? "

"But ..... "

At that point, Auber glanced at Eris.

Looking at it with a sidelong glance, Reida spat with still eyes.

"It is no good that Eris is among the enemies, huh. Whether the attack in the forest, or on the street at night, you did a half-hearted job. Even a coward like you wants to act swordsman-like in front of your disciple."

Everyone held their position while Reida was badmouthing them.

"Why do you think you were hired for such a high price?

Is it so you could just take the money using your prestige as a North Emperor, lose two of your disciples, and watch your employer die without being able to do anything?"

" ..... "

"Weren't you a more underhanded person?"

".....Yeah."

Auber made his move.

With a sword in the right hand, he joined the party.

Heading toward Ariel's direction.

This is bad.

I have do to something.

I can't move.

What should I do.

This is one of Hitogami's pawns.

With only one [God] rank from Water God style, this happens.

I had heard of the counter for the Water God style from Orsted.

I listened to his explaination carefully.

It's to [Take action so that it doesn't come to this.]

Run away out of their sight before you see the Water God style, then take a stance.

Either behind or ahead of them is fine; even above or below works.

Run away while you still can.

Even though I was told that.

It has come to this situation.

" ... Na! This! "

Suddenly, the security of the castle entered the room.

Knights in armor.

No, that silvery armor ..... apprentice knights?

"P-Put away your sword ....! "

"Don't move! "

Reida's shout stopped the Knight apprentices.

However, there was one apprentice who didn't listen, proceeding further in.

Walking a few steps in this pressure, that person removed her helmet.

Emerging from under the helmet was the face of someone I'm familiar with.

Water King Isolte Cruel.

Why is she here?

There shouldn't be a single knight guarding the castle today.

Is this Darius's doing?

In anticipation of such a situation, did he station the apprentice knight?

Or was this just a coincidence ?

"Honored Master, what on earth is going on here? "

"Oh, is it Isolte....?"

"Using the secret arts at a place like this.....!"

"Yeah, yeah, I'll explain. Today, Water God Reida and North Emperor Auber shall begin their rampage."

"Ram..... page? "

While Isolte frowns upon hearing that, Reida continues her words.

"Let's see..... Both of us here had conspired with the Kingdom of the Dragon King.

Blinded by huge amounts of gold, we tried to assassinate officials of the kingdom.

Ariel is brutally murdered, then the murderers are killed by an apprentice knight who was present at the time by some chance.

Isolte Cruel becomes a hero, and Water God Style survives."

Starting with a laugh, Reida saw the first prince.

"Yeah, isn't it a good plot? I should've become a writer..... Make it happen like that, Grabell boy."

"Did I just hear something stupid, esteemed master..... ! "

Trying to step forward, Isolte's legs are stopped.

Perhaps in Reida's excitement, she caught Isolte in her area of attack.

" ..... Hurry, Auber."

" ..... "

"What? Are you worried that the North God Style will lose it's social status? Don't screw with me, I'm cleaning up your mess! It's too late to step down now, calm yourself."

Auber shook his head.

He picks up his sword, and turns around to Ariel.

But, he shakes his head in hesitation.

He is at a loss.

"What are you doing, Auber! Kill Ariel now! And that whore over there as well!"

Darius' cry resounded.

He also included Tris.

For Darius, it's not only Ariel's death that is desirable.

If evidence remains, even after Grabell becomes king, he might still be in trouble.

"Don't worry about what happens later! I'll do something about it!"

Hearing the cry of Darius, Auber seems to have regained his resolve.

Looking a little bit different, he continues walking to Ariel's direction.

Oh, this is bad.

This situation.

Is it already checkmate?

"Chi..... "

Eris is trying to move.

For better or for worse, she tries to escape Reida's barrier.

"Eris, it's useless "

"But. "

"Please, stop it."

"Then, what do we do.....?"

I do not want to see a situation where Eris dies.

But what will I do?

What should I do?

I do not know.

What if we move all at once?

No, that's no good.

It's not a skill that could be broken so easily.

I assume, regardless, we're too far apart to coordinate the attack.

What about Perugius?

He has not moved since earlier.

No, he's looking at me with a bored face.

A face that seems to say, [What are you going to do about this situation?]

Even though his two subordinates are dead, he doesn't look agitated at all.

Could he have something in store?

Or is he relying on something?

No, there is no such free time.

Auber is trying to kill Ariel right now.

No choice.

There is no choice but to move.

I will attack both Reida and Auber at the same time.

I will use『Electric』magic.

I will be injuring the surrounding people near me.

It might not be able to completely defeat them, and I might also get incapacitated if I use lightning.

Plus, Water God Style can evade even magic. The success rate is low.....

"Rudeus..... Let's do it. "

Seeming to have noticed my finger's movement, Eris gave me a signal with her eyes.

We'll die together.....

Sylphy, please pick up my bones later.

" .....!"

And, at that time.

A jolt passed through the core of my being.

"T, This is ... !"

Auber's body starts to tremble and stops moving.

Reida's forehead starts to sweat profusely.

No, it is not just those two people.

In this place, most people have begun to tremble and jerk their bodies.

Even though the world stopped moving from Reida's pressure, their faces turn pale and shiver.

So he noticed.

Ah, thank goodness....

From the ring a little while ago, magic seems to have properly gone through.

"Damn it, I give up..... Darius, I wasted too much time talking....."

" .....W, What? What's, going on!? This cold air.....!"

"Change of plan. Auber, it's bad but can you take Darius and flee from this place right now?"

Auber is puzzled at Reida's words.

"Why Darius..... instead of First Prince Grabell? "

"Ma, even an old lady like me won't forget her debt. "

Reida laughed thinly.

"Hurry! At this rate, regardless of friend or foe, everyone will die!"

At her words, Auber thought for a moment, then nodded.

Grasping Darius's arms, he dragged his heavy body, taking him away.

"This way."

"Hu, Yea..... "

Auber fled in a direction differing from the entrance the apprentice knights came from.

No one can stop them.

Tied down by Reida, I cannot move at all.

" ..... "

Silence envelops the area.

"Whew. How far can they escape? If I knew about this earlier, then perhaps I wouldn't have come...."

".....Why?"

Someone asked this question.

It was Ariel.

Even in the face of death, her complexion hadn't changed.

She seems to question why Reida is helping Darius.

I also have doubts in that regard.

"Everyone's noisily asking [Why, why]. Come on, this isn't something unusual."

Reida has a pleasant look.

"It's a story of when an old woman was just a young girl.

Praised as a genius, the ecstatic girl beat up a noble of the same age at a dojo... and received retribution after.

Outnumbered and surrounded by a crowd, she was knocked down in an instant.

Just when she was about to have both her hands–the life of a swordswoman–cut off, and turned into a daruma, she was rescued.

By a single noble boy who was higher ranked than those nobles."

..... What?

It was Darius?

"She became a Water King and was selected to work as a fencing instructor.

When she tried to give her thanks then, he'd become a fat and sly man with a twisted character.

He didn't remember me, either."

...

"I sure felt let down.

After all, I'd thought that even if his face was bad, he was a boy with a straightforward, righteous character.

[Maybe, if I could meet that person]... I've even thought some maiden-like things."

Reida has a distant look in her eyes.

Remembering the illusion that she thinks she can now move on from.

"Well, it was an end to the girl's first love..... But well, I didn't resent that, I just needed to repay my life's favor."

Reida said.

In few short words, in such a short time.

A confession towards no one in particular.

"Honestly, I also had forgotten about it.

But, on the way back to Asura, there was a sudden revelation in my dream.

If I came back to the royal palace as a Water God Style instructor, I could return the favor of that time."

So it was Hitogami.

And now, a man opposing Hitogami is coming towards us.

While, unfortunately, his presence poured overwhelmingly, one man is running through the castle at great speed.

Auber will probably run in the opposite direction of that man.

They do not have the power to detect his presence, but he understood somehow.

Auber is a person sensitive to such signs.

"It's funny. Even though he had completely forgotten about it long ago."

" ..... "

"But at this age, it no longer matters anymore. By removing the feeling of love, it becomes a whole new feeling. It becomes a feeling to repay the kindness of a lifetime."

Then Reida opens her eyes.

" ..... He seems to have arrived."

The front door opened.

A lone man entered.

"Hi!?"

Everyone is overcome with fear from seeing his figure.

Some leaked, while others collapsed on the floor.

There are those who are hostile too.

However, everyone here holds a similar thought.

『I'll be killed.』

Silvery hair and golden eyes.

A lone man with a dangerous, frightening face.

Orsted stood there.

"Long time no see. Did you come to perform the final rites for this old lady's short remaining life? "

"That's right. Because you're an apostle of Hitogami."

"Apostle, huh... So you let me go the previous time because I wasn't one then? My my, in my last moments I'm going to have to fight an unbelievable opponent.."

Locking gazes, Orsted approached Reida in a straight line.

There was no hesitation.

"『Deprivation Sword Kingdom』"

Reida's body blurred.

Her sword was never at a fixed location.

Every time Orsted took a step, golden flickers flew out from the sword.

With sword flickers leaving an afterimage, Reida and Orsted are tied with a thread of gold.

All sword flickers has been defended against.

Sparks are scattered around Orsted.

He repelled those sword blows with his bare hands.

One step, two steps, three steps.

The number of sparks increase with each step.

Orsted still does not stop.

He reached the front of Reida's eyes in no time.

"Die."

And all too soon.

Very anticlimactically, Reida's chest had been penetrated.

By Orsted's transparent hand, Reida is run through.

She was discarded like a rag.

" G-Grandmaaa! ! "

Isolte cried, and the killing intent vanished.

But, as if time stood still, no one made a move.

What just happened? No one understands it.

Only fear dominates this place.

Everyone thinking that they would be the next to die.

The first one to move is Isolte.

She drew her sword and took a stance against Orsted with trembling legs.

"How dare you, the esteemed master.....! "

"....."

As if nothing had happened, Orsted moves towards the terrace.

Isolte starts running after him to the terrace.

"Rudeus-sama! "

Cried Ariel when she came to.

"Please chase after Auber and Darius! They must not escape!"

Following Ariel's roared phrase, time began to move again.

Selfish nobles started to flee with their escorts in tow.

Three people. Ghyslaine, Eris, and I ran out of the room and chased after Darius.

"Ru, Rudi? What happened?"

Sylphy came over as well.

She doesn't seem to grasp the situation.

What should I do, bring her along?

No, Isolte is still in the room.

She is looking down from the terrace outside while being stunned.

She seems to have given up on chasing Orsted....

"Sylphy, guard Ariel-sama! Be careful of Isolte! We will chase Darius!"

"Okay!"

I leave Sylphy and Luke to protect Ariel.

With that last minute judgement, we gave chase.

It is uncertain why Ariel screamed [Chase Darius!]

Maybe it was just in the spur of the moment?

Don't let Darius get away!

I wonder if it's because of the old woman's tale?

Ariel must have another reason for me to chase Darius.

She's also a Dragon's dog like me.

Maybe her reason is simply: [Don't let Hitogami's apostle Darius get away.]

Kill Darius.

It's decided that I must do this.

"This way! "

In accordance with Ghyslaine's nose, we run down the hallway.

Ghyslaine and Eris have no doubt whatsoever in Ariel's words.

Chasing after a fleeing enemy, they wear stifled smiles.

Feeling the adrenaline, I run down the hall steadily.

Security is low.

It's not entirely absent, but they seem to be after someone else.

A voice saying, [He fled towards the Royal Palace!] can be heard.

Perhaps they are after Orsted.

" ... I saw them! "

With no disturbances, we easily caught up to them after a few minutes.

Darius, with his huge body, was being carried by Auber.

Heavy wheezing can be heard as they rush down the corridor.

" ..... Tch! "

Looking back with a sharp glance, Auber clicks his tongue.

He supports Darius's shoulder, and flees into a nearby room.

We immediately rush in after... and suddenly come to a stop.

Darius catches his breath, while Auber with his unsheathed sword is facing us.

".....Ku, Ku! "

Writhingly Darius glares at me.

"Agh, why did something so stupid have to happen? This is strange, too strange."

"Darius-dono, you have lived a long life, so you should have experienced this type of thing before. How about calming down and using your head to get us out of this situation? "

Auber replied To Darius's cry.

"I did as God said! I shouldn't have been cornered like this! "

Darius refutes with a red face.

" ..... My my, so you're a religious guy. Then at least calm your breathing and pray for my victory."

While scratching his cheek, Auber took up his swords with a helpless look.

Before us, he brandishes his swords head on for the first time.

And he introduces himself.

" 『North Emperor』 Auber Corvette."

To that challenge, Ghyslaine and Eris quickly ready their swords.

"『Sword King』 Eris Greyrat."

"『Sword King』 Ghyslaine Dedorudia."

Should I also introduce myself?

While I hesitated, Darius pointed his finger at Eris.

"The one with red hair! Boreas! It's you! You're a Boreas Greyrat! "

Eris bit her lips and frowned blatantly.

"..... That has changed."

" I! I have provided various help for Boreas's needs!"

Darius didn't hear Eris's reply and shouted while spitting out his saliva.

"Even with Fedoa territory's disappearance, I helped them with gold!"

..... Come to think of it.

Darius provided the capital to fund the Fedoa Region Search Group, right .....?

Although I heard talk that there was an ulterior motive.

Being caught off guard, this part of me is a little weak.

Ulterior motives of investors aside, many people were still saved by it.

"That's irrelevant to me!"

Eris spit out her words harshly.

She is smart.

"J-James also received my help!"

James.

The current head of Boreas, Eris's uncle.

"Installing him as Boreas family head, and preventing him from being crushed by the all-out attack from nobles is also due to my help! "

It's a completely different matter.

"Because of that, the reconstruction of the Fedoa territory is also going well!"

No, no, that's a lie.

"I've seen it on the way to the Royal Capital, but reconstruction of Fedoa territory isn't advancing at all."

"Don't listen to that youngster! If Boreas had completely collapsed, other lords would have sold the Fedoa territory bit by bit and abandoned it!"

Putting it in that way it sounds convincing.

Was that really the case?

The reconstruction has not been going well is a fact.

But were the alternatives any better?

"If that's the case, you should've helped old man Sauros..."

Coming out clearly from my mouth, were those words.

At that, Darius's complexion changed dramatically.

"Sauros? Don't talk about that idiot, that toothless lion could never grasp the reality of the situation! That man tried to use the entire Boreas fortune to reconstruct Fedoa Region without thinking about the consequences!"

" ..... "

I think that's a manly choice ... but.

Well, you can definitely call it a bad move.

The Boreas House is falling prey to other lords now, after all.

"I saved James who came crying to me! I killed Sauros who was forcibly advancing things, and made sure that James would become the head! The Boreas House and Fedoa territory still exist. This was all possible due to my help! So help me! Please overlook this!"

Aa.....

That's not good.

Saying such things about the late Sauros.

I think these two people may no longer be stopped.

"In other words, you're Sauros-ojiisama's enemy."

"I see, so that's how it is."

At Eris's words, Ghyslaine nods, they take up their swords and bare their fangs.

"Then, I'll kill you."

"Hiiii!"

Darius gives out a short scream.

Auber sighed.

"I guess that means negotiations have failed."

Thus, the final round begins.

" Fu~u ..... Fu~u..... "

Has Darius collected himself?

He sat on the nearest chair taking deep breaths.

His shout just now is starting to look like a lie, with his calm looking attitude.

"Auber, can you win?"

"Well, it would be better if it was just the two Sword Kings, but that magician is troublesome."

With his back to Darius, Auber is pointing a sword in my direction.

He looks... settled down, I guess?

However, his eyes are not focused.

He's looking and moving restlessly, is that a feint?

"..... I know. The God also said so."

"God did?"

"That a mage in gray colored robe will come and kill me. I did as I was told; I destroyed all the magic teleportation circles in the area and had you withdraw to the capital, however this is the result. I won't believe in him anymore."

Following Hitogami's orders, he moved about secretly, doing this and that.

Like Orsted said, chess seems to be a weak point of Hitogami.

Maybe he just doesn't like playing a two player game.

"Do something. That's why I hired you. Your speciality is fighting while being outnumbered, isn't it?"

"Understood.....If by any chance I win I will get a special reward, right?"

"Oh yes, that's right! I promise!"

——After that exchange, Auber was facing us.

He squared his shoulders against his opponents.

Seeing this, Eris and Ghyslaine straighten up.

"North God style..... 『Red Ink』 "

"Gaaaaaaaa! "

"Uraaaaaaa! "

The moment Auber muttered that, Eris and Ghyslaine reacted.

But at that time, I already understood the meaning of 『Red Ink』.

I had heard from Orsted what kind of skill it was.

Ground.

A red carpet was laid on the floor.

Also, a red ball was scattered beforehand without anyone realizing it.

By the time we noticed it, it was too late.

"This is!"

"Nu!? "

At the feet of Ghyslaine and Eris, a big pop "Pa~an" resounded.

Spreading under their feet, strong liquid adhesive was strewn, sticking the soles of the two to the carpet.

This ball was developed by a certain North Saint pharmacist, an instant adhesive.

Since the process is complex, I don't really remember how to make it.

The impact causes the ball to rupture scattering the contents around.

The strong adhesive kept Ghyslaine's and Eris's legs stuck to the carpet.

"『Water Flow』!"

Using water magic, I washed off the adhesive on their feet.

It is weak to water and loses its suction the moment it's exposed to moisture.

But, Eris and Ghyslaine's stance had already been messed up.

Too unsteady for their kill moves, but with their well trained legs they still never-the-less managed to strike.

Too slow.

Auber has already started his next move.

He immediately moves between Ghyslaine and Eris.

Ghyslaine's sword stops.

Eris's sword stops.

They're taught in Sword God Style, to never release a Sword of Light with allies in the way.

"First thing's first, you. Rudeus Greyrat."

Auber's target isn't Ghyslaine or even Eris.

It was me.

<Two swords with both hands are swung down to me.>

I see it.

Thanks to the simulated training with Eris, my foreseeing eye has caught Auber's sword properly.

Immediately, I moved the artificial hand into the sword's trajectory.

First move.

I guard another by using the art of 『Earth Shield』 with the right hand .

"North God Style secret art..... 『 Oboro Cross 』 !"

<Auber's hand is blurred.>

Auber threw his sword into the air, lowered his upper body, and reached for the sword remaining at his waist.

I see that.

The foreseeing eye has caught the movement.

To cover my right side, an『Earth Shield』 shaped like a buckler has already formed.

This shield made to parry Auber's slashing power is heavy and very hard.

It's so heavy that my hand's movements are limited.

Auber's sword is already under my left hand.

It's a heavy prosthetic hand made of high magic, there is nothing beyond the wrist, but it manages to receive Auber's sword slash directly .

Auber tries to draw another sword while making a turning fall.

The strike can't be avoided.

Even if there was a way, there is not enough time to do that.

I decided to take a risk.

I jumped and moved my bent knee at him. Auber's sword was received by my left foot.

Something hot sears my shin.

When I landed, my left foot felt like it had been squashed and bent.

If you take a look at the area right below the knee of my left leg, it is dangling by a flap of skin.

Pain came later.

"Iii! "

I withstand the pain by clenching down on my teeth.

I confirm my surroundings

Eris is moving, Ghyslaine's also looking back, I'm standing here.

I'm not dead.

Auber, enclosed by three people, cannot escape.

"....?"

Just then, something caught my attention

What now, is Auber trying to use strange ninjutsu again?

That's not it.

Something moves at the edge of my vision.

It's Darius, pointing his right hand in our direction.

"Spirit of fire, everywhere between the sky and earth, I request for your protection –

Divine protection of the great fire spirit in the place where the demand of thee――"

Ghyslaine and Eris noticed it.

The actions taken by the two women were almost completely opposite.

Eris faces Darius, to stand between Darius and me, while Ghyslaine approaches Auber.

"――『Fire Bullet』."

From Darius' hand, a mass of fire is released.

Its power and speed, both unquestionably lethal, the fiery projectile was closing in.

"Fun..... Gu! "

Eris cut the fireball in half.

But, before anyone could notice.

Auber's kunai-like dagger had been thrown, penetrating her side.

My vision returns to the present.

Auber, still retaining the posture of throwing a dagger at Eris, had received Ghyslaine's sword.

No, it wasn't received; Ghyslaine's sword had cut into Auber's shoulder.

He had not completely parried the blow.

His sword broke and he was thus cut

However, only shallowly.

It did not sever his arm.

"Fu! "

"Gaaa ! "

Auber flew to the back while back flipping,

Eris lay in wait at his landing point, launching a killing attack.

But, probably because of the Kunai in her side, Auber evaded it easily.

" ..... "

This is bad; He's put distance between us.

I don't know what went wrong, to confront Auber from a distance is bad.

Why is it bad?

That guy has a variety of skills.

Not only that.

My leg was sliced and I doubt Eris can run either.

Now, supposing Auber runs away with Darius.

Then it will become Ghyslaine alone.

That's right.

I have to do something to Darius.

While discarding the Earth Shield, I directed my staff at Darius.

"Stone Cannon! "

"!?"

"Oooaa!"

The bullet flew at a ridiculous speed, but it was received by Auber's sword.

However, this was within my predictions.

That shot just now was not a mere Stone Cannon.

"!?"

Right where it was hit.

The hollow point rock bullet which was cut into two explodes near Darius.

I had developed this hollow point rock bullet while traveling the Magic Continent.

The name is Explosive Stone Cannon.

"Gugyaaaaaa! "

Fragments of rock and shell penetrating his eye, Darius crouches while holding his face .

"Nuu?"

Auber's attention slipped.

"Daaaaaa! "

There, Eris immediately seized the opening.

Sword of Light.

"....!?"

Auber.....received it.

He caught it with the side of his blade, the thickest part of the sword.

But Eris' sword cuts through it like it's nothing, and her sword went into Auber's arm.

Too shallow.

Because of her injury, the technique was not perfect.

After slicing Auber's arm, Eris's sword failed to cut deeper.

"Gaaaaaa! "

After that, Ghyslaine moved.

Auber, lacking both his arms, tried to evade.

However, the Sword of Light is a difficult move to evade.

It's a killer move of the Sword God Style, after all.

Auber is in no position to avoid it.

It's not a move you can dodge without preparations.

Auber realizes this.

Currently, it is impossible.

Ghyslaine's perfect Sword of Light entered from around his shoulders and exited his side.

" ..... Impressive."

While muttering that, Auber fell.

He collapses in a pool of his own blood.

His body twitched for a while, but the light in his eyes was gone.

..... He is dead.

" ..... "

"Aaaaa, my eye, my eye! Auber, do something ..... Auber!"

Still crouching, Darius was screaming while holding his eye.

Ghyslaine looks down at the crouching Darius who received my Explosive Stone Cannon.

" ..... "

Ghyslaine swings her sword down in silence.

Blood sprayed even to my cheek.

I left Darius's corpse there.

This is a prior arrangement with Ariel.

Regardless of how the murder took place, it's best to leave Darius' corpse behind if possible.

The possibility that Ariel is accused at a later time is also high, but...

It's more important to prove that Darius is dead.

This happy feeling over killing someone... bothers me.

"Fuu ..... "

The unpleasant guy died.

I killed him.

The aftertaste is bad.

I did not deal the finishing blow directly, but it didn't matter.

Now, I actually felt it.

I am the one who killed Darius.

Killing Auber that tried to protect him, while crushing Darius's eye, rendering him defenseless.

It was not possible to feel it until now, but this time I felt it.

I do not know what is the difference.

Will it be a problem of distance.

I don't know.

"Huh ..... "

I think that it's useless to mull over it.

Because this is a path I have chosen.

Then, going to the next room, my wounds were treated by using the King Class Healing Magic scroll that I got from Orsted.

As expected of King Class, even the severed foot was restored.

But, probably due to the thinning of my blood, my body is cold.

Next to me is Eris.

She is looking at my treatment with a blue face.

I pull her clothes off.

Such charming, well-trained ab muscles .....

"..... What? "

Her side's wound had turned purplish.

Poison.

Auber's dagger was coated in poison.

"..... "

I tried Elementary and Intermediate Detoxification.

Confirmed that they are not effective.

Cold sweat has run down at my back.

Suddenly, I remember Orsted's words.

Auber only uses one type of poison and it is non-lethal.

In addition, he also has the antidote.

Immediately returning to the room next door, Auber's corpse was scavenged to obtain the antidote.

Eris drank it, and spread some on her abdomen while she was at it.

As a precaution... I who received slashes also drank it.

It was dangerous.

If he had more powerful poison, Eris would probably already be dead.

I'm so glad, really.....

"You avoided his 『Oboro Cross』 quite well....."

When treating Eris's side, she said clearly.

I wonder if can be considered avoiding ..... .

Well, I suppose you can given that it is not a mortal wound.

"It's thanks to the mock battles with Eris. Having become accustomed to fast attacks, I was somehow able to evade it. "

"But even I've never evaded it ..... "

Saying so, Eris was giving a slightly lonely look.

Eris had been taught the way of sword by Auber.

Was she reminiscing?

"Oh well, that's fine."

Eris shook her head quickly.

Her character is enviable.

Anyway.

Ghyslaine, Eris and I are safe.

Total victory.

"Then, let's go back "

"Well."

"Ah."

We'll look at it as a triumph, I am allowed to feel triumphant.

When we came back to the party venue, an unexpected sight befell my eyes.

"....Eh? "

Luke is pressing a dagger against Ariel's neck.

Philemon is kneeling and Sylphy is sending a hateful gaze in Luke's direction.

What kind of situation is this?

Luke glanced at me in confusion and opened his mouth.

Directing words not towards me, but towards Sylphy.

"If you want to help Ariel-sama, then kill Rudeus."

That question was directed towards Sylphy ——

The party venue had regained its composure.

The people that remain in the venue, are mostly the major senior aristocracy and nobility of Asura Kingdom.

Greyrat, Bluewolf, Purplehorse, Whitespider, and Silvertoad. They're families that have served Asura Kingdom since eons ago.

In order to witness the 『Result』, they chose to remain in the venue instead of running away even after Orsted left the place.

Of course, the party didn't resume.

What happened so far is hard to ignore.

Darius's downfall and Perugius-sama's appearance.

With these two impacts, Ariel instilled a strong impression to nobility that she is the one who will become the next king.

Of course, regarding Orsted that appeared abruptly, made many of them puzzled with their own questions.

However since Ariel, the host of this venue, was calming them down, the other nobles that still remained began to relax.

"....."

The nobility felt a fear that penetrated through the depths of their hearts.

That man, whose body emitted fear, suddenly appeared and saved Ariel.

That man and Ariel are accomplices.

Thinking that, even the nobility will distrust Ariel.

At least that was what Rudeus had thought.

However, the actual situation is a little different.

The man appeared only for a moment, killed Reida, and left without even giving his name.

Thus, Orsted was dubbed 『Perugius's Underling』 in the eyes of the nobility.

After all, they share the same hair, eyes, and have similar appearances.

He reminded them of Perugius, who has the stature of a king.

Perugius has an underling who can beat the Water God in one blow.

Everyone there put their trust in Perugius.

Memories prior to that were forgotten.

(If you disobey, then you're the next victim)

With that thought, the nobles could only bow their heads to Ariel.

No one dared to pry further into the matter.

Ariel has returned to Asura.

Darius has fled, possibly already dead.

Ariel will kill all those who get in her way.

Everyone there thought so ..... even the First Prince Grabell.

Orsted's curse wielded enough power to do so.

Everyone, except one.

Because he knows Ariel better than anyone else.

Because he has been informed of Orsted by Hitogami.

Because he, even after being persuaded by Ariel, still didn't fully trust Rudeus.

That person is Luke Notus Greyrat.

Luke was thinking.

Really, what good can come from an evil man like that; the man whom Rudeus calls boss.

Luke feels alarmed.

And what will become of someone who ascended with their help?

In this case, even Darius is still a better choice.

Hitogami came out in his dream.

Radiating a divine aura, its appearance can be called godlike,

He gave Luke advice, going into great detail.

What he must do in order for Ariel to become a King, and how Rudeus has been tempted by Evil.

Ariel had lectured him before.

His God is evil.

She said his advice will lead Luke into a trap, with himself gaining benefit from their fall.

Indeed, if you compared Hitogami's prophecies with how events actually unfolded, there were many lies.

No, rather than a lie, he should think it's his own mistake in many cases.

He himself misunderstood the advice and took a wrong step.

He feels that way.

Luke is Ariel's knight.

If his lord said so then he must believe her, more than the mysterious God. He's going to believe in his lord.

Even in that matter, for example.

His duty is to follow his lord's path blindly, live together, and be ready to die together.

But when he came here, Luke was forced to recognize something.

Looking at Orsted, he was forced to recognize.

Luke only has good eyes regarding women.

On the other hand, he can't discern the true nature of man.

He's aware of it.

But, he still knows.

That Orsted is evil.

He is not someone whom you want to associate with.

He is a false god that will lead humans to their ruin.

Ariel is wrong.

And, Rudeus was probably fascinated by that false god.

He thought so.

Then...

(Then, what should I do?)

(When it's become clear that my lord is walking the wrong path, what should I do?)

State his opinion?

It would be nice.

But, to whom?

Orsted has already moved.

And he already gave his aid.

In this situation it can be said that Grabell and Darius are the losers, Ariel has taken the kingship.

Isn't it too late?

With my pitiful sword and magic skills, what can I do?

Even if I did something, will there be a meaning in that?

(I'm powerless.)

Just as Luke was about to give up.

One person suddenly entered his field of view.

Moving in front of Ariel quickly, that person performed a kowtow kneeling.

"Ariel-sama!"

Philemon Notus Greyrat.

Luke's father.

While giving a nasty smile, he lifted his voice to Ariel.

To be heard to the many surrounding nobles.

"Congratulations! This Philemon has awaited impatiently for this day for so long!"

Saying that in a feigned happiness, Philemon looked up at Ariel.

"In order to block Grabell's faction, I pretended to change sides.

Oh dear, now that I think of it, I really did not need to do that.

Ariel-sama truly. It seems you've grown quite mature in a foreign country!"

Although these might have been considered noble words, in the current situation they are the words of someone desperately clinging to their position.

He is the one, who in order to gain Grabell's trust, sent his own soldiers to assassinate Ariel.

The other nobles saw Philemon with contemptuous eyes that said [How dare he say that now.]

"Philemon-sama ....."

"No, no, Ariel sama, you do not need to say it in front of everyone.

I had few allies, so my actions may seem like a stab in the back.

However, all that I have done was for Ariel-sama's sake.

Now that we're here, let's go back to the way we were.

I'll be the backing of Ariel-sama――"

Ariel did not let him finish.

"Philemon Notus Greyrat!"

Her roar drowned out Philemon's groveling.

"So what about your House!

So what about your position!

In regards to that betrayal, just state your true reason: because I was weak! "

Philemon wide-eyed, looking at Ariel.

This may be the first time Ariel shouted at Philemon in this way.

"However, have pride to the last minute if you betray one's ally. After having lost and reconciled, to even seek a position. Know shame!"

"Ha.....Hu..... "

Philemon looks around in shock, and starts stammering.

"Ah. I don't mean, no..."

Looking at Philemon's state, sounds of stifled laughter could be heard from the nobility.

Philemon was looking down with a bright red face.

But Ariel's anger hasn't subsided yet.

"I've already planned for your betrayal, so your house could survive.

I will give the position of family head to Luke, and you can retire in your territory,

I did not intend to pursue the matter any further!

But this!

You betrayed your ally, and yet after that you still tried to cuddle with the one you betrayed!

Such shameless action, even I am speechless!

I've already made the decision that I won't harm anyone, even the ones that didn't side by me! "

Philemon's face becomes pale.

"Apologize or face death!"

Hearing that, Luke realized that this was a farce.

From the beginning, Ariel had anticipated that it would become like this.

She may say this now, but he won't be executed.

The agreement with Ghyslaine was just verbal promise.

Ariel likely planned to spare Philemon.

For Ariel, Philemon was her strongest ally.

Although nowadays he's become somewhat weakened, it is no exaggeration to say that before they ran away to Ranoa, Ariel's faction revolved around Philemon.

He cannot be considered loyal, and yet...

Ariel was indebted to Philemon.

The one who made arrangements for Ariel to escape to the North was Philemon.

The one who provided assistance to Ariel was Philemon.

Ariel being alive now can be said is thanks to Philemon.

She won't forget that favor.

But, just because he was forgiven after the betrayal, he wants to come back again.

Allowing this would have a bad influence on Ariel's political activities in the future.

"Enough, if you don't retract what you just said, I can't hide what happened just now, thus execution.

Luke! Lend me your Sword! At the very least, I'll personally perform the last rite for him."

Listening to her words, Philemon saw Luke with a fearful look.

His eyes were begging for help.

Eyes focused on Luke.

Luke was lost in response to that gaze.

— Luke's point of view —

I knew that my own father was a subservient and timid person.

However, I also know there is no way it could be made known.

Although he became a lord at a young age, my father's job was a doormat, even in his son's eyes he was a coward, he was dull.

Even as a vassal he was degraded by Grandfather, saying [If only you were like Paul...] His decisions as lord, in Grandfather's eyes, were all unsatisfactory.

When I was home, I witnessed this many times.

My father would be troubled by his father, and I would suffer as a result.

Now, such a father is about to be executed in front of me.

It's inception, but father reaps what he sowed.

The promise with Sword King Ghyslaine is also involved.

I would be lying if I said there was no possibility father was involved in the execution of Sauros Boreas Greyrat.

Father's and Sauros's relationship was bad.

Or rather, I would say grandfather and Sauros had a good relationship.

The Head of Boreas House and the previous Head of Notus House were like brothers.

But Sauros did not like Philemon.

Before he became lord, Sauros did not hesitate to insult father.

Even after becoming lord, Sauros sent complaints and bad-mouthed him at every opportunity.

So, when Sauros was in trouble...

I do not think it strange at all if my father had his hand in Sauros's execution.

If it was father, he would do it.

Well, although I was upset when I heard it, that was due to Hitogami's lie.

When I see father's face after eight years...

He looked much older than the father I remembered, the father that I met for the first time in eight years looked small.

"....."

Suddenly, I remembered when I had wanted to talk man-to-man with father.

I was young, I had a lot to talk about with my father.

In retrospect, it seemed father favored my eldest brother.

As the second son, I have come to terms with this.

My father would not discuss important matters with me; but, when we did talk, he never held any bad intentions towards me.

I did not know anything, and my father told me as much, but he helped me find my own answers.

Although he told me [Think on your own], he still helped show me the way.

He is still my father.

My father is rarely right.

He's clumsy and always makes mistakes in his decisions.

But that father was always working hard for Ariel.

Since we were ambushed as we departed for Asura Kingdom, I have been struggling with that father as an enemy.

Why did that father act so selfishly?

Although I refer to him as selfish, father was serving as the family head, so he had a duty to protect the house.

After Ariel escaped from Asura, father was forced between a rock and a hard place trying to protect the house by aligning with Grabell.

He even sent his soldiers to that ambush in order to protect the house.

Father was desperate to gain Grabell's trust.

"Ariel-sama, please listen to my request."

"What is it, Luke?"

"Will you please forgive my father?"

Ariel is facing me.

Her eyes are cold.

Recently she has been looking at me with those eyes more and more.

Particularly since she discovered father's betrayal.

"... I cannot do that."

"Is this because of the promise with Ghyslaine?"

"No, this is because I cannot afford to allow betrayal."

That's right.

Father and Ariel, no matter how friendly they were...

My father betrayed her in a major way, and he even sent his soldiers to kill Ariel.

If she allows this, she can not maintain her rule.

Even I understand this.

However, after all he has done, will Philemon Notus Greyrat still meet such an end?

I do not know what that false god did to them.

{ C-Editor's note: Referring to Orsted. }

Rudeus and Ariel also might have been deceived.

But, my father has betrayed Ariel.

To rejoin Ariel's faction now means that he will have defected twice; calling it a shameless act is true.

But I...

I don't want this.

"....."

I drew my sword...

"..... Luke?"

"I'm sorry."

"What?"

I did not know how I came to such an action.

Before I had noticed, I had grabbed Ariel from behind...

While holding my sword to her neck.

"... Luke. What do you think you're doing?"

Sylphy noticed immediately.

She is glaring at me with a stern expression, I can feel her killing intent.

This is the face that she absolutely never lets Rudeus see.

In her hand is a wand for an apprentice magician.

A small wand just like the one I used when I started to learn magic.

However, I know. That wand can fire magic on par with even the best of Asura's Court Magicians.

Such a thing is aimed directly at me.

"Sylphy, do you not think it's strange?"

"I think the strange one is you! Who do you think you have turned your blade on?"

I'm aware that this is strange.

It's more like I do not know what I want to do now.

Everyone's sight has focused on me.

The nobles are wearing expressions as if they don't understand what's happening.

...Is this it for me?

Em, is this right?

"Sylphy, do you really believe that man?"

"That man? You mean Orsted? What are you talking about suddenly? What does that man have to do with this situation?!
"

"Answer me honestly!"

To my strong tone, while holding her wand, Sylphy replied in a low voice.

"I do not trust him."

"Then why? Why do you follow Rudeus? Even after he became that devil's subordinate!"

"It is because I believe in Rudi."

I do not know the meaning of her words.

"Rudeus has become Orsted's subordinate. Didn't his behavior change? Isn't he being manipulated by Orsted!?"

Honestly, it is not like I want to draw Sylphy to my side.

However since Sylphy married Rudeus, she hasn't been thinking properly.

She's been blindly following Rudeus, it's as if she no longer has her own opinions.

The one who taught her this was me.

Listen in silence to what your husband says to gain his love, he must have taught that to all his wives.

...At least, I knew this because my mother did not do so.

She didn't love my father, which led her to leave the house.

"You, did you even think about it? That even Rudeus can make mistakes."

Sylphy was incensed.

"I know that! But Rudi is moving with the thought of protecting us! For us, to not hold our head down and appreciate his efforts, is like exposing our ugly side! I do what I must do, rather than saying anything that would annoy him or cause any misdirection, I take his side, because I will support him from behind! "

Sylphy answered clearly.

Rudeus was her only concern.

In the last few years, I think she's changed quite a lot.

"In that case, does Ariel-sama still matter to you?"

As I said that, I pressed the sword against Ariel-sama's neck.

What I'm pressing against her neck is the flat of the sword.

After this, I will be executed as a traitor, but I cannot afford to scratch Ariel-sama's skin.

The skin of a woman should always be beautiful.

"How dare you!"

That's really true.

And then, behind Sylphy, I saw Rudeus appear in the entranceway.

His eyes started to widen at this scene.

"Hey, Sylphy. You'll respect Rudeus's opinion, even if that opinion comes from that evil Orsted?"

"... Yes, I will always believe him."

"In other words, it's this situation."

I'm watching Rudeus.

He's trying to figure out the situation, looking over the surroundings restlessly.

His eyes stopped for a moment, but soon turned away, looking disappointed.

He had seen Perugius.

Despite being in such a situation, Perugius is still sitting on his chair at the head table.

He almost looks as if he's enjoying a particularly funny play.

"If you want to help Ariel-sama, then kill Rudeus."

Sylphy's eyes widened.

"If I said that, what would you do?"

Sylphy has not looked behind her.

She should not have noticed Rudeus.

"If you had to choose between them, who will you choose?"

Even if I do say so myself, this is a nasty question.

I wonder why I asked such a question.

It's off topic.

"I choose Rudi."

Sylphy didn't hesitate with her answer at all.

At a rate that can almost be called an immediate answer, she answered yes.

"I know it's a bad choice for Ariel-sama, but if I'm forced to choose, I cannot turn my back against my husband or my child."

Just a little bit, it is a lonely answer for me.

It must be a lonely answer for Ariel as well.

Rudeus is posing like [Incredible], holding his mouth with both hands.

This guy, even after arriving late, is frustrating.

"I will follow Rudi. I do not know what the result will be. We may fall into some serious problems, and may end up being killed by Orsted... But even at that time, I'm going to support Rudi. That way we will remain married for life."

Those words struck me like an arrow.

Oh, so there are things like that. I felt something churning in the pit of my stomach.

Lost in my own thought, I only felt one answer come out...

"......Haa."

A small sigh came out.

Really, I wonder what I'm doing.

Did I made a mistake and put Ariel in danger?

I also, even if she did not like that, wanted to be there for Ariel.

As her knight, our relationship is not unlike being married for life.

Orsted is the false god.

Between Hitogami and Orsted, Hitogami is certainly more believable.

However, between Ariel and Hitogami, who's more believable.

It goes without saying.

It's fine to just watch over Ariel's choices, obey her, and then protect her, without any regard for myself, if anything goes wrong.

I was fine with that.

Ah, all my reason is coming back to me.

"So, Luke."

Ariel finally speaks.

She has been silent all this time until she heard my sigh.

"In the end Sylphy chose Rudeus over me, will you cut me down then?"

"What?"

"If so, I want to talk to my little brother before I'm cut down. Can I at least ask him to grant safe passage for Sylphy and them out of the country, please? "

Ariel, said so in a low tone.

"Are you not going to ask me why?"

"Yeah."

I was saddened.

After everything that has happened I have no excuse, but she, Ariel, thought that I was betraying her.

The one who has been together with her for as long as I can remember,

The one who has served her so faithfully all these years,

The one who would gladly serve as her shield,

Even now, the first one that I've always though of is Ariel-sama.

She thought I was someone who would betray her at the last minute.

However, with her following words, that idea disappeared.

"Just one thing, Luke."

"...?"

"I am your princess."

Tears almost came out.

For me, that word was enough.

Even now, Ariel is still sees me as her knight.

She didn't think I want to betray her.

She thinks that I absolutely won't betray her.

This, even in a situation with a sword pressed to her neck,

And she did not think that I wanted to betray her.

"..."

Discarding the sword, I released Ariel.

The tense atmosphere immediately relaxed with the dry clang.

I knelt and looked up at Ariel.

Eyes frosty as ever, she looked down at me.

"Luke, what are you?"

"I'm your knight."

Ariel smiled softly.

Looking at that smile, I bowed my head, it was a pose to show the neck by dividing the hair.

"So, please cut the neck of this traitor."

I still don't want to die.

I still have many things I want to do.

But, it is good.

I'm satisfied.

"....."

Ariel picked up the sword, and lifted it heavily with one hand.

She strikes my head with the blunt side of the sword.

Dull pain courses through my brain.

"Luke. You, the playboy, unable to endure your sudden urge, hugged me and groped my body."

".....?"

"Originally it is an act that is not allowed, but given that I was also horny, I'll forgive you."

I looked up at Ariel.

Smiling mischievously, she gave me a wink.

That smile is one I haven't seen for a long time.

Nowadays, she only carries a fake smile. This is the smile from her younger days.

"Haah..."

I was forgiven.

Even though my speech and action were a betrayal, I was forgiven.

I was not blamed.

"Well, then."

When I take a breath, Ariel turned around to my pale father.

My father humbled himself upon seeing her gaze.

"What shall I do?"

My father's judgement.

By forgiving my betrayal, the air in the place has changed a little.

Generosity seems to be in the air.

However, my father's crime is heavy.

He tried to take Ariel's life.

If you try to make excuses you will not be forgiven as I was.

You did not act without reason.

While I was in thought, Rudeus approached us and spoke.

"Earlier, Darius had claimed that Sauros-sama's execution was his own plot. Philemon-sama didn't participate in it "

"...What happened to Darius?"

"Dead... I killed him."

"...Is that so, then let's put all the blame on Darius."

As she said that, Ariel turned to face behind me.

Unaware, Eris and Ghyslaine were already behind me.

If I had kept holding Ariel, I might have been cut down from behind.

"Ghyslaine, is that alright with you?"

"I..."

Ghyslaine has a dissatisfied face.

Does she want to cut off my father's head so much?

And then there's Eris pulling Ghyslaine's tail tightly.

Ghyslaine looked surprised and trembled at that sensation. She focused on Eris.

When she released her hand, Eris raised her chin and folded her hands.

"Ghyslaine. My grandfather's enemy, please endure him a while longer!"

"...If Eris-ojousama says so."

At those words, Ariel turned towards my father with a satisfied look.

"So that's how it is, Philemon-sama. You'll receive judgement at a later time."

"Ha ...!"

That's certainly generous towards my father, he was prostrating on the floor.

You will not go without blame, but at least your life has been spared.

"Luke... I'm sorry..."

His voice was weak, but I felt his warmth.

I looked around.

While saying something, Sylphy is clinging to Rudeus who was patting her head.

With her face down embarrassed, altogether Sylphy's appearance doesn't look too bad.

Eris is talking about something with Ghyslaine.

I heard her voice because it's loud, but she is talking proudly, [Rudeus was saying it before, this is what I call reading the atmosphere.]

Perugius is unchanged.

From what I can see, he still has an amused expression.

I wonder if there is something amusing for Armored Dragon King-sama in the exchange just now.

My father left with plain clothes.

His figure is still small, but seems to be somewhat more composed.

And crying over the dead body of the Water God is apprentice knight Isolte or something.

There is no sign of her coming after us.

Darius seems to be dead.

With his strongest backer gone, Grabell sits on a chair exhausted.

Nobles are flocking to his surrounding, but they will not be able to much longer...

Nobles from Ariel's faction are looking over with puzzled faces.

Among them, Tris is standing with her parents.

There are no more enemies.

Thus, the curtain falls on the battle for Asura Kingdom.

10 days have passed since Darius was defeated.

Defeating Water God Reida, defeating Auber, overthrowing Darius, and Perugius coming to the Asura Kingdom were enough to overwhelm Grabell.

Philemon was stripped of his position, and now he is under house arrest in his territory.

Luke became the Notus family head, and Luke's big brother seems to fill the role of his assistant.

Luke's brother is sociable, from that they can expect a smooth transition through the political war.

He's the one who practically makes decisions instead of Luke.

Initially, Ghyslaine was still hostile towards Philemon.

But Luke's brother, who was praising Ghyslaine and even went as far as making a marriage proposal to her, helped dissolve the tension.

Like a dog being happily praised by its master, she looks somewhat proud.

By the way, Ghyslaine is still working as Ariel's escort.

She has already become a permanent employee now.

I don't know what her true feelings are, but let's say she is good at this point.

Let me talk in order about what happened in the 10 days following the battle at the venue.

First Day. The matter with Orsted.

After defeating Darius, our triumphant return from the venue led to a victory celebration.

As expected from Ariel, but I was exhausted and retired to my room.

Even if I say that, after returning to my room, all I could think about was how Sylphy openly confessed her love for me by saying [I choose Rudi] in public.

Honestly, because I was dumped in the diary, I was feeling a little anxiety.

For her to proudly choose me in front of so many people...

She's a better girl than I deserve.

However, Sylphy also seemed tired, at the end of the game without having to rush the second round.

Sylphy fell asleep peacefully.

I bathed with cold water to cool myself.

On the way back, Eris was bursting into me with rough breaths and still in battle excitement, admiring me wildly.

I think, Eris is a wild young lady who has learned to control her malice.

The next day my spirit was so drained I felt as if I didn't have the energy to breathe and shriveled up like a dried fish.

Then a maid came with a letter addressed to me.

The letter was sealed with a crest of a dragon.

No doubt, it's an office memo.

The contents of the memo were brief, expressing concern over any injuries and stating the location of today's meeting.

The conference room was in a cemetery located on the edge of the nobles' residential area.

Not only is the cemetery old and unkempt, it's also a wide and lonely place, like an island in the middle of the capital.

The conference room is in a crypt below one of the tombs.

This seems like a place that would be filled with the undead at night.

There one who is more frightening than the undead lurked.

"Have you come, Rudeus Greyrat?"

"Yes, I'm here!"

Sitting on the coffin, Orsted was waiting with one hand on his chin.

What he's doing now is disrespectful towards the deceased.

I cannot bring myself to sit on the coffin, so I begin making tables and chairs with earth magic and set up a candle that was brought.

"Please."

"Oh, pardon me."

Under invitation from the chairman, I also sit after him.

Well, it's the start of the meeting.

"First of all, let me congratulate your hard work, Rudeus. Now, Ariel becoming king is confirmed "

"Can't it not be confirmed until the previous king's death? Or has it already been established?"

I heard that in his old age the King was suffering from an incurable disease... but, there is still time until his death.

During that time, Grabell's faction will definitely try to struggle to regain their position, and not just once or twice.

We can't let our guard down yet.

We still need to ensure Ariel takes the throne.

There are still uncertainties.

Water King Isolte whose teacher was killed in front of her eyes...

The Boreas house who sided with Darius...

I should be very careful of these two.

They've been forced into a corner, they will likely do everything within their power to lash out.

I had thought this... but.

"Oh, Ariel had already become king when she received Perugius's backing. Defeating Darius was only a matter of time."

Orsted seems confident.

For me, I won't be sure yet, but he seems to think everything is already set in stone.

"You look confused, Rudeus Greyrat."

Oops, looks like he could tell from my face.

"I ~~ee, I was wondering, Orsted-sama. There are still some parts that I can't be sure of."

"..."

Orsted is staring at me.

Honestly, does just saying that mean I don't trust my president?

All I'm trying to say is that it's not over yet.

"Iya~, look, Orsted-sama, are you sure that you didn't miss anything? Maybe if looks like the end, but we can't make sure that Hitogami didn't leave anything behind as parting gift right? So, there is no reason to say that this is already over."

"..."

That's all I can say, I have no choice now but to remain silent.

Orsted is still hiding something from me.

Surely, he won't tell someone like me what it's is.

"I'm formerly Hitogami's apostle anyway, you don't need to tell me..."

Those words came out clearly from me.

Words that I did not intend to let out.

A slip of the tongue.

Hearing that, Orsted rises.

Observing me with his tremendous power.

"Iyaa, I, I'm sorry, I didn't mean it like that... It's not like I'm unhappy with things that you didn't tell me."

"Certainly, Rudeus Greyrat, I did not trust you completely."

While fully opening my foresight eye, I'm looking for a way to escape.

It is useless, I'm surrounded by Orsted's shadow.

When I run away, he will catch up to me immediately.

It can't be helped, showing my belly is the only way.

"This time, the likelihood of you betraying me was also taken into account, I was constantly monitoring you."

Monitoring.

Well, I can believe it.

Orsted's mood, even Auber, everybody seems to have been watching me while I was on the job.

"But you have proven that you are not a man that's just all talk, you can be trusted."

"...."

"I must also apologize to you, Rudeus Greyrat. I have lied to you."

After having said that, Orsted sat back down.

"You lied?"

After asking again, Orsted was showing a scary face.

Well, he has a difficult face.

This man, I think he must put a little more time to practice his smiling face.

Smiling is a cornerstone of communication.

Then again I've been told I'm not very good at it either.

"Yes. I told you before that in exchange for obtaining the power to see fate, by using the secret technique created by the first generation Dragon God to fight Hitogami, I am separated from the principles of the world."

"Yes."

That was how he could see a rough version of the future.

"Half of it is a lie. I don't have any power to see the future."

Hmm...

"So, the part about being separated from the principles of the world is true, right?"

"Yes. But, Rudeus Greyrat. What do you think it means to be separated from the principles of the world?"

I wonder if there's a hint somewhere.

For example, the curse.

Orsted has been cursed to become hated.

No, that shouldn't matter.

"The slow recovery of magic... is a side effect, I suppose."

"Yes, my magic recovery is significantly slow and in exchange Hitogami can't interfere with me. But, did not you think this was strange? Hadn't you questioned why the first generation Dragon God included a disadvantageous trait like that in his own secret technique? "

Even if you ask why...

In order to avoid Hitogami's interference, weren't you forced to use the technique despite such a disadvantage?

But no... When using Orsted's bracelet for protection, I don't have such a disadvantage.

"The first generation Dragon God devised a secret technique to win against Hitogami with absolute certainty."

"...."

"That secret technique sacrifices my mana recovery rate in order to, no matter when and where I die, let me redo things from the beginning with my memories intact."

Redo.

In other words, Orsted really is...

"The beginning refers to the winter of Dragon Armor Year 330. The northern part of the central continent, inside a nameless forest. My time extends for about 200 years. Once I've exceeded that time limit, if I haven't killed Hitogami, I'm forcibly reset to that point. Even if I die along the way."

Time leap.

I thought that it was possible, but...

To think that was really the case.

"You who have already witnessed the time teleportation ought to believe it."

"Yeah, true..."

The future me, got the inspiration to travel through time from a Dragon Race ruin.

The Dragon Race had arcane magic that could reincarnate one into the future from the past.

In that case, the Dragon God being capable of time leap magic, is not strange at all.

Anyway, It could summarized into something like that.

"Um, then, about how many times has Orsted-sama already resetted?"

"I stopped counting after 100 times."

Orsted hatefully spits out words like those of Rashou.

Well, that's 100 times 200 years, 20,000 years.

He's been continually looping for more than 20,000 years?

It feels like I'm getting dizzy...

"However, in these hundreds of loops, I've seen the battle of Grabell and Ariel many times. Who is necessary, who is unnecessary. What is needed for Ariel to win, what is needed for Grabell to win. And at this stage, Grabell can't make a comeback. Ariel's victory is guaranteed."

"Is that true even if Hitogami is involved?"

"Yes. Because Hitogami doesn't carry over his memories, he doesn't know that I reset, but I know of his existence, and ever since I began fighting him, I've participated in battles like this many times. And in all of those patterns, at some point Hitogami backs away."

"And you're saying this point is one of them?"

"That's right."

I get it.

Orsted's explanation sounds convincing, he's seen this fight play out hundreds of times, he has tens of thousands of years of experience.

Then there may be exceptions?

I suppose at some point, when put in exactly the same situation, people will take similar actions...

However the situation is never exactly the same, so the possibility of an exception should exist...

"So, you can be at ease. If we've already brought things this far, Ariel will be king."

"I understand"

If you're saying that, then Ariel will become king.

Orsted will only lose confidence in me if I have too much anxiety.

"Orsted-sama. Can you really win against Hitogami?"

"Yeah, I'll win. I've already established what's necessary and what preparations are required to defeat him. You're here this time too. I am only one step away."

Then, I will believe those words.

Although Orsted can't see the future, and it's seems like he's been reset many times now, it doesn't matter...

Because I have no choice but to do this.

Let's do my best.

In order to protect my family.

Day 3.

Isolte came to visit the mansion we're staying in.

By the way, Ariel gave me this house.

It is one of Ariel's private houses, although it's smaller than her second house, it's still about two times larger than my home in Sharia.

It even came with a full set of employees to manage the household.

As a villa in the Asura Kingdom, it looks good and feels free to use.

The house is good.

But Isolte.

Did she come to see Eris?

Or is she here for revenge?

Although I was casting skeptical glances and remained vigilant, she received our polite hospitality.

After greeting the maids, Eris guided her to the living room.

Eris asked for a maid to bring the tea, Eris' attitude towards Isolte was very friendly.

I am a gentleman.

There will be no stiff shoulders in my house.

Though Aisha's a maid, not a servant.

Isolte seems curious about my presence.

While being vigilant, she bowed and began introductions.

"Nice to meet you, my name is Isolte Cruel. Me and Eris became acquainted in the Holy Land of the Sword. Please treat me well even after this "

"Thank you very much, my name is Rudeus Greyrat. Husband of Eris."

After my greeting, she blatantly frowned.

"So... it's you."

Yes, it is me.

It seems that I'm quite hated, though I knew that from her conversation with Eris the other day.

"... Yes, I'm Rudeus"

"The one who ditched Eris, and also married another two wives after that?"

"..... Yes."

I know this feeling.

It's the same feeling I have with Cliff.

A newcomer to the Millis congregation!

"Surely, I had mistaken you with that womanizer knight named Luke."

"Well, I didn't mean to lie?"

"No it's fine, because I just misunderstood."

Isolte was smiling and looking quite glad.

"Nevertheless... You cherish Eris more than I thought, don't you?"

"Does it seem like that?"

She asked that abruptly.

I do not know what it means to cherish Eris, but Eris is important to me.

However, I do not think in exchange up to now that there has been such an element.

"Water King Isolte came to see us.

Disciple of the Water God Reida who was killed in our venue.

Possibly, she might be the enemy of Princess Ariel.

Possibly, she might have come for revenge.

Possibly, Eris might pull out her sword.

I need to protect her. I need to fight with her...

That's what's written on your face."

Mu, such long sentences are written on my face?

Recently, my face has become easy to read.

Should I keep practicing my smile again?

Well, it's fine.

"You're saying that's related to cherishing Eris?"

"If you didn't, you would just leave her alone. She's your third wife, after all."

I don't really like Eris being called my third wife, because I have decided to disregard the order.

"Honesty, I've been thinking, I expected Eris to be neglected a bit more. She's usually only strengthening her arms, body, and sword. She's not a good talker, her circumstances are..."

Like a dominant husband.

Yes, Eris is not very talkative.

There isn't much talk about on her side, and when it's night she requests my body..... ara?

A dominant wife?

No, rather than not talking, we still do stuff together like training.

"That Eris is happy, I was relieved a little."

"If you are so, then I am also happy."

When I said that, Isolte laughed.

It's a crystal clear smile.

Though it looks neat and clean, I can feel her sex appeal.

She'll become very popular some day, but she's still in budding form.

After she marries, she will become a flower.

That's the charm of married woman group.

E, Eris-san.

It is painful if you're stepping on my foot.

"So, what are you here for? Rudeus is mine, so I won't give him to you."

Eris showing an honest attitude as usual.

"I don't need something like that."

"Then what, a duel?"

She called me 'that'. Disheartening.

Isolte had a troubled face.

"Nevertheless, there is also teacher's last will, but Ariel-sama also didn't make a fuss about the Water God Style incident. I will never turn into her enemy."

As scheduled, as soon as the period of apprentice knight ends, Isolte, I hear she was going to be recruited as knight.

She will replace her master as the fencing coach.

A title might be possible as well.

"Regarding Master, there are also many who sympathize with her in the royal palace. Princess Ariel herself didn't want to turn Water God Style into her enemy."

"Well, isn't that so."

Well I can imagine, swordsmen in this world are monsters.

But they still yield to those with higher standings rather than face them as enemies.

A person whose strength is in their sword is better as an ally.

"With that, we could escape from the fate of having our dojo demolished, so I'm fine with it."

The story was that Reida was the sole perpetrator.

A single crazy person after Ariel's head.

Even in place filled with political strife, it's unbelievable that an assassin would act so brazenly.

An assassin that attacks in public will have nowhere to run.

Although we could bear witness to the truth, blame would certainly follow.

When it comes to the power struggle between Ariel, Grabell, and Darius, even I want to erase her blame to some extent.

Even after this incident, Ariel did not want to exact revenge against the Water God Style.

Fighting against the Water God Style... I want to avoid fights I don't have a sure chance of winning.

It's a mutually beneficial arrangement, so no one will be blamed for this.

"It was a shame that Master died, but at least she was able to die a warrior's death, even in peace time. It was what she wished for. As for me, I was more shocked because I wasn't informed."

It seems Isolte wasn't seriously concerned regarding Reida's death.

This sort of attitude is almost like an adventurer.

"Certainly... even if I want to exact revenge, the other side has Ghyslaine and Eris. I'm also lacking against Rudeus-sama, so it's pointless."

Isolte was likely feeling a little regret.

I wonder, are you a little regretful that you did not chase Orsted in that place?

"I don't mind fighting solo."

"Please do not make that kind of joke, Eris. Now I have a duty to protect the dojo. If I'm fighting another crazy swordsman like you, I might get permanent damage."

Crazy.

It's a word that fits Eris.

"A dojo is just a stupid thing"

"Can you really say that after abandoning your house's status and obligations?"

"..."

Eris was silent.

With an uncomfortable expression.

Isolte said that with mischievous eyes.

"Well, it hasn't been a year yet since our parting, let's enjoy the moment together and strengthen our bond "

"Yeah, Yeah!"

Eris's cheeks were flushed, she looked as if she seriously thought that.

However, Isolte's expression is completely the opposite.

Geez, you have the face to me, I'll limit it to keep giving the meat to the dog.

She's good at handling people like Eris.

"The main reason I came today is to see Eris. Because it's been long-awaited, I will guide you through the Imperial City "

"Yeah. It's the place you left for after we separated! Let's go!"

"Rudeus-san, please come along with us."

She might end up quarreling with Eris somewhere.

And it's possible her the conversation until now has been a lie. Eris may be led into a trap where many Water God style disciples lie in wait, so I should go with her.

"... Then, allow me to tag along."

With that said, we started exploring the Imperial City along with Isolte.

Despite my concerns, Isolte guided us around the town normally and seemed to have fun spending time with Eris.

Acting like this just a few days after her master had died...

Well, it may just be her personality.

Fifth day.

A dinner invitation came from the Boreas house.

The invitation was for myself and Sylphy.

It was an invitation to dine without Eris.

Is it poison?

Needless to say, we were very vigilant.

Based on their story, it seemed they wanted to get close to Ariel through me.

They didn't include Eris because they still feel wary.

If seems that they're holding a little grudge towards Eris, but they've decided to let it go for now.

Eris and Boreas are already opposing each other.

It would be annoying for them if Eris tried to return to Boreas after this long.

Though that doesn't matter. Eris is mine.

At that dinner, I gave them some vague answers.

Day 8.

Let me take the time to recount the current state of affairs.

Tris has returned to the aristocracy.

Her standing is the same as Elmore and Kleene, Ariel's longtime servants.

Ariel seems to think that a back door to the thieves' group is available, and is using Tris to broker deals with them behind the scenes.

Luke and Ariel are moving energetically toward the future, they likely have no time to spare.

Darius's death caused a little confusion in the Royal Palace.

Though that's not important since Ariel is stepping up to become King.

Perugius returned to the Sky Castle, leaving one familiar behind in the Royal Palace.

When I sincerely gave him my condolences about his two familiars being killed, he replied that they could be revived in the Sky Castle.

Familiars sure are convenient.

As you said Orsted, everything is progressing smoothly.

It looks like there's nothing left for me to do anymore.

My work was over.

So let's go home soon.

After sending that message to Ariel, she immediately scheduled to meet me the next day.

At Night.

Ariel's Boudoir in the Royal Palace.

I was accompanied by Sylphy; I wanted to avoid being suspected of cheating on my wives as much as possible, so I decided to visit Ariel with her.

I wasn't asked to come alone.

Ariel's boudoir was ultra-luxurious.

Of course, it's part of the Royal Palace, but it's as big as a house.

The furniture's fluffiness is the highest grade. The sofa feels like it will melt.

Everything was shining brightly even though it wasn't metallic, probably because it's top class in this world.

Usually a room like this would be filled with maids.

But it seems that Ariel dismissed them for our meeting.

In a cold and empty room lined with luxurious furniture, Ariel poured wine for me.

"Please."

"Thank you."

Purple liquid was poured into a set of golden cups.

Wine.

I wonder if it's high quality.

"So Sylphy also came."

"Yeah, because if Rudi is meeting alone with a beauty in the middle of night, a strange rumor might spread."

"Well. Certainly, I don't know what will happen in a private meeting."

Ariel laughed, but Sylphy was not laughing.

I wonder if she didn't think that was a joke.

"If it's Rudi, it will somehow really happen."

There's no trust in my lower body.

Well, there is no way there would be.

But, I have confidence in Sylphy.

That time she said that she was prepared to pick me over Ariel...

Honestly, my heart skipped a beat then.

But it seems that to Sylphy, Ariel is a praying mantis that wants to eat me.

"Now then."

After having finished pouring the wine, Ariel also sat on her seat.

"Rudeus-sama. I would like to say my thanks again. Thanks, for what you've done so far."

"No, it is the result of your efforts Ariel-sama."

Ariel's personal connections in Ranoa kingdom have proved useful.

She's filled the hole left behind by the deceased Darius.

She's promoted talented people to replace the important posts held by the Grabell faction.

If she keeps up her current pace, Ariel will have complete control of Asura Kingdom.

"Giving me advice to convince Perugius-sama, advice for the trip, advises for other cases... If I didn't get your advice at that time, Rudeus-sama, I would still be frustrated even now."

"I'm feeling embarrassed now."

"Really, like Sylphy said. It might be good to spend one night together."

While saying that, Ariel sent a bewitching glance to me.

My eyes quickly wandered to certain places, like Ariel's nape, but after being glared at by Sylphy, I hurriedly hung down my head...

Ariel returned with a smile.

"Well, though that part was a joke, the part about my thanks is true."

"Your gratitude is, well..."

Because of this incident, I got a house.

That house would probably be good to use as my vacation home in the future...

"Is there anything you want? You promised in front of Luke that you wanted neither a title nor land but, is there anything unusual that I may freely provide?"

I have considered this.

What I can obtain from Ariel...

Basically anything.

Asura Kingdom has just about everything.

Maybe magic manuals?

Oh, no.

There was one.

One thing to ask.

"There is one thing, at first this will take some time, but I have already planned it out. Please set up and put up for sale my figurine and book set. It is in the image of the Supard Race, but if I have Royal authorization it will be easier to do business."

"Oh, is that what you were talking about with Perugius-sama?"

"Yeah, is that difficult?"

In Asura kingdom, the Millis religion is popular.

Even with permission from the royal family, selling the likeness of a Magic Race...

It's possible to cause some friction.

"It is not that difficult. It's important to prepare workshops as well for mass-producing."

"What about the Millis doctrine, will they be all right with it?"

"It's all right. That sort of thing can be solved with money."

O~h, the power of money!

That's good.

Becoming the Asura Kingdom's King was the same as becoming the richest man in the world.

"So, if there is progress after I return..."

"Yes, I will wait."

I got a studio and sponsors.

After that the plan's growth depends on Julie.

It certainly was written in the diary, that I successfully make a picture book and sell it.

...Also, I must find a painter.

To interest as many people as possible, the best option is still a picture book.

There are many people who can't read, but picture books can be viewed by anyone.

While I was starting to see dollar signs, Ariel straightened her posture, and turned to Sylphy.

"Sylphy, thanks for the hard work."

"... Yeah. Ariel-sama, also cheers for your good work."

Yesterday, Sylphy officially ended her job as Ariel's escort.

It seems the takeover procedures were also finished yesterday, so she has a lot of free time.

"After the other day, I guess there's no more need for me?"

"Yes. It is all right now. Thank you very much for protecting me for such a long time."

As she said that, Ariel bowed deeply to Sylphy. Really deeply.

Ariel lowering her head was an unusual scene.

"Ariel-sama, please raise your head"

"But, I do not want to lie to you, I really can't think of any reward good enough for Sylphy. This feeling is the only thing that I could give you. I want to tell you, with my feelings and words. You've helped me very much."

"It's okay, because we're friends, of course I'll help you."

While saying so, Sylphy continued to grip Ariel's hand.

A friendship for ten years, right?

It's nice, a relationship like this.

"But Sylphy, I'll come to play some time "

"Yeah, well, if you have any errands towards the Ranoa... I doubt it's a place you can just show up at."

"Well, when I'm a guest at Ranoa Castle. At that time, I will send the invitation."

"Haha, that's like a VIP guest."

Then, Ariel and Sylphy spent some time talking and laughing together.

While listening to them, I was reminded of when I met Sylphy for the first time.

It was an image of Sylphy walking all alone.

The Sylphy who was pelted with mud balls by other children, failing to offer any resistance.

That Sylphy was now talking and laughing with the princess of a country.

Such a thing, was somehow, quite the happy scene.

Then, the day I leave Asura kingdom arrived.

Day of departure.

Early morning.

Before the sun rose, a person appeared.

It's Ghyslaine.

Bringing three wooden swords with her, she came to the mansion.

What do you want? What do you plan to do?

I mean, even without the need to explain I somehow knew why she came.

Eris and I received a wooden sword in silence, and went out to the garden after changing our clothes.

The garden of the house is quite wide, but because of the various flowers that are planted here, I feel it's a little cramped.

However, I think it's enough for what we will do now.

Standing in the garden, before Ghyslaine, Eris and I raise our swords.

Sylphy with a sleepy face, sitting on a chair not far away from us.

A maid who had been working since early morning came to watch out of curiosity.

"Let's start the lesson."

With Ghyslaine's words, taking the swords on our waists, Eris and I bowed.

"Thank you."

Ghyslaine gave a small nod and she took up her sword.

Our training began.

"Let's start like usual: 1, 2!"

Following Ghyslaine's voice and movement, Eris and I swung our wooden swords.

In the quiet garden, sounds of the wooden swords being swung broke the silent atmosphere.

Compared to Ghyslaine and Eris's movements, my sword movements look dull.

But, Ghyslaine never gave her reproach.

When I learned the art of the sword from her, she would give me a pointer every time I swung my sword.

Today, she didn't say anything.

"Rudeus! Don't space out!"

"Yes!"

But I wasn't!

Is there anything wrong with my stance?

It should be fine.

Because even I can do something like this.

"197! 198! 199! 200! Swinging practice, stop!"

200. With just this, Ghyslaine stopped her movement.

Eris and Ghyslaine had sweat enough to soak their clothes.

After only 200 swings.

This is because those 200 swings were performed to the utmost of their abilities.

It's not only about number.

However, their breath is not rough.

Well me too.

This kind of movement is only a warm-up.

"Then, let's start with Gale Kata Style!"

"Yes!"

Poised with the wooden swords in the standard form, Eris and I swung with movements we were suited for.

Never wavering.

This was a form that was entirely familiar to us.

A fundamental form of the Sword God Style, I had also taught this to Norn.

After marrying Eris, this was something she and I had done every day.

"All right, stop!"

When all the exercises to be performed in the training were completed, Ghyslaine stopped us.

"Pair training!"

With her command, Eris and I faced each other.

It refers to paired practice with two people involved.

In most cases, it's called hands on practice.

In kendo, the one who receives the attack is the senior.

But, now Eris is the one who's attacking.

It was like that long ago, it's still like that even after marriage.

Then, it's still practiced even now.

"Start!"

"Raaaaaa!"

With Ghyslaine's words, Eris started attacking me.

Because it is only kata she isn't so fast.

But I couldn't keep up with her attack speed, and it ended without me making a move.

Of course, there is no such thing as holding back in Sword God Style.

Eris in the past had no control.

Now she does.

"Switch!"

Now it's my turn to attack, but my sword couldn't reach her at all.

There's no need for me to hold back either.

Not only that, but there is a difference in the swordsmanship between Eris and me.

The condition will be somewhat better if I use Foresight Eye, but I don't use it this time.

Because I didn't have it when I was in Fedoa territory.

So I don't use it now.

"All right, stop!"

In response to orders from Ghyslaine, Eris and I stop our swords.

If it is the usual, we would follow by practicing the basics.

My Foresight Eye and Eris neither of us need basic training, the result is obvious for whoever saw our match.

And, when I was thinking that, Ghyslaine looked at me then gestured to the sidelines.

"Rudeus! You're out!"

I fall back, Ghyslaine came to replace me.

I took about five steps back and sat on the lawn.

Ghyslaine facing Eris, she raised her sword to her hip.

"Eris this is the last."

".... Yes."

Eris nodded, setting up her stance.

She had not taken a proper upper body stance during her training with me.

Ghyslaine took an Iaido stance while Eris pointed her sword to the heavens.

Those two stances are in contrast.

Cold sweat sprouts on my back.

the atmosphere became heavy, time has stopped.

I somehow saw that they're seriously going at each other.

That moment seemed to last forever.

There, a breeze could be felt.

.... There was no signal.

"...."

And Ko~o~o~on, only that sound rang.

My eyes couldn't keep up with their movement.

I was only able to see the result.

Both of their swords moved in a flash.

If there was any difference, Ghyslaine's sword seems to be deflected slightly.

While Eris's sword, if slightly moved, could have struck Ghyslaine.

"....."

"....."

for a while, those two didn't move from their previous stance.

After a little while they slowly drawback their swords.

Eris's lips forms a "へ" shape.

Ghyslaine gives an earnest face.

Giving a small nod, Ghyslaine said.

"With this, I will end the practice."

"Thank you very much-!"

At her words, I bowed while remained in my sitting position.

Raising my head, Eris while biting her lower lip, had continued bowing her head down.

Wrinkled on the middle of the forehead, Ghyslaine patted Eris's cheek.

"It's farewell. Eris-ojousama..."

"M, master also... you, you are also very skillful!"

Eris looked up, almost brought to the brink of tears, and once again bowed.

Ghyslaine did not say anything more than that.

Just gave me a glance at the end, and went away from the house.

From her eye, will to ask the young lady can't be true to her own feeling.

It would not be a misunderstanding to me.

I stood up for Ghyslaine, and once again, bowed by bending my waist deeply.

She taught me the sword art, she protected Eris.

I can't thank her enough.

"Waaa! Waaaaa!"

The moment Ghyslaine was out of sight...

Eris cried.

While shouting to distract herself from the sadness, in a voice like it could reach forever, she cried.

Before our departure.

Many people came to see Sylphy off.

Although most of the people who came were nobles from Ariel´s faction,

And most of them did not even know that Sylphy was a woman,

They were surprised to hear that she was married to me.

However, just because of that it's not like their attitude toward Sylphy changed.

They left again after saying a short thank you.

Sylphy has corresponded with a smile to those people,

It probably was not a very polite manner.

"I'm tired of this kind of thing", I said while grumbling.

The next ones that came to Sylphy were two women.

Elmore Bluewolf.

Kleene Elrond.

Two people I am not aquainted with, but they're Sylphy's close friends.

That I see them sometime and they are had also told their farewell in tears.

Towards the end, Luke came.

He could only spare about 15 minutes.

As Ariel's assistant, and as a local lord,

He has become more and more busy and came to say goodbye during a vacancy in his schedule.

" Sylphy... err, take care of yourself"

"Yes."

Luke looked like he felt a little guilty toward Sylphy. It seems he finds it hard to look her in the eyes.

"Sorry for the thing that I said before."

"No, Luke at that time you were feeling uneasy and it could not be helped. But that shows how much you really care about Ariel-sama, if it was me, I couldn't bring myself do that."

"Is that so...? Thank you."

"You're welcome, I also... said some strange things before."

"Indeed."

After saying that, both of them laughed.

After they had laughed for a while, Luke looked for words with an "Uh..." while giving a wry smile.

And Luke dropped a bombshell.

"Sylphy, if you no longer have a place at Rudeus's home... Come to my place."

The moment I heard that, my body became stiff.

I mean, you know, it's not the place for a marriage proposal, right?

I would prefer if you did not say that when her husband is right next to her...

"I won't break up with Rudi... or even if you said that I won't marry Luke even if that happens, okay?"

"No, it's not a marriage proposal. However, if a time comes when you don't have any place to go, I won't hesitate to welcome you."

Luke sounds so manly.

Putting romantic feelings aside, he'll be there for you when you need him?

Don't say something so confusing.

But, cold sweat can be seen on Luke´s forehead.

I wonder if Luke feels some unrequited love towards Sylphy.

And you keep saying that you're not interested in women that have no breasts...

No, that was also a hidden warning to me.

I need to do better.

"Although I think that this will not be the case, I'll come to play every year."

"Oh, also take care."

"Yeah, Luke also take care."

After saying that, Luke left.

Compared to Eris, it was a quick farewell.

Well, because this life is full with meeting and parting, he is that kind of person.

It's a long life.

As long as we live, there will be the opportunity to meet again.

"Rudeus."

While in thought, Luke came to me.

What is this about, I guess?

You want to fight again?

"I'm sorry for doubting you during our journey."

He apologized.

"No, it can't be helped since I did make many suspicious moves."

Luke was tricked by Hitogami that time.

However, in the end even I saw Ariel and Luke as pawns. I was wary of their behavior, actions and speech.

Although I knew that the possibility of Luke being Hitogami's apostle was high.

Since he is not alone in this, he is not at fault.

"Beside, I also doubted Luke-sempai, so we are even."

"... I am saved by those words."

Luke smiled as he scratched his cheek.

"Rudeus, if you become unsatisfied with Sylphy's body, then come to my house. In Notus's house there are plenty of beautiful women with a great figure."

"Luke."

At Sylphy's angry voice, Luke's body shook and shirked. He was barely able to smile.

"That was just a joke."

And, Luke returned back to his horse.

He looked good while riding away on his white horse.

He looks like a prince from some country.

"Rudeus, take care of Sylphy. Sylphy, please be safe and well."

With those words, he rode off.

Although our first meeting was bad, we gradually got along with each other.

If Paul hadn't left his house, I would've grown up under the same roof as him.

If that were the case I would have probably got along with him better.

While thinking that, Sylphy and I watched his back.

Well, I said my goodbyes.

All that's left is to head home.

No... there is no need for a long journey back, Perugius can send me.

During this 10-day period Perugius seemed to have assembled a transition magic team at the royal castle.

Go to the Sky Castle with him, then teleport to the ruins near the outskirts of magic city Sharia.

From there, home sweet home is only half a day away.

What a disappointing way to go back.

From what Eris described, it looked like she was hoping to take a month or more on the way home.

"What? I didn't cry like an idiot!"

And, I was beaten.

No, I think that farewells are important.

But I did ruin the moment.

Eris's precious tears are too good.

But I can understand what Eris was thinking. Ghyslaine also seems to think the same way.

Like student, like teacher.

Among them, I just abruptly appeared.

Hey, it's not like Perugius is charging us transfer fees. For him it is a simple matter.

.....but no, it won't do any good for me. It's an emergency route.

Orsted is also capable of creating magic teleport formations,

We might be able to build a direct route to each country, not only in the Asura kingdom,

If those magic formations were known only to us, then not even Hitogami could destroy them.

All right.

Next time I'll propose it.

Since using magic teleportation circles are forbidden, we left the city and secretly snuck back in, to enter Perugius's Sky Castle.

By the time we got there, the sun had completely set.

Therefore we were allowed to spend the night in the castle.

Currently I am in one of the Sky Castle's rooms.

With me are Eris, Sylphy.

Before, we arrived with eight people.

Now, only three people returned.

As expected, I feel a bit lonely.

While thinking that, I was looking at the flames of the fireplace.

With the bed in the back, Sylphy and Eris slept side by side.

Although they got their own rooms...

Sylphy, and Eris, for some reason, said they want to sleep in the same room with me.

It was possible to consider that they were there for a reason.

Possibly, it may be that it was the day of YES today.

But, because Eris hesitated when it comes to 3P, it's become NO.

Anyway, we manage to sleep in a row given the space, but somehow I can't sleep.

While watching the flames dance in the fireplace, I became lost in thought.

My surroundings are quiet.

Only the sound of the fire could be heard.

While watching it, I collected my thoughts.

I won.

I won against Hitogami.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that it was a great victory.

There were no casualties on our side, we defeated all the Apostles, and we made Ariel Queen.

Well, there's still some time until the coronation...

However, too much anxiety will make a great victory tasteless.

Ultimately, this victory was all because of Orsted's plan.

It's an important victory, but this is just round 1.

In the future, he will continue this battle.

Thinking of the outcome of such battles will only invite anxiety and worry.

I.... did I do alright?

Have I done everything I can this time?

I helped Ariel, almost died, became Orsted's underlying, and married Eris.

Was this... good enough?

"Rudi..."

When I was thinking like that, Sylphy suddenly woke up.

"Are you still awake?"

"Yeah."

"Isn't it late?"

She said while looking out the window.

Outside is dark.

Two people not sleeping, a considerable amount of time seems to have passed.

"Whew....."

Sylphy, deciding not to go back to sleep, sat next to me.

Sticking her body to mine, she leaned her head on my shoulder.

I was holding her shoulder as a matter of course.

"....."

For a while, I spend time in silence.

Sylphy's warm body.

She was flushed to the point that I thought she had a fever.

Looking at the nape of her neck, I noticed Sylphy looking at me with upturned eyes.

Sylphy's pupils were somewhat out of focus.

I wanted to kiss her.

Putting power into my hand to bring her towards me, when Sylphy suddenly clearly said:

"Since the time I stopped being Ariel-sama's escort, I have felt a bit lost."

I decided to stop the kiss and hear the story.

"Everything, it's over..."

I looked at Sylphy's refreshing face.

Eight years, she has worked as an escort for Ariel.

Eight years.

From the age of 10 to 18.

In her youth, she was always with Luke and Ariel.

Perhaps, she might feel lost now.

Really, I wonder if I can take their place.

I'm already not Sylphy's friend.

Husband and wife should not be a substitute for friends.

"So Rudi. I was thinking. "

While I'm being silent, Sylphy said clearly.

"Until now, I couldn't always stay with Lucy because I was worried about Ariel-sama. But I think from now on, I will always stay together with her at home."

When I look at Sylphy, she had a face like she decided to do something.

"Lucy is growing bigger and bigger and now she needs me more than ever. "

While saying that, Sylphy pressed her head against my shoulder.

I pat her on the head.

Sylphy's head felt more feverish than usual.

"So, I think I will become a decent mother who dedicates herself to raising her children."

I do not think that Sylphy is a bad mother.

But, if I match it against the common sense of this world...

She could be considered to be neglecting her child.

Leaving their child's parenting to the maid is something that nobles do.

We're not nobles.

But, I'm not originally from this world.

I came from a country where it's not uncommon for both parents to work.

"Apart from that, is there anything you want to do?"

Sylphy is only 18.

In this world she's considered a respectable adult, but she's only 18.

She should still have dreams and aspirations.

It's understandable if she wants to do more with her life instead of rearing children.

But I'm glad she's trying to use raising children to improve herself.

Well, that is just a thought, but it might be a thing that comes from my lack of awareness as a father.

"Well... something I want to do, uh..."

Tilting her head, Sylphy looked up at me.

"Well I think, I wanted to be like Eris."

"Eris?"

As she said that, I think for a moment and my eyes begin wandering to her breasts.

I did wish for Sylphy's small bust to increase, but even I will be troubled if those become too big.

Well, if you want to become big... I can massage every day.

No, this isn't about her breasts.

"Yes. To be able to stand in the same position as Rudi and fight together. On an equal footing, helping each other and protecting Rudi's back. I think I want that kind of relationship."

"....."

"But Eris, and also Rudi are so far away that I can never hope to reach it. I've realized this."

I do not think such a thing.

Sylphy was more than enough strong.

Indeed, her rank may go down when compared with Eris.

But, that can't be helped.

Because Eris has lived her life only for that.

Instead, Sylphy has a lot of things to do that Eris didn't have.

"So, I gave up on this goal and will protect Rudi's back in another way."

Oh, So.

Unlike Eris, what of me that Sylphy will protect.

"Is it, mother?"

"Yeah, Roxy also seem to have no wish to stop being a teacher for a while. I will work hard, I will take care of the children in the house. I will raise the children properly and won't be afraid to show discipline, properly educating them, whenever you are out."

It is a welcome story.

And, it's a story that I'm sorry about.

I'm sure, in the near future I will not see too much of my family.

As the subordinate of Orsted, I'll likely see more and more work in the fight against Hitogami.

Just like this time, I will surely be forced to travel to lands far from home during the fight.

"Therefore Rudi. From now on, please leave it to me, alright?"

Anyway.

Sylphy is likely to have set on a new goal.

She found a place for herself.

With one stage done, she's taking the first step onto her next one.

"Yeah, I'm looking forward to hearing about everything from you."

Somehow, I've been thinking that suddenly I'm more and more helplessly falling in love with Sylphy.

Sylphy is always cute, she looks more cute than usual today.

It's the last straw, I can't hold it in anymore.

Drawing closer to her face, I kissed Sylphy.

Sylphy accepted it without any resistance.

Further, I moved my hand from her shoulder to her ass.

While hugging her, I noticed Sylphy's eyebrows distort in trouble.

" ...!"

...Then I stopped moving, like a warrior caught in Medusa's glare.

I feel the line of sight.

It's from... the bed.

Eris that should be sleeping was looking over here.

She was watching with wrath in her eyes.

I'm almost certain that she's humming [Dum dum] with her eyes.

Her eyes are like that of a raptor.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Jurassic Park film. }

When I see a scene like this, I feel that she will kill with the slightest sign.

Super scary.

"As I thought, I'm going to sleep soon."

"What? Ha... Yeah, me too."

Me and Sylphy crawling into bed where Eris is waiting for us.

Well, those things can wait until we get back.

In this castle, Perugius is always a voyeur.

"Already, Eris, please do not intrude..."

"I. I'm sorry... but, you're so sneaky, meanie..."

"I'm not sneaky... if you wish, want to do 3P now?"

"Mu, It's impossible, such things with three people it's embarrassing....."

Because Eris sounds so pathetic, I've gotten a bit embarrassed but... I wonder.

Oh well, while listening to those two people talking in a quiet voice, I was getting some comfortable satisfaction.

Sylphy's matter.

In Sylphy's heart, there was one great change.

In this matter, she appears to have grown significantly.

Then, wouldn't I also able to be change a little more?

Leave my back to her... to be changed to a positive.

While thinking so, I fell asleep.

Magic City Sharia, has not changed at all from two months ago.

My hometown now under construction, enlarged and is almost finished.

That's right.

Many feelings are accumulated inside my chest.

Orsted promised my family's safety.

To reunite with my family only to find Sharia turned into a pile of ashes and dust.

Donning a headband, Ariel and I would enter into war planning with our president.

Well, I'm relieved that I could joke about nothing in particular.

Passing through the square, we arrived in front our house.

There is no change whatsoever to my house.

It is not burnt, frozen, nor covered in thorns..

Beat was photosynthesizing in the garden, shaking its branch.

Jirou the Armadillo was taking a nap in the kennel.

Peaceful.

"I'm home!"

"Welcome home!"

Upon opening the front door, with a [Tatatata], Aisha jumped out.

Full of spirit, she jumped straight into my chest.

I'm fine.

Above all, this does not seem to change.

"The souvenirs? Have you bought souvenirs?"

"Yes, here is yours."

In a split second, Eris retrieved a box from the luggage.

Suddenly moving away from me, Aisha received it.

"Wow! Eris-nee, thank you!"

Aisha opened the box immediately and removed what was inside.

A ceramic that looks like a rice paddle.

An exquisite relief is engraved on the handle.

Looking at it, Aisha's eyes was beaming.

"It's a mirror! Like the one I saw at Shirone!"

"Yes."

Perhaps because of trade with Begaritto continent, Asura kingdom was selling many glasswork products.

Because it was only a short traveling time this time, I mainly bought glassworks and mirrors.

"Wo~~w.....amazi~~ing! It's amazing!"

"Fufun, you seem to like it!"

Looking at Aisha making a happy face, Eris boasted that she chose it with Sylphy.

Although Eris's sense is not bad, her original choice was too simple.

"When I look at myself, I am really cute...!"

While Aisha is praising herself, she is spinning round and round.

Lilia comes out a moment later, hitting Aisha on the head and adding in some rotation.

Watching a full spirited Aisha, somehow I feel relieved.

They're alright and full of vigor.

"... Lilia-san, Nothing strange happened right?"

I asked for now.

Lilia nodded lightly, expressionless as usual.

"Yes, we're all alright."

"Is that so."

It's good.

It was really good.

And still clinging to my chest, Aisha's expression suddenly darkened.

"Oh! But Onii-chan... Roxy-nee is..."

Roxy!?

What happen to Roxy!?

... No way, a miscarriage!?

No, if it's like that Lilia would have told me.

Or did she have to be hospitalized because her condition is bad?

"Roxy-nee~ is..."

And, when Aisha just stopped her words.

My line of sight is directed to a door leading to the living room.

From there, Roxy's face pokes out.

It looks like she is in low spirits.

"Roxy, I'm back."

At least, she does not look unhealthy.

I cannot see, but she doesn't look injured.

She is very healthy-looking.

"Rudi, welcome back."

Saying that, she remained in that pose and replied without coming here.

"I expected it to take a little more time, but it seems everything went well since you've come back as planned."

"Yes. Ariel-sama won the political war safely "

Well, it's not complete victory yet,

News that [Princess Ariel is dead!] might arrive at a later date...

Well, there is no need to say such a thing.

It's because those are the President's instructions.

"Really? That's good."

Roxy still doesn't reveal herself.

She is only showing her face.

Only face, it can't be that her body became more plump.

You mean.....Roxy has become chubby!?

Roxy's gonna say, there is a myth that her body will continue to become more plump even after giving birth!

It's not like you care about gaining weight?

Because most likely Eris's weight, is about twice that of Roxy?

"Oh, I'll tell you something Onii-chan. Roxy-nee somehow become a little too sensitive recently so you must tell her gently."

Aisha's words.

Sensitive.

When their weight increases during pregnancy, so too does their anxiety.

And, now that she's uneasy, it's my job to reassure her.

"It is not sensitive."

"Well, why have you been hiding your body all this time?"

When Sylphy said so, Roxy showed her body reluctantly.

I left my house, for about two months.

In the meantime, Roxy's stomach has become fairly larger.

If you think about it, with the weight increase during pregnancy it's a matter of course.

Because it's made... for holding the child inside.

Even so, her chest looks a little bigger.

Maybe some breast milk come out.

Yeah, let's taste it later...

Even so, she is an Migurd of the Magic Race... I wonder if they didn't change as much as the human race.

"Recently, I feel my body is not like my body. My stomach swelling, the inside moving here and there. Everyone said there is no need to be worry, but..."

"Oh, I understand. I also experienced it. But, at that time Rudi was not here."

With Sylphy's addition, my chest stung a little...

I'm so sorry.

Indeed, although it couldn't be helped at that time, I'm sorry.

"Ugh, Sylphy... Roxy... I'm sorry"

"What? Oh, Rudi, I didn't mean that. I'm not gonna blame you for that."

She was taken aback and said that, while her line of sight was swimming here and there.

"Well, Eris-san. Is it alright for me to spend my time alone with Rudi today?"

"Oh? Heh, Th -, that 's alright"

Eris was looking at Roxy's stomach and her own alternately.

I wonder if she had thought about her own pregnancy turn.

"So Rudi, with this you must spend your time with Roxy now, as for luggage, leave it to me... well, I wonder where is Lucy? "

"Zenith-sama is playing with Lucy-sama on the second floor."

"So that's where she is, thank you Lilia-san... ho~ra Eris come on."

"Okay."

Without waiting for my reply, those two go upstairs carrying the luggage.

Thus, Roxy and I moved to the living room.

In the living room, the sacred beast Leo was curling in front of the fireplace.

At the corner of the room, there is Jirou the Armadillo.

When Leo saw me he started barking happily and approached me while wagging his tail.

When I pat his head, he begins to lick my hand.

Oh, this guy loves it.

"....."

I sit on the sofa alongside Roxy.

Somehow, she doesn't want to show her body line too much to me, so she's only wearing a loose dress.

I wonder if she is worried about her body line disappearing.

Even though I think her current figure is attractive enough.

"Roxy?"

"Erm, how was your work? Did it go so well that you came back as scheduled?"

"Haven't I already said that before?"

It's unusual for Roxy to be panicking.

What happened to her. And the panicking Roxy is so cute.

Don't tempt me with such a cute reaction.

Although, during the journey there is no such thing that happened,

Feeling a sense of security from having completed my job, it seems my worldly desires have increased.

Anyway, the person who was a little sensitive suddenly appeared erotic.

As a man-that-you-could-easily-read, I must be careful to not show my desire too much.

Let's just give her some caring words.

All right.

"Err... your stomach has grown quite big, Can I pat it?"

"N, No good!"

Immediate answer.

It's no good?

W, Well, she is at her delicate time.

"Touching my breasts is also a NO."

I was told ahead.

It seems she already thinks that I want to grope her breast like always.

Well, I can't deny that.

"Recently, this yellow stuff comes out."

"I see."

Sylphy also experienced that, the sign of breast milk coming.

It could be treated by massaging them, but I can't do that.

"Well, how about the head?"

When I said that, Roxy moved her head toward me.

I stroke her head.

Her hair is smooth and it feels good in my fingers.

Stomach and chest are a NO go.

But head is good.

I must draw the line first.

I look for a breakthrough at the last minute.

"Ass?"

"...well, that's alright."

While blushing, Roxy gave me an OK.

Seems to be good.

I stroked without reserve.

Round.

Eh, unsatisfied, no it's different.

It's not that, it's that of a child.

"Eerrrr... Roxy, I think I could help you as much as possible "

"R, Really? But, you don't have to overdo it. Aisha could do it, and didn't Rudi have many things to do? "

"There are indeed a lot of things to do, but, even I understand that a pregnant woman takes priority over those things. I'll do anything from helping you down the stairs to helping you bathing."

"Eh, bathing!?"

Roxy overreacted to the word bath.

What.

Stomach and chest is a NO, but ass and head is a YES, yet a bath is not good.

Argh.

"It that so... Rudi, so you'd like to help washing me in the bath..."

Oh, I would love it.

Using a cloth or my hands, I would love them both.

But I must be patient and hold myself back when I do, even if I'm a little backed up.

"Rudi... since you will find out about this sooner or later, I need to tell you something. "

"Yes."

As if she resigned, Roxy was facing toward me.

It's a serious face.

That one?

It must be serious, I wonder if it's something beyond my imagination.

like that actually the baby in her stomach is infected with a horrible disease.

Maybe a voice saying [Call me Great Emperor of the Demon World!] can be heard from the stomach...

No, if that's the case, Lilia would have definitely told me.

It is an abnormal situation no matter how you look at it.

Then, I wonder what.

Ha ha, you don't mean that the child inside Roxy's stomach is saying [I'm not Rudi's child].

The child has a tail or horn when born.

Oh come on, spare me from such fate...

"....."

Roxy, making a serious face, unbuttoned her clothing.

She then rolled up her dress and showed me her stomach.

Her white stomach swelled greatly, her navel poking out a bit.

Cute.

Yeah, it's cute.

Only that.

There is nothing such as a strange spot on the skin...

"What is the problem?"

"I guess you will understand if you see it?"

I heard it but i don't know where the weird part is...

"Ah... The navel pokes out, I guess?"

Hmm.

Certainly it is a protruding navel.

I wonder if this is what she means.

I guess... I'd better not question a pregnant woman about that.

"...Yeah.... Uuu, is it not strange after all?"

Apparently, Roxy is quite stubborn in this matter.

Well, she's certainly sensitive.

There is no big deal even when seen.

But, it is important for the person herself.

There was such a thing too.

"...no, it is very cute."

"Now, I will not be deceived. There was a slight pause in your answer."

"It's not a lie; I don't care about that type of thing,"

"It is a lie. Because, didn't Rudi say it before. [Roxy's stomach is the best after all.] while you licked my navel."

I can be such a fool.

Even by me... that such words could have left such a deep impression in her feelings.

Oh, but no, it could be said, that saying something appropriate when you're on the bed is ok.

"Since that day, I've always seriously cleaned my navel. Look at this, Rudi's favorite navel, probably you were disappointed? "

"I'm not."

I was able to answer immediately this time.

I didn't have a navel fetish.

If it's Roxy body, even if she could fire a missile from her navel, I would still worship her.

Oh, I remembered now.

Certainly I seem to lick her navel in the midst of adult sumo at night, Roxy was very shy.

So she needs to be earnestly praised here.

"Rudi, I will not be deceived. You're just saying that."

However, Roxy did not believe me.

Muu~.

"I don't want to be deceived, so please show it with action."

"What should I do?"

Speaking of what I'm able to do, I'm a true devotee of the Roxy cult.

I am fine with making a speech and performing rituals before a congregation of more than 10 million people.

However this would take time, I can't afford to say it right now.

Lost in thought, Roxy moved her stomach towards me.

"Please lick it."

"Is that alright?"

I unknowingly spit that out after receiving such outrageous words from Roxy.

To order me to do such a thing.

Rather, won't you say it's a reward.

I wonder if it's okay to ask that.

No, I can't take it too seriously.

This is the will of the God.

All right.

Please put your hands together!

I, TA, DA, KI, MA, SU!

{ C-Editor's note: 'Itadakimasu' is a Japanese expression of gratitude stated before eating meals. However, Rudeus here is using Itadakimasu as a euphemism for sex. }

"...."

I licked.

While pushing away Leo's approaching nose, I'm licking Roxy's navel.

Just then, something moved in the belly.

Moving [Bikun] and [Pokon] with quite a force,

Because I touch it with my tongue, I noticed it.

Roxy also noticed.

I looked up at her eyes and her body stiffened.

"It moved,"

"...it's probably trying to say welcome home to its father. "

I hug her body.

I pat Roxy's stomach.

Despite what she said just now, she didn't reject it.

A warm stomach.

The baby won't feel a chill.

"....."

Roxy is no longer feeling shy.

With a cherished look, she put her hand over mine.

"Thank you Rudi. It was like Sylphy said, right? Somehow, I am relieved."

Hearing Roxy words, for some reason I was also relieved.

"Again, welcome home Rudi."

"I'm home."

I came back to my home.

The next day, I gave homecoming greetings to each of my friends.

Zanoba, Cliff, Elinalise.

Nanahoshi too, when I stopped by in the Sky Fortress.

Come to think of it, my number of acquaintances in the magic city Sharia has also reduced by quite a fair amount.

Most of them have left the town.

Zanoba and Cliff will also leave someday.

While thinking so, I proceed to my destination.

It's evening already.

Under the orange sky, the place I arrived at is a cemetery.

Round gravestones are lined up at this quiet area.

It's not recommended to come at such a time since demons may appear, but I have no choice.

Because it's time to pay my respects.

Entering, I greeted the gravekeeper and went to stand in front of a specific tomb.

Paul Greyrat.

That name is written on the round gravestone.

I clasp my hands in front of the tombstone that still looks new.

"Dad, this time it ended with no one dying."

Placing the liquor I bought at the Royal Capital and the flowers I purchased in the neighborhood, I recounted my journey.

Orsted's matter, Hitogami's matter.

And, the fight in the Asura Kingdom.

"There, I also met your brother, my uncle. He looks similar to father, but his mind seemed rather weak."

I remember Philemon's face.

In some ways his face resembled Paul's.

His figure too, but their personalities differed. That was probably because he was the younger brother.

"That person also survived. Your nephew risked his own live to protect his father. Honestly, I was a bit envious of him."

Luke kept his father from being executed.

I didn't hear everything that was said, but the scene was clearly reflected in my eyes.

Philemon is not a praiseworthy man in any aspect.

I also intended to kill him at first but...

Looking at Luke's figure protecting him, for some reason I just couldn't do that.

"Then I killed a person. Although, I did not personally deliver the killing blow... He tried to kill me and I fought back. And now he is dead. I don't regret what happened, but it did leave quite a bad aftertaste."

Actually, it's not my first time killing someone.

If I think back, there is a previous case.

It's not like there was anything special this time.

But for some reason, only this time had it left a deep scar on my mind.

Surely, it was because I listened to the Water God Reida's story.

"....."

I reflect on that event.

This time, everything somehow turned out alright.

No one dying is my number one priority and I have achieved that objective.

But, at the last moment.

It was at that last moment.

If something had went even slightly wrong, someone might have died.

Even though my goal was achieved, the overall results remained, becoming a lump in my heart.

This time, I have indeed succeeded.

It was a satisfactory, total victory.

But, it seems there are still many points to reflect on too.

For example, in the preparation stage, if I got in touch with Ariel earlier.

Then maybe Hitogami would be unable to make Luke his apostle and he wouldn't disrupt us on our journey.

Well, because of that Ariel made contact with Orsted, so that was a positive result.

If I could have defeated Auber in Red Dragon's Upper Jaw.

If Orsted didn't come after the Water God activated her 『Deprivation Sword Kingdom』.

If Auber didn't carry his antidote.

Well, it's pointless to think about this now.

However, there is only one thing I can say.

Hitogami is not dead.

Although the job is over, the fight is still far from over.

Then it's still ongoing.

In the future... that fight, will probably be chaotic down to the last minute.

I was lucky this time.

... Well, I've been lucky up until now, I guess.

Until now, I wonder why I haven't failed that much.

Maybe it's because I never expected to fail.

For example, when Paul died.

I thought that it was the best outcome, given that it couldn't be helped.

Indeed, at that time and moment, I gave it my best.

There were some points where my judgement erred and I made the wrong choice.

But at that time, I did everything I could.

In the end, an ending I couldn't hope for came to pass.

Such a result could have been avoided.

It was unlucky.

It was not inevitable.

But, is it really like that?

Then, if I had good luck, Paul would have survived.

Yes, he would.

With the Hydra's last attack, Paul died.

He would probably still be alive if he was lucky.

In the event of a fluke, I wonder what would change.

In reverse, we might have gotten unlucky and someone would become injured on the way, forcing us to retreat.

What about if the circumstances were different, if we just had one more helping hand...

When it comes down to it, luck is a flaky thing.

From now on.

Should I rely on luck to protect my family?

This time, many people could have died.

Especially, Eris who was seriously wounded at the shoulder, struck by a poisoned Kunai.

She could have stood on the brink of death, clinging to luck.

Then, in the last minute, she could succumb to death.

Can I really rely on luck?

No, one must reinforce their luck through action.

A human's abilities have limits and sometimes there is nothing that you can do about it.

But, for example, in this case.

If I had done just a little more.

If I was just a little stronger.

What would have happened if I was cornered?

How would things change?

A few changes here and there, and all of my plans could have crumbled.

What do I need more of?

I need to take charge with my own hands.

I need to become stronger.

I need to train harder.

Now, I must fight against Hitogami as Orsted's underling.

I was saved at the last minute, surviving by a thin margin.

In order to not let him kill my helpless family.

I must become someone who can properly protect them.

So, let me renew my determination once more.

"Dad, I will do my best in the future. So, please watch over me."

Saying that at the end, I left the cemetery.

Mushoku Tensei: Isekai Ittara Honki Dasu - Volume 19

Dear Paul-sama,

It has been one and a half years.

I will be 20 soon, and my sisters will be turning 14.

I'm still working for Orsted while continuously training.

Orsted is knowledgeable, but it doesn't appear that he is good at teaching others.

Additionally, because he rarely uses magic, there is no demonstration.

He would teach chants and give pointers, but probably because he is a genius, misunderstandings often happen.

Maybe I'm just a bad student.

I only get about a tenth of what's taught.

Owing to the memories remaining from my previous life, I could understand the principles and reach [Saint] class in the early years, but to surpass the walls of [King] class, that is not enough...

For example, the Fire Saint Magic 『Flash Flame [Flashover]』 is a way to make the flame spread in a vast area instantly.

By using light to generate heat in the air, like Vegeta, but somehow it looks different. (!)

{ C-Editor's note: Vegeta is a character from the Dragon Ball Z anime series. }

Once I have used a magic with an incantation, I can immediately use the voiceless version of it, which puzzles Orsted.

Orsted does not only teach me about magic, but also other things, such as how to fight other magicians.

Afterwards, he taught me numerous techniques from the Sword God Style, like what to be careful of and what to counter with.

A magician that specializes in fire magic when mixed in with a swordsman is very hard to defend against.

Therefore, many groups of magicians and swordsmen use this tactic a lot, so we must respond accordingly.

Simple PvP tactics.

As one who boasted high offensive ability due to having numerous offensive magics and a foresight eye, I was told that I could reduce the number of opponents by throwing them into confusion and then dealing fatal blows when facing them one by one.

It's not much different from what I had been doing in the past, but somehow, the result is different when I do it consciously.

Training with Eris and Orsted, as well as occasionally teaching Sylphy, Norn, and Aisha, has had some beneficial effects.

Through continuous training, I have attained:

[Saint]-class Fire and Wind magic

[Saint]-class Healing and Detoxification magic

[Intermediate]-class God Barrier magic

It's very good progress for only a year.

I can see that I have been fooling around too much in the past.

However, despite my other gains, drawing a summoning magic circle is still quite challenging for me, and I can't draw it very well.

I can't be playing around now if I want to master so many arts.

Anyway, I have grown a little stronger.

Training with Orsted has also helped me do his jobs.

After the uproar in the Asura Kingdom, there weren't many difficult jobs to handle.

For example, helping an adventurer that was trapped inside a labyrinth,

Or helping a merchant stranded inside a forest about to become a demon's meal,

Or going to a slave market, purchasing a slave boy, and selling him somewhere else.

Well, these were odd jobs; my work is mainly helping other people. I also enjoy it.

Basically, those who we help now will become useful to Orsted in the future.

For example, we helped a young female dwarf thief called Tal Qi the other day.

She wasn't important, but her son would become the assassins guild leader in the future.

He would also become a man that would assassinate a certain person, but if that dwarf girl is killed, it will become Orsted's loss.

Of course, it doesn't really matter since Orsted could go to kill that certain person, who would get in his way in the future, himself.

But by helping step-by-step while considering the future is also a way Orsted could preserve his magic.

By changing the past, he saves himself trouble in the future.

It seems the key is to make sure that Orsted is in his best condition for the [decisive battle].

Orsted has learned [what to do for someone who might die young] from his long loops.

Which will lead to [this person will give me an advantage] in the future.

By adding me into his team, he could move more efficiently than in all the loops he previously experienced.

It was similar to directing someone with hand signals randomly. (!)

That's what I'm doing, but I'm also somehow making some friends.

That's basically why Orsted doesn't help me.

He has something else to do in another place.

Where the important [Flag] has to be set, he will go there himself.

Hitogami also doesn't interfere that much.

At least, he doesn't interfere when I'm moving alone.

If you look at it, it's probably because he's interfering directly with Orsted, as the missions that Orsted does are probably critical events for Hitogami.

Although, there were times when I worked directly with Orsted.

When I do, one or two of Hitogami's apostles will definitely appear.

Strangely enough, it was never all three at once. Maybe one has been working behind the scenes?

For now, I'm not worried at all.

Is it all right that Orsted is only doing some odd jobs?

More than that, why doesn't he take any offensive moves toward Hitogami?

When I asked him about that, Orsted only shook his head lightly and said,

[According to the future diary, Hitogami is still trying to change the future.]

So, it's okay with what we're doing right now.

Hitogami is trying to change the future.

...By my prediction, the next big confrontation would involve Cliff.

In the diary, Cliff was dead.

Hitogami is probably involved, but I can't be sure of that yet.

Orsted also hasn't told me much about this matter.

Anyway, I do my job, report back to the office, meet my friends and my family, and then do some training in my spare time.

Such is my life.

Oh, and speaking of work.

I also implemented some long term solutions for work.

First is the office–the hut in the Magic City Sharia suburbs.

The place where we made the [Magic Armor] has become our office.

Because it will be inconvenient for us to continue to use it as a base from now on, we have to renovate it.

It is a one story building, but inside there is a conference room, a sleeping room, and a research room.

It's a good place to carry out strategy meetings and to some extent, sleeping.

I mean.... sometimes I need to rest a little because I am too anxious.

Documenting and scheduling a meeting about where to go, what to do, and who must survive, as well as what kind of impact it will have in the future, there is no way I could remember all of that. (!)

Anyway, I also made an arsenal.

That is where I put the [Magic Armor] and other magic tools or Magic ItemsImbued products I often use.

Miniaturizing the [Magic Armor] was a success... but let's not go into the details on that right now.

The armory has large amount of tools that I use for work.

If stolen, it's worth an entire life's fortune.

With that in mind, I used Earth magic to lock it, but the thought that it might be stolen is scary.

Maybe Orsted didn't want the hassle of managing the company's equipment, but it's something that needs to be done. (!)

Again, I should hire a manager.

But that's not all.

A basement has been added to the main office.

It is a huge basement and is also a labyrinth, made by my earth magic.

The basement is divided into 20 rooms, and there is a magic teleport circle in each room.

When you step into one of the rooms, you will be transferred to one of the major places around the world... well that's the plan.

Only five of these rooms have magic teleport circles so far.

Asura Kingdom, Holy Kingdom of Milis, the Great Forest, Kingdom of the Dragon King, and the southern part of the Demon Continent.

Only those so far.

It's because I also need to setup magic teleport circles at the destination as well.

Also, Orsted doesn't go to places that have low population, but if there are too many people, Teleport Magic is difficult to set.

Due to this, the number of teleport destinations are few.

Of course, more will be added.

Well, Paul-sama.

That's enough about work, I'm sure you're bored of it by now.

I'm sure you're feeling impatient.

Now let's talk about the children, or rather your grandchildren.

First, my eldest daughter.

Lucy Greyrat.

She is growing up fast.

We celebrated her third birthday just the other day.

She could now walk and runs around the house with a [Dotadota] sound.

After she learned some words, she began to speak loudly- I think it's due to Eris's influence- and the house has become lively.

In addition, Sylphy also began to teach her magic and human language recently.

This girl got a special education from the age of three.

Sylphy is ... becoming a teaching mom.

When she puts on the triangle glasses, her night lessons with me suddenly become so intense.

{ C-Editor's note: He is imagining Sylphy as an anime teacher character with glasses. }

Well, let's set aside Sylphy for now, and talk about Lucy.

She seldom meets me because of my work.

Sometimes, there are times when her expression is a little surprised when I come back.

It is a face that says [Who is this guy].

It is very sad.

However, if Sylphy says [Greet your Papa], she says [Welcome back, Papa.]

When she says it, she is so cute that I want to eat her, but what immediately follows is [Where is Papa?] as she faces me, and she hides behind Sylphy.

I am very sad.

The way this is going, it looks like I won't be referred to as a respected father by her in the future.

If it becomes that way, I will be sad.

Once, I brought Lucy to Orsted's place.

This was to test whether Orsted's curse would affect Lucy.

Testing whether what Hitogami said is true or not.

I took her to him thinking that.

As it turns out, the curse did not work on Lucy.

When Lucy met Orsted for the first time she was showing beaming eyes.

Reaching for his silver hair, she shouted [Papa! Papa!]

She said Papa!

It was an attitude that even made me perplexed.

At the time, I thought of killing Orsted on the spot.

That's a lie, I'm sorry.

There is no way I would harbor such strong murderous intent.

Yeah, I didn't have even a bit of interest in that.

This is because Lucy is used to seeing Sylphy's white hair, and Orsted who has a similar hair color might look like a relative.

When I told Orsted's name to her, she remembered the name immediately saying [Osute~tsu, Osute~tsu!]

It's how she pronounces it. (!)

While giving sidelong glances to my bitter face, Orsted went and gave a piggyback to Lucy.

Lucy grabbed hold of Orsted's hair and tried to tear it off.

When I said [Pulling hair is bad],

Orsted gave me an interesting answer [Don't worry, just this much won't hurt my saint dragon touki].

He doesn't seem bothered by my daughter's approach.

Of course, since Lucy is cute.

However, with this, Hitogami's words also increased in credibility.

[Orsted ... and my descendants will work together to defeat Hitogami.]

When I told Orsted about it, he responded with,

[Do not trust Hitogami's words.]

And, he stared at me with a scary look on his face.

I didn't mean to trust them of course.

However, I feel that not all of it is a lie.

It is just a convenient way of thinking.

However, recently, I started being able to read Orsted's mood, and Orsted's mood when playing with Lucy is good.

Even I will drop my guard in front of such cuteness. (!)

Not only that, since he experienced the same things over and over again in his loops, of course he's delighted to experience something new.

Considering how many loops he's been through, I can guess that much.

As a subordinate, I want to try to make Orsted's daily life merrier.

And we've gotten sidetracked, haven't we?

Back to the topic, children, Roxy also gave birth.

On that day, there was a heavy snowstorm.

The office had not yet been completed.

Orsted was waiting on me when I returned from a successful mission.

It's not uncommon that the president meets people directly.

At that time the office only had one room, and I also needed to give a report to Orsted.

Orsted, after finishing his own tasks, often has plenty of downtime until the next task.

When I was reporting in as usual that day, he said.

[Isn't it about time?]

First thing he said.

What's about time?

That's obvious.

Because I was also quite anxious during work.

I did not think that I would say this to Orsted, but... I am also a father, so I said [I will give my report later], and left the office immediately.

When I was in the street, I ran through the snow like a snow plow and returned home.

After returning Roxy was in her last month of pregnancy.

I was there just before she gave birth.

If I waited two days, I wouldn't have made it back in time for when she give birth.

"Yeah, Rudi...I wonder if it's alright, I wonder if I'll really be able to give birth."

When I got home, Roxy had a worried expression.

Repeating again and again, she asked, [Will it be be all right? It might be impossible], with a pale face. I did not let go of her hand.

During the time when mother Zenith gave birth to me as well, I'm sure it was that kind of feeling.

During that time all I was thinking was, [Roxy really is the worrying type.]

– But, Roxy's worries ended up right on the money.

It was a difficult birth.

The baby's shoulder got caught.

It must be a the so-called shoulder dystocia.

I do not know the cause, but it could be because of Roxy's small body.

She was in the normal birthing age of Migurudo tribe, but because the child is a half-blood child who has a big body, it was like she was giving birth at an early age given the size ratio.

It was more than likely because I'm the father and human.

Roxy ... was in a dangerous state for both mother and child.

But, the worst did not happen.

Lilia's skills and experience in this matter are very high and Aisha is a genius.

With me bringing in midwife and Doctor-san through the heavy snow, the party assembled was perfect.

Aisha had experience as midwife from the time with Lucy and settled Roxy down.

Her birth was dealt with smoothly, with no complications.

As for Roxy's child, she gave birth to a girl. Safely.

We didn't have to give a C-section, and both the child and mother survived.

She gave birth safely.

The one who was born is a girl.

She was slightly bigger compared to Lucy when she was born.

It's not like she was fat, but she has a fearless look.

Who does she resemble..?

[Her eyes are like Roxy, her mouth is just like Rudi], according to Sylphy.

Maybe that fearless look is a mix of Roxy and me.

Well, if you're a child between Roxy and I, you have nothing to fear.

"It was a girl .....so her name is Lara."

She was named Lara.

Lara Greyrat.

We found out that she has the same hair color as Roxy soon after her birth.

She had beautiful blue colored hair.

It is the color that can be called the symbol of Migurudo race.

Seeing that, Sylphy and Roxy both made a complicated face.

I did not know why they made such a face at first.

Roxy's hair color is gorgeous, and Lara is a girl.

You will definitely become a cute girl when you grow up, trust me.

Sylphy then told me why–she might be bullied because her hair color is different.

This city is mixed with a large number of various races other than human; however, most of the population is still human, after all.

If her looks differ from the human race considerably then she might be bullied.

Whether her original hair color might cause problems for Lara, such as whether or not she is bullied, I don't know yet; however, I believe that she will always have love from her family.

As a side note, Elinalise also gave birth along with Roxy.

Probably because she's used to it, hers went without a hitch.

According to Cliff, I heard that his child will be [Born Soon!], but the next time I met Elinalise she had already recovered from giving birth and had her slender body back.

She is a veteran at childbirth.

Her experiences in it is on a whole different level.

Well, the first child of the Grimoire family was a boy, who was named Clive.

Clive Grimoire.

Elinalise was very pleased, [I gave you an heir!]

Heirs.

I don't think only boys can be heirs.

Lara and Lucy can too.

If they want to follow my footsteps and help Orsted, I won't stop them.

Also the curse didn't seem to work on them.

But, there is one person who is inspired by Elinalise's words.

It's Eris.

She was often going to work with me until then.

Like a part timer of Orsted Corporation?

By my side, as my vanguard, my sword, she cut through all the insects standing in my way.

But in response to Elinalise words, she said [Next is my turn!] and proceeded to suck me dry, even when we're at work.

As long as there is an opportunity, she won't let it go and goes commando immediately on me. (!)

I ... my maiden heart got crushed, but let's not talk about that.

No matter what, maybe bad luck, but she wasn't blessed with a child.

Eris felt really troubled about this.

I often found her talking with Sylphy night after night after I got home.

She didn't want her insecurity known to me, so I won't give the details of the conversation, but I might have heard some dreadful remark such as [...maybe I need to do it more often].

Anymore than this... I won't survive with that much of a nosebleed.

Even though I thought that, it's a husband's job to help his wife overcome her insecurity.

With that thought, I gave my best.

Using all of my knowledge that I've accumulated, from the basic knowledge to Ougis, whether changing her diet, or having her do some kind of training, I tried everything in my power in order to ease her worries.

{ C-Editor's note: Ougis are secret techniques or ultimate moves in anime and video games. }

Well... I would be lying if I said I didn't enjoy it.

I heard my mother, Zenith, also suffered from infertility for a period of time.

Father must have worked hard to ease that worry once.

Doing your best every night.

And that's how Norn was born, who's currently diligantly attending school.

... Let's talk about Norn another time.

Our efforts bore fruit, and Eris got pregnant safely.

The next month, she toned down her training level.

It looks like her intense training every day was the main cause of her infertility.

When one trains hard, it's harder to get pregnant.

But if the child is strong, she could get pregnant, but in Eris's case her training was far more intense than normal training.

Even if the egg already fertilized, if it's not implanted, it's the same as nothing happening.

That's why Eris took a maternity leave.

Even though she can't come with me to work, she's still happy.

While stroking her already swollen belly Eris smiles happily while muttering [Mufufu].

As the only one who knows her since she was young, I can tell you it's her true feeling.

Somehow ..... Eris looks like she has become respectable.

The late Sauros-sama and Philip-sama, I wonder if you are sobbing happily on the other side right now.

I learned of Eris's pregnancy about one month ago.

She's 4 months pregnant now.

If she seems to be quiet these days, it's partly due to morning sickness.

When I came back from the next job, she already entered her fifth month pregnancy.

She might start training hard again once it reached stable period. It worries me.

I've sent a letter to Ghyslaine the moment I found out.

Ghyslaine would be very busy now because Asura's king, who was on sick bed for a long time, passed away.

Ariel will become Queen soon.

First Prince Gravell tried for his last stand, but that's already futile.

It's not likely Ariel will lose to him.

However, with that kind of rival, Ghyslaine won't have any free time for the next 2-3 years.

After Eris's child is born, we will try to visit Asura Kingdom.

By the way, Eris only thought of boy's names for her child.

So, I decided to think up a girl's name in secret.

Whether it's a girl or boy, as long as the child is healthy, I'm good with it.

So that's the wives and children.

Family life, training, and work.

Besides lacking time for my children, it has been a fulfilling life everyday.

Finally.

It is about Zenith-Okaasan's memory.

There are still no signs of it returning.

At some point her emotions stopped improving as well.

She almost didn't speak a word.

I tried asking Orsted about her, but didn't find any clues to a cure.

If even he didn't know... then I can't think of any way to heal her.

Well, maybe this is the first loop for Orsted where Zenith became an invalid, so he doesn't know.

Maybe some Magic ItemsImbued products exists that can cure her.

I won't give up, I will definitely find a way to cure her.

Anyway, I think for now we'll just be taking it step-by-step without worrying too much.

Dad, once, in Holy Kingdom of Milis, you scolded me.

That I'm ditching my mother and more worried about other women.

Although I didn't intend to, please forgive me, with my current situation for now I have to defer her again.

I will do everything I can.

Sincerely yours,

— –

And with that I closed my diary like usual.

Rather than a diary entry, more like a letter addressed to no one.

However, by writing these things, there are days when I got a sudden motivation from it.

With such strong motivation, I could move my body better.

"All right, let's go"

Feeling motivated today, I stood up, and went ahead toward the magic circle.

My work begins.

Angelique Karentail, nicknamed Ange.

She was born in a small village in the west edge of the Kingdom of Dragon King, close to the jungle.

Her parents were pharmacists. Ange was raised to become one as well.

Before she reached adulthood, her parents died in a magic beast's [Goblin] attack, but that's not unusual in a village like this.

After finishing their funeral, with the villagers' help, and overcoming her sadness for their death, she took over her family home and business.

Ange has one person whom she could call a close friend.

Fam Haindora.

A hunter born and raised, she is both Ange's companion and guard. Her mother caught a disease that infects only adults, and her father was killed by a goblin, along with Ange's parents, when they went in the forest together to collect medicine for her.

In other words, Fam's father couldn't protect Ange's parents.

Thus, Fam feels indebted to Ange.

Once upon a time, Ange also begrudged Fam.

But after some conflict, it was settled.

Now, this duo of best friends is known to everyone in the village.

Like that, these two people will be 20 years old this year.

"Oh... I wonder if there isn't a good man somewhere."

Muttered Fam.

Skillfully removing fur from her vest, and leather pants.

Wearing thick leather boots, carrying a long bow and quiver of arrows at the shoulder, and machetes on the waist.

She is dressed like a bandit, and looks dirty. But, overall, it can be said that she is a beautiful woman with well-defined features.

"At least, he won't be in a place like this."

Ange answered.

She's a pharmacist, but she wears leather pants so she could move easier.

There was also a knife strapped on her waist, and an adze as well.

If there was a very large difference between these two girls, it was that Ange carries a large basket.

The basket's contents were a variety of nuts and medicinal herbs, which were arranged orderly and took about half of the basket's total volume.

These two girls, now inside the forest.

They're harvesting medicine supplies for Ange's pharmacy.

"Well, he has to be rich, handsome, but naive, and a bit awkward in company of women. The kind that blushes full bloom from holding hands."

"Just an average guy for me. He doesn't need to be rich, as long as he's nice and normal."

"Ange, you have no dream!"

"Fam, let's look at reality."

In the village inhabited by these two girls, there is no such young man like in Fam's description.

It's not like there is none at all, but most of them are already married.

Millis devotees are not so much in number in that village.

But having more than one wife is prohibited by law, other than the village chief of course.

The current chief is almost 50, and already has five wives.

He won't get married again.

"Also in reality, and If I get married, maybe it's with Dochin."

Dochin son of the Village chief, 20-years-old, he's the same age as these girls.

However, he's already married to his fiancee who was selected since their birth. He also already has an heir.

There is also a rumor that he will become village chief soon.

If that happened, he could marry his second wife.

According to the village tradition, when someone is appointed to become village chief, he must choose his second wife and marry her.

It's the talk of the village on who will be his number two right now.

For that man, there are plenty of unmarried maidens to choose from.

"Well, Dochin probably won't choose me."

"Fam was always bullying Dochin when we were young."

"No, what if he selects me to exact his revenge? And bullied me at night?"

"I don't think so Fam, I think Dochin is still scared of you."

Because they're from the same generation, they often played and hung out together from a young age.

There were seven of them, and Fam is a bully child from their age.

At the time, Fam often made Dochin cry.

Ange thought she would end up marrying one of them some day, but unfortunately that didn't happen.

From those seven childhood friends, three of them left the village, leaving only three women and Dochin as a lone bachelor in their generation.

Dochin then married his fiancée, so Fam and Ange ended up as leftovers.

"But, I think Ange has a chance, since you're so cute."

"Well, I won't. Cause I'm the only pharmacist in the village. I can't work if I married the chief. It would just cause trouble for the village."

"No ..... you will somehow manage it, and has some remembrance about his time"

"I hope you are right, ha-ha-ha-ha."

And, Ange said that with a laugh.

But, the truth was she was thinking about something else entirely.

(I wonder ... that ..... a Prince, won't come and take me as his wife, huh?)

Although Ange told her close friend to look at reality,

When she was a child, she heard such a story from the bard, and longing for it.

It is a story of a little adventurer with blue hair.

{ C-Editor's note: Referring to Roxy. }

She was journeying alone as an adventurer from Millis continent to all over the Central Continent, becoming an A rank adventurer in no time.

That story made her young heart race.

But still, at that time it was just a simplistic story from the other side of the world.

But it's no longer just a fantasy, it happened 10 years ago.

A certain adventurer appeared in the village vicinity 10 years ago.

On the way leaving the forest, she tried to reach West Port.

That adventurer stopped at Ange's village.

A small adventurer with blue hair.

She was just like how the bard described about her.

It was in that moment that the other side of the world, the story became reality.

She stayed overnight in the village, and told the 10 year old Ange at that time about her adventures.

It's not a fantasy story product from someone's delusion, it was a real story.

Fam's eyes shone when she heard her story about her fight against the boss of the Labyrinth.

Ange's heart was racing when she heard the part of [Entering a Labyrinth searching for a cool man] was the purpose for her adventure.

The adventurer succeeded in capturing the labyrinth but still failed to fulfill her purpose, that story never-the-less left a great impression in Ange's heart.

From that day after she heard the story onward, Ange had some kind of admiration for adventurers.

Sometimes, her head was full of such longing of delusional encounters.

She was in a pinch from being suddenly attacked by a demon, suddenly a prince gallantly appears to her aid. And to that person, she offered herself as a form of gratitude.

(Kya!)

And, it's where her delusion come to an end in agony.

The longing is just longing.

A delusion is just a delusion.

There was no way such a convenient thing will occur, and Ange knows about that.

Delusions about such marriage is only a pipe dream.

Mere fantasy.

The Ange now was only looking properly at reality.

5 years ago, she felt the feeling of sadness and loneliness from losing her parents, and she hated those feelings.

"Ange be careful, we're entering that guy's territory."

"Yeah, I know."

They have come to a cave in the deepest part of the forest. Ange places her basket by her feet.

This time, these two girls came to this cave in search for material for a certain medicine in this cave.

A disease called Iburi Disease, which as become an epidemic in the area. The main ingredient for the cure is inside this cave.

"It cannot be helped, if it's for Dochin."

"Yeah."

Currently, the son of Village chief Dochin was infected by Iburi Disease.

The Iburi Disease, it's a disease that spreads all over the body and will cause certain death, if the patient didn't drink the medicine within 10 days.

However, there is a sure way to cure it, that was by using intermediate detoxification magic, and it's not contagious.

From this view, it is a disease which isn't dangerous in most of the world's cities.

But, this deadly disease is feared in a remote area like the village where Ange lives.

Because it takes at least ten days to travel to the nearest city, where an intermediate detoxification magician could be found.

Their childhood friend and future village chief, Dochin, is inflicted with such a disease.

For that matter, this same disease is also the one which caused Fam and Ange's parents' deaths.

Fam's mother was also infected by Iburi disease,

In an attempt to cure it, Ange's parents and Fam's father entered the forest to search for its medicine.... and perished.

It is a disease that caused these two girl's relationship to become closer.

And that accursed disease is now sinking its poisoned fangs into their childhood friend.

"....."

Carefully, the two girls take each of their steps.

The ingredient for the medicine is a flower that only blooms at the foot of this cliff.

They don't need a lot to make a single portion.

Just five or six petals.

With that amount, it's enough for one person.

"..... Gulp"

These two girls gulp when they reached the clearing.

The gap between the trees suddenly cleared, and they come out in a place that look like a plaza.

There in front of them, a high cliff.

With blue flowers blooming at its base.

"...Gasp!"

Even while looking at the beautiful sight, their expressions didn't relax one bit.

Ange quickly went to the flowers and tore a handful of petals with her trembling hand.

The next moment.

"GroaaaaaaaaRRRRRRRRRRR!!"

A thunderous roar could be heard.

"Ange, run away!"

Fam cried.

However, Ange's feet were already frozen the moment she heard that roar.

"Ange! Hurry!"

While she grabbed her long bow and an arrow from her quiver, Fam yelled at Ange.

"!"

It appeared on top of the cliff.

A Giant lizard with purple-red skin, at least ten meters in length.

Master of the forest.

Iburi Lizard.

That reptile has no wings, so it's similar to the giant lizard inhabiting Begaritto Continent.

So why is the lizard, called [Iburi] Lizard?

Because near the area where that lizard lives, Iburi Disease always spreads.

And because the flower necessary to cure Iburi Disease is only found within its territory.

Because of this a group of scholars came up with a theory,

They said that the Iburi Lizard is spreading the Iburi Disease.

By spreading Iburi disease, their prey will come to pick the flower to cure the disease.

But, that truth has yet to be confirmed.

Regardless, this village has been haunted by this lizard and the Iburi Disease for the past five years.

Ange's parents, Fam's father...

Everyone has been killed by this guy.

"AAAAAAAAAAAARGGGGGHHHHHHH!"

Fam shouted to strengthen herself, and fires her arrow.

That arrow flew and stuck itself on the scales of the Lizard with a [Ting!] sound.

In that moment, Iburi lizard also made its move.

It ran down the cliff at a tremendous speed like a gecko.

It looks like Fam's arrow didn't have any effect on it.

"Ange, please get up! Run!"

With Fam's voice, Ange stood up at last.

But she didn't run away immediately, she was indecisive.

Such impatience tangled Ange's legs.

She finally turned around and ran.

Seeing that, Fam also turned to make her escape.

However, it was already too late.

"GuuuAAAAAAAAAAAAA!!"

"A Gyaa A~a~a~a!"

The thin Iburi Lizard caught up to Fam at a tremendous speed, with its chaotic movements and sharp teeth it cornered Fam and glared.

The Iburi Lizard grabbed Fam in its mouth and lifted her like a doll, she was swung about while screaming in a way not befitting a young girl, and was thrown back towards the cliff into the bed of flowers.

Ange was looking at that.

Her eyes reflected Fam being thrown through the air.

She saw Fam's desperate face.

In that moment she hesitated.

She had thought to help her best friend.

Then when she noticed it, the Iburi Lizard was already in front of her.

"Ah"

I will die.

Ange realized this.

Someone would come to save her at the last minute.

Sometimes she has such delusions.

A delusion is only a delusion.

While in fact, there is no way someone will come to her rescue right now.

At this moment, she will die.

That was reality.

So surely, everything after that moment must have been a dream.

Suddenly, the Iburi Lizard was blown off to the side.

"What?"

Ange did not understand the scene in front of her.

Suddenly, the monster that almost killed her, changed its direction.

Suddenly, the body of that giant lizard flew off in an impossible direction.

"GRRRRR...."

With its blood spilling from its mouth, the Iburi Lizard frantically looked in the direction of whatever had managed to blow it away.

Ange also looked in that direction.

Standing there, a man.

Wearing a dark grey robe, fluttering with the wind, with a black armor hidden below.

In his left hand he carried some kind of tube.

With his dazzling brown hair dancing in the wind, he walked toward the Iburi Lizard.

"GrAAAAAAAAWWWWW!"

The moment it saw that man, Iburi Lizard opened its jaw and rushed at that man.

Huge fangs approached that man, but he faced it calmly.

The man was bitten without mercy – that was what Ange predicted.

However, the man was alive.

The man, he caught the Iburi Lizard's head.

He stopped the giant Iburi Lizard's movement with one hand.

Then, as if in slow motion, he directed his left hand at Iburi Lizard head.

"Shotgun Trigger!"

Next, something fired from the tube.

Seeing that, Ange didn't know what just happened.

But she concluded that it fired something at very high speed.

After Ange's point-of-view, it was over in a flash,

Because the Iburi Lizard's head has already vanished from this world.

"....."

Its head exploded into a million pieces, the long neck that was caught in that explosion's momentum caused the Iburi Lizard's body to fall backward.

It lands with a sound too faint for its size.

An unbelievable sight.

However, bright red blood continued to flow from its severed neck.

"Whew..."

While sighing, the man aimed his right hand to the lizard corpse.

Then, the body of Iburi Lizard burst into flames in an instant.

Sounds of oil crackling and the smell of burning flesh filled the air.

Then, the man turned towards Ange.

With the fire raging behind him, as if nothing happened to that man, he opened his mouth.

"You .... are Angelique Karentail right?"

"Heh?"

He suddenly said that with such a goofy voice.

"Or, Miss Fam Haindora?"

How did you know my name?

Ange wants to say, but the words won't come out. Still in a daze, she shakes her head. Ange noticed that they're staring at each other.

"I came to help."

Hearing those words from that man in grey robe, Ange's heart started beating loudly.

The man called himself Rudeus Greyrat.

While casting skeptical gazes at Ange's unquenchable throbbing chest, he applied healing magic to Fam who was treated in an instant.

Although Fam's consciousness didn't return immediately, even injuries such as broken bones, her leg that was almost torn, and purple bruises on her skin were immediately healed.

He explained that he had been asked to come here by a certain person to help Ange, but he didn't reveal this much about his request.

Also, Ange has no idea about who could have asked him to come to help her.

"Regardless of what has happened, it was good that I just barely came in time this time."

"Ah ... Right!"

Rudeus is walking through the forest while piggybacking Fam.

Ange is following with her basket of flowers and herbs.

While walking, she is frequently worrying about her appearance.

(No doubt about it my hair is disheveled, my clothes also covered with mud, maybe ..... Yeah, my face looks so dirty. Oh.....what must I do about it? Is my appearance a mess?)

She was blushing every time Rudeus turned around, and turned to hide herself.

It seems Rudeus didn't mind such attitude.

Rather, it's like he convinced himself to not look at her face.

Without looking back, they walk in silence.

He looks back once a while, but it's really only once in a while.

Ange wanted to see Rudeus's face more.

(Ee~r, what can I do? Soon we will arrive at the village. And then he will be treated like a hero. Defeating the Lizard, he saved the village. What should I do, if that happens I'm sure, it won't be possible to talk to him ...)

And then, Ange saw Fam's figure piggybacking on Rudeus and burned it into her eyes.

Her ample bosom is successfully pressed against Rudeus's back.

Seeing that, Ange felt a little jealous with her.

"Eh, well, Rudeus-san!"

"Yes, what?"

Rudeus looking back at her remaining expressionless, and Ange riding on that momentum.

"About, Fam! Isn't she heavy?"

"It's all right"

"Eh, but you've already been carrying her since a while ago, don't you feel tired?"

"No, I always train myself, so this level of activity won't make me tired."

Saying so, while rolled-up his robe Rudeus showed her his upper arm.

Although his biceps was not visible because of his black armor, for some reason while watching it Ange was impressed by the words of [After all, I'm always training myself.]

Then Rudeus struck his hands with pop.

"Oh, yeah. I'm sorry I'm not being considerate."

"What?"

(What, What, did you notice it?)

And, Ange's eyes turned into black and white.

Rudeus said that with a smile while showing his shining white teeth.

"Say, Angelique-san I'm a bit tired. Shall we take a short break?"

By the way, his teeth shining is only Ange's delusion.

"Oh.... Yeah, I'm sorry and thank you very much for your hard work, please take a rest... and please just call me Ange by all means!"

"Ange... Okay."

Rudeus, slowly put Fam down, then sat himself on a fallen tree.

That fallen tree has a V-form shape.

To Rudeus it was obvious that he was only being friendly, sitting opposite Ange.

But, as for Ange, she thought...

This is a chance, and now is the only time.

(Eit!)

As it is, Ange sat down next to Rudeus.

"...!"

Ange could feel that Rudeus was a little startled.

(I wonder ... if it feels unpleasant?)

She takes a glance at his face.

Rudeus had an indifferent face.

But, his expression didn't look like he dislikes it.

He is just confused.

From what Ange guessed, and from her lips an excuse leaks immediately.

"Su, about this I'm sorry, I was scared. Well, even now I'm still scared, let me sit beside you!"

"Oh!... Yeah, if that's what you mean."

Ride on the momentum.

Ange was going all-out.

To the end the holy war.

"Oh, and thank you very much."

"No, it's fine because it's my job."

Though Rudeus's attitude looked unfriendly, his eyes swam right and left overlooking Ange.

Ange followed his line of sight.

She's wondering, what he sees.

Around her neck, her clothes are unbuttoned and her chest is exposed.

"!"

In an effort to hide it in the moment, Ange hugged herself with her own hands.

It seems that Ange's attempt to be not interrupted.

Is already going beyond the horizon.

"...!"

Ange tried to cuddle next to Rudeus.

But as she tried to get closer, each time Rudeus would move a bit away.

In the end, Rudeus was cornered at the end of the fallen tree and Ange pressed up against his arm.

"That, Rudeus-san..."

"What a... Is it..."

When she could feel Rudeus's line of sight focused on her chest, Ange swallowed.

Her size isn't as big as Fam.

But it's definitely greater than the average size in the village, she often receives sexual harassment like [Ange-chan, won't you bring me medicine from the valley of your breast?] from middle aged men.

It was a tool that only made fun of inside the village.

A part of Ange had cursed it, but...

This was a weapon now.

"I said, even if its work but the fact that you saved my life didn't change, I'm truly grateful for that."

"Errr~... You're welcome."

"If, after this, we go back to the village, as long as you didn't immediately go back you can come to my house...and I will give you something as thank you present."

"No, I can't do that. Because my next job is already waiting for me there."

Her plan failed, but Ange didn't give up.

This is because Ange was determined to make it to the far end of the journey, to the Eternal City.

"So, that is, well then, at least please let me give my gratitude, but I don't have anything....except for my body."

Even while feeling her face becoming red, Ange's arms that crossed around her body to cover her chest.

...then opening her arms that covered her chest, Rudeus's eyes were immediately glued there.

And then Rudeus suddenly stood up.

"Oh... Rudeus-san?"

"Surprise attack, my chronic disease is almost acting up, I need my medicine!"

While he said that, his line of sight was still glued to Ange's chest.

But, hearing the word medicine, Ange came back to her senses a little.

She is a pharmacist.

She had thought that if the man in front of her had a chronic disease, her actions might be triggered it to act up.

"Oh, I am a pharmacist! If it's medicine, I could mix it after we've arrived at my home."

"No need to worry, because I brought some with me."

After giving such a vague answer, Rudeus reached inside his armor...

And took something out, wrapped in a white cloth.

Seeing that, rather than a love affair, Ange was more excited by the medicine.

Could it be some kind of recidivistic disease?

Rudeus is a powerful warrior.

He has strong stamina, which makes it possible for him to travel while wearing an armor capable of taking the Iburi Lizard's attacks head on.

In spite of that, he can also use healing magic.

Had applied advanced level Healing magic to Fam.

She often heard that Healing magic and Detoxification magic are learned as a set.

Thus perhaps, he is also familiar with detoxification magic.

Afflicted with a chronic disease without any cure, he seemed to be a person right out of a legend.

He himself didn't know how to cure his disease, and journeyed the world searching for a cure.

"Is that the drug... for your treatment?"

"Yeah, well, it's something like that."

But despite saying that, Rudeus took the edges of the cloth and spread it.

At first Ange had thought that the medicine would fall, and motioned to catch it...

But nothing fell, not pills nor powdered medicine.

Other than that cloth, nothing was to be seen.

So, where is the medicine?

A strange thing caught Ange's attention and caused her to look up as she thought that.

It was pantsu.

{ C-Editor's note: The Japanese word for panties . }

Rudeus is holding pantsu.

According to its size, it's from an adult woman.

When did...?

Eh.

Why.

The... The cloth that was wrapping the medicine until a little while ago...

No, that is the cloth from a little while ago.

That cloth he was holding was pantsu.

What?

Why?

"...? ...?"

"Whew...."

While Ange cast her confused gaze at Rudeus, he.... was taking a deep breath.

He buried his face against the pantsu.

"Su~tsu~u~u ---- ..... ~Haaa~~ ~~!"

He exhaled a deep breath.

"Suha, bad habit, bad habit, Suwa"

As he said that he continued to take breath after breath...

Smelling and smelling, sometimes he snorted.

He was completely mesmerized by the pantsu.

"....."

At that sight, Ange was terrified.

The scene made cold sweat run down her back, she could not move nor make a sound.

She was perfectly still, she couldn't do anything but look on in horror at Rudeus.

"Whew....."

Rudeus finally ended his bizarre ritual five minutes later.

"O God, I give my thanks to you!"

After saying that, while posing like a devotee praying to their god, he folded the pantsu neatly and return them to his bosom.

"....."

Ange didn't know how to respond, the only thing that could escape her mouth was a [pacpac] sound.

Her wit could not keep up with the current situation.

She thought this was her chance, then suddenly the pantsu came out and...

She could not comprehend what just happened.

"After all, the holy relic is limited use only."

But, only one fact came to her.

Rudeus's behavior just now had smashed her delusions to pieces.

Yes, Ange's love at first sight shattered instantly.

"Well, what was it Ange-san?"

"......I, I, it's nothing..."

She woke up from her dream.

Then, Ange returned to the village unceremoniously.

Before they entered the village, Rudeus entrusted Fam to Ange.

"Because I won't make a stop at the village, I will excuse myself here."

"..... Yes ..... Yes"

Hearing his words, Ange could only nod her head in reply.

That bizarre scene still burned strongly in her mind.

"Now, take care."

Then suddenly... he stopped as if he remembered something. Rudeus stopped walking and turned around to face Ange.

He looked back.

"Oh, well Ange-san didn't you mention about a reward before."

Hearing his words, a chill ran down Ange's spine.

Thank you.

Yeah.

When she considers it, he did indeed save her life.

She can't refuse if it's his request.

No matter how much she wants to run away from the physiologically disgusting man in front of her...

Ange is not that ungrateful to that level.

"Eh, uh... so, I'm troubled that, you want my pantsu too?"

"No, I don't need that. But, I need you to do something."

"And, what do you want me to do?"

(Oh, What should I do. It must be something amazingly kinky.)

Ange's resolute face turned pale.

"....."

While scratching the back of his head after seeing Ange's reaction and muttering [Well, what do I say...], Rudeus took something out of his backpack.

A picture book along with a doll.

"Then, Ange-san, please read this book to your children when they're born. Please read this picture book to them and tell them that the Supard race isn't like the Iburi."

"Pardon me? Huh? Supe?"

"This is the Supard race."

"Supard race..."

After hearing those absurdly strange words, Ange's eyes went black and white.

"At the end of the book there is a table that shows you how to read the characters, so it could be used to teach your children to read. Just that, thank you."

After saying that Rudeus placed the book and the doll in Ange's hands and left.

In Ange's hands sat a green haired Magic race doll and a picture book.

Just from the look of that Supard race doll, she felt terrified.

It's incredibly detailed and painted with vivid colors.

It seems like it could come to life at any moment.

The image of the terrible demon.

There was an impulse that made her want to throw it away on the spot.

However, the fact that it's a request from someone who saved her life made her reconsider.

"... Let me see?"

Supard race.

She never met them, but she knew about them.

The Supard race she knew was just as frightening as the Iburi.

When she was a child, if she was doing something bad, her parents would threaten her by saying she would be eaten by a Supard.

Was there really another story that the Supard race weren't bad guys?

(Why such a thing...)

Ange, not knowing what to do about such a strange request, pinched the doll's head.

"Oh..."

Then the doll's hair came off.

Now in Ange's hands was a warrior holding a spear with a rugged face.

"Cool."

Seeing that, Ange laughed.

She didn't know what his intention was.

But, it's what the person who saved her life requested.

Let's do as he asked.

That was Ange's decision.

A few years later.

By curing Dochin from the Iburi Disease, Ange was chosen as his second wife when he became the village chief.

Dochin is an ordinary man, but he is a hard worker to the point that it isn't even funny.

However, he is not a pervert.

While feeling grateful for that fact, Ange raised their children while reading that picture book for them.

Over time, the story from the picture book became a staple for the children in the village. The story of the bald warrior from the Supard race carrying out justice. Later it spread through the neighboring villages...

But... That's for another time.

[Next story notice]

Rudeus that barely escaped from the temptation of cheating.

He who was exhausted both physically and mentally finally arrived at home.

But Eris's selfishness immediately hit Rudeus who came home seeking some healing from his daughter!

Next time episode 192 of unemployed reincarnation

"Borrowed Cat"

– Tyrant does not return, what he borrowed.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Doraemon anime bully who steals under the pretext of borrowing. }

I finished work safely this time around.

Rescuing the hunter Fam Haindora that was supposed to die in that forest.

When I heard the details on the mission, I thought it would be an easy job.

Healing the village chief's son with Detoxification magic, and getting rid of that fake dragon in the forest.

It's very easy.

What I didn't know was that Fam was already inside the forest.

I finally managed to catch up with them after anxiously chasing after them, but Fam was almost dead.

That was dangerous.

When I got to her, she was already unconscious which caused me to break into a cold sweat.

While carrying her on my back, I continuously used healing magic on her.

At the same time, Ange the pharmacist was with Fam.

She was also dangerous.

Too voluptuous. That girl was certainly a femme fatale.

One misstep and I might have pushed her down.

It would have been instant death had I not brought with me the replica of the Divine Relic just in case.

Of course, I wanted to bring the original that is still enshrined in the altar, but there was no choice. If the other party were to ask for it back, I don't have any choice but to return it. So this was the only option.

"Whew..."

Anyway, I better get back home quickly.

Go home and pat my daughter's head.

Eat rice cooked by Aisha for dinner during the evening, and do erotic things with my wives once the night is out.

It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say it's my raison d'etre.

It is also no exaggeration to say that in my every day life, I'm going back home only for that.

While I was thinking of these things, I arrived at my house.

As I approached the entrance gates, the Beet's branches suddenly moved and the door was opened for me.

Since when can it do that? I wonder if it's an automatic door now.

Meh.

Jirou the Armadillo was not in his bed. Maybe he's still with Roxy at school.

Zenith was enjoying her lunch in the garden, while Lilia was airing the laundry.

Upon seeing me, Lilia lowered her head and went inside the house.

"I'm home."

"Oh, it's the voice of my brother! Welcome home, Onii-chan! Sorry, your sister is a little bit busy now to welcome you, but at least I could say Welcome back!"

I heard that voice from the basement.

That is Aisha's voice.

"I hear you."

What was Aisha doing?

I wonder if she is organizing her fertilizer?

"Welcome back Rudi."

While I was thinking of that, Sylphy came towards me from the living room.

Behind her is Lucy, following her like a baby duck.

"I'm home Sylphy... this time I feel so tired."

"Thank you for your hard work."

Sylphy took my robe, then she cleaned it making *papapa* sounds with the duster and hung it with a hanger.

By the way, the Magic Armor was left at the office.

Besides the entrance, I installed a large mirror. I'm looking like a young man that just entered society in this world.

But, the me today was quite tired.

I feel like a salaryman that just came home from work.

"Papa, welcome back"

And when I looked at myself in the mirror, Lucy welcomed me.

Her hair color is bright brown, and she looks dignified.

She's almost three years old now and her face is handsome like an elf infant.

Her ears are shorter than her mother's, but she looks very similar to Sylphy in her childhood.

Just like that, she stood there quietly, and welcomed me.

Oh!

Papa, Welcome back!

Aaa!

"Lucy~~ ~~ I'm home!"

When I tried to give her a hug, she suddenly ran away and hid herself behind Sylphy.

She is glaring at me with vigilance.

Shock!

Oh, do I look that dangerous?

sob*
"Come on, Lucy"

"Nooooo~~ ~~"

Sylphy scolded Lucy and held her hand towards me.

I caught it immediately.

Lucy's hand was very small, and warm.

Sylphy is right, her body temperature is higher than normal.

Maybe because she is a bit thin.

Or, was it a characteristic of the elf race?

Oh? Nope, Lucy-Tan, huh, huh ..... Chu-chu, just give Papa a welcome kiss on the cheek, Uhehe.

"Noo, it's scratchy!"

She hurriedly avoided me when I tried to give her some kisses.

Come to think of it, I did not shave at work.

Regret regret.

Anyway, though I'm a bit reluctant, I will stop for now.

Yeah, I don't want to force her when she doesn't want to.

I don't want her to hate me.

When I put Lucy down, she immediately ran pit-patting towards the dining room, fleeing from me.

Did she really hate me so much?

(´・ω・`).

"Sheesh, that Lucy..."

Sylphy sighed while posing with her hand at her hip.

But, compared to before, I think Lucy was beginning to open herself up to me.

She already could call me Daddy, and no longer made a [Who is this guy?] kind of face.

I feel that there is still a little distance... but, it can't be helped.

"Ah..."

For now, in order to regain the warmth that I lost, I embraced Sylphy.

Kissing her, and groping her butt while doing so.

"Really, Rudi..."

Oh, somehow I got turned on.

I wonder if I could take her to the bedroom right now.

But, doing that when the children are still awake...

"We can't do this now, let's do this later."

"Okay."

Being told so, I released her.

Anyway, as long as I make love to my wives, that femme fatale's scent would be blown away.

"Where are Lara and Roxy?"

"Lara is in the living room, and Roxy is still at school."

Following Sylphy's answer, I went to the living room with her.

Lara was sleeping in the cradle.

Lara Greyrat.

My second daughter.

A baby with beautiful blue hair.

But, probably because she has a deadpan expression, I could feel many "Ba~" intense sound effects can be heard around her bed.

Leo curled himself below the baby cradle. Well, I won't get in between him and his prided charge.

"Lara, I'm home."

"U~Oh!"

Even though Lara is still young, she could already understand me.

Even though not even a year has passed since her birth.

Possibly, the children of my house are geniuses.

Or perhaps this time around it's a reincarnated person.

But, she didn't respond to English or Japanese as usual.

But, I never get her saying [Thank you for your hard work, now please take a rest for a while.] Nah, it's probably because of her deadpan expression.

I wonder if she will grow into a proud looking girl in the future.

"Lara, she doesn't cry or laugh much, so I'm a little worried..."

Sylphy is worried about Lara in a different sense from me.

Although, I think that's okay.

I mean, I was also that way in the past.

This is of no concern.

No doubt about it.

Well, still, I understood Sylphy's concern.

The treatment towards someone with a mental disability in this world was very different from my original world.

"Well, it's okay. Even if something were to happen, she is still part of this family."

"I know that, but I get the feeling that Roxy would feel responsible."

"I will give her a loving hug if the time comes."

While stroking Leo that came to lick my hand, I simply told that to Sylphy.

But it's likely that Roxy will feel responsible.

I'm just really happy that I have a new daughter...

I'm wondering, somehow, Roxy was showing her perfectionist side.

"Huh?"

And, that's when I noticed something.

Eris is not here.

She is always competing with Aisha in welcoming me.

And she's always making me touch her stomach and saying [Yes!]

So as to indicate it was becoming larger steadily.

At those times, I would also rub her breasts and get beaten in turn. It's always that kind of pattern, but...

Today, that didn't happen for some reason.

I wonder what happened to her?

"Where is Eris?"

"Ah."

When I asked that, Sylphy showed me a troubled face.

"Somehow, she's been having a little dispute with Aisha since this morning."

"Eh? What? Do you mean they got into a quarrel?"

"Quarrel...? I wonder if that could be called quarreling... unnnn..."

Sylphy gave me a vague answer.

One look is worth a hundred explanations.

"I understand, let me see them."

"Right."

After patting Lara's head, we left the room.

By the way, Lucy was peeking at us from the gap of the door, but when our eyes met, she quickly escaped to the second floor with a *dotadota* sound.

Even if I had the urge to chase after Lucy, I walked towards the basement first.

Going down the stairs to the basement, we found Aisha knocking on the basement floor's door.

"Eris-nee, come on, in this house we already have Leo, Jirou, and Beat."

"I know that!"

Aisha was knocking the door, and Eris was answering from the other side.

"What's the matter?"

Hearing my voice, Aisha turned her head.

"Ah, Onii-chan, Listen! It looks like Eris-nee picked up a stray cat this morning, it kept meowing since this morning."

"A cat."

So it's a cat.

Well, Eris is indeed an animal lover.

In my heart, I'm not as endeared towards them.

But I quite like Leo, so I guess I'm in the dog faction.

Everyone, we must answer goodwill with goodwill.

"It's not that I hate cats, but don't we already have three other pets in the house? So I told her to at least ask for Onii-chan's permission, but she wouldn't listen."

I see.

Looks like my input is necessary.

For once, I'm the head of the family.

"We can keep it."

"Really!?"

A joyous voice could be heard from the other side of the door.

I think I need to pamper Eris who is in her pregnancy once in a while.

Adding a cat or two won't affect the household too much, it's quite cheap.

"However, there is a baby and Lucy, and I won't be home so much. So, you must discipline it properly."

"Of course! I know that!"

Hearing Eris's joyful voice, Aisha turned her face towards me.

"Mu~, then I must devote extra time to buy their food."

Oh, so this is increasing Aisha's workload...

Perhaps, her O meter of taking care of the pregnant Eris is nearing its max.

"Aisha, I'm sorry."

"Don't worry, Onii-chan. After all, you gave your permission."

"I'm sorry, I will make it up to you later."

"Geeze, there's nothing I can say, then..."

After gently patting her head, her mood improved somewhat.

But, probably because she was loosening her hairstyle, her face looks a bit complicated.

"Then Eris, please open the door."

"Okay."

After saying that, the door to the basement opened slowly.

From inside, Eris's lips, forming a "へ" character showed themselves.

She's not showing any signs of weakness pregnant women typically have.

So this is how King-class swordswomen take pregnancy.

"....."

And, through the open door, I looked inside the basement.

I examined the cat sitting down the basement, it breathed deeply and had a collar around its neck.

It was a splendid cat.

Though it was dirty, her ears were standing and her tail was waving to and fro.

Not only that.

What I first noticed were her breasts.

Large breasts. I wondered if they are about the same size as Eris's.

She is wearing torn rags, which could barely hide her chest and waist.

Supple and plump thighs, healthy brown skin and a tail which moved freely.

"Ah! Boss, long time no see nya! I won't forget this favor forever, nya!"

"This morning, on the way back I picked her up! Her name is Rinia!"

Rinia Dedorudia.

My senpai. A beast race female who graduated from the magic university a few years back.

Aa~, such memories.

I get it.

All right.

"Throw her out!"

"No!"

The door was slammed in front of my face.

It took an hour to make that door open again.

After which we decided to move to the living room to hear her story.

Anyway, looks like Eris picked up Rinia while accompanying Leo for a walk.

She is already in her fifth month of pregnancy.

After her condition stabilized, Eris started to take Leo out for walks again.

Her first exercise is light walks.

I could certainly feel her strong will.

Well, I also think some light exercising isn't bad for pregnant women.

While walking nearby the slave market area, that incident happened.

First, from hiding, she told, that Rinia suddenly leaped towards her.

Then, following her were rough-looking men.

Sadly, Rinia's tail got caught....that's business.

Eris, after seeing that, immediately came to a decision.

She drew the sword from her hip, giving help to the poor soul [nekomimi], and slashed the area between the two.

{ C-Editor's note: A nekomimi is a female human/feline hybrid character found in manga and anime. }

She then brought the spoils of war [Rinia] back home feeling triumphant.

"I am the one who helped her so she is mine! I'll raise her!"

And, Eris was determined.

Claiming the ownership over Rinia like a bandit.

"....Y, Yes, I'm Eris-sama's property nya!"

Rinia saying that, she placed her ears above Eris's knee.

Her body was still shivering but I only saw a little shiver on her plump body.

She was trembling in fear.

Waving her tail to the strong, that's the law of the beast.

Well, it's okay ... but.

"By the way Rinia, why were you on the street? No, why are you here in this city?"

Certainly, that day, the day we parted with Rinia in an evening sun.

Saying she will become a great merchant, as her gallant figure walked out of the city.

And now, here she is wearing rags like a slave, and appearing dirty.

"Want to hear nya? It's a long story, full of tears....."

"Give me a short summary."

"Nya."

She left town after graduating from the school, and said that she will become a merchant.

She purchased goods from Asura Kingdom and took them to the North and sold them.

She then purchased goods from the North, and sold them to Asura Kingdom.

In other words, work as a peddler.

For that reason, she purchased a horse drawn carriage with loan.

Taking this opportunity, she also stocked up on goods.

Also with a loan.

Usually, you would do a round trip to the next town by foot and do that repeatedly to earn little by little, but...

In short, she wanted to earn big money in one trip.

And, as a result, her debt interest increased and she was always in the red. Well, that's a given.

Living in poverty day in day out.

It seems she was paying her debts little by little, but she didn't know when her debt would be cleared and those days continued on.

That way, she carried on, hoping to gain glory under the sun someday.

A merchant belonging to the firm where she borrowed money from had approached Rinia and talked to her.

He eagerly talked about paying back the debt with something. But looking at the business, it wasn't going well.

[You can't erase the debt, but it's possible to become a member of the company. It will make payments much easier.

To become a member, 20 Asura gold coin pieces were required as fee to pay the management in the firm, but you could also gain that back later.

You could return the remainder of the debt later.

Once you write IOU, just trust the rest to me.]

Rinia's story continued.

When I heard of that, it really sounded fishy. And the cat was successfully baited with fish.

Rinia's 20 pieces of Asura gold coins were gone to purchase a badge of the members of the Chamber of Commerce.

But, that bright red member's badge was a fake.

When the time came to make her debt payments, they gave her a [What's this guy doing?] kind of face when she showed her badge to the Chamber of Commerce debt collector, and they immediately noticed that it was a fake.

But, the IOU is real.

Rinia's debt increased by 20 Asura gold coins.

Asura gold coins are the most valuable gold coins in this world.

20 Asura gold coins, and surely, the interest from that is a big amount of money.

Originally, Rinia was already up to her neck with the interest payments from her previous debt. With this new debt, she already couldn't pay them.

Her carriage was seized, and Rinia was taken into custody.

"Achishi I was swindled and that's how I ended up being sold to a slave merchant."

{ C-Editor's note: 'Achishi' appears to be some kind of an interjection or speech quirk only used by Rinia. }

I think half of it was her own fault, but ....

Well, a fraud is a fraud.

That swindler is the one in the wrong.

"Hmm."

Though, it's already come to this.

Eris already injured the slave traders, and that is a problem.

There's children and babies in the house.

Given these circumstances, I don't want lowlifes as my enemies.

"..... I wonder what's wrong?...."

"Boss, help me, nya. By all means nya.....I don't want to become a slave, nya ....."

Rinia begged me while clasping her hands.

She's dressed in rags and has a collar.

Somehow, it's erotic.

"Rinia... you..."

"Yes Nya~?"

"Was it Game Over for you already?"

"Nyaa?"

Before Rinia could stand up, I was suddenly looking at the ceiling.

The Boreas punch exploded, and I was flipped from the chair.

"Rudeus! Are you even listening to her story!?"

"That's right Rudi, you don't understand delicacy at all."

"Onii-chan is the worst."

I was severely bashed by the ladies.

"I'm sorry."

Now let's apologize honestly.

Yeah, that's right.

Certainly it's a bit too vulgar.

"Excuse me to say nya! Nya! I'm still a pure virgin girl nya! Something like that was what made my value as a slave rise!"

"I got it, thank you."

I do not know why I heard myself.

I had to make sure somehow, whether they left some mental trauma in her.

I'm reflecting myself.

Even so, her value increased.

Even in this world, the kind that value in virginity does exist.

Come to think of it, in the Great Forest the unicorn is residing inside.

While thinking of these, I noticed something about my body.

My nose is in pain.

Upon examination, I had a nosebleed.

Sylphy was applying healing magic with quick motions.

"Maa~ however, I feel a bit worried."

Eris already attacked the slave merchant.

They must feel humiliated, and will come to exact revenge on us.

Somehow, I must do something about that....

By returning Rinia to them peacefully.

Or by crushing the hostile slave merchant thoroughly.

If I choose the latter, I'm afraid Norn might get kidnapped in a detestable way...

Either way, abandoning Rinia would fill us with guilt.

But she is my friend.

Uhmmm.

"Excuse me~e!"

And, we heard some voice from the entrance.

I don't know any man with this voice, but behind me, Rinia's body suddenly jerked and she jumped behind the couch to hide herself.

"It's them nya!"

Apparently, it's the slave merchant.

I proceeded to the entrance.

"I know our slave is inside this house, we have come to take her."

"I do not know what you're talking about, please don't make such a baseless lie."

Lilia replied to them while I made my way.

They brought three people.

Standing at the front is a tiny man with a knife.

He might be from the dwarf race.

Behind him was a muscular bald man, and a Mohican style haired man.

Violence oozed from their bodies.

They gave a feeling like that of Samson and Adon.

"So you say... In this town, a red haired pregnant woman is already conspicuous, then combined with a large white dog, we already know where to search without asking."

"Maybe Eris-sama is acting violently. You just said it's a possibility. However, inside our home, there is no such thing like a slave to be taken back."

Lilia gave them such a clear answer, the baldie from behind made a cracking noise with his hands.

Pushing his way in front of the small man and then reaching towards Lilia.

"You. This granny is in need of a beating–"

{ C-Editor's note: He is using a disrespectful way of saying 'you' which is 'teme' in Japanese. }

Lilia could only tremble while her shoulder was about to be grabbed violently.

"Wait wait wait woah, wait, don't make trouble, don't make trouble, don't make trouble, and absolutely don't touch her.....!"

She wasn't grabbed.

Hearing what the little guy said, the baldie dropped his hands.

"Big brother, why? Usually it's always. ....."

"You idiot! This maid, is the nanny of that Rudeus Greyrat, and the mother of his half sister. If you dare to put even a scratch on her, your entire family will be annihilated!"

Hearing that, the baldie looked at Lilia and shivered.

"Well, I'm here for business..."

"Look... if the [Mad Sword King] really came out from this house like the story–"

"Hide~e"

And, that's when the little man noticed my presence.

Without delay he rubbed his hands together and made a meek face.

"Oh, it's a pleasure to meet you, Rudeus-san..."

It's a Nechikkoi voice.

{ C-Editor's note: An annoying voice. }

He is posing humbly in front of me and didn't touch Lilia.

Well, I would probably get mad if that baldie even grabbed her.

No way, I wouldn't go as far as massacring them.

At least, I'm sure of that.

I don't know about Eris.

"... Lilia-san, I will handle it from here."

"I understand, Rudeus-sama."

Lilia bowed to me, and she retreated a few steps.

She looked a bit reluctant.

"Nice to meet you, Rudeus-san."

While rubbing his hands together, the small man bowed again.

"I'm working under the Balbard company and I was charged with this matter. My name is Kinchou."

"Nice to meet you, I'm Rudeus Greyrat."

But Kinchou?

That's like a certain drug for mosquito.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to Kincho insecticide. }

"So Kinchou-san, what's your business here?"

From what I heard, I could make a rough guess already.

It would be silly if you were to say you come for something else.

"Though I am reluctant to say this Rudeus-san, one of our beast slaves ran away."

"Hou~, what kind of slave?"

"A daughter of the Dedorudia tribe, high battle capabilities and able to use magic. Really, the best slave."

Oh. I already heard from Rinia.

She's the best slave.

Her evaluation is high so she must be insanely expensive.

"Then, the hunting party from our company chased after her, but they were annihilated."

"Hou~~"

Must be Eris's work.

Somehow I feel sorry for them.

A slave merchant worker, rather than exacting revenge on the murderer, they chose to track her down.

I feel helpless.

"Well, that kind of thing is an everyday occurrence to us and all part and parcel of our work. There's always victims. Without even mentioning that the other party is subordinate to the second ranked in the seven great powers [Dragon God], and an acquaintance to the next king of the Asura Kingdom....right?"

"So to say, somehow I got saved."

It looks like they're scared of Orsted and Ariel's name.

It's the power of connections.

Thank you, President Orsted! Section chief Ariel!

Somehow it won't become a huge deal.

But, it looks like the news about me working under Orsted have already become widespread.

Ma~, maybe the rumor spread from somewhere.

"However... Rudeus-san."

"Yes?"

"That, slave is, how do I put it, her price is quite high."

"You mean... a premium slave?"

Although I think that he is rather a stupid man, but who knows that he has quite an ability in this.

Well, each man has their strong point, isn't that right?

"That slave slipped towards this area. Incidentally, I'd be able to treat you well at our establishment. Hehe, as expected of that slave, she wouldn't come along willingly. But too late, someone already bid on her."

"That buyer was one [Bo***s Gr****t], you get my meaning?"

{ C-Editor's note: Boreas Grayrat. }

"Yeah, yeah. That's right that's right. Rudeus-san also knew them very well!"

That's...

Eris's former house.

"The princess from the Dedorudia tribe could freely use magic in combat. Beautiful and still a virgin. Hearing that, they immediately bought her for 300 Asura gold coins as an advance payment."

Maybe it's Uncle James, or his son. Really, this Greyrat house...

Rather than using that money for buying a slave, why didn't he use that for Fedoa territory's reconstruction?

But Eris also fell in love at first sight with Rinia, and if Rinia is a limited product, I won't get my hands on something like her again.

Seems like I have a money issue.

"This slave is really pricy because it is a limited item. This person must be forced to accept her situation right?"

"Well, I would say so."

"Hey, could you let us past? You understand, right? We need to retrieve our slave."

"....."

Hmm.

Focused in the money, huh?

Well, it appears to be a large enough loss to cause their company to collapse.

Even if they collapsed, I don't care.

I won't feel bitter about it.

"Come to think of it, Rudeus-san"

I'm perplexed, he's directing a threatening smile to me.

"One of your li'l sisters and your wife, I'm sure they're coming back and forth towards Magic University. I'd feel bad if we had to disturb them...."

"You... You don't intend to mess with Norn and Roxy do you?"

If this matter really comes out, I certainly won't go easy.

Didn't I already prepare myself to destroy Ranoa Kingdom?

"Oh, uh, not for now, not for now. Of course not. Of course, I don't want to be in hostile relationship with Rudeus-san? If possible, we want to get along."

"I also feel the same way."

"So you agree? Then, please return our slave. I also don't want to discard my life by being the enemy of Rudeus-san. But, hora~, did you know? As it is, we will end up killing each other, biting each other's neck and die at the same time, did you want to fight till you die?"

Yeah, he's got a point here.

They're also in a desperate state.

After they've cancelled the advance payment of 300 Asura good coins, and even if I paid them the same price, they'll lose from the pay back credit.

Hey, come to think of it, trying to refund the 300 Asura good coins...

They would certainly go bankrupt.

And thinking that they would go bankrupt, they would become desperate.

A wounded beast is scary.

"Hmm..."

...Well, oh well.

Even Rinia was careless this time.

Getting herself in debt, then adding more debt, and finally getting swindled. It was her own fault.

Even if they tried to throw her into prison, Boreas nor myself would let it happen.

As far as I know, at least for Sauros-sama, he never made those beast-eared maids work too hard.

He never gave them hard labor.

Well, maybe they had to do some erotic things, but good-looking guys like Philip and Eris were over there. The Boreas love beast girls, so she will be loved.

If it's like that, I will ask them to let me write a brief note.

She is a slave, but please don't treat her badly because she is my acquaintance.

All right, let's go with it.

"I understand."

"Do you now?"

"Yeah, now..."

While I was looking back to bring Rinia.

–I swallowed those words.

My eyes caught the presence of someone at the top of the stairs.

"....."

Lucy.

My cute daughter.

She has an anxious look. She had seen what's happening here from behind the railings on the stairs.

".....Lilia-san."

"Yes, Rudeus-sama?"

Here, if I yield to this threat, is it really all right to hand the pleading and frightened Rinia over to them? She's laid the groundwork. Heh.

I have been anxious in front of Lucy.

I am a father.

Inside this house, won't my child be scared if I let these bad men forcibly take someone away?

No.

"From the safe in my room, please bring as much as you can."

"Yes, Rudeus-sama."

Lilia was quick.

After disappearing into the back of the house in a flash, and hurriedly came back with an armful of big bags.

Bags full of both small and heavy objects.

I opened a bag which contained several smaller, tightly packed packages.

I picked up one of them, and threw it towards Kinchou.

"...This is?"

While frowning quizzically, he opened the bag that he just received.

"!"

And his complexion changed.

"It is a magic stone. If you sell it in an appropriate place, it will be about 500 Asura gold coins."

"Oh you mean?"

"Here, another one."

I threw the second pouch.

Kinchou received it in a hurry.

"Perhaps, you didn't just captured one Dedorudia, you didn't captured the princess of Adorudia right? Because those two were always together."

"Eh? N, No? I mean, didn't we only capture one animal?"

"For your own sake, I advise you to not lie to me."

Saying that, I threw the third pouch to him.

While catching it, Kinchou's face was full of confusion.

"You've said that, but if later I went to your shop and found another, your shop is history. Because I don't intend to finish this with just money."

Kinchou's face quickly turned blue.

"I, It is true. A Daughter of Dedorudia, we only have one of them!"

...Well, I guess it would be like that. I only need to listen once.

Rinia became a merchant and Purusena became the village chief. The two of them followed different paths. There's no way they would be caught at the same time.

By now, Purusena would already be back in the Great Forest.

"Well..... if that's how is it, I will purchase Rinia."

"No way!? This, three bags?"

"Well... if it's not enough, I still have some magic items, do you want one?"

I also reached out to the next bag.

2000 pieces of magic stones all at once.

I showed them what I earned all of this past year.

"N, no, this, this is fair enough!"

"Well, without saying so. Recently, my house is a bit empty you know. Because I am often not in the house that's why annoying insects come... to bother my family. Perhaps you've seen some?"

"Oh ..... Oh ....."

We must keep a nail tight here.

Intimidating diplomacy.

"Also, in the future, I want us to get along. For example, if the daughter of Adorudia that I mentioned a little while ago comes up or becomes a slave. Or if a daughter or a sister by any chance become a slave. I ask you to at least give me a little leeway."

"Eh, yeah, yeah, of course, you will have your leeway in our market."

"What if, I install the jewelry on the forehead and apply light magic for you to wear. How should I put it.....how about a helmet with flashlight instead..."

Kochirou's body began to tremble and he suddenly bowed to me with a frightened look on his face.

"Wah, O...Okay! She is sold to you! Don't threaten me! I don't want to be your enemy."

"Thank you very much."

I won.

It is a victory, the power of money.

That said, I'm not going to turn this place's slave merchants into my enemy.

Incidentally, also the Boreas family.

"Also, please come back later! I'll have a letter for those Boreas and I need my receipt."

"Oh, is that so... I got it."

After saying that, Kochirou took his men and left in a flash.

"Whew..."

Large amounts of money just disappeared in a flash, huh...

There were only three magic stones, but they were worth about 1500 Asura gold coins together.

That was a lot of money.

Lilia didn't say anything, but she must have been amazed.

"Rudeus-sama."

"Lilia-san..."

"Well done!"

"Thank you"

With a slight smile, Lilia bowed down to me.

It seems she forgave me just this once.

But, Aisha might get angry.

I wonder... let's convince Orsted to get more remuneration somehow.

Well, that aside.

Lucy, look at me.

Your daddy is a man that will help people who are in a pinch.

So if you're in a pinch, I'll help you immediately.

So you don't have to worry about anything anymore.

Now, jump to your Papa's chest.

"... There!"

Thinking about that... when I turned my body.

Lucy was already not there.

Sob.

Anyway, thus Rinia was saved, it was decided that she will live in the house.

As a slave.

It was decided that Rinia will be working as our maid in the house.

As for me, I think it's fine to throw her out on the street.

But, that's not happening. Rinia is my friend.

When my friends are in trouble, of course I will go to help them.

Maa~, though for an instant I was thinking of abandoning her, but I just couldn't do it. I didn't have the heart to.

Moreover, Aisha strongly objected to that idea.

After paying that outrageous amount of 1500 Asura gold coins, there is no way she will let her get kicked out of the house.

"Onii-chan, your payment is good, but that amount of money is nothing to laugh off!Until she pays back all of it, Rinia-san must work here!"

Indeed, your Onii-chan receives an irregular salary from Orsted.

Be it a magic item or magic stone.

Probably because of his time loops, Orsted knows where to find it all.

So, if it's about gold coins and my lifetime living expenses, I could immediately gain it back.

Still, well, 1500 pieces of Asura gold is still a large amount of money for me.

I mean, isn't that more expensive than a house?

"Oh well, she is Rudeus's friend, so that's why I won't give up on her!"

And those are Eris's words.

Since the very beginning Eris didn't want to hand over Rinia.

If I choose to hand over Rinia that time,

She would definitely come out with a sword hanging on her waist making [kachin-kachin] sounds, then producing a large number of corpses in a flash.

If I scold her for killing that slave merchant...

I don't care how she killed the slave merchants, but I'm afraid that it will affect her baby.

Maybe the evil spirits from the people she killed will haunt her and kill her during pregnancy.

Therefore, next time I will use Ariel's name for some pretext to gain their trust.

Or, perhaps, saying that before they could even place their hands on their mouths.

Eris is that kind of woman.

I've given up on trying to change her.

"I think it's a good idea, Rudi."

That's what Sylphy said.

She also did not oppose hiring Rinia.

Sylphy already knows that I'm only on friendly terms with Rinia.

In fact, she complimented my valuing this friendship.

"Wan~!"

And that's what the Holy Beast Leo said.

Although I don't understand what he's saying.

Only Rinia knows.

"Oh, yes, of course Leo-sama. It's nice to be under you, nya! Listen to what I said, nya! It's fine to be under you, nya!"

Rinia, she didn't ask me why the Holy Beast-sama Leo is here.

Leo seems to have already explained his circumstance to her with respect to the matter.

I don't know what you've explained, but she didn't need to hear more from me to respect the Holy Beast's wishes.

Anyway, Rinia's position in the household is below Leo's.

Poor Rinia, her position is below even a dog's.

Rinia salary is two Asura silver coins, but is deducted by half for her debt's repayment.

So it's actually one Asura silver coin a month.

Including a bed with three meals.

As for the bed, she began to sleep in Eris's room.

Rinia acts as Aisha's subordinate, but to give it an actual name, she's like Eris's pet.

However, one Asura silver coin per month.

About 1 or 2 pieces of Asura gold per year.

Her debt repayment, it's gonna take 1000 years or more.

"Rinia, are you fine with that?"

"Uu~... I already received too much help, nya!... That's already enough for me to cherish forever, nya!..."

Rinia seemed to have given up already.

Like an impala bitten in the neck by a cheetah, she's resigned to wagging her tail in front of Eris forever.

Well, if the person herself is fine with it, then it's all good.

After that, Roxy also returned home, but she did not seem to mind either.

Her comment is like Sylphy's and compliments me for lending money to help out a friend.

However, when she heard the price, she gave me a paranoid glance. I wonder why?

"For so much, is a noble daughter's virginity really that pricy?"

It didn't take long to solve her misunderstanding.

But, it looks like my lower body still lacks any sort of credibility.

Next morning.

With Roxy, I went to the Magic University.

She didn't ride on Jirou this time. We're walking together.

We clomped our way through the snowy path.

I haven't taken any lessons from the Magic University in a long time. I also began to miss that once a month homeroom.

However, I need to go to school now to greet Cliff and Zanoba. I need to ask something from them.

Leaving the avenue paved with magical bricks, we're getting closer to the first principal's bronze statue.

When I see the fortress-like school building, I begin to feel a bit emotional.

When I came here for the first time, I was a man suffering from ED.

"Well then, Rudi. We're parting here."

"All right, Roxy. Stay cheery today, too."

"Rudi, also -"

"Aa~, look! Roxy-sensei came with a man today!"

As Roxy says her farewell, I hear a sudden shrill voice.

Looking around, a group of students just leaving the dormitories point to us.

"Aree~~ ... isn't he Roxy-sensei's husband?"

"Ee~~, Norn-senpai's legendary Onii-chan??"

"This is my first time seeing him, but he's actually pretty cool!"

Seems as if I'm being treated like an endangered species or something.

However, I'm unexpectedly also an Ikemen.

{ C-Editor's note: A cool good looking man. }

Fufu.

"....."

Suddenly, Roxy looks at me with eyes full of admiration.

Aa, it's different.

It's like a child who would be happy with just a little praise.

"Excuse me."

And, I wrap my arms around Roxy's body, hugging her.

And, facing toward the students.

"Kyaa!"

While raising the shrill voice, the students disappeared into the school building.

"That's part of my appeal."

"....."

When Roxy gives me that look, I quickly release my arm.

Her ears are red.

I myself feel a bit wounded, and my tail is wagging.

"C-can't you let me go now?"

"....."

There isn't a reason to not let her go.

But, I could make any excuse to Roxy. To stay by her side.

In fact, I only want to feel my little girl's breasts.

While I think this, I rub our cheeks together.

Nn~~, her cheek is smooth.

"W-what? All of a sudden, in a place like this ..."

"G-O-O-D-B-Y-E KISS!"

"A, a, aaaaa, so that's it.....I see. I'll take it, then! Then, Rudi, take care!"

Roxy dashes to the staff building, her right hand and feet moving together.

After parting with her, I run toward the research building.

"What? Seems I'm too early."

I arrive at the research building, but Cliff doesn't seem to be here yet.

His child's the reason. A lot certainly happened.

By the way, when she gave birth to the child, Elinalise unceremoniously dropped out from the magic university.

Originally her purpose for entering Magic University was for a man hunt.

Once she found a man and had a baby, she kissed the school life goodbye.

Many frowned upon her for that, using the sacred school grounds for something like that.

I respect Elinalise in that regard.

Let's see, now I have some free time.

I could go to Zanoba's place first, but...

If that diligent Cliff didn't hear what I have to say first, he'll be bugged about it later.

U~m, I'll go to Zanoba's place this afternoon.

I feel bad for Zanoba for my constant sudden appearances at his place.

Let's go as planned and meet in order Cliff → Zanoba today.

While I'm pondering here, I see a parade around.

Walking on the slightly snowy road, they assemble themselves in the schoolyard.

Having nothing else to do, I approach them, overhearing the principal giving his speech on the stage.

"—-But, magic is different. It has unlimited potential!

Regaining the lost magics and learning to integrate it with modern day chanting,

Everyone of you has the possibility of bringing forth the new evolution —-"

I think I already heard that speech somewhere.

I try to remember, where I heard that speech before.

My entrance ceremony.

So~, it's already that season.

Now, what was my grade.

Fifth grade... No, sixth grade.

I only attended the lessons at first and second years here, but I would like to attend my graduation ceremony.

Sylphy also dropped out from school after the debacle in the Asura Kingdom since it wasn't that important to her any more.

Aa~, if I was already in my sixth year, then Silent Sevenstar-senpai must have already graduated.

That girl, I wonder if she went to her graduation ceremony?

Most likely not.

I have the feeling that these last few years, Nanahoshi got her hands full with learning summoning magic.

Now, she seldom asks for my help.

By the way, Perugius lends her a good deal of help. Otherwise, she wouldn't have gotten past the experimental stage.

Well, it seems that she only enrolled because of the school's facilities, and it doesn't look like any of it matters to her now.

If I had to take a guess, I suppose she only wants to attend her graduation ceremony in her previous world.

Anyway, I still feel a little anxiety toward Nanahoshi.

My future self said that she found her own grim end.

Let's keep an eye out for her when I have some free time.

With onigiri and potato chips in hand.

"Now, a speech from the new student council president."

While reading over my own thoughts, I realize the principal's speech was already over.

He returned to the teaching staff's sitting place behind the podium.

And there I see Roxy sitting in the middle of the teaching staff.

Aaa~, Roxy sitting straight as a teacher.

Must be nice...

Among these freshman I want to say, [Did you see that beautiful blue haired girl? She's my wife!] proudly.

How's that? I can take pride in that, right?

" —chan rea....."

"That magic university specialty is–"

"Hey, that little girl there. She's already an adult, right?"

"I guess she still doesn't know about men yet."

As the principal's speech ends, the freshman begin to buzz.

I'm puzzled about why.

When I look towards the podium, Norn is standing there.

Together with her is a tall demon-race girl, and accompanied by a youthful brawny beast-man.

She is standing in the middle.

"Everyone, this year's chosen student council president is fifth year student Norn Greyrat."

Norn is the student council president.

This is the first time I've heard about this.

I did hear that she was a student council member.

Maybe they elected her during these last few months.

"Though we think it's still too soon, but we decided to do it."

When Norn started her speech, the student body kept up their buzzing.

Seems like Norn isn't charismatic enough to stay the freshmen's chattering like Ariel.

It can't be helped, I'll use some magic to silence them.

And, suddenly I notice that among the guys around me, a group of them look toward Norn with passionate eyes.

They seem familiar.

If I'm not mistaken, they're those bodyguards, those [Fan Club] fellows.

What are these guys doing, among the freshman.....

"BE QUIEEEEEEEEEEEEET!"

The next moment.

There stands a young brawny beast on the stage, giving out a thundering roar.

That voice silenced the freshman in an instant. Only a few quiet murmurs remain here and there.

"Thank you, Gilbert."

"Yes."

Norn gives her thanks to the beast youth then continued her speech.

"Every one of us here are assembled from all around the world.

Among us, a good few of us would believe those around us are rather unusual, wouldn't you agree?"

But here, where each of you stands as a student among students, is the magic university.

In this place, you are now students of the magic university. Abide by the rules!"

That speech, I thought I already heard it somewhere.

Things about school rules and regulation, learning different things. And knowing about what constitutes as common sense here.

It's what Ariel said at my own entrance ceremony.

Apparently, the themes for student council president's speech are predetermined in this school.

"——more than that. Everyone, I wish you all a great school life."

Norn quickly bows her head, then walks down from the stage.

Her walking posture is full of dignity——ah, there was a scene.

Soon, Norn's foot slipped from the stairs, and she fell down to the ground.

Kusukusu, I could hear laughing voices from the surrounding now. She's definitely famous now.

A—a—, just a moment ago, she was recognized as a cool student council president....

And, that's what I was thinking, but somehow the passion in their gazes increased.

For instance, the SS guys now wear satisfied looks on their faces.

{ C-Editor's note: He is referring to Norn's Fan Club as SS or Secret Service guys. }

Fans of the clumsy-type girl archetype certainly exist in this world.

But, a student council president in her fifth year.....

Norn's definitely doing her best.

Your brother is proud of you.

Paul's soul looks on from the grass field behind me, taking that big picture of Norn with his tripod camera.

I'm filled with an unexplainable feeling.

Keeping up with her studies, practicing swordsmanship, doing her best with her student council work.

Good luck, Norn!

All right!, I also must do my best.

Staying at my best even after this, protecting my family from Hitogami!

"Hmph, so that's the rumored Norn Greyrat. She's a C.....no, a B if I factor in my expectations."

And immediately, I hear a voice that kills my excitement at my side.

What this guy just said.

Looking at him, a Bishounen is standing there.

It seems he's about 15 years old.

A blonde haired Elf....

Amazing Ikemen sighted.

Mou~, Ariel looked fairly normal.

But this Ikemen face is like radiating some kind of light which prevents us from looking at him directly.

U~n, No.

From this guy's face, he's definitely proud of himself.

If only in his appearance level, he has overwhelmed the greatest Ikemen from the Greyrat family, Luke.

That's for certain.

If this guy's rank is an S, Luke is an A, and Norn is around a B.

"So much for what I was hoping for from the top student of this school....she's only at that level."

But, even if that's the truth, such comments have their right time and place.

I really feel that you're an Ikemen, but you need to limit your standards to the general population of this world.

Did you know that all the scary seniors over there are staring over here?

They're people who think that Norn is the best in the world.

Ah, look out! Those guys really came here.

From where those guys were hiding away, three guys stand out.

Chatting while glancing at me.

"Senpai, that guy is serious?"

"Serious? About Norn-chan? Really?"

"Really serious."

That kind of conversation could be heard.

No, that just now was me dubbing over them.

He's a freshman Ikemen, and I dislike bullying.

But, the SS (those guys), I don't think they'll like it if they heard what you've just said.

Hey now, they've got a look that says "Please don't hold me back, I can take 'em on..." while looking at my face.

With that cruel look in their eyes, do they want someone to be taken up to the rooftops to have an accident?

"Is that guy on the side of Rudeus, the one called brother?"

Well, with regard to that, I don't deny it.

I certainly know about the Rudeus hard faction.

But I created such a thing.

You can't win against me.

And, when I see this guy, our eyes meet.

"You think so too, right?"

That Ikemen is looking at me, and his eyes ask for my approval.

Eh? What's with that...?

"... Well, u~n, well, Rudeus himself is a great person, I think? But, Norn-chan also does her best, right?"

"Ha."

Puzzled by their reply, the Ikemen laughs at them.

"Aaa, I'm sorry. Humans in this town, everyone is scared of Rudeus. But I desire peace of mind. My name is Raifold. From elven village Magnafold, and I'm son of its village chief. I don't have any reason for clashing with Rudeus."

Aa~, thank you very much for your polite attitude.

But, in such a situation it's a bit hard to introduce myself.

How about this. For the time being let's introduce myself as Ruud Ronma.

"Both of us, we go to different courses than Norn. In these last several years, there is only one addition to special student. I wonder if you're here as a preparation to become village chief of Elven village?"

Oh.

I see, same as Rinia and Purusena.

Coming from a faraway land, they come all the way here to study human society.

"Certainly I will stand at the top of this school. Even that Norn girl, will become my woman."

No, that's something I can't let you to do.

No matter what your circumstances, I won't let you have Norn for such a reason.

This Onii-san won't permit it.

"Good, you have that good look in your eyes, come with me."

"Ha....?"

Possibly, that might have sounded like I was trying to recruit him as my underling.

Now come to think of it, I don't have any underlings...

But, somehow I can feel some eyes looking in our direction with envying looks.

Before he does something to interfere with Norn...

... In this situation, as her brother, what should I do?

Although he isn't aggressively going after Norn right now, somehow it still feels like I need to do something.

But, helping Norn too much is unnecessary.

It would seem like I'm being overprotective.

Norn is probably fairly well protected in this school.

Although Raifold is a village chief candidate, he shouldn't have any political power in this country...

Norn has her helpers, and her bodyguards [Fanclub] at her disposal.

Although I still feel like I should handle this business myself.

What should I do?

"Leave that guy alone."

Then, another person's voice rang out and joined us.

Somebody help put an end to this!

With some hope in my chest I looked back, half-expecting to see a familiar face...

"My name is Mii-Nall, son of village chief of Bii-nall village. A dwarven village."

Who is this guy?

It looks like he is also a freshman.

His attitude is so high, but his height is only half of us.

No matter how you look at it, he has the face of an adult, he even has a stocky mustache.

He's obviously of the Dwarf race.

"How naive of you thinking that there is only one special student...? Don't make me laugh. I too am special students of this term!"

Ah, that was unexpected.

Looking down at that dwarf face, Raifold was surprised.

"Oh, isn't that Mii...!"

"Long time no see, Rai!"

Apparently, they seem to know each other.

I guess the elven and dwarven villages are close to each other.

So even their village chiefs' sons are acquainted.

"Well, so this year's special students are the two of us?"

"Nope, that's also wrong. Gufufu."

That's a unique laugh, I wonder if the Mii-Nal lineage has a unique way to laugh?

There's someone hiding behind Mii-Nal's shadow.

A small boy about the same size as Mii-nal, another Dwarf race?

His race... No, that child is different.

He is probably from the human race, a youth from the human race.

His age is about seven.

His face is familiar, he looks like someone... from the Asura lineage.

"Hey, introduce yourself."

The boy introduced himself with a trembling voice.

"My, my name is, Grannel. Grannel-Zafin-Asura. I'm the second son of Asura Kingdom's first prince, Grabell-Zafin Asura"

I was perplexed.

Grabell's son.

This boy...?

Why is he here?

I wonder, is it for revenge? For that incident in Asura Kingdom?

Is he here on some assassination mission... this late?

Why did he send such a small kid?

"That, father lost in the political game, we are in dangerous situation..."

Oh!

I got it.

Grabell, in the off-chance that Ariel would assassinate his sons, he sent them out of the country to escape.

Hey come to think of it, this is the second son, I wonder if Grabell's eldest son is in another country?

....No, it's different.

This country, Ranoa Kingdom, is full of Ariel's supporters.

Yet he was sent to this country, so he might be some kind of hostage for Ariel.

In this world it looks like there's a custom for sons to greet people while saying their father's name. I wonder if he doesn't care about the consequences?

"I see, we are alike. People from various places chased from their villages for some reason, and now we three meet each other in this place"

"I don't have any particular reason to get chased-out... Because I am only third in inheritance..."

"Okay, it's good. Everyone has their own circumstances. You must have heard some rumor?"

"You too....!"

The Elf Ikemen put his arms around Mii-nal and Grannels' shoulders.

"Ma~, as fellow special students, we should help each other. If we join our power, becoming the top in this University is not a mere dream....right?"

"Oooo~h...!"

"Eee~tto, please take care of me!"

I don't know what happened, but it looks like the special student freshmen immediately befriended each other during the entrance ceremony.

What a beautiful sight.

Well... just for now I'll forgive him about the matter regarding Norn.

Everyone wants to show off their character when they're starting their first year of school.

If you're a second year and muttered that B-Rank crap, I won't let that slip.

Well, anyway, I want to say to do your best.

"Oo, so this is this year's gathering nya!"

While I was being deeply affected by that sight, someone spoke up from outside the freshman crowd.

I recognize that voice, until a few years ago that was the voice of one of the troublemakers in this school.

Looking in that direction, I saw a cat-eared girl with one hand in her pocket making her way over here through the crowd, it was Rinia.

Shouldn't she be working as a maid at home, why is she here?

"....What the, aren't you Rinia-senpai?"

"Who?"

"You know, the boss from two years ago."

"...Some kind of delinquent?"

"Why, didn't she graduate already...?"

Her surroundings are perplexed.

She walked straight to me.

"Hey, boss."

"Oh, what's the matter?"

"I came to deliver Roxy-sama's lunch that she forgot to bring nya! Originally I want to deliver to the office nya, but it looks like she is here nya."

So that's it.

Instead of coming during lunch, Aisha must have sent her over before classes began.

Aa~, Roxy seems to forget to bring her lunch on a regular basis.

By the way, I didn't bring any lunch.

It's not like I didn't want to eat a homemade lunch, but I already planned to eat out with my friends as a way to communicate.

"....."

"....."

Then I noticed, those two freshmen who were talking with high spirits from before, averted their eyes from here and watched their feet.

"Oi, why didn't you come to talk... I mean return to the Great Forest?"

"I also want to ask...."

"Eh? What?"

Those two guys spoke in a small voice, only Grannel-san looked puzzled.

"Are~e?"

So Rinia noticed them.

These two are also from the Great Forest.

She raised her hand to them in a friendly manner.

"O~y, Rai, Mii!"

Those two were trembling and faced away.

It seems they're acquainted.

"Hey, did you come here from the Great Forest nya? Hasn't it already been about eight years? Hey I missed you nya, are you healthy nya? Hey, face me nya."

It's no good, there's going to be a quarrel.

Ara? Rinia's eyes, that's the look she has right before a fight.

Hey now, even that Grannel boy is scared.

"No, you're mistaking me for someone..."

"I, I also didn't know someone with such a name..."

"Oh?"

Rinia grabbed those two heads and turned them toward her, saying yakuza-like lines.

Like, it felt that line [Just a minute your loan is not that little.] Completely like that.

"Perhaps, it's a fatal thing, to carelessly leave nya? Eight years have passed. I see, your memory needs to be refreshed nya..."

So, somehow I understand the relationship of these three.

Pursena and Rinia are the bosses, those two are their henchman.

Even if she herself is a slave now, this girl has the strange sense of a boss.

"N, no, there is no way it's true...! Since I heard someone who left the great forest will become someone else entirely!"

"Pu, Pursena-san and Rinia-san have become really beautiful. For a moment I thought that you were someone else.... it was like that, please forgive our rudeness...!"

Well, slowly, they're self destructing.

The surrounding freshmen have become frightened and retreated to a distance.

New students, it'll be bad if you think this is a scary school dominated by violence.

The Magic University is Roxy's alma mater, it's our university.

This is a glorious university designed to teach and practice magic!

So, I'll give a little help to these cute freshmen and save them from the clutches of their delinquent Senpai...

"Hey, what's going here!"

"....What?"

"Eh... Ehhhhh...!"

Our surroundings suddenly became noisy.

The crowd was split into two.

Someone, walking toward our place.

Soon, that person showed up.

Bright blonde hair inherited from Mother, with eyes full of motivation.

It's Norn.

Student council president Norn Greyrat.

Following from behind, a brawny Beast race youth and a Magic race girl.

Looking at the two people behind her made me remember Ariel.

OK! Norn.

You made a blunder a little while ago, but now the opponent is Rinia.

Now say something, show off your dignity as student council president.

Okay, I won't allow Rinia to say anything. This Onii-san will give her threatening glares from behind!

"Nii-san!"

When I thought about that.

Norn passed Rinia, she came toward me.

With her hands on her hips, she came and looked up at me with a pouting expression.

"Why did you mix into the entrance ceremony?"

....seems like Rinia was just ignored.

No, I didn't do anything like bullying, I hope.

"Well, you know... for this and that..."

"You saw my screw up... ahh, how embarrassing..."

"Well, uh, it was a wonderful speech. Very elegant. Father in heaven——"

"I didn't come here to hear about that!"

She was angry at being praised.

I feel a little crestfallen.

"Why are you in a place like this? Are you bullying the freshman?"

"What?"

Bullying?

Me...?

That can't be true.

Looking around, all gazes focused toward Norn and me.

Expectant gazes focused on Norn and frightened gazes focused on me.

That's weird, was I always such a bad guy?

"Say! What did you do to this child?"

"No, nothing.... just, they were saying a few bad things about Norn and Onii-san just wanted to..."

Such as, let's see B rank.

Um.

....Umm?

"I'm already used to that sort of thing, so please stop it! Look, they're scared now!"

"N, no, they're scared of Rinia aren't they?"

"Rinia-senpai is working for us, so it's definitely nii-san's fault!"

OH, SHIT!

So that's how it is.

I failed to see this from that point of view.

Me as the big bad banchou with Rinia as my henchman.

Damn it.

Is it because of my daily conduct?

"I mean, listen Nii-san!"

"What? What is it?"

This nii-san is almost weeping, you know.

Any more than this... Are you trying to deliver the final blow?

"Some time ago, Roxy-nee said it! Rinia-senpai became our s, s, slave! What are you after!?"

Eh? That?

"There's no way around it, a slave is a slave. Instead of us shouldering her debt, she's simply working it off at our home. That way, no one loses."

Clearly, Norn's lips are puckering while she frowned.

Really, rather, Rinia please, help me!

I don't have any evil intentions whatsoever.

"Norn-chan, what boss said is true, nya! He already saved my life, nya!"

Rinia while rubbing her hand together approached Norn.

The two freshman showed a relieved look.

Seeing that, Norn sighed.

"...So that's it. Well, all right. To be honest, I would have probably done the same thing if I saw her under those circumstances."

She believed me.

"But, Rinia-senpai, you've already graduated. Please stop causing problems at the school!"

"Is that a problem, nya? Achichi, and I was just greeting a couple of my old acquaintances...."

"....."

"Alright, it's my bad, nya! If I ever become the center of attention again, I'll get outta here, nya."

Norn looked up with a disgruntled look, and Rinia scratched her head and bowed down.

I feel kind of bad for her. She probably didn't mean to start a scene.

With all that said, she turns around starts saying things like, [These two, nya, I need to give them some spirit], and so on. Apparently she still has more to say.

Hearing that, the two freshmen become even more frightened.

Diverting her eyes from Rinia, Norn faces me again.

"Nii-san, I'm glad that you're trying to protect me, but please don't help me too often. I can settle things on my own."

"Right, I'll keep that in mind."

When I lower my head, I could hear raised voices from our surroundings.

"She could make that Rudeus bow his head down!"

"As expected of the student council president."

"Norn-chan is so cute..."

Is it so rare for me to bow my head down?

Me bowing is a daily occurrence...

Well, whatever.

Norn's reputation is going up, so I'm fine with it.

"....."

I suddenly noticed, the three freshman remained frozen in their place, watching us.

Norn just noticed them.

"Er~m, is that them?"

"Yeah, they're special students."

"Oh, I heard about them. There are three special students enrolling this year."

Norn then cleared her throat.

Then she turned to face them with a courtesy.

"Nice to meet you, everyone. My name is Norn Greyrat, the new student council president."

Answering her is the smallest child of those three.

"Se, second son of the A, Asura kingdom's first prince, Grannel-Zafin Asura"

"Thank you very much for being so polite.

Grannel-san, though learning in another country seems scary.

But I think with such a noble upbringing, you won't have to worry.

If there is anything making you anxious, please come to the student council.

As students at the Magic University, no matter your background, we student council are your friends.

Upbringing aside, we the student council are an ally to all those who come to study here."

What smooth talking.

As if she's been practicing it, Norn's words and movements are elegant. She expresses her gratitude once more.

"Y, yes."

"Well then, enjoy your school life..."

Norn said her piece and left.

As soon as Grannel saw her, his face became a feverish red. Norn's escort also said their greetings.

Wait a minute, it hadn't been that long since I've last seen her, yet Norn grew into a splendid lady.

As I thought, she picked up an etiquette class.

Anyway, that incident with the three special student marked Norn's first act as Student council president as the junior dominating senior.

Staying around here's making me feel kind of awkward, so I'll take my leave with Rinia.

It would be nice if you put Roxy's lunch on her desk in the staff room.

Though a large chunk of the last generation still remained in the Magic University, a new wind began to blow.

I was heading toward Cliff's place, and parted with Rinia on the way.

Recently, Cliff's character is more known for his eye-patch.

Cliff's initial which is carved into his eye-patch is stylish indeed, looks like Elinalise was the one who made that.

However, while wearing it, it made him look more threatening instead of more fashionable.

Compared to Ghyslaine, he also has less muscle.

"Ariel's regime, the son of the first prince... it is likely this will bring more trouble."

When Cliff attended homeroom, it seems like that trio had introduced themselves.

He sighed at the thought of the trouble in the future.

"Since I don't think he is a hostage of Ariel-sama, please get along with him. Don't be so negative, it isn't like he was involved in his father's political war."

"I know that. Well... at least, be careful so that guy won't be going out with your sister."

"I will."

While conversing with Cliff, we entered his laboratory.

Elinalise is there.

She's rearing her child.

Elinalise has lived for several centuries already, I wonder how many children she has now?

But Cliff's child is especially cute. Clive is being raised like royalty.

His mother is also experienced in raising children, so I'm sure he will grow up into a splendid child.

"Well, shall we go?"

Carrying three wooden boxes from the laboratory, Cliff is walking next to me.

Each wooden box is 30 centimeters square sized on each side.

I'm carrying two of them.

They're heavy.

"Thanks for the help."

"No, no problem at all."

Carrying them, we left the research building, and continued our way going out from the school.

"How is Clive's health?"

"He is growing up healthy, but he still cries at night. It will be busy... it reminds me of my time in the orphanage."

"So Cliff-senpai grew up in an orphanage."

"Ah! In the orphanage, there were many abandoned children... but, I thought of myself as the only one who was special."

"Really."

We were headed towards the city outskirts.

We used a horse-drawn carriage ever since we left the university, and that carriage would bring us to the city's gate.

We're sitting side-by-side inside that horse-drawn carriage.

"Cliff-senpai is splendid, I'm sure you will become a fine father."

"I can't do anything yet. Lise is there, so I must look decent at least."

"But, I don't think so, he was just born one month ago after all, so it doesn't count as not participating in raising the child."

"Even raising a child, has many forms. In your case, there is your wife and your maid, you could learn from her[maid]. So it's not really that hard."

Cliff, with the wooden box on his knee, said that like he finally understood something.

"As a servant of the god, if I can't watch over my child's growth everyday... I will be a disgrace"

"If you say so Father Cliff, then that child will definitely be saved."

"Ah! Now I want to go back and make a confession...."

I was unaware of it, but Cliff already successfully passed the test to become a Father in the Milis religion.

It's not formal yet, but he could still work for the church due to his lineage.

He didn't only research.

As expected. He still thought about it, returning to his hometown.

This year is my sixth year, while Cliff is in his seventh year.

My senpai, will graduate next year.

"Cliff-senpai, what are your plans after graduating?"

"...I don't know, as I haven't contacted my grandfather yet. But, I think once I return, I will tell him that I'm already married and have a child now."

"I will miss you."

At that time, I will still be working for Orsted to defeat Hitogami.

Hitogami might be targeting Cliff according to the future diary.

I don't have a plan to persuade Cliff yet. In the first place, I've never heard of Cliff's circumstances.

"That's still a year from now."

"You're right."

While we were talking about such topics, the carriage arrived at Sharia's southern gate.

We paid the money for the driver and continued on foot.

Leaving the gate, we headed towards the southeast.

After a while, the main office of our company came into sight.

As a building on the outskirts, it's considerably big.

It's surrounded by a fence to ward off trespassers.

"But, after a while, I've finally understood. That time, you lied to me after all."

"Yes, you wouldn't have believed me no matter what, because of that curse."

"I won't blame you, with a curse that powerful... Look! Even at this distance, I'm trembling."

Having such a conversation, we moved to the front door of our office.

There are the words [Staff Only] written on the door.

I took the key from my breast pocket to unlock the door.

Although I took the key out, I didn't actually use it.

From there, we went to the inner part of the room.

"Ugh....."

The instant the door opened, Cliff shivered.

Glancing over here from behind a luxurious wooden desk in the middle of the room, Orsted was writing something.

His grim face is the same as ever.

"Hm. Cliff Grimol."

"Oh, oh, yeah. ...'s Cliff Grimoire."

"a, Ah!, yes. It's Cliff Grimol....."

"It must be difficult for you every time."

"......What do you mean?"

Somehow this way, it's fine as it is.

Granting my request to meet Orsted, it means so much for me.

"Orsted-sama. Let's start this quickly, there are three today."

"Ah."

Cliff and I placed the wooden boxes on the desk.

Opening one of them, Orsted removed its contents.

The box contains a full-face helmet.

Other boxes also hold the same.

Only their colors are different. There are three colors in the order black, brown and gray.

"Please, wear them."

"...."

Orsted didn't say anything, pushing his head inside, he now wore the helmet.

While only wearing a helmet without body-armor, he is giving off the impression of a suspicious person.

In my eyes, he is getting even more scary....

"Cliff-senpai, how do you feel?"

"...it's no good, it's even worse than before."

"Well then, the next one."

And so, Orsted wore the three helmets in order.

Looking at Cliff's reaction each time, I confirmed their effects.

Afterwards, we listen to Cliff's opinion.

"As I thought, after trying these three in turn, one trying to convert the magic via the flux method, it seems to have backfired. Come to think of it, the magical power of the curse itself must be very high."

"Its magical power...?"

"Ah, Orsted-sama, as soon as I could feel the appearance of your magical power, I thought I could sense the curse being invoked.

"Well, what about covering my whole body with some anti-magic material?"

"By putting you inside a box without a singe crack, that way the curse won't be invoked, but that wouldn't solve anything."

"It is as you said."

This is what we're trying to do, researching Orsted's curse.

Over this past year, Cliff has been conducting some experiments with research of Elinalise's curse as the basis.

Cliff was able to determine that Orsted's curse is focused around his head.

So Cliff has focused on suppressing the curse with helmet-type tools.

Cliff is very determined in this subject, to test the limits of the effectiveness of his anti-curse tools.

Sometimes, some progress was made.

Currently, with the latest version of anti-curse helmet, Orsted's curse is weakened a bit.

It was only a small effect.

Even with this helmet on, children began to cry when he walked in town, stray dogs would get scared and run away immediately, and horse-drawn carriages slipped.

However, Eris and Sylphy's attitude was able to soften when facing Orsted. Well, that's enough for now.

You might say, it has changed from [He is the enemy of living beings] to [An Evil Boss]. It seems the type of fear is different. As for the result, females could somehow judge it more clearly.

Luckily for me, Orsted's curse has no effect.

In the middle of his research about Orsted, Cliff was able to understand that I lied to him.

It is an important step.

I have some complicated feelings about this, but we'll manage somehow or another for the time being.

Although, there is still a long way to go.

At the present, the helmet size is about twice as big as Orsted's head.

There isn't any ventilation for air to enter, it didn't have an eye visor before, and he couldn't hear or speak.

It is not a thing that can be worn for a long time.

Really, still a long way to go.

Though Cliff succeeded in creating it in one year, it isn't just a fluke. It is the work of a genius.

As it is, the research is progressing. Orsted could now walk near the town gate.

As for Cliff, he is satisfied with the results of the research from a curse on someone else and plans to develop a new anti-curse tool for Elinalise.

It's regrettable that he must return to the research of Elinalise's curse, as her curse is starting to flare up again after the baby is starting to mature.

But worry not.

He just needs to quickly make his second child.

"Well then, the next one is also one month later."

"Ah, no need to hurry, Cliff Grimol. To think that you had such talent."

"Eh!? a ..... aa, tha, that's right!. Since I'm a genius."

Towards the result of Cliff's research, Orsted could only be astonished.

Apparently during his long loops there was a time when he tried to do something about his curse.

But, even after several hundred years of research, it didn't bear any fruit at all. It seems he gave up in the middle of it.

During his 200 years, there is no other person who made any progress in the research of his curse except for Cliff.

But, isn't that because Orsted had no friends to help?

However, the results came out.

The next target is, one way or another, Cliff. His research study regarding curses is also included in Orsted's plan.

Heck, I wonder if I have to lead him while he walks around.

Before, it was walking around this office and the surrounding area....

"Rudeus"

And, while I thought about it, Orsted called me.

Cliff already moved outside of the office.

Because the work on the curse is done, he wants to get away from Orsted as soon as possible.

Even though he already knows about the curse, his body is reacting differently.

It's like the case between a human and a cockroach, even though the cockroach doesn't have the power to kill the human, they're still freaked out when they meet.

"...It was helpful."

Saying his gratitude, damn it!

Ohh, president-san, you're skillfully using your voice.

Alright! Once the anti-curse tool is completed, you'll be able to enjoy window shopping alone.

Going on a date with Orsted.

Well I can't really say it's enjoyable for either of us.

"No, my family is still opposed to my decision, it's also painful for me, Orsted-sama who moves freely, Hitogami hates me, I'm moving on my own."

"That's right."

When Orsted-sama's curse is healed, Orsted Co. will become one of the largest companies in the world.

While considering such things, I leave the office.

After parting with Orsted, on my way out of the office, I stopped by the arsenal.

From there, I take out the Magic Armor.

Small sized Magic Armor.

The black armor was divided into several parts. Arms parts, legs parts, and body parts.

It looks very lightweight at first glance, but as it was something I made with my earth magic, it has massive weight.

For that reason, the only way of carrying it is by wearing it and channeling magical power into it.

"Cliff-senpai, thank you for waiting."

"Ah, then let's go."

Together with Cliff we're headed back to the university.

Next is Zanoba.

I must always make this trip. I have little choice, as trouble would likely occur if Orsted entered the university.

"Cliff-senpai, did you already eat lunch?"

"Now that you mention it... before I go back to my room, I'll visit the cafeteria first. You invite Zanoba. Let's have lunch together."

"Ok."

To drop off the helmets, Cliff quickly left for his laboratory.

Following his words, I'm headed straight to Zanoba's laboratory.

Just as I wanted to open the door, my movement stopped.

Once, when I opened this door casually, I saw a scene of a sensual Zanoba in a reverent posture.

Our situation at that time was awkward.

I'm a man who reflects on his faults.

Before entering the room, it is always necessary to knock on the door first.

I knocked on the door.

"Knock, hello!"

"Oh, Shisho! Nice timing! Come in."

There was a reply immediately.

After I get the confirmation, I open the door.

There, a 30 year old geek stands....

Also about a 10 year old naked girl.

The little girl was pressing her stomach and her face was contorted and about to cry.

From between her feet, a line of blood was flowing.

Ah! This, is the scene of a crime.

"Zanoba... you... to lay your hands on Julie..."

"You can even joke at this situation? Shisho, quickly use healing magic on Julie. Her blood hasn't stopped flowing since earlier."

Zanoba's voice is desperate.

I wonder if some accident happened.

Julie also looked up at me with a half crying face.

"Grand master.....my stomach is painful. Please help me....."

I'm not a doctor.....while I thought something like that, I'm looking at Julie's body.

There are no wounds.

If it is like this, an internal wound then?

Blood is flowing from between her crotch.

It's suspicious.

Then, maybe....no, it must be that!

"Probably, I guess it's menses. Let's just call Ginger-san."

"Ee! A~h! So it's menses! Which reminds me, Julie is a girl! Really, how could I forget a fact like that!"

"Master?"

Looking at Zanoba laughing at himself, Julie has an anxious look.

Julie is 9 years old, or 10 years old?

But for her first menstruation to come this early, is that also a trait of the dwarven race?

Or, is there some mistake of her age when we bought her?

You might say, any of those two.

"So, before going to lunch. Julie, you can take a break. Until Ginger returns, is it alright to leave you alone?"

"....I'm scared. Master, please take me along."

"Hmm..."

My goodness, Zanoyan, you're so popular.

Hateful guy.

"Well, that's a nice idea. I'll buy you something to eat."

Julie already became an adult.

Adult, wait a minute, come to think of it, lately her magical power stopped growing.

Soon, our plan will be put into action.

An hour later, Zanoba's laboratory.

After that, meeting up with Cliff, we came back after we bought lunch.

Currently, I'm facing three people while eating our lunch.

On the side, Ginger looking after Julie.

Rather than a knight, she looks more like a maid.

"Master, about the Magic Armor's performance, how is it?"

"It was not bad, it could take a demon's attack. But, as I thought, I still feel a bit worried about its ability. It's fine against a demon, but will it be enough if the opponent is a swordsman...?"

"Defense power, resilience, and mobility... because we sacrificed them all."

"But, to reach the prototype level, size is required...."

After one and a half years, the Magic Armor has gone through a number of iterations.

At first, beginning with completing Magic Armor <set>, then thinking about downsizing it while keeping its performance as it is, that is where the hard part was.

In the first place, it was a collection of the best technology we had at that time, and then the addition of Hitogami's mysterious technique.

Even after a complete revision, it was still not small enough. It could become one size smaller, but that would make its ability fall. This result is not very useful at all.

Then finally, after repeated trial and error and thoroughly studying the Body part magic formula.

Concentrating on both feet part magic formula, wrapping its principle, it then changed form.

This miniaturization reduced the consumption of magical power significantly. (However, it was still on the level where only I could use it).

Completion of Arm parts and Legs part [V2].

But, [V2] power has some limitations.

At any rate, the thing about magical power flowing through the body part, it fully needs my magical power to move one hand or one feet from its original location.

So, with this kind of inefficient magical power consumption, it could only deliver a performance of about the average level of an advanced swordsman at its best.

So, by breaking its limbs we're inserting an auxiliary magical formula and it is also installed in the body part.

Now, it has become [V2 Revised] which has the average performance of a [Saint] class swordsman.

The ideal power-efficient version that I envisioned.... is still far.

The ideal is always far away, and not always what the world's society would like.

"Well, it seems like we have no choice but to continue to improve it while using this."

"You're right."

Cliff also gives his consent.

Anyway, he has the task to complete the equipment for each limb.

"Then, master, I wonder, how about the Gatling gun barrel?"

"That is too overpowering, so I try to limit the use of it..."

Someway or another, I'm always thinking of developing new weapons.

Roxy's acquaintance manufactured the Gatling Gun.

Following Orsted's advice, we made a small change, it could fire 10 rock shells at the same time.

Something like....Finger-Fu○aboms, or commonly called Shotgun.

This is a counter measure against the Water God style.

Orsted said that Water God style can parry the magic itself.

So, with a little variation in timing, my shotgun which could fire off bullets simultaneously is the best counter for it.

It's useless when facing [King] class of Water God style or above. Though with the exception of its firing range it is hard to call it useless, it's a very user-friendly weapon.

I train hard in various ways, but I won't suddenly become strong without a growth period.

Practicing magic, strength training...

Training my mind for battle...

Recently I've only had to fight little fish, at some point a strong enemy will appear.

I need history of killing, like killing enemies in one shot.

"Come to think of it Zanoba, how is your autonomous doll research progress?"

"Ah, it's over there. I temporarily abandoned it, because research to protect Shisho's life is more important."

"Ah... I'm sorry for causing you so much trouble."

"Ha ha ha, Magic Armor research is also fun. There is no need to apologize. Rather I feel gratitude to be included in this."

So says Zanoba, but while saying so, he is hitting the Magic Armor.

I wonder if that is what he really feels.

"Come to think of it Zanoba, now that Julie has become an adult, I wonder if we can start selling the dolls and the book now?"

"Hmm ....."

Dolls and picture book.

At one point, the first step has already been completed.

While I wasn't here Zanoba has secretly bought paint, and made the finishing touch to the product.

Well, some of Ruijerd's hair color is too light, his spear is cream-colored. Come to think of it, his skin color is also too bright. Well, that is only a trivial problem.

Then in case, the painting is supplemented to teach more about Supard race.

Norn keeps one on her bedside, Roxy screamed when she saw it the first thing in the morning, she then shut herself in her room and ignored me.

Regarding what happened to the picture book.

Wow, Zanoba is the one who drew it.

It's not toned down enough to be liked by children. It's difficult to reach that degree.

It's mass produced by printing. Afterwards it's manually colored by hand.

I'm overwhelmed with the feeling of handmade goods, in this world it's roughly all like that, so there is no bad feeling.

Finally, by adding an overview of the letters used in the language at the end of each book, it is not only a story book, but it also doubles as teaching material.

In case it will become a text book, with consideration of its early distribution.

A doll and a book, a two-in-one package. During every job where I save someone, I never forget to give a set to that person.

It's good to keep at it....earnestly.

"It is difficult."

However, Zanoba is showing his pessimism.

"... is it about the costs?"

"No, I don't have to worry about the funds. Because Princess Ariel is giving her aid to us. Also, her personal workshop in the Asura Kingdom is available to us to produce it. However, what I'm concerned about is whether or not we have the connections to the merchants."

"Oh..."

Oh yeah, I didn't think about the people who will sell it.

Originally, I thought of starting my own shop.

However, I cannot do that with my current situation.

Rather than a salesman ... a shopkeeper is more necessary.

That guy must have business acumen...

I don't have such an acquaintance.

I really didn't know what to do.

"Can't you get Ariel to introduce us to her connections?"

"Her Highness Ariel is very busy lately, because her day of coronation is drawing near. We don't need to increase her problems"

"Only giving a loan won't make it interesting."

Let's put this on hold for now.

Well, there is no need to rush.

Julie hasn't become an adult yet, it's not too late starting from now.

U~n, it looks like...

"Zanoba, do you think it's possible to teach the basics of commerce to Julie the next five years?"

"It is possible ... but, Julie is the doll maker, isn't she? Is it not better to entrust another person to sell the goods? Or buy another slave to be entrusted with the matter of selling it."

Another slave huh?

Interested in business, reading and writing, also arithmetic.

While you're at it, also having a good face.

A popular person, might be good.

Such a slave is... U~n, who has some knowledge about trades... there aren't any!

Getting caught in a fraud inside the shop is a no-no, so a certain enslaved cat is the last one I want to entrust this to.

It might be nice to buy a new slave.

"U~n... as I thought, a more reliable plan is entrusting this to a knowledgeable person. That is the most sensible plan."

"That's right."

You're right.

For this side, let's perfect our plan from now on.

Rushing the matter will only result in a blunder.

From now on, let's plan this carefully.

For the next 10 years, let's do this slowly.

"Well then, let's focus on this subject for now... the Magic Armor improvement."

"Yes Master. By the way, I already have a concept for the next version, not to mention another flashy plan."

Then.

Along with finishing our lunch, our research meeting also came to an end.

As for the Magic Armor, its performance has improved slightly.

In the evening, dropping by the staff room, I greet Vice Principal Jinas.

While getting angry with his unfinished work and pointing at Roxy to help him, I'm forced to stand in the hallway.

While I'm feeling downtrodden, Norn comes to return the key to the student council office.

Well then, after a long time, I'm walking back home together with Norn and Roxy.

"Norn, did you understand the point of today's lesson?"

"Yes, it is all right. Roxy-nee. As usual, your lesson is easy to understand."

Right next to me, Norn and Roxy are talking happily.

Unknown to me, these two are getting along very well.

There isn't a trace of their awkward relationship from before.

"I will be careful from now on, but if you have some difficulty please tell me."

"When that time comes, please give me a private lesson."

"Fufu, my private lessons are expensive you know."

It's lively. Listening to the conversation of these two, I comfortably go back home.

"I'm back."

"Welcome home, everyone."

"....."

Coming out to the entrance way, Zenith and Lilia who are weeding in the garden greet us.

Zenith, it seems there is no change in Zenith yet.

In a good way or bad way, she is stable.

Of course, her memory hasn't returned yet.

The method to cure her isn't found yet, I got my hands full with working and visiting several places.

Recently, Sylphy and Lilia are also trying something, but there have been no results.

"I'm home."

"Welcome back Rudi, Roxy, and Norn-chan."

Upon entering the house, Sylphy greets us from the dining room.

From behind Sylphy's apron, Lucy comes walking "tekoteko". And, running *dotadota*, she's tackling Norn from below.

{ C-Editor's note: Walking/running sound effects. }

"Welcome back! Nong-ney!"

"I'm home, Lucy-chan."

Norn is accustomed to embracing Lucy, and strokes her head.

Lucy likes Norn very much, she is giving a full face smile.

However, when our eyes meet. She moved her body and hid behind Norn.

That is, does she hate me that much...?

"Norn-chan, are you staying at home today?"

"No, but I heard Rinia-senpai is staying here, so I came to meet her."

"A~...un, various things happened. And Rudi ended up helping her."

Sylphy said so, but somehow she sighed.

What is she sighing for?

"And, is it going to increase again?"

"U~n, don't know. But, it's just a matter of time till Rinia falls for Rudi. She is sexy too..."

Your comment is like I'm going to lay my hands on Rinia.

Certainly, I admit that the cat princess is a sexy one.

Asking whether or not I want to do a night's wrestling with her, of course I want to.

But, that is that, this is this.

I have my reasons too.

"How about Eris-neesan? Did she oppose it?"

"She said [This child is mine, I won't hand her over to Rudi.]"

"Ah, so it was like that...."

Come to think of it, I haven't seen Eris.

"Sylphy, where is Eris?"

"Going out with Leo. Even though I already said that she is pregnant, she won't listen. I also noticed that she is doing sword practice during the day. After entering a stable phase, she's always like that...."

Eris is the same as ever.

But, really, at least calm yourself a little.

Eris is strong, but the child in her stomach is weak.

I also could only sigh.

Really, I wonder if Eris's child will be born properly.

I feel anxious....

"Oh, welcome back!"

That voice, coming from the top of the stairs.

Looking there, is Aisha.

"Hey, everyone, look!"

Aisha looks delighted, beckoning at the interior of the second floor.

From there comes out a woman, wearing the same maid uniform as Aisha.

Coming down the stairs, she spins herself once [kururi].

Her hem is slightly raised, a healthy looking calf could be seen.

Then, posing like a gravure idol, she places her hands on her hip.

"Nyahha!"

A Nekomimi maid.

"I modified it from the one mother gave to me, and came up with these clothes. It's cute right?"

Cute indeed.

I could hear a breath of admiration from the ladies.

Aisha's handmade....

She called it handmade, but it looks like a new one.

But, the fabric itself? It is old indeed.

"Be prepared, because there will be more work to do from tomorrow onwards!"

"Okay, Aisha-senpai, thank you!"

"Start with the dishes!"

On the front is little Aisha, and behind her is the tall Rinia.

Passing triumphantly by our side, these two girls entered the kitchen.

The sight of Aisha's chopping figure is, somewhat strange.

"....Who would have thought that the cheerful Rinia-senpai at school has become a slave in our house."

Norn whispers.

Rinia is an idiot after all. Just because she survived that predicament, she thinks everything is alright now.

Then, dining together with the entire family for the first time, entering the bath with Eris and checking her stomach size.

Lulling Lucy to sleep together with Sylphy before the night. After a bath, teaching magic to Norn and Aisha, and talking with Lilia about Zenith's condition.

Before going to bed, intently observing Roxy feeding breast milk to Lara.

Finally, sleeping with Sylphy.

It was a peaceful day.

From tomorrow onwards, for a while, it will be a training period.

Let's do my best.

10 days have passed since then.

I've spent that time staying at the office, training from morning till night.

If Orsted's there, I have my physical strength training in the morning, mock battles at noon, lessons in the office at night, then I clean the office and sort out all the documents before going to sleep and that cycle keeps repeating.

The days when Orsted's not here, I'm usually training alone.

Wearing Magic Armor, continuously and tirelessly repeating a set of moves that Orsted taught me until I'm exhausted, I'm also looking for someone to do co-op training with.

Once in a while, Sylphy comes to deliver lunch, at that time I have someone to do co-op training with. But today, I'm training alone.

Well then, this form that is taught to me is something left behind 400 years ago, by the Dragon God Urupen.

Dragon God Urupen.

He is known by the general public as one of the Three Demon Slayer Heroes.

Perugius's comrades.

According to Orsted, amongst the generations of Dragon Gods, he is in fact one with the lowest magical capacity.

At that time he was treated as the weakest Dragon God, as he hardly had the qualifications as Dragon God with his low magical power.

Like that he developed a completely original Dragon God technique on his own.

And with this original technique, he justified his title as Dragon God, and defeated Demon God Laplace.

Even to this day his name is hailed as the strongest and [The Most Genius Amongst Dragon Gods], or that is what people say.

Dragon God Urupen's form is a fighting style for defeating an opponent using a minimal amount of magical power.

Orsted discovered it on a secret note left behind by Urupen,

With that information he successfully learned the [Saint Dragon Touki], the Greatest Fighting Style and mastered it to the highest level.

The style that uses little magical power.

However, that kind of style is necessary for me,

Using minimum power to fight my enemies, is a knowledge I need the most.

Besides, combining magic arts and martial arts [wushu] is a classic form of martial arts, it perfectly matches with me who is wearing the Magic Armor.

Well then, let's research a combo today.

First is [Rock Shell].

A direct hit from it will definitely cause injury, even to Orsted.

It has extremely high power.

Rivaling the [Sword of Light] from the Sword God Style.

Therefore, the combination usually uses this.

After that, it's [Quagmire].

Perhaps because I have used it over and over again, [Quagmire] has the fastest invocation speed amongst my magics.

With this spell, I will greatly hinder the movement of the enemy immediately

and start my offense from that point on.

Or [Electric],

Its invoking speed is slightly longer than [Quagmire], but this spell is a great magic that could penetrate through the opponents [Fighting Spirit] and paralyze them. A very useful spell.

If the opponent couldn't be delayed with [Quagmire], I usually use [Electric] on them. Such a situation has happened often.

Using this at the beginning instead of [Quagmire] is also a common start for me.

As for stopping enemy movement, I can use [Heavy fog] or [Frost Nova] to destroy the enemy formation.

Afterwards, basically finish them off with [Rock Shell].

In other words, it's a combination move. I restrain the enemies' movement, and limit what they can do.

By fully utilizing that hand, I could usually create an opening on my opponent that can't be parried.

And then use [Rock Shell].

By practicing these patterns, combined with the help of my companions, victory is almost certain.

or so, according to Orsted.

The important thing is routine.

Getting used to my routines, even if my opponent has the most bizarre movements, I could respond to them without delay.

[Quagmire]My opponent taking an action□countering my opponent's move with magic□My opponent still could respond to my counter□countering his move again with my spells, keep repeating that until my opponent is cornered, and finish him off with [Rock Shell].

Yeah.

It sounds simple.

In practice, a swordsman could cut his path through any magic. In the case where there was a pre-emptive attack, the chance of having such support magic fail is high.

It was difficult to put it into practice.

Which reminds me. Orsted also taught me about [King] ranked magic or higher.

That said, there have been no results either.

After all, the point of [King] class attack magic or higher is usually the [Fusion] of [Saint] Class spells.

For example, the [Emperor] ranked water spell [Absolute Zero].

This could be achieved by combining the spells [Water Splash] and [Icicle Field] resulting in the spell [Frost Nova] and at the same time expanding its target area into a massive area of effect at a high speed.

By enveloping a massive area with water and then freeze it immediately, that is called the [Emperor] water ranked spell [Absolute Zero].

It's too late to teach me that, I could already do it.

That meant.

I already mastered [Emperor] ranked spells...

For that reason Badigadi said that my [Rock Shell] was already in the realm of [Emperor] ranked Earth Magic.

Usually, there is no thing such as an enhanced [Rock Shell]. However, I brought together a new method there.

In short, I, who has already mastered all four attack magics to [Saint] ranked or higher, have already mastered all of the attack spells.

However, using [God] Class magic is futile.

To use [God] Class magic vast amounts of magical power is needed, along with the fine tuning in controlling, the use of a long chant to control the magic effect and a magic circle is required.

Orsted said that its power is so powerful that it could basically change the terrain of the world.

In part of this world's strange terrains, there are traces of such magic.

Honestly, I'm still poor at drawing magic circles,and it would be nice if I didn't need to draw something big to use such spells.

[Fusion] magic, the fundamentals, and putting them in practice.

By utilizing variations of these, there should be no opponent that I cannot defeat.

Let's take it a step at a time by building strength from the basics.

Let's do that, together.

"Rudeus."

And, as I do my usual magic special training, Orsted returns.

I immediately face Orsted and bow to him.

"Welcome back!"

"Ah."

When the president comes back, bowing one's head is a company employee's duty.

While wiping off my sweat, I continued to say my greetings with my waist bent 45 degrees to the front.

Doing this by myself feels lonely, but I must be patient until Cliff's study on Orsted's curse has finished.

And, when that happens, we could each greet the president in sequence as he walks by.

Who would even care if we act like the Yakuza.

{ C-Editor's note: Yakuza - A Japanese organized crime syndicate. }

"There's work."

At first Orsted said [Don't be so formal], but he is used to it now.

"Departure will be in three days. I will begin the explanation now."

"I respectfully receive the work!"

I personally receive company jobs from President Orsted.

The next task has been decided.

"As usual, it's not a really hard job. But... spend some time with your family over the next three days."

"Yes, I understand!"

So, I decided to return to my house.

"Oh, welcome back boss..... ah, danna-sama, nyah!"

Returning home, a cat-eared maid is sitting in front of the entrance.

What are you even doing... Geez, this girl.

Did she screw something up?

"I'm home, Rinia. By the way, what are you doing sitting in a place like this?"

"Nya-ha-ha... just a little failure, it's to reflect on myself....."

Rinia's ears are hanging low on her head, looks like she is dejected.

"I understand."

Let's leave her reflecting on herself.

Passing by her, I enter the house.

"I'm home—!"

There, Lucy pokes her face from behind the door in the living room towards me.

Ah, I wonder if she's going to run away again.

And just while I was thinking that, she suddenly leaps from behind the door.

With steps sounding like "Taptaptap", she jumps on my legs.

"Welcome home papa!"

I wonder what happened.

Her welcome is warm today.

"Ah, what happened, Lucy?"

Embracing my leg without changing her position, she is hidden behind me, clinging onto my robe.

Someway or other, her distance towards me is unusually close today.

Papa is happy.

"Mama! Papa is back—!"

"Yeah, I know, wait a second!"

"Mama~!"

Sylphy's voice could be heard from the bathroom.

Doing the laundry, or cleaning the bathtub.

Afterwards, Lucy called Sylphy several times more. Before long she reached her limit and let go of my robe. "Taptaptap", she runs to the bathroom.

What was it I wonder....

Well, don't think too much about it. This is what children do.

Usually I always go straight towards Lucy. It's fine if she comes to me once in a while. Let's consider Lucy's feelings.

While I think so, I wander around the house.

I find Leo and Lara in the living room.

Lara is sleeping soundly in a peaceful mood.

She is also healthy-looking today.

Continuing towards the kitchen, I found Lilia preparing ingredients for cooking.

Her face looks a bit worn-out.

I wonder what happened?

"Lilia-san, I'm home!"

"Welcome back, Danna-sama."

{ C-Editor's note: Danna-sama - Master as in master of the house. }

"Are you tired?"

"No."

Even though she said so, Lilia's face looks really tired.

"Why don't you take a rest for a bit?"

"It's not a problem."

"Really?"

"Yes."

If the person herself says so, it's probably okay.

I wonder what is causing her such trouble.

"If your condition today is a bit under the weather please take a rest, don't you want to take a rest for a bit?"

"Thanks for your concern. But really, this is not a big problem."

If Lilia says so, then I will believe her.

However, if it's not her body, maybe it was mental fatigue.

It might be some anxiety.

"Did something happen?"

"...It's just, Eris-sama went to school."

"Eris? What is she thinking?"

"She said it was the day to teach swordsmanship to Norn-sama..."

Swordsmanship....

Really, a pregnant woman should just stay still.

Eris, I wonder if she's going to become a teacher.

Although I'm not really opposing that, but I would like you to restrain yourself a little while you're still pregnant.

I'm worried.

"I deeply apologize. We all tried to stop her, but she just ignored us and left..."

"Ah, I understand. Thank you for trying."

Trying to convince a child who wouldn't listen.

Lilia must be tired.

Once, I also experienced that from someone who told me....

Furthermore, she only listens to my words.

Hmm, yes...

I'm also convinced that Eris wouldn't listen to Sylphy's words or Aisha's preachings.

"Ah, come to think of it. Where is Aisha?"

When she hears that, Lilia answers me with a wry smile.

"She is in the backyard."

Following Lilia's words, Aisha was in the backyard.

She's sitting in the corner of the garden.

Looking at her, her shoulders are trembling a bit.

It's rare for Aisha to display such a feeble appearance.

I wonder if she's crying.

"Aisha?"

"Ah, welcome back Onii-chan...."

From Aisha's back, a flat reply could be heard.

Without looking at her face, I won't know whether she's crying or not.

"Huh..."

However, I sighed immediately.

Looking at her, with the shovel in her hand, it looks like she dug a hole in the corner of the garden.

In that hole, something that looks like pottery pieces are buried.

From those pieces, I thought I saw something familiar.

Looking closely, there is also a handle part.

Even that handle part looks familiar.

In the past, Aisha bought a stylish tea cup set with the same handle with her own pocket money.

That tea cup over there, is her favorite tea cup.

She always uses it whenever she is enjoying tea by herself.

I also remember I used that cup once.

If I'm not mistaken, that time she looked delighted. [Onii-chan is the only exception] or [For Onii-chan, drinking tea using an excellent cup tastes a bit different, right?] or something like that.

Honestly, I wouldn't know what would make it taste any different, but looking at Aisha's delighted face, I remember saying that it somehow is really delicious.

And now, that favorite cup is broken.

"Hey... Onii-chan"

Coming from Aisha, is her unusual low pitched voice.

"... Wha.. what is it?"

This is anger.

For the peaceful Aisha to get angry.

Oh darn, I wonder if I've done something wrong.

Apologize? What have I done that I need to apologize for? It will only be like pouring oil into the fire called anger from the other person.

What should I do? What is the cause?

And, as I worry, Aisha turns towards me, looks into my eyes and says.

"That cat over there, why don't you get rid of her?"

"Eh?"

That cat? I wonder which cat...

No, maybe she is referring to that cat in a seiza-pose right now at the entrance.

"Just abandoning her would be a waste. Let's sell her to a slaver? No... sell her to Eris-nee's home. If I remember correctly, weren't they trying to buy her at a high price? 1500 Asura gold coins, it would only take them a second to gather that much, right? Even half of that would be fine."

"W...wait a minute. Calm down now. Let's sit down first."

I made a chair with Earth Magic, and urged Aisha to sit.

Aisha took one broken fragment from the hole, and stood up.

She threw that piece at my feet.

Then, she sat on the chair with a thud.

"It wasn't all that expensive. But it's impossible to get my hands on one of those cups anymore. The person who made it already died, and the store already went bankrupt."

".....Hmm, but, something with a shape like that, would definitely break one day."

I made another chair, and sat in front of Aisha.

Somehow that made her a bit calmer.

"I know that. I'm not all that angry about the broken cup."

"Uh huh."

Anyway, there's no doubt it was Rinia who broke that cup.

And that's why Aisha's angry.

Even though she says she isn't, I have no doubt that is how she really feels.

"But, the problem is, that cat really isn't suited to become a maid. She breaks the dishes when she washes them, breaks the mirror when she cleans it. When she does the laundry the sheets are full of her fur."

"Doesn't everyone make a mistake their first time? Though she is like that, Rinia is a princess from somewhere."

"I ...!"

Looks like Aisha wants to say something with a loud voice, but she swallowed her words.

Looks like that was my mistake, she didn't fail to say her words.

"... Before, when doing housework in the living room, she dumped water on Lara-chan!"

"Water on Lara? T...tell me what happened."

"While she was cleaning the ceiling, she held a bucket in one hand, and a dust-cloth in the other. Because of that her balance crumbled and she fell.....well, it didn't escalate to anything serious."

That cat, looks like she doesn't even know how to clean.

Come to think of it... before, I've entered her room once. It was wonderfully messy.

"Though that often happens, I can't really complain. Norn-nee, she was even more awful than Rinia. They're like on the same level."

"Don't compare her with Norn so casually."

"Casually? ... No, didn't want to say bad things about Norn-nee. But, even though that cat doesn't have a particularly bad memory, she always makes the same mistake over and over again even after I warn her repeatedly."

Aisha keeps ranting, and I could only sigh.

"That cat, she never apologizes"

Never apologizes.

That's bad.

"I see..."

"When she makes some blunder, she gives off her devilish laugh like [Nya-hahaha, my bad, my bad. I will be more careful next time. Nya~]"

Then, for the time being, I'll make her apologize.

But, Rinia has to do it of her own will.

She must sincerely apologize to the other person.

Create the mood, and when she arrives she should apologize.

"This is no good."

"I know, right?"

If it was me I could just forgive her... But Rinia's superior is Aisha.

This is an issue I can't be too involved in.

"So, hey~, Onii-chan. Please Onii-chan, can't you throw her out? I can't stand working with her anymore."

It's rare for Aisha to go as far as badmouthing Rinia.

But, she probably couldn't stomach it anymore.

Though there probably wasn't something like a big incident.

It wasn't only a single broken cup that caused this.

But by allowing mistakes to accumulate one by one, and forgiving each one with a smile, it has now reached this point

Hmm.

But...

"Yes, she certainly is a bit troublesome. But she's still adapting to a new environment."

Even now she still has it tough.

Trying to get used to a new environment, she might only be acting cheerful.

It may look like she isn't apologizing seriously in Aisha's eyes.

I mean, isn't it painful to look after someone who keeps repeating the same mistakes?

Rinia is trying the best she can, I think.

When she was my underling she also made these kind of mistakes.

But, that reduced over time.

Thus she must really, really be trying to change herself.

It can be said, that only after making a big mistake, can you reflect on yourself, so you won't repeat it again.

At least, when I saw Rinia in front of the entrance door she really did seem to show some remorse.

I could almost feel a calm composure from her.

"That's a lie. That cat never reflects on herself. Generally, even her attitude is very strange. She is humble towards Roxy-nee, Eris-nee, and Leo, but she makes light of Sylphy-nee..."

So Aisha says, and her lips pout.

She is so stubborn.

"What do you mean with Sylphy, treating her lightly?"

"Somehow, with an even more disrespectful tone than Eris-nee, she sometimes calls her Fitts."

Once the past, when they were still studying at the Magic University, they were on bad terms with each other.

I mean, Sylphy and Rinia have such a strange relationship.

"Certainly, that's because Sylphy and Rinia have known each other longer than they have known us."

"...Precisely because of that, it has caused the atmosphere in this house to become strange since Rinia came here."

The atmosphere... changed.

Certainly, come to think of it. Even when Roxy or Eris arrived, such a problem did not happen.

"Anyway, if Rinia slips up again, she must apologize. And if she breaks anything, the costs will be added to her debt. She must show a more upright attitude if she is really trying to reform herself.... I will speak to her personally. Anyway, I want you to give her a little more time. How about it?"

Aisha made a pouty face.

With a pointed mouth, Aisha turns her face away with closed eyes

Looking at her showing that attitude, she's silent. It looks like she isn't that angry anymore.

"Hey please... Aisha. Even though she's like that, she is still your Onii-chan's friend."

".... Well~, then just this time I will overlook her for your sake, Onii-chan."

After saying that Aisha, suddenly stood and turned herself to face me.

"However Onii-chan. I have a very bad premonition. As it is, let's pray that it won't come true."

After saying that, Aisha went back into the house.

Afterwards, I told Rinia.

Her answer was [Yup, nyah!] Nothing can be done about her light tone.

But, she will regret that....

Incidentally, Roxy came home together with Eris, and was reprimanded for doing such strenuous exercises.

Eris placed her hands on her hips, her lips formed a へ, and said [I understand!]

But that [I understand!], how much did she understand of it?

For the time being, it seems like she won't be rampaging around while carrying her sword. With her stomach becoming bigger she has also matured more.

But really, I still worry about her.

So she does not come to harm her child, I must rein her in tightly.

Mother and child, be strong!!

At the dinner table, the mood is more gloomy than usual. Perhaps because Aisha is sulking.

Furthermore, after dinner, Sylphy secretly says to me without remorse [Rinia does not fit in this household.] It is right on the mark.

There is no reason for Sylphy to feel sorry at all. After all, it is her duty to keep the household in check.

Still, Aisha was right. It's bad to leave things like this.

One way or another, I must resolve this situation before leaving again for work.

Though, I wonder if I could wait a little more to see how things would develop.

Hmm~.

Evening that day.

Since it's both of Roxy and Sylphy's time of the month, I decided to sleep alone.

Honestly, after ten days of holding back myself to train, I have almost reached my limit.

Well, nothing I could do about it on days like these.

I could only weep in my own lust.

Or, do I simply help myself...

"Rudeus."

At the place leading up to my bedroom, Eris was already waiting for me.

Folded arms and legs spread at shoulder-width as usual.

Wrapped in a negligee, her stomach is bulging [pokkori].

Recently, her sleepwear should have been warmer. But today, Eris is wearing some unusually erotic lingerie.

That's no good, your stomach will get chilly.

"Let's do it!"

"No way."

Children are important.

No sex while pregnant, is the rule in our house.

"But, you want to, right? I heard it's that time of the month for Sylphy and Roxy."

"I'll be fine, I can endure it."

"My dear husband, there is no need to restrain yourself."

Saying so, Eris grabs my hand and forcibly pulls me in.

So strong... as I get dragged into my bedroom.

Regrettably, if this continues, I might really lose myself.

If I enter that state, I cannot hold myself back.

This is bad, absolutely terrible.

So regrettable. Eris is already pregnant, and she also moves around and exercises too much.

"St... stop it Eris. We can't do it while you're still pregnant. If we lose our cherished child, Eris and I would surely regret it. Don't do this, this is absolutely no good."

"I know. I know. That's why I'll be careful."

Though you say you will be careful, you're going to school and leave the house to run with the dog.

Well, she's more used to moving around than sitting still.

My standards are different, so it's okay I guess.

I might be just too overprotective.

No, no. that and what's happening now are totally different.

"Just look over here! What I'm trying to say is..."

Eris pulled me to the bedside,

and flipped over the blankets.

"......Nya, Nyan~!"

On top of the bed there was Rinia, lying down.

I think she is wearing one of Eris's negligees. She is curling up her bewitching body.

"As I'm no good, you can just do it with Rinia, right?"

"Unyaa....."

Looking at me, Rinia making a face of resolution and resignation.

Through the gap of her negligee, her cleavage was visible.

Her waist is slim, she's moderately muscled, a straight foot-line.

Her cat eyes are glowing and shining in the dark.

Before I lose myself in lust, I look at Eris with amazement.

"What is this?"

"Dont you see? It's Rinia!"

Probably, it's okay for me to take Rinia.

Such a thing from Eris?

She is someone who easily gets jealous with a disgruntled face as I flirt with Sylphy.

"Hey, Eris. This... isn't this an unfaithful act?"

"She is a slave so it isn't cheating. Father and also dear Grandfather said so as well. Moreover, as I have decided it, there won't be a problem at all."

Sauros, Philip. What did you teach your daughter?

Hilda-san, Hilda-san... come here and scold them.

This father and them, they have been teaching some strange things to their daughter!

"Oh, father in the Great Forest, mother... I... I'm helpless now, I will but become a plaything as a slave..."

Rinia muttered something in a low voice, something as a prayer.

This might be a bad idea after all.

We should stop here.

Faced with Eris's selfishness, she couldn't do anything.

"Well Pursena... excuse me for being a step ahead of you nyah! Ehehe, this is my victory. I'm sure you can find someone else more suitable nya!"

Well, perhaps she wasn't all that reluctant to do this.

I guess it's fine if we both consent.

"Rinia."

"Nyah...!"

While calling her, my hand reached out for her. Rinia's body suddenly goes stiff with a [bikuri] sound.

But, even though her body tenses up, she doesn't run away.

Turning my hand on her thigh, touching her butt.

It should have the supple muscles of a predator. But unexpectedly, it has a very soft feeling.

Then I turn my other hand on her back, touching her waist. This side also has [mokyumokyu] feeling. It's very charming.

"A-as it's my first time nya... please be gentle nya"

"...."

"Nya~, this silence... is frightening nyah.....Ufufu~n... nyanya~n.....this... this feeling... Nyaaa!"

I put power in my arms, and lifted Rinia off the bed.

Carrying her across the room in a princess carry.

I move towards the next room, still carrying her.

Turning the doorknob with my foot, and open it with a kick.

There, in front of me, is the dark and cold hallway.

In that place, I throw Rinia.

"Unya~!"

There, before she landed on her butt, I grabbed the door knob.

Closing it from the inside, I locked it.

Phew. With this, I've got some peace on my mind.

The Evil has been vanquished.

"W-wait a minute, Boss. Isn't your treatment a little bit too cruel!?"

I don't hear anything.

I don't see anything either. There is no evil cat tempting me.

I've protected my chastity.

"Wait a minute Rudeus! What did you do that for!?"

Eris comes over from behind me, but I won't change my mind.

"Eris, don't be mistaken, I love to do ecchi things with you. But I don't want that cat."

"R-really ...? I-it's fine if that's the case, but we can't do it until this child is born, you know?"

"Oh, of course"

Following this.

"Boss, open the door! T-this is an insult to my pride as a maiden nya~!"

The door is hit over and over again.

Well, no need to mind that.

Yeah, that thing is irrelevant.

"Boss, please... nya~! It's already unpleasant working under Aisha nya!"

As I'm thinking about it, Rinia began to cry.

From Rinia's statement just now, it seems their compatibility is bad.

Though the other day, when Aisha sewed the maid uniform for Rinia, their compatibility looked just fine...

"At least let me become a concubine. I want to increase my standings nya!! Even just a physical relationship is fine. Please nya~! Really! There is a chance I will bear a child and become the fourth wife, consider my nearly infinite debt nya!"

So that's it, she is scheming something like that.

But... well... how to even start with a debt like that.

Her debt is too much, and it will take far too much time to repay.

However, there's no chance I will treat her as a sex slave.

Although I would be lying if I say I don't want to do any erotic things with her.

But Rinia, she is my friend.

And I want her to remain my friend.

Besides, I already have two daughters now. Let's say that, if I do it with Rinia... After having that talk at noon with Aisha, would she not get angry? And how would I face Sylphy and Roxy?

If I show unfaithfulness just because of some fleeting emotions, I will end up in a crisis called a family breakdown.

I must protect my family at any cost.

"Waaa! Waa~!"

Then, from somewhere in the house, crying sounds could be heard.

Apparently, because of Rinia's voice, the sleeping Lara woke up.

What should I do? Open the door for now, and make Rinia shut up?

And, while I lost myself in thought for a moment, the sound of a door opening could be heard.

"Just a minute Rinia, what time do you think it is!? You woke up Lucy and Lara."

"Geh! Fitts! S-sorry nyaa. I, I didn't have any bad intentions nya!"

"It's not Fitts! It's Sylphy! Anyway, it's already this late so be quiet!"

"Ye.. yes..."

With Sylphy's yell, Rinia stops making a ruckus.

Tottering sounds could be heard somewhere.

Perhaps Rinia is headed back to Eris's room to sleep.

For a while, the sound of Lara crying could be heard, but she finally became quiet.

For now, the silence of the night returned to us.

However, this poor Rinia.

Though half of it could be said to be her own mistake. She got into debt, then confined in the house without a good way to pay off her debt.

She can't do house work very well, and the head maid Aisha won't take any compromises in that regard.

If it's like that, the least she could do was try to sell her body to please her master, she thought. But she got rejected...

At this very moment, she might be weeping on her pillow.

Also, an unpleasant feeling is filling the house now.

Aisha sulking, Lilia looking tired, Sylphy raising her voice the first time in a long while, and Lara crying.

And maybe Eris going to school was because of that. She felt uncomfortable inside the house.

I don't think she did it intentionally. That girl isn't very good at reading the mood after all.

Anyway, it's a bit awkward now.

Rinia's got a feisty nature and she can't behave like a gang leader anymore.

I won't say she is at fault for being unable to read the mood, but...

As I thought. Having such a huge debt, then getting sold as a slave, having her price tag skyrocket. No wonder she feels insecure.

...As the one who bought her, Rinia is my responsibility.

One way or another, I must do something about her.

Tomorrow, I'll look for a non-maid job for Rinia.

I can't leave Rinia in this house anymore.

The mood in the house has become worse since she came. If her temptation continues, I don't know if my sense of reason can hold up.

If I succumb to the temptation, it might lead to a dispute in my family, resulting in Sylphy running away from home and taking Lucy with her.

If that happens, it will only lead to a bad end like in the diary.

It should be avoided in advance.

That is why I decided to introduce Rinia to new jobs.

Naturally, the idea of her debt being cancelled was discarded first from my thoughts.

There is a line that even our friendship can't cross.

In society that was called returning the [great cost].

The reason for that was of course, to increase my standing in the neighborhood.

Well, now about a job for Rinia...

Honestly, I don't have any idea about what she could do.

She could use magic, so combat is an option.

However, to return something like a debt of 1500 Asura gold coins, that choice is not what comes to mind first.

Foreseeing that, I am also thinking of various ideas.

First, let's ask if she could help in Zanoba or Cliff's research, and get paid for that.

Rinia had excellent results, so maybe there is an area that needed her. That was what I thought at first.

But I quickly changed my mind. With her personality, research isn't something she could do.

Aa~, that steady kind of work isn't suited for Rinia.

Ato~, I think it also won't work. It's a foolish idea to shamelessly push another expense onto Cliff, especially when his child was just born.

Giving her the responsibility to be the head merchant in charge of distributing and selling the Ruijerd book + doll sets... That so-called idea was instantly discarded.

I don't want the girl who got herself involved in a huge debt and fraud starting her own business again.

Become Norn's exclusive maid in Magic University?

I also considered this idea, but it was also instantly rejected.

Norn will hate it. Perhaps it will end up having a similar result as the current situation.

Become an adventurer and pay her debt?

Or something like that, but being an adventurer isn't as profitable as it sounds.

Rinia didn't qualify as an adventurer, and it has great costs and takes a long time to earn a profit – if she didn't die first.

Let me see, those jobs above are no good. None of them could reach 1500 Asura gold coins. I can't help but shake my head while thinking about this.

But let's just assume that all of those [Can't Do]s are only in my imagination.

As a matter of fact, maybe now there is work there that is suitable for her and gives a high salary.

Thinking so, I decided to take Rinia to the school.

Rinia's appearance is that of a maid.

When we entered the school's vicinity, she and I stood out a lot. With a triumphant look, she began to kick around and made the surrounding student scatter.

"Ora! Ora! Bancho is coming nya! Open the path for him nya!"

From others perspective, we're like hoodlums.

"Chi~ssu! Long time no see!"

"Os~su!"

When I thought of stopping her, a beast race man came and greeted her with a happy face. Let's wait for the time being.

It's been two years since Rinia graduated.

Looking at the current students, it looks like there are still many that remember Rinia.

Maybe around this place, I could get some clues from this Senpai.

"Ossu~, Rinia-senpai! Long time no see!"

While I was thinking about that, one guy approached us.

Who is this guy?

I feel that he was introduced to me in the old days. Around my sophomore year.

I cannot remember his name, but he was the one that led a group of students.

"Oh, you, isn't your yell lacking fighting spirit nya?"

"Ossu!"

"All right! Increase the pitch nya!"

"O~O~sssuuuuu!"

Rinia is really bossy.

Even though she's wearing a maid uniform.

Even though she's covered in debt.

"By the way, Rinia-senpai, is this okay?"

"Nn? Is what okay nya?"

"I heard, now you're a joke. From the stories that I heard, you've become an eternal slave to student council president's Aniki."

{ C-Editor's note: Aniki - Gangster/hoodlum style of saying big brother. }

"You might say nya. Wait a minute, that's not the entire truth nya. But following the strong one is also a teaching of the Beast Tribe nya, so it isn't too bad nya."

Really, for Rinia to answer him with full spirits is contrary to her mood, her Kouhai could only sigh.

{ C-Editor's note: Kouhai - A person's junior. A younger more inexperienced person. }

".... Honestly, I feel disappointed."

"For what, nya?"

"Rinia-senpai, before you graduated you were full of spirit, taking the top position of the school before Rudeus or Ariel, but the present Rinia-senpai is... like a common pet cat, isn't it?"

Rinia was speechless, falling silent for few seconds.

And when I thought she would be angry.... and bare her fangs, "fuu~" she laughed.

"Certainly, Achishi, now I'm fallen. But just wait. Before long nya, the junior will be dominating the senior nya."

"Ge~, so, so it's like that?"

"Really nya. To experience a junior dominating the senior nya, I think it's not bad experiencing this once in a while nya...."

Looking at Rinia saying that, her Kouhai's eyes are wet with tears.

"Rinia-senpai, as expected! I-my thinking process hasn't reached that level yet!"

"Well, this is where we're different nya!"

Tapping her forehead, Rinia said that proudly.

Then after that, Rinia sends her junior off who is looking at her with eyes full of admiration and showered her with tons of praises, while I went to my classroom.

Well, I'm being considerate towards their relationship.

"....."

I'm on the way to the research building.

Along the way, greetings for Rinia came like there's no end to them.

But, after entering the research building, and there are no people anymore, the greetings ceased.

Walking quietly in the school building, Rinia looked around and back.

"Boss, how about the conversation from a little while ago nya, about social standing Nya?"

"The conversation a little while ago?"

While the rubbing one's hands together, Rinia looks like a debt collector.

"The conversation about junior dominating senior nya. That's only talk on the surface, I'm not gonna go against boss nya."

"I see."

Because of Rinia's circumstances, she is still at her branching path of life so it could be her true feelings.

Considering some strange lines here and there, talking about her public position, I guess what she said some time ago were her true feelings, at least that's what I had been thinking.

"It's fine for you to aim for a much higher position, however, don't overdo it."

"Of course nya, if you think I lied, you can prove it in the empty classroom ahead, please be gentle nya, ufufufu."

What's with the [ufufufu]?

Ah, junior dominating senior, perhaps did she mean with [I as the top] then [aiming to become a direct subordinate of me] did she means that?

Whether or not I'm doing something, to make her into my bride, without asking permission from my beloved trio of wives namely Sylphy, Roxy, and Eris...

How cunning...!

This fellow, don't tell me she's an assassin dispatched by Hitogami to destroy my family from inside.

"... You, in the last few years, did you meet a guy who calls himself a god in your dreams that gave you some revelation?"

"What's with that suddenly nya? Revelations in dreams? There is no such thing as long as I remember nya..."

"For your own good, don't lie."

Though it's weird to say this...

President Orsted's judgement is to [Kill any suspicious person].

I won't go to that extent though.

"Ye, yesterday's dream, was a dream about the sky splitting open and a lot of fish raining down nya... before that, eee~~RRR, I don't remember nya..."

To see such a happy dream.

Surely, one fish is one point so she must want to increase it by collecting 100 fish points.

But, I must be careful with some other meaning in there.

Anyway, for the time being, she isn't Hitogami's apostle... I think.

And Hitogami, won't use guys like this to weaken me with such a situation.

"...Well it's fine then. But, if you see such a dream, talk to me immediately."

"OkaNya!"

While I feel relieved, we're going to Zanoba's place.

"Oh, Shishou... Mu~u!"

When I arrived at Zanoba's place, he frowned as soon as he saw Rinia.

"... Oh, long time no see."

"Ou, Zanoba, sorry for not contacting you after I returned nya."

Zanoba was dripping cold sweat, while looking around his room.

"Excuse me, I'm tidying my room a bit, please wait a minute."

And, after glancing around, one doll after another was boxed up and put away.

Hurriedly.

From the important dolls, to the fragile looking dolls.

Inside, Julie was coloring a Ruijerd doll,

In the middle of her works, she began to imitate Zanoba and cleaned up the desk and what's around it.

"Hm~, now it's fine. Well then, let's start the talk."

Zanoba is, pointing to the table a little ways away from the workplace.

Julie left the desk immediately and she was walking with [totetote] sounds following Zanoba's command.

"Julie, continue the works."

"Yes, master."

Then me, Rinia, and Zanoba sat down.

However, the still restless Zanoba, is calling Ginger in the corner of the room.

"Ginger."

"Yes!"

Zanoba only called her, but she understood that and stood between the table and the workplace.

As if protecting the workplace.

"So, Shishou..."

Then, after he is satisfied, Zanoba faced towards me.

"Is there some important matter today?"

While Zanoba warily glanced towards Rinia, he asked me.

He is extremely vigilant.

He didn't said that aloud,

But perhaps, leaving Rinia in this place is a rude request.

I feel bad.

"No, only some trivial matter."

"Hmm?"

With this, there is no way I can ask Zanoba to let Rinia assist in his research.

As expected, no, more that what I expected, their affinity is the worst.

This must have been caused by the incident where Rinia broke Zanoba's doll.

Bullying causes one's spirits to break.

Though it's not like that in Aisha's case, she has simply reached her limit of patience when her cup was broken.

Though Zanoba looks nonchalant on the surface... But, he will definitely show an unpleasant face if I asked him to have Rinia assist here.

"By the way Shishou, why did you come with Rinia? Although I overheard the talk that somehow she became a maid in your house...."

"Well, various things happened, and now I'm looking for a job for her."

"Ah, so, so, It's like that."

Zanoba's eyes swam right and left.

Possibly, it's seems he has some kind of work in his mind, but it looks like he's still disagreeable to working with Rinia.

Don't worry.

I won't leave her here.

Even so, such as her misdeed in the past it looks like it still hasn't been resolved.

"Well, that's it. Let's talk about research now."

"Oh, that's right!"

From what I gathered, Zanoba didn't want anything to do with Rinia.

Yeah, following that he began to talk happily about the Magic Armor as usual.

I took lunch in the cafeteria.

The surrounding students looked at us with skeptical glances, and in the end many men gathered around Rinia.

"Nyahahaha! Achishi I said something hilarious about Pursena nya. What are you chubby nya.....or that."

"As expected, Rinia-san!"

"That manner of speaking is really Pursena-san, there isn't anything odd in that tone."

Rinia was probably considered pretty charismatic before Ariel came.

She has the charisma of a delinquent.

She naturally attracts delinquents in her surroundings.

She naturally does it, although how she acts according to her surroundings could also be considered part of her nature.

Hmm... Maybe there's a job that requires gathering people.

Well, for now let's try Cliff's place.

As it turns out, it was also no good at Cliff's place.

The atmosphere was the same as Zanoba's place. They're aware that someone like Rinia is problematic to handle.

I personally didn't want to leave her here.

Well, even if she is helping in Zanoba's or Cliff's place, it didn't guarantee that she could repay her debt.

Now what should I do about this person?

"Didn't you need someone to help you with your own work?"

When I tried to consult with Cliff about this problem, that was his response.

Well my work, traveling around the world to fight against Hitogami's evil hand according to where Orsted's evil hand points, to complete various jobs...

But there's a problem with it.

"If she is affected by Orsted-sama's curse, then what is the point of making her do that?"

"Ah, that curse is... The magical power activates when looking at him directly. Therefore, an interview with Orsted-sama is..."

Then of course... It's a no go.

"Maybe I could have her work in the same office, but without meeting him personally?"

"That's... that's unlikely. Moreover, the Beast race is sensitive to odor, there is some possibility that the curse could also activate with that..."

Odor, can the curse even affect the sense of smell?

What is it, wait a minute it's interesting.

"Then, can the Beast race smell magic with their nose?"

"Oh, there isn't any proof yet, it's just my hunch about that kind of possibility... but if we have Rinia, we could confirm it. How about that?"

Getting cursed with the odor.

If it's like that, we must also study how to reduce Orsted's odor.

An animal's sense of smell was several hundreds fold of a human... the thing is, how much would we have to reduce his odor until it couldn't be detected by an animal.

If the theory is correct, that's one step further toward anti-curse tool completion, deodorant is necessary.

But to make sure that the deodorant is working, must run tests.

Adding a flower aroma might act as a double barrier for blocking the curse.

Orsted that wearing an aromatic helmet... Hmm, somehow that's a very bizarre idea.

"Well then, let's do some small investigation, approaching from that direction."

"Oh, that's right. But, then someone from Adurodia lineage would be nice. Their nose would work better."

Dog has a better sense of smell than a cat.

Come to think of it, what if Pursena was here?

I guess she would only come here if she lost interest in becoming the Dorudia Village chief.

"So, sense of smell... But, if that's the case why limited to the Beast race? How about examining various races?"

In the human race and other species, even the colors they can recognize are different.

There are many variations in the so called [People] in this world, there are even Demon Eyes that can see magic particles.

Perhaps we can find the source of the curse by examining responses from various races.

"...that's right, not only Beast race, there are also various Magic races, finding subjects will be tough."

"Yeah..."

There are many different races in the Magic City Sharia.

That's because the magic university doesn't refuse any kind of student.

But, that doesn't mean that all the races are gathered here all the time.

It's always changing.

Gathering rare species, verifying each one by one, then investigating one by one until the origin of curse is found...

That's very mind-boggling work.

However, research is something like that.

Basically, it's just brute force.

"Anyway, first, let's start by gathering the people."

"So it's come to that, however, I'm not moving around too much, so a job to gather people is something I'm not good at."

Cliff's communication skill is very poor.

Same with me.

"Someone who is popular, someone who has a personality that could make many people gather..."

My line of sight and Cliff's, spontaneously focused on Rinia.

Even if it's only delinquent guys, she's good at gathering people around her.

Thus, in the place where people are assembled, it's something to gather more people.

Rather than gathering only what is necessary, it's better to set wide parameters, if as a result one's hand is able to reach a spot that itches.

Of course, when gathering so many people, problems would be bound to occur.

Gathering that many dangerous existences...

Simply gathering together will raise their spirits to a whole another level, it would only take one bad influence to lead the whole group down a bad path.

A group without a leader is not so different from a mob.

However, once Rinia is tamed, the others will come following her example.

I guess I can't just leave everyone alone after gathering them.

"Nya, what is Nya...? What are the two of you talking about Nya?"

Here she is, in one corner of the room spending her free time yawning, and jolted her body in response to our line of sight.

However, what method should we use to recruit people?

Even when Rinia does nothing people will always gather around her, but they need a reason to act.

Some reason to gather many people... as I thought it's gold.

In a place where money gathers, there will undoubtedly be many people.

Some kind of event with money as its prize... No, that will only gather them temporarily.

As I thought, masking it as a business is the best way.

Assuming that we're doing business, I guess funding is necessary.

Raising the funds from my own money... somehow I feel like that's putting the cart before the horse. I guess it's fine to think it as some kind of investment.

Ah!

I see.

To gather servants for Orsted, in addition to help assisting the research.

If I think about it, I'm tired of doing everything by myself.

There must be some kind of support organization, isn't this actually what I need?

It is not only support.

If by dividing the simple jobs, with three people at once, or maybe four, many people could be saved.

And then Orsted will be less burdened in the future.

Of course, there is also a possibility of them being manipulated by Hitogami, so the important jobs must still be handled directly.

But it's still too early for Orsted or I to breathe a sigh of relief, it would also be possible for Hitogami to manipulate the organization for his own ends, he won't just wait in silence.

But, what would they do when there isn't any work?

They would only increase the number of mouths I have to feed, and that's not very appealing.

Each individual needs to be given a way to earn their keep.

Jobs... that only they could do.

As I thought, dispatching typical capable people... No, Orsted has the money.

Forming a typical trading company, investing in talented fellows, using various prearranged schemes... Isn't that also good?

But, for that Rinia to manage it...

If something happened, it would be nice if someone was assisting her.

Someone talented... Someone knowledgeable.

Taking this opportunity, let's talk about this matter.

All right.

"Rinia."

"Nyah, what's up boss...?"

"After this, your job is, to collect people."

"What is to collect nyah?"

"I see, it's a more fitting job with her personality, nor merchant or mercenary, everything is good since preliminary work is done now."

"Wha, what is the relationship between this and money Nyah?"

"Leave the funding to me. If this turns out to be a success, then the Corporation's profits can be used to pay off your debt. Although I'd take a cut of the profits as payment for my initial investment."

If my share is not enough, then I can consult with Orsted about the situation to increase the stocks.

Depending on the situation I might have to rely on credit from Ariel.

"....? I, I see nya, what about the place nya?"

"...That, it will be prepared right now."

"Right now... that's kinda random, is that really alright nya?"

For Rinia to give such weak consent, her face isn't that bright either.

Of course, even I don't expect that this will be going well from the start.

But, if it's only limited to employing some people, maybe the chance to gain some profit will come.

In case we get our hands on some employee who has business acumen, that guy will be in charge of marketing the Ruijerd dolls.

"We don't know whether this will be going well or not till we try, right?"

"Achishi, but if this doesn't go well, please pardon me from increasing my debt nya...."

I see, Rinia is feeling anxious.

As I thought, the impact of her first failure was huge.

But, honestly even with her income from working for me, her whole life won't be enough to cover her debt.

But, if things continue like that, my household will certainly collapse.

And if it comes to that, I might need to develop time travel magic.

"...In order to prevent it from becoming like that, you must be diligent."

"Ugh..."

It doesn't look like Rinia is fully convinced yet, but she was still nodding her head in the end.

Then, on the way home, we stopped by a real estate agent, did some review, and purchased a building to become the new office.

It's a cabin sized building, and its location is also not very good.

However it's a building with a roof, so it's a good base for the time being.

It also has a reasonable price.

It has reduced my estimated expenses.

Purchase that place now—-and immediately ask Aisha to tidy that place up.

"For now, this place is your office."

"Understood Nyah."

At this early stage, I want to find a clerk as my replacement to watch over this company.

A staff who could do some paperwork and arranging the office documents...

Because of Orsted's curse there is a possibility of immediate dismissal, this is a disposable business after all.

"Here! This is an emergency fund for the time being."

For the time being, I'm giving Rinia 10 Asura gold coins.

That amount of money is more than enough as funding to start a business in Ranoa kingdom.

"O, OOOO... Is, Is handing this much money to me really alright, Nya?"

Looking at that amount of money, Rinia's eyes started glittering.

There is a saying about casting pearls before a swine.

Seeing that much money, there isn't any living being that wouldn't understand its value.

However, does this cat know the true value of money? Among living beings cats are ephemeral creatures, and money doesn't flow like water out of a fountain... I suppose I shouldn't hand over this much money to her.

Maybe if I do this under the pretext of a lesson.

"He, Hehehehe, Boss. Entrust this to me Nyah, with this many funds, I won't make a mistake Nyah, This time for sure, This time for sure I will definitely find success Nyah..."

Rinia's eyes changed into dollar signs.

Now I truly feel uneasy.

I guess passing that much money to this fellow is no good.

I mean, since after this I'm going on a job for Orsted.

When I come back Rinia's debt could be doubled, and she could be living in the basement wearing nothing but rags.

Or she might become Eris's real pet, wearing a choker and getting her love.

"Onii-chan, the cleaning is done."

There she is.

It's Aisha's turn.

"Aisha, I have something to request of you."

"... What?"

Even though I say that, Aisha is looking at me with a really dissatisfied face. She's still sulking, it looks like that matter from the other day still isn't forgiven.

"I want you to watch over how Rinia uses the company funds so she doesn't accidentally make a big mistake, please support her."

"... But, I have work to do at home."

"No need to do it everyday, just do it once every three days."

"That... Why must I do that?"

She is glaring towards Rinia.

It looks like, because of the problem from the other day, Aisha doesn't want to work with Rinia.

Judging by her attitude, I feel really uneasy if she was around the type of people Rinia tends to attract.

That would be like an army of insects gathering around the Rafflesia.

{ C-Editor's note: Rafflesia flowers, native to Sumatra, look and smell like rotting flesh and attract carrion flies. }

Well, it's just Aisha feeling reluctant.

She has her own reasons after all.

"Because, I know you're the only one whom I could trust with this kind of job."

"Why? Is it because I said that Rinia shouldn't be a maid? Or, is it because of me that the atmosphere inside the house is bad?"

Aisha with her sulking attitude, glancing at me while she is crouching.

Usually Aisha is always looking straight into my eyes, but this time she's avoiding me.

"That's not it."

"...."

"It is... that if it's you, if Rinia makes a mistake, you'll reprimand her immediately right?"

"But, can I really handle it? I could cause more damage instead..."

From my view I could see Rinia's weak face, but let's ignore her for now.

"But, it can be said that, your presence will allow Rinia to make full use of her talent, that is for sure."

".... U~n, so it's managing her work, it seems like that would really fit me."

"In other words, your presence is to prevent her mistakes."

Aisha looked at me with an astonished expression.

That's her disappointed expression.

She didn't want to make a mistake, that is what her expression said.

Wait a minute, maybe I said it in the wrong way.

U~~n.....

"Aisha, I think... Immediately abandoning a person just because they made some mistake, is not a good thing."

"...U~~n. I understand. That's really an amazing way of thinking, Onii-chan."

"Thank you. That way Aisha, when in the future.... Aisha encounters a similar case, I don't want you to become someone who easily abandons others."

Aisha is a smart child.

The so-called genius type, who could do well no matter what she does.

But, because of that, there will be times when the people around her won't understand what she's thinking.

Although the future has changed, she might still be by my side until death.

But if by chance Aisha leaves the house and tries to find a job somewhere...

I think Aisha would do well, but there's a chance that her co-workers would be jealous and exclude her, it wouldn't be odd for someone like her to completely close herself off from others after something like that.

As a result, if she's isolated from her family, that would be more than enough reason to become a shut in.

I think, before she has that opportunity, I want Aisha to learn firsthand by herself.

Though it's not something I could teach her... Since I'm bad at socializing myself.

"Now once again, with the same position as Rinia, won't you give it another chance?"

"...."

Aisha is looking between me and Rinia alternatively.

Then, she closed her eyes.

1 second, 2 seconds...

It looks like she is thinking about something in silence.

"Is it for my sake?"

"That's my intention... Well honestly, I get the feeling that with you being in charge of the support and funds, we could avoid the worst case scenario."

"I see, thanks for the honest answer."

Aisha's eyes opened.

"Onii-chan, if I reject your request here, would you hate me?"

"There is no way I would do that. It might be a bit troublesome, but I think it's okay for you to reject it."

"...."

Aisha stretched both her arms out to me timidly.

When I spread my arms, she immediately gave me a strong hug.

"I understand. If Onii-chan said so, then I will try to do my best.

"Thanks."

Though I feel that I'm being a bit bossy here...

But, that's not a mistake.

With this, I can expect some good results.

Together with Rinia, doing something in this new job, Aisha should be able learn something.

She might learn something different from what I expect, but that should be okay.

I'd like to think so.

....By the way Aisha, hasn't your chest somehow gotten quite big.

This... might be around a D-cup.

Although she isn't that tall, her chest is huge.

I guess she's becoming a glamorous woman.

Just a little more and she will become like Lilia.

No, I do not care about my little sister's chest.

"Thank you, Onii-chan."

"No, I am the one who needs to say that, thank you for listening to my request."

"I, will listen to anything that you say Onii-chan."

Smiling mischievously, Aisha getting her way with me.

It's her usual smile.

Turning towards Rinia with that smile still on her face, Aisha reached out her hand.

"Like that, let's work hard together!"

"Ri, right Nyah!"

They exchanged a firm handshake.

These two people who were on bad terms as superior and subordinate...

Well, let's forget the past and work hard like this.

Finally, Aisha made plans for the future, her ideal image, and a speech, then left that place.

For now, let's hope that the next time I come back nothing terrible has happened.

(!)

On the topmost floor of the Quagmire Tower.

There, stood a young knight just entering his 15th year of life, Lionheart, who gripped his sword with a rough breath.

"Huff..... Huff....."

"Kukuku, what's wrong Hero, is this the end?"

Standing before him is a creepy guy, wearing a dark grey colored robe and a suspicious white mask to hide his face.

"With only that level of skill, did you really think that's enough to defeat this Great Evil Mage, Rudeu.....Ehm, I mean Rudo Ronuma?"

"Damn, daa~~mn it"

Clenching his sword, Lionheart forced his heavy foot to take a step forward and swung his sword in an all out attack.

But, Rudo Ronuma easily parried that attack and pointed his right hand towards Lionheart.

At that moment, an invisible shock wave ran through the room, blowing Lionheart back from where he stood.

"Guwaaa?"

"Ah! Lionheart!"

A heartbreaking cry could be heard from the woman who was chained in the corner of the room.

Dressed in a pale pink dress was a lovely woman with a silver coronet on her head.

She is the princess from a small country in the northern lands, Twall, her name is Geltraude.

"Calm down Princess, I will beat this Pervert rascal immediately! Let's return to Twall after that...!"

After encouraging himself with his line, Lionheart forced himself back up onto his tottering feet, and with all his power he turns around to Geltraude to give her a reassuring smile.

Moreover, Rudo Ronuma is already panicked.

"Wha, hey, who did just you call Pervert!?"

"It's you! To strip the Princess of her panties, moreover WEARING THEM ON YOUR HEAD... KNOW SHAME!"

"Tha, that's not true! This, this is my wife's genuine panties! I wouldn't do something as impolite as that...!"

It's not a matter of whose panties they are.

Lionheart is the last knight remaining.

If he is defeated, Princess Geltraude will definitely become Rudo Ronuma's plaything.

It would only be a matter of time until the Princess' panties are worn over his head.

"Uo ~O~o!"

"Too weak!"

Seeing Lionheart's assault, the Evil Magician Rudo Ronuma dodged like a cockroach and then launched another shockwave attack.

This has already been repeated many times before.

"Guh~a..... Shit..... Princess, I can't lose in front of the Princess that I love.....!"

Even though his whole body is battered, Lionheart's eyes did not lose their fire.

His mission is one of love, he must defeat Rudo Ronuma.

"Kukuku, that's some great loyalty. However, for the king to send so few people to rescue the kidnapped princess, is that really worthy of your loyalty?"

"This doesn't have anything to do with the country, I..... I... I love the Princess!"

Lionheart's heartfelt cry echoed throughout Quagmire Tower.

Geltraude was so deeply moved, she covered her mouth with her hands and tears began to trickle from her eyes.

"Uoo~o~o!"

"Kukuku, what a beautiful love. But, the difference in our ability can't be overcome with love alone!"

"Guaa!"

Lionheart was blown away again by Rudo Ronuma.

"Shi, shit..... just a bit more.....always getting away!"

"Kukuku, this me you want to beat. I would become extremely weak if I saw a Supard race doll, though the story telling about them in the picture book is different from what the people know.....hahahhahahahaha!"

"!!!"

Those words made Lionheart stunned.

Supard race doll, he happens to know about it.

Before he arrived here a shady fortune teller forced him to listen to his exaggerated fortune, before finally forcing Lionheart to take a Magic race doll.

He said that it would be useful when the time comes..... but there is no way it's true!

Lionheart leaped to his bag that he threw beside the door.

And took out a doll from within it.

The doll of an emerald green haired warrior posed with his white spear!

And, a picture book that tells about his story!

"Aaa! That's, it can't be!"

"Yes, it's a Supard race–"

"No doubt about it, that's the guy who was judged as a bad guy by the world, but he is actually a gentleman who loves children, also a great hero that overthrew Laplace, that's the doll of Ruijerd Supardia!"

Lionheart didn't know that story.

He didn't read the book.

But, the effect was excellent.

"Ah, crap, my power is diminishing....!"

"This is it! Lionheart! Now!"

"Uoo~o~o!"

Rudo Ronuma staggering.

Princess Geltraude cried.

Lionheart rushed, gripping his sword.

Rudo Ronuma's already weak right hand pointed toward him, but it's too late.

Lionheart sword piercing very deep into Rudo Ronuma's chest.... or not.

The sound of [gakin] could be heard, it's the sound of something snapping.

Under the robe, he wore something also.

(Ku... so this is also useless .....)

The next moment, as Lionheart was about to give up.

"Guaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!!!"

Rudo Ronuma's sudden death throes could be heard, his whole body was enveloped by light, and he was blown backwards.

Behind him is the balcony.

With a thud sound, Rudo Ronuma's body struck the handrail of the balcony, and while giving an idiotic [Geffu~~u!] voice, he fell from there.

This is the third floor of the tower.

If it's that magician, a fall from this height won't be enough to kill him.

The next moment Lionheart thought so and tried to look under the balcony.

From under the balcony, a large explosion occurred.

The blast wave rushed past Lionheart cheeks, causing his hair to become disheveled.

"?"

After the explosion subsided, Lionheart tried to look again, and what he saw down there at the bottom of the tower was a hole.

The trees around where Rudo Ronuma fell are all uprooted, in the center of where the explosion occurred, a crater was formed.

"....."

Then, Lionheart realized.

Perhaps, his last blow just now, destroyed the core of Rudo Ronuma's armor.

Because of that his magical power went out of control, and Rudo Ronuma exploded like a balloon popping.

In other words, he won.

Lionheart has won.

"Lionheart ...!"

"Princess! It's safe now!"

Lionheart rushed over to the Princess, and hugged her.

"Lionheart ...aaa, Lionheart, I believed that you would certainly come to rescue me!"

"Princess ..... I'm aware that for me to fall in love with Princess is something beyond my reach, our social standing is too far apart.... but, but..."

"Aa, something like that didn't matter for me Lionheart.....I... I also love you very much."

"Princess.....Your words just now are too good for me! Well then, let's return for now!"

"Yes!"

The Evil Mage Rudo Ronuma is dead.

After this, Lionheart is hailed as the hero of this country.

Given high rank nobility, becoming close companions of the King and the Princess.

The two of them married, and lived happily ever after.

The End.

— Rudeus's perspective —

"Aa~h! That was a close one."

The mission this time was to [Match The Young Knight Lionheart and The Small Country Princess Geltraude].

It looks like their descendants will be useful to Orsted.

Naturally in case of these two people, even if they love each other, they can't say it because of the difference in their status.

The king that knows about their love, and was even cheering them on.

But, the problem is their lineage, so secretly he planned [Let's make some situation where Lionheart could be a hero] or something like that, but with Lionheart's timid nature there's no way he could make a case for his valor.

So the king, one way or another, must create a situation for Lionheart to make his stand. So he started a war with the neighboring country and sent Lionheart to the front lines, where of course the timid Lionheart died.

As a result Princess Geltraude became a political piece, and was married off for political reasons.

And this series of events were told as a song that was made by Geltraude in her later years.

A Princess falling in love, to a young knight with a different social standing.

Knowing that, the king became angry and sent the young knight to the front lines to die.

The princess didn't understand what her father was trying to do.

Anyway, my job this time was to fix their twisted fate, and set Lionheart with Geltraude.

First, I made contact with the king.

I made a proposal to kidnap the Princess and confine her in the tower in the middle of the forest at the edge of the country, then he could send Lionheart to help her.

At first the king doubted me, but after using Ariel's name, I persuaded him.

I, as the Evil Mage Rudo Ronuma, kidnapped the Princess.

Imprisoning the Princess in a tower, handmade by me.

It's a cheap structure that would likely fall with a single earthquake, but it's not a problem for now.

Before Lionheart started his travel, I, masquerading as a fortune teller, gave him a hint to defeat Rudo Ronuma.

Taking that opportunity to spread the wonder of the Supard race doll, killing two birds with one stone.

Later, I returned to the tower, unconcernedly waiting for Lionheart to come and struggle in a hard fight against me before he reversed the situation.

Though, it sounds easy.

However, from preparation for negotiations, up to the practice, I did it all by myself.

Come to think of it later, somehow I feel as if I made it into too large of a scheme.

"So tired..."

Anyway, this mission is also a success.

After receiving words of gratitude from Orsted for my work, I'm back to my home.

After one month, I return to the magic city Sharia.

This fatigue, I guess it will be healed by Sylphy.

Watching that young couple being all lovey-dovey, for some reason I want to see Sylphy's embarrassed expression so much.

With that, I want to spend the night in a passionate way.

In order to release my beastly instincts.....

But, lately Sylphy grew accustomed to it, she isn't embarrassed by it that much anymore.

The other day, when I thoughtlessly snuck a look while she was changing her clothes, she said "Ah, please hold these pants," and handed them to me.

There's not enough of an element of shyness.

I wish she had said "Really, Rudi is being lewd," or something like that.

Anyway, I'm finally back home.

As usual, Beat is opening the door for me,

Touching Eris's stomach, groping Sylphy's ass, patting Lara's head, licking Sylphy's ears, my hand getting licked by Leo, and Lucy running away from me.....

I feel relieved when surrounded by my family.

Come to think of it, in my previous life, when my father came back from his business trip, even though his face looked weary, but seeing his family immediately relieved him, maybe this is how he felt at that time.

Today is the day when Norn will come home, so while waiting for Norn and Roxy to come back, I think I will spend some leisure time in the living room; while I'm deeply sunken sitting on the sofa.

Suddenly, I noticed.

"Ara? Aisha isn't home today? Did she go shopping?"

As soon as she heard my question, Lilia's complexion changed.

Quite the complexion she had there.

Sylphy's face, also somehow looked a little worried.

Eris's expression is like usual.

This isn't a good atmosphere.

I wonder what's wrong?

"That is, recently Aisha is often spending her time outside....."

Lilia said it in an apologetic tone.

Outside.....

Oh, I see.

Which reminds me, that last time I asked her to support Rinia's job.

"That is, actually last time I think I asked her to help in some work, isn't that what she does?"

"No... though you said it's work.... but, she is associating with some bad looking guys, and it's still increasing."

When I heard about bad looking guys, what comes to my mind is Mohican styled guys wearing shoulder pads.

In the world where gasoline is precious, those fellows ride high emission motorcycles while shouting [Ya-Ha].

A reference to the Fist of the North Star manga and anime series. }

Or some colleagues that often gathered around Rinia.

"Errrr....Rudy. Recently, I see a lot of strange guys inside of the city and nothing can be done to them. They are all wearing black suits, however, Aisha-chan, is often seen together with those guys."

It's still been less than one month since I asked.

Whatever the circumstances might be, for the city to change this quickly, it seems there isn't any words about some kind of gathering.

Moreover, black suits...

U~~m.

She, is soon turning 14 years old.

Now she is in her puberty phase, rebellious age, the season of Eight grade illness.

She will rebel and oppose her brother or parents, the years she will be rebutting with cold words.

Don't tell me, that by giving her permission to go out has made some kind of cultural shock happen, damn it!, what has actually happened for her to start socializing with those kind of guys.

"My apologize, Rudeus-sama. I won't let Aisha do something like this again, when she comes home tonight, I'll scold her properly."

Ah, so that means she isn't staying out all night and comes home in the morning.

Well then, if it was like that I could feel relieved for the time being.

The moment I think that, Sylphy said something strange.

"But, Aisha-chan said that Rudy already gave her permission to do that."

"...."

Got my permission?

With those words, inside my head the worst kind of scenery unfolded.

While Rinia is taking the application forms for those gathering inside the warehouse, the thugs give a vulgar smile while they lick their lips.

Their line of sight is gathered toward the two beautiful girls, Rinia and Aisha that are rooted on the spot.

Inside the cramped warehouse, that way, they encircled them....

Of course Rinia's battle power is high, but only to a general level.

Thus, she won't hold if she is overwhelmed by a great number of enemies.

Come to think of it, even though Aisha is still a child, recently her body has experienced a spurt of growth.

Mainly her chest, which is in the process of approaching her mother's.

And, even from my eyes, as her brother, she is cute.

A refreshing expression which she inherited from Paul, the effect is doubled to the viewer when combined with her charming double tooth smile.

Aaa, forgetting such a simple fact.

Rinia and Aisha, both of them are beautiful.

How could I leave them alone with gathering a lot of bad guys?

Isn't that the same as throwing fresh meat into a swarm of sharks?

... No, I don't have anything that says that they are a collection of bad guys!

"Eris, why you didn't stop her?"

"...eeh? Why must I do that?"

Eris tilted her neck.

Aah, perhaps Eris isn't that interested in Aisha.

"Nothing, since those guys must not be that big of a deal."

No, for Eris, there is no difference between a lion and a cat.

Even Sylphy and Lilia are concerned about her being surrounded by a lot of bad guys,

From Eris's point of view, they may not look that bad, only at the level of being mischievous boys.

No, do not rely on Eris.

She is pregnant now.

Besides, I'm the one who's pulling the strings.

It's my responsibility.

".... I see, it looks like I must resolve this myself."

Since I didn't particularly tell Aisha who to hang out with, I won't blame her.

Even the so called 「A Lot of Bad Looking Guys」, if I talk to them they might actually turn out to be good guys.

But, there is something called limit to everything.

After all Aisha is still underage, she might be treated as some kind of convenient woman by some of her colleagues, as her older brother, I think it's my duty to give her some help.

I think, Paul will also do the same thing.

No, I think Paul is also classified as the [Bad Looking Guys].

"Do you know their hangout?"

"I'll show you."

Said Eris immediately.

But, she is pregnant.

She can't go no matter what.

If a fight broke out, it will surely turn into something dangerous which is not good.

"I'll go too."

Sylphy volunteering herself, but I shook my head.

"... No, I will go alone for the time being."

Assuming the worst case happened... Besides, if nothing bad has happened, there is no need to trouble them.

So, first, I have to move alone, to see the situation.

Thinking so, I leave my house again as soon as I came, I'm moving in the direction of Aisha's hangout.

Sylphy told me the directions.

Third Street of the adventurers district.

Far from the main street, there is the place.

It's a splendid two-story building, made of anti-magic brick.

Its shape is similar to an adventurer guild, or a tavern.

But, there is some kind of different feeling with the latest addition of a sign painted with black ink, in the middle of that sign is the mark of a ferocious tiger.

As I was about to go inside, the doors opened, and what appeared from inside the room were men completely dressed in black.

All members are wearing the same black coat, with the same lucky tiger mark as the sign on the door attached on their backs.

And for some reason, they were carrying things like hoes and sickles.

"Ssha! I~tsuzo~o~o! Raa~a!"

"Ooosssuuuu!"

While they're shouting their full of fighting spirit yells, they passed without taking a glance at me, till they disappeared along the main street.

So scary.

That, they absolutely won't do something like cheering for a baseball game right?

Without a doubt, they will usually practice battle against lions in nude while shouting 「Tiger is stronger than Lion！」.

That was dangerous, I guess it's okay now.

No, thanks to Orsted's training I've also become stronger recently.

As a precaution, I also wore the Magic Armor from the office.

So it will be all right. Definitely all right.

Therefore I won't lose against these degree of thugs.

I can't afford to back down now.

That cute Aisha together with such rough fellows in a place like this.

No matter how clever she is, Aisha is still powerless against them.

She always comes home at night, but I wonder what happens during the day....

One cannot look for help.

Even in a case where many opponents come out.

It's all right. Now is the time to use the tactics against a great number of enemies.

After countering with three punches, turn back for a moment, then counter one punch with three punches again.

"E, Excuse me ....."

Opening the doors, I'm entering the building.

Immediately arriving at the lobby.... I guess.

A spacious room, with barrels lined up at fixed intervals.

Why barrels, I can't think of any reason for that.

But they're using barrels as a substitute for the tables.

Placing liquor bottles on the barrels, they're leisurely enjoying their drinks.

This place is like a bar.

However, there is one thing that certainly makes it different from a normal bar.

Everyone inside, they're wearing the same identical black coat with the mark of the tiger on their back similar to the group I just saw outside.

Look so~ dangerously scary.

"Have some kind of business here?"

I then noticed, from inside someone from the beast race with a Lion face was approaching me.

He was taller than me, even his width was larger.

His black coat making [PichiPichi] sounds is bulging and almost torn off.

It appears he has a wonderful amount of muscle, and I'm sure that it's his pride.

But, fighting force isn't determined by the amount of the muscle alone.

Even President Orsted and Ruijerd didn't look as macho and strong as him.

"Eeeerr, that, my younger sister, I've come to meet her but, is she really here?"

But, manners come first.

For example, if this person is someone strong who loves to quarrel, then I must make him overlook me.

Honorifics in the first meeting, that is the secret of my success in this world.

It doesn't mean that I'm scared of him.

"Sister ...?"

While this beast race frowned with a doubtful face, he looked over the lobby.

Looking at it calmly, there are many guys wearing black coat, as well as many women.

They don't particularly look like bad guys, none of them has the look of a veteran warrior.

At least, magic university student is one rank above them in terms of their tough look.

Bad looking guys... I'm really wondering, are they really bad?

Anyway, it looks like among everyone inside, Aisha isn't one of them.

"Pardon my impoliteness...."

After noticing me, that Beast guy brought his face closer to mine.

Hey- what is this! Stop it!

Hey you, what kind of place is this?

I, I'm acquainted with Orsted you know!

From his position the man didn't move at all, only his nose was moving while sniffing me.

It seems my smell is bad.

Or something like that, how embarrassing.

"....?"

The man, while sniffing me raises his eyebrows.

"...!"

And, he is staring at my face intently, [thud] he took two steps back and fell on his behind.

Dangerous, it looks like I'm very smelly right now.

Which reminded me that I hadn't taken a bath yet since I came home.

"You, could it be, Aisha-san?"

So the man asked me.

It looks like, my identity is discerned from my smell for the time being.

"Ah, Yes! I'm the one called Rudeus Greyrat. My younger sister... does Aisha happen to be here?"

How could I have forgotten, self introduction is also important.

Naming oneself, to make clear about your affiliation, is also the first important step of communication.

Incidentally, it looks like my name is quite famous in this city.

I guess by introducing myself, it put some kind of restraint.

"Swo~sh"

As soon as I said my name, the atmosphere instantly changed.

The people that could hear my name, all of the members, now turn their head toward me.

"Greyrat ....."

"Then he is ....."

"To think that the day to meet him someday finally came....."

Somehow I could perfectly feel the atmosphere of being away.

This looks bad.

This sensation, somehow made me feel a little nostalgic.

Like when I was apologizing long ago to some group when Eris made a big ruckus with them, that kind of feeling.

Maybe, it's already too late and Eris already beat them once.

Nn? So, then why didn't Aisha come back?

Ah, perhaps, they already gave Aisha some detailed instructions.

Oioi, then, Aisha is here by her own will?

Impossible.

Certainly, they must have used some kind of threat.

Shit, how could I made such a blunder, to give out my name.

Maybe it's alright if I named myself as Mysterious Masked Magician, Rudo Ronuma.

In other words, there is no point in arguing over it.

"..... he is the, the president!"

"... the president!"

"President Rudeus ...!"

When I begin to think about that.

The people began to surround me, and lowered their heads.

From standing at attention, they bowed 45 degrees toward me.

Everyone started doing that all at once.

What is this?.

"Ee~rrr"

Looking, at the beast race youth earlier, he was showing me the top of his head.

"Inexcusable, for not having even known President's face..."

"Eh?"

"This way please, I will take you to the adviser."

"Adviser? Ah, Yes."

Normally in this situation it would not be wise to follow him...

But to see what's inside I must follow this Beast race youth whose muscles extend even to his tail.

He will guide me, for now I'll follow him.

"Go on ahead."

Climbing the stairs, I was guided towards the innermost part of the building.

It's a dim room with the curtain closed.

The wall is decorated with a portrait of an enigmatic looking ikemen (handsome guy), such a weird room.

At that place, that guy stopped.

In that place, resides the number one bad guys in this city.

Those two were also wearing the same kind of black coats.

Furthermore, they're wearing white mufflers on their necks even though it will be summer soon, and inside this closed and dim room, they're wearing sunglasses.

Dressed like that they're sitting facing each other, counting gold coins with a sinister grin and a smile.

"Nyahahahahaha. As I thought, purchasing sunglasses was the correct choice after all. The radiance from these good coins will surely make me blind Nya!"

That one is laughing aloud while giving the sinister smile.

Because of the lighting effect, I could even see her teeth shining gold from all the coins.

I can't recognize her face because of the sunglasses...

But there's no mistake, the eyes behind those glasses are dollar signs.

Her eyes are done for.

"E~r, this is this month's payment nya!"

"U~mu"

And, nodding her head, is also a young girl wearing sunglasses.

She, also sitting on a chair, was swaggering with a bossy attitude like some kind of important person.

In such a posture, she proudly raised her hand and received a bag of gold coins from the first woman.

It seems the number of the gold coins is around ten pieces.

Judging from the appearance, it's not Asura gold coin, but Ranoa Kingdom gold coin that are usually used and seen in this area.

The young girl proceeded to count its number, then threw the gold coins in a gold bag that was in the vicinity.

And, [sarasara] wrote the amount of money on a piece of paper and signed it with her signature, then returned it to the first person.

"U~mu, certainly."

"Of course Nya!"

"And then?"

The young girl, giving a signal to the woman with her chin.

"Nyahehehe, and this is the adviser fee Nya!"

The woman picking some gold coins from the tower of gold coins on top of the table, and passing it to the young girl.

5... No, 6 coins.

"Here, even after this please keep giving your support Nya?"

"Of course"

"Nyafuhihihi, Adviser-sama is so evil Nyah."

"He~h, not as evil as Rinia-san."

While a bad smile raised from the young girl's lips, she received a different money bag from the one gold bag that she was handed earlier.

Then, that gold bag immediately disappeared into her cleavage.

"Ah!"

Then, they noticed the Beast race youth and me.

"Chief Rinia, Adviser Aisha. President Rudeus is coming for inspection."

The two people that were dressed like mafia bosses were Aisha and Rinia.

I was sitting on the nearby sofa.

Aisha and Rinia sat right in front of me.

"This, how did it turn out like this?"

For now, I will try to listen to what really happened.

Someone must explain this, I have that kind of feeling.

Certainly, I ordered Aisha and Rinia to collect the people in the city.

But, the building that I lent them for that purpose isn't here,

And I never said to them to make those guys put on black coats, and the number of people gathering here already surpassed my assumption.

"U~m, I'm really doing it according to what you said Onii-chan, to gather people, and then use the gathered people to start a new business."

"... hoo, tell me in detail."

Then Aisha explained it to me.

Everything that happened since then, immediately after Aisha and Rinia gathered the people.

Then, focused in gathering the students and graduates from the magic university, and adventurers guild, they succeeded in gathering 30 people right away.

Suddenly they had 30 people.

That's when they became concerned, the warehouse that I bought became cramped in no time.

So Aisha made her move, she sold the warehouse on the same day;

Using her connections to recruit sponsors, it looks like they managed to rent this building.

By the way, it looks like Zanoba and Cliff are their sponsors.

The portrait hanging in this room, is my portrait that was drawn by Zanoba.

Too much beautification, it almost didn't resemble me.

"But, as I thought they simply gathered here, they didn't have any sense of unity at all. We must do something regularly."

With the number of people that gathered, and the number of days till I return.

Unless one gives direction in what they will do, it seemed they would scatter immediately.

So, Aisha went to the Sky Castle to get some advice from Nanahoshi.

Taking the whistle to call Perugius from the table inside my room, she summoned Arumanfi.

After giving her greeting to Perugius, she got some advice from Nanahoshi.

"Eh? You met Perugius-sama?"

"Yeah. That person is so cool."

To go to such a scary place without my knowledge.

If she offended him, her life would've been forfeit.

No, that person is very lenient, I guess he won't do something so childish against a minor.

If she innocently said that he is cool, Sylvaril too will be nice to her.

"Then?"

According to Nanahoshi's recommendation, what we need is [Uniform] and [Manner].

If everyone is wearing the same clothes, it will create a sense of solidarity.

After accomplishing that, even without doing anything, they won't scatter.

Furthermore, by teaching the troops about some correct manners, they will boost their sense of faith in the business and easily gain their trust.

Aisha, moving according to Nanahoshi's advice, from her acquaintance of a clothes shop, she bought a stockpile of cheap clothes.

And the one they had a quantity of was this gloomy black coat.

Aisha, without thinking too much about it, bought them.

She purchased yellow cloth with her own money, then it looks like she sewed rat marks into them one-by-one.

A rat mark.

Because I'm a Greyrat, so it's a rat.

Because of the Black cloth on the yellow shirt, I was almost certain that it was a tiger mark.

Isn't that nice, that tiger mark over there is so cool, I could almost say that.

Anyway after they're wearing same the identical garments, Aisha taught them how to bow.

The same one I'm most skillful at, a respectful bow of 45 degrees. Otherwise commonly known as OJIGI.

After all of them memorized that, they would be known as a courteous organization.

Thus, it's the beginning of the complete formation of a group of people in black clothes.

After that, Aisha thought about what these guys could do.

However, majority of the beast race here is actually yearning for Rinia.

They didn't have any talent except for combat, their hobby is muscle training, and many of them don't know their alphabet or numbers, let alone how to read.

Although there are some smart guys among them, the ratio of smart guys to muscle heads is only 1 percent.

Taking advantage of that fact, the only thing that came to mind was forming a mercenary company.

Thus, it was decided that they will form a mercenary company.

Then, the name of the group was also decided.

Using the pseudonym that I always use, it's named [Rudo Mercenary Company].

But, this place is in the Magic Triumvirate.

And, in the middle of these 3 countries, Magic city Sharia is relatively peaceful.

Without any experience in war, it would take time for them to prepare.

Facing these circumstances, Aisha devised a new plan, the one so-called as Bodyguard business.

With fixed amount of money for the fixed amount of time, the company dispatches several mercenaries.

Out of the several people dispatched, the one with the best head for battle is selected as the commander.

Also, if one of the mercenaries is injured or dies, then another mercenary is immediately dispatched to replace them.

As it's said, the bodyguard is bound by their contract.

It's definitely not a gangster organization.

Absolutely not a gangster organization.

"So if we start with that kind of work, things like fame will instantly come."

Rinia is a Dedorudia princess indeed.

Strangely this mercenary business could easily gain trust, there are also good relationships between the members, and with Aisha promoting it they instantly became famous.

After 14-15 days from the start of business, they received contracts from the Knight of Rania Kingdom, the head of the Magic Guild, and the Magic Tool Workshop.

Registered beginner members also increased at the same time, now, nearly 50 people in black suits are loitering around this town.

From adventurers and order of the knights, students, blacksmith, to magic tool shop, various occupational factions exist in this city, of course quarreling and brawling also often happens.

Hence, comes the existence that stands on the neutral side to protect them. The cracks between each faction demand such an existence.

But one wrong move and the mercenaries themselves will become a new faction...

But Aisha thinks it's okay, because they receive various jobs from various factions without giving any special treatment.

"Because of that, my payment is separated from the money we paid toward the company, we gained more profit than I thought."

"Really Nya, to think that we could earn this much money for the company Nya. We're honest fellows Nya."

For the time being.

There is little difference from being an adventurer and being a bodyguard.

In the month since the launch, it seems they've earned a decent amount, and their cash flow has already stabilized.

The individual pay isn't that large of course, it will still take some time for Rinia to clear her debt.

However, with the business as it is now, it's still possible to expand.

After gathering the capital, we could expand or start a new business, Rinia might be able to pay off her debt in one go.

And if that's the case, by the time Rinia pays down around half her debt, I could probably write a cancellation of debt letter. I'm not particularly attached to money anyway.

Honestly, I was expecting them to do something completely different.

What they've created is very different from my expectations, but they've been successful, so it's okay.

I mean, even I didn't expect it to be going this well right now.

The secret of success, I guess it's because of Aisha's management.

Giving her the role to keep an eye on the company fund has paid off.

This genius girl has finally become serious, no mistake about it, it just will take a little more time.

I mean, like this she'll start doing everything more seriously.

"But Aisha, to think that you were this fond of money..."

"Eh, it's not like that!"

Unintentionally I said it with a sigh, because of that unexpected line Aisha is pouting and looks somewhat displeased.

"The one I love is Onii-chan! Because Onii-chan told me to do so, I'm working very hard right?"

"Aisha...."

Her eyes are sparkling...

So cute~~.

I feel relieved that I don't feel anything toward my little sister.

"Also, it will be worrying if this cat ends up back at home."

Ah, so that's her real intention.

Though I feel that their relationship was looking good a while ago, I wonder if the reality isn't like that?

No, that is that, this is this.

"Regardless of what happened, well done!"

"Ehehe, Thank you"

When I patted her head, she gave a satisfied smile.

Anyway.

With this, we could expect Rinia to pay her debt.

With this, guys that have business acumen who could do office jobs will surely come.

A clerk for Orsted's office, and also we could hire a talented merchant to handle Ruijerd doll marketing.

To think things could progress this quickly in only a month.

As expected of Aisha.

I might have been underestimating her true ability.

"But, because Lilia is a little worried, we must talk a bit when we get back home."

"E~~, since mother's being so stubborn, she didn't want to hear my explanation. I-I want to try a little longer doing this job."

"It's okay. I will specially ask her, and give a proper explanation."

If someone is forced to do things against their will, it won't usually end well, but this experience has actually motivated her.

If the person herself is this motivated, then let's see how things go for a while longer.

I mean, right now she is about to witness the fruits of her efforts, it's not like she is putting this in a more important position than her maid job at home.

"I understand. I will believe you, Onii-chan. Since Onii-chan is so naive towards mother, can you really give a proper explanation?"

"Ah."

Thus, I obtained subordinates.

The name is the [Rudo Mercenary Company].

My first subordinates.

After this I could finally use my subordinates.

My dream expanded.

"Ah, that's right boss!"

When I was about to go back home with Aisha tagging along, Rinia suddenly called out to me.

"What?"

"While you were working, a letter from the Great Forest CAME Nyah!"

Hou~, from the Great Forest.

I wonder if it's from Pursena?

While thinking that, Rinia handed me the letter.

It's addressed to Rinia, so the seal is already opened.

There is no sender name.

And yet, why does Rinia know that this letter came from the Great Forest?

I wonder if it's from the smell?

Without waiting I immediately took the letter, and read what's written in there.

"...!"

What's written in there, there isn't any date or season of the year.

Just a single line.

Written in beast god language.

[Grave Situation, Holy Beast-sama has disappeared! Urgent Search ASAP!]

"Well, it looks like Holy Beast-sama's disappearance has become a problem Nya~"

With her hand folded behind her head, Rinia said that while laughing [Nyahahaha].

"....."

I decided to go to the Great Forest.

To apologize to the beast race while bringing a box of cake.

'Rudo Mercenaries'

President: Rudeus Greyrat.

Representative Director: Rinia Dedorudia.

Adviser and vice president: Aisha Greyrat.

Company Employees: 50 people

Main Company: ORSTED Corp. branch company

Sponsor: Silent Seven Star.

The summary so far: Holy Beast-sama's matter comes first

Three members will go to the Great Forest: Rinia, Holy Beast Leo and me.

Eris also wanted to tag along, but as one would expect, her stomach had already become quite big, so she refrained.

Because her toy, which is me, is often lost [going to work]. Recently, Eris has been saving quite an amount of stress.

She'd probably be happy if I managed to bring back another Beast race child as my replacement [sacrifice] fresh from their tribe, because they have plenty.

Rinia had the opposite reaction and said [I don't want to go, I will only end up working under Pursena in that case], but if I was the only one that went, they won't be very convinced. So her role is convincing them.

The truth is, right after Leo was summoned, I wanted to send a letter to them but completely forgot about it.

Such a failure.

Well despite the stubborn Beast race, I am an adult now...

It won't end up like last time.

This time, I've already prepared a long and strong argument and will bring Rinia and Leo with me.

Because of this trip, the mercenary company has been left to Aisha.

The management itself won't become a problem, since originally, Aisha handled it by herself.

Also, the company employees that originally only relied on Rinia are now starting to respect Aisha.

Since this is only a short and temporary trip, there won't be any problems.

Honestly, with this trip, the schedule for Orsted's jobs has been put a bit out of order.

But, such things will become the root of evil in the distant future, so it's better to take care of it in its early stages.

If we don't do this ASAP, they will only become more enraged as time passes.

And one year later, it won't be strange if hordes of the beast race suddenly come and challenge me to a war.

That would be very troublesome.

However, I will try to persuade them, rather than make them face Orsted's scary face. I will bring Leo as my lawyer, and Orsted will be in charge of my home defense in the meantime.

Thanks to my appearance, many of his strategic plays are going smoothly, so it looks like there won't be any problems for now.

Even though I say that...

I don't have a magic teleportation circle in our office's basement that's connected to the Dorudia Village.

The magic teleportation circle in our office's basement that leads to the Great Forest is quite a distance from Dorudia Village.

Regarding that matter, it's time to request Perugius's help and at the same time thank him for the matter with Aisha.

It's possible that he knows about the abandoned transfer magic circle in the ancient ruins in the northern part of the Great Forest.

When I came to greet him and ask for his assistance, Perugius was sitting on his throne surrounded by Sylvaril and his other 10 familiars as usual.

One familiar is missing, but it's already well-known that he dispatched one of his familiars to Ariel's palace as his ambassador.

"So to the Great Forest, huh?"

"Is there any problem?"

"Nope, did you want to go there immediately?"

"I think it's better if we move as soon as possible."

When I tell Perugius about my business in the Great Forest, he puts on a perplexed face. But that's only for a moment – he immediately gives a nod to my request.

Does he really forgive me for using him as a substitute for a taxi?

As I thought, Perugius-sama is really a generous person.

"Even so, the Holy Beast huh... That's made me remember unpleasant memories."

Perugius is looking at Leo. Somehow, he made a complicated face.

He should have known that the being I summoned was Holy Beast-sama, but this is their first meeting.

Even when he is under Perugius's gaze, Leo is sitting still with a calm face.

Rather, the one who is getting scared is Rinia.

It looks like even though she has already met him once with Aisha, she isn't quite used to Perugius's presence yet.

"The other day, it seems my little sister gave you a little trouble."

"I don't mind. She is a clever person, and I don't dislike such a person."

It looks like Aisha was forgiven. While waving his hand, Perugius's expression looks like he is in a good mood.

When I see that he really means it and doesn't have any ill intentions, it looks like Aisha was well accepted.

"By the way, it seems like your daughter has already been born."

"Yes, did you hear that from Aisha?"

"U~mu. Isn't it a nice thing that it isn't a green haired male?"

Perugius said so with his inquiring voice.

"... Yes. I feel relieved that she isn't Laplace's reincarnation."

Hearing my answer, Perugius directs his smile at me.

"Ho~u. Did you already hear about the ancient Dragon race reincarnating from Orsted?"

"Yes."

"If that is the case, just remember this: If your son is Laplace's reincarnation, I will hunt him down to the bitter end."

Saying that, Perugius smiled while baring his teeth at me.

Scary.

"...As for me, I hope that won't happen."

I'm not sure about my current stance on Laplace, as I'm not ready for such a matter.

According to Orsted's story, he is the oldest surviving warrior from an ancient Dragon race who continues a very, very long battle against Hitogami.

If that is the case, as far as that matter is concerned, he is my ally.

However, that's only as far as concerning how to defeat Hitogami. Aside from that, we're in different factions. As far as deceiving Ruijerd and being an enemy of Perugius is concerned, Laplace is my enemy.

If he's born as my son, I don't know how I would face such a problem.

Well, it's not like I must worry too much about this matter.

Where, when, and whom Laplace is reincarnated to, Orsted will definitely tell me when the time has come.

Although my appearance caused a wide array of other possible futures...

Yeah, about Laplace's strong fate, I don't think I will have any influence on it.

"Thinking about how you and I would be baring our fangs against each other though, if Laplace is about to be reincarnated, it would be nice if you came here first to discuss that matter with us."

After Perugius says that to comfort me, he stands up from his throne.

He doesn't continue that discussion with me.

But, from his talk and that mood, it's not likely he would leave Laplace alone.

There's a possibility that he would change from his usual kind manner and suddenly go for the kill.

"Well then, the preparation for this magic teleportation circle will take quite a while. In the meantime, you can rest in one of my castle's rooms."

After saying that, Perugius left his throne room.

It takes a while to prepare the magic teleportation circle.

Thus, I went to greet Nanahoshi, but she wasn't in her usual room.

I asked Yuruzu-san, who was walking down the corridor just now, where she was, and it seems that she is currently deep in the study of applications of magic teleportation circles.

I hear that there are many important things that she needs to memorize.

I believe that it is something that will need my cooperation but...

For the time being, I will leave the homemade potato chips and the salted Onigiri in her room.

This is her healing food.

After that, I moved to the private room that was assigned for us, and waited for the magic teleportation circle to be readied.

Rinia's eyes glow brightly when she sees this ultra wonderful room, and she immediately jumps into the soft and fluffy looking sofa.

"Haa~... Putting Boss aside, Aisha sure is fearless Nya, to be able to speak on equal ground with such a scary person Nya..."

Rinia complained while stretching her body.

I don't know what kind of conversation happened between Aisha and Perugius.

But I think Aisha hasn't caused any problems since Perugius isn't in a bad mood.

But, because Aisha would sometimes accidentally be blunt (open) about her real intentions.

I'm a little worried.

... There might be some kind of plotting behind the scenes.

"Rinia. He's not a peer. My position is below him. As for forgiving Aisha's somewhat impolite way of speech, it's because Perugius-sama is a very generous person."

"Is that so? Isn't it because Boss is scared working for that Dragon God person? Though I haven't met him, he's very scary right? He could even make that always serious Cliff tremble in fear Nya."

"Stop it! There's no way that could be true!"

Because I'm unaffected by Orsted's curse, unlike you.

As for this conversation, it will all be directly transmitted straight to Perugius.

The tea or the dust-cloth might contain a hidden camera...

Seriously...

While we're having such a conversation, the time passes, and Sylvaril appears with a somewhat sullen mood.

As I thought, she heard our conversation.

"Since Perugius-sama is a very generous person, he truly considers Rudeus-sama one of his best friends."

That word perfectly nailed me in my heart.

Of course, I knew from her tone.

This idiot cat just said something that isn't supposed to be said.

Well~, to think that Perugius-sama thinks of me as his friend is quite an honor.

While I'm saying these flattering lines, though a bit obvious, Sylvaril's sullen mood isn't even fixed one bit.

"...Since the preparations are finished, please come with me."

Because of Sylvaril's sullen mood, we're urged outside the room.

With her as our guide, we moved towards the Sky Castle's basement.

We also used this dark-labyrinth-like place when teleporting to the Magic Continent.

There, in one of the rooms with dim lighting stood two people, Perugius and Nanahoshi.

In front of them, as usual, is a transfer magic circle carved there.

But, for some reason, the transfer magic circle isn't shining.

It seems it isn't activated yet.

While I was wondering what was wrong, Nanahoshi was standing nearby carrying a magic crystal in each of her hands.

She takes a deep breath.

"The practical use is still the same as usual, but always follow the proper rules."

"Yes..."

While Nanahoshi says that, she comes closer to the transfer magic circle.

"Rudeus, step in here. If this fails, then please forgive me."

With a face filled with a tensed expression, Nanahoshi signals me to step into the magic circle.

It seems that, this time Nanahoshi will be the one who activates the magic circle.

Guinea pig for practical class?

I won't voice any complaints. Since we were the ones that asked for help.

"Sylvaril, did you already give them the map?"

"I'm sorry master, I forgot about that matter."

With Perugius's words, Sylvaril takes a single piece of paper from her bosom and gives it to me.

I take a look at the contents after received it from her.

Confirming the position of the place, I see Dorudia Village is located at the edge of the map, and our current transfer point is in one of the ancient ruins.

It will take around half a day to get to the Dorudia village from our position.

Perhaps because it is located in the forest, it seems pretty close...

For now, I will try to show it to Rinia.

"Ah! If it was from this place, I already know Nya. It's okay, it is pretty close Nya."

And, that was her reply.

If that's the case, it seems it is going to be okay.

Nonetheless, it's already been ten years since I went to that place, so it's better if I leave navigation to the local resident.

I mean, Sylvaril-san.

If Perugius hadn't mentioned the map, it looks as if you would have had no intention to give the map to me.

That's not good, that's quite a dark personality.

I'll tell on you to Perugius-sama...

"Well then, begin."

"Yes."

Nanahoshi squats on the ground near the transfer magic circle with a magic crystal in both of her hands. She starts writing something on the ground with a brush.

"Be prepared for the worst, you will only have a moment after the magic circle is activated. Once you get to the other side, take care of yourselves, is that clear?"

"?.....Yes"

While the process continued, I reflexively replied to Perugius's words.

...I guess it's a countermeasure against monster swarms.

Oh wait a minute.

Could it be, now is that time of the year?

"Ah! Wai—"

Coincidentally, Rinia also realizes it at the same time as me.

However, by the time we noticed, Nanahoshi had already finished the preparations.

On the ground where she wrote with a brush previously, she placed her magic crystals there.

As soon as we said that, the magic circle that was only dimly lit before released a brilliant light, and my body is immediately sucked into the magic circle.

"Uwaph!"

By the time I noticed it, my body is already submerged in the water.

I was soaked up to my stomach where I was standing on the magic teleportation circle.

Instantly after that, the magic circle lost its brilliant light.

"Nya! As I thought, it was the rainy season now!"

While Rinia is busy screaming like that, I'm carrying Leo.

Leo is being carried like baggage, it's only natural, afterall his whole body would be underwater.

It's regrettable though, the box full of cake also got wet.

The water temperature is cold.

If we didn't find somewhere dry soon, we would definitely catch a cold.

Well, even the common cold could be cured immediately with detoxification magic.

While I was looking for stairs to the upper level, I noticed the stairs going up were missing.

If it was like that, then...

I summoned a spirit of light to become our torch and searched around the room for stairs leading down.

It looks like this room is the top floor of the structure, so it couldn't be completely flood.

"Boss, nyease do something!"

"Keep your mouth shut and wait a moment."

As for now, it's better if we go to a higher place first.

With the water level of this place, there should be no water at the area above here.

While thinking that, I created stairs on the surface of the wall with earth magic, I continue creating it till it reached the ceiling.

"Fu~h!"

After destroying it with magic, the ceiling became an exit.

I went outside.

Downpour of rain.

Surveying the surrounding scenery, it is just huge trees after huge trees lined up one after another, looking up, the sky is not visible due to the dense foliage.

Below, the whole area is flooded by a stream of muddy water.

It's like the scenery of an illusionary forest in the middle of a river.

No doubt about it, this is the Great Forest.

Currently, I'm standing on top of the ruins.

Almost all of the ruin is submerged by the flood.

"That was dangerous Nyah, what will we do after this Nyah? We didn't consider this season Nyah."

Rinia also came up with Leo.

"We could walk above the frozen water, or travel by creating a ship with magic."

"Ooo, as expected of boss Nyah."

"But, I don't know the way to Dorudia in this rain."

"Achishi, I also, with it being like this, don't nyow the way..."

Yeah.

After all, this ruin is submerged up to the top floor.

The depth of water, it's about 5 meters.

Anything that could be considered a landmark is likely submerged.

"Wha, what do we do nya?"

"How about waiting till the end of the rainy season in this place?"

"After rainy season is finished, it's mating season Nya, and then, Achishi I may become of use Nyah."

I see. Mating season, huh.

Rather than being at my house, I'm in the middle of traveling, there's a high chance I can't contain my urges.

I might end up making a move with anyone as long as it's good.

Oh wait, how about going back to Sharia again, then borrowing some magic item from Orsted...

"Wan!"

And, just now Leo barked.

While stretching his chest, he is looking toward me.

I guess he's trying to make some sort of request.

"Is that true Nya?!"

Rinia is answering him.

"Wan!"

"As expected of Holy Beast-sama Nyah!"

Leo barking and, Rinia responding to him.

I'm glad that I brought Rinia along.

As I thought, Bau ○ n Gal is necessary.

"What is it, Rinia?"

"He said [I know the way to the village, just prepare the ship] Nyah."

"Ooo, I see."

As expected of Holy Beast-sama.

While thinking that, I made a ship with earth magic.

Because I created it with the magic arts, the amount of magical power used for it is quite massive.

But, while I made it as durable as possible, I also made it's weight as light as possible.

So that it could maintain its durability I shaped it like a honeycomb, I trapped some air in the hollowed part inside so it will have more buoyancy when we ride it.

While considering that factor, the ship is finally completed after an hour.

It's shaped like a clumsily made square raft.

Well it's floating well, and the driving force is by magical power.

So there won't be any problem.

"All right, let's go!"

"Boss... Is this thing really safe Nya? Is your magical power enough Nya? It won't sink in the middle of the journey Nyight?"

"The chance for that is impossible, and we will take a rest on the top of the trees on the way to the village."

While saying that, I hopped onto the raft.

It's a little unstable, but that could easily be fixed in the middle of the journey.

"Ugh, I feel rather uneasy Nya..."

"Wan!"

"Ah! Boss, go in that nyirection."

"OK. Well then, let's advance."

I began to propel the raft by manipulating the current in the direction Holy Beast-sama Leo pointed.

Two days later.

We arrived at Dorudia Village.

The distance wasn't that far actually, but we were getting attacked by monsters from the water along the way, so we got a bit lost.

The good thing was that Millis [Holy Sword Road] isn't washed away by the flood, if it was also washed away then maybe we would have been stranded along the way for another ten days.

"Hey, Look!"

"It's Holy Beast-sama!"

"Tell Gyes right now!"

Dorudia Village, the villagers immediately went into an uproar when they saw us.

Warriors gathered with a Walla Walla as if we stirred a beehive.

Everyone is armed.

"It's a man from the Human race..."

"Don't tell me, he's kidnapped...."

"Ah, come to think of it, 10 years ago there was a kidnapping spree incident..."

As the raft got closer and closer, the village warriors became more and more vigilant.

Their atmosphere seemed to indicate that if we continue approaching them, they will immediately restrain us without question.

What should we do now? If they capture us, they'll just toss us into prison in our most majestic outfits, our birthday suits.

While I was feeling uneasy, Rinia stood up.

"Hello everyone. Gyes Dedorudia's daughter, Rinia Dedorudia has returned Nya!"

"Eh?"

When Rinia said her name, the village warriors suddenly became stiff.

And, after looking intently at Rinia's face, they simultaneously began sniffing.

"It's true, she is related–"

"That girl, she's already this big."

"Twelve, or has it been already thirteen years?"

My chest now is filled with a nostalgic atmosphere.

I think it's okay to feel relieved now, but instantly after I was thinking that...

"You! I heard about you from Pursena!"

"Becoming a whatever merchant!"

"–fulfill your duty to the village!"

Such jeering came flying around.

"Aaaaaa, As I thought! Boss turn back the ship! Please turn back Nyah!"

Ignoring what Rinia said, I continue to drive the ship into Dorudia Village.

Dorudia Village is just like before, nothing has changed in any way.

Typical of a secluded area, outsiders will definitely be facing a strong oppression.

Although, this time I took the initiative by bringing Rinia along, for some reason many of them also remembered me.

I came to this village 10 years ago.

The children from that time have already enlisted as the Village warrior corps, they remembered me as soon as they caught my scent.

Among the veteran warriors, there are also people who I remember.

For example, the person who poured cold water on me.

That person, in these 10 years, after giving birth to 5 children, returned to her post as a warrior again.

Somehow she is a hardworking person.

They're welcoming me, Rinia on the other hand is receiving bashing from them.

"Though she is the patriarch's daughter she has abandoned her duty!"

"She is a shame of the family!"

Rinia, who is hiding behind me, is becoming smaller and smaller.

With tears in her eyes, she is whispering in a low voice [This is why I didn't want to come along Nya...]

Of course, you reap what you sow.

While the villagers were bashing Rinia, a sudden growling sound could be heard from below...

The wet Holy Beast-sama shook his body to dry his fur, which suddenly caused everyone's focus to converge on him.

"Rather than Rinia, look it's Holy Beast-sama!"

"That's right, he has returned at last!"

"Where the heck was he for the past year?"

After that, as the one who 'stole' him, I explained the story for them.

Where he was living, how he was summoned...

While my explanation dragged on, gradually some started to look at me like some unknown creature saying [No way, he left with his companion?] while others began to look at me suspiciously.

Ooh, somehow this is kind of nostalgic.

Then someone said [Come to think of it, 10 years ago Holy Beast-sama was really attached to this guy] and after that someone proposed that I stole him, it's looking like I might be thrown into the prison again.

The moment I though that! Two loud voices rang out from the crowd.

"ALL OF YOU BE QUIET NYA!"

"Be quiet!"

The ones who appeared are two female warriors.

I remember those faces.

They're the daughters of the Beast race that I saved before.

It's Minitona, and Terusena.

These two while acting like their leaders and calming down our surroundings, stepped in front of me.

"There isn't any meaning speaking in this place!"

"The chief will listen to the story in his house! Open the way!"

And, Just like that I'm taken to Gyes's house for interrogation.

Gyes had become the Village Chief.

Seriously injured in the battle against a monster during the rainy season a few years ago, the former Village Chief Gustav, retired.

Now, after he entrusted the village to Gyes, Gustav is spending his time leisurely in another settlement.

Maybe because he's become the village chief, for some reason I could see some kind of dignity from Gyes.

Compared to our previous meeting, he's become fairly calm now.

In this case, the chance of being falsely accused is zero.

I was relieved, as I passed him some smoked meat I brought from Sharia I began to explain my situation.

How I was waging a war against a powerful enemy...

How to combat that powerful enemy without any distraction I summoned a being that could act as my family's guardian...

And then, how the one that appeared was the Holy Beast-sama.

After he finished listening to my story, Gyes had a bitter face.

"Too absurd, that's too unbelievable of a story."

I bet it was.

When Leo the Holy Beast appeared from the magic circle I was surprised myself.

"Wafu!"

"But, Holy Beast-sama, even with that reason..."

I don't know what he just said, the Holy Beast-sama was sitting quietly beside me, undoubtedly he spoke to protect me.

"Holy Beast-sama just said that it's because [The meals in your house are so delicious!], is that true!?"

"Eh?"

"I'm just joking. He said that [There is a mission to accomplish, and that is to protect your daughter]."

After he said that, Gyes sighed.

[Just joking.]

That Gyes, now can tell jokes...

Even so, my daughter.

Lucy, no, I guess it was Lara.

Leo is more attached to Lara than to Lucy.

From what I've seen, he almost never left Lara alone in her baby bed.

Orsted also said [It looks like Lara is special].

"Wan!"

"Hou~, fate is it?"

Facing each other, Gyes and Leo talking about something.

However, because of Leo's [WanWan] language, I don't know what they're actually speaking about.

"Rinia, please could you translate what they're actually talking about?"

"N? Okay nya?"

Listening to their conversation, Rinia who was seated on my right began translating.

"Indeed, 100 years after Holy Beast-sama's birth, assisting the person who will save the world... that's still handed down in our tradition..."

"Wan! (And nyhat is your, the Dorudia tribe's, mission!)"

"Indeed that is the Dorudia tribe's mission, until the savior appears, it's our duty to look after Holy Beast-sama."

"Wafun! (Now I found it Nya, this person's daughter is the savior.)"

"Indeed, I guess that is the reason. But, this is unprecedented. To think that the savior's father is the one who summoned the Holy Beast-sama, and had him protect the baby..."

So it appears that inside Rinia's mind, the Holy Beast is using [wagahai] to refer to himself.

Somehow that's made me remember about a certain muscular Demon King.

Even so, to think that my daughter is the savior...

Lara who has that brazen face is the savior.

Come to think of it, Orsted also said something about that...

I see...

Now I don't feel that young anymore.

It looks like I'll have to start teaching Lara from a young age.

She will be the only child that will be learning about my secret arts directly from me.

"Wanwan, wanwanwan! (Well then according to the tradition, before she would reach adulthood, if the Savior would die, what would happen!?)"

"...According to the legend, if the savior dies, the sacred tree will wither, and Holy Beast-sama will die in that weakened state."

"Grrrrrrrrrr!(And our savior is being targeted! You, did you want to kill me!?"

"...No, I never meant it that way"

"Wafu! (In that case, I think there isn't any problems anymore regarding this!)"

Somehow Gyes is showing a bitter face.

Then, as if he was repeating some mourning prayer saying [norinori], he glared at Rinia who was translating.

Instantly, Rinia curled up and hid herself behind me.

Don't be like that, I asked you to translate for me, don't give me some funny translation.

I'm prepared to face the punishment for my crime, I'm the only one who should receive it.

And then, Gyes spoke.

"Rinia, is what Holy Beast-sama saying true?"

"Nye, Nyes. It's true that Holy Beast-sama towards Bo... towards Rudeus' second daughter, is very concerned about her and always protecting her."

For Rinia to use [Keigo], how rare.

This delinquent daughter left in Sharia must be very scared of her father.

"A daughter of the Human race... It's only been 20 years since Holy Beast-sama was born. I thought there were 80 more years to go, but..."

"The daughter is half human and half Magic race, therefore I think that she will live for quite a long time nya."

"So that's it, I see, if she has a Magic race lineage the possibility for that is quite high..."

After hearing that fact, Gyes clapped his hands together.

It looks like he's become quite a thoughtful person in these past 10 years.

The Gyes from 10 years ago gave me the impression of a reckless youngster who never used his head.

But he seems to have matured and calmed down now.

I wonder if this is a characteristic of the Beast race, that after becoming 30 their manners becomes calmer.

Then the two youngsters behind Gyes suddenly started shouting.

"For a Magic race to be the Savior is impossible Nya!"

"He said that Holy Beast-sama was summoned using magic, then he must be being deceived by some strange magic!"

Terusena and Minitona, somehow they ended up like the old Gyes.

It's really funny, when I remember how they were in the old days, giving me their gratitude for saving them... Is this also a characteristic of the Beast race?

Those two girls aside...

Certainly, it's a fact that I summoned Leo by using the magic circle formation that was created by Orsted.

In that magic circle, it looked like there was some kind of element that made the summoned creature completely obedient...

Because of that magic, Leo could have been put under the impression that my daughter is the savior...

"Though it's low, there is also that possibility. Supposing that is the case, Rudeus-dono would not have come to our village. In any case, the fact that Rudeus-dono came here before us, and how he came to our residence in the Great Forest from the other side of the world to explain this matter... I suppose we should overlook this case."

"Is, is that so."

Honestly.

...I'm sorry, to think that they would understand my situation and overlook this case.

Please forgive me.

"About this Holy Beast-sama matter, as for now I think it's okay"

"Really?"

"If Holy Beast-sama is the one to decree it, we will obey."

"Wafu!"

Putting his head on my lap Leo was facing me with an expression that said [That's only natural.]

I pat him in reflex, and from his face he seems to like it.

Terusena and Minitona making a [What's with that?!] kind of face, they don't understand.

Even so, if Holy Beast-sama said [Okay], then it's okay.

Or something like that was said by him, according to Rinia's translation.

She resembles Ghyslaine quite a bit.

"However, Rudeus-dono. That's for the time being... Isn't it? Then, about 15 years later, when your second daughter reaches adulthood, please bring her here. Following our tradition, she must complete the ritual in the sacred tree. I understand that the trip will take a year, but please let us do our duty."

"I understand."

So it's a ritual.

I don't know what kind of ceremony it is, but I guess it is something for formality.

Let's not forget about this promise.

15 years from now, let's return to the Dorudia village with Lara for her coming-of-age ceremony.

...In order for me to not forget this future appointment, let's write this in the diary.

Leo's matter is already taken care of, at least for now.

Somehow it's been resolved easily.

I sighed and felt relieved, Gyes also relaxed his tense posture.

The tensed atmosphere in the room is now relaxed.

Then, suddenly Gyes turned his face towards Rinia.

[shiver] Rinia's body suddenly trembled.

"And, Rinia... the Dora cat, why are you living in Rudeus's house?"

"Ah, that's right, this fellow, this fellow was trying to start her own business but she borrowed huph~~-"

"Listen to my wonderful story Nyah!"

Interrupting what I was saying, Rinia suddenly started telling her own story.

"After parting with Pursena, I was thinking of starting a new business Nya, then on a certain day I received a divine revelation from the sky, after I had followed that revelation, I arrived at Magic City Sharia, and what I found is that Holy Beast-sama was hidden in there, and then I knew This is it Nyah, because of this I got a revelation to visit this city again, for the sake of looking for Holy Beast-sama, the heavens gave me such a revelation! Achishi, in short there was no way I was gonna forget about the Dorudia tribe's duty, rather it's the opposite, it's my duty to return to the village to report this, to fulfill my duty as a warrior from the village!"

Amazing.

How dare she shamelessly blurt out such bold lies.

Perhaps she'd been planning this since she heard about the trip...

Gyes's face is full of doubt, but it looks like Minitona and Terusena are convinced.

Just sometime ago they were looking at her with scornful eyes, now they're looking at her with eyes full of respect.

These girls are so simple.

But there is a man here who is maintaining his scornful look, a man who has already grown into a respectable adult... He could read this girl like a book.

And from his own experience he determined that lying isn't good, she should grow up into a respectable adult like him.

..... But, well lying, is NG.

"Gyes-san, this fellow here, she was trying to start a new business, but, she was swindled and got saddled with a huge debt, not to mention that she'd been finally sold as a slave and came to my place to get help. Well, you could say that she is tangled in another kind of debt now."

"I see"

"Nyaa! Boss, don't say the true reason!"

Minitona and Terusena's facial expressions, instantly turn into contempt.

"And now she is working hard in my house, in order to pay her debt."

"That... I wonder if she is Rudeus-dono's slave?"

U~m.

Come to think of it, Rinia is Gyes's daughter.

If a man knows that his daughter has become a slave, what would he think?

If it were me, and Lucy became a slave, I don't think I would let her master get out alive, the chance of that isn't zero.

But no, lying is bad.

"That is, That's the truth... but, I never treat her like a slave. She is a friend that needs rehabilitation..."

"No, it doesn't matter. To throw away her money-making mission and finally doing her duty, I feel indebted toward you Rudeus-dono, you're my family's hero, I'm sorry for my family always causing you trouble, I hope I could do something to pay this debt from my family. Please do anything you want to me whether it be to boil or grill me."

Oooooh.

Gyes, during the time I was not seeing him, it looks like he understood how to speak like a true man.

No, that face, rather that face is a face of someone who lamented about their bad daughter.

"Dad, wait a minute isn't that a little cruel? Achishi, however it was only a little trouble. Soon I will be transformed into a noble to comfort your worry no matter what..."

"If I remember correctly, Rudeus-dono has been a man full of vitality since he was very young. Mating season will begin very soon, at that time please use Rinia to your liking."

"Nyah! Dad, what do you think your daughter's chastity is?!"

Rinia raised her fist, but Gyes looking at that with a sharp glare then flashed his eyes.

He let out a howl along with a thundering voice.

"Shut up. If you're a Dorudia race, return the favor with your body."

"U, uuu.....wa, I understand nya.....achishi, I'm a bad kid Nya....."

Rinia surprised and in no time, she's instantly curling her body behind me to hide.

It's fine if you want to hide behind me, but don't press your breasts so strongly against me.

Because I'm not going to accompany you in the mating season.

"Anyway, now that Holy Beast-sama has become like this, someone must act as his caretaker, don't you agree? We already don't have anything to pay Rinia's debt. So please take her back with you."

"Understood."

Caretaker, huh.

I don't think it's really necessary for Leo, but it's the Dorudia tribe's duty.

If they want to give their aid, then there is no reason to refuse it.

Even I, just now, felt troubled at the idea of leaving Rinia in the village.

Especially after all her effort getting the mercenary company on track.

"However, with just Rinia alone, it will cause anxiety on our side."

"I guess."

"Boss, so you are really agreeing Nyhat and really wished for that nya..."

Rinia said with a look full of compassion, somehow I understand now what Gyes feels.

Though Rinia is not a particularly useless child, she has shown an inclination towards that side lately.

"So take another one... well, please choose Minitona or Terusena to take back as an official caretaker for Holy Beast-sama."

Saying that to me, Minitona and Terusena stood in front of me.

Both of them are dressed like Beast race warriors.

Wearing hide armor, and wielding huge meat cleavers...

Well trained bodies, big chests...

Their chests were big even when they were kids, but now they've developed further.

The Beast race is a race with huge boobs.

"I'm the one who will go Nyah!"

"No, it will be me!"

"That person will be me, my sword skill is good, my head is also good nyah."

"That's a lie, when we're commuting to Wen Port school, my result is better."

It look like they really want to become a caretaker of Holy Beast-sama.

Although I think that after 15 years as a caretaker instead of becoming their family's head, that look in their eyes will most likely disappear.

Or, I guess that becoming the caretaker of Holy Beast-sama is more of an honored position than becoming the family head.

"Terusena only has better scores in magic, with exception of that I'm superior in all other aspects Nya."

"There is no such thing, Tona is a liar."

"The one who is a liar is Terusena Nya."

So that's it, these two's rivalry is just like Rinia and Pursena's years ago, so selfish.

Ah...

Come to think of it.

"Where is Pursena, has she not come back yet?"

The moment he heard that, Gyes's face looked distressed.

Afterwards, we were guided to a building located at the edge of the village.

For me, it's a memorable old building.

I really missed this one building

I mean, I also lived here for a period of time.

It's good and a very comfortable one.

Halfway through I had to share my room with a middle-aged monkey faced newbie, but nevertheless it's a good and comfortable room.

Especially it's goo————od ol' perfect security.

In short, it is a prison.

It looks like Rinia has had some bad experiences with this building, as she didn't want to come in.

"....."

There Pursena, emitting a considerably slutty atmosphere, was lying down on the bed.

It's not like she's naked like I was, but a considerably high portion of her skin is exposed.

Her sex appeal hadn't disappeared yet, thin shirt and hot pants.

Dressing like that, facing away from the iron bars, she thrust her hand inside her pants, and scratches the base of her tail while munching on something.

Girl power is reduced.

"Hey, Pursena, Wake up!"

"n~~, I can't eat anymore....."

When her name is called by Gyes, she is [betabeta] muttering some sleep talking answer, while [patapata] shaking her tail.

"It's time for your meal."

"..... Na!"

And, while her body is twitching and trembling, she raised her body.

"Fa– ....."

When she is waking up, her breasts bulge up from her thin shirt.

As big as ever.

Boing boing.

It is a poison of the eye.

The kind of poison which detoxification magic can't cure.

"Ara~? I don't smell a meal?"

While her nose made a sniffing sound, she is looking at her surroundings with sleepy eyes.

And, she is looking in this direction.

"Pursena, a visitor for you."

Pursena, inside the cell, has a blank look on her face.

However, when she saw my appearance, she immediately leaps at the iron bars.

"Boss! It's not what it seems! I'm innocent! Please help me!"

I was taken aback when I saw Pursena screaming as she grabbed the iron bars.

Looking at her, Gyes let out a deep sigh.

Previous story : Dog in the prison

This incident happened ten days ago.

It took place in Dorudia Village during the rainy season.

The cause is the Reinforced Lizard dried meat stored in the village warehouse, someone murdered it... that was what I wanted to say.

It was eaten by someone.

Because of the seriousness of this case, the Dorudia warrior tribe immediately began their investigation.

And the investigation result is, one suspect found, a female warrior.

Pursena Adorudia.

She returned to Dorudia Village just a half year ago, she is the daughter of Adorudia tribe's chief.

Being the top scorer among her graduates in the Magic University Ranoa, she brought back excellent results to her village.

"I fulfilled my mission and came back as a candidate for village chief, Rinia is the lost cat-nano."

And she talked about what happened in her years in Sharia. Immediately after that, she joined the warrior group of the Dorudia tribe.

This places families head said, [She is in the first list of candidates both in Dedorudia and Adorudia]. Her name has soared high in the Dorudia Village.

But, it's not something that she could easily get used to.

To become village chief, she must serve as warrior chief until the previous village chief retires, in addition she must show ability befitting of someone who can lead others and gain trust from her warrior subordinates.

Pursena has enough ability and experience leading others so she is actually already a fine warrior chief.

Usually before entering the warrior group one needs to go a journey to see the world, Pursena was already away from her village for more than ten years, but she still lacks experience with the warrior group.

With that said, the current village chief Gyes provided her with a training period.

She will work and study inside the village, as a warrior chief she must remember her group members's faces and odor, then someday become village chief... that is how the original plan was.

It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that it's an elite course.

Pursena, by using her advanced healing magic to the fullest, she gained the warriors trust in an instant.

It seems Gyes also determined that she passed his test,

After this rainy season it would have been time to pick a son-in-law, assuming the warrior chief declared that she wanted it.

Then that incident happened.

The day that incident happened.

Around midnight of that day.

Pursena was on duty to guard the warehouse.

In the warehouse, there was a large amount of preserved food stored for the rainy season.

Every night it's guarded by a team consisting of two people.

And the one who was paired with her that night was Kanalna, a warrior from the Adorudia tribe.

That day, Kanalna's body condition was a little bad.

She was wounded the previous day when she was repelling the demons that attacked the village, and that injury had an after effect to her body even after it was already healed.

She said herself that this wasn't that important, but the testimony said, [When it was time for the shift change, her face was already blue colored.]

Like that, Pursena was opposing her to attend to her duty and gave her an order as warrior chief, [Go back to your home and take a rest, I will take responsibility in your place.]

Following her order, Kanalna decided that it was better for her to go back to her room and sleep.

She intended to only sleep for a bit, but maybe because of her body's instinct to heal her injury, Kanalna slept soundly.

Then, early morning of the next day.

When it was time for the guards to switch, one person arrived at the warehouse.

But when he came, no one was keeping watch in front of the warehouse.

Not feeling confident, he tried to peek inside the warehouse———-.

The food in that place was eaten by someone, with some trace of meat around her mouth, Pursena was sleeping in the warehouse with a full stomach.

Caught redhanded, Pursena was immediately arrested.

In Dorudia Village, stealing food during the rainy season is a felony.

The warriors's evaluation of her took a 180 turn, she was forced to resign from her position as warrior chief.

Naturally, she also won't become village chief.

This is why she was thrown into the jail.

However, the main suspect Pursena said.

"That day, I was unconscious because someone hit me from behind, and when I came to I was already inside the warehouse!"

"Someone wants to frame me! That fucking rascal-nano! Boss, please-nano! Please catch the true culprit!"

"Surely, there is someone that didn't want me to become the village chief! Minitona and Terusena are the most suspicious ones!"

"That alone is already strange. If I was the culprit, I wouldn't do something like this to my target! It was very obvious that after sending Kanalna back to her room, you immediately ate small portions of the meats!"

Pursena kept claiming that she was innocent.

I also had some experience in it myself, my first impression of people from the Beast Race, is that they're easy to give a false charge.

It is one of their forte.

If she really isn't the one who did that, then I will help her.

With that in mind, I try to do a little investigation.

Dorudia Village, the village where the Adorudia tribe and Dedorudia tribe live in harmony.

To raise Holy Beast-sama, many village warriors attend to him to protect him, so that they won't be short in power, many children are reared and the married people usually have many children.

Now they're a very large family numbering about 500 heads, and they live above the trees.

With a stream of muddy water outside during rainy season, their houses look like islands.

The chance that the culprit is an outsider is almost none.

If it was, then it's someone who can move like me and many more difficult ideas come to my brain.

The main suspect Pursena said, that inside the village the line of men who want to mate with her is long.

Then I immediately get my assistant Yasu and my helping inspector Gyes,

I began to collect evidence from the testimonies of people that were involved in this incident.

"This mean, Yasu it's time to go!"

"Who is Yasu nya?"

"It's you Rinia. Now I will call you Yasu, a certain assistant from a certain country."

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to The Portopia Serial Murder Case computer game. }

"Oh, so that's it..."

Inspector Gyes also didn't say anything.

Thinking that this is useless, but now is the time to move.

"First testimony, the one who found her in the morning, warrior Gimel"

"Are you the first person who found her?"

"Yes."

When I saw this youth, I got some sense of deja vu.

Somehow, I got the feeling that I saw him somewhere before.

So I asked.

Gimel → Ask → Event from the Past

"You, have we met somewhere before?"

"Yes, ten years ago when I fell into the water you're the one who helped me."

Ah, I see.

Ten years ago, come to think of it.

During the rainy season, I together with Ruijerd helped a kid.

At that time, the boy waved his tail.

So nostalgic.

Well, let's put that aside in the meantime.

Now back to our incident.

"At the site of the crime ten days ago, what did Pursena look like when she was found?"

"Let's see, the box of dried meat was opened, Pursena was sleeping while she was leaning on them facing the door and she said, [I can't eat anymore] happily with her bulging stomach."

The scene at that time, somehow I could perfectly imagine it just like he said.

"...In other words, there were practically no eyewitnesses that saw whether Pursena had really eaten the dried meat or not, right?"

"Yes. But there was some meat left in between Pursena's teeth. And from the half eaten meat that was scattered around that place, Pursena's saliva smell could detected."

Dorudia's unique way for carrying out their investigation.

This incident, just by the smell alone it could be easily resolved.

They really have absolute confidence in their own noses.

With that as their weapon it's become, [The saliva smell has been detected], and that's already become more than enough evidence.

But that kind of investigation process is full of holes.

"Though Pursena's belly looked like she was full... but there is a chance that inside her belly there was only air that was trapped and blocked. Isn't there?"

"No, from her burp I could smell the dried lizard meat from it. I have no doubt about it, she was the one who ate it herself."

There was no hole.

From the smell that came from inside of her stomach, it's almost certain that Pursena is the one who ate the meat.

We can bisect her with a large pair of scissors and look directly inside of her stomach, but I don't want to use this kind of method as much as possible.

"Is there really nothing else inside? For example... something like footprints of someone else other than Pursena?"

"Whether it's footprints, smell, or hairs, nothing else was there."

I see.

At least, the true culprit is doing his job perfectly.

・"Testimony of Pursena's partner that night, Kanalna"

"Kanalna-san, on your day of duty, how was Pursena's appearance?"

"Yes, she was repeatedly saying, [I didn't eat anything since morning, so hungry-nano]."

It looks like Pursena was very hungry that day.

But, this fact is very odd.

The Pursena that I know, she was always eating meat whether it was meal time or not.

Dried meat, smoked meat, and occasionally raw meat.

To think that kind of girl, DIDN'T EAT ANYTHING....

What is the true culprit's aim?

"I wonder, why didn't she eat anything?"

"When the warriors were fighting against the demon invasion the day before, quite a number of warriors were injured."

The report says that too, that the day before the incident a large number of demons appeared.

There were no civilians wounded by that large-scale attack, but I heard many of the warrior group were injured.

"Ho~~"

"Because Pursena is the only advanced healing magician in this village, she was running around to several places, going back and forth to treat the injured warriors. And in the end her magical power was running out..."

Pursena's magical power was running out.

I have also experienced it, running out of magical power then losing consciousness, and not being able to even wake up for half a day.

In Pursena's case, she didn't faint... she must keep her consciousness for her duty time.

Just like that she, without drinking or eating, carried on doing her duty as she was.

"Did she eat something, she has a choice to do that right?"

"That's the rule."

Basically in Dorudia Village during rainy season, eating snacks outside of meal time is prohibited.

The stored food absolutely must be enough for three months, so there is a very strict management on it.

"Pursena can take a rest when she is on duty, there is an option like that right?"

"Because the number of demons that attacked the previous day was the most we had, quite a few warriors were already on bed rest. We didn't have enough hands. I also advised her to take a break from duty and rest, but she said [I only feel a little hungry]."

I see.

To become village chief, she was filled with a sense of duty, that's admirable.

If it was the me from the old days; I would have made this and that reason to take a rest.

"And, that led to this incident."

"Yes, even now, at least it would have been fine if she was eating something while on duty."

After hearing that, taking that situation into consideration, I feel that I got some leads to this case.

No, Pursena insisting that she wasn't the one who ate the dried meat.

・"Yasu's Opinion"

"Rinia... I mean Yasu, after hearing those stories just now, what do you think?"

For the time being, I will listen to my assistant's opinion.

She is Pursena's friend.

"That girl, I think she is the culprit nya."

"Hmm"

"Since a long time ago whenever she felt hungry Pursena has a habit of snatching food from her surroundings. When we were still enrolled in school, she often snatched my fish and dried meat nya."

Yeah... there is a criminal record.

Thus, after listening to the full story.

I found that someone's testimony was really strange.

Luckily there is only one person who is lying and I know who it is.

And that would be...

→ Pursena.

Yes, it's Pursena.

That girl, she just didn't confess her actions until the very end. Still saying that someone hit her from behind.

Let's return to Pursena's room once again, and hear her story.

Moving → Village outskirt → Pursena Prison → Listen to her story → The incident

"Pursena, if you truly didn't do it, look in my eyes and say it."

"It's true-nano, Boss, please believe me...."

Pursena put her hands together, and her eyes are sparkling.

However, her tail is moving in a dubious way.

Let's trick her a little.

"Before I leave, it's possible for me to become your advocate in this village."

"Waa, as expected of Boss!"

"But, if it's found out after I leave this village that you have lied to me, then I won't let you eat meat for a year as punishment."

"O, O, O, Of course that's true-nano."

"But, swear to GOD?"

"S, Swear to....!"

Pursena's eyes are swimming from left to right.

This guy is suspicious.

This is, it's the eyes of a liar.

"Listen, I absolutely won't forgive anyone who insults my God. Do you really swear by the name of my God?"

I move my hands across the iron bar and grip Pursena's head firmly, let's listen to her answer while looking at her eyes.

Pursena should already know, the thing about me being a devout man.

Her face's color suddenly becomes ghastly pale, her body is trembling.

While trying to hide her crotch with her tail, she is trying to grasp forward with both her hands.

"Now what are your words?"

"I, I was the culprit..."

Case closed.

The incident was resolved.

The culprit is of course, Pursena Adorudia.

She didn't admit her crime, not until an outsider made her confess her crime, and her punishment will be left to that person.

This rascal.

But, she is tempted by the evil meat, maybe she is also one of the victims.

"Gyes-san, sorry for troubling you."

"It's nothing... but, is it really okay with Pursena?"

Gyes having seen this series of events and listening to my conclusion is amazed.

"So what do you want to talk about?"

"The talk about the one person that will go as the caretaker of Holy Beast-sama from our village."

The look on his face seemed to say, please, by all means.

"Ah, no, that would be more than is necessary."

Of course, I do not need one.

More than this, the number of big breasted women around me will be increased, that will only raise the suspicion of me cheating.

Generally, I want someone such as Roxy and Sylphy, but I don't need the stupid ones.

After all, the simple Pursena is an angel factor to increase the number of excuses.

Eris will be happy.

"Is that so, however, who you will bring between Minitona and Terusena?"

"No, aren't those two already village chief candidates? Better to take a somewhat different person."

While talking with Gyes, we're walking out of the jail.

"A-, wait nano! Boss, don't leave me behind-nano! My time to rise-nano—! I wanted it—-! I don't want to live without meat-nano!"

We ignored the wailing voice that came from behind us.

"Nyahahaha!"

And, Rinia that was waiting for us outside, the first time she goes inside she is laughing very hard.

Previously, she was also imprisoned in a nude state before.

Apparently she also experienced this a long time ago, trapped in the nude here.

Remembering those humiliating times, she refused to come in with an unpleasant face.

"Yoo Pursena, you look so terrible nyaaa!"

"Ri, Rinia!? I smelled your odor sometime ago! Why are you here!?"

Before I was aware of it, Rinia put her sunglasses on.

The one that she usually uses at work.

To hide her dollar shaped eyes.

"Why? Fufu... I nyonder why?"

While saying so, Rinia pushed my hand, and pressed it against her chest.

Nonono I can't.

Aaa, noo, the smell of sexual excitement....

"No, no way, Rinia... and Bo, Boss....?"

Pursena leaned her nose toward our position and sniffed, suddenly her face shivered.

One end of Rinia's lips is grinning.

That's a devilish smile.

"Well nyaa..... ah, when I recall that passionate night nyah. I was sleeping in the bedroom, Boss carrying me like a new bride... Aaah, I can't say more than this nyaaa! However, that day, I was crying a lot in front of Boss nyah."

Carried indeed, then thrown outside of the room. She was tossed away.

After that, she was weeping inside of Eris's room.

She didn't lie at all until the last moment.

"No, no way, Boss... we're inferior to Roxy and Sylphy, that's why you never turn your eyes to us!"

"Nya-ha!, Isn't that because Pursena isn't charming enough? At that time I'm alone nyaa. Weeell, the Asura noble from the Greyrat house lineage is really intense nyaaa. Just the first night, my ribs nyended up broken nya."

"Ri, Ribs.....! Wha, What a violent copulation-nano!"

Ah, so it was her first night with Eris.

While she was sleeping, she was strangled[hugging pillow] to death by Eris.

I, Leo, and Rinia were all done in by Eris's power.

The next morning, it looks like with a half crying face, Rinia begged Sylphy to apply healing magic on her.

U~n, regarding that she isn't crying yet.

"Ri, Rinia, be, became Boss's wife?"

"No, nyot his bride...but, something similar to his slave nya."

"Slave!?"

Covering her mouth with both of her hands, Pursena's face is turned red.

U~n, slave...it's not that wrong either.

"Well, my position is considerably good nyaa. Though a slave, I'm entrusted with some works, now I have 50 subordinates under me nya. Similar to Pursena, but I'm not thrown into prison, and received Boss's affection. Ah, but I wonder if Dorudia Village's chief position is as good as that nya? So Pursena, don't regret nyis experience... Nyahahahahaha!"

Loud laughter is echoing inside the prison.

"Rinia————!"

[Gashagasha] sound could be heard, Pursena with a bright red face shaking the iron bars.

But, after a little while her hands gradually lost power.

Being powerless Pursena could only kneel on the floor.

"Gusu... this is too much-nano, that day was really busy, I didn't eat anything from morning... I want to eat too, at most, I only ate the same amount of one meal, in that case it could be replaced with the demon that I defeated, It should be more than enough to compensate-nano...."

Inside the cell, she continued her weeping and lamenting.

And, Rinia immediately left from my side.

"Haa~, I'm satisfied now nyaaa...."

She said that with quite a satisfied face.

Such an awful fellow....

But, I think Pursena's actions are also justified.

According to the story that I heard, the demon attack happened from early morning until over midnight.

And caused huge damage, and that happened right on her watch duty day.

For the healing magician Pursena, that took a big toll on her.

After repelling the demons, Pursena desperately used her healing magic repeatedly.

Thanks to that, there should be many warriors whose lives were saved by her.

However, in the end Pursena's magical power depleted and she experienced exhaustion.

After she woke up, she should have eaten her meal, but soon it was her night duty time.

Although, there is the theft accident.

While it's true that she didn't eat anything from morning until her night duty, that's not a reason for her to be sneaking bites.

The me from the previous world, when the crime of police officers from Elite corps come to light.

That said there is still room for leniency, but a crime is a crime.

She broke a village rule.

Even if she is warrior chief and soon to be village chief, it's still unavoidable.

"E~r, Boss, father!"

Then Rinia turned her body facing me and Gyes with a serious expression.

"I have a request nya."

She bowed.

It's a 45-degree bow.

"....Pursena, I want her to become Holy Beast-sama's caretaker nya."

Then Rinia lifted her face up, and sent a strong glance to me and Gyes.

I look into her eyes, those are the eyes of someone that was straightened out once.

"I, in a far away land in the distant country, used to keep trying hard to become village chief nya.

Putting great effort more than anyone alone nya.

Trying nyo hard, but in the end failed nya.

I, in the end, lost to Pursena's technique and was forced to surrender my right.

But, I agree that Pursena is the most fit one to become village chief nya.

But, with only one mistake that led to her ruin, that's too much nya."

Then, Rinia paused a bit to take a breath, she looked at Gyes's eyes.

"I want to give her a chance nya.

Five years from now, no.... 10 years from now.

If Pursena does a good job as Holy Beast-sama's caretaker.

Completed her duty properly, then bring Boss's daughter back to undergo her ceremony,

I wish her crime this time is forgiven nya.

I nyow I can't say this to village chief, I only wanted to give her a punishment suitable for her position nya."

After experiencing school life, she isn't talking through muscle again.

Rinia herself, abandoned her duty, and became a merchant.

For that reason she originally didn't have a right to make a request.

To begin with, this crime, is the result of Pursena's lack of self-control.

If it's according to the story that I heard, certainly there is room for negotiation of her crime.

Something like, Hurray you did it, Hurray you did it.

Or, congratulations for preserving this far, the result is exceedingly good.

But that event didn't happen.

"That's enough."

Gyes also said so.

Even if the past bygone, but what already happened can't be ignored.

That's only natural.

But,

But,

As for my own feelings...

Because of her great effort, I want her to be rewarded for that.

Pursena, kept persisting.

Every day, while chewing meat, she took her lessons seriously.

Since I took the same healing magic class with her, I know that she tried her best.

There is no doubt about it, she put more effort in than others.

Therefore, even though the Beast race don't have very good heads, she was able to take the first seat in school rank.

With that kind of great effort, she must be rewarded.

That is my wish.

The same case with me if I work hard, I also want to be rewarded.

I not only think that.

"Gyes-san, can I also make a request?"

"Huh? Boss?"

But, if it was me, I want someone to give a reward in this current situation.

As much as possible, I want to be rewarded.

"...."

Gyes has had a bitter face for a while now.

But, he immediately raised his face.

"I see. That's a good idea."

If he was Gyes 10 years ago, he definitely wouldn't have backed down with Pursena's judgment.

It's not like I think that his judgment is right.

That's only my ego.

"Rinia, Pursena. Fulfill your duty perfectly. Understand?"

"Yes Nya!"

"Y, yes-nano!"

Those two girls instantly bowed their heads.

Watching that, I suddenly realized something.

As I thought, these two act better when they're together.

We're returning via Holy Sword Highway by raft. After we arrived at the stone monument mark I blew the whistle to summon Arumanfi, then by using the sky fortress, we returned to Sharia.

"I really missed this place-nano... once I'm the summit of this city, I didn't think that I would back to this city again...."

Upon arriving at the Magic city Sharia, Pursena muttered to herself with a deep strong emotional voice.

So, she returned to this place.

It can be said that to her, the magic city Sharia is her second home.

"Ah, Pursena I forgot to say something nya."

"What-nano? Just a while ago I'm feeling a strong emotion-nano, so make it brief."

"I need a little help therefore, will you become my servant for a while?"

"Eh?"

As Rinia's servant.

Chirping sound of the birds, just like the cry of a sparrow, hearing that I open my eyes.

"N.... is it already morning?"

I stretched my body as strong as I could which caused a crisp sound around my back, then after yawning I get up.

"Afa..."

Looking next to me, it is a girl with her blue colored hair sparkling under the light of the morning sun.

It's Roxy.

Or should I say God.

And a bit further next to her, lied a blue haired baby.

Child of a Goddess and a man, Perseus.

Rather, it's my daughter Lara.

Next to her.

Under the bed, rounded like a silver ball.

Is Leo the Holy Beast.

He is now officially known, transferred here by the beast race because of a certain matter, since I had a hunch that I had to show my faceto them soon.

It could be that Rinia and Pursena grovelling in such a way was only a small experience for them, perhaps.

Nevertheless, to think that Lara is extremely lucky...

Lara is the savior.

It was so shocking, though I already predicted it to some extent.

But, there is something special in this child.

There is some part in me that is feeling ecstasy, but let's not show that too much.

Since acting like that is the same as attaching superior or inferior label to the children.

"N~... Ah, good morning, Rudi....."

Roxy woke up.

While rubbing her sleepy eyes, she raised her body.

Her chest that got bigger because of her pregnancy is showing itself under the sunshine.

Regrettably, if it's looked at with evil eyes, the eyes will get smashed.

But oh, my eyes are attracted to the evil at that place.

Oh, God. Please help this poor soul.

"Ara? Why is Lara...? Rudi are you the one who brought her?"

Roxy, with half asleep eyes looking at me and her daughter beside her.

Tilting her head, she is gently brushing Lara's silky hair.

"Don't remember, that yesterday, you brought her yourself?"

"...Ara!"

Yesterday, after our blazing night, we fell asleep until suddenly Lara who usually doesn't cry at night, began crying.

Roxy left the bedroom with a half asleep face, with an unstable way of walking, brought Lara to the bedroom, changed her diaper, and fed her with milk, after she lulled Lara to sleep, she began to sleep.

As for Leo, he followed Lara to the bedroom of course...

Well, it's fine even if she didn't remember it.

"...Fa~~"

Remained with her still sleepy face, Roxy yawned once.

"I will do my usual morning training."

"Is that so. Then I will sleep a little longer with Lara since today is a holiday."

While saying that, Puff, Roxy fell to the bed again.

"Yes, good night."

"Good night."

Instantly, I could hear Roxy's sleeping sound, then I left the bedroom.

After changing my clothes, I go out into the hallway.

Suddenly I got a sudden thought, I opened Sylphy's bedroom door.

Sylphy is still sleeping.

Together with Lucy, it looks like they're enjoying sleeping together.

For the time being, Lucy was given her own room, though sometimes Sylphy also accompanies her.

Once in a while, I think it's good for parents and their child to sleep together in the same bedroom, forming the kanji for river.

{ C-Editor's note: Kanji are the Chinese characters used in the Japanese writing system. The kanji for river looks like three parallel lines. }

But, nothing can be done to my strong sexual desire, since we're sleeping together we must do something about that...

We must act with discretion in front of the children, we can't be too open when showing our passionate nights.

Anyway, I'm satisfied being blessed with this wonderful scene, then I close the door again.

Next, I peeked in Eris's room.

Looking at Eris in the early morning.

I wonder what is going to happen?

"Ugh.... Ugh...."

When I think that, I saw a poor soul on the bed.

Pressing her face with both hands, she is trembling a little.

Though she has huge breasts, her hair isn't red.

She has dog ears and a tail.

Her eyes usually always look sleepy, but somehow it's a little watery today.

"Oh, Boss... Good morning-nano....."

It's Pursena.

After that event at Dorudia Village, she followed us coming back to the magic city Sharia.

When Pursena came, there was only one person who was very delighted.

It was Eris.

She was looking at Pursena with her tongue out and said, [This child is quite cute].

Looking at her, Rinia trembled with fear, while Pursena was the opposite.

"As expected of me-nano, even boss's wife is pleased meeting with me for the first time."

She pushed out her huge chest and looked at Rinia's face.

The moment Rinia saw Pursena's attitude, [Flash], her eyes flashed and she started flattering her.

"Iya~~, that's amazing nyaa, to think that you could please and be patted by the [Berserk sword king] over there, as expected of Pursena nya. I always want her to do that to me nya."

"Ufu~, Rinia is being unreasonable-nano."

Pursena got carried away.

She approached Eris while her tail was waving, her ears brushed gently, and her tail got praised. That's a little excessive to be called skinship, but I guess because she is from the Dog race therefore, she muttered while giving a sidelong glance to her frilly tail, [I'm a sinful woman-nano. Even Boss's wife is completely captivated by my charm.]

Looking at her, I could only give her a bitter smile.

Usually I would get annoyed, but I can't help but to put a bitter smile toward the scene that happened before me.

Looking at Pursena's attitude, Eris eagerly stepped on further.

"Since I guess sleeping alone will be lonely, we will sleep together once in a while!"

And, here came the proposal.

As for Pursena's consent toward this proposal, [This was only a matter of time before the junior surpasses the senior-nano] she agreed.

Realizing that, Rinia gave a [Nyishishishi] laugh at Pursena who would be spending her nights with Eris periodically.

And, after getting one or two broken bones from Eris's Maximum Powered Hug, that really is a sad sight.

"U~h..... My breasts hurt....."

To Pursena who looked like she was in great pain, I applied healing magic on her.

Her breasts are still as big as usual, but there was no problem, after I spent a night with Roxy today I'm a sage.

"......I'm saved."

While receiving thanks from Pursena, I went off to the first floor.

I went into the entranceway without changing my clothes, then grabbed the wooden sword that was strapped beside the front door.

Then it appeared, before the front door, Eris is standing like a Niou statue.

Folding her arms, and opening her legs at shoulder width.

Her big stomach has become more stretched out.

As if she were a gate guardian, she stood before the front gate.

"Eris, good morning."

"Rudeus, good morning."

Today Eris is also in high spirits.

I realized that after looking at her face.

I guess, it was because she was comfortable with hugging Pursena all night long.

Rinia and Pursena.

Currently, those two are renting a residence which is close to the Rudo Mercenary office.

Similiar to Cliff's large apartment, also, since those two are best friends, they agreed to share their room together.

Once it was dusk, those two will come alternatively to see Leo, and accompany him to take a stroll.

But they only do their official duty since, being stationed permanently at my house, it won't be amusing if that caused discord with my family members, so it's good.

As for Eris, those two are alternately invited to her room, as her hugging pillow.

Rinia is somehow always trying to escape from that, but she can't escape from Eris.

At least, one of them is free of debt.

When I see the faces of one of those two, as they disappear into Eris's room, I somehow feel a little jealous.

I also want to get invited into her room once in a while.

I'm also a member of Eris's harem, so it's very reasonable, that I want her compassion [love].

Well, I guess I could embrace her again, after she has given birth.

Ara~?

Isn't something reversed?

It's strange, normally I'm the center of this house or so I thought...

Well that's fine anyway.

"By the way, what is his name?"

"I'm still thinking of his name. As I thought, it must be heroic."

Thinking about that this early in the morning, and when I'm about to go out.

I think that she is like a watch dog.

"A heroic name huh, I guess it was a good name if it was a boy."

"Such as Ars, or Aldebaran, or Karuman....."

"U~m wait a minute, let's do something about those names that are too heroic."

Everyone, did they really want the name of the past hero?

Well, I'm fine with any name.

However, it must not be a very old name, so he won't become a target of bullying I guess.

"Rudeus, any ideas?"

"I think for a girl name. Such as Alice, or Fran..... that's a pretty name and it's quite good I wonder."

"It's a boy, why did you think of a girl name?"

Eris is seriously pondering about it.

"If the one that's born is a girl, she will become a poor girl with a boy's name."

"..... It's absolutely a boy."

Eris goes into her Tsun-mode and turned her face to the side.

Well then, at least there won't be a problem thinking about a girl or a boy name.

Such as Maki, or Kaoru.... Nope, those aren't names on this side.

Well, we can still think about this matter until the first month of the year.

"Then, I'm going inside first."

"Have a nice time."

Recently, Eris doesn't do her usual swinging practice.

Now, her pregnancy is entering its sixth month.

It looks like she is aware of that as a pregnant woman, or merely acting based on her instinct.

She doesn't have a strong motherly feeling, but no matter what she will still give birth to her child.

While thinking about this and that, I started my morning training.

By the way at breakfast time, all the family members gather together.

Aisha and Lilia are the waitresses.

Zenith sits on a chair and immerses herself in thought.

Sitting next to her, is Norn since I'm rarely at home we often miss each other.

Next to Norn, is Lucy sitting in her chair quietly, while her legs are flapping around.

And next to her is Sylphy, telling Lucy to not do that.

On the other side of the table, is Roxy with her eyes that are still sleepy, giving breast milk to Lara.

Just like her mother, Lara also drinks it with a sleepy face.

Always following that scene, sitting with a dignified face, and having Pursena's head on her lap while she is gently patting her head is Eris.

Still completely exhausted, Pursena just lets Eris do anything to her, but when the food comes her tail is standing and swaying happily.

I sat next to Eris.

I'm at the end of the table. The so called seat of honor.

Though there is no such concept here.

However, the table is really big, and yet it still feels cramped here.

Soon there won't be enough room in this house.

I guess Lara will also grow up soon.

No, by the time that happens, I wonder if there is a possibility that Norn will be out of the house?

After graduating from the school, what will she do?

As for Aisha, I guess she will stay here even after she reaches adulthood.

"Norn."

"Yes, what is it Onii-san?"

"You, after graduating from school, what are you going to do after that?"

When I asked that, she had a perplexed look on her face, then she looked back at me.

".... Not yet, I still haven't thought about it, but?"

"I see."

Well, she is still in her fifth year, and she is the student council president.

She has yet to reach adulthood.

She didn't think that far yet.

"U~m, Nii-san."

"What?"

"If, this is for example."

"Uhuh."

"Let's just say, if I want to do something like an adventurer, will you oppose it?"

Adventurer huh.

Norn as an adventurer.

Her sword technique is doing fairly well, and in these five years her magic is also progressing very well.

I guess it was enough for her to become a good adventurer.

I wonder if she is longing to become an adventurer after hearing Paul's stories about his time as one.

Well, there is still some concern about it.

The thing about Norn is, won't she step on somewhere clumsily, and die easily.

And, around this lovely adventurer, it seems that men will easily gather...

Recently, because I often see adventurers in a pinch, nothing but bad images are floating in my mind.

"I won't oppose it, but I can't help but feel worried... Do you really want to become an adventurer?"

"No, it's not like I want to become an adventurer. It was just a sudden thought."

Norn shook her head.

Adventurer, whether or not she really wants to become one.

After graduating from the Magic University if by then, she has a stable income from becoming an adventurer then it's good, or having more stable work but....

No, since it was about money, perhaps her goal is something other than that.

If it's like that, then I will respect her.

"Gochisousama. I'm going to school."

"Yes, have a safe trip."

After Norn finished her meal, she immediately grabbed her school bag, and stood quickly from her chair.

Roxy is enjoying the holiday, but it looks like Norn still has some student council work.

It sure is hard.

After saying goodbye to her family, Norn goes to school.

"It's not like I oppose it, but if Norn-nee becomes an adventurer I worry something will happen to her."

After Norn is gone, Aisha says that quietly.

"I'm also thinking to let Norn do what she loves. I think that is her own right."

"I'm opposing it. Norn-sama is, Paul-sama's and Zenith-sama's most important daughter. She will be married to an appropriate person befitting her status, that way I think we will send her to a safe and more secure life."

"I'm also in favor. Norn's sword technique still has a way to go, but becoming an adventurer is fun indeed."

After Norn is no longer here, her family here began to talk what fits her the most.

Of course, it doesn't mean that everything is decided by this family's council.

"Well, how about making her familiar with adventurers first. That's what I think, if her family opposes her she might silently leave on her own."

Finally, with Roxy's awfully heavy words, the breakfast of the day is completed.

We left the house. Pursena and Aisha go towards the Mercenary office's direction.

As for Pursena, her position is the Vice-Director.

The reason is to help Rinia, something like the so called secretary (Private), but her position is the Vice-Director.

Inside the director room, wearing a black suit and sunglasses.

Without cigarettes of course, or some other funny idea.

Now, the rascal is using a hat for the executives' management.

"Then, let's do our best."

"IISSEE, Boss!"

"Let's earn a lot today!"

"Don't show that too much."

As she said that, with her nail, she pulled the list of employees out of a tube... Everything is coming together, with this list of members...

There are 50 names on the list.

Among them, the one who is particularly good with paperwork is marked.

I will show this list to Orsted, then pick someone with the lowest possibility to become Hitogami's apostle from that list.

After he is interviewed behind the scenes, he will be earnestly placed in the main office helping with something like office management and sorting the documents.

"I mean, with that kind of work if in case, well I think it's fine let's do this....."

Somehow, I didn't want to discuss that kind of thing with Aisha.

Certainly, if I discuss it with Aisha the efficiency will greatly rise.

However, if she, by chance of 10000 : 1, saw Orsted.

Possibly, for some reason or other the curse is invoked on her.

It's possible that Aisha will show hostility towards Orsted.

I feel that if Aisha really opposed me working under Orsted, my movements will be greatly hindered.

She is living her every day life lazily, but if she starts to move, she can produce great results in the early stage.

I'm afraid that by the time I noticed that Aisha is moving behind the scenes, Orsted would already be at the bottom of the ocean.

There might also be a certain reason.

Though I'm probably thinking too much about it.

"Aisha, please take care of the Mercenary company."

And, for now let's just say that.

After leaving the Mercenary office, I head to Orsted.

I report my past month's activities to him.

Rinia and Pursena acting as the chief of the Mercenary Company, and leaving Aisha to assist them.

Concerning what was mentioned before, especially the opposition part.

"The situation has not changed, please continue like before."

And, for my interesting actions, I got an amusing answer instead.

As for permission to get a clerk for this office, from the list he said, [I think either one of these two is fine] just like that he selected a clerk.

By some chance, maybe he already expected this.

"Even so those girls, Pursena and Rinia, how about their positions? Their condition didn't affect history right?"

"The typical result of which one of them that becomes the village chief, there will be a big change in history."

The typical result of which one of them that becomes the village chief.

This time, Pursena won by a hair breadth and maintained her position as village chief candidate.

Though Rinia was defeated, it is still possible for her to become a village chief if she liked.

If that really happened, I will carry the responsibility seriously.

"Because of your influence in this time line, the people that got involved with you usually have their destiny greatly changed. Therefore I can't say for sure."

That was painful to my ears.

But, I just want to live in peace.

For that, I must endure this lecture.

"Even so, to think that my daughter is the savior, Orsted-sama did you know about this?"

"No, the partner of the Holy Beast was always another man."

Well, because Lara is never born in the previous loops, it could be either.

"But, from your story, I know that Hitogami was trying very hard so your fate and Roxy wouldn't be tied together. Therefore I guess that your fates are very strong."

With my daughter's birth, she pushed away the original hero from his seat, and took it for herself.

"By the way, about the original savior, what kind of person was he?"

"He was the man who will defeat Demon God Laplace when he is revived."

"I see... The other person, the other savior, is he alright?"

"Why do you care? As far as I know, that person and his companion will kill Laplace. The Holy Beast and his partner will give aid... They're not a necessary piece."

In the past, when he fought with Laplace in his loop many times, they became powerful allies.

But, now I wonder if winning against Laplace isn't necessary anymore?

"Lara too, is she destined to be burdened with the battle against Laplace?"

"Well. As far as Hitogami is concerned, he wants Laplace to disappear. With your daughter born, things won't go as he wants... Your daughter, rather than an obstacle for Laplace, is probably a major obstacle to Hitogami."

So Lara is an important factor for defeating Hitogami in the future.

However that's no more than a prediction.

Because in this loop, there are many factors that even Orsted doesn't know about.

"As I thought, from now on Lara will be targeted by Hitogami..."

For now, that's my only worry.

My cute daughter is being targeted, that's pretty worrying.

But, Orsted shook his head.

"That's what the Holy Beast is for. With the strong fate of the Holy Beast, Hitogami can't easily put his hands on Lara."

".....Ha~~h."

"Besides, if anything does happen, I have no intention of watching your family die. That's why you shouldn't worry."

Well.

If Orsted is going as far as saying that, I can be relieved for the time being.

I, I'm up to the task.

And just like before, it's preparation for [The Next Battle].

After leaving the main office, I went to school.

There is still some anxiety remaining about Lara.

But, only feeling anxiety, won't solve anything.

Let's switch the mood.

"Fu~u..."

All right, I switched.

Completely switched. Everything's all right.

Now, I guess I will see if Zanoba and Cliff's research has made any new progress.

The scaled-down Magic Armor for instance, the mana consumption is getting better but...

As for now, only I can use it...

No, if the mana consumption gets better that will result in anyone being able to use it, it will be troublesome if it was stolen by someone from Hitogami's side.

Well, either way it could happen.

Cliff's door was locked.

I was expecting that, he and Elinalise were probably engaging in the production of their second child in the morning.

Those two, for some reason they often do that the first thing in the morning.

One round in the morning, then recharging before the night comes, doing it again at night, and recharging again when they sleep.

I guess they have that kind of life cycle.

Cliff's kidneys won't hold for long.

Well then, I guess I'll stop by Zanoba's place first as usual.

By the way, as for Zanoba, let's start first with the result of the scaled-down Magic Armor research.

Then we can discuss the Rudo Mercenary Company and the plan for using it to recruit a merchant.

Once this is done, we can have lunch, then head to Cliff's place.

Then we can inspect the prototypes and bring them over to Orsted's place.

Lets go with that flow.

And after making that simple plan, I entered the research building.

"Are you an idiot!"

All of sudden a jeer can be heard.

I won't deny that I am an idiot, but hearing it so suddenly is painful.

Who is the fool who called me an idiot just now?

"I know that, do you even understand?"

Hearing that, I naturally search for the source.

I'm looking for the owner of that voice, and instantly found him. He is at the bottom of the staircase.

There are five people.

All of them are my acquaintances.

"If you're going back, you will only get yourself killed!"

The one that shouted earlier is Cliff.

While he grabbed Zanoba's chest, Cliff was shouting with his maximum voice with a terrifying attitude.

Behind him, is Elinalise carrying her baby showing a somewhat difficult face.

Zanoba didn't move at all, he was only looking down at Cliff with cold eyes.

Behind him is the frail Julie trying to restrain him, as for Cliff, he is relying on his piercing eyes.

Julie is at his feet, looking at Zanoba, she is about to cry at any moment.

Quarreling... Them... This is strange.

Something has happened.

"Zanoba, Cliff!"

My voice climbed through the stairs, hearing that they turn their heads toward me.

Cliff is making a face like he needs my assistance.

Zanoba's face is expressionless.

For the first time, Zanoba is showing an expression similar to a person who was looking at an insect.

No, I got the feeling that I've seen that expression once before.

That was where I wonder...

"Shisou, you have come at the right time. Come to think of it, now is almost the time for your visit."

"Rudeus, it's good that you have come to this place, please help me persuade Zanoba!"

Those two spoke at the same time.

Zanoba, with a sullen face, gave Cliff a strong push back.

Zanoba didn't look like he meant to put much power into it, but being a Miko with superhuman strength, Cliff tripped and fell on his butt.

Seeing that, for a moment Zanoba's expression changed, but he approached me without apologizing.

Since he is taller than me by one head, I'm looking up at him.

"....What is the problem?"

"A request about Julie. Please buy her, though she is originally Shisho's slave."

Zanoba said that so easily to me.

But before that, I want an explanation.

"Leaving Julie behind, where are you going?"

"To my home country. A royal command for me to return has come."

Royal command.

You mean, directly from the King.

But, if that was the case, why is Cliff against it so much?

Can't it wait for another six months for the graduation ceremony?

"My brother Pax, he succeeded his coup. He executed my father and brothers and took the throne."

"......Ha?"

Pax, that seventh prince who caught Lilia?

That guy succeeded in his coup... Taking the throne?

Does that mean he became a king?

"Exhausted from the civil war, other countries might invade us. Therefore I received a royal command to return to my country, and assist in defending it. So, I will be going for a little while."

Zanoba said that in a tone like he was going to the convenience store.

But, from his words somehow I realized.

The next fight, it came earlier than I predicted.

Mushoku Tensei: Isekai Ittara Honki Dasu - Volume 20

Previously: Zanoba received orders to return to Shirone.

Sharia Magic University, Research Building.

Zanoba's research lab.

Six individuals are in a circle around a table.

Zanoba, Cliff, and I are sitting; Elinalise, Julie, and Ginger standing as if to surround us. Elinalise is holding her baby, so really 7 people are present.

Zanoba looks very troubled, and Cliff agitated. Julie also looks troubled, and Ginger looks ready to burst in tears.

Even Elinalise looks flabbergasted.

An unhappy mood permeates the air.

"Zanoba, calm down, can you start again from the top, this time with details?"

".... Okay."

Zanoba is expressionless, which is terrifying since he usually has a smile on his face. It's like he's a different person entirely.

"This morning, a soldier from Shirone delivered a letter to yours truly."

He already showed us the letters, which I'm currently holding. I take it out again to read.

The envelope is sealed with the Shirone Kingdom crest and Pax's signature, with three letters sealed within.

The first details the political turmoil in Shirone Kingdom in the last half a year.

The gist of it was about how the Seventh Prince Pax, who was sent off to study abroad at Kingdom of Dragon King, gained their backing, and returned to Shirone Kingdom.

Then he initiated a coup, murdered King Shirone, as well as rest of the royal family, and became the new king of Shirone Kingdom.

The contents seem to prattle on with praise for Pax.

The second letter concerns what happened after the coup.

It's mainly about how most of the country's ministers and generals were replaced or escaped from Shirone.

As the population declined in Shirone, its effective combat force declined as well.

Once they realize this, countries in the North will likely take advantage of the situation and attack.

Because Shirone lacks the force necessary to defend itself, a plan was hatched to recall the miko Zanoba to defend his home nation.

The letter is written with a [political change is necessary, so Pax did nothing wrong] tone.

The third letter is an official letter to recall Zanoba.

It includes a cancellation of the previous king's order and an order to return home.

It even has the seal of King Shirone stamped on it, very official looking.

Basically the three letters are [Pax's Heroic Tales], [Excuse], and [Draft Letter].

The coup led to a decline in their fighting force.

Reinforcements are necessary to stave off enemy attacks.

It sounds like a bunch of excuses, but they kind of make sense.

Of course, a question remains about how useful Zanoba is in combat.

But Zanoba is quite famous in Shirone, so recalling him alone should at least help with the troops morale.

But considering that they have the backings of the Kingdom of Dragon King, why not leave national defense to them?

I don't know the situation on the ground, so maybe there are reasons why that's not possible.

No alliance is set in stone.

If the letter didn't mention protection from the Kingdom of Dragon King, it probably isn't possible.

Pax and Zanoba had a history together.

Eight years ago, with Zanoba's help, I destroyed Pax's scheme.

As a result, Pax was sent off to study abroad in the Kingdom of Dragon King, and Zanoba was sent off to study abroad in Ranoa Kingdom.

If Pax still holds a grudge, he won't let Zanoba off that easily.

So maybe this draft letter is really a trap for Zanoba.

Well, leaving that aside. The problem now is what to do? What will Zanoba choose?

"Then, given the situation, what will you do?"

"I'll follow the order to return to Shirone and join the battle."

Here's the problem.

No matter if it's Cliff or Ginger, they all disagree.

They could understand if Zanoba wanted to return to avenge the previous king.

They could also understand if Zanoba chose to disobey the order too.

But Zanoba did neither.

Even though it's obviously a trap, he's going to comply.

With Pax.

With the usurper.

"You have no reason to go."

That's what Cliff said.

He thinks the chance of a trap is high.

Or rather, he already decided that this is a trap.

"You want to take a chance, but this is obviously a trap for your life."

"Um."

"In a coup, the most obvious thing to do is to eliminate the entire royal family, to avoid problems down the line."

Cliff himself has been affected by the political struggles underway at Holy Kingdom of Milis. If his father the pope loses, his life will be in danger.

Eliminate an enemy by killing his entire clan. It's only natural.

"And even if the enemy attack is real, what good will you do on your own?"

"Um... Maybe not much. Regardless, I'm a miko after all."

"So what?"

Frustrated, Cliff slams the table with a bang.

Zanoba lets it pass.

"Even if you beat back the enemy, have you considered what Pax has planned for you?"

Cliff knew about why Zanoba was sent out of the country.

When was he told? Probably when I was telling him about how Zanoba and I first met.

That's why he knows what kind of person Pax is.

Maybe his opinion was biased, but I can appreciate why he's so adamantly opposed.

"He'll probably get rid of you after he's finished using you!"

That's why he was saying this.

But I agree with Cliff on this one.

Assuming that war is really on the horizon because other countries are invading.

Assuming that Pax really wants Zanoba's power.

Assuming that Zanoba returns to Shirone, using his miko power, solves the crisis.

Then what?

As royalty, Third Prince Zanoba, what kind of existence is he for Pax?

When enemies attack, Zanoba has value.

He might even be considered the savior of a nation.

He might even become really popular among the soldiers that he saves.

What would Pax think about someone like that, with the same royal blood flowing in his veins?

No doubt he'll be a hindrance.

A potential threat to his position and survival.

When Pax considers this, what will he do?

That's obvious.

"Zanoba, I think so too."

"... It's highly probable."

After I concur with Cliff's opinion, Zanoba nods seriously.

He should know well that Pax still holds a grudge and might make an attempt on his life.

"But I must go."

Even though Zanoba agrees with us, he still thinks he needs to go.

Why? I don't get it at all.

"... Why?"

"Because this is an official order of the kingdom."

Zanoba replied.

True, the stationary has the king's stamp.

Forget the previous king's order, immediately drop out of school, and return home — that's the order.

"But that order comes from Pax, right? The king has changed. There's no need for you to comply?"

"Shisho, if everyone disobeys their orders just because the king has changed, then the country cannot survive."

"Even if you say so, he didn't become king through the proper channel... isn't he just a usurper?"

"No matter how he did it, the reality that Pax is the king does not change."

Is that so?

Yeah, in my previous life this happened in many countries as well...

What would the ministers of a country do in this situation...

Would they keep working even under the usurper...

"Zanoba, you really want to work for Pax?"

"That's not the case."

Slowly, Zanoba shakes his head.

There's nothing we can do.

Zanoba refuses to listen, regardless of what we say.

Realizing that frustrates me.

"T-Then why?"

I unconsciously raised my voice.

"Even though you know you'll be killed, and you don't plan to follow him, then there's no reason for you to go. Why are you so stubborn?"

Or is he afraid of the consequences?

If Zanoba refuses a direct order, Shirone Kingdom might retaliate.

But this is Ranoa Kingdom, it'll take at least half a year to rush here from Shirone.

If I ask Ariel for a favor, he should be safe as a refugee in Asura Kingdom. [Due to the coup in Shirone Kingdom, to escape the danger I'm exiled to Asura Kingdom.] But I don't know whether that excuse of exile will work...

"My reason?"

Zanoba laughs at my confusion.

A different laugh from his usual, natural one.

A forced laughter.

"Shishou, you're aware, that for Shirone Kingdom I'm considered a nuisance."

"Not really, since you're a miko?"

"Yes, but, I'm a miko that murdered royal blood because of my lack of self-control."

Hearing this, I suddenly recall Zanoba's nickname back at Shirone Kingdom.

[The Head Ripping Prince.]

He ripped off the head of princess escort's newborn – his own brother – a mad prince.

It doesn't need to be said, killing his own relative without reason, even royalty can't escape that unpunished.

But, Zanoba himself was left untouched for that, even though his own mother was forced out of the country.

"I was forgiven, because I am a miko. Because they believe one day I can be of use."

A bit shaken, Cliff looks nervously at my direction.

Maybe he hasn't heard about this before.

"After that, I even ripped the head of my own wife, which precipitated a civil war."

Zanoba has married before.

A politically motivated royal wedding, and on their wedding night he ripped her head off.

This caused a crisis in the kingdom.

"Even though she said some unforgivable things, which I never plan to forgive, but punishing me for the resulting conflict would not be unreasonable."

Zanoba looks at me as he says this.

"But I was not punished."

Then, he sighs, and as matter-of-fact he continues.

"Shisho, do you know why the kingdom let me live?"

"..."

I have no answer.

Zanoba continues.

"After that, I met Shisho, and the country kicks this troublesome me out of the country. It would be perfectly reasonable to sentence me to death then, but I was merely send abroad. I wasn't just exiled, but instead sent to Sharia. The kingdom even spent heavily for my living expenses. What do you think is the reason?"

I know where Zanoba is going with this.

I get why the kingdom left Zanoba alive.

"So at the moment of crisis, I can save the kingdom."

I have no answer to Zanoba's strong reasons.

Even Cliff can only stare.

Only Ginger looks understanding, pained.

"Fighting for my kingdom is my duty. This is why I'm left alive. It's for this reason my nation forgave my transgressions. That's why, I must go. Otherwise, if I wait for the kingdom to be attacked, it'll already be too late. Rather, the enemy might already be attacking. That's why I must make haste."

He's right.

As repayment for nurturing him, letting him live, he has to repay his kingdom.

A debt must be repaid, that's only natural.

Perhaps, he thought he should have headed back during Pax's coup.

But what's past is past.

Right now if he starts another insurrection, it will further degrade the nation's combat strength, Shirone Kingdom might really face destruction.

That's why he will obey Pax, and become the protector of Shirone Kingdom.

I get it.

But, Zanoba.

This isn't like you.

Weren't you a more free, selfish person?

Shouldn't you be saying, [This has nothing to do with me. More importantly, look at this doll! Look at these exquisite details!] Aren't you that kind of character?

.... But I can't say that.

That's not right.

Honestly, I want to tell Zanoba [You can let this slide.]

But, that's not right.

"... You will get killed."

I only have this to say.

Zanoba replies.

"If the motherland wants me dead, then I can only die."

Resolutely, he answers.

Maybe if you ask the warriors of the old, the soldiers of the old Japanese army, they might answer the same.

But, I need to stop him.

I don't want Zanoba to die.

But, I can't just be straightforward and reject him.

Because Zanoba right now is looking straight at me.

Or maybe I have changed.

I have nothing to say.

I don't know what to say.

"Shisho, Cliff, please don't look like that."

Zanoba shows a happy smile.

His usual smile.

"When I was in Shirone, duty was never a thing on my mind. But after meeting Shisho, meeting Cliff, meeting Nanahoshi, after living here, I thought about a lot of things. About what my purpose in life is..."

And that's how, his conclusion became [protect motherland?]

How did he connect the time we spent together with protecting motherland?

I don't get it at all.

"Ha, that might sound presumptuous, even I don't really know how that came about! Ha ha ha!"

Zanoba laughs, but I can't.

I don't want to argue about his conclusion.

Whether it's right or wrong, it's only up to him to decide.

I can only respect his choice.

The only thing is, what happens with that choice, that is, if Zanoba dies... I don't want that to happen.

Zanoba is my dear friend.

Thinking back, he has always been by my side.

He is the one that came to my aid in Shirone.

When I came to the university, if I hadn't met him, I might not have the friends I have now.

Meeting Rinia and Pursena, that was because of Zanoba's dolls.

Without Zanoba, Cliff and I might not have got along like we are right now.

When we went to the Magic Continent together, he single-handedly held back Atofe.

The Magic Armor as well, without him, making it would be impossible.

Now that I think about it, he has always come to my aid.

Moreover, when we make dolls together, those are always happy moments.

I'm really happy.

He always puts me on a pedestal, no matter what I do he showers me with praises.

Just being with him alone is comforting.

Maybe others think differently, but for me, without a doubt, it's very comforting.

And it's him, in my future diary, that stood by my side till the end.

I can't just stand by and watch Zanoba march to his death.

Rudeus Greyrat can't let Zanoba Shirone die.

... Oh?

Wait.

Future diary?

Suddenly, I realize something.

"Zanoba."

"What is it, Shisho?"

As if only natural I follow up with.

"I'm going too."

How Zanoba reacts, the mix of anxiety and happiness on his face, leaves a strong impression on me.

After that talk, I head over to Orsted's place.

I spend the day there thinking about the situation.

First, Zanoba summoned by his motherland. That never happened in the diary.

Zanoba was always in Sharia.

Right? I don't know for sure, but according to the diary he's always by my side.

The diary never mentions any draft notice.

Maybe Pax's coup failed? No, rather a coup probably never took place.

Either way, this differs from the diary.

In that case, maybe... Hitogami is up to something again.

Now I think about it, for the past year and a half, I have yet to see another 3 Hitogami apostles appear together.

If Pax is an Apostle, then it's reasonable to expect that he has been working in the background during this time.

Orsted has said, [Wait for the opportunity], maybe this is the opportunity he speaks of.

Um, this is it.

It shouldn't be wrong.

I have been training for this exact moment.

To help Zanoba.

"Orsted-sama!"

Orsted is his usual self, busy writing something on a high class table.

"Ah, Rudeus, what is it?"

I explain the situation to Orsted, who looks scary as usual.

That Zanoba has received a draft notice, which didn't happen to Zanoba in the diary.

"Isn't this Hitogami's doing?"

"..."

I said full of confidence, but Orsted just stares at me with his scary face.

Eh?

Weird.

Did I make a mistake?

"According to the history I'm aware of, Shirone Kingdom will be destroyed due to Pax Shirone's coup in thirty years."

Orsted, looking terribly scary, answers the troubled me.

Wait no, he looks no scarier than usual...

".... Thirty years?"

"Right."

Orsted explains to me what's supposed to happen.

The original history.

In other words, when the Metastasis Event never occur and where I was never involved with Shirone Kingdom.

In that history, Pax took advantage of the kingdom's slave market to gain allies and a war chest, taking hostages against his enemies.

And finally, initiates a coup.

The coup was a success, and Pax became king.

But by then, Pax has lost his drive and burned out.

After becoming king and gaining complete freedom, Pax starts questioning his kingship.

He vacated the throne and proposed a republic.

Thus, the Shirone Republic was born.

Shirone Republic went on to become a powerful nation.

It managed to swallow about half of the current strife zone.

Thus, Shirone Republic became the fourth power of the world and a hindrance to Hitogami.

"Hitogami hates that, thus he manipulated you to head to Shirone Kingdom, and used you to exile Pax from Shirone Kingdom. But..."

Because I followed Hitogami's advice, the situation in Shirone Kingdom changed.

Both of them were exiled from the country, and the cause of Pax's kingship disappeared.

Shirone Republic won't be born.

"If Pax becomes king, it'll give birth to a republic."

Orsted looks troubled.

In other words, this is exactly opposite of what Hitogami wished for.

"This time with Kingdom of Dragon King as his backing, maybe he won't propose forming a republic?"

"No, that won't change. I have seen similar situations before, in the end Pax always made that proposal."

Regardless of history, as long as Pax becomes king, he'll propose a republic, and Shirone Kingdom will become Shirone Republic.

Kind of like Ariel's situation.

The conclusion is destined by fate.

As soon as he's king, the rest is set in stone.

"Huh? What about Pax in the future diary?"

"Perhaps Pax did not initiate a coup, like Hitogami originally intended, and Shirone Kingdom remains a small nation."

In other words.

Past timeline: [Pax coups, becomes king, gives birth to a republic.]

Diary timeline: [Because of Hitogami's manipulation, Pax loses the kingship, the republic becomes stillborn.]

This timeline: [Pax coups, becomes king, likely gives birth to a republic.]

Something like that?

In other words, this time Hitogami is purposely changing the scenario to what it supposed to be.

"Why would he?"

"It's a trap."

Orsted's words add another layer of fog on the situation.

"Maybe Hitogami is willing to trade-off returning to the original situation to kill you off."

Like in mahjong where you break your own hand to ruin the opponent's.

Something like that?

"Thus, if you go, Hitogami will likely have a sure-kill trap set for you."

"Can his target be Orsted-sama?"

"That is a possibility, but Zanoba Shirone is your friend, so he's the bait."

"..."

Pax summons Zanoba home.

It's pretty much confirmed to be a trap, but Zanoba resolves to go regardless.

Even though Hitogami shouldn't be able to predict whether I would go or not, but I'll probably take the bait if Zanoba has a high chance of death.

Hitogami really knows me well.

... Hitogami is rather clever this time.

"Zanoba makes your equipment. Even if you don't go to Shirone, Hitogami probably thinks getting rid of him would help him down the line."

Two birds, one stone.

If I come, he'll take care of both of us.

If not, just one is fine.

"Chances of Zanoba as an apostle?"

"Unlikely in this scenario. He's pretty much a nobody in the history of Shirone Kingdom."

Quiet, you!

He's very important to me!

Right now, I'm ready to take the bait willingly for him.

"Then, what should we do?"

"Just like before, wreck his plans straight up."

"... Ah, right."

If Orsted comes along, it should be easy.

Just like what happened with Ariel.

It doesn't matter if there's a trap.

Even if I'm drawn in like a moth to a flame, I can always just say [Please mister.]

Like the light on an angler-fish, he can rush to my aid and easily strike down my enemies.

Recently I've been called [Dragon's Underling] or [Dragon's Claw], but truth be told I'm really [Dragon's Lantern.]

"But, it's possible too that Hitogami isn't involved."

"... Explain?"

"Since this was supposed to happen."

Ah.

This was supposed to happen.

"What we talked about so far, truthfully are mere guesses. The diary never did mention what happened around this time. Maybe Zanoba Shirone did go home, then returned safely."

Without Hitogami's interference, it happened anyways.

Zanoba like the previous was recalled to Shirone Kingdom, did his job, and returned home safely.

Is... this... possible?

".... Em."

"Zanoba in the diary had a bounty on his head due to Milis. Considering that, Shirone would likely bar him from return. Or maybe Zanoba himself rejected the draft notice, or maybe Ginger discarded it for him..."

That makes sense.

If I calm down and think about it, the diary situation is already different than now.

Even if Pax succeeded in his coup in the future diary, Zanoba still had a bounty on his head.

Ignoring the existence of a person wanted by the Holy Kingdom of Milis makes a lot of sense too.

Holy Kingdom of Milis has mercenary knights.

If Zanoba returned, those knights would likely consider Shirone an enemy state.

The possibilities are basically endless.

"But didn't Hitogami already use me to change the history of Shirone Kingdom? Will Shirone still become a Republic in this situation?"

"He wants to change it but failed. That possibility exists. Your fate might be strong, but even you aren't strong enough to change everything."

Oh, even I can't change history as I please.

"Oh..."

Just now, Orsted realized something.

He's in his thinking pose, with his hand on his chin.

"W-what is it?"

"Wait... Pax was in the Kingdom of the Dragon King before, correct?"

"Right."

"In that case, the possibility that the King there led the coup is high."

"Ah, that's right."

Ah, that's the case.

Pax was in Kingdom of Dragon King.

In other words, the possibility exists that Pax was manipulated by another apostle there.

Thus the possibility exists that Pax isn't an apostle.

Rather, someone else at Kingdom of Dragon King is Hitogami's apostle.

This person is the actual person manipulating from the shadows this time.

"Alright, I shall head to Kingdom of Dragon King and check for apostles there."

Eh?

You're not coming with me?

"B-but, if Shirone Kingdom really is Hitogami's trap... then what should I do?"

"... If you're scared, then don't go."

In other words, leave Zanoba to die this time?

Well, as Orsted mentioned, maybe Zanoba won't be asked to do anything important.

Orsted promised to protect my family, even though Zanoba is my dear friend, he isn't family.

Ah, then I should just make him family.

Ask one of my family members to marry him...

Wait, no, that's not right.

If it's Zanoba, I won't mind leaving one of my sisters in his care, but that's not right.

"Zanoba has helped me. In the diary, even till the end, he always helped me."

"..."

"I won't leave him to die."

Question is, will I alone be enough to help Zanoba?

No, I don't have to go alone.

Who can I send to help Zanoba?

Eris has contacts with Holy Land of Swords, knows some Sword Saints, maybe I can arrange Zanoba a bodyguard army or something.

No, I can't let outsiders know about the magic teleport circles.

My mercenary army isn't ready to mobilize yet...

"Then you go to Shirone, I to Kingdom of Dragon King, and we will destroy Hitogami's plans. That's that."

"Okay."

Thinking about it, all sorts of possibilities exist.

We definitely need to look for clues and investigate.

"Say, I forgot to mention, when you head to Shirone, promise me one thing."

"Oh."

A promise?

Definitely don't die on me, something like that?

If he said that, I might get nervous...

"Don't kill Pax Shirone, even if he's an apostle."

"... Eh?"

"Don't kill Pax Shirone."

It's that important? That you have to tell me twice?

Ah no, it's because I didn't react the first time.

Don't kill Pax...

Why.... Oh, I get it.

Because if Pax is killed, Shirone can't become a Republic.

OK BOSS.

Even if Pax considers us an enemy, I will let him know beforehand that I won't kill him.

"Got it."

But the difficulty has been raised.

If Pax wants us killed, but we can't kill him.

In that case... all I can do is try to avoid getting killed.

And bring Zanoba back with me.

Eh?

Say, what must Zanoba do before he returns to Sharia?

What does Zanoba want?

National defense?

Then how far does he have to go before he feels satisfied?

Well, forget it.

All in all, I'll go first, and try to convince him when the opportunity arises.

"Thank you very much, Orsted-sama."

"No need to thank me."

I make a deep bow towards Orsted and leave the office.

But, a Hitogami trap.

Zanoba had no complaints about me coming along.

But, if I told him it's a trap, he might reconsider.

And if he reconsiders?

Suppose he refuses, should I tell him?

In order to kill me off, Hitogami set a trap using Shirone Kingdom.

Using you as a bait to kill me off.

That's why you shouldn't go, etc...

No, that won't do.

He'll just say [Even if that's the case, I must go] in response.

In that case,

... then I'll stay quiet for now.

Zanoba might end up hating me this time.

After I went home, I gave a report to my family.

Recently there is a lot about my business trips that I can't talk about.

But since this time it might take a while, I feel I owe them more details.

First, our office doesn't have a magic teleport circle directed at Shirone Kingdom.

Instead, I'll purchase a horse carriage at the Kingdom of Dragon King then travel to the Shirone Kingdom from there.

Last time it took almost four months for me to get from the Kingdom of Dragon King to Shirone.

Including investigating on the way, at best I can cut travel time to two months or so.

Two months.

In other words, travel alone will take four months.

Considering that Eris will give birth in about three, there's no way for me to get back in time.

Of course, if I ask Perugius for the favor, we can head directly to Shirone Kingdom instead.

Zanoba and Perugius got along well. Zanoba would often bring new paintings or dolls he found in the market to Perugius and have an art show together, just the two of them.

If anything caught Perugius's eyes, Zanoba would happily offer it to him.

Since they get along so well, if Zanoba asks for a favor, he probably won't refuse.

Still, even if we cut the trip back and forth to under one month, we don't know how long Zanoba will spend in Shirone itself.

So I still don't know how to proceed right now.

It'd be easy if all I need is to kick someone's ass and go home, but Pax cannot be killed.

The alternatives will probably take a lot more time.

"That's why, I don't know when I will get back."

After dinner, I said.

Norn isn't home tonight, but that's typical. It can't be helped.

Still, the whole family is present, including Sylphy and Zenith.

Besides how long it takes, I also gave them the gist of the situation, but I didn't mention the possibility that it's a trap by Hitogami.

It's only a possibility, after all. It'll be troublesome if Eris insists on coming.

It might be selfish of me, but because of that they didn't raise any objections.

"I'm fine with this."

They all look toward Eris.

Eris looks comfortable in the center of attention, with her hands wrapped around her ever growing tummy.

"Well, it can't be helped."

How easygoing, nothing compared to how nervous Sylphy was.

"Hey Eris, aren't you too indifferent?"

"Even if Rudeus isn't here, the baby will be born."

"But, this is important!"

"I know, but all Rudeus would do is hold my hand, right?"

"It's true, but..."

Finding no retort, Sylphy shrinks back.

Roxy folds her hands with a [She's right, you know] look on her face.

But the person with personal experience still believes how important my hand's warmth is during birth.

"Rudeus isn't necessary when it comes to childbirth."

Eris said that with a raised voice.

I feel a little sad to hear that I'm not a necessity.

But with Lilia and Aisha here, my lack of necessity is a matter of fact.

"It's fine as long as Rudeus praises me for giving him a wonderful son, once he gets back."

Eris sure is direct today, how manly. She's probably doing this to leave me without worries.

Eris is starting to become considerate of others. I feel proud, but also a little lonesome.

[You only need one to birth a baby], as a husband, should that be what I hope the wife to say?

Well, I'm not the one going to give birth.

"... By the way, have you picked a name already?"

"Yes, a great name, just look forward to it!"

But didn't you say you only thought of names for boys?

What if you end up giving birth to a girl while I was away?

Do you really plan to name her and raise her as a boy?

"Eris... If the baby's a girl, please give her your mother's name, Hilda."

"No, I'm not gonna give her an old lady's name!"

Denied.

Do you have to call her an old lady...

Hilda-san is probably crying from the beyond right now.

"Ara ara, just let Eris-ane do what she wants. Just follow Slyphy-ane's example, Onii-chan, and support her quietly from behind."

With Aisha's input, the discussion is over.

Indeed, Sylphy really has always been supporting me from the shadows.

As expected as the captain of the wife's corp.

I can count on her.

I'd worry if Eris was left by herself, but I have my other trustworthy wives here, and sisters and mothers too.

No matter what happens, I can count on them.

"I'm more worried about Rudeus going on his own again, so honestly I wanted to come along!"

On the other hand.

Honestly I'm the one worrying them.

Indeed, this time has some elements of danger. Basically, I'll likely fall for one of Hitogami's traps.

Ugh, now I start to feel rather uneasy.

Will I come back alive this time...

No, worrying alone won't help.

I got to do what I got to do, and take down any enemy that comes my way.

Take things one at a time, I'll just do that.

"Rudi, you look uneasy."

Roxy asked, seeing how troubled I look.

She's her usual self, holding Lara to her bosom, looking towards me with fatigued eyes.

"Um, yeah, it might devolve into war this time..."

Let's go with that first.

Roxy raises her head and studies me with a serious expression on her face.

"To be honest, I think it might be my fault this time."

"Eh? Why?"

"Because the one tasked to educate the young Prince Pax was me."

Now that she mentioned it, Roxy has spent a long time at Shirone Kingdom.

"No one blames a home tutor for what the student does in the future. You can't teach him everything."

"That may be, but his twisted personality happened under my watch."

That's not your fault, Roxy.

How could a person turn twisted from Roxy's brilliant teaching be possible in this world?

I know that for sure.

That's what I want to say, but honestly speaking I know nothing about this Pax person...

According to Orsted, even if it's via a coup, he seems to have what it takes to be king, so perhaps he did grow a bit under Roxy's tutelage.

No, impossible.

How can it be possible.

Even the worst of human scum can learn greatest under Roxy's teachings.

Definitely not your fault, Roxy.

Definitely another reason.

"Sensei, it's not your fault."

"... Rudi, did you ever notice, how creepy you look when you call me Sensei?"

Eh?

Really?

That's impossible.

I only call Roxy Sensei out of utter respect.

How can me looking creepy be possible?

It's true that we have teacher-student play at times, but that's only a game between husband and wife.

I definitely do not have any ulterior motive.

I'm innocent!

"I have mixed feelings about this... but I might just add fuel to the fire if I go this time..."

Roxy glanced at Lara as she said this.

Lara looks at me with her sleepy face.

As if wanting to say something she stares straight at me.

Roxy looks somewhat troubled.

Maybe if there wasn't school or a kid, Roxy might want to come along with me.

"No, Roxy, it's definitely not your fault."

That's all I can say for now.

I don't know if Roxy would have become Pax's home tutor, if I didn't reincarnate in this world. Yet Pax would still become a king through a coup.

Moreover, the chances are high this time that Hitogami is behind this.

If Pax was educated by Roxy, even if he received a different education than other timelines, I doubt the situation would be any different.

That's why, this crisis is definitely not Roxy's fault.

"Pax has been manipulated by Hitogami."

"But... No, right, I get it."

Roxy still has her reservations, but in the end she dropped her objections.

She probably is still bothered that one of her students did a bad thing.

Suddenly I look at Sylphy.

She isn't my student, but the one that taught her magic foundations was me, and I think I taught her many other things as well.

If after the Metastasis Event she didn't end up with Ariel, but instead used the magic I taught her to kill and steal. What would I think?

I definitely would have thought, [I taught her wrong], [I'm responsible], [I need to stop her], [I need to get her to listen to me], and etc.

"Eh, Rudi, what is it?"

"Nothing, I just realize that Sylphy had always listened to everything I said."

"That came out of no where, haven't I been doing that even now? Only recently, Rudi was so pushy, even though I was reluctant, and forced me..."

"Hey, there's children present."

"Ah, right."

Lucy, who's sitting besides her, looks back and forth at me and Sylphy.

Her face reads, [What are you talking about.]

How cute.

It's too early for her, too early to learn about night time wrestling strategies.

Let's end this family meeting here, on a positive note.

"Alright, everyone, I'll leave the rest..."

"Ah! Ah-!"

Crying suddenly.

Looking over, the usually quiet Lara is bursting in tears in Roxy's bosom.

She's looking towards me, crying, with her tiny hands outstretch.

"Kya! Aah-!"

"Lara, what wrong? Be good..."

Roxy nervously tries to comfort her, but she just keeps crying.

I think this is the first time Lara ever had an outburst like this.

Maybe she couldn't handle the heavy mood.

She just keeps looking, with her hands outstretched towards me, crying a river.

"Rudi..."

"Oh."

I take Lara from Roxy's hands, carrying her in my arms.

Lara instantly stops crying as soon as she grabs hold of me.

She grasps tightly on my shoulder, glued on me like a cicada.

Maybe she can sense that I'll soon be far away.

If she was crying because of that, it bothers me a bit...

But this never happened previously.

Maybe because the mood feels different this time, she sensed something?

"Well, papa will go away for a while, so be a good girl, okay?"

Oh, she should be fine if she stopped crying.

I lightly pat her back before handing her back to Roxy.

I tried to hand her over.

But couldn't.

Lara refuses to let go.

She grabs my cloak and clings on like a rhinoceros beetle.

"Kya-! Aah-!"

Just when I try to pry her away, Lara starts crying loudly and refuses to leave.

I'm actually very happy that Lara wants to be with papa so much.

Be a good girl, when papa comes home, I'll take a bath-bath with you.

"Well, Roxy, I'll leave her to you."

"Eh? Ah, okay."

Well, I said that I can't pry her off, but she's still a baby, after all.

I easily toss her over to Roxy.

"Aah—! Kya——!"

Right away, Lara cries out like she's at death's door.

Almost as loud as Eris, nothing like how quiet she usually was.

I feel a little guilty, like I'm abusing her somehow.

"Then, while I'm away..."

"Maa–! Baa—-! Aaa–!"

No, papa, stay.

That's what I imagine she said.

I feel like being held back.

But I must go.

I can't leave my dear friend alone.

"Bya–! Aaa–! Aaa–!"

I glance at Lara, crying like she saw a ghost, she reaches out in fear towards me.

This is the first time I've ever seen Lara like this.

Everyone else looks dumbfounded at Lara, all wondering [What's going on.]

"Be good... What's going on. Why all the sudden... Lilia, do you know about this?"

"No, this is the first time I've seen this as well..."

Regardless of what Roxy does, she can't seem to calm Lara down.

I suddenly feel anxious.

Is there nothing strange going on?

Will it be alright if I go?

Lara is chosen by Holy Beast Leo as the savior of the world!

Even though I don't know how she will save the world, but maybe she has some special ability.

Like premonition.

Or she sees a dead man walking.

Eh... Am I, going to die?

"Aaa—! Bya—!"

The sorrow in her cries echoes through the room.

This only adds to my unease.

"Okay, I get it, Lara."

In the midst of her cries, a person picks up the crying Lara and embraces her.

Raising her to her own eye level, with exchanged glances she said.

"I'll go with papa and protect him."

Like the warm sun basking the earth this gentlewoman says.

Only that.

Instantly Lara stops crying.

I tried to stop her.

It's really dangerous this time.

The chances that it's a Hitogami trap is high.

Roxy will just get in the way once the fight starts.

Perugius doesn't allow Magic race in the Sky Castle.

Teaching is Roxy's dream job, she can't just go on vacation for a few months without a heads up.

She might get fired.

Babies cry all the time. Now that she stopped, just forget about it.

I spoke rather harshly, making up all sorts of excuses on why Roxy shouldn't come.

But Roxy looks unmoved.

"If it's a trap, then that explains why Lara started crying."

"Even if I'm a hindrance in fights, I might come in handy elsewhere!"

"If I can't go along, then I will just find my own way there."

"Teaching is my dream, but it doesn't matter when my husband's life is at stake."

"It's a mother's duty when her daughter cries."

Roxy counters my every excuse, leaving me lost for words.

Not a single member of my family are with me on this one.

For sure, none of them think it's okay if Roxy dies.

Rather, as soon as they heard [This is Hitogami's trap], all of them had [So that's what it is] written all over their faces.

[Why didn't you tell us], they admonish me.

Then Eris demands to come along, with Sylphy trying to stop her.

Even Sylphy starts to speak about whether she should come as well.

An out-of-ordinary unease clings to everyone's hearts.

Will I really be alright on my own?

Really?

This is what they mean by bad omen?

Something will happen to Rudi?

Everyone's anxiety rests squarely on Roxy.

That's why she decides to go with me as the family's representative.

Because of Roxy's words, even Sylphy and Eris want to come along.

As expected of Roxy, but I have mixed emotions about praising her for that.

I'm in a bad spot as well.

I'm the kind that wants to treasure the things that are important to me.

Roxy, my special treasure, if possible I want to keep her safe in the most secure of treasure chests.

But, Roxy is stubborn.

Even if I stop her now, she'll definitely go off to Shirone Kingdom on her own.

Knowing this, I have no choice but let her come with me.

It's easier to protect her with her by my side.

But I'm also starting to feel anxious.

Facing a trap that Hitogami set, and I can't count on Orsted coming to my rescue this time.

I haven't even figured out how to convince Zanoba to come back with me yet.

Only dark clouds cover the path before me, how foreboding.

Roxy is coming along during my predicament.

The one I respect the most of this world by my side.

There's nothing more reassuring than that.

Next day we begin preparations for the journey to Shirone Kingdom.

Preparing everything that we need for the trip.

First, equipment for Zanoba.

It goes without saying that I don't want Zanoba to die.

Because of that, I pick a few choice armor out of the office armory for Zanoba to use.

First is a rather hefty full body armor.

It is augmented with [Increase fire resistance] magic tools.

A perfect match for Zanoba, who's weak against fire.

Even though Zanoba seems vulnerable to fire, but that's more or less true for all humans.

Next is a weapon.

Orsted said, there's no weapon tough enough for the strength of a miko like Zanoba.

Regardless of how special the sword is, it will break like a twig in his hands.

That's why I made Zanoba a bat.

A stone bat, hardened with my magic.

It's shaped like a racket.

It's deceivingly heavy, so much that even a grown man can't lift it.

But Zanoba pinches it, holding it like a twig. If a single swing from that lands, it's basically instant kill.

It's like attaching lasers on sharks.

Even though Zanoba has ridiculous strength, he has plenty of weaknesses.

He isn't fast, but I have just the thing for that.

A magic item called [Net of Overfishing].

For reasons unknown, as soon as it's cast, as if it has a mind of its own it will automatically chase and tie up the opponent.

Taking advantage of Zanoba's strength, it can instantly cripple an opponent, and drag him within Zanoba's striking range.

I'll just leave these three pieces of equipment with Zanoba for now.

He doesn't really like wearing full armor, but he's more than happy with the rest of them.

I also prepared equipment for Roxy.

Of course her safety is my top concern.

So I mostly picked equipment that can adequately protect her.

Of course, Roxy isn't very strong, so I can't exactly dress her up in full body armor like Zanoba.

She has plenty of combat experience, so wearing unfamiliar equipment might just become an hindrance for her instead.

That's why I picked for her a barrier ring for physical attacks and a scapegoat ring that can prevent one lethal attack.

She'll use her usual staff and robe.

That's all the equipment for Roxy.

It makes me uneasy.

But all I can do is do my best to protect her.

We don't know what kind of trap awaits us, but we will make headway on that front.

On the school front, Zanoba dropped out, and Roxy also filed a leave of absence.

I don't want Roxy fired, so I asked Zanoba to write a notice of recall, requesting Roxy to return to her post as court magician of Shirone palace.

Of course the school objects.

So it ended up becoming a sit-down negotiation between the principal and Zanoba.

Roxy has become that important a personnel to the school.

That's only natural.

If I were the principal, I'd do the same.

"Roxy-dono was court magician for Shirone to begin with. Only for various reasons did she quit, but she has plenty of ability, thus I wish to bring her back and again grant her the position of court magician of Shirone Kingdom."

Zanoba negotiates aggressively, while Roxy complains [I don't want to be a court magician...]

The principal, taking advantage of Roxy's words, declared [Roxy belongs to the Magic University.]

An hour into negotiation, Zanoba finally budges.

He'll bring her with him, since she's involved this time, afterwards he'll return her to the University... that's the deal.

Put up unreasonable demands first, then coming back down.

That's the art of negotiation.

And that's how Roxy managed to hold onto her teaching position when she returns.

Finally, I checked my own equipment.

When it comes to my equipment, it's the same as usual.

Magic Armor MK-I, Magic Armor MK-IIB, and the Shotgun Cannon; just these three.

It's been a long time since I last used my old companion Aqua Hartia.

I feel a little guilty towards Eris, but she responds [Isn't it great that you found a better weapon?]

I kind of wish she would treasure the symbol of our shared memory more.

Even though it encapsulates the memory of our tenth together... Or does she want to forget the past?

Yet I still remember fondly how her boobs felt back then...

For now, my friend Aqua Hartia currently sits as decoration in my room.

Maybe it's better to let Sylphy have it?

Unlike Eris, Sylphy never stopped using the magic wand I gave her.

If I give her my companion Aqua Hartia, she definitely will use it happily.

But I'm not sure how girls feel about being regifted a present from another woman.

But Sylphy's current wand was a present from Roxy as well...

Regardless, like usual, my primary equipment will be Magic Armor MK-IIB.

Only when a strong enemy appears would I need the bulky Magic Armor MK-I.

It's fine. Even if a strong enemy appears, I have long planned for that scenario.

It'll work.

I plan to disassemble the bulky Magic Armor MK-I and ship it over, then reassemble it there.

Hitogami knows about the existence of Magic Armor.

To avoid giving him a chance to deal with it, it's better if I keep the Magic Armor hidden.

Unlike MK-IIB, I can't wear MK-I at all times. Keeping armored core dissembled when not-in-use is common sense.

With the equipments set, all that's left is how to get there.

For that, Zanoba and I went together to bow our heads to Perugius.

When we reached the Sky Castle, we were brought to a particularly upscale room.

One I have never been in before.

The room feels particularly personalized.

Paintings cover the walls, hand-sized sculptures line the shelves.

The pieces here looks exceptional even compared to all the others on display in the Sky Castle.

All the works on display in the hallway looks [expensive], but the ones here all look [exquisitely crafted] or [particularly tasteful.]

In other words, money can't buy taste.

"This place is amazing."

"Oh, is this Shisho's first time here?"

I start murmuring to myself without realizing it. Unexpectedly Zanoba replies.

"Yeah, I'm usually at the guest room or courtyards..."

"Only those recognized by Perugius-sama are allowed here."

Sylvaril speaks sternly, standing by the entryway.

Hidden in her tones is [And you're not.]

Recently I've started to think that she really hates me.

Or more precisely, hates the one behind me, Orsted.

"Sylvaril-dono, can you not speak as if my Shisho somehow is beneath me?"

Without turning around, Zanoba raises his objection.

Hey, at least look at people when you speak to them.

"But, the only one Perugius-sama recognizes and granted permission to enter is Zanoba-sama. I don't know why you're so insistent about bringing both over..."

Listening to Sylvaril's calm reply, Zanoba turns around like he saw a ghost.

"Indeed, Shisho rarely has a chance to make dolls during Perugius-sama's presence, so I can understand why he may not yet to be recognized. But, Shisho's work has a depth far beyond my own understandings. They're truly excellent."

"But Perugius-sama..."

"Rudeus Greyrat is my Shishou. Indeed, he may be less informed than Perugius-sama and yours truly. But without Shisho's guidance, the Zanoba Shirone who has been recognized by Perugius-sama himself may not exist!"

"..."

Sylvaril falls silent.

She seems disinterested.

Well, I can't tell behind that mask.

Even though I'm used to Zanoba's flattery by now, I still feel rather moved this time.

I have a little know-how about figures from the other world, it's not that big of a deal.

"Understood, please accept my apology, Zanoba-sama."

"It's fine, Sylvaril-dono."

Sylvaril bows her head, and candidly Zanoba pardons her.

Honestly, I don't really care how she treats me.

"Zanoba, you're back."

Just now, the door to the interior opens.

It's Perugius.

Maybe reading the mood, he glanced back and forth at Sylvaril and Zanoba.

"... What is it, has Sylvaril been negligent in some way."

"No, Shisho has never been in this room before, and we're talking about that."

Zanoba happily replies.

He did not complain to the master. He's a good man.

"Rudeus... Indeed, he never had a chance to come here. What do you think of this room, my pride and joy?"

"It's truly impressive. Even more than those in the hallway, they truly capture the essence of good taste."

"Oh–?"

Not knowing what to say in details, I gave some ambiguous praises, but that seems to put Perugius in a good mood.

"If those on the hallway outside are what's considered first rate, then these here are the premium goods that Perugius-sama loves. Aren't they?"

"Exactly."

Perugius smiles with a smirk on his face and sits down.

I muddled through this time.

Maybe my appraisal ability hasn't completely been forgotten.

Even Sylvaril looks shocked... I think.

Even though I can't see under that mask.

Regardless, Zanoba and I rushed to sit down after Perugius's invitation.

It becomes an interview between us three.

"Well then, what shall it be today? Have you found another interesting doll somewhere?"

Perugius asks merrily.

Zanoba happily replies.

"No, Perugius-sama, I'm heading home, so I come to say my goodbyes."

"Oh..."

Perugius frowns, staring at Zanoba.

Then slowly his happiness subsides.

In details Zanoba explains the draft summon he received from Shirone Kingdom.

Perugius listens without interrupting, only looking straight at Zanoba.

Zanoba finishes his monologue.

And after a moment of silence, Perugius finally speaks.

"... Zanoba, have you the resolve to die?"

Instead of waiting for anything else he has to say, Perugius asked.

Zanoba looks blankly back at Perugius.

"Why are you so certain?"

"I can see it in your face, the look you wear, I've seen it on many men in my lifetime."

Perugius unhappily said.

Even though I wonder how he knew from just looking at Zanoba, but if Perugius wants to stop him, I concur.

It's perfect if he tells Zanoba not to go to Shirone Kingdom.

If that happens, then I won't fall for Hitogami's trap.

"If that's true, what will you do?"

Zanoba keeps his poker face. Perugius smiles lightly.

"If you need to fight someone, I'll happily give you a hand. Discussing art with you is important to me. If someone gets in the way of that, I'll get rid of them. A... false king, for example."

"That won't be necessary."

"Ah, of course."

Perugius suddenly checks his surroundings, before stopping on me.

Am I supposed to say something?

This is what they call exchanging a glance, right?

While I'm thinking, Perugius has already looked away and continues his conversation with Zanoba.

"Zanoba... going to your death, does he know of it?"

"No, he just wants to come along–"

"Oh, and you didn't refuse him?"

"Because once Shisho sets his mind on something, even if I refuse he will come to Shirone Kingdom."

When I said I'm coming, Zanoba didn't particularly object.

I guess he realized objecting won't do any good.

Well, it's true.

"Rudeus will protect your life like his own."

"Haha, what are you talking about, Perugius-sama."

Zanoba laughs like he heard a joke.

But his smile is forced.

"Shisho will have another baby soon. There are things he must do. When it comes to it, certainly he will save himself first."

"Are you the student of someone who would watch his friend cornered and leave him to die?"

"Of course not! Shisho is an amazing man. He will definitely come to my aid and survive as well!"

I'm no superman.

Well, leaving aside whether Zanoba seriously thinks I'm superman or not...

Zanoba and Perugius's meeting has been going smoothly.

But [Don't go to Shirone] doesn't seem to be an option here.

Perugius seems to realize something.

Losing interest rapidly, he props himself up, and sighs with a face of boredom.

"Well then, you shouldn't be here just to say goodbye, what can I be of help with?"

Zanoba nods before answering.

"I wish to borrow your magic teleport circles to Shirone Kingdom, for permission to bring the Magic Armor to the castle, as well as... permission for Shisho's wife, the Magic Race Roxy Migurdia."

"I can prepare a magic teleport circle for you, and permit entry for the Magic Armor... but Magic Race are not allowed in this castle."

Perugius replies with a frown.

Previously Arumanfi had also denied entry for Roxy, also because Perugius refused to allow Magic Race from entering the Sky Castle.

"Even if this, Zanoba Shirone, asks you as a once-in-a-lifetime favor?"

"Zanoba Shirone, you said this, so you think you're that important to me?"

"I am a rare friend who can discuss art at your level with you."

"So you said this Armor Dragon King Perugius Dola has befriended some prince from a little kingdom like yourself?"

"Excuse my impudence, but when it comes to art, race and stature are irrelevant."

Perugius stares down Zanoba.

Zanoba fearlessly returns the favor.

Sylvaril also glares at Zanoba.

Only my eyesight wanders back and forth.

The situation is tense.

If it's me, I'd start apologizing.

"Ha!"

Perugius raise his chin and laughs.

"Fine, I'll permit that Magic Race's entry."

"Thank you very much for your consideration."

"But, I have conditions."

Afterwards, Perugius lays out his ground rules.

Roxy is barred from speaking, touching anything, from appearing before him, inside the castle...

Basically, she's only allowed to use the castle as a way station. I accept the conditions.

"Then, Sylvaril, prepare the magic circle for them."

"Yes!"

After giving Syvaril instructions, Perugius looks back at Zanoba with disinterest.

A cold glance, but in there somehow I saw he has resigned himself.

"Zanoba Shirone."

"Yes."

"It's a pity."

Perugius and Zanoba stand up together.

Towards the Perugius's back, Zanoba bows quietly.

Perugius's outline looks particularly lonesome, but perhaps that's just an illusion.

After the Magic Armor has been disassembled, it was sent to Shirone Kingdom via the magic circle.

Afterwards Ginger contacted a craftsman she knew to encase the Magic Armor in stone blocks as camouflage, and had it sent to a warehouse near the capital.

I didn't go along.

But I did instruct her to also start investigating the situation inside Shirone Kingdom.

If the north invading turns out false, that gives me a good reason to dissuade Zanoba from going.

Even though, the northern Kingdom of Bista really looks poised for attack.

Bista has mobilized for war, with large number of mercenaries and hoodlums inside its borders.

"King Pax seems to have brought 10 able knights from the Kingdom of Dragon King with him, and used them to rid the country of rebels."

10 able knights.

Just 10?

Well, including Pax, the coup has eleven members, but the coup's success are no doubt the doing of these ten individuals.

In that case, they might be the trap set by Hitogami.

"Ginger-san, did you learn of the names of these 10 knights?"

"No, unfortunately I haven't got that far with my investigation... Only that it's rumored King Pax has a man with a skull-looking face by his side. Also the rumor that man is among the Seven Great World Powers, the Death God."

"I see."

Yikes, another one of the Seven Great World Powers...

Well, I hope that the Kingdom of Dragon King won't bother to lend Pax one of the Seven. Maybe that skull guy is someone else. Either way I should report this to Orsted.

"Oh, if the northern kingdom is ready to invade, then we have to hurry."

Hearing this, Zanoba looks anxious to immediately head out.

He is ready to go.

His tone is like usual, but I can sense his unease.

Nothing I can do to dissuade Zanoba now, so we will set out in a few days.

The party will be me, Zanoba, Ginger, and Roxy. Four members.

Julie is temporarily left with my family.

Eve of our departure.

He came.

After making love to Sylphy, I headed downstairs before going to sleep.

Abruptly, Leo starts barking.

Moment later, Eris rushes out her room, full of bloodlust.

What's going on?

"Enemy attack!"

"What?"

Who would attack here?

I went to my room to grab my staff, and take a glance out the window with a lantern.

In the darkness, the outlines of a man I recognize standing in front of the gate.

"Eris, that isn't an enemy."

"Oh... fine."

Eris looks out the window as well, before answering, still fired up.

I put aside my staff and walk out the hallway.

I hush the rest of the family back into their rooms, who're wondering about the commotion, and head to the gate.

Outside the door.

Stands Orsted.

Currently entangled by the wooden pillars at the gate, Beat. It's tentacle play.

"Sorry for coming so late."

"It's fine... Beat, stop it."

"This is an emergency. Do you have time?"

"Ah, yes."

With a few swooshes, Orsted untangles himself from Beat and disappears into the darkness.

I applied some healing magic on Beat, briefly inform Eris that I'll be out, and rush to catch up to him.

There are no 24-hour shops in the city.

So we met at a nearby clearing instead.

A moonless light.

Only the lantern I brought from home illuminates the empty field.

Somehow we always meet in such dark locales, when Orsted and I speak privately.

And when we speak in such dark locales, it feels like we're scheming something.

I should add more lights to the office...

"So, what is it?"

"About the pawns Hitogami has prepared this time."

Orsted has read Ginger's intel.

Because he wasn't around when I visited, I left a memo.

"I'll give you my predictions based on Ginger York's report, and the strategies to deal with them."

Predictions?

It would be better if we have more time to collect information.

Should I hold Zanoba back to collect more intel?

No, at this crucial moment I can't trouble Zanoba.

This is rough.

"First, about the ten knights. Nine of them are probably small fries."

"Right."

"But the last one, the skull-faced man, I remember him."

The guy always staying by Pax's side.

"Knight of Kingdom of Dragon King, with a face of a skull, and outstanding skills. There's only one possible candidate."

"And that is?"

Orsted sharply glares at me (I think).

"Ranked fifth on the Seven Great World Powers, Death God Randolph Marianne."

Seven Great World Powers.

Number 5. Death God.

Those three phrases hit me head on.

So the rumors are true..?

"The trump card of Kingdom of Dragon King."

"... Trump card? Why would he be involved in the political dispute of another country?"

"I don't know, but assuming Hitogami's involved, that's typical of him."

Ah, of course if I think about it.

I asked something pointless again.

"Why Kingdom of Dragon King would rent out the Death God is hard to imagine, but someone else can worry about that... Right now we don't have any information about any other pawns involved who would be capable of assassinating you or I. For now, I want to discuss how to deal with the Death God with you."

Perhaps that skull-faced man isn't the Death God.

But better safe than sorry, and be prepared for the worst.

"That Death God Randolph does not belong to any school in particular, he's a self-styled warrior."

"Self-styled?"

"Indeed, no set style. He would do anything for victory."

In other words, like Ruijerd?

I'm no good against someone like that.

"But his best skill is [Sword of Bewitching]."

Sword of Bewitching.

I can imagine from the name alone.

A skill like Engetsu Sappou.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the television series 'Nemuri Kyoshiro: Engetsu Sappo'. }

"[Sword of Bewitching] is a meld of [Sword of Luring] and [Sword of Hesitation]."

"What do they each do?"

"[Sword of Luring] entices an enemy to attack when he should retreat. [Sword of Hesitation] forces an enemy to retreat when he should attack."

Eh?

I don't get it.

"In battle, he manipulates the opponent, making him attack when he shouldn't, defend when he shouldn't. It messes with your timing, so be prepared."

"But I don't really know what I'm supposed to do then, hearing that."

"Attack when you thought to guard, guard when you thought to attack. But there are also times to defend, and times to attack."

How rhetorical.

Confusing.

"Don't let his theatrics get to you, just overpower him."

In that case, then Orsted can go take care of him.

I briefly entertained that precocious thought, before shooing it away.

Orsted is heading to Kingdom of Dragon King.

"Can I overpower him..."

"He's fifth on the Seven Great World Powers, so he's master class, and has plenty of counters against magic. A difficult opponent indeed... but a man long absent from the battlefield. Right now, he's probably a distant second to any of the

heads of three great sword styles. Once you figure out [Sword of Bewitching], understand how it works, and steady your resolve, even you should suffice against him."

Really?

Honestly, I don't have any confidence against someone of God Rank.

But I did beat North Emperor Auber that time, so maybe I can. Probably?

"Sounds like that Death God uses tactics similar to North God Style."

"Indeed, that man was the original candidate for North God."

Ah, really?

So he was a candidate, but he's not the North God, so he failed?

Yet he's ranked above even the current North God?

I think North God is ranked seventh, and Death God fifth.

"Then how did he become the Death God?"

Orsted gave me the details about Death God when I asked.

Randolph Marianne.

Grandson of the second North God.

For a while since birth, he trained alongside the third generation and current North God, under the second generation's tutelage.

But when he came of age, he had a fall out with the second generation.

Leaving the second generation North God, he went on to develop his own techniques.

Afterwards, he managed to defeat one of the Seven Great World Powers in the Magic Continent.

Randolph ended up gaining the title of Death God after beating the original.

But from that day forth, endless hoards would challenge him, vying for a place among the Seven Great World Powers.

One fight after another.

Endless battles against those that care for nothing but the battlefield.

After spending ten years fighting those fights, Randolph was fed up.

He decided to retire.

He returned to his hometown at Kingdom of Dragon King and studied to become a chef.

Then he took over a relative's troubled restaurant.

Thus a new chapter of the Legend of the Death God began.

But that legend had a rather inglorious end.

The restaurant folded due to financial difficulties.

He had talent has a warrior, but none as a chef.

Buried in debt and wandering the street, he was picked up by a general of Kingdom of Dragon King, and became a knight of the kingdom.

No one knows how old he is, but that's the story of Death God Randolph.

What an interesting tale.

"As long as your tactics are sound, he isn't a hard counter against you. If Death God Randolph does appear, use guerilla tactics. Attack from a distance, just like you did with me."

"Got it."

Death God Randolph.

Carving the name of my new enemy deep into my memory, towards Orsted I took a bow.

"Then... come back alive."

"Okay. Thank you."

Knowledge of a potential hard fight ahead.

We head out tomorrow.

How suffocating.

The day of departure.

My entire family came to see me off at the gate.

Sylphy, with Lara in tow, Eris, Aisha, Norn, Lilia, Zenith, Lucy, Leo, and Jirou.

"Well, Rudi, be careful. It's fine since it's Rudi, but don't get careless. Come back safe."

"Sylphy, take care of the family."

"Em. I will."

I gave Sylphy a hug.

And rubbed her butt while I'm at it.

Do I really have to say goodbye to this cute butt also?

"Eris, no rigorous exercise until the baby is born."

"Got it."

"And if the baby is a girl, please give her a girl's name."

I caution Eris just in case.

Knowing her, even if it's a girl, she might give her a boy's name.

And raise her as a boy anyways.

That makes for a fun story, but it's obviously a pretty awful thing to do to a girl.

"Well then, Onii-chan. Work hard. Expect the mercenary group to be even bigger by the time you get back."

"Alright, but nothing too shady, okay?"

"Hey!"

I also caution Aisha just in case.

The mercenary group is on the right track, but don't forget, they're a group of hoodlums.

Look away from the wheel for a second, and they'll turn back to a bunch of good-for-nothings.

The only thing we can do is keep them as spotless as possible.

"Nii-san, I was in his care while his highness Zanoba was in school. If possible, do your best to prevent the worst from happening."

"Yes, count on me."

"Well then, you take care too, Nii-san."

"Norn, work hard for the student council too."

Going out of her way to come today, Norn is rather strict.

Her days will only get harder, now that she's the student council president.

"Master, may the fortune of war be with you."

"Yes, I'll return safe this time as well."

Lilia tries to light a fire under me.

She's approaching retirement age.

Well, she still has some youth in her, but now's not the time for this conversation, so I can only bow for now.

"..."

Zenith rubs me on the head.

Perhaps Lilia can't just leave her alone, with Zenith the way she is?

Somehow I feel that my family might have robbed Lilia of her path in life.

But, this is the path Lilia chose, probably.

"Hey Lucy, tell papa to stay safe."

"... Have a safe trip."

"I'm leaving now, Lucy."

Lucy fidgets by Sylphy's legs.

As if struggling about something.

Finally, with her mind made, she looks towards me.

"... Papa, hug."

"! Come here... okay, good, be a good girl now!"

"Mm..."

Given a rare chance to spoil her, I gave her an eskimo kiss.

{ C-Editor's note: Rubbing his nose against her nose. }

Maybe because I shaved this time, she didn't resist.

I let her off after charging my fill.

Finally, I speak to Julie, who's left in my family's care.

"Julie."

"Yes, grandmaster."

"You might be a slave, but you're also a guest of Zanoba, as well as my student. No one here will treat you like a slave. Consider yourself family and make yourself comfortable."

"Yes. I will do my best to not be a bother too."

Julie always took my lessons to heart.

She is fluent in human language, and has even become quite good with etiquette.

Now that I think about it, it's been 5, no, 6 years since we bought her.

Her figure remains roughly the same, though, but Ginger trained her well. She even got her period already.

She is already a respectable adult.

Should I have expected this?

"And... please take care of master."

"Yes. Of course."

Julie seems quite concerned for Zanoba.

That's how it is.

I would worry as well.

That's why I'm going.

"Leo, same as always. Not just Lara, please protect the rest of the family as well."

"Woofu!"

And finally, I ask guard dog #2 to guard in my stead.

"Well, let's go."

"I'm going now."

With luggages in tow, we head out.

Roxy also says her goodbyes with the family, and we leave them behind together.

Afterwards, we meet up with Zanoba at the city entrance.

Basically, most of our baggage has already been sent to Shirone Kingdom. We're traveling light.

Just a change of clothes.

As courtesy, I'm also carrying Roxy's luggage.

There are roughly seven holy relics among them.

{ C-Editor's note: Euphemism for panties. }

They must be carried with the utmost respect.

Cliff also came to the city entrance to see us off.

"Sorry, Rudeus... I really want to go, but..."

Cliff wants to come, but he has a family to look after.

I can understand.

Also he's not like me, always globetrotting like I already dropped out of school.

"Cliff-senpai... Please help out if my family is in need."

"Em. Rudeus, take care of Zanoba."

"I will."

With that said, Cliff turns to face Zanoba.

"Zanoba. I thought about your patriotism."

"Well, it's not really patriotism."

"... But Zanoba, please listen carefully. Milis-sama once said..."

Then Cliff went on and on preaching to Zanoba in the typical Milis style.

Is it fair to call him preachy?

I was on the receiving end of that often too.

But this is a life and death situation, so I can understand.

Zanoba can only listen and smile wryly.

In one ear and out the other.

I glance around while pretending to listen, and saw Elinalise and Roxy talking among themselves.

"Roxy. Please take care of Rudi. That kid can crumble under pressure..."

"You don't have to tell me."

Worrying about me?

I can understand worrying about Lara crying.

But besides that I can't think of any other reason to worry about me.

"When he gets depressed, push him down like last time. Don't forget."

"Oh, well... I don't think Rudi will repeat a mistake like that."

"Well, this journey could be a good educational opportunity. You're still producing milk, right? Try some new plays while your body's still different, it could be... hot."

"Rudi might like it, but I won't."

I trust Roxy with her words, but...

Sorry, I'm the kind that repeats my mistakes.

If, hypothetically, Zanoba dies, it's not impossible that I'll fall apart again.

Well, maybe Elinalise is just joking around to loosen Roxy up.

Yeah, I'll go with that.

Elinalise is the same as always, even after giving birth.

Only dirty jokes whenever she speaks.

Hopefully she'll restrain herself when educating her child.

"Well, I'm going."

"Ah, come back safe."

A half day's travel to the citadel ruins before we teleport inside the Sky Castle.

Roxy also managed to enter the Sky Castle.

Arumanfi looks in disgust as he explains the conditions for Roxy's entry.

Immediately upon our arrival, Sylvaril and two of Perugius's other familiars surround the magic circle.

Tight security for only one individual, Roxy.

"Rudeus-sama. This time Perugius-sama was too generous to permit this Magic race from entering the castle..."

"Yeah, thanks."

"..."

I go through the motions, but Roxy can only silently look down.

Condition Number One.

Roxy must remain silent when inside the castle.

Also, don't touch anything.

And don't come within sight of Perugius.

Only then would she be allowed passage.

Roxy understands this.

"..."

Only that, Roxy looks dreamily towards the breathtaking Sky Castle.

Gawking like a country bumpkin at the castle standing before her and pulling my sleeves.

Even though I just explained how Roxy has been barred from the castle.

I pat her shoulders to stop her.

From under her hat she looks up to me, slightly red-faced.

Really looks like an embarrassed bumpkin.

"Cough."

Sylvaril coughs at our playfulness.

Isn't it fine as long as she doesn't talk?

Though Perugius might be known for his magnanimity. If you show too much prejudice against Roxy, bad rumors might spread about his underlings.

The ones that would spread them would be my dog and cat.

"Well, this way."

Sylvaril leads the way. Flanked by the other familiars, we head underground.

No sightseeing, but, it can't be helped. I'm the one asking for a favor.

Bringing in a Magic race that Perugius abhors.

I don't know why it's such a big deal, but he must really favor Zanoba to permit her passage.

Perugius really wants to keep Zanoba alive.

"... Sylvaril-san."

"What is it?"

"Please give Perugius-sama my thanks again."

"Certainly."

A reply, as matter of course.

Nanahoshi awaits us at the teleport chamber.

She stands behind the already activated magic teleport circle.

Speaking of which, I forgot to mention our trip to her.

Maybe she heard about it from somewhere and came to send us off?

"Zanoba... I heard you're going home, but..."

Nanahoshi might have heard of the situation, but doesn't really know what she should say.

With her arms crossed in front of her, she looks troubled.

Slowly Zanoba approaches her.

"Yes, Nanahoshi-dono. I'm going home first."

"..."

Nanahoshi makes a complicated expression.

Looks a bit jealous, but also a bit sad.

"Nanahoshi-dono, your day to go home will come one day as well."

Zanoba wasn't trying to put on airs.

For Nanahoshi, whose ability to return is undetermined, that might sound like an insult.

"Yeah, I hope so."

"Nanahoshi-dono, don't give up. You'll return one day, but you can't if that home is gone."

With that said, Zanoba wraps his arms around Nanahoshi, and gently pats her back.

"I might be far away then, but I'll pray for Nanahoshi-dono's safe passage home."

If this was Japan, that might be considered sexual harrassment.

But Nanahoshi doesn't show aversion. Frigidly, she also wraps her arms around Zanoba as well.

A sparkle hidden at the edge of her eyes.

"Well, then, thank you, Zanoba, em your highness..."

"No need for courtesy now. Each day I spent with Nanahoshi-dono and Cliff researching were all irreplaceable memories. Thanks are unnecessary. Or rather, I should be the one that owes you thanks."

Say, did Zanoba and Cliff grow close because of what happened with Nanahoshi?

Assisting Nanahoshi with her research together also deepened their bond.

How nostalgic.

"No, thank you, if I... without your highness Zanoba's presence, my research would certainly not have reached its current stage."

"Rather, without Nanahoshi-dono, I would have never met Perugius-sama, and missed such a convenient method for returning home. So we're even! Hahaha!"

Still smiling, Zanoba separates himself from Nanahoshi.

"Well then, Nanahoshi-dono. In case we don't meet again... take care."

"Yes..."

Nanahoshi looks towards me with unease.

(This sounds like a last goodbye, but isn't it an easy return with teleport magic?)

Of course, this won't be a last goodbye.

Zanoba is just visiting home for a while.

All I do now is simply nod.

"Well, Shisho, let's go."

Following Zanoba's lead, we head inside the magic circle.

The magic circle destination is a ruin.

The usual teleportation ruin.

This ruin lays on the edge of Shirone Kingdom, inside the eastern forests.

It's about five days journey to the capital.

"Phew..."

Roxy lets out a sigh with her ban lifted.

Also, she looks incredulously at the magic circle she arrived with.

"I always had some interest in magic teleport circles."

"I'm used to it by now."

"If I memorize how the magic circle looks, I might be able to draw one myself..."

"... Can you?"

Hearing my response, Roxy shakes her head.

"No. Perugius-sama already said he doesn't want Magic race in the castle. Probably because when Laplace revives, it would be troublesome if there are Magic race capable of teleport magic, I imagine. If I memorize it, he'd have me killed."

Really?

That might not be the main reason, but it might be one of them.

But Laplace should know of magic teleport circles himself, so that might be pointless.

"Quit the chit-chat. Come on. We still need to pick up our baggage."

That was Zanoba. Thus we head out of the ruins.

We found a small hut by the forest, and collect the luggage that was left there for us.

Then we head to the capital.

By the time we reached the capital city of Shirone, Latakia, it's already sunset.

When Zanoba passed the city gates, he looks deeply moved.

It also been a long time since I visited this place.

The scenery doesn't look very different from how I remember it.

There are plenty of adventurers on the streets, ready to challenge a labyrinth.

But, well?

It feels rather tense since our arrival, and the streets more unkempt.

Not just the adventurers, it feels like a lot more hoodlums and suspicious types are about.

"Mm, the number of mercenaries have grown since I have been away. Looks like war is coming."

Zanoba sounds a bit happy in his voice.

How can he sound so happy with war approaching?

Somehow I feel he isn't just putting on a brave face.

"You look happy."

"Shisho, that's because battle raises your spirit."

"Does it."

"Yes. It's what it means to be a man. Isn't that the same for everyone?"

I don't really get it.

Like the excitement from seeing a robot in person?

Regardless, we head to the residence Ginger prepared for us.

We'll stay here for a night, then change tomorrow to announce our return and have an audience with the king.

We didn't cross the border, so it's a bit sketchy, but we have an excuse prepared.

If he didn't ask, all the better.

"Zanoba-sama, I'd like to lie low in the city and collect more information."

Ginger said and takes her leave.

Zanoba stops her.

"Eh? Ginger, you're a knight. Shouldn't you come with me tomorrow to report to his highness of our return?"

"... No. While I may be a knight, I'm also Zanoba-sama's royal guard. I sense something amiss in the city."

"Well, do that then."

"Yes!"

While taking her bow, Ginger shoots me a glance.

As if to tell me to please take care of Zanoba-sama.

I nod in return.

Well then, from now on this is the real deal.

Only Zanoba and I will have an audience with Pax.

From there, we'll gain some idea of what Hitogami's up to.

Alternatively, that might become our battlefield against the Death God.

In that case, I'll grab Zanoba and run.

With Roxy covering us from outside, we'll retreat outside of the city.

From there I can use the Magic Armor and do battle with the Death God, or make a run for it.

Those are Orsted's instructions. For battle, attack from a distance.

Assuming it's [Sword of Bewitching], I should have the advantage in a ranged battle with the Magic Armor.

If a fight does not happen...

I'm afraid Zanoba will march to war.

A battle against the northern kingdom, I don't know how it'll turn out, but..

Also, I don't know what will satisfy Zanoba.

How will I bring Zanoba back?

What do I have to say in order to persuade Zanoba?

If Pax is aiming to take Zanoba's life, will Zanoba reconsider?

Well, let's think about this again after our audience.

Honestly, I hate the fact of just walking into an obvious trap.

It's easier if I can just blow up Pax and the castle from a distance.

But I know that's impossible.

Orsted bars it, and even if he didn't, Zanoba wouldn't let me.

The castle is the symbol of a nation, and if suddenly destroyed, so goes the kingdom.

It would only entice the enemy from the north to attack.

Basically, it's impossible.

An uneasy future.

All I can do is sigh.

First, let's take care of the audience.

Then we'll figure out what we need to do.

"Rudi."

In the midst of my thought, someone taps on my shoulder.

I turn around to see Roxy standing there.

"Aren't you a little tense there."

"Am I?"

"Yes. How about relaxing a little. You can't be careless, but if you're so stiff, you'll find it hard to move during crucial moments."

Roxy began rubbing my shoulders as she spoke.

With her small, but strong hands.

For a while, I sat there and savour those sensual hands.

Indeed.

I need to be flexible.

Just decide on a target for now, then go with the flow.

At worst, it's fine as long as Zanoba and Roxy live.

Including my own life, that's three.

Let's set that as our baseline.

Then, let's add Ginger on top of that, so four.

The survival of us four, and a safe return.

Can I do it?

"Thank you. I feel a weight taken off of my shoulders because of you."

I turn around after saying that.

Roxy is her usual self, her sleepy eyes.

But somehow gentler than usual.

"No, the usual Rudi would be more playful when relaxed."

"... Like?"

"Like saying, [Roxy, how about massage my front this time, starting here] and ripping your pants off..."

"B-But that's only when we're at home..."

"Yes. At home all Rudi wants to do is dirty stuff."

Roxy said as she caresses my face.

Feel like I'm being reprimanded.

Sexy stuff is no good?

On the eve of the battle, with her around, anyone would want the same.

Not just me.

"Just kidding. Doesn't that help you loosen up?"

"... Ah, yeah. It did."

Indeed, my shoulders have loosened up.

With enough tension to remain right for the situation.

Relaxed, but still focused.

It's just right.

"Well, I'll rest up for the audience tomorrow. Thank you."

"Yes, good night, Rudi."

Do my best.

With only that on my mind, I slept.

We arrive at the entrance to the royal castle.

At first, the soldiers on guard look at Zanoba with suspicion.

They didn't expect him to come. He never made any contact.

At least he should arrive on horseback.

But instead he's on foot.

Even his only royal guard Ginger is nowhere to be seen.

Everything looks too suspicious, but after a few questions to test and confirm Zanoba's identity, they immediately straighten up and make way for us.

From their actions, I can appreciate how much this kingdom puts its royalties up on a pedestal, including this one here.

Maybe they're especially sensitive, given the recent purge of the royal bloodline?

Regardless, we asked for an audience and were brought to a waiting room.

There we wait for about an hour or so.

Our request was granted, and we're allowed into the audience room.

Shirone Royal Castle.

Audience Room.

Inside are five individuals.

Only five.

With not a single soldier standing guard.

In the center.

Seated on the throne is someone I recognize.

At least, on the outside he hasn't changed much.

He hasn't grown much.

Nonchalantly he leans back on the throne.

Pax Shirone.

A little more mature looking, a little more daunting, but more or less the same as before.

A beautiful girl sits beside him.

Looks like a middle schooler. She's wearing a white dress. Her hair has a dash of aqua blue.

The color is similar to Migurdia Tribe's, yet not the same as Roxy's.

Maybe from another tribe?

She has vacant eyes.

Wearing a coronet, is she the Queen?

Pax's hand motions behind her.

At a glance, it looks like he's rubbing her back, but...

I know that he's touching her butt.

He thinks no one can tell?

Sigh, treating her like a sex slave.

I turn my sight away from that girl, towards the man standing by the other side of the throne.

He looks around 40 or so.

Buff looking, with a sword on his waist, but he's lightly armored.

He doesn't look particularly strong or dangerous.

A person that I won't feel guarded towards if we cross paths normally.

But on his head.

A grim face with prominent cheekbones.

An eyepatch covers his right eye. His left eye looks sunken and lifeless. His face is shaded like a zombie.

He looks like a pirate captain straight out of old movies.

If I have to describe him in a single phrase.

It would be a skull-faced man.

Indeed.

No doubt he's the Death God Randolph Marianne.

"Your majesty. Zanoba Shirone has received your summons and rushed back from Magic City Sharia."

Zanoba walks up the audience room and immediately kneels down.

Without any reservations he pays his respect to Pax and bows his head.

I imitate his motions, but just in case, beneath my robes I take aim at Pax.

Pax spies at the kneeling Zanoba and withdraws his hand from the girl's buttocks.

While slurping that hand, he speaks.

"... Aren't you early."

"I hurried given the state of emergency."

"Or perhaps, you've been in hiding somewhere in the country the whole time. After all, there's no news of you crossing the border."

It took us about a month to reach Shirone Kingdom, after the letter arrived.

It's a year's travel by normal methods.

Our pace definitely looks impossible.

"To avoid attacks from enemy nations, we kept our identities hidden during the journey here."

"Even after you crossed the border?"

"Especially after we crossed the border."

"I see."

Pax humphs.

Doesn't sound like he'll bother to ask how we got here so fast.

Well, we'll just lie about it, but...

Pax straightens up and points towards me.

"Then, what about him?"

"Your majesty knows him as well. He's Rudeus Greyrat."

"I'm aware."

"Then, what is it?"

"I'm asking why is he here."

"War is coming, so I thought it would be ideal to bring a strong magician along."

It's decisive.

In this world, magicians have critical importance on the field of battle.

Advanced Rank magicians, even intermediate ranked ones, are very handy for tactical positioning.

In single confrontations, swordsmen generally have the upper hand. But in numbers, when individual battles are less crucial, magicians become the focus.

Saint and King Rank magicians are indispensable commodities for kings of nations during wartime.

But Pax snickers in response.

With a sullen smile, his glance shuffles between Zanoba and I.

"Oh, really? Are you sure he isn't a pawn you brought to kill me."

When Pax said that, bloodthirst can be felt from two individuals that appear suddenly beside the Death God.

I guess those two are knights from Kingdom of Dragon King?

There should be ten in all.

Including the Death God, three are accounted for.

Where might the other seven be?

Honestly, they don't look too strong.

"How could you say that... I have no intention of making enemies with your majesty."

"Huh, you'll forgive the usurper?"

"Certainly. It's not like I ever swore loyalty to the previous king."

"Then, do you plan to swear loyalty to me?"

"..."

Zanoba did not reply.

Pax snorts, unamused by the non-response.

The attitude might be considered seditious, but Pax seemed to overlook it.

"Just as well. Brother ... no, Zanoba. What you actually think is irrelevant."

{ C-Editor's note: He is using the formal way of saying 'Brother' in Japanese. }

Pax nods towards the knights standing behind him.

"Look, these are the knights I brought from the Kingdom of Dragon King."

Hearing Pax, the knights lower their heads.

But the Death God yawns.

"And this one here, is a rather big deal. Ranked fifth of the Seven Great Powers, Death God Randolph Marianne."

The Death God straightens up when he heard his introduction.

He steps up looking rather uncomfortable.

A dry cough.

"Thank you for the introduction. I'm Randolph Marianne. Magic Continent born, mixed race. Human, elf, immortal, and a few others. I work as a knight under the command of General Generalissimo Chagall Gargantis of Kingdom of Dragon King, Order of Black Knights. My main job is killing. I can kill anyone. I don't belong to a particular school, but was formerly trained in North God and Water God Style. People think that the Death God is just a serial killer, but that's a misunderstanding. My hobby is cooking. I'm really a nice guy. I hope we can get along."

After that well practiced speech, he fakes a grim smile, and steps back.

"He might not look it, but he's really strong. After all, he took out all of brother's royal guards in a blink of an eye, he's the crucial character that made me king."

He soloed the whole thing?

As expected of one of the Seven Great Powers.

I heard he's rusty, but I guess not that rusty.

"How about it, Zanoba. How about we let them fight it out and see who's stronger?"

That's how it's going to be?

So Pax really is a Hitogami apostle?

This time he sent the Death God to kill me...

For a trap, this seems awfully straight forward.

"Surely you jest. Exhausting our forces right before war with the north..."

I can see beads of cold sweat forming on Zanoba's temples.

I suppose he's trying to protect me.

On the other hand, Pax is looking rather bemused by the way Zanoba acts.

Finding joy in cornering someone with mere words and watching him panic.

This reminds me of that time when he had me caught.

He really enjoys gaining the higher ground.

Finally, his face turns, as if to show that's he's just kidding.

If via Pax, Hitogami intends to force me to fight the Death God.

I'm ready to fight.

I have made my resolve.

Should I preempt the attack?

Death God looks full of openings.

Oh...

My opponent is among the Seven Great Powers. Certainly he won't have any obvious openings.

If I just attack the first opening I see, it'll certainly be countered.

Orsted said that is the Death God's expertise.

While I was thinking, Pax suddenly stretches his arm.

"Ha, just kidding. Don't be so serious."

A simple reproach.

That's it?

It's not happening?

Randolph looks totally unenthusiastic from the start, yawning again.

Yawning like he only had two hours of sleep last night.

Or maybe he's just bored.

"I have heard of rumors of Rudeus Greyrat. In Asura Kingdom, even though he had help from Armor Dragon King Perugius, he still took down Water God Reida and the Three Swords of North God? Randolph is a treasure his majesty Kingdragon lent to me. I don't think he would lose. But if he's hurt, I would lose face."

Pax shrugs.

Then, straightening up again, he looks back at Zanoba.

"Say, brother, you look rather guarded."

"Well, your majesty and I left on bad terms."

"That is true... but, I don't intend to keep on fighting my brother."

Pax crosses his legs and rests his chin on his hands.

Looking rather arrogant.

"So, let bygones be bygones."

"Thank you for your generosity."

"Sure."

Pax grins as Zanoba takes a bow.

A satisfied grin.

The grin of a winner.

Not a winner in battle, but a smile for having the upper hand.

"Rather, I should be the one thanking you."

"?"

"Because of what happened, I was able to change for the better."

He changed?

That short and chubby Pax doesn't look much different.

Well, looking more carefully, he seems to have slimmed down.

I can see his jawline and abs now. His neck has thickened too. Has he gained muscles?

He can no longer be considered chubby.

No... it's what's inside that counts.

"Certainly, I shed my share of tears when I was sent off as hostage to Kingdom of Dragon King. Towards brother and Rudeus Greyrat... I felt only hate in those dark days."

"..."

"But, I changed."

Pax glances at the girl beside him.

That girl notices his glance.

The glance they exchange conveys a certain trust between them.

"Let me tell you a little story."

"..."

"When I arrived at Kingdom of Dragon King, nobody cared for me. While wandering around aimlessly, I happened upon a girl."

Pax begins his tale without waiting for our reply.

Well, no reason to stop him.

Maybe he'll incidentally mention something about Hitogami.

"That girl was alone in the garden. Just by herself, having nothing to do and bored out of her mind. No one would talk to her, and she would talk to no one. Even when I approached and asked, she wouldn't respond."

Somehow Pax became interested in that girl.

Everyday he would approach her in the garden to make conversation.

That girl talks little, but at least she would respond to Pax.

She's just a clueless girl, but she seems happy to listen to Pax talk.

Pax also finds joy in this, always seeking new topics to discuss with her.

"Soon the rumor spread, that the good-for-nothing from Shirone has hooked up with the good-for-nothing from Kingdom of Dragon King."

A pair of good-for-nothings.

And if they do the deed, a good-for-nothing will be born.

How terrible, soon the palace will be filled with good-for-nothings.

So goes the rumors.

"I want to behead the ones that spread those rumors."

If it was Shirone, even drunks wouldn't dare to speak such slander.

But it wasn't.

"Because in Kingdom of Dragon King, I have nothing."

This weighed heavily on him.

He wanted to make them pay.

But all Pax could do was hide in his bed and soak his pillows with tears of frustration.

He thought that when he got tired of crying, he would just dismiss them as a bunch of idiots...

— But that didn't happen.

From that day since, Pax changed. He turned away from wanton lifestyle and became diligent.

"Even I don't know why that happened. I was not really dumb in the first place. Maybe I just want to prove that I'm more than a good-for-nothing."

In a different environment, meeting different people, learning different emotions, and forging a different path.

It's a change of heart.

I understand.

Because I too, was like that when I came to this world.

Anyways, Pax put in the effort.

He diligently studied magic.

Because of his physiques, he had no talent in swordsmanship and exercise. But looking at him now, he didn't slack off on physical training either.

A year and half later.

Kingdom of Dragon King held a scholarly convention – Pax posted great results in a mock trial of sorts.

That's where he caught the eye of the king.

The king said, [Even though he was sent as a hostage, his never-give-up attitude is praiseworthy.]

There was even an offer of reward.

Basically, he was recognized.

Pax was summoned to the audience room, and the king asks.

Do you want wealth? Or perhaps rank?

If you want, you can defect from Shirone Kingdom and become a citizen of mine.

Despite the king's generous offers, Pax replies.

"The Eighteenth Princess."

Eighteenth Princess Benedict Kingdragon.

Born of a Magic Race mother from unknown origins. The king used her as a plaything, and she was born of that plaything.

She has no succession right, even though she held the title as Eighteenth Princess, no one recognizes her as royalty.

An apathetic girl, the good-for-nothing princess.

Yet Pax asked for the hand of this princess.

The king was hesitant, but Pax was relentless.

"Other daughters are fine too, what a shame you asked for Benedict. Though, even if it's only in name, Benedict is still a princess. You'll need a stature to match that."

Thus the king of Kingdom of Dragon King permits Pax to temporarily return to Shirone Kingdom.

So he can find a suitable station in Shirone before returning to wed the princess.

Also to ask for another prince as hostage.

A necessary step to save face.

But Shirone Kingdom tactfully refused.

Pax always caused trouble in Shirone.

That's why King Shirone sent him to Kingdom of Dragon King.

Wouldn't it be a pity to send another prince as hostage in his place?

This enrages the Dragonking.

How dare a vassal state like Shirone refuse an order from the Dragonking!

To show his wrath, the king sent his most able knights, Death God Randolph and the Order of Black Knights, with Pax to initiate a coup.

They murdered the rest of the royal family, and installed Pax on that still bloody throne.

"... And that's how I gained everything. Rank, fame, a woman's love, and the strongest pawn."

Pax wraps an arm around the girl besides him as he said, and shoots a glance at the Death God beside him.

That girl blushes. The Death God can only shrug.

Oh, so that girl is Benedict?

Eh?

So far he has yet to mention Hitogami.

Maybe Pax heard the word of god and did nothing with it?

Well, his change of heart is a bit suspicious, but...

"That's why, I have no reason to hate you anymore."

"I see, how respectable."

As if truly grateful, Zanoba takes a deep bow.

Then he asks.

"Since you now wield the strongest pawn, is there a reason to recall yours truly?"

"Ha, about that."

Pax snorts and laughs.

Zanoba and him both like to use I to refer to themselves, it's a little confusing.

{ C-Editor's note: The formal Japanese version of the pronoun 'I'. }

"Indeed, if I ask Randolph, he can handle the northern incursion on his own. But despite calling him my pawn, ultimately, he's just a loan. Who knows when he will return to his majesty Kingdragon. To assume borrowed power alone can protect the motherland would be a mistake. I don't want to disappoint his majesty after finally earning his approval."

Because he was recognized, Pax was made king of Shirone.

So he has to show his worth.

"What good am I, if I don't show my resourcefulness once a while?"

How self-aware.

I often try to make myself useful to Orsted as well.

"So, that's why, brother... no, Zanoba. You might have expected revenge when I summoned you, but... that was never my intention. It's as just the letter said. Due to the coup, our country has a moment of weakness, and is now under attack from the north. Right now, the country needs a warrior like Zanoba. So let water under the bridge, and lend me your power."

When he said that, Pax lowers his head.

Not really a bow, but it's lowered.

Not asking Zanoba as his brother, but as his king.

"Of course, your majesty. It's for this that I live."

Zanoba nods.

There's no hesitation there.

His lack of hesitation probably unnerves Pax.

Thus he asks.

"Brother... even though I'm an usurper. You're fine with that?"

Pax fears that Zanoba might plot mutiny?

Perhaps he just wants to lay it all out there first.

He did kill the rest of their brothers.

He said he doesn't harbor hate anymore, but Zanoba still might.

It's not unfathomable to think that Zanoba came back to avenge them.

"..."

Zanoba raises his head when he heard those words. A moment of confusion, then bows down again.

With Zanoba unresponsive, Pax raises his chin and speaks up.

"Speak freely."

Dependent on his answer, I might have to fight the Death God.

The Death God may look unenthusiastic now, but if things turn serious, he'll certainly come at me with breathtaking speed.

I will put up a distraction and break a wall to escape.

While I'm on alert, Zanoba speaks.

"No matter the king, no matter his politics, the fact that I live to protect the kingdom remains unchanged."

Silence permeates the audience room.

That wasn't the question.

But, it's clear that he means [I don't plan to betray you] in those words.

Pax looks troubled.

I wonder if it's a difficult decision.

Whether to consider Zanoba friend or foe.

"Ha, well, do as you please."

He mutters as if he gave up.

But as if resolved himself, he loudly declares.

"Zanoba Shirone. I give you command of Fort Karon. Your soldiers are already deployed. Take over as commander there and stop the northern incursion."

"Yes sir!"

Zanoba takes a gracious bow.

With that, the audience concluded.

Feeling like I dodged a bullet, I left the audience room.

Afterwards, we're led to a room inside the Shirone Castle.

Zanoba's room is no longer there, so a guest room on the second floor is used instead.

Our guard seems to be a knight of Kingdom of Dragon King.

Instead of guarding us, I'm afraid we're under watch instead.

Pax is wary of Zanoba.

Tomorrow we head north towards Fort Karon.

I want to give Roxy the heads up, but we're under watch.

It's better if we don't make unnecessary movements, so we'll just meet up tomorrow before heading north.

Zanoba and I are sitting on a sofa together, like a couple.

"Pax is surprisingly a great king."

Zanoba is the first to break the ice.

In his usual tone, but he seems rather happy.

"Is he?"

"He's trying to protect Shirone with our own people. For that, he even lowered his head towards a former enemy. Isn't that spectacular?"

Em. If you look at it that way, it is very impressive.

I nod slightly, still...

"Shisho looks concerned, but people change. What happened was a mistake."

"Right."

"Pax did handle it poorly. He made mistakes. But I feel that he's trying his best right now."

Indeed hasn't Pax become... stronger, than how I remember him?

I can't say for sure whether he's doing his best.

But that's not for me to decide.

"This may also be manipulation by an evil god."

"The evil god Shisho said you're fighting against?"

My joke backfired, and I got a serious response instead.

"What? Did I say that?"

"Before, when we had that dinner with Cliff."

Ah, my heart-to-heart with Cliff?

I guess Zanoba wasn't as drunk as he seemed.

"Of course back then, I thought it was a joke."

"..."

"Asking Cliff-san to create a anti-curse device to weaken Orsted's curse, along with other work Shisho has done with Orsted, I start to connect the dots that they all have to do with that evil god."

Really?

You did?

Is it time to fess up?

After all, Zanoba is part of it this time.

"Alright, I'll talk."

"Please, Shisho."

I tell Zanoba about Hitogami.

Roughly all that has happened.

Also the rough situation this time.

And the possibility of Pax being manipulated by Hitogami.

"Umm... But Pax never mentioned Hitogami at all. Maybe maybe not?"

"Hitogami deceived me too. How he works in the background can't be easily fathomed."

If Pax isn't an apostle, then maybe the Death God, even Benedict is a possibility.

Right now the prime suspect is the King of Kingdom of Dragon King.

Unfortunately, there's more than one apostle.

Considering Hitogami's motives, there should be one in Shirone Kingdom as well.

"Deceive... so Shisho fought Orsted, because Hitogami deceived you?"

"Indeed."

"Hypothetically, if Hitogami has deceived Pax, a possibility exists that I may have to fight with Shisho."

Zanoba presses his hands against his chin, taking a moment to think.

Then slowly, those words trickle out.

"Since in that hypothesis, I must protect Pax."

Oh?

"... In that case, we might become enemies?"

"Eh? No no, that won't happen. There's no way I can become enemies with Shisho. Didn't Shisho just say that Pax must not be killed?"

"But, right now..."

"By protect, I meant [protect him from Hitogami]."

Whew.

What a shock.

I thought Zanoba was saying he would go to the other side.

I have no clue what I would do if that actually happens.

What a relief.

Why did the word protect suddenly pop up?

"I thought you didn't care about Pax."

When I thoughtlessly say that, Zanoba is stuck in a daze.

Again putting a hand under his chin, considering for a while.

"Well, certainly it was like that up until now. It didn't have anything to do with me."

With a troubled expression, he murmurs.

"... Unexpectedly, Pax is depending on me, this is a first for me!"

Zanoba says, flashing a bright smile.

Rather than rely upon, he's more like being used.

But Zanoba seems quite happy to be depended upon.

I guess the desire to [Protect the Kingdom] and the actions to protect its king, Pax, often line up.

I still can't read Hitogami's intentions.

I don't know who the apostles are.

I can't see any signs of it being a trap to kill me.

I get the feeling that I missed something, that there's something I didn't notice.

It would be nice if a trap was just Orsted overthinking things, but it's best not to be too optimistic.

There may be a trap somewhere, and I just didn't notice it.

Well, my doubts remain, but right now there's too many things I don't know, so there's no helping it.

Also, convincing Zanoba seems impossible.

Pax acts as if he's welcoming Zanoba.

No killing intent.

There's a feeling that if it's what Zanoba wants, it may be alright to let him stay here.

If Pax shows now intentions of killing Zanoba, the reasons for making him return are on thin ice.

If there's no chance of him being killed, its like finding employment at your hometown when your family is in trouble.

Though a company run by Pax doesn't seem like it would treat its employees well, I should respect Zanoba's decisions.

But the possibility remains that Pax will have a change of heart and try to kill Zanoba.

Mentioning that here would just sound like an excuse, but my doubts won't disappear just like that.

Not to mention, it would be too late once Pax really acts to take out Zanoba.

Before that happens, I'd like to find proof somewhere that Pax really wants Zanoba dead.

But where can I find that evidence?

In the first place, even if there's no intention to kill him now, Pax may be thinking about killing Zanoba if he ever becomes a nuisance in the future.

Damn it.

I'm going in circles.

This stress will make me bald...

I won't get any answers just worrying on my own.

I'll go discuss it with Roxy tomorrow.

The day after the audience.

I left preparations for departure to Zanoba and came back to the inn.

I meet up with Roxy.

Roxy was waiting in our room, armed to the teeth.

She seemed to be stiff and rushed up to me as soon as I entered.

"Was it alright? I was worried because there was no contact but..."

"Yeah, nothing happened."

Because she had not had breakfast yet, we ate on the first floor of the inn while I told her about the contents of the audience:

The possibility that Pax is an apostle of Hitogami is low.

That it is difficult to discern the intent of Hitogami.

That the king of Kingdom of Dragon King is suspicious.

I told her everything along with my worries.

"....Hmm"

While making a difficult face, her soup spoon clicking against her bowl, Roxy listened to my story.

"Honestly, my head isn't working very well right now due to lack of sleep..."

"Right."

You can see bags beneath her eyes, and her overall movements are dull.

It would be wrong to think of it as an all nighter, after all we had kept moving the entire day before.

Even an adventurer will become tired if they remain at attention for so long.

"There was no fight. Prince Pax was rational. The name Hitogami did not come up. Thus, I wasn't able to determine anything."

Roxy could not think of anything either, but maybe my explanation was lacking.

"If there was not going to be a fight I should have went as well."

"Why you?"

"I may have been able to figure something out if I could have heard it with my own ears."

Ah, there might have been something like that.

During the audience I was thinking only of Hitogami's possible traps and the Death God.

Over the course of events there may have been something outside of my expectations which I missed.

Another head with different expectations may have been necessary.

That head may have been Roxy's.

Well, there is nothing I can do about what's already past.

"... Somewhere there will be a trap created by Hitogami."

"Hmmm, could it be that the trap is only in Orsted's imagination, and there is nothing?"

"We should assume the worst and move accordingly. It may be that, right now, there is an invisible noose drawing around our family."

The fact that Lara, who has become the savior, cried like that has made me nervous.

For now there is no sign of Hitogami, but we might just be missing it.

It could be anything.

"Well, it was a careless remark."

Roxy lowered her head apologetically.

"If Pax summoned us here to spring a trap, then he won't announce anything, I think he's hiding something."

"For example...?"

"For example, this morning Ginger-san brought me some information."

"Oh?"

Although I haven't seen Ginger, she must be moving behind the scenes.

"Her report says that 500 soldiers are at Fort Karon."

"500?"

If only a number is told, I won't understand if that's too little or a lot.

By her way of speaking it sounds like that isn't much.

"The enemy force seems to number nearly 5000."

That's horrible.

If there is a difference of 10 times, there doesn't seem to be a chance of victory.

"Did you hear about that?"

"... No."

I didn't hear about that at all, I was only told to go.

"Ginger also told me this:

Prince Pax is keeping the forces protecting Fort Karon to a minimum,

The rumor is that in the background mercenaries are gathering for an ambush.

Did you hear anything about the strategy?"

"... No."

I had not heard any of that.

But, yeah, it would be possible to throw away Fort Karon.

On the outside he could be welcoming Zanoba, but his intention could be to use him and then throw him away.

While Zanoba holds the enemy at bay with his life, he would be able to consolidate his fighting force.

If I suppose that Pax thinks of Zanoba as a liability, then that would be killing two birds with one stone.

"In addition it could be that getting Rudy was the intention all along."

"Why do you say that?"

"I have never been to war myself, but I have read an account of a single Saint class magician who was able to hold off 1000 soldiers by themself."

Is there such a record?

A warrior worth a thousand men.

I had not really thought about the scale of Saint class magic.

"I am King ranked, Rudy is the equivalent of emperor rank. If it's the two of us, we should be able to hold a fort for a considerable amount of time."

Hmmm.

It might be difficult to annihilate a 5,000 strong force.

If it's me, though, and I come at the entire force with the intention of killing them...

But even just being there, the other side should know about it.

Information that a King and Emperor class magician are present should leak out somehow.

It would be the height of foolishness to just plunge into such a well defended fortress.

Or possibly, if an attack came...

Out of those 5000 soldiers there may be a considerable number of magicians.

If it is a full assault by such magicians, even someone Saint ranked could be overwhelmed and destroyed no matter how much more powerful they are.

No, in an all or nothing battle it would only take one good blow to be disabled.

"However there is a limit to magical power. Eventually you'll become exhausted."

I can't imagine running out of magic power myself, but while fighting fatigue will accumulate.

Magic power is also not infinite, it will decrease by the amount you use.

"If the Death God is sent to us when we are exhausted from battle... possibly that could be his aim. Do you think it seems like that kind of trap?"

"Ah, it's certainly possible."

"Also..."

Roxy raised her spoon between her fingers: the pose of a teacher.

"There are only three apostles?"

"Yes"

"The king of Kingdom of Dragon King making Pax king feels kind of forced. At this point it's kind of hard to tell whether an enemy attack is coming, isn't it? Rudy, who do you believe the apostles should be?"

Who would I make as the apostles...

Ah, the enemy nation!

Shirone is kind of like a vassal state to the KDK.

There would be a risk involved when invading.

A dissenting opinion should appear in the country.

An apostle would be needed to push past that.

Perhaps a member of the royal family from the enemy country...

No, maybe someone like a general.

"While getting advice from Hitogami, bringing us to ruin reliably in a pincer attack with the Death God... surely."

Thanks to Roxy's insight, my thoughts were coming together.

There are two people with a high possibility of being Hitogami's apostles.

One is the king of Kingdom of Dragon King.

The other person should be an outstanding person from the group attacking Fort Karon.

As to the third person, I wonder who it could be?

In the Asura kingdom it was... Luke's turn.

To be honest, this casts some doubt onto Zanoba.

However from the talk yesterday he did not feel like an apostle.

Then there is Ginger.

Given their organization in the Asura Kingdom, the Death God is suspicious.

Or there is the possibility that it is the Princess who was beside Pax.

Until now Hitogami has not attacked with more then two pawns.

That is to say, if there are only two people this time then the other one is possibly moving towards the next goal in another location.

In other words, there is likely no third apostle here.

There are numerous possibilities.

The third apostle cannot be determined yet.

However the general identities of two apostles have been solidified.

Roxy is once again reliable.

"For argument's sake, what will you do if going to Fort Karon becomes like climbing into the lion's mouth?"

"Well... for now I think it's important that we don't speculate too heavily about the other party."

"I strongly believe we should not go to Fort Karon."

But Zanoba is raring to go already.

He'll go even if we stay.

He'll go even by himself.

But Pax is sending Zanoba to a location with a mere 500 troops, with that knowledge I could try to persuade him.

Pax you are trying to kill Zanoba... You are heartless enough to say, [Even if you don't want to, go there even if you die.]

It is that you are going to use him and throw him away.

That reason alone will not stop Zanoba.

Zanoba will just set out with, [It is my duty to protect my country.]

In that case, if someone said to retreat during an enemy attack he would not just nod his head and listen.

Wait... If somehow the enemy is 5000, might that satisfy Zanoba?

While Fort Karon is holding out against the enemy Pax can gather more forces.

In other words, while Fort Karon is protected the country is stable.

I wonder if they are just pretending to defend the country.

".... We'll go to Fort Karon to save Zanoba."

"I understand."

"The problem is, there is still a trap."

Roxy made a bitter face when I said that.

For the time being I had better bring MK-1.

I wonder if it is possible to beat it head on...

"Well there is some time before we go to Fort Karon. We can consider various things."

"Yes, Sensei."

Then, around the time we were finishing our conversation, a horse drawn carriage arrived carrying Zanoba.

Zanoba did not change his expression even after hearing about only having 500 soldiers.

Rather he just happy nodded with a, [Oh, is that the case.]

His attitude was indifferent.

Suddenly I realized, this guy maybe doesn't consider the difference in strength between himself and his opponents.

"Listen to this Zanoba, [If the difference is 10 times then it's a siege. If it's 5 times it's an attack. Once it is doubled there is a difference. If there is an enemy, then fight well. If there is an attack, then escape. If there is a siege then avoid it.] When you get right down to it a fight with a large difference in numbers is disadvantageous."

The place is a fort, but if the strength difference is 10 times it will be difficult to endure.

After my roundabout explanation Zanoba just tilted his head and gave a blank stare.

"How do we know that in this case it is disadvantageous?"

"How can you take a difference of 10 fold lightly? It's 10 times more."

"Seriously Shisho, can you not think of a way in which we are not outnumbered 10 fold?"

Somehow not 10 times...

Is this guy serious?

Can he not even do basic arithmetic?

"We have 500, doesn't the opponent have 5000? Ten times 500 is 5000. Are you feeling okay?"

"Fumu... Shisho, I wonder if you are testing me?"

Zanabo sighed and let out a laughed.

It's the kind of laughter that a fool might make.

All the while he had a tense face.

"Look at it this way, Shisho:"

Then he began to explain.

"In that calculation Roxy-dono and Shishou are not included.

It is said that a Saint ranked magician can be equal to 1000 soldiers in the right situation.

I view the forces we have here as at least worth 2500 soldiers.

Considering Roxy-dono is king rank and Shisho is Emperor, I imagine that it is closer to 3000 or more.

Convention says that it should take forces in excess of 3 times an occupying force to storm a castle.

Fort Karon is an ideal place to defend in this manner.

Therefore the enemy will require more troops.

Additionally Shisho has a surplus when it comes to aggregate magical power."

" ..... "

I was speechless.

The answer I got back exceeded my expectations.

This guy, I mean, it was really unexpected.

"T-that was surprisingly detailed Zanoba-kun."

"Ever since early childhood I was forced to study military tactics for when I would become a leader within the country."

He had been kept alive in order to protect the country.

Just for this time he had been allowed to remain on the payroll.

That's exactly the case.

And unless you just want him to mindlessly rampage across the battlefield then you better teach him well things that will increase his judgment.

"This is Shisho's first battle... but please don't worry. In the past, just for a little, I have entered the field. As long as there is Shisho and Roxy-dono, the enemy will not enter the fortress."

He's brimming with confidence.

I wonder if it's really alright.

I don't feel like it is.

Still, it's best under the present conditions not to go to Fort Karon.

I'll try to persuade him, just a bit.

"But Pax was going to place you at that fort without, at the very least, knowing about Roxy."

"Well I would still go."

"If it's about my tremendous aggregate magical power, then Pax should not know of it."

"Shisho, what are you trying to say?"

I took my time with the preface, but I'll get right to the conclusion.

I'll just be frank.

"You don't feel like you are being thrown away?"

" ..... "

Zanoba made a face like a dove shot with a bb-gun.

But to Zanoba any gun would be like a bb-gun, huh.

"Pax surely might not feel bitter towards you anymore, but he may still expect you to die."

"... Well, that could be."

Zanoba waits for me to speak while scratching his cheek.

"Is there really a need to follow this order?"

Zanoba sighed and let out a laugh.

It's an expression that asks, [Just what are you trying to say?]

"In war, there are times when someone must be sacrificed. Soldiers must become the first casualty, but also sometimes the royal family bares this burden. There may be a time when I must die."

"But is it necessary to clean up after Pax? He killed the rest of the royal family. Do you really have an obligation to him after that?"

"What is important is the serious matter before us, not past blunders. Doesn't Shisho often say the same?"

It's the normal Zanoba, but if you look close he seems to be a little uneasy.

Outside the window mercenaries mingle alongside the regular merchants.

It's also normal out there, but if you look closely it's a little uneasy.

Zanoba has said he is going.

To go to war with other countries is his duty.

In that case, that Pax is king, or the relationship between Zanoba and Pax, those things don't matter.

... As I thought, right now persuasion is impossible.

"I get it, It was wrong of me to say that."

"No, I understand that Shisho is just showing his concern for me."

"If we are going to Fort Karon, then, because I am an amateur, I will follow your orders. Feel free to say anything."

For the sake of Zanoba that had to be said.

"Ah thank you! If Shisho is there then it's very reassuring."

Okay.

We'll go and hold the northern Fort Karon for the time being.

By doing that Pax will be able to consolidate his strength. Also the enemy might not even attack.

Over time the country will stabilize.

The country's defense will be bolstered, Zanoba can protect his homeland, the result should be satisfactory.

The rest is Pax and DRK job.

Wait?

From the current situation where Shirone is a vassal state of Kingdom of Dragon King, how will Pax turn it into a Republic?

Hmmm....

No, Orsted says that is a story that won't happen for 30 years.

Also some other incident is likely to happen between now and then.

If he turns out to be an apostle then the king of Kingdom of Dragon King will certainly meet his death in the near future.

It isn't necessary to put everything in order all at once.

After we bring Zanoba back home, I'll have to consult Orsted about it again.

『I'll bring Zanoba back alive.』

That's the reason I'm here this time.

I will not forget this.

Three members head towards the fort: Roxy, Zanoba, and myself.

Ginger remains at the capitol.

When she heard that Zanoba was going to the fort she seemed troubled a bit, but she had decided to remain and continue to collect intelligence.

It seems certain there is something she is anxious about.

With an earnest request, she entrusted the rest to the prince.

At any rate, we are only three people.

This is, you would say a departure for the front, no a farewell escort, not even that but maybe unique reinforcements.

One of Shirone's soldiers is driving the carriage, but he is formal and distant.

It seems like Pax plans to make Zanoba a sacrificial pawn after all.

As for the Magic Armor MK-I, just like Zanoba's dolls, it has been disassembled so that we could transport the parts separately.

It will arrive after us.

The transportation in this world is sloppy unlike the shipping industry in modern Japan.

The magic armor's destination is the same as mine, but...

Something could still happen in the meantime.

I'm worried about that.

The only part of the MK-I that we have with us is it's large gatling gun.

I'm so worried that I have even considered equipping it.

I remembered that during my fight with Orsted I became half dead by running through all my magical power.

As much as possible I need to preserve my magic for the Magic Armor.

In any case, our departure was underway.

There was no large road leading to the battlefield.

We rode along in a horse drawn carriage earnestly moving forward down a small road like the footpath between rice fields.

As we head north we move from small towns, to farming villages, and then sometimes we end up camping.

" .... "

Along the way I began to think about other things, not just Hitogami.

Because of everything I'm now going to war.

As soon as I thought that, anxiety reared its ugly head.

My body became stiff.

War.

After coming to this world I still only have just some experience with killing other people.

However... war.

There is an unspeakable fear from that word.

To kill or be killed.

Just from the idea of war there is fear.

Or rather... I pray for victory.

Because of the explanation the other day, I now know there is likely to be battle.

I'm going to war for the first time.

I'm anxious.

"Shisho look. There is a group of adventurers, but I wonder what they plan to do lugging all of their heavy equipment way out here."

Despite my unease, Zanoba seemed to be having fun.

Every time he discovers something he comes to me, smiling, to report it.

His cheerfulness is amazing.

So much so, you would not believe that he is headed to war right now.

"That is a party set out to explore labyrinths. There are not a lot of labyrinths around here, but plenty can be found out away from towns. A party that is serious about doing labyrinths, those kinds of people will move the last stretch out from their location on foot."

Roxy is calm too.

Zanoba is cheerful as usual.

I am going to war for the first time timidly.

"Oh, Roxy-dono is indeed knowledgeable."

"At one time I also dived into a labyrinth in this area."

I'm the only one that's blue.

I wonder how these two people are so composed.

Somehow only I seem be missing the materials to have a peace of mind.

For them, I wonder what those materials are.

Perhaps my anxiety does not show on the surface.

"Come to think of it, it was because Roxy-dono completed a labyrinth on her own that she was asked to become the court magician of our country."

"Yes, that's a nostalgic story."

"You never hear of someone challenging a labyrinth alone, that is not an ordinary feat. I had thought that it is, of course, only natural of Shisho's shisho, but why did you do something so excessive?"

"Eh? I mean let's see, that is a search for, it is something beautiful... It was an error caused by a youth's passion."

"Ho, I wonder if you discovered what you were searching for ?"

"It was not found at that time, but at a later date I finally got my hands on it."

From under her hat Roxy looked at me with sparkles in her eyes.

Ah, it's that kind of story.

Roxy went into the labyrinth looking for a lover, or something.

"I see, this blue haired genius magician entered a labyrinth in search of a husband."

"Please don't clearly say such embarrassing things."

"Isn't it great? Since before Shisho has entered school he has been yearning for Roxy-dono."

"Is that true? Would he be in a loving relationship with Sylphy if it were?"

"No, it is true. At first I wasn't aware that Roxy-dono was his shisho."

Zanoba and Roxy have fun recounting an old story.

If it is like usual times this might be where Zanoba's jealousy would show.

At this time I have become accustom to it.

"Well the Rudy back then and I... Rudy? What's wrong?"

I became aware of Roxy looking straight at me.

Her face is close.

I thought about trying to kiss her, but I didn't.

"Hey, Zanoba I think you are having quite a bit of fun considering we are going to war."

"HAHAHA, I am a man too! My heart will dance when I am preparing to enter a duel with my life on the line."

"....."

I'm uneasy.

Nine days pass.

Fort Karon was a more splendid fort than I had imagined.

Its appearance, when viewed from a distance, was of a small sized stone fortress.

It was a kind of place you could see anywhere, with a somewhat undependable atmosphere.

However its location was excellent.

It was constructed on a delta between the mouths of two rivers.

Indeed, the famous Sunomata overnight Castle was built in a place like this.

{ C-Editor's note: Sunomata Castle is a castle and tourist attraction in Japan. }

In addition there is a forest spread before the river.

Coming in and out of the Shirone kingdom through this forest is simple enough, but leading an army through it would be difficult.

In this world, especially, demons will be lurking in the forests.

While held in place fighting demons, before too long more will come down the other side of the path and flank you.

There is nothing you can do about it.

That guy who called this place a strong position was correct.

Once I got a better look I realized it was more imposing than I had initially thought. Something like a trebuchet was installed on the roof of a watchtower.

Because I heard that only 500 people were lodged here I had assumed it would be rather small, but it was a respectable size.

However the number of soldiers moving around was few and their countenance was gloomy.

After hearing of the overwhelming enemy, their spirits probably plummeted.

"Shisho, Roxy-dono, this way."

We were led over by Zanoba where we inquired about the officer who is currently responsible for the fort.

We found the commanding officer in a place that looked like a strategy meeting room. Him and some vice captains were huddled over some maps with their heads together.

"Who is it?"

"It is the third Prince of the Shirone kingdom: Zanoba Shirone."

" .... ! "

When we entered they all looked over at us with blank suspicion, but the moment Zanoba gave his name they dropped down on one knee.

"Shirone Knight, Garrick Babiliti, Karon Fortress Defense Corps captain."

"Yes, thank you for your work until now. I think a message was sent by the king but... "

"Yes Sir, I received it just the other day."

"If possible let's speak quickly. I will take over command of this fortress starting tomorrow, is that clear?"

"...Yes Sir."

I could sense a slight bit of dissatisfaction from Garrick.

Rather than being bothered by being removed from the top, is he troubled over whether to give command to this guy here?

I wonder if he has been proud to be in charge of this fort until now.

Once we join together with these guys, we don't want to leave any questions about discord under the surface.

"That said, It has been a long time since this one has stood on the battlefield. Therefore, to that end, I will put myself into an aid-like position and rely on Garrick when it comes to real world problems. Will that suffice?"

"Yes Sir!"

And, before I said anything, Zanoba followed through.

Yeah, it's best to leave such matters to a veteran.

"Well then, without any delay, Garrick, I want to raise the troops' morale. Please gather all the troops in this fort."

"Yes, sir!"

On Zanoba's orders we prepared to greet the remaining soldiers in the fort.

An hour later.

Before a balcony which was set up for appearances outside the fort, an army of armored figures totaling nearly 400 were lined up.

On top of the fortress were 50 people, part of the watch.

The remaining 50 troops were occupied outside the fort with reconnaissance or as part of the transportation corps.

The soldiers in formation are all strong brazen looking guys with tough faces.

Everyone appears more fearless than I expected; it's spectacular.

I had thought that 500 was a small amount, but once I saw them all lined up that was no longer the case.

With this many it feels like we could do it.

No, with an opponent 10 times larger, I wonder if this even amounts to anything.

On the dais Zanoba was standing with his suspicious looking face.

Everyone's moral is low.

Standing before them is a member of the royal family so there is a lot of whispering and chatting between the men.

"I am Shirone kingdom's third prince, Zanoba Shirone."

"Your Highness Zanoba! Every man present is honored by the chance to fight with you!"

The commanding officer standing in the front sticks out his chest as he compliments Zanoba.

He does this even though I do not think he feels like welcoming Zanoba himself.

His face is asking Zanoba why he is even here.

"Yes."

Zanoba looks down on the soldiers while nodding in an exaggerated fashion.

Perhaps because of his full body armor or the club I had made for him, but Zanoba had become something else entirely.

"First, explain the situation!"

"Yes Sir! Currently skirmishes with the enemy side are continuing. It has become clear from questioning captives that we will soon be facing a large offensive."

"I see, then we don't have much time to prepare."

Zanoba nodded with an [Umu].

The commanding officer's face looked a little uneasy.

You can tell a lot from his face.

Zanoba, from deep in his chest, raises his voice.

"First of all, gentlemen, allow me to introduce your reinforcements."

Just hearing the word reinforcements caused the soldiers faces to lighten a bit.

It is easy to understand how quickly morale increased in that moment.

However, just where could those reinforcements be?

At least, there has been nothing from Pax.

Just when I'm thinking of this Zanoba looks our way.

Roxy and I go up on the stage when prompted.

"Hey there."

"Up front... another."

"But surely..."

The soldiers began to murmur.

I feel like some people are looking mainly toward Roxy.

There are few women on the battlefield and I wonder if she is rousing the beast in them.

Yes fellows I know that Roxy is awe-inspiring and beautiful and cute but...

There are female soldiers looking at Roxy too.

Hold on, men and women, you are all looking at a living person like an object.

It's all people in their 30s and 40s.

"Gentlemen!

There are many enemies but few allies.

We also are expecting a large offense from the other side.

Everyone surely is feeling anxiety.

However from the magic city Sharia now,

I have called up some very powerful reinforcements."

Zanoba gave a wink.

Certainly, we are those reinforcements.

That's right, Saint rank or higher is a match for a thousand.

Roxy and I together are 2000 men in power.

"Thanks."

Taking off her hat, Roxy greeted them.

The men's commotion increases.

"I thought so! That was the court magician..."

"The king ranked magician – "

"The one who developed some of the basics we use in drills..."

While making that dogai face, Zanoba starts to explain about Roxy.

{ C-Editor's note: Dogai are characters from the Dungeons & Dragons role-playing game. Their heads are featureless. }

"This is Roxy Migurdia.

She is a person who was at one time the court magician to our Shirone kingdom.

Although I think many of you know this, she is also the person who developed the foundations of our modern paired magical training.

And this is Rudeus Greyrat, her disciple.

These two are both resourceful magicians of King class or higher."

The place came alive with oohs and ahhs.

I see.

At one time Roxy was the court magician for this country.

Among these soldiers there will be those who had been around in those days.

But that's not like you Zanoba.

Right now Roxy is Roxy Greyrat, not Migurdia.

Just how did you make such a blunder?

Well perhaps Migurdia is required to evoke her reputation.

"I'm sure you will have heard the story that Saint class magicians power is worth 1000 men.

In that case King class magic could be any kind of thing... !

Not many people know this, but in fact there is also a story from the Laplace campaign in the distant past where a single King class magician successfully repelled an army 100,000 strong!"

The entire place fell silent.

100,000 is probably too much of an exaggeration.

I have never heard such a story...

But there are some guys looking at me with yearning in their eyes. Apparently they believe it.

"In addition to these two people with King class or higher magic, myself, with the nickname Head Ripping Prince and a miko, will be leading from the front lines!"

After hearing that he is a miko and also the Head Ripping Prince the soldiers expectations soar.

In Shirone kingdom there is a miko called the Head Ripping Prince and even though he has a detestable nickname, when you put him on the battlefield he becomes reliable.

"Gentlemen, I will promise victory to you."

As soon as Zanoba said this he raised his fist into the air.

The soldiers also raised their fists and yelled out loudly.

"Whooooooa!"

Their morale is excellent.

By no means was it a bad speech.

Surprisingly I wonder if Zanoba has the necessary talents for leadership.

I had never once thought such a thing, even just a bit, until now.

Talent isn't enough to become a king, but it might be enough to make someone a general.

So, in addition to this fort that seems hard to attack, we have two king class magicians.

To attack from here might not work, but defending it should be easy.

Zanoba is full of confidence and the soldier are cheering for him, it's that kind of story.

As I watched those soldiers saluting my anxiety faded.

I've trained myself properly.

I will do my best.

The following day I went on a date with Zanoba.

The location we chose was the prairie north of Fort Karon, which will likely become the battlefield.

It's not actually a date of course.

If it was a date I would have brought Roxy.

I don't dislike you Zanoba, but I already have two wives and one husband.

{ C-Editor's note: Referring to Eris as husband. }

I cannot answer your feelings.

Let's set aside the jokes for now.

Early this morning Zanoba came to me saying, [I want you to come with me for a little bit.] and brought me out here.

Honestly, I'm scared.

This is a rough neighborhood.

We could encounter the enemy at any time here.

"Hey, is it safe out here?"

"Hmmm, Shisho, are you being timid?"

"Well, isn't it possible we might be discovered by the enemy at any time... because the main attack should be coming soon?"

"We will be fine if you just defeat whatever shows up. Those don't seem like the words of my valiant Shisho who challenged one of the world powers, Dragon God Orsted."

Valiant is an unsuitable word for me.

Eris is the one who is valiant.

Well, with the MK-II Magic Armor I'm probably over dressed to handle small fries even if we are ambushed...

"Ah, well enemy scouts should not come here where they can be seen from the fortress."

"Shouldn't it be the opposite? If they don't position themselves where they can see the fort how can they achieve anything as a scout?"

"There is a bit of truth in that, but Commander Garrick has said that once the enemy arrives here they are already cut off from their mainparty. One or two people might come in hiding but you won't see any formations this close."

Alright then, that's good.

If the enemy forces in the area are known then there are no worries.

"I mean, Zanoba, why did you bring me out to a place like this? A love confession?"

"Haha, I like you Shisho, but I'm not into sodomy. I'm not like those Asura nobles... Oh sorry, actually, Shisho is descended from Asuranobles."

" ... Our family tree is perfectly ordinary."

I'm not interested in men.

Or else would you want to embrace me?

Neither of us would feel good about that?

"Joking aside, when this becomes a battlefield the enemy will be arrayed in about this position."

"Ooh."

Now that he mentions that I look around.

It's just an empty field;

rolling plains with bundles of tall grass and a few idle stones.

In addition there is also a slope.

If you look towards Fort Karon you would be looking up.

As you move away the slope gradually lessens.

The river flows from south to north as well.

"It is an advantageous position, but the enemies bows will still reach."

"Oh..."

I think we have plenty of distance but...

Something could still get through.

Still the arrows from this place will arrive more or less.

So, I suppose we should do something about the terrain in this area.

"So that we don't have to worry about this position I would like to change the topography here."

"I see."

If we change the terrain, then the enemy won't be able to deploy as close to us.

In that case they will have to move their formation to a spot before here.

If we can use that kind of method then their arrows won't reach us.

If their advance becomes more difficult, it becomes possible to pick them off before they even get to the fort.

This is definitely an ideal first step.

"Well then, Shisho, if you would."

"Affirmative. What kind of feeling do you want?"

"How about a mountain or a valley."

"Then how about a valley which won't be passable without building a bridge."

We spent the entire day altering the terrain of the battlefield.

Out on the prairie we also created some trenches, 10 meters deep, 5 meters wide, and 20 meters long.

While we were at it we disguised some of them to make pitfalls.

Like this they are easy to fill, so we even installed a trebuchet to increase our range.

In addition I crafted a moat and some stone walls along the outside of the river surrounding the fort.

In this way it would be difficult for the enemy to construct a position near the fort.

Even if they assault from the pitfall zone they will find it difficult to advance on the fort.

Everything was completed.

Setting it all up took half a day, but with this the enemy won't have an easy time with their advance.

The field took a form where we will be able to attack unilaterally.

"This scene gives me a peace of mind."

"No no, Shisho, couldn't you destroy this fort with magic from the other side of our traps?"

"It's possible."

If I could see it then that would be enough.

"The other side's magicians, it would be a good idea to assume their magic will reach."

I do not know what kind of range a regular magician has.

But if there is one person (ME) who can, then you had better assume others can as well.

I think the possibility that Hitogami has prepared a Saint to King ranked magician is good.

"Also, it's possible that a magician from the other side will be able to fill our traps."

This time I made pitfalls the focus.

But they are pitfalls after all.

If you are up against an earth saint magician then they will be filled in one shot.

"I expect that, in the main phase of the battle, Roxy-dono and Shisho will be tasked with resisting that kind of magic."

"I see."

Even if it turns out like that, we have two Saint ranked magicians over here.

If their goal is terrain destruction I should be able to resist.

I'll counterspell.

"I'll get the details at a later date, but for now there is meaning in making today's traps."

Hmmm.

Looking at the traps from the enemy's perspective, what would I do to surmount them?

I could either use a magician, or if not that then human wave tactics.

I will resist them if they use magic, if they use humans then the fort's archers.

This way, I have peace of mind.

We won't be taken by storm.

If it's me, then I should have some flexibility.

And then three days went by.

My magic armor arrived and I got busy assembling it.

It is fundamentally designed for close combat so I won't be able to really use it until the fort is infiltrated.

Magic consumption is also large and I can only go one battle inside of it, so I will fight without wearing it for now.

I must not forget that there is a possibility that I will have to fight one of the 7 major powers.

After I completed the assembly of the magic armor, I participated in reinforcing the fort with Zanoba.

I block openings and strengthen walls.

If only to this degree, consumption of magic is insignificant so there isn't a problem.

While I was doing that, Roxy was teaching magic to some of the soldiers in the fort.

She wasn't only teaching magic to the soldiers, but also the rank and file.

In a pinch, having the use of elementary magic could be the difference between life and death.

Within the fort Roxy was popular, but I found myself being avoided.

They aren't hostile toward me.

In short, they are afraid.

This seems to have happened because I rearranged the battled field in one day.

Soldiers in front of me get out of my way in a hurry, and if I ask for something then it will be answered with a polite and respectful tone.

On the other hand, the soldiers do not approach me to talk.

I'm a little alienated.

Even though Roxy and Zanoba are already being accepted by the soldiers...

Could it be a difference in communication skills?

If I went and spoke with them more, would it be good I wonder?

No no, I didn't come here to make friends. I'll be fine.

The soldiers are cold and distant towards me, but there is rice.

This is because the Kingdom of Dragon King is backing this war.

They may not have sent reinforcements, but they have sent supplies.

In particular, they have sent food.

Sanachia rice is eaten on a daily basis in the Kingdom of Dragon King.

It is also eaten in the Shirone kingdom.

As such it has become a staple in this fort.

The taste is a little different from the rice that Aisha is breeding back home.

Aisha has been diligently attempting many different things to meet my preference.

When it comes to taste, I prefer Aisha's rice.

But originally it's the same rice.

If I can eat this rice every day then I am fine becoming a soldier of the Shirone kingdom.

While thinking that, I feel a moment of bliss.

However, I'll pass on the idea of working under Pax.

Then on the fourth day:

From an allied scout, we were told that the enemy troops have departed for the front.

The enemy will come soon.

Traveling from the enemy's fort to here, it will take around five days to arrive with their forces.

I do not know how many days it would take for a scout to complete a round trip, but they won't make a five day trip in only a single day.

Neither will they make it on the third or the second day.

The enemy will be here in the blink of an eye.

The inside of the fort became an uproar.

Zanoba with Garrick began to reorganize the troops, meanwhile Roxy started writing magic circles on the roof of the fort.

Sharpening weapons; refurbishing armor; the soldiers of the fort were even counting their arrows.

Among them were even guys writing wills for the event that the enemy sacs the fort.

I became bored.

There didn't seem to be anything for me to do.

I had already finished everything that I could do over the last few days.

At best the only thing I can help with is writing magic circles with Roxy.

According to Roxy these circles are for the Saint rank magic [Flashover].

Roxy did not learn this spell formally.

Controlling it is difficult if you are not good with fire magic.

However it seems she is able to with the assistance of magic circles.

Nevertheless these magic circles are not set up for Roxy's use.

These are set up so that multiple soldiers can pour magic power into them at the same time.

Roxy will likely use water saint rank magic exclusively.

Fire magic is not used on demon foes.

It has high power but inside a labyrinth it can cause oxygen deprivation and also possesses a high probability of splash damage. For these reasons it is not preferred.

However it is very effective on human opponents.

After all, there are no human beings who are not weak to fire.

When the battle begins, along with Roxy, I will be commencing magical bombardment of the enemy from the roof of the fort.

We have a detailed plan, but fundamentally I'll just be bombarding the enemy.

That is my role.

However there is one concern.

Will I actually be able to fire?

Every single time since I have come to this world I have hesitated when faced with killing a person.

It's too late, I am already guilty of murder, I won't pretend to be a good little boy.

In the future, I don't plan on becoming an unreasonable adult by telling kids that killing is never justified.

Now that I think about it, I once told Ruijerd not to kill people.

In the past I have killed a man once.

Senior Minister Darius.

As far as that goes, Auber as well.

I did not deliver the finishing blow, but I was the one who cornered and killed him.

It left a bad aftertaste.

However he was someone that had to be brought down.

This time, though, the opponent is relatively innocent.

Yet I'll have to kill them.

This is no just cause.

When you come right down to it, I am only here for Zanoba...

Regardless, I will be killing many people from a distance with my magic.

Unlike my fight with Auber, this is going to be one sided.

If you ask whether I can or can't, then I can.

If you ask whether I will or I won't, then I will.

But when it is over, will I be okay?

I wonder if I'll feel sick and retch and vomit.

Then if the Death God attacks, will I be able to fight properly...

" .... "

"How are you doing, Rudy?"

Roxy is looking up at my troubled face.

She has ink on her cheek.

Come to think of it, she has been pretty calm considering this is war.

Because Roxy spent her time as an adventurer she should not have experienced war before.

I wonder if she has killed anyone in the past.

I certainly haven't heard that kind of story from her.

"Roxy... well, it's kind of like this."

But I hesitate to ask.

Have you ever killed a person?

In my previous life it's the kind of remark that might cause [Did you mean this fellow...] to be blurted out.

"Aah... I understand. It absolutely can't be helped."

"Eh?"

"I hear that before a fight, a man should embrace a woman to quiet his troubled heart. If its so much that I can no longer stand then I will be troubled, but since I am Rudy's wife I can take care of that."

"No no no, it's not that kind of thing."

"It's... something different?"

Even I can't get into a pink frame of mind during such a time.

I mean, Roxy, that's a little disappointing.

If Roxy wants to do it, I am pleased...

No, let's set that aside.

Alright, I'll have her listen to me.

"Roxy... have you ever had times like this when you had to kill people?"

"There has been."

She replied frankly.

I was taken back.

Roxy, that Roxy who was immediately able to befriend the soldiers of this fort...

"Since I had spent a long time as an adventurer it should not be that surprising."

"Huh... but who was the opponent?"

"The first party I was in... back when I was an adventurer on the magic continent. At that time I was still only a child and, because of a fight where one of the members tried to cheat us, it became a situation where we tried to kill one another."

The situation just naturally escalated, it should be that kind of thing.

"Just that?"

"When I was adventuring alone... there were several more times... Ah, when I would go on trips alone often I would be targeted by kidnappers. It is because I have such an appearance of someone who would be an easy target for kidnapping. When all of their members were together I turned the tables on them and wiped them out."

Oh, is that the case.

This is that kind of world.

No one living here can be completely clean.

"Roxy may have settled down... but is this your first time experiencing war?"

"Yes, but I have stared death in the eyes many times until now."

The answer was decisive.

"Here you won't likely have to face the enemies you kill. You can also take refuge in the rear. I can handle it."

"And just run?"

"Yes. If it comes down to it just run away and I will take over your responsibilities. I came here in order to protect Rudy."

Roxy raised the hand that was holding the brush and posed while flexing her bicep.

Her upper arm is soft.

It's still nice and reliable...

"Rudy, are you afraid to kill people?"

"Yes, I'm scared."

"How come?"

"I don't know..."

Roxy nodded with an, [I see.] and wiped the sweat from her brow with her sleeve.

The ink that had gotten on her sleeve when she took her pose is now smeared across her forehead.

"Even in the past Rudy was timid, but you can ride a horse even if you are scared."

Ah.

That reminds me, 15 years ago I was too scared to even go outside.

How nostalgic.

"Do you have something you are having trouble with? Then please talk to me about it."

Like that, Roxy was teaching me for the first time in a long while.

"If there is a situation where you hesitate to kill a person. Don't worry about it, I will take care of it."

"Just don't worry about it? Is that really okay?"

Why?

I would not be troubled if I understood it.

But I think it would be bad to just not worry about it.

Until recently I never thought about killing people.

"... I have been adjusting my magic since the time I traveled the Magic continent so that I could decide when to kill and when not to kill."

Originally I began to adjust the power of my stone cannon so that Eris could have experience fighting demons.

That experience allowed me to continue to adjust the power so that I wouldn't have to kill human opponents.

The reason was because of Rujerd.... the party of [Dead End] was a group that could not kill.

"At that time our party decided that we would not kill people. Because I was the leader I had to set a good example like that. Somehow I've continued on in that manner and it has become ingrained behavior."

Precisely because I was like that for so long, deep inside the habit of hesitating has rooted.

Just like someone rigidly trained as a child, I continue experiencing this repellent feeling even into adulthood.

It's a kind of trauma.

It's been that way through my entire journey, maybe there's no reason to worry about it after all this time.

I have made it all the way here with good results.

"I see."

Roxy brushed the bangs from her forehead.

Ink has now also spread to the tip of her nose.

"What do you think about the hesitation yourself? Do you want to do something about it somehow?"

".... No. I am thinking about the people who would be lost."

In this world I have power.

It is such a force that an opponent can be killed at the snap of my fingertips.

Killing my opponent disturbs me.

Furthermore it is the kind of power to kill multiple opponents without rebuke.

That is if there is no hesitation.

Like in my future self's diary, I could become someone who has no concern for murdering anyone.

I find that... disturbing.

"Then isn't it fine?"

Sure I guess.

But on into the future it could become troubling.

"Look here. Let's say, [Because Rudy let this guy live he has went on to kill Prince Zanoba another time.] This will provoke Rudy's anger."

" .... "

In war, murdering people is sanctioned by the country.

The organization called the country bears the responsibility for it.

So the number of people I kill in this war doesn't matter.

It becomes the responsibility of Zanoba, or Pax, entirely.

This is not just an excuse.

"This time, if Rudy is unable to use magic, I will do my best. If this causes me to run out of magic please put me on your shoulders and escape."

"... Well, with Roxy on my shoulders, the place we escape to might be pretty nice."

"Oh yeah?"

While laughing at my remark, Roxy picks up another jar of ink.

Seeing the ink stain on her sleeve, she frowns.

"Rudy, is there some ink stuck to my face?"

"Yes, enough that your face might just produce some magic."

When I said that Roxy took a handkerchief from her breast pocket and rubbed her face roughly.

Her face is bright red.

A blush came out instead of magic.

"Did I get it all?"

"It's on the tip of your nose, your forehead, and cheeks."

"... Please wipe me. In this state, I don't look like a proper wife."

"Alright, here I go."

I take the handkerchief from Roxy and wet it with water magic.

Roxy raised her face up and closed her eyes.

I wiped her forehead and the tip of her nose, but her cheek I kissed.

" ... "

" ..... "

Unnoticed by me Roxy had opened her eyes and was glaring at me reproachfully.

Her face was waiting unchanged.

"I still have some more magic circles to write. After I'm done, let's take our time and continue with that."

"Yes."

It seems I'll be able to continue.

I waited like a dog while Roxy finished writing the magic circles.

After that the two of us, alone back in our room, became soaking wet.

This war.

I do not know what kind of things I'll be able to do.

But it will be fine so long as Roxy is here.

The next day.

A report that the main enemy force will arrive by the end of today came in.

Everyone in the fort became tense; we had everyone take up their positions.

I also took my place on the roof of the fort.

The job given to Roxy and me is to fire off magic attacks while taking orders from the magic soldier commander.

Until the enemy gets here I just have to wait patiently.

I am currently wearing the 『Magic Armor MK-II』.

I set 『MK-I』 up so that it's sitting down over the back of the fort.

It's setup and ready for me to jump in and go.

Even now, Hitogami has yet to show his hand.

Will he do something when this battle is over?

Or will he somehow come and take advantage of this battle?

Could there be apostles among the enemy?

Might there even already be an apostle in the fort?

Will Pax come from behind as the true enemy?

While I was feeling uneasy something moved within the edge of my view.

"Hmn?"

The back of the fort.

From the opposite side of the enemy's advance.

A group of armored figures separated from the fort. They seem to have moved into the woods across the river.

Somewhere around 100 people.

No way, it couldn't be deserters.

"Excuse me, do you know what is going on over there?"

"Yes sir!"

I try to ask Mr. Billy, the company commander.

Then he nodded at the group outside the fort dressed in armor.

"It is a military unit that was formed around his highness Zanoba. Their task is to kill enemy soldiers who attempt to escape through the forest, tolaunch a surprise attack on the enemy in certain situations, and to take the head of the enemy general."

"Eh!?"

What was that?

"What!"

"Yes sir.... No, with Rudeus-sama's arrival the need for us to protect the fort has weakened."

"No, I don't think I make that much of a difference."

"I think we are very lucky, and along with Rudeus-dono came Roxy-dono."

Well yeah, I'm grateful for your consideration, I understand what you want to say.

It would surely become that when Zanoba leads a small unit away from the fort I would yell, [This is exactly the form Hitogami's trap would take!].

Roxy might have also reacted in the same way, given the situation.

From the forest I do not think I can do as much, depending on the situation.

I understand the reasoning.

But then this didn't have any meaning.

Because of that guy's thinking I have come here for nothing.

I only came along to protect Zanoba.

You could at least say goodbye before your departure.

What would we have done if I had accidentally nuked you?

I mean, what if our opponent knew that our supreme commander was just sitting in the woods? Wouldn't that be dangerous?

Right now I should give chase...

"Tsk!"

However, before I could take action the tension in the fort spiked.

The bell to announce the enemy attack resounded with a [Kan Kan].

Everyone's eyes looked toward the same place.

Ahead of us, the horizon is blurred by a cloud of dust.

The enemy had come.

Zanoba has run off somewhere.

Apparently he's gone to take the head of the enemy's commander.

I have no idea why.

I don't understand, but I cannot afford to leave my post either.

However Zanoba had made arrangement with his commanding officers in advance.

I can't just recklessly take off and leave Roxy to take care of the magical offensive alone.

I need to think carefully.

Even if I left now, Zanoba who is in the forest, won't be found easily.

He's not alone. Since he took 100 people then it's a military maneuver.

It's obvious that I should just do what I was told.

"... Phew~"

I need to calm down.

Zanoba will have done all this as part of a military strategy.

Therefore, I also need to move as planned.

"Whew... haa...."

Okay, calmed down.

Now that I'm calm I take a look at the enemy.

While my thoughts were in disorder the enemy has set up an encampment in the area before our traps.

Just as planned.

From that position the opponent's magic should not hit us.

Well, for us it doesn't just barely reach.

When it becomes a full battle, at that point half of the enemy should enter the pitfall zone.

"As expected, there are a lot."

"It looks like there is about 3000."

"All that is missing is their rear guard."

That is what the men are talking about.

In order to count the number of soldiers all you have to do is look at the number of banners.

"Rudy! Please resist this!"

"Eeh?"

Roxy suddenly cried out.

I look towards the enemy.

From around the center of the enemy formation, something like a tornado is rising into the sky.

"They are trying to fill the traps you made with earth magic all at once!"

Ah, they are using earth saint ranked magic [Sandstorm].

I see.

The presence of our pitfall traps must have been confirmed by enemy scouts.

In that case they are trying to fill the traps up with a large amount of earth.

However we prepared for that as well.

"I understand. I'll resist with Violent Storm[Hurricane]."

As I said that I raised my hand up towards the forming cloud of dust.

I use wind magic.

Wind Saint magic, Violent Storm[Hurricane]

The name attached to this magic is a little overboard, simply speaking it's a magic to create a strong wind.

However I don't possess the title of a saint ranked magician just for show.

Water Saint magic, [Cumulonimbus]

Earth Saint magic, [Sand Storm]

Both of them are similar kinds of blended magic, 'a wind with additional attributes'.

It is just that this wind magic only causes wind.

Even though they both use similar amounts of magic power, the power is put completely into the wind.

Its power is tremendous enough that the effects of an Earth Saint rank spell are blown away.

It's also very effective against demons flying in the sky.

Nevertheless the power of the spell is felt much more by those in the air than those on the ground.

The reason for this is that things like trees will dampen the power of the wind as it races across the ground.

According to one source it was created in order to counter weather changing magic in the event that they were used for war.

Although that is just one theory.

Even with its power dampened, if I pour enough magical power into it, it becomes strong enough to pull trees out of the ground.

Generally there isn't as much power felt on the ground, but in the air it rages unobstructed.

It is a thing that seems like it could have been developed to knock a flying dragon out of the sky.

Though if you consider that they can fly in the air with such huge bodies, dragon's must be using air magic and fighting spirit.

According to another theory I'll go bald if I use it too much.

The reason seems to be that the strong wind will even uproot hair.

They say the principal of the magic university lost his hair like this, but there is no credibility to that rumor.

Okay okay, I'm calm now.

"YEAH!"

The soldiers around us break out in cheer.

However, because of the great distance, there was no damage to the ground.

The wind that blew away a sandstorm would normally leave some kind of trace on the ground but...

Perhaps it did not because it was highly directional;

or because it was directed at the sky above;

or because magic was somehow involved;

or did I make a mistake with my magic again?

Oh well.

That's just how it is...

"Rudy, they are trying again!"

"Eh? Again?"

Although I think it's useless no matter how many times they try.

Ah, no, it's useless.

Normally, someone's magic power would run out.

It's possible the enemy is using a magic formation in the same way we are.

In other words, multiple people are pouring magic into magic circles, it doesn't have to be a lone saint class magician.

Because they have a force ten times the size of ours, they should have ten times the number of magicians.

It's not unreasonable for them to believe that if they continue to spam magic, we will become depleted first.

Wait a minute?

If I think about it, doesn't that mean there is not one of Hitogami's apostles over there?

Having an apostle among them, they would be aware of me and won't show this kind of behavior.

It's a waste of magicians.

"For now I'll just resist them until they give up. That'll be good, right?"

"Ah, yes. With that kind of magic... will you be alright?"

"I'll be fine."

The sub commander looked at me with eyes filled with fear now.

Only my total aggregate magical power is large.

Even if I stop ten of those saint rank attacks I would still have power to spare.

They used sandstorm five more times, all of which I resisted.

If I used Ran ma then I could limit my power consumption but...

It would absolutely fail at this distance.

" .... "

For now, the movement of the enemy has been stopped.

Did they no longer have magicians which could power saint ranked magic?

Or perhaps all of the magic circles they had prepared were used up.

Maybe they just realized it was a waste...

"I wonder if they'll attack."

"They will."

Looking towards the enemy sub commander, Billy spoke with a stern look,

"If I was the enemy's commander, I would not just charge recklessly into a battlefield that is littered with traps.

I would pull back.

You can misread the power of your opponent in the opening stages so it's best to pull back and re-examine their forces.

If it was me that is what I would do."

"Oh... it seems that they are coming."

When I look, I see that the enemy encampment has started moving.

They dragged themselves along and moved towards us, slowly leaving a trail behind them.

Well, anyway.

They probably carefully held a strategy meeting and then came after forming a variety of plans.

Pulling back would use up food and supplies and could also harm the morale of the troops.

It may not be necessary to withdraw just because you were shamed in the opening maneuvers.

In normal exchanges, our magicians would have used up magical power as well.

In that case they would be able to pass through the pitfall zone unmolested.

That is probably what they are thinking.

"Archers at the ready!"

In response to the orders from the sub commander, bowmen came to the front.

Any enemy attempting to cross the pitfall zone will be targeted by arrows.

"Fire!"

In response to the sub commander's orders, arrows fly.

We have 50 bowmen at the most.

The enemy number 5000.

Their effect on the charge will be meager.

The enemy commanders probably think the same way.

After a brief pause a horn sounded.

The enemies' advance hastened at the same time.

One group of enemies slowly pick their way through, another constructs a bridge, others occasionally falling into a pit or detouring around one. In this way they advance a tiny bit at a time.

Having seen the archer's attack they now advance boldly without fear of a magic attack.

Well, that should be enough.

"Magic troop prepare."

The sub commander issues his order and magic soldiers holding wands step forward.

We have 20 magic soldiers in total.

From that number, eight move to the edge of the roof.

The other eight stand ready in the back.

The remaining four come out to use the magic circle that Roxy drew.

The magic soldiers on the roof ready their wands.

Also Roxy, who I hadn't been watching, was out holding her wand.

I should join in as well.

Okay.

And so I make a tight fist while psyching myself up.

Most of the enemy have entered the pitfall zone.

"Commence chanting!"

The eight people in the front begin to chant fire magic in unison.

When they had gotten half way through their chant, the eight soldiers in the back began to chant as well.

" ~ Fireball Bullet [Fireball] ! "

From the eight members of the vanguard, fireball was cast.

The fireballs flew in an arc and landed in the center of the enemy formation.

Several people transformed into something charred black.

The ones who had fired immediately retreated and began chanting again.

" ~ Fireball Bullet [Fireball] ! "

The eight people in the back then released their delayed fireballs.

While maintaining a time difference of half a chant, they continued to rain down fireballs.

However, countless balls of water started to fly from the enemy in groups of four.

They can't reach us at the fort, but if they hit a fireball then it is undone.

I'll resist them.

In the previous skirmish, it was not the case that the enemy used all of its magic power.

Of course they didn't.

"Roxy-dono, there is a banner with a scorpion on the right side of the battlefield."

"Yes, I see it."

The words of the sub commander cause Roxy to turn this way.

The banner with a scorpion on it is raised on the enemy's right side.

Around that point is where the water bullets are flying from.

In that area the magician corps of the enemy should be huddled.

In other words, if I can smash that group the possibility that the enemy can resist our magic will be lowered.

"Um, Rudy... should I do it?"

"No, I can."

"Alright then."

Roxy made a thin smile before she began chanting.

I also became ready and poured magic into both of my hands.

And then...

I killed them.

After that, it became one sided.

They were no longer able to resist any of our magic.

Most of the remaining enemy had no method to defend themselves from the saint ranked fire magic our soldiers shot out.

The defeated enemy could not even easily withdraw because of the pitfalls.

Over the course of their retreat their chain of command dissolved and their movements became erratic.

To be sure, Roxy and I then attacked with Saint ranked magic.

They became like ants trapped in a heavy storm.

They panicked and ran about wildly.

Inside the pandemonium they fell into pitfalls and were struck by lightning.

One after another they died.

Now I understand what that person meant.

People are garbage.

However not everyone was in a panic.

Some of them escaped the pitfall zone, some were outside the range of our saint ranked magic.

There were not many, but some got within range and attacked with magic.

Almost all of them were resisted, but a few hits landed on the fort killing some of our men.

Enemy archers took up swords and possessed the fort.

Only 300 defenders were left to meet them.

Of course from the roof we cast magic on them like a rain of stones.

Finally, we had worn the enemy combatants down to only a few.

Some had lost the will to fight, others were still struggling.

Some of them were taken as prisoner of War and some of them were killed.

I do not know the statistics involved.

Our losses number relatively few.

This was something that might be called a historic victory; the enemy withdrew.

When the battle ended commander Garrick raised a shout of victory.

The magic soldiers, archers, and I also broke out in cheer, our faces beaming.

I also cried.

I did not know whether I was pleased or not.

My awareness of having killed people was lacking, but so was the sense that we had won.

It was my surroundings that become filled with cheer and excitement.

Those soldiers that previously had feared and avoided me ran up and clapped me on the back.

Some were patting shoulders, others embracing.

One of those was a young female archer.

It's thanks to you, you did it, thank you.

When told this delight overflowed from me.

Finally there was Roxy.

Roxy leaped into my arms.

She was so excited that I got an uncommon Roxy initiated kiss.

The men around us whistled and raised cheers and jeers at us.

I'm happy, just happy.

The source of my happiness isn't that I'm being embraced by a woman.

It might be the effect of what they call group psychology.

The wild enthusiasm has certainly paralyzed my heart.

It's not bad.

I couldn't think about the people I had killed with my own hand or anything else.

I am good.

Anyway we won with almost no damage on our side.

I should be happy about it.

So to say that I don't have to think about it is fine.

I'm fine.

I did it for the first time; surprisingly it may not have been that big of a deal.

This is how it is living in this world.

It isn't necessary to forever be bound by the ethics of my previous life or to the rules I'd established in my youth.

There is a time for the spear and a time to hold back.

I should no longer hesitate if I need to kill a person.

I am in control.

"Prince Zanoba has returned!"

This was said by a messenger who had come from the lower floor.

During the chaos of the battle I had forgotten completely about Zanoba.

I ran downstairs in the blink of a eye.

But the scene at the bottom of the stairs was frightening.

A group of people with clearly different hair color is surrounded by ten of our soldiers.

They were filthy with leaves, dirt, soil, soot, sweat and blood.

One of our men, a ferociousness man in splendid armor raised his voice to greet me.

"Ah, Shishou!"

Who was this?

I thought I knew who it was.

Who was this with his victim's blood in his hair?

There was damage all over his armor.

Even his glasses were smeared with blood.

"Zanoba?"

Zanoba is Zanoba.

He looked like a different person who looks exactly like Zanoba.

It was so much so that I wanted to complain.

I just couldn't make the connection between this man and Zanoba in my head.

"You are..."

When I approached the crowd split in two.

So I swallowed my words.

At Zanoba's feet was a kneeling figure.

This guy tied up in a net was also covered in mud.

It is a net that I recognize.

It is the magical item that I had lent to Zanoba.

"Thanks to Shishou, the surprise attack was a success, we caught the enemy's commander."

"Ah, ummm..."

The soldiers around the fort are praising the dozen or so muddy warriors.

The eyes they turn towards Zanoba are different than when we first came to the fort.

They are different from those eyes filled with suspicion.

They are eyes full of respect.

I mean, only ten men.

Why are there so few?

When they left there should have been almost 100.

"Um... where are the others?"

"They were killed. They died honorably in battle."

Oh, I see.

If you raid that huge army with 100 people it becomes like this.

But isn't it strange?

Wouldn't we have won this battle even without making this raid?

They shouldn't have had to make a desperate raid like that.

"Just what... did you win something from the raid that would be worth the lives of 90 men?"

"Of course we did. This person is a member of the enemy's royal family. If we negotiate with him as a hostage the war should end."

Oh, I see...

I get it.

Yeah.

I understand now.

If that's the case then the raid was necessary.

This put everything in perspective, this battle was a complete victory.

Zanaba created a victory with a desperate charge.

If you think about it, this may have been a worthy way to sacrifice 90 men.

It's a rather small sacrifice for ending a war.

No wait, I shouldn't be deceived.

This time we delivered a crippling blow to the enemy.

1000 or 2000.

Or even 3000.

Any commander with his head straight on isn't going to attack us anymore.

"I can't keep Shishou stuck in this fort too long. This was a fine success."

Smiling, Zanoba laughed.

It was that kind of thing.

I guess it isn't necessary that the enemy would be stopped by just this defeat.

There is the possibility that the enemies commander doesn't have a good head on his shoulders.

Even though we severely wounded them today, our enemy has the advantage in numbers.

Meanwhile, without Roxy or I, the fort could easily fall.

Neither of us can afford to stay here one or two years.

But with the capture of an enemy royal, once a cease fire agreement is signed, the war is over.

Having gotten a hold of someone from the leadership, we can finish this surely.

Without that guy's methods, this wouldn't have been possible.

For example, if I was in the enemy's fort...

No, even if Roxy hadn't helped me get over my hesitation and fear of killing, wouldn't things have still taken their course?

"Iya. However just as expected.

That saint ranked magic of Shishou and Roxy-dono...

In addition, this [casting net of overfishing].

I thought that I would be able to capture the enemy's commander eventually, but I did not expect it to go so well."

Anyway, under the cover of the mess created by Cumulonimbus, Zanoba successfully captured the enemy's head.

Like picking up a chestnut from the fire.

If you make a bet, you have to win it.

He created a method using Roxy and myself, while just barely scraping by, got the best results from this single large battle.

"Iya-haha, but there sure is a large difference between being inside that saint rank magic and seeing it from a distance!"

"Ah, uuuh, Yeah, that it is."

Suddenly a chill ran down my spine.

The range of Cumulonimbus is wide.

It's the kind of attack that will strike the enemy in a large scope.

That would mean...

"Ah, that is, Zanoba... did I hit your group with lightning?"

"Hmmm....."

Zanoba placed his hand on his chin and made a pose like he was thinking.

He said with a straight face, "Shishou... there are always sacrifices in war."

I was right.

Roxy and my lightning struck them.

We were safe in the fort.

Alternatively, they could have also been blown by the strong winds into our own pitfalls.

It might have been a guy I was eating my rice next to.

It might have been a guy Roxy had taught magic to.

Even though I didn't get very involved with the men, I notice that faces I had gotten used to seeing over the last several days were missing.

"And, those men's fate are the sole responsibility of the commander. Shishou, you shouldn't worry about it."

Even if you say that, I feel like I've done something irreparable.

"Shishou, you must be tired. Please rest well for the remainder of the day."

While saying that, Zanoba hit me lightly with a pop, and then gently patted my shoulder.

Then he took the prisoners and disappeared into the fort, while saying one thing or another to soldiers he passed.

I just stood there stunned.

Words would not come out anymore.

" .... "

Ah, I see.

We must prepare for an attack by the Death God.

There is no time to be stunned.

I don't have the time to be resting.

I should be near the MK-I.

Then let the enemy come.

That evening an assailant came.

However, he was not the Death God.

Neither was I his target.

He came to rescue the royal family member we had taken hostage early today.

I did not have to kill him.

He was weak.

I stunned him and handed him over to a soldier of the fort.

I don't know what happened to him after that.

My restraint is functioning at least.

I'm alright. I'm going to be okay.

I am unstable, but I'm in control.

I am able to control my power.

So I'm okay.

I continue to tell myself this all night.

The Death God did not come.

I was not attacked.

The next morning I joined in questioning the hostage with Zanoba.

He's part of the royal family of the aforementioned North Country.

Whether or not they know the existence of Hitogami: No.

Whether or not there was a guy in their country who made a remark or claimed to foresee the future: No.

Then how did they perform the invasion collecting 5000 soldiers in such a short period of time?

They had been eyeing the Shirone kingdom for some time, working towards an invasion slowly.

So then, the north country is clean.

There was no relationship with Hitogami.

Or, it could be that the general idea to invade Shirone came from Hitogami... but this guy is not an apostle, certainly.

This guy who became our hostage, he is just a moronic commander like you could see anywhere.

Still no attack from the Death God.

The North Country is clean.

My expectations are defeated.

It's been a long time since I felt like I was just earnestly spinning my wheels.

It seems that I have misunderstood something fundamental here.

For example, perhaps in this particular case, there was no trap from the beginning.

Far from a trap, maybe Hitogami has nothing to do with these events.

Even while I think this, I remain vigilant.

Partly, I may have misunderstood some meaningless thing, it's better to be prepared.

Then on the tenth day, the situation changed.

Ten days have passed since the battle.

Thanks to our hostage, the enemy has put forward an offer of truce to Zanoba.

We sent a message back to the capital.

We wrote about our victory, taking the hostage, and the possible truce.

It's been proven after the fact that there is no force left which can make all out war on Shirone now.

If Pax doesn't act like a total moron, I won't complain.

Well, we haven't received a reply yet, so I feel a bit uneasy.

Everyone inside the fort is wildly enthusiastic about the battle.

To them Roxy and my magic was amazing, Zanoba, who cut through the enemy was also amazing.

This place has been filled with relaxed excitement.

Thanks to my part in the success of the battle, or perhaps because I captured the assailant, the soldiers of the fort have softened towards me.

Even so, the excessive courtesy they had shown me is still there.

But I think their facial expressions aren't as stiff.

They have started to smile at me recently and when they come to talk they do it with a bright expression.

The magician who they didn't know may have become a fellow soldier to them.

At least there wasn't a single man that came to blame me for the death of those who were caught in my saint ranked magic.

Thanks to things like the attitude of the men,

the day to day counseling with Roxy,

and my concern for Zanoba, my mental state was recovered.

I am able to believe that I did not make a mistake; my actions were not at fault.

It's better to not focus on the past's troubles.

Here in this world I am a subordinate of Orsted.

In order to protect my family I have made an enemy of a god.

A time like this was bound to come some day; I should have prepared.

It's a fragile calm but this is the path I've chosen.

However, in the future, I probably won't participate in war even if I'm begged.

In this other world, how should I say it... It's another universe.

At the same time, perhaps I'll have to kill again.

It is tiring if I dwell on each person one by one.

If I can avoid killing, then that's what I'll do. This is my decision.

It won't pay to worry for days about each person I may have to kill, it would just cause unnecessary mental damage.

Well, let's reorder my thoughts.

Even though I have been wary these last ten days, nothing has happened.

Both my mental state and my magic have made a full recovery.

I'm in perfect condition.

The Magic Armor MK-I is still setup and I remain vigilant.

I am in a better position now than at the audience with Pax; the Death God should have attacked then if he was going to.

After all, Hitogami may have had nothing to do with this affair.

It must be as Orsted said.

This event originally happened but was not recorded in the diary.

Even without me Zanoba must have somehow handled this.

Perhaps he wasn't even summoned.

This may have been a waste of time.

However that isn't something I should say.

There is still a possibility that Zanoba could have died this time.

Regardless, the war is over.

There is no longer an enemy country arrayed against the Shirone kingdom.

Zanoba should also be satisfied.

I should be able to persuaded him to come home to Sharia now.

Thinking of him staying close to Pax is repugnant.

"Mmmnnn ... !"

I stretched myself out in the morning sun.

Hitogami is unrelated... probably, I think.

If he's done nothing here, then the possibility of a trap is as low as possible.

After I thought about it like that I slept soundly for the first time in a long while.

And nothing happened while I was sleeping like a log.

So, it's not a trap after all.

With this new refreshed attitude, I decided to go wash my face in the nearby river.

I could also use water magic, but it isn't the same kind of feeling.

At the river the soldiers were washing their faces and brushing their teeth in groups of two and three.

"Oh look, it's Rudeus-sama."

"Thank you for your good work at watch every night!"

"Iya, I thought that doll must surely be part of Zanoba's hobby, but it was a magic tool after all!"

I had quickly become surrounded.

I'm a very popular person.

Being pampered day after day like this, it may be my first time.

At any rate, the soldiers of Shirone wear a light brown pair of shirt and shorts outside of combat.

The uniform is the same for both sexes.

Moreover the women do not seem to wear a bra when they go to bed.

The young archer girl who had hugged me is here; potchi rises up a bit.

I'm seeing something precious, it's a sight for sore eyes.

"I wondered what caused this crowd to gather, it's Shishou."

So Zanoba also comes here.

Also this guy, from head to toe is dressed just like the soldiers.

There is no hint of royalty here.

Because of his skinny limbs and underdeveloped muscles, he gives off the impression of a NEET.

"Zanoba-sama!"

As it is, the soldiers dropped down on one knee for Zanoba.

"Alright, go back to washing your faces."

"B, but..."

"Generally, you don't need to place me on a pedestal. I am the same as you Gentlemen, I'm just sleepily getting up."

While saying so Zanoba makes a deep yawn.

Over the last few days Zanoba has been busy with the cleanup after the battle.

I don't know the details, but after a large scale battle there are a number of troublesome things that have to be dealt with.

By the way, the dead bodies left on the battlefield had been neglected.

During the last few days a bunch of men dressed like bandits appeared out of nowhere, stripping equipment, they slipped away unnoticed.

People who specialize in that kind of thing will be drawn to the battlefield.

Occupation: looter.

I was mulling all this over while kneeling by the riverside with Zanoba.

"... So, how is the truce proceeding? Is it coming along well?"

Initial persuasion: light jab.

If a truce is struck, then there won't be a need for you to be in such a place Zanoba.

The war is at an end.

"Yes, Yesterday we got a reply.

The rules have not been hammered out yet, but it will all be concluded in time.

Now, there will not be another attack for three years at the least."

After hearing Zanoba's words a soldier uttered, "Oh."

This might not have been something that should have been heard in a place like this.

Since it is good news though, it shouldn't be a problem.

Even so, in three years...

In other words, the North Country, despite it's crushing defeat, has not given up completely on their invasion.

If it is assumed that the current commander will be let go because of his complete defeat, who will his successor be?

How do they intend to supplement their diminished troops?

Will they just break the recently agreed upon truce without an honorable justification?

Various factors are entangled over those three years.

At a minimum it would take three years.

So, in reality it will take longer.

"But that's good. In three years time Shirone should be able to rebuild itself."

I see. This could also be seen as stalling.

Certainly if its just buying time, that should be more then enough.

"Can he do it, that King Pax?"

"Even I could do it."

Zanoba answered so proudly.

I don't know about it myself, but perhaps there is already a plan.

In any case, I've seen the end of this war.

The whole thing was unsatisfying.

"Anyway, it should quickly become peaceful."

"Yes, it should."

Zanoba said so happily, but his face was sad.

Well outside of wartime this guy has no role to serve.

Well now, how to convince him?

"Zanoba, now that this battle is over, what will you do?"

Second jab.

Accidentally, it came out like a death flag.

This is like the method you would use to break the ice before you propose to your lover.

It's already far too late to buy the bouquet. Even I don't have that much self confidence.

"I will return to the capital for now and make ready to receive word from His Majesty.

I do not know if I will continue to be assigned to this fort as it is..."

"You intend to remain in this country then?"

"Haha.. Isn't it obvious?"

The magical armor has not been completed.

Research of the automatic doll, also has stopped before completion.

Our plans to sell dolls with Julie was also just able to finally get a foothold.

Won't there be all of those kinds of regrets?

No, there definitely should be.

"Zanoba."

"What?"

"Once the truce is signed don't you intend to come back to the Magic City Sharia with me and continue to make dolls just as always?"

Now I've turned it into some kind of marriage proposal.

I should have bought that bouquet.

But well, I think it's okay if I say that kind of proposal.

We're not getting married.

I'm just asking him to discard his country and pick me instead.

With a wet face Zanoba looks at me.

He's expressionless.

It's hard to believe that until now there was a fun atmosphere.

This is bad.

I'll be turned down.

I've failed.

I confessed right from the start without setting the right mood.

This is regrettable.

This atmosphere says I'm dumped.

Oh ah.

"Shishou, could it be.... ummm..?"

"Ummm?"

Right then noise suddenly rose up from the fort.

The sound of horses running, clip-clap, can also be heard.

We don't have cavalry in this fort.

Who is making that sound then?

As I thought that, I looked around the edge of the fort and spied a person coming at us on horseback.

"Fumu, that's a messenger from the capital."

At those words from Zanoba I also stand up.

"Probably Pax has sent us a statement about the truce."

"What could it be. Maybe it is a message that instructs us to invade and destroy the enemy nation."

"Oh yeah? But I also feel like we could do it if you are there Shishou."

We wait for the approaching horse while joking.

As we watch it approach, we notice that the rider is a familiar person.

It's a person I also know.

"Ginger ~ ?"

Ginger rode up to us on the horse with a desperate look.

I wonder what's going on.

As soon as Ginger sees us she cranks her neck in our direction and proceeds straight at us.

The soldiers form a wall to protect us.

Then Zanoba cried out,

"She is my imperial guard! Open the way!"

With those words from Zanoba, the soldiers give way quickly.

Before Zanoba can make a move Ginger falls from her horse with a relieved expression.

"Ginger, what happened!?"

"Ha.... haa..."

Zanoba picks up on it as well, Ginger's deep distress.

She isn't hurt, but has the dark complexion of sever fatigue.

Perhaps she has been riding her horse for 24 hours straight.

"Oh, there is trouble in the imperial city Latakia.

The former warlord Jade has become the focal point for an uprising in the name of the 11th prince.

They have surrounded the Imperial castle with their forces...."

As she said that, Ginger began to choke and then fainted.

"The 11th prince? Ridiculous, that boy should have had only 10 people within the Shirone royal guard... Ginger! We need a more detailed description... oi!"

"Calm down Zanoba, let her rest first."

I get Zanoba to stop shaking Ginger.

Then, for the time being, we carry her into a room.

11th Prince Haruha Shirone

Three years of age

He is the child that former king Palton Shirone sired in his later years.

His mother was the daughter of farmers and, as such, he wasn't originally in a social position where he could become king.

Therefore Haruha was treated as if he did not exist.

He was given an estate in the corner of the Shirone kingdom with his mother, and had been living quietly under the name of a local feudal lord.

There was externally little to know about his existence.

The former King Palton Shirone, at the same time, had a sister who is the warlord Jade's mother.

Both of whom were killed during Pax's great purge.

That only leaves the warlord Jade.

He had formerly sworn allegiance to the king.

Jade, in spite of only possessing farmers, was able to raise them up. Because of his talent with tactics in this regard he was allowed the position of warlord.

Thanks to Jade becoming a warlord, the family is no longer hungry; a wealthy life was possible.

There was one important factor.

The king expected this position to be repaid with Jade's younger sisters when called upon, it was that kind of obligation.

At the time of Pax's coup, Jade had been stationed at Fort Karon.

At that time their were nearly 1000 people defending Fort Karon.

Jade led 500 of those and went to the capital Latakia.

However, it was too late when he arrived. The king had already died.

The royal family was waiting with reports of that massacre.

The forces defending that capital at that time numbered 2000.

As he marched forth with his soldiers, Jade's force swelled to 1500 with reinforcements from local feudal lords.

Factoring in Jade's repute as a tactician, fighting and winning would be possible considering the numbers.

That is if you only looked at the numbers...

The army of Jade, with it's increasing number of commanders, split in two.

The reason is that Pax had promised to treat the local lords in the same manner as always.

Some of those local lords had rushed in at the spur of the moment. Some were not happy with the former king, some lost their nerve, and some actually agreed with King Pax.

Looking at the noble's disagreement, Jade realized that he could not win.

He surrendered to Pax and swore allegiance.

Of course even though Jade took such an action, there was dealings behind the scene.

His sister's child, the 11th Prince Haruha Shirone, was alive and he had learned of it.He would endure it for now.

Under the banner of Haruha, he would wipe clean his regrets towards the deceased previous king.

This was his vow.

Then, under the surface, Jade began to move.

He collected dissidents behind closed doors and shored up his forces.

He organized the rebels who had been eagerly awaiting a chance since Pax's uprising.

Now there was a chance for success.

And then the time came.

The northern country showed signs of invasion and Pax was forced to move military power into the north to meet them.

Because of Jade's head hunting and the after effects of the coup, the Shirone kingdom's troops had dwindled.

There would be no reinforcements from the KDK.

I do not know if it would fall, but Shirone's strength would now be inferior to the northernland.

If Fort Karon is penetrated then Pax will be forced to send away his treasure, the Death God.

This is what Jade was thinking.

He had miscalculated; the third prince Zanoba Shirone had returned.

He had also brought with him the return of Roxy Migurudia who was once court magician, and Rudeus Greyrat who had overthrown the Water God Reida and North Emperor Auber at Asura kingdom.

Jade had also planned to contact Zanoba in the event that he had returned to have vengeance upon Pax.

However, Zanoba bowed down to Pax and headed to Fort Karon.

Jade's calculations went amiss.

Fort Karon fought off the enemy with a historic victory and so the Death God never had to leave for the front.

The declining military power was also on its way to a full recovery.

The force gathered at the north would also likely return to the capital soon.

This may have been his last opportunity.

Considering this, Jade launched his coup.

He gathered up all of the soldiers he had left in waiting and took up to occupy the capital.

He surrounded the royal capital.

This was the summary that Ginger, who woke up after several hours, told us.

Ginger was in town at the time, but escaped by taking advantage of the confusion caused by the revolt.

She came straight to Zanoba without stopping.

"When I left the capital, the King seemed to have shut himself up in the castle with a handful of guards... but I don't know the details or the current situation."

In a calm voice Ginger finished telling us everything she knew.

Apparently Pax is under siege.

It's been a few days since the revolt happened.

It won't be funny if Pax dies or even if the royal palace is occupied.

But the Death God is one of his troops.

It wouldn't be surprising if the rebels were annihilated instead.

Breaking through the siege shouldn't be hard if he intends to escape.

Why a siege?

There is a lot I don't understand.

This time we need to be careful of the situation.

"We need to immediately get to the capitol and see things for ourselves."

Zanoba said so as if it was just a walk to the general store then stood up.Ginger made a relieved expression.

However after hearing the next words her expression froze stiff.

"I will rescue His Majesty and help him escape here to Fort Karon. If that isn't possible then I will invade using a secret royal path and come to the aid of His Majesty."

"Please, please wait!"

Ginger's body shot up from her resting position.

She restrained Zanoba with a desperate look.

In regards to this girl, she was entrusted with Zanoba and that's exactly what her expression says.

"What now? Don't worry your little head, Ginger. Just stay here and rest your body."

"No, do you... Do you really have to go to King Pax as an ally?"

Ginger says this in a tone you wouldn't believe.

Zanoba turns back.

He's making an unspeakable expression.

"Naturally I will. To begin with, I don't even know the 11th Prince's face or anything other then he was born. It's suspicious, we can't truly even know if he has inherited the blood of my Father."

He has a point.

Finding Pax to be unbearable, the warlord Jade may have created the 11th prince as a puppet.

His younger sister may have been pulling a shell game on the King.

Ginger's eyebrows are bent like the character ノ乀.

It's an expression that is impossible to understand.

"Once you are committed to King Pax as an ally, what will you do then?"

"Things like that, I will leave to His Majesty. If he says so I will crush the rebels."

"How.... How can you come to the aid of a person like that?!"

Zanoba's eyebrows move, twitching.

It's an expression of anger.

" 'A person like that'? Ginger, you, just who do you think you are talking about?"

"I know it's disrespectful, but Zanoba, you surely know what Prince Pax did?"

"Just what did he do!?"

"I, my entire family, they were taken hostage!"

Zanoba's eyebrows move, fluttering.

Come to think of it I experienced the same thing.

I had nearly forgotten it was so long ago.

Well it's sure to be an unpleasant memory for anyone.

The side that was bullied will not forget the fact.

"I can't can't think much of a king who has to take his own bodyguards family as hostage... I do not think that king is worth being protected!"

It's the kind of line the feudal lords of the Edo period from my former life needed to hear.

But certainly, in this country, the ability to win royal guards was supposed to be a measure of power within the royal family.

The greater the number of royal guards, the closer to the throne you became; there was that kind of system.

They aren't just simple subordinates, they are vassals.

Forced to take hostages to keep them, that may be taboo.

"Haha, Ginger, allow me ask you the contraposition: This Zanoba Shirone... why do you serve him?"

"That is because..."

"I, in the past sold you. That isn't an act worthy of a member of the royal family. Why does Ginger still follow me?"

The reason why Ginger was in a situation where her family were taken hostage, it should have been because Zanoba sold her.

He traded her in exchange for the Roxy doll that Pax had bought.

Just why has this person stuck with Zanoba...

Ah, Zanoba's mother, it was a promise to her.

"That is, Zanoba-sama is an extremely wise person..."

However, Ginger did not say it.

Well, she may value this and that because of the royal family.

'I'm here because your mother asked me to be', will not be said.

"Is Pax not also a resourceful and competent man?"

"I want to do it, and then doing it without thinking of the consequences, that is His Imperial Highness Pax. It's not wisdom, he is just clever... doing such a thing, he is plainly a fool."

"I'm just a fool with a doll fixation. Pax and myself are exactly the same kind of person."

"It is different."

Kneeling, Ginger looks up toward Zanoba.

"Zanoba is a miko. You have so much power that if you were not wise many more people would have been killed by you up until now. It could be that you pretend to be foolish... I wonder?"

She has a point.

Zanoba sometimes says some deep things.

He read and understood the ancient documents of the automatic doll and even made the Magic Armor.

This time he saw through the situation immediately and his grasp of the battlefield was fast as well.

His insight in the past has also been remarkable.

It seems like he could just be acting and speaking the part of the fool.

However, his love of dolls would be true; that's not acting.

Nevertheless, he does not make a wise appearance in public.

"I am originally a fool. I just have a thing that I love and want to do excessively."

"Then let's go back to the magic city Sharia. There Zanoba, you can do what you love for the rest of your life."

"I won't go. The doll only moves after it is handled."

"Wh... what.. ?"

Ginger then turns her head to me, she is looking towards me.

Her eyes say, 'Please also say the same to him.'

Certainly I think what Pax did is unforgivable.

He captured Lilia and Aisha to lure me in and then set a trap to make Roxy his sex slave.

There is also the matter that he struck Lilia forcefully.

Recently I had not thought about it and so I could remain calm, but now that I've been reminded my guts boil over with rage.

"Hey, Zanoba, I also disagree."

"Shishou..."

"Pax certainly might have changed a bit since going to the KDK, but Pax is not a companion that you should bet your life for."

With an angry face Zanoba turned toward me.

"Like I told you before Shishou.... I am a servant of my country. The country belongs to the king... If the king is not safe isn't that a problem?."

"Didn't you say, 'My duty is to engage in war with other countries. It is because I am reliable in this manner that I was permitted to live.'?"

Zanoba remains silent.

I remember word for word.

"Whether the king is Pax or the 11th Prince, does it matter either way? Your work is not to settle the troubles between the royal family. Once the war with the Northern country is over and the truce is signed, haven't you achieved your duty magnificently. Isn't that how it is?"

"Shishou..."

"Wouldn't it be a nice ending? To continue living normally in Sharia. Let's go home together, eh?"

"Fumu."

Zanoba places a hand on his chin and looks toward the sky.

Now I am watching him closely.

"That is an attractive proposal but.... it is not possible for me to accept it."

"Why?"

I'm not calm.

For persuasion I should remain calm.

This opponent won't change his opinion even if I raise my voice.

I can also see that there is a hole in my logic.

Just because the job is over doesn't mean he can say hello-goodbye to his position in the royal family.

I see.

Yeah, I get it.

But it would still be good to go back with that kind of excuse.

"Let me ask you why."

"Well... it's unexpected, but even you don't understand."

Of course I don't understand!

No, I need to calm down.

Patiently, be patient.

Surely there is a reason that Zanoba has become obstinate.

I'll stay here and listen patiently until I can unravel his motives.

"...Zanoba, Pax should be afraid of you."

"So what?"

"Because of something like that, that fellow annihilated the rest of the royal family."

Even if Zanoba doesn't hold a grudge against Pax, the other side is underhanded.

It's only natural to be suspicious of someone with such a shady past.

"He could easily have the Death God help him take care of you."

" .... "

"Let's put whether to rescue Pax or not aside.

Even if you help Pax now,

Pax won't come to trust you.

He'll just betray you.

At any rate, once he has a chance he'll kill you.

That isn't the kind of place you should want to rush into."

Zanoba said nothing.

He just looked at me with a sullen face.

"You... Before you said the country would die and there was nothing I could do.

I understand that I could die during war,

but the idea that I will die because Pax is jumping at shadows is laughable.

After all, I am only here because I was called to the service of my country."

" .... "

Zanoba closed his eyes and was silent.

I breath in slowly to prepare my next words with care.

"It's that, Pax is my younger brother... he's my last blood relation."

Younger brother...

Blood relation...

Because of those words I lost my ability to speak with a single blow.

There is nothing I can say anymore.

Despite this Zanoba continued his arguments.

"Just now, I wanted to try to say that kind of thing. I don't know if you can understand but... but Pax is my little brother."

Zanoba is staring blankly at me.

His face has no color in it.

He isn't trying to express anything, not with his face, hand gestures, crying, laughter, nothing.

This is the real Zanoba, looking straight at me.

"Haa..."

Involuntarily, a sigh escaped my lips.

If he's doing this for his brother, and his family, how can I be so strongly opposed?

I can understand why Zanoba is so stubborn about this.

If it was me, and Aisha killed Norn, or possibly the other way around, the first thing I would do is remonstrate her.

But I would have to forgive her.

If the relationship between the both were to become so thin.

The one who survives may have just been at the mercy of some great fate.

Even if you make the wrong action you can still try to move forward.

Even while remonstrating I would still cooperate.

"I understand."

Zanoba doesn't intend to return home with us.

I can understand it.

Is it because his brother lies or is truthful? I do not know.

But, for me, I understand wanting to protect your own blood.

It's not the kind of intention that can be bent.

I'm sorry, Cliff, Julie.

It doesn't seem like it is possible for me to bring Zanoba back with us.

I will, however, follow Zanoba until I'm sure he is able to create a relationship of mutual trust with Pax.

I'll support him in this.

"Honestly, my original intention was to get down on the ground, and half crying, beg you to come back with us, but now, if that is the case, I'll follow you a little longer."

"...Thank very much. As expected of Shishou, if you had begged and cried I wouldn't have been able to go through with it."

"Then I should have done that first."

"Good joke."

Zanoba and I, our voices broke into laughter.

I don't know what I'll say to Cliff.

Julie... if you wish to follow Zanoba, then I will escort you to him.

I'll just have to start from scratch on a new sales plan for the Ruijerd dolls.

We had gotten permission from Pergius and the cooperation of Ariel, and then we had begun to look for talent with Aisha....

For all this preparation over the years, there is a sense of loss.

But it's okay.

If Zanoba has to do this for his family, then I have no choice.

I have nothing I can say.

As for Zanoba and Pax... well, it's not a relationship that I can say is close at the moment.

However, after this, there is no reason that it couldn't improve.

Apologizing for the past, forgiving and being forgiven: that could happen.

Over a long time that can nurture their relationship slowly.

They can repair their mistakes.

I think Pax is a jackass.

But he should be able to change; I've changed.

There isn't anyone who cannot change.

"So it's like that."

Ginger had become pale.

Now that I think about it, she hasn't had a chance to really see Pax since he became king.

To her, Pax is probably still the same as he was in the past.

He is still the old repugnant Pax.

"Ginger, I'm sorry. If it's this kind of thing, then I'm going to have to respect Zanoba's feelings."

Well, in this situation, Pax seems like he will continue to grow into his role as king.

Well whatever, nothing will happen if we don't go to Pax.

If we just come to help on our own, unexpectedly, Pax may change his view of Zanoba.

"It's like that Ginger. Our troubles keep multiplying."

Zanoba patted Ginger's shoulder as he went past her.

"Ah, oh, please wait."

Ginger came tumbling out of the bed after him.

Without even standing up, she clung to Zanoba's feet.

Ginger pleaded desperately.

"Zanoba-sama, I understand that I can't stop you, but please, just one. Just listen to my one request!"

"Go ahead."

"Even if King Pax orders you to, please do not die!"

They were awkward words.

It was probably said on the spur-of-the-moment.

But I understood Ginger's desire.

She only wants Zanoba to live.

It's just that alone.

"Haha, well but..."

"I understand Ginger. I'll bring Zanoba back alive by any means."

In Zanoba's place, I replied.

I'll help satisfy Zanoba's obligation towards Pax.

I won't let him die.

If there relationship is twisted and seems to be hopeless,

I'll take responsibility and return with Zanoba.

The original purpose that had drove me to come all this way with Zanoba was the same.

I have to accomplish that original intention.

It's not something I can forget.

"Thank you Rudeus-dono, I am very grateful."

Ginger bowed deeply to me.

I decided to wear the Magic Armor during our trip.

It is a pain to move the Magic Armor, which has to be disassembled and re-assembled every time.

If there is a battle going on in the capital it is best to take it along.

I'll just have to turn a blind eye to the magic power I'm expending by just wearing it.

My initial plan was to run with the others on my shoulders, but that proved to be far too uncomfortable for everyone but me. As expected, the vibration seems to be terrible.

Since it is not a distance that cannot be traveled on foot in a single day, we had to come up with some method of transportation.

The method I came up with took the form of a drawn carriage.

With the Magic Armor, I pulled the carriage, which had been modified with earth magic so that it would be more stable.

It certainly would have been simpler to just use horses and the ride would have been more bearable.

Zanoba was retching and vomiting, Roxy also had turned pale in the face.

But we got to the capital in five days.

I do not know how much of my magic power remains.

My body feels just slightly listless, so I can tell that I'm not completely recovered.

I had thought that because I wasn't using it for combat that I would arrive with a surplus, but still...

My magic power is at the level where it would be impossible to even think of fighting against someone like Orsted.

This time we'll go to Pax's aid.

I'm pretty sure that the Death God is our ally, but I do not know what will happen.

I'm prepared.

The Imperial Capital Latakia had been blockaded.

The capital gate stood firmly shut and soldiers who seemed like they were the rebel army stood upon it's ramparts.

Outside the castle walls stood the people who had been barred from entry, piled up in great number.

They were merchants, mercenaries, and adventurers.

In addition there were camps of the country's soldiers.

It seems that they may have come from a different city, or perhaps been outside the castle on some task when everything went down.

"It would seem they intend to keep out any new obstacles until they are finished."

"So in other words, Pax is still alive."

It's been ten days since the coup.

The Imperial castle has not yet fallen.

I do not know what their difference in arms is, but they have unexpectedly held out.

Well, I'm sure it's thanks to the aid of one of the Seven Major Powers.

It's also possible that Pax is already dead, and they are blocking the gate for some other reason.

"We can bypass the gate through a secret passage along the riverside."

Following Zanoba's instruction we advanced along the river.

For a second I considered squashing the rebels with a frontal attack, but it was a fleeting thought.

It isn't good to just bust into things without knowing the situation.

Also that would just be adding a bunch of unknowns to my list of worries.

I also want to know just why this all took the form of a siege.

We avoided the people outside the castle perimeter.

It would cause an uproar if they noticed Zanoba was the Prince.

The warlord Jade should have recognized Zanoba as an ally of Pax.

So it's better if we aren't discovered.

" .... "

It was pretty quiet at the riverside.

And so I chose to suspend the Magic Armor there.

I couldn't imagine a fight breaking out in that place.

I wonder where the boundaries between war and peace are?

"I think this is it."

Moving along the river we had come to a single building and water mill.

I placed the Magic Armor in there.

Zanoba and Roxy came down from the carriage.

Both of them were ghastly pale and Roxy had to go over and vomit into the river.

This trip hasn't been kind to those two.

"Somewhere in this watermill there should be an underground passage."

Zanoba is speaking cheerfully, but his face is still a deep blue.

Seasickness can be repressed with healing magic, but it won't bring back lost stamina.

Zanoba still has all his power, but his stamina is shot.

"Perhaps we should take a small rest break?"

"No, we may be in a situation where we don't have a moment to lose. Let's enter right away."

We do not know what has happened inside of the imperial palace.

This watermill might be our last chance to rest.

The MK-1 will not fit through this underground passage. I would like to prepare as much as possible.

My magic power will not be able to recover, but I think that Zanoba and Roxy should allow their strength to return.

"Zanoba, calm down. This is the best place to take a break and get our breath back. Besides, you and Roxy look ragged."

"Muh...."

"Those who hurry make mistakes, is how the expression goes."

"I've never heard of that expression... but I understand."

Zanoba nodded reluctantly.

Good.

We don't want our travel fatigue to blunt us.

"Before that, someone should confirm that there actually is a passage here."

"Oh, certainly."

Following Roxy's advice, I go confirm our path under the watermill.

I found it under a pile of barrels and crates which had been crammed inside the mill.

It was in a place like a storeroom.

Zanoba and I beat on the floors and the walls looking for the path.

Then we reach the far side of the mill.

There we found the path, hidden in the bottom of a wooden box.

It was covered by a metal plate.

It doesn't exactly look like a door, but something like a door knob is definitely there.

"Is this it?"

"Wait, don't jump to conclusions, this may be some part of the warehouse."

While saying the opposite of what I was thinking, I start to examine the suspected door.

I wonder how it is opened?

No, it wouldn't be strange for an escape passage to not open from the outside.

I wonder if it is designed to only be pushed open from the other side.

"Oomph!"

After Zonaba peeled the metal plate up with brute force a pit with a ladder was revealed.

It doesn't seem like it could be a root cellar.

I used intermediate level fire magic to light up the inside.

After that we could see the bottom several meters below us.

While checking it out we made sure that the tunnel was aiming towards the capital.

However I didn't immediately discard the possibility that it was just some kind of cellar.

I dropped down and tried to light up the back of the cave.

The inside of this place was completely bare.

It was just a narrow passage which continued on into the darkness.

There is no doubt.

This is an underground passage.

"How is it down there?"

"Seems like this is definitely the place."

"So we will take a break?"

"Yeah."

After we rest I returned to the carriage and put on the MK-2 Magic Armor.

With the size of that passage it will be impossible to use the MK-1.

However, I should be able to perform well enough in the MK-2 as long as I don't have to fight one of the Seven Major Powers.

Now that Zanoba has regained his physical condition, we begin our invasion through the passage.

The passage was so narrow that a person passing through would rub along the sides as they continued on endlessly.

There doesn't seem to be any lighting at all.

... An invasion through here shouldn't have entered anyone's mind.

We used the summoning scroll's light spirits for illumination.

They are just as convenient as always.

The passage was empty and dark.

It was a path that appeared to have been made only for the sake of moving through it.

We marched down the path with Zanoba in the lead, followed by myself, and then Roxy.

A rear guard is unnecessary.

Enemies will not come from behind in this place.

"Being in this narrow passage, it makes me remember some unpleasant things."

Roxy whispered this from behind me.

I went to respond but couldn't find the words.

All I ended up saying was, "Is that so?"

And so we continued moving silently down the passage.

We continued to walk for about an hour.

Then, ahead of us and down the passage, appeared a door.

It is a door made from a single sheet of metal.

There is no doorknob. There is, however, a small fixed window.

It is very similar to what was in the watermill.

It seems it is another door that is designed to only open from the other side.

"Muuhn!"

By inserting his fingertips between the wall and the door, Zanoba is able to pull it open.

It was a good idea to place him in the front.

"Ah... this is..."

However, after opening the door, Zanoba said something baffling.

When I looked around him I could see that the passage ahead had been blocked by earth and sand.

It was a dead end.

And there was nothing like a fork in the road.

With this, could the watermill have been a mistake... ?

"Perhaps this collapsed during an earthquake... or the warlord Jade knew about it and closed it up in advance."

This was Roxy's assessment.

Well, this is probably the place.

It's still possible that Pax was crushed at the time of the coup.

Anyway, one of the reasons Pax was unable to escape has been revealed.

"Shishou, this debris, could you somehow take care of it?"

"... Yeah, I'll give it a try."

Zanoba and I swapped places.

I didn't just dig out our office's basement for show.

This kind of sediment clearing is something I'm used to.

Fortunately, in this passage, there is nothing setup to inhibit my magic.

With magic I compress the soil to reduce the quantity while hardening the walls and ceilings.

It feels like making a pipe through stone.

It's an impromtu method this time, but it should reinforce the strength to the degree that it won't collapse.

It's something I'm used to dealing with.

We eventually come out the other side with a crash after an hour.

The distance was something along the lines of five meters.

So short, and yet so long.

However, that kind of thing doesn't matter.

A surprising scene awaited us upon our exit.

"What the hell."

There was a lateral tunnel.

It seems like it's a cave.

Its height is about 2 meters, its width 3.

A similarly sized passage ran right beside it.

Water is flowing through the ground, reinforced by masonary stones; it's a tricklying stream but it doesn't feel like it's sewage.

The passage we just came through simply ends in this cave.

We are in a slightly higher position, there is about a one meter drop to the cave floor.

"Zanoba, do you know which way we should be going?"

"Well... I never heard anything about a fork in the road but... "

For the time being we'll just go down into the cave.

Even without the spirit of light, things are visible down here.

If you look, mushrooms growing on the wall of the cave are giving off light.

Just that small quantity of light makes me uneasy.

It's like an artificial cave, but also not like one.

It is a cave with a slightly strange feeling.

However, I feel like I've seen a cave like this before...

"Perhaps we should just go straight."

Roxy said this as she inspected the surrounding passages.

She jumped down while gripping her skirt and hat.

"Rudy, please just try and dig against the wall in line with the passage we came through."

"Okay."

I don't bother asking why.

Yeah, it's Roxy's instructions.

I'll just follow them.

"Roxy-dono, could you explain what is going on?"

In my place Zanoba asks.

Well not asking doesn't mean I don't want to know.

"This cave... has a similar feeling to the labyrinth I conquered in this country.

It probably has eroded the passage as it grew."

"I see."

"Well, it's just a guess.

If Rudy's digging doesn't turn anything up then we'll just have to take the right or left."

While I'm listening to them talk I'm also digging.

Ultra Digging.

I dig just like a dog.

No, I'm using my magic.

As I go another hours passes.

Then I finally hit the first pocket.

It was a passage similar to what we had went through with the spirits of light at first.

We did it.

"The path, it's here!"

"Then let's go."

I made stairs for them.

The stairs are also for the return.

But, if we leave this open like this, won't demons from the labyrinth enter...

Yeah, whatever.

Still, as expected of Roxy.

She looked at the cave, and in just a moment realized that it was a labyrinth.

This person who I respect is really something.

Then another hour went by.

We've spent about four hours in total moving through the passage.

By the time we finally arrived at the exit Zanoba was beginning to show signs of fatigue.

We emptied out into a place that looked like a basement.

The space was six tatami.

{ C-Editor's note: About 10 meters squared. }

The walls and ceiling were solidly constructed with masonry.

There were also candle stick like things placed upon the wall.

In the corner of the room there were stairs leading up.

Our exit way was a door hidden in the corner of that room.

I could tell immediately that we were in the palace of the Shirone kingdom.

At any rate this was a room I was familiar with.

Well I lived here for a while.

"... Zanoba, I think this is."

"Yes, Shishou, this is the room where we met for the first time."

It's a place of memories.

That's a nice way of putting it, but this is the place where I was imprisoned by Pax after he had tricked me.

I thought it was an empty room, but it was actually used for escaping.

This explains why that trick magic formation was here to begin with.

It was a now destroyed, barrier.

"How nostalgic. When I finally met with the producer of that doll I thought it was the high point in my life. Never did I dream of all the joyous day-to-day moments that would occur in the future."

"We can enjoy our sentimental moments later."

I try to stop Zanoba from monologuing like a documentary's interview so we can move forward.

We move up the stairs and down the hallway.

Everything was utterly silent.

The sun had set while we worked through the underground passage, outside the window everything is dark.

There don't seem to have been any maids to light the lamps in the hallway.

It's a stillness like in a hospital late at night.

I wonder if all of Pax's men are plugging up the perimeter; it seems that way.

"Where should Pax be?"

"He should probably be in the room that used to belong to my father."

By his father's room... he means the King's bed chamber.

Zanoba took the lead and started moving forward.

Of course someone is familiar with their own home.

This isn't something I want to particularly think about, so I walked forward ignoring it.

We followed him in silence.

".... ah."

Suddenly Roxy stopped.

She just came to a complete halt in front of a certain room.

"What's wrong?"

"Nothing, I was just thinking that my old room was around here."

The door to the room was open.

Nobody was inside.

There is only a desk and an empty unmade bed.

This room's occupant must have fled in haste. The bed is in disarray, the desk and floor is also a mess.

It must have been passed on to someone else after Roxy departed.

It had a strange lived-in feel to it.

It was another person's room now.

But since Roxy had lived there for a while, it probably meant something to her.

It is probably like the room I had lived in when I was Eris's tutor.

"Shishou, Roxy-dono, what's wrong?"

"Nothing. Roxy was just feeling a little sentimental after seeing her old room..."

"Didn't you just say we don't have time for sentimentality..."

Zanoba walked back to us with an amazed look on his face.

Then he stepped into the room with a 'fumu' and looked at Roxy.

"Roxy-dono had been living in the room next door back then."

"Ehh?"

A flustered Roxy opened the door to the room next to us.

When she compared this room with the one we had just looked at, she noticed something that made her blush.

"Heh, I made a mistake because of the darkness."

That Zanoba, he really humiliated Roxy there.

What is that guy even thinking?

If Roxy says that something is black, even if it is white, then it becomes Dark Matter.

"Shishou, why are you stepping on my foot?"

"My foot slipped a little."

"I know Shishou adores Roxy-dono, but it would not make sense to be immersed in sentimentally for another place all together."

You are the worst.

Stamping on your foot isn't going to be enough for me to forgive you.

However I am deeply moved hearing about a place where Roxy used to live.

If the metastasis event had never happened, could it have been that I would have just ended up settling in Shirone?

"Let's hurry ahead."

On Roxy's prompting we continued on.

We did not encounter anyone inside the castle.

Not a single person.

For some reason there wasn't anyone.

The result of which was that Zanoba became rather talkative.

"There is an entrance to this castle on the second floor. This is the entrance used by outside guests, the third floor also has..."

He told us, matter-of-factly, about the castle.

Floor 1: the living area for soldiers and servants

Floor 2: the audience hall and various facilities used for diplomacy

Floor 3: other facilities such as conference rooms, internal affairs offices, and corridorsthat lead to the primary defense positions in the walls and towers

Floor 4: the living quarters for the princes and princesses as well as their bodyguards

The King's chamber is on the fifth floor.

It's a weird castle.

Wouldn't the royal family be annihilated if they failed to wake up during a fire on the lower floors?

Well, that royalty was already all but gone though...

Nothing on the first floor, the second floor, nor the third.

There was nobody.

When we entered the fourth floor I tried looking through the windows.

There were bonfires around the castle, it was easy to understand that a rebel army lay outside.

However the presence of Pax's men could not be seen.

Neither is there any sign that fighting has occurred.

I can't see a single person.

I feel like it isn't just that I can't see them in the darkness.

The castle is unmanned.

" .... "

This eerieness , Zanoba has noticed it as well.

When we entered the fourth floor,the conversation suddenly stopped.

Everyone's expression also became stiff.

Something is going on here in the castle.

While feeling this way, we climbed the final flight of stairs

And then we arrived on the fifth floor.

The top floor of this building could also be called the castle tower.

It is the room which is literally at the top of the country: the King's chamber.

" .... "

Here at its entrance, the landing of its stairs, in front of the door sat that guy: the Death God, Randolph Marian.

For some reason he had propped a chair up against the door like he was on break, here he was setup on public display with his head bent forward.

His elbow was on his knee, and he was using that crossed posture to hold his head with his neck bent slightly.

He turned his weathered, eye patch wearing, death's head face toward us.

"Why does the king of this country have to put his bedroom in such a high place?"

[Death God], Randolph Marian

After spotting us, he suddenly said that kind of thing.

"It seems like it would be pretty inconvenient to construct a bedroom in a place like this.

Coming down into the office every day would be cumbersome. Even after having a meal made, it would have cooled a little by the time it made it up here.

Once your legs become weakened by old age, you would have a hard time climbing the stairs.

If there's a fire, it would surely delay your escape."

While cocking his gaunt face, he says all those things, and stares at us.

It's the attitude of an ordinary worn out old fart, but when he speaks it causes a chill to run down my spine.

"If it were my castle I'd place my room on the first floor.

Then it's a short distance to my office and I can eat my rice while it is still warm.

It would also be easy to go out...

That's what a regular guy like me would do."

Randolph punctuated his rant with a laugh, 'haha'.

With that laughing skull right in front of us, Roxy swallowed hard, gulp.

"Well there are certainly advantages to having it this way.

If you needed to barricade yourself in the castle then this is the ideal.

After all, this castle has a lot of magic resistant bricks.

This also offers good resistance to long range magic. There is also a defense point on each floor, so it's difficult to reach the top.

This is a pretty good castle for war time."

I wonder what Randolph is actually trying to say.

He's just sitting there.

Couldn't I pass through beside him?

Although, honestly, I don't want to get an inch closer to this guy.

"Randolph-dono."

While I'm confused Zanoba moved forward without hesitation.

Without changing his irreverent attitude, Randolph smiled at Zanoba.

It's a skeleton laughing in the middle of the night.

He's eerie.

"Your Imperial Highness Zanoba, it's a pleasure to see you again."

"May I know the state of the castle?"

"Yes, certainly, certainly, I'll tell you."

Randolph removed his eye patch while saying so.

Behind it lay a glowing red eye.

Inside of his pupil a pattern like a six-pointed star floated.

It's an eye only a devil could possess.

"For His Majesty's life, I used my [Absolute Void Eye] to construct a barrier around the entire castle.

With that power I'm still holding off the enemy's force."

It's a demon eye which I'm not familiar with.

Orsted has not told me about the existence of his magic eye.

That guy, he never tells me the important things.

But does he wear that eye patch because he is unable to control it?

Should I be wary now that he's removed it?

"I see. So where are the others?"

"Everyone who isn't dead has otherwise fled."

"So... where is His Majesty?"

"Behind me."

"So, you are currently protecting His Majesty."

Zanoba began to go past the side of Randolph while saying so.

However Randolph extended his arm and held him back.

"Why did you stop me?"

"His majesty has ordered me to let no one pass."

"However this is urgent business."

"His majesty is occupied now, even if you have come with pressing matters."

It seems like he is occupied with something or other.

What could he be doing with no subordinates in a place like this?

"Move aside please, I came all this way to save His Majesty."

"His Majesty, does not seem to be willing to leave this castle."

" .... "

He's being evasive.

Randolph continues to talk as if he is hiding something, and it's clearly frustrating Zanoba.

"I want to talk directly with His Majesty!"

Zanoba tried to force his way through, causing Randolph to stand.

He moved relaxedly.

His hollow face just suddenly appeared to jump up to our level, there was no sense of him standing.

"Now just give me a moment. His Majesty's heart is very distressed about the current situation."

"His heart?"

"Just take a goo~ood look at the state of the castle from here.

Enemy soldiers stare in at us with hostility.

Then our own soldiers are outside of the walls doing nothing, they just sit there watching..."

Randolph's eyes moved to our rear while he said this.

I involuntarily look back, and certainly, on the other side of those large windows in the landing, the state of the capital is very clearly seen.

Rebels surround the castle.

Outside the city walls, soldiers are stalled.

If you look at it from up here there appears to be an army which does nothing against the rebels.

But the majority of that army is actually travelers, adventurers, and merchants.

Those people can't be expected to help.

"Until the heart calms down, I won't move from this spot."

"When will that be?"

"Well then... I don't know how long that kind of thing will take. It takes however long it takes, eh?"

"Yea, talking to you is obviously pointless."

Tired of Randolph's slippery Q&A, Zanoba puts his hand on the man's shoulder and goes to push him away.

"Naaaaaaaaaaaah!?"

Zanoba shouldn't be someone you can just blow off like that.

He rolled down the stairs, gorogorogoro, and smacked the back of his head against the wall.

The wall then collapsed with a loud crash.

"Let me say I'm sorry here, I'm sorry... you can't defeat me like this, so please just go along and leave."

Randolph unsheathed his sword while saying so.

In the darkness the blade glows green.

Surely that is a magic sword too.

Ah, this is bad.

Regrets, regrets.

Without the MK-1 a fight is no good.

"Zanoba, calm down, fighting here is dangerous."

"But Shishou..."

Hearing the story just now, it is obvious that Randolph is just guarding Pax.

Zanoba is also here to protect Pax.

We should not be enemies.

It would be another story if Randolph was an apostle of Hitogami but...

That possibility seems rather low.

The same with this all being a roundabout trap aimed at my life.

If he was trying to kill the future republic then, with the Death God, Pax could have been destroyed much earlier.

That could have been taken care of even back during the time he was in the KDK.

Anyway, I'll ask him just in case.

"Randolph, if you ask us to wait, we can wait...

Until then, there is one important thing I would like to discuss, okay?"

"What could that be?"

"Do you know of the existence of Hitogami?"

Randolf laughed at that, smirkingly.

It was a laugh fitting this castle, an eerie laugh.

"Yeah, and if I know it?"

With a rattling laugh, Randolph said so.

He declared it.

The reason to fight has been lit within me.

The Hitogami's apostle that we had been looking for, the apostle is this guy here.

I don't understand exactly what the scheme is, but something advantageous to Hitogami is bound to come out of the situation with this guy.

So, this guy is our enemy.

He's an enemy that has to be defeated.

I thought it would come to this.

My blood thirst rises.

"Ah, so that's how it is after all."

Randolph has his sword.

That blade which emits green light illuminates the hallway.

Zanoba is standing with his club poised, Roxy also has her wand out.

I go first.

Little by little the course of events was moving toward this.

A battle with one of the Seven Major Powers while only wearing the MK-II.

The fight began slowly.

I hadn't intended to fight like this, but since it has started I can't afford to lose.My switch has been flipped.

"Uhaaaaaa!"

Zanoba was the first to make his move.

Our opponent is one of the Seven Major Powers, however Zanoba doesn't hesitate at all.Without any technique he just charged straight ahead, he's really too honest.

He pressed toward the Death God with his club raised roaring.

The Death God evaded it with room to spare.

But I already knew that Zanoba wouldn't land that attack.

A single blow from Zanoba is an instant kill.

He has a high critical chance but very low hit.

It's my job to setup that hit.

In the place the Death God will move when avoiding, I had already created a quagmire.

"Oops."

Then his foot sank into the quagmire and his stance broke.

" [Ice Strike] "

Then Roxy fired her magic into the fray.

The Death God's posture worsened as he effortlessly deflected her attack with his sword.

Zanoba continued to press forward.

He possesses Herculean strength that can even hold down an immortal demon king.

The blow which stemmed from that strength mercilessly punched a hole in the landing of the stairs.

As expected of the Death God, he avoided it.

At the same time we were stopping him from being able to go on the offensive.

He stumbled backwards, his feet left the ground.

The point of his sword is in an unexpected direction and his left hand is at his elbow.

Now is the time to attack.

The Death God's face shows a startled expression.

"No way, this shouldn't..."

After hearing him mutter that I judged that it was time for my attack.

I took a step forward and winked at Roxy.

Zanoba again rushed the Death God, trying to get in a decisive blow.

I turn both of my hand toward the Death God.

If I let Zanoba land a successful hit, then I'm good.

If the attack fails, then I need to determine the direction he'll dodge in with my foresight eye and electrocute him at that point.

While he's paralyzed I'll spam rock bullets at him with the magic tool in my left hand and finish it.

Even if he can evade all of that then Roxy can again break his posture, and we can begin anew.

It's not a planned strategy, but this impromptu co-operation should be fail proof.

That guy is like a mouse in a trap.

"Ahtsu!"

The Death God suffers a single blow from Zanoba.

If I hadn't seen it I wouldn't have believed it.

Oh man, he just tanked it.

That super human strength of Zanoba's: he stopped that club with his bare hands.

That is terrifying muscular strength. He's not a member of the Seven Major Powers for show.

But, look here.

The fact that his arm came away broken is clearly reflected in my eyes.

Checkmate.

"Zanoba, move!"

Zanoba, hearing my shout, snapped out of the way, and I sprung forward.

Purple lightning shot from my right hand.

With a hollow crack and a flash, the lightning licked the Death God.

Direct hit.

The Death God's body stiffens, and he folds over.

That death's head is looking right at me.

It's a face which doesn't understand what has just happened.

Even if you defend with fighting spirit, an electric shock will still paralyze you.

That's it.

I pour magic into my left arm and prepare to fire off a rock cannon.

"[Shotgun Trigger]"

I fire off a group of stone bullets, which people have said are between Emperor and King rank, at the Death God.

The stone cannon is a special move whose power was even recognized by Orsted.

It has power enough to even damage Orsted if it hits the mark.

With his posture and this timing, the Death God should not be able to avoid this, and even if it doesn't kill him, he won't escape damage.

I've won.

" ..... eh?"

That's what I thought.

However, the next moment the stone bullets disappeared.

Something happened in an instant and the only thing between me and the Death god was some sand or dust.

I couldn't understand.

"Ah, so you've come to aid me! Death God-sama!"

Because Randolph said and glanced behind me.

"!!"

A new arrival!?

The Death God?

Well then who have I been fighting until just now!?

I turned to my rear.

There was nobody.

The only thing there was a staircase lit by moonlight.

"Rudy!"

By the time I heard Roxy cry out I was being pushed away.

I could see some blue hair down at my waist.

I was being pushed away by Roxy.

I don't know why, I didn't think about it, but I changed my posture and embraced Roxy in the mid flight.

As I fall down my back strikes the stairs.

The Magic Armor made a sound, 'Gakeen', as I struck the floor.

There was no damage.

"Ouch..."

I turned over and looked up the stairs.

There was Zanoba who still didn't understand what had happened, and the Death God standing as though he'd just swung his sword.

The Death God stood there as if nothing had happened.

Shouldn't he be paralyzed by my electric shock?

Didn't we break his stance?

That's funny, what's going on?

"Rudeus-dono, a god of death is always something that stands behind you."

His expression was composed; his words were composed.

Because of that comprehension overtook me.

It was a performance.

His reaction to the shock, his stance breaking, all of that was on purpose.

It was all to have me turn around...

Oh shit, that was my mistake.

Orsted had even warned me that Randolph fought in that kind of way.

Although I didn't intend to have been careless...

Even so that's what just happened.

My stone bullets were erased.

No, that seemed familiar.

That was the same phenomenon when we fought with Manatite Hydra.

That this was...

"Magic absorbing stone."

"Wow, that was discovered quickly.... As expected, you are someone to reckon with."

While saying that the Death God displayed his palms.

Magic absorbing stones were fitting into the palm section of his leather fencing gloves.

I did not notice earlier, but they might have been undone by those.

I had not heard that he possessed such gloves, but...

It could even be the very same magic absorbing stone I brought home from Begaritt...

It wouldn't be surprising of a knight of the KDK collected that kind of equipment.

Even Orsted didn't know about it.

Well it's fine.

It was a little careless of me to think we could defeat one of the Seven Major Powers so easily.

Just because magic doesn't work doesn't mean this battle has become more difficult; I know the properties of the magic absorbing stone.

If he turns his hand towards it he can nullify magic, but only after he puts the same amount of magic power into it.

In other words he has to turn his palm towards me for it to work.

He can't turn towards his backside.

The caveat is the small window of attack...

It should be possible to penetrate that with three people.

Looking at it that way, with only one magic absorbing stone glove, if Roxy and I fire off magic simultaneously while Zanoba pursues him...

No, it won't be that simple.

However if it doesn't work, we'll just try another method.

It'll be trail and error.

We'll continue until his defeat.

"Roxy, please move over to Zanoba's rear."

" .... "

There is no answer.

Now that I think about, Roxy hasn't moved since a moment ago.

Her hand is limp.

And then around her shoulder there is a strange feeling.

" ...hmm? "

What is this?

It's red.

"Roxy's.... b-blood... no way?"

Roxy's robe was cut, and then from under it blood was flowing.

My heart was pounding like a hammer.

Like a revolving lantern the scene replayed for me.

I saw the figure of that man that pushed me from the jaws of death.

That man who was struck and then stopped moving.

Paul.

He reached out to me in the end, Paul...

This is the same as with Paul.

Roxy...-!

You too?

This can't be.

"This isn't happening! Roxy!"

"... Because it's actually happening, please don't touch the wound, it hurts."

I finally noticed that Roxy's eyes were open.

"Oh, okay."

It seems she's alright.

Roxy separated from me, and then in a hushed tone chanted healing magic and cured herself.

I was relieved.

This is bad for my heart.

"Oh, that should have been a fatal wound but..."

Placing his hand on his chin, the Death God tilted his head in curiosity.

To say something horrifying like that, and in regards to Roxy, it makes me agitated.

That monkey seems to have done something from up in his tree.

It seems he thought he had killed Roxy and is disappointed.

The result was only that the shock shaved a few years off my life span.

Alright, the rematch starts here.

"Hmmm?"

There, the sound 'pikiri' came from Roxy's neck.

The necklace I gave her before our departure cracked and, when I looked, it crumbled apart and blew away.

After that, her fingers, the rings on them, they all shattered.

" ..... "

Well then.

That was a magic item to take the place of a single fatal wound, also magic rings that should protect from physical harm.

"Ah, I see... it was like that."

I was horrified.

I was struck with a chill so severe if felt like I had icicles running down my spine.

I experienced a pressure like a strong gale blowing from the Death God.

I know this feeling.

It's my usual cowardice.

I can't stop even if I understand it.

Involuntarily, I embrace Roxy tightly.

"R-Rudy... ?"

It's useless.

Only to this point.

My assumptions only came this far.

That necklace was something I had prepared in advance.

So it's not just luck.

Everything up until this point was within the scope of my predictions.

But, from now on, what?

The opponent came out with an instant kill with a single blow.

Trial and error?

With this guy as an opponent, we won't get many attempts.

There are not continues.

They have all been used up.

Someone will die if we continue with this guy any more than this.

We won't win.

It's not surprising that you can't challenge one of the Seven Major Powers from the front and win.

Why did I even think it was a good idea to challenge one of the Seven Major Powers directly?

Even Orsted said not to challenge him directly like this.

It was like that from the very beginning.

"Zanoba! It's no good. Try to retreat."

"Shishou!?"

"We can't win this round. We'll return for a rematch with the MK-I."

While still holding his club, Zanoba fell back two steps.

He came and looked at me over his shoulder.

"No no, we have a pretty good game going.

That thing a moment ago was particularly dangerous.

If you use it again, I don't have confidence I could prevent it.

You even made me use my trump card..."

The Death God murmurs.

A while ago I felt like he was honestly addressing us, but this is a lie.

Orsted also said it.

This guy is a provocateur.

He'll invite your attacks, he'll incite your defense.

His words right now are a dare.

No, is he serious?

Can he say that without having used his demon sword?

This time his words were too blatant.

He is deceiving us in an attempt to provoke us...

I don't care!

This guy, you can't believe anything that comes out of his mouth.

I understand one thing.

The me right now can't defeat the Death God.

In this moment that fact was carved into my heart.

However, Zanoba did not agree.

"In that case, Shishou, please look over me. I'll break through this one person and then meet with my little brother."

Zanoba charged in.

In my eyes it was reflected in slow motion.

Time slows down, sounds disappear, the rest of the world fades out.

Zanoba takes one step, then two.

In my foresight eye, the Death God is already running.

It didn't seem to be the speed from his earlier awkward movements.

It was a speed that isn't possible to be caught with your eyes.

Time returned.

A sword stroke flashed.

"Zanoba!"

The slash strikes Zanoba on the side, entering his upper shoulder

It's a reverse kasaya.

His armor is shattered and Zanoba is blown up to the ceiling.

Zanoba struck the ceiling forcefully and then fell at my feet.

He doesn't make a sound.

This all seems like a dream.

"Ha..... ha...."

My heart is screaming: severe palpitations.

Is he all right?

His armor is shattered.

That thick breastplate part and the shoulder are shattered like glass.

I have no idea what kind of slash can transform metal into this mess.

"No effect from the secret technique [Pulverizing Armor Slice]..."

With the Death God's words, sound returned to my world.

Definitely.

Definitely, there is no wound on Zanoba's body, even if I look closely.

The cloth under his armor has been cut, but his skin is only harmed to the degree of blue bruises.

"Ugh.... guuuu..."

Zanoba groaned as he sat up.

I glare at the Death God who stands at the top of the stairs.

"As expected of a Miko, that isn't enough to cut you."

While grinning like a skeleton, the Death God looks down at us.

Then he slowly returned his sword to its sheath.

"Well I'm not the Sword God, I don't have a fixation on killing with the sword... Fire magic might work? From His Majesty Pax, I have heard that kind of thing."

Oh, then this guy can also use magic.

However the outside of Zanoba's armor is resistant to fire...

No it's not.

I don't think that it will be able to produce that effect in such a ruined state.

"...."

Zanoba rises.

I don't know what he thinks he's doing, but he picks up his club and puts his foot on the stairs.

Roxy has also risen.

As if protecting me, she readies her wand and steps forward to cover Zanoba.

I also stood up.

Zanoba is stubborn.

He might continue to fight until his death.

Naturally, I can't allow him to do that.

Roxy as well.

I'll die if she dies.

My spirit would die.

"Will you go on?"

Randolph looks down on us with a blank expression.

He has taken no stance, nor has he begun to chant magic.

He is just standing still, composed.

He doesn't seem to want to initiate the attack.

Shit, this is just a game to him.

Rather there is even a sense like he is going easy on us.

This guy has sealed my stone cannon.

He had a way to disable magic from the beginning.

Anyway, I don't have anything other than magic with which to catch this guy with.

And still he might have another hidden trump card beside what we've seen.

What had Orsted said?

When it seems like I should attack, defend; and when it seems like I should defend, attack?

Well then, if I believe that, then this guy can anticipate the present flow of battle?

I don't know.

I don't know how to move at all.

There is no necklace.

There is no armor.

We don't know what the opponent has up his sleeves and his attacks are fatal.

There is no guarantee that it is possible to prevent this guy's attacks from breaking the Magic Armor MK-II.

It's no good.

It's not good no matter how much I think about it.

We must withdraw at once.

But how to convince Zanoba?

If he can't be convinced, then stunning him from behind and making him faint.

Then we can retreat to where the MK-I is and fight from there.

"Zanoba, do you understand now? He can't be killed with a head on assault."

"But, Shishou, Pax is..."

"The Death God was waiting. There should still be time for us to secure a certain victory."

I could see the hesitation in Zanoba's movements.

He also seems to have realized that we cannot win.

"Are you leaving now?

Well, I wonder if it's possible ... his majesty might be finished quite soon?"

It's a trap.

I don't need to hear it.

"Ah, let's try to make a fresh start once more."

I question whether he'll really let us go.

"I apologize about suddenly attacking you. Therefore, will you please overlook our behavior?"

This may have started out poorly, but maybe I can change the direction if I try a modest approach.

If things continue and we can flee while fighting, there is always the Magic Armor.

After that it's a rematch.

If he doesn't give chase, that would also be good.

"Huh, it doesn't matter, but..."

Ah, is that so?

This is somehow anticlimactic.

I cannot read the intention of the Death God for the life of me.

What exactly is this guy's purpose?

I can't figure it out.

"Death God-san, you, are you getting instructions from Hitogami?"

"What kind of instructions would I get? Especially from someone I haven't ever met."

Eeh?

"But just a moment ago you said, you knew him."

"Someone related to me once met him so I've heard his name... it's only to that point. Myself, I haven't encountered Hitogami, let alone talked to him."

This has turned into what kind of story?

"That would mean that you, you aren't an apostle of Hitogami?"

"I don't know anything about apostles... so that's correct."

Oh we jumped the gun!

Ah, dammit!

Recently there is way too much fruitless effort!

"Then you aren't an enemy of King Pax?"

"Yes. I am veerry mu~ch a supporter of King Pax and the Queen Consort Benedict. At any rate, those two are the only ones to praise my cooking...."

"In other words there isn't some dubious ritual going on in the room behind us and you aren't delaying us to buy time?"

"Yeah, well it's the kind of ritual that you might not want to talk about in front of a small girl."

The Death God glanced at Roxy while saying so.

Roxy was called a small girl, so she looked depressed.

She surely doesn't look like a mother from her appearance.

Even so, I see.

We didn't even have to fight.

Yeah...

I'll apologize.

It's my fault for jumping to conclusions.

"So.... I'm very sorry.

We are not King Pax's enemy.

That sudden attack, please let me apologize again."

"No, I also didn't explain it well. Sorry."

Conversely, he lowered his head.

He, he is very polite...

Oh wait.

Actually, this could just be us playing into the hands of the Death God.

In fact, he could have been preparing instant death skills the entire time we were talking...

What exactly should I believe...

Ah, this is such a mess; I have no idea.

If this is the Death God's trick, then I have already completely fallen into it.

And, then

"Oh?"

Randolph, laughed with a 'pha' and relaxed the force he was emitting.

But I don't relax.

This guy will not show an opening.

"Seems like it's ended."

What has happened?

What's to become of us?

"Oh, please don't worry so much.

Because I don't really want to kill any of you guys."

"...Liar, just a moment ago you tried to deliver a fatal injury."

"Haha, Certainly... Rudeus, you are interesting."

That skeleton laughed at me.

He just said that I was interesting.

"I was ordered by King Pax to not let anyone through until the end. The thing is finished, so that order has been followed through to its end."

Randolph re-sheathed his sword while saying so.

Then, while sighing with a 'phew', he sat back down into his chair.

"Well, as you please then."

I wonder if this is a trap.

The moment I show my back I may be dealt a single deadly stroke.

"I can go somewhere else if you hate the idea of showing me your back."

"No that's fine, I'll believe you."

Zanoba, so manly, put his club away and began to walk.

I stowed my weapon as well.

Thus the battle ended.

The top floor of the royal palace.

In the King's chambers.

The Shirone kingdom's most luxurious place: the best suite.

Paintings lined the walls, a desk with beautiful sculptures sat to the side.

In the back room there was a 5 meter wide canopy bed.

A girl sits at the center of the bed, wrapped in the disturbed bed sheets.

You could hear the quiet sleeping breath of that blue haired girl.

It was Queen Benedict.

Cloths are scattered around, suggesting that she is naked inside the bed.

Also, a familiar smell permeates the room.

It's the smell from when a man and woman do ~that~.

And there is something sitting in front of that little girl.

Until just now Pax and his Queen were in the middle of it.

This country is in a serious situation.

Even though Zanoba has come here so desperately, they are doing something so carefree.

There was Pax on the balcony.

From the railing of the balcony he was looking out.

Stubby limbs, big head, and short childlike body.

It could be that his ugliness comes from his mother's side.

He's only wearing a single pair of underpants.

His back is wiry enough that it can't be said that he has never trained his body.

In addition, there were many scars, and after that, bruises and cuts.

All of this speaks about his life up until now.

"Was I so noisy that my older brother had to come and check on me?"

When Pax looked back at us I forgot about my initial impression 'carefree'.

His face was tired.

His face was banged up.

He was also somber.

Randoph had said, 'Until the heart calms down.'

He was probably being literal.

I've had similar experience.

After working things out, your mind will calm down.

"Your Majesty, I have come to your assistance.

Let's forget about this castle and retreat to Fort Karon."

Zanoba went to the front of the balcony and held out his hand to Pax.

Pax faced Zanoba and, looking at his hand, laughed through his nose.

"Help? Fort Karon? Just what are you saying?"

"The best plan would be to surrender the castle this once, and then to go wait in another place and sharpen our fangs.

Once we gather troops regaining the castle should be easy."

"... and now you just repeat the same shit, why?"

Pax glared right at Zanoba.

Those cold eyes were enough to make me shudder.

With eyes like that, if you told me this guy was the Death God I would believe you.

"Repeating myself?"

Zanoba questions him.

Pax laughs through his nose.

I don't understand but he begins muttering something then casts a side long glance out over the balcony.

"I had intended to try my best even until this.

I replaced all of father's corrupt ministers with other people.

I hired mercenaries in preparation for war. Security was worse but certainly...

I had fixed my sights on the futures of this country."

Pax leaned back against the hand rail of the balcony and looked right at Zanoba.

"I permitted my older brother to return home.

I also heard the unreasonable wishes of that brother.

Moreover I took those wishes into consideration.

Honestly, I dislike you Brother, but I have to recognize your strength as a miko."

"I know. The amount that Your Majesty has had to rack his brains over this Zanoba is clear to me."

Zanoba is obviously trying his best to remain calm and speak well.

It seems to have touched a nerve with Pax.

He scowled at Zanoba with vicious eyes while strongly clenching his fists.

"Just what do you know!

Does anything really reach you including my feelings?

Look at what's going on!"

Pax flailed his arms towards the scene on the other side of the balcony.

Although the rebel army's bonfire light is right under the scales the town is silent as death.

Outside the city walls there are signs of a large number of people.

There are bonfire lights and campsites setup.

If you look from here a large army seems to have surrounded the capital.

"Even though there are so many soldiers there is no sign that they are trying to stop the rebels!"

"Your Majesty, those are not soldiers, most of them are just various civilians.They are adventurers, merchants, and others gathered together waiting for the city to reopen."

"Is that so? So what! That doesn't change the fact that I have been abandoned by the entire country!"

He slammed his fist onto the railing of the balcony, Pax was screaming.

I was just looking on without a word.

It's not my place to interfere.

I have a feeling that this is something that Zanoba has to handle.

"Your Majesty, that is absolutely not the case. By no means has everyone abandoned you."

"What is the difference!? The fact is you only brought three people.

You should have brought a lot more soldiers!

Three men!

You did not bring help, those two over there are just your own bodyguards!"

"That is..."

That's not the case.

I was against helping Pax.

I wanted to discover what was the real motive of the Shirone kingdom.

I don't want Zanoba to die so I've come with him.

"It's just like the old days.

Even if I make a large effort, no one recognizes it.

Even though I created good results, everything backfired immediately!

It's all ruined. It seems like it's always like this!"

While screaming loudly, Pax pointed to Roxy next.

Roxy's body stiffens in confusion.

"Roxy! Do your remember it, or is it too long ago?"

"Eeh?"

"The time when I was able to use intermediate magic for the first time!"

Roxy rolls her eyes in confusion.

"I studied diligently myself.

I trained! Once I finally succeeded in intermediate magic,

just what kind of reaction did you show!?"

"Um... Thats.."

Glancing at Roxy, she was obviously in a panic.

Does she remember?

Has she forgotten?

Me, I don't know.

"You just sighed!"

"eh...."

"I came and excitedly showed you, don't you forget, you returned a sigh!"

"No, that's just..."

"It was a sigh that said, 'He finally got this far.' Oh how you wounded me!"

With wide eyes, Roxy bit her lower lip.

It's inconceivable, she wouldn't sigh like that.

My Roxy?

That Roxy who gave me a compliment every time I was successful in something?

"That's how it was! I adored you!

You were the only one in all of Shirone who accepted me!

So I was trying so hard to get your attention!

But it was useless!

You just absentmindedly treated me with apathy!

You corresponded with a man whom I did not know!

It was ludicrous!

Even though I made such an effort I wasn't recognized. Why did you keep telling me to do my best?

Then when I stopped putting in the effort, you just abandoned me unceremoniously!

You just left the country as if to say, that's enough!"

Pax pulled the hair from his head.

Remembering that time, his eyes are bloodshot, tears are pooling in his eyes.

"So, that is... excuse me, I'm sorry... back then I was..."

"Shut up! I do not want to hear your excuses!"

Roxy kept silent.

In her expression, deep regret was visible.

The thing called effort is something that you should be doing for your own sake.

But it isn't my place to make that kind of sermon.

I have always been recognized, at least since I came to this world.

All my effort returned results.

Even when my efforts proved futile, at those times people still recognized me.

So, I'm not qualified to preach to Pax.

"It's obvious... in reality, this is my limit."

Here Pax relaxed.

"The King of KDK gave myself Shirone, but it's in this state.

No one recognizes me as King; no one is coming.

On the contrary, the general of some person who may not have even inherited father's blood has created a revolt.

In the confusion, the knights whom I had received from His Majesty King of KDK also died.

His Majesty would certainly be disappointed in me."

Pax's restraint crumbled and tears poured heavily from his eyes.

"It is only Benedict who accepts me, after all.

Only she loves me for myself.

She says few words, but she smiles so very hard at me."

The strength of Pax's voice seems to have somehow or another carried down from the castle.

From the bonfires, voices and chatter could be heard.

From below, I wonder if Pax's figure is visible.

Pax looked down upon them as if they were unimportant.

"Hey Older Brother... in this situation, I wonder what I should do?"

"I don't know. But, when you killed our parents and siblings, you went too far."

"... That could be. But those brothers above us would have surely revolted just like this."

"Well, alright."

Zanoba just shook his head.

"However, in these things anyone can fail.

Reflect on it and decide whether or not to leave someone alive next time!"

The lively voice of Zanoba echoes off the top floor.

It's amazing that he can produce that kind of voice in this situation.

"I can't do that. I'm just that kind of guy.

Again and again I just repeat my mistakes."

Pax shook his head slowly.

The gesture was very similar to Zanoba's.

These two people look so different, only that gesture was similar.

Pax raised his faced and looked behind me.

"Randolph"

"Yes, sir."

I was startled.

Imperceptibly, right behind me, stood Randolph.

A death god is at my back.

That's bad for the heart.

"That discussion we had before..."

"Your wish is my command."

"Good."

I wondered what they were talking about.

A moment passed while I thought about it.

Suddenly Pax moved over the handrail of the balcony.

"Ah."

This is the fifth floor.

He leapt.

Huh?

Jumped off!?

Eh?

"WAhhhhhhhhh!"

Zanoba ran.

Though there was no time, he ran with his arms outstretched.

He caught the handrail, destroying it as he went, and then fell.

"Za-Zanoba!"

I quickly turned heel and dashed from the room.

Pax was dead in the garden.

Zanoba was stunned; on his knees, he embraced the corpse.

"Ah, Shishou, quickly, healing magic..."

Zanoba called out, dumbfounded.

I took out the scroll of healing magic from my breast pocket and pasted it on Zanoba.

Maybe because he just fell from the fifth floor, but there are bruises on this guy.

"No not on myself, on Pax..."

" .... "

I shook my head in silence.

Pax was already dead.

It looks like he landed on his head.

It is a tragedy.

I want to think that there wasn't much pain.

"Really...?"

"Yeah, it's a pity."

I did not expect him to abruptly jump off.

However, he might have decided so from the beginning.

He was surrounded by enemies.

It may be that he did not escape the castle because he believed he had no allies.

So, he was probably fretting for several days.

As a result, he came to realize that he had failed as King.

From the beginning, he was going to die.

"Shishou..."

While holding Pax's corpse, Zanoba, he looks up into the sky.

A beautiful full moon peered down over the back of the castle.

A castle without a King.

It's just an empty husk.

"I wonder what I should do..."

" .... "

"Perhaps, everything I've done has been for nothing?"

"Don't say that kind of thing. You've given it everything you had."

Nevertheless, Pax couldn't comprehend it.

Pax had said he wanted to be appreciated by others, but he was not able to appreciate those same people.

Oh, before that, it was a feeling like Zanoba didn't even appear in his vision.

Still, I wonder if he wouldn't have understood after some time.

I had thought that Pax was nothing but a hopeless guy, but

I wonder if perhaps Pax did acknowledge Zanoba.

"Why, why did it become such a thing?"

"... I don't know."

Zanoba was silent for a while.

Then, as if suddenly remembering something, he looked up at my face.

"Could it be, this, this is also the work of Hitogami?"

I don't know this time, where the hand of Hitogami was.

After all, a guy claiming to be an apostle did not appear.

But originally, Pax, using various methods, should have made this country into a republic.

That is gone now.

In this case, our participation squashed that republics formation.

Alternatively, from the very beginning all the way up until now, Hitogami's target might have been Pax's life.

He can see the future.

He may have understood that if cornered mentally, Pax would commit suicide and would not need to be killed directly.

Even if that isn't the case.

This time, it's possible Hitogami isn't involved at all.

If I think back, I first came to this country on instruction from Hitogami.

Orsted had said that the Shirone Republic in the future would be a problem for Hitogami.

As a result of my actions, Pax went to the KDK.

Then, it's likely that Hitogami was somehow aiming at Pax back then.

"You could say that."

".... is that so?"

Zanoba slowly laid the corpse on the ground.

Then, slowly, he breathed in and out.

He looks like he could cry, but tears do not appear.

I would be crying, if it were me.

Finally, Zanoba said in a whisper,

"Let's return."

I did not need to hear anything beyond that and nodded firmly.

I went to take care of cremating Pax.

Bake him and bury him.

It's the common method for memorial service in this world.

However, Zanoba, shaking his head, stopped me.

Without Pax's body the revolt won't be settled.

In a flat voice he told me that, in order to take care of this internal turmoil, we should leave his corpse.

You shouldn't hand the body of your King over to the rebel army either.

That's what I thought, but Zanoba was incredibly coercive.

In the end, I cleaned Pax's body with water magic and then we carried him to the fifth floor.

When we reached the fifth floor we saw Randolph carrying the Queen Benedict on his back like luggage.

Roxy was helping.

Randoph seems to have relied on her.

She helped dress the naked Benedict and made a backpack from the sheets to carry her with.

Silently she worked to fill a bag with cloths from the closet.

"Your Majesty?" was the first thing Randolph said.

"The King is dead. I'll carry his body to the rebels to stop this chaos."

Zanoba's reply was indifferent.

Randolph's expression did not change.

It was like he immediately understood the plan.

"I have been tasked by His Majesty, to escape with his Queen, and then to escort her to KDK."

Randolph knew.

He knew Pax intended to commit suicide.

I can't say why he didn't have the decency to stop him.

"Then you should follow Myself."

"Yes sir, Your Highness Zanoba.... for your forethought, thank you."

At the end of that very short exchange, Randolph bowed.

That Randolph who had just been trying to kill us is now accompanying us.

Ordinarily I would be cautious of him.

That last battle may have just been the preamble of Hitogami's trap.

But I can't believe that is the case.

I feel that Randolph does not want to fight.

It's a strange sensation.

But, it's not like I can be sure.

He's the fifth ranked Seven Major Powers: Randolph Marian.

That man who I couldn't even compare to had such a tired look on his face.

However, Roxy and I, we both look just as tired.

Even if someone said, 'We have to fight Randoph here.' I would just weakly shake my head no.

Everyone was tired.

Even Zanoba was quiet as a mouse.

The four of us... no, it's five people once you include Benedict.

With heavy footsteps, we five escaped from the royal palace using the underground passage.

We came back into the watermill.

There was still time until the darkness makes way for daybreak.

When the spirit of light broke the darkness, I cheered up as the Magic Armor was illuminated.

I didn't have to use this for anything other then movement after all.

"This... could this be the Fighting God Armor?"

Randolph abruptly asked me.

He was gazing up at the Magic Armor with a stunned look on his face.

"No, this is a magic tool which Zanoba and I have made for decisive battles, it's the [Magic Armor]."

"I see... If you had employed this, I would have been in trouble."

"Is that so, but in the end I couldn't do anything about your [Bewitching Sword]."

Randolph responded to that with a 'Ha' kind of laugh.

"Well I was cornered before I used that."

"Eh?"

"My body was becoming worn out from your formation, and negating that Rock Cannon had used almost all of my magic power..."

He told me this as if he was comforting me.

Maybe, in that place, I would have had some more flexibility if I had not allowed myself to be intimidated by his talk, stance dancing, and bewitching sword.

If I had attacked him there, victory would have been possible... maybe?

No... anyway it's nothing to sigh about.

The correct answer was to not fight at all.

To win, to lose, in the end there wasn't any meaning to it.

"Now that I think about it, Randolph, you had said that you were aware of Hitogami."

I need to hear about this before I forget.

Someone who knows about Hitogami could be valuable.

We came here, but Pax died.

We failed to achieve results; it's pathetic.

"Yeah, but I do not know that much."

"Just in case, can you tell me what you know?"

"Sure thing... It's just about someone related to me, a long time ago I heard a story that they managed to fight against a powerful enemy with the help of Hitogami."

"A powerful enemy?"

"In order to protect his fiancée, he stole the Fighting God Armor at the suggestion of Hitogami, and it seems he fought in it. The person said to be the strongest at that time: the Dragon God Laplace.

In the end he failed to protect the fiancée, and the two struck one another down."

Randolph punctuated his story with, "Sounds fake, huh?" and then laughed.

But I've heard that story somewhere.

That's right, it's someone that both Orsted and Kishirika have said.

Dragon King and Fighting God battled...

"When I was younger, I was told this over drinks. Although it is probably a myth... thanks to growing up listening to that story, I am familiar with the name Hitogami."

No, this is valuable information.

If he says this, then it's a story about a former apostle of Hitogami.

Well, it's something Orsted likely already knows.

Our information may overlap to some extent.

"Could you tell me the name of that relative?"

"The Biegoya region Demon Lord, Badigadi."

Ah.

Well, huh.

If that's the case, then the story seems suspicious.

That Demon Lord-sama was a lighthearted and vague gentleman.

It could just be a tall tale.

Though I don't think that Orsted would lie...

Well, each person might tell a famous heroic saga differently; things are lost or added in retelling.

"Thank you very much..."

I suddenly felt worn out.

I lacked the energy to continue talking.

I was influenced by such a thing...

Haa.

Without thinking, I just want to go home and sleep in my own bed.

If I think about it, it's been a full day, I have not slept today.

"Randolph, what will you do now?"

After our conversation was concluded, Zanoba asked Randolph.

"I will go to the KDK from here."

"And then?"

"I will protect the Queen until her delivery and then teach the art of the sword, erudition, and cuisine to her child."

Childbirth, that would mean that Benedict is pregnant?

You can't tell by looking at her, but...

"Because I was told to raise it with praise, it might grow up to be a little selfish."

"Is that so."

Benedict bears it, and Randolph raises it.

Was Benedict aware of the fact that Pax was going to die?

Randolph is similar and won't say why he didn't stop it.

I should have stopped him.

It might be that these two people are the most miserable.

"Randolph-dono, would it be fine for me to hear one thing?"

Zanoba suddenly brings out a question.

In the darkness, a face like a skeleton cocks to the side.

"You, why did you follow Pax? Was it just on the orders of the King of the King Dragon Kingdom?"

Randolph faintly laughed.

"No. I liked him, that fellow."

"Well then... if that's true, you have my gratitude."

"Thanks huh. Your Highness Zanoba, you are an interesting person."

I could see the remains of a thin smile on the face Randolph presented towards me.

"Oh, that's right, Rudeus."

"Yes? What is it?"

"About that matter with Hitogami.

My relative had said too, to not make an enemy or a friend of him.

Neither would end with a good result."

I nodded.

I'm well aware of that.

Also, it's too late.

If possible, that's a thing I would have wanted to tell myself ten years ago.

"My relative, it seems like he also experienced something severe because of the influence of Hitogami."

Badigadi.

Come to think of it, he had talked like he might have known of Hitogami.

I have no idea where he is now but...

"Well then everyone, stay healthy."

"You as well Randolph-dono."

He shook hands with Zanoba, then finally turned heel.

That skeleton disappeared into the dark night.

" .... "

" .... "

Then, with nothing left to say, our group returned to the water mill.

I slept like a rock.

We didn't wake up until around noon the next day.

Already, the royal palace had been occupied by the rebels.

The blockade at the gate seems to have been taken care of while we weren't looking.

[Absolute Void Eye]

The demon eye which Randolph posseses is that kind of thing.

I don't understand what kind of principle it works on, keeping the enemy from entering the royal palace.

However, the effect might have faded with the passage of time or when he left the royal palace.

Things like cooking smoke could be seen coming from the occupied royal palace.

A lively feeling could be felt from inside.

Like the soldiers from Fort Karon, I wonder if they are drunk on victory.

Anyway, you could feel their energy.

The reign of the foolish King has ended, and now their bright future can begin.

The strength of that feeling comes not just from the palace, I felt it from all over the town.

On the contrary, there is only one place in the entire town that isn't bright and vibrant.

It's the town square.

It's the place where the corpse of Pax has been displayed.

No one will pay homage to his dead body, it is naked with a cut across the shoulder for some reason.

When I last saw it there was no such wound.

They might want it to look like they defeated him themselves.

The story that the Warlord Jade is spreading seems to be, 'Pax was a foolish despot who I have punished while bringing you a true King as a replacement.'

It would be that kind of propaganda.

In fact, I don't know a thing about the politics here or whether Pax was a tyrant or a foolish king.

The Pax from the past surely seemed like a foolish tyrant, but recently?

Could that Pax really be called a stupid tyrant?

No, the only way he looks like a tyrant is if you focus on his massacre of the royal family.

Despite the rumors, even though they were thoroughly spread, the people who appeared to throw stones at Pax were the minority.

It's not like he was beloved, but neither was he hated.

He spent a long period away in a foreign country, his reign was short, because of this he might appear to be a sacrificial pawn; many people think this way.

Indifferent majority.

That's my impression.

" .... "

Looking over all this was a trembling Zanoba.

His eyes were wide and his tightly clenched fist was shaking.

Watching this scene, even I had something in my eye.

We should have just cremated him after all...

It seems to me that it should have been fine to not give the rebel army his body.

Once they occupied the castle I would think they would see it as their victory...

No, before that, I should have saved him.

I never even considered that he would jump off like that, or that Zanoba would leap after him, I could have used wind magic, possibly...

.... I quit.

I couldn't have known Pax would jump so easily.

I was just too late.

We should have noticed he was considering suicide at an earlier stage.

This, there is no need to dwell on it...

"I may have erred again."

As if lost in thought, Zanoba whispers.

I don't know what lies in his heart.

I can't understand just how seriously Zanoba thought of Pax as his little brother.

However, if you look at Zanoba's face, you can see that he indeed did have some feelings for Pax.

Their past which I don't know about, there may be something there.

"Well with this... but if I look at it this way, then the people who will defy the next King should have decreased. The country... will be stable, right?"

The 11th Prince.

What's his name?

I don't remember, but he's definitely only three.

Even if he orders something, it won't be necessary to follow him.

General Jade, you can handle it.

That's the idea.

It's just my suspicion though.

" .... "

After all, Jade, I wonder if he was Hitogami's apostle.

I wonder if it would have been better if we killed him.

But, we are beyond the point when we could have saved Pax.

Also, now that this is all over, it's likely that Hitogami is done with whoever his apostle was.

It's expected.

I've kept working fruitlessly until now.

At this time, anything I could do would be irrelevant no matter what I tried.

Or rather, I have no confidence in my judgment anymore.

As soon as we return, I had better get instruction from Orsted at once.

Pax's death also needs to be reported.

However I can't return without consulting Zanoba.

"Zanoba, I'll be returning to Sharia; what do you intend to do?"

"..... Shishou. Before returning, from here perhaps we still need to meet up with Ginger."

"Ah, that's right. I understand."

Regrettably, I had already completely forgotten Ginger.

That's right.

We'll need to join up with her.

We'll continue ahead after meeting up with her.

After reflecting a moment, we left that scene behind.

Afterward, the three of us took lodging at an inn within the capital for three days.

The original plan was to move towards Fort Karon and there pick up Ginger, but we didn't manage to put that into action.

While I really wanted to get home as soon as possible, I also felt like I needed to monitor this country a bit longer.

Just being here a few days longer might allow me to see where this is all going.

For once I didn't slack off on collecting intelligence.

Yet I still haven't understood everything that is happening.

I couldn't afford to slack off on the Magic Armor's maintenance or general vigilance.

Inside the town is buzzing with rumors.

That the rebels surrounding the Imperial City had battled with the kingdom's army led by Pax.

That there was mortal combat between the Death God Randolph and the warlord Jade.

That the next era's King is wise and noble.

It's all fabricated.

It's a horrible means to win over the loyalist army.

Although it might not all be the warlord Jade's lies.

It's possible that it's just things that have been said in jest getting spread around.

If you look at the times where rumors spread the fastest its often like that.

Those rumors might have already been spreading while they were camped outside the castle.

Some people just prefer to see a more dramatic world.

Fact is stranger than fiction.

Reality is strange, helpless, and disappointing.

In the dining room of an inn, at the water cooler, in the market; lies, truths, and words that people might not understand are spread.

Someone also had said things like, the next King is selling half of Shirone to the northern country.

That reminds me: how will this effect the cease-fire negotiations?

Did the commanding officer of the fort take over for us?

As it is, I don't know.

We know nothing, but Zanoba appears well regardless.

Ever since we arrived at the inn, Zanoba has been absorbed in thought.

Day after day, he just sits in a chair absentminded.

Thinking about it, Zanoba has lost his whole family: his house, his father, his brother.

He had said that this country was his home, but it might not be a home worth defending now that everyone is gone.

Although, he doesn't give off the impression that he is burying his depression.

Basically there is just many things for him to think about.

He's concerned about the future.

There is another person who is actually depressed.

It's Roxy.

She has been a person of few words these last several days, and she eats very lightly like she has no appetite.

In the evening, with a listless expression, she sits still, gazing into the fireplace.

Pax's death, I wonder if she is in shock over it.

I would be.

In his very last minute, Pax spewed out his grudge against Roxy.

It was like he was saying, she was to blame for his death.

That would really effect me, if I was her.

"I'm back."

".... Welcome back."

Today, Roxy is just holding her knees while looking into the fire.

I sit next to her as usual.

There are a lot of things I could say to cheer her up, but they are all hackneyed irresponsible things.

I cannot bring myself to say them.

Well, the person saying those kind of things might be trying to comfort Roxy, but...

"Certainly..."

She opened her mouth and whispered.

"Back then, I did sigh."

Roxy won't look at me.

However, she's talking to me.

As if making a confession, she continued to speak.

"One day Pax mastered intermediate magic.

He came to show me with great excitement and all I did was sigh.

I might have even said, 'Only to this degree' under my breath."

"It really hurt him, I guess."

When I said that Roxy clutched the end of my robe.

"I think that, honestly, when I was teaching Prince Pax, I was only comparing him to Rudy.

When there was a problem Rudy, you, would immediately understand; Rudy learns magic so easily.

And then I moved directly to this child who was far below Rudy.

So, I might have been condescending."

I did quickly learn up to intermediate magic.

Roxy also probably learned it without difficulty.

But that doesn't mean that everyone else can learn it so easily.

Surely, Pax was giving it his best.

He made his best effort, studied, practiced, and finally learned it.

Then he wanted to show off to Roxy and be complimented, but only received a sigh.

Back when I was in Buena Village, if such a thing would have happened to me...

I would not have come to respect Roxy, and we might not have married.

"In those days I only looked towards the top.

I was thinking about learning King ranked magic and then aiming for further heights.

Perhaps it was arrogance.

It was enough to lead me to neglect the people under me"

Biting her lower lip, Roxy tightly hugged her knees.

I stroked her back.

Roxy was trembling slightly.

"I intended to repent.

After failing I would study well for the next time."

In that instant, tears swelled up in Roxy's eyes.

"But, I regret it, I failed.

Although I had vaguely thought about what I might have done wrong as a teacher,

I mostly just blamed the environment of the royal place; I had to justify myself."

Tears spill from Roxy's eyes.

"I didn't realize that my attitude had such an effect on Prince Pax.

Until the other day, when he told me from his own mouth, I hadn't even a clue."

She buried her face in her knees to catch all of the tears which were endlessly flowing down her face.

I stroked her small back in a circular fashion.

"For Prince Pax, there won't be a next time... "

Roxy simply cried.

I continued to stroke her back.

I had been doing so for a while.

However, I kept stroking her trembling back as she sobbed.

Eventually, Roxy's sobbing stopped.

She looked up at me with engorged bright red eyes.

"Rudy, now, how can I continue to be a teacher?"

" .... "

What should I say to that?

I don't know.

I'm not a teacher.

However there are words that I have heard in the past.

"Sensei"

These may be superficial words which I stole from a game or manga.

It's something said under pretense.

It may be no more then comfort.

I might just be cheating.

"Sensei, even if you fail, experience will still pile up."

I do not think it is wrong to just pay lip service.

"Assuming the teacher does not repeat the same mistakes,the students of the teacher will be brought up magnificently and find happiness like me."

"...."

Roxy, she looked at me intently.

Her blue hair, her eyelashes, her small lips trembling.

It was something which I couldn't reach at one time, now it is different.

"Rudy, are you happy?"

"Yes, there have been painful things, but thanks to Roxy-sensei's teachings, I have been able to experience happiness."

"Rudy... always says that."

Quite right.

What I say won't change from day to day because it is the truth.

"I can't explain it well, but I was able to take my first step as a human being thanks to Sensei placing me on the horse."

"That's an exaggeration... since that was all such a long time ago I'm convinced it's that way."

"Certainly it might be an exaggeration, but I remember Roxy moving forward after failing some things, and there is no doubt that I've been encouraged by that."

I told her that seriously.

Indeed, by the teacher Roxy, the life of one student might have fallen a little out of order.

'Roxy, it's not your fault.' I'm not going to say that kind of consolation.

Beyond a sense of responsibility, she feels that she killed Pax herself.

But conversely, there is even a student that has been kept alive by Roxy.

It's me.

It isn't Roxy alone who has kept me alive so far.

But, the fact that Roxy deserves the credit doesn't change.

"I won't tell you to forget about this time.

Rather, not forgetting it might be best.

But also, don't forget that there are people like me who have been kept alive thanks to Roxy."

I'm aware that I said a self important thing there.

But that is my true feelings.

Roxy, you should not deny yourself the life of a teacher.

" .... "

Roxy gave me a blank stare.

She has a half opened mouth and wide red eyes.

What with her trembling body, she just then noticed her running nose, and flustered, hid it behind her knees.

"Rudy."

"Yeah."

"With Lara, surely I will get a chance to make amends for what happened with Prince Pax..."

I do not know the answer to that last question.

Only Lara will be able to answer it.

Hers may be different than my answer.

".... maybe, I can't say."

Afterwards, Roxy cried for a while.

She continued to stick to me.

From the next day on, Roxy regained her vitality.

Five days passed from then.

The warlord Jade seems to be planning a coronation.

It's something that should be flashy, but there isn't room for that in this country.

However, it is important to show the rest of the world when the head of a country changes.

I heard the rumor after meeting up with Ginger.

After her stamina recovered she immediately left Fort Karon chasing us.

She was only a bit late because she rode her horse into the ground coming.

After seeing the state of the town, and listening to our story, she just said, 'Oh, is that so.' without changing her expression.

Still, when she heard about Pax's death, her face showed that she felt he deserved it; it was impossible to miss.

Well, because Pax did some terrible things to her, it can't be helped.

It can't be helped, I understand, but it's still sad.

"Thereupon, Zanoba-sama, how will we proceed from here?"

"Hmmmm."

"Also... how do you plan to charm the country?"

I think when she heard about it, Ginger was calmed.

Pax is dead.

There should be no one left threatening the life of Zanoba.

The next king might view Zanoba as a risk.

But, Jade shouldn't kill the guy.

Unlike Pax, they should not harbor any personal resentment towards Zanoba.

They should also know the usefulness of a Miko.

It can't be said that he isn't dangerous, but both parties should be able to approach the situation reasonably.

But Zanoba shook his head helplessly.

"No, I'll go back to the magic city Sharia."

"... yes sir."

Ginger gave an exaggerated nod.

Just a bit, her face is a happy one.

I had thought that Ginger's hope was for Zanoba to become a respectable royal but...

More than that, she wants him to live.

I was honestly relieved by that.

If he remained in this country, it's likely he would be killed.

While I was thinking that, I looked at Zanoba's face and got a bad feeling.

"Ginger,"

For some reason, Zanoba had a face full of determination.

It's the face he made just before his journey to Shirone.

He's up to something, it's that kind of face.

"I... will discard this country for the moment."

"You're going to, discard the country...

Ah, you mean you'll take refuge?

I think it's a good idea.

Ranoa, for us, would gladly accept the likes of Zanoba-sama.

With a word from Rudeus then even Asura would..."

"No, I will not go into exile."

Again, Zanoba shook his head.

And then, he looked down upon Ginger who had taken a knee to persuade him.

"I intend to abandon my position within the royal family.

At this time let them believe that I died during the rebellion. Rather than Shirone Kingdom's Third Prince Zanoba Shirone, I'll just become Zanoba and try to live a fulfilling life in the future."

Ginger's face is hard to read.

I wonder if she's disgusted.

Throwing away his social position, it's a feeling I'm familiar with.

I also have something like status which was thrown away.

"... I also think that it's a good idea."

However, Ginger did not stand against it.

The Zanoba back in Sharia, every day was having a good time.

Now that he has returned to Shirone too late, it becomes a humiliating thought.

Even taking exile in other countries is only an option available because he is a Miko.

If that's the case then why not throw away the position and lead an enjoyable life.

Without being part of the royal family money might be a problem... I can probably throw some work his way though.

Something like being the Magic Armor's full time mechanic with salary would be possible.

He could also do mercenary work if he finds that unpleasant.

"Yes. Ginger, I would like to thank you for your help so far."

"I am truly grateful for your words..."

Zanoba then nodded with a satisfied look.

Ginger's body relaxed and a feeling like relief spread over her face.

"So then, Ginger, after this, what do you intend to do?"

"... Of course, I plan to continue to serve you, Zanoba-sama, on into the future."

Ginger said that as if it was a matter of course.

But Zanoba frowned.

"However, although you have been this one's bodyguard as a knight of Shirone.

If I am no longer part of the imperial family then you are left without a reason to serve."

"No, whether Zanoba-sama is a part of the royal family, for me, it is irrelevant."

"Hmmm. But I can not give remuneration for your labor and help. How would you continue to support your family?"

"They are all self-reliant adults already. I am no longer the bread winner."

Those two continued with questions and answers for a while.

Zanoba was reluctant, but Ginger had a hold of him.

And, as the questioning continued, Zanoba gradually lost ground.

"Furthermore, you are at a good place in your life; won't you miss your chance to marry?"

Zanoba's final question was this kind of thing.

Marriageable age...

Now that I think about it, that Ginger, I wonder about how old she is.

If I think about the normal marriageable age in this world, I feel she may have already missed it.

"The likes of marriage.... !"

At this point Ginger became impatient as well.

Violently, she raised her hands up in front of her face.

It turned into kneeling.

What happened was... she slammed her body heavily into the ground.

She was prostrating herself.

In Shirone Kingdom, I wonder if throwing your entire body on the ground is the way you show maximum respect?

Zanoba, he does it properly.

"I was asked by Minerva-sama directly, to look after Zanoba-sama!

Even if Zanoba-sama is not royalty, it does not matter!

But, even if I'm not a guard, I would be fine as a mistress!

Please! If I think about my future there is only one place for me; I beg you, let me stay by your side!"

He did not hide his puzzled, surprised reaction.

The name Minerva, I wonder if that is Zanoba's mother's name...

"Hmmmu"

Placing his hand on his chin, Zanoba squatted down.

"Ginger, I understand your thoughts. Raise your head."

" .... "

He lifted her upper body and exposed Ginger's tear filled face.

"I won't push the matter forcefully if you say it like that.

However, I won't take you as a follower.

You can stand by my side as someone who understands me, alright?"

Tears began to spill from Ginger's eyes.

"Yes sir!"

Then, she returned to throwing her entire body on the floor once again.

It's a beautiful scene... don't you agree?

Just by the looks of it, it's a little surreal.

Anyway, this is case closed now that Zanoba has decided to return with us.

I can't say that we settled the case well.

Nothing was really resolved.

Also the affair left a bad aftertaste.

We are left with only a sense of futility, defeat, and stress.

But it's done: the end.

Let's go home.

— Zanoba's Perspective —

Formerly, I could not see the difference between humans and dolls.

Either they speak, or they do not.

I had thought the difference was only to this degree.

The distinction began to sink in as I grew up, but it did not change much.

Humans, their arms can be torn off, their heads can be removed.

I thought they were the same as those wooden dolls you can find everywhere.

No, of course I love dolls.

I only loved dolls.

There are exquisite dolls, and there are many flawed dolls; but even flawed dolls, I love them.

Human beings are, so to speak... a doll I did not care for.

They were dolls which complained and made demands for themselves: detestable dolls.

There was a change in my way of thinking after meeting with Shishou.

It did not change immediately.

I met with Shishou, and then went to the magic city Sharia. Then, after several years, I met with Shishou again.

Gradually, I found that I no longer disliked all human beings.

The starting point was when I accepted Julie.

She was a slave which I had purchased with Shishou and Sylphy-dono for the purpose of manufacturing dolls.

We could not speak a word to one another, and I could not leave a six year old to fend for herself.

She was a troublesome presence.

My existence as her master became a kind of charm for me.

It was troublesome, but a doll will not emerge from a block of wood if some of the wood is not shaved away.

Therefore, I took the task to heart and, one by one, instructed her in the things that she must do.

Before I realized it, Julie was no longer a hindrance.

I don't understand it.

She would listen obediently to what I said and quickly absorbed the techniques I taught her.

Until that day I had never met a human like that. I had begun to like and grow attached to that person, I did not discriminate against them at all.

Did this start from the time I began to live with the girl?

Other humans also, began to appear differently in my eyes.

I really noticed it when Ginger appeared.

Ginger was an existence that only scolded Myself.

I had misunderstood her because of trivial things; I failed to see the trees through the leaves.

The branches and roots are an essential part of the tree. The roots hold the tree down while the branches hold the leaves up, but this is something I never understood.

Honestly, she was an interfering presence.

When we reunited she was no longer a nuisance.

I do not know why, but she no longer felt like a hindrance anyway.

Even though her nagging did not diminish.

Why?

Why did I change like this?

Definitely, it is because of the influence of Shishou.

Shishou never abandoned me even once.

I am a man who is only good at power, and will clumsily break the doll he is trying to create.

With my magic power so small, I am a man that does not live up to the expectations of his Shishou.

Shishou worked hard to instill into Myself the secret of his doll making technique, but it was all a wasted effort.

I was ready to give up.

I cannot create dolls.

Even though I was abandoned by the doll making god,

I was happy.

A presence that would look after Myself to this extent, until now did not exist.

Therefore, without Shishou, the Ginger which always watched over me would not have been recognized.

Because of that, the stupid Me finally noticed.

Human beings and dolls, there is a difference.

I understood the importance of this.

The stupid Me did not understand why this was important, but I knew it was important nonetheless.

By no means did Shishou tell me these things directly from his mouth.

However he has shown them to me in his actions.

Through him I was granted a [Revelation].

For that alone I owe Shishou a debt of gratitude, for that I will always respect him.

I am proud that I was able to look up to such a person as my Shishou.

However, there was also the fact that stupid Myself didn't understand the actions of Shishou.

For example: that thing with Nanahoshi-dono.

Silent Seven Stars.

Nanahoshi Shizuka-dono.

She seems to be studying summoning magic in order to return to her homeland.

That home, I don't know it's name; I'm not interested in it.

For Myself, a homeland is a place devoid of pleasant memories.

No part of me could sympathize with Nanahoshi, who wanted to return home so strongly.

Shishou, he is from the Asura Kingdom, and has many unpleasant memories from there.

Even with that, Shishou was devoted to helping Nanahoshi-dono.

When Nanahoshi became heartbroken, he brought her back to his home and nursed her himself.

When Nanahoshi became ill with an incurable disease, he traveled to the magic continent looking for a cure.

I also helped.

For some reason, I did not mind.

If Shishou was doing it, then I would aid Shishou; I did not think of it as unpleasant.

However, I did not know what made Shishou help Nanahoshi-dono.

Meanwhile, there was a change in Myself.

Unconsciously, I had also begun to think of my homeland.

Because Nanahoshi's homeland was a home she wanted to return to, surely I became infected with the idea of Home.

That disagreeable Shirone Royal Palace, for some reason it became the case that I was longing for it.

Thereafter I continued to think about it.

Shirone Royal Palace.

When I received the request for aid from Pax, My conclusion was immediate: 'I will go.'

In fact I like my country.

I intend to defend my country in its time of need.

At this time I have to go.

My thoughts were like that.

It's different now.

At Fort Karon, when Shishou tried to persuade me to return with him, my heart wavered.

I intended to return.

The state of the country seemed to be good enough, and with Shishou I could indulge in making dolls and having fun to my heart's content.

But I could not return.

In my head, there was only the thought that I could not return.

[I want to help Pax because he is my brother.]

Instantly, that lie appeared.

Even so, there was the chance that I would have relented if Shishou had begged me.

However, things proceeded in that direction.

I did not know why.

Sometimes, lies told in the past have a way of transforming into the truth; I thought it was that kind of thing.

When Pax jumped off and I watched him die, the past incidentally flashed through my head.

It was the time when Brother, was called to a party hosted by the second prince.

What the party was about, I do not remember.

It was never the kind of thing where attendance was mandatory.

Why we were there, I do not remember.

The part I remember is that young Pax accidentally sat down in the seat next to Myself.

This all happened before Roxy-dono had came.

I think, at that time Pax had not yet reached the age of ten.

There was no conversation.

Simply, we just sat beside one another.

There was an atmosphere like Pax was trying to say something to Myself.

I thought it was all bothersome and did not even look at Pax.

To the very end Pax was unable to speak to me.

It was like he was ignored.

He didn't try to converse, but it was still ignoring.

When I lifted Pax's corpse up I suddenly had a thought.

Why, I wonder why, at that time, did we not speak to one another, huh?

Then everything became clear.

I understood.

The meaning of the actions Shishou took in regards to Nanahoshi-dono, that inexplicable behaviour, was found.

To Shishou, Nanahoshi-dono is probably like a sister.

I wonder why I did not notice.

Although Shishou also has real little sisters.

In particular, how Shishou interacts with Nanahosi-dono and his sisters, I think it seems very similar.

There are slight differences, but still it's very similar.

The way he watches over them and, if something happens, comes to their aid, it's very similar.

For Shishou, taking care of Nanahoshi-dono is like cherishing his sisters.

And why did Oneself help with it?

After I helped, why did it remind me of my home?

When the letter came from Pax, why did I decide to go back to my country over everyone's objections?

After the battle at Fort Karon, why did I think that I must go and rescue Pax?

Why was such a lie given instantly?

Why did the lie fit so snuggly?

I understand.

I understand everything.

It was all connected.

But it was too late.

I should not have taken so long to notice.

Pax died.

I did not jump into action like Shishou.

Still, there was a thing that I could yet do.

— Rudeus's Perspective —

We set out for the magic city Sharia.

Breath: good, good. I was full of dread, but the trip home was smooth sailing.

I pulled the carriage with the Magic Armor.

Zanoba and I took it apart inside the forest, and then we prepared a teleport magic circle and entered the sky fortress.

Roxy had to pass through, but Zanoba and I stopped to greet Perugius.

After greeting us with an offhand attitude, "Okay," Perugius took us into the usual room. "To be bound by a country is a foolish thing." we received that kind of admonishment.

Zanoba nodded obediently and explained that he had ceased being a part of the imperial family.

With those words, Perugius seemed satisfied.

Perugius even gave me praise for dealing with that 'trouble'.

Saying something or other about how his tea-drinking companion hasn't left him, he seems to be relieved.

By the way, I went and reported to Nanahoshi as well, but all I received was a sigh of 'Haaa' from her.

I suppose the farewell crying of a woman would ruin my impression of her.

I understand the feeling.

Well, Eris will also come to term soon.

At the time of the delivery, I must be by her side.

I need to go home...

However, there is work to be done before that.

I need to report to Orsted.

This time I was taken care of.

There was no damage to me, but the Shirone Republic — in the future it should have produced an important person for Orsted.

That is, it's kind of like we've had one of our stronger pieces taken.

Thinking about it, my return might have been premature.

If I had stayed in that country a while, could I have possibly pushed it towards becoming a republic...

No, if it was just about the republic Orsted would not have said, 'Reinforce Pax'.

Anyway, I should just honestly tell him what has happened.

Then, if there is something we can do, I'll do it.

"Then Roxy, I want to stop at the office. I need to store the Magic Armor."

"...okay. Be safe. I'll go to the family and let them know we've returned early."

I bid farewell to Roxy at the entrance to the city and headed toward the office.

Zanoba came with me for some reason.

"Something wrong Zanoba?"

"No, I was protected by this armor. I need to give Orsted my thanks, and an apology for letting it be destroyed."

"I see."

It seems unusual for Zanoba to thank Orsted.

Because of his curse, I would have thought such feelings would be impossible.

Could this be the results of Cliff's research?

Once you are close enough to look into Orsted's eyes, you should be struck hard by it, but if he controls his impulses maybe it will be fine.

Convinced of that, I went back to the office along with Zanoba.

There I stowed the Magic Armor in the armory.

After locking it I moved towards the main building.

We went past the unattended lobby towards the president's office.

"Suuuu...."

Before entering, I take a deep breath.

It's time to report my failure.

Until now, there has been several failures, but...

It's a large failure this time.

I may be subjected to some rebuke.

Perhaps he's absent.

No, it's still better to prepare an early report.

Okay.

First, let's knock.

A knock so a man can compose his heart.

It's a polite knock.

Lightly rapping with just the finger, tap-tap.

"Rudeus?"

Ah, he's not absent.

However, all of the details of the report need to be put in order.

Let's just go with sincerity.

"Excuse me! Rudeus Greyrat reporting, I have just arrived with news from the Shirone kingdom!"

I open the door with a bang, enter inside, and bend my waist into a bow.

Then I raised my face towards him.

"FuAaah!?"

Orsted was wearing a solid black face mask, I was startled.

This, could it be?

Cliff has produced a new revision of the mask... so it's a magic tool.

"It looks like you came back safely."

"...Y-yes."

I was unnerved at the start, but my heart is still in this.

I need to report in all sincerity that I failed.

That I did not achieve any results.

No, is that it?

"Reporting — "

I reported straight forwardly this time.

What I was careful about, what I discovered.

So it'll be alright if there are any retorts later, one by one, calmly, carefully, I explain everything.

One at a time I went over: what I thought, my conclusions, who I consulted with, the actions that we took.

Then finally, I gave the results.

I told him about our conjecture about Hitogami's predictions, and what we thought the correct interpretation was.

Everything thereabout was reported at once.

"I am very sorry. I let Prince Pax die and was unable to accomplish my orders."

Finally, I bowed.

No matter how you gloss it over, failure is failure.

If there is a punishment, I'm resigned to my fate.

" .... "

Under the surface, Orsted gave off a heavy dull feeling.

His expression was incomprehensible for a minute, it's more frightening than usual.

Honestly, it's scarier for me with the helmet on.

Hell, why does he even have it on now?

Just take it off....

"King Dragon Kingdom's King, Leonard Kingdragon was an apostle of Hitogami. Probably, the warlord Jade or a Shirone kingdom general was also an apostle. By manipulating these two people, Hitogami cornered Pax and drove him to suicide."

This was Orsted's conclusion.

There were two apostles

First he manipulated the King of KDK to assist Pax.

By doing that he planted the 'awareness that he must meet the expectations of the King of KDK' in Pax.

Give him the Princess, give him the Death God, have him put the country into a good state.... then manipulate Jade to orchestrate his failure.

The flow should be something like that.

Since Hitogami can see the future, he would have easily understood who can force Pax toward suicide, it would have been obvious.

"... who was the final person?"

"The other person, Vista's King..... the probability is high."

"That reminds me. The Death God said something, and it seems there is a possibility that the Demon Lord Badigadi was once an apostle."

"..... If that demon lord was an apostle, he would have shown up by now, we would have seen him."

Ah, certainly.

That guy stands out...

Though in this case, my existence should be an anomaly for Hitogami.

For this reason I won't necessarily meet with a person who is an active apostle.

But, I wasn't able to notice the intent of Hitogami.

I'm pathetic.

"In the future, will we be destroying Jade... ?"

"It's too late."

Emotionlessly, Orsted spoke.

"For that, I'm very sorry."

"Before that, I had made an error in my predictions. After killing Leonard, I shouldn't have left everything to you. Thinking about it, I should have then went to the Shirone Kingdom... but still..."

After saying that much, Orsted went silent.

It feels like his motivation has run out.

This failure, is it that severe?

"Or maybe, there is someone who could substitute for Pax?"

"There is no substitute."

"There is nothing?"

" .... "

"Orsted-sama, are you alright?"

Then a voice called out from behind me.

There was Zanoba peering in from the rear.

From when did he arrive?

Perhaps he was here from the beginning.

Since he did not speak, I thought he was waiting outside.

"Zanoba Shirone...."

Orsted also seemed to have just noticed him now.

No, in reality, he really may have just noticed him now.

With that helmet, he shouldn't be able to see a thing.

... Also, I just noticed, but his voice is able make it through as well.

Which means he's able to breath as well.

Zanoba took a single step forward and bowed at the waist.

I have no idea what kind of expression Orsted is making.

But, thanks to the helmet, he should be giving off a slightly better impression.

Ah, then this was the reason he was already wearing the helmet when I came in.

He actually felt a sign of Zanoba before I entered and put it on in advance.

"You could have just expressed your gratitude to Rudeus. Wouldn't that have been fine?"

"No, there is more then that."

Just thanking him.

I thought that was all, but Zanoba is going a step further.

He doesn't seem to be completely daunted by Orsted.

"It is the case that I have heard the story from Shishou now, that Pax was swallowed up in the battle between Orsted-sama and a hostile force.... I wonder if that is correct?"

"You are not mistaken."

Does that mean, this time, Zanoba thinks everything was the fault of Orsted?

I that's the case, I had better stop him.

"However, Orsted-sama was trying to aid my younger brother behind the scenes, correct?"

"I wasn't trying to help. I needed a man who would have been born in the country Pax would have created."

"Created a country? Person born from... ?"

"I could try to explain, but you wouldn't understand."

Orsted is saying a lot of profound things today.

However, there is something I also want to know.

If we don't understand it, how are we going to recover from this?

"I think I would like you to explain in detail, if you could please, Orsted-sama."

" .... "

When asked, Orsted remained silent.

While the silence in the room stretched thin, breathing could be heard from within the helmet.

In this kind of tense situation, it's a sound that could be easily misunderstood.

But I totally hear those breaths as a sigh of anger, and my tension rises.

"... After becoming king, Pax would transform Shirone into a Republic."

Yeah.

I heard all this before.

I want to hear what comes after this.

"After Shirone becomes a republic, a man who was formerly a slave trader rises to power.

His name is Bolt Macedonias.

Pax gives this man an important post."

Bolt Macedonias.

He's a person of consequence?

"Bolt Macedonias becomes a man of influence in the country and sets his roots into Shirone."

"What does this person do?"

"Bolt Macedonias, himself, does nothing. However, from his descendants, the Demon God Laplace is born."

Laplace.

So he comes out here.

"Moreover, now that Pax has died, I no longer know where Laplace will be born."

In other words, without Pax founding the Republic, there is no flag set for the birth of Laplace.

"... No, wait. If, even now, we somehow create the Republic... or setup Bolt Macedonias with the partner who would have given birth to his children when he married..."

"It's useless. Do you think I haven't tried those things until now?"

In his long series of loops, Orsted also probably tried various methods.

Therefore, the nature of Laplace's birth must contain many random variables which need to be regulated.

Perhaps it's not just Shirone Republic. It is something that has been directed for over 100 years, to have Laplace born in a specific place. Additionally, there is the possibility that some of my work was also towards this cause.

With just one thing out of order, none of them are good anymore.

"In order to reach Hitogami, Laplace must be killed.

As for that guy, he'll resurrect, then, after a brief period to gather men, he'll wage war.

While I can defeat Laplace, to bring down that guy and his subordinates requires a great deal of magic and labor.

Then immediately after that, I am brought into a fight with Hitogami."

"Well... after defeating Laplace, is there no way for you to restore your magic power?"

"The time Laplace will revive is roughly determined.

It's far too close to the end of my loop.

I have tried creating a scenario where he is revived earlier, but it was impossible."

After a deep breath, Orsted continued.

"I can't reach Hitogami if I have to go through a war.

This loop, it's a failure."

Failure.

Those words rang in my head like an echo.

Then why didn't you come to Shirone?

Part of me wants to curse and scream, but nothing comes out of my mouth.

The work I was entrusted with, I failed.

Now, I wonder if I'm useless. This job really proved the measure of my worth.

I wonder if I'm a disappointment.

Orsted seems to have completely given up on the loop now.

If that's the case, I... what should I do now?

"Don't just assume this is a failure, it's too early."

And then Zanoba spoke up with a vibrant voice.

I wonder just how much of the story just now Zanoba understood.

Suddenly it was a story about the future, that didn't confuse you?

"When war breaks out, if you say you have to bring down Laplace and his subordinates. Starting now we can begin to prepare our own forces."

"...Ho?"

"Creating an army... even not going quite that far would be sufficient, don't you think? The forces to defeat Laplace, if we start gathering them now, we'll have plenty of companions when the time comes."

Ah, Zanoba said something good.

It's like that.

If using up his magic power is the problem, if Orsted doesn't have to fight then everything is fine.

"Orsted-dono, as your curse prevents you from collecting comrades, Shishou... and Myself, leave that to us."

Then Zanoba stepped forward and took a knee, lowering his head, before Orsted.

"The current proposal, it's just an idea based on my limited understanding.

I'm not sure whether it's even relevant."

I don't know whether it can be realized, however it seems like a good idea.

The revival of Laplace... wasn't it not until 80 years from now?

If his revival is approximately set, then it should be within a several year time frame.

By that time we could have gathered plenty of strong allies like Perugius and the Death God, and be ready to strike when Laplace resurrects.

That way we can preserve Orsted's magical power.

"I do not know the detailed circumstances, but I have heard that you are fighting a two man war against Hitogami. And that Hitogami is — "

There Zanoba abruptly stopped his speech, then raised his head to look at Orsted.

After that he placed his hands on the ground.

"He is the adversary who killed my little brother."

Zanoba went prone.

He was prostrating himself with his head on the ground.

It's not the usual way in which he just throws his entire body on the ground.

Slowly, gracefully, he shows his respect.

"Would it be possible to, please, accept Myself as another subordinate under Orsted-sama."

" .... "

"I want to make our enemy pay!"

I think Orsted cast a glance in my direction.

His vision should have been blocked but...

But, does he want my opinion?

Well, am I even qualified to give an opinion?

"Because of Zanoba's addition, the Magic Armor was able to progress.

Also, just now, that idea seemed pretty good.

In this last job, without him, I would have faced much harsher challenges."

"I understand."

Orsted did not bother listening to the end.

He nodded, stood up, and looked down at Zanoba.

Then he declared,

"In that case, then you shall be attached under Rudeus, look to him for instructions. If you say you can gather allies, then show me what you can do."

"...Y-yes sir!"

Orsted is still wearing the helmet.

Zanoba remains fallen in the prone position.

Like that, Zanoba became my co-worker under Orsted.

Pax died.

The Shirone Republic – it won't be born.

Orsted's plans have also significantly been thrown out of order.

It's a large loss.

It is the result of my inability to move well.

Instead, Zanoba has applied for a position as my companion.

The end results of this, we won't know yet.

If it's him, then at least we should be able to make improvements to the Magic Armor but...

Still, will I be able to turn my existence into something profitable for Orsted?

I was told that I had made considerable accomplishments until now, but I feel as if it has been canceled out by this job.

Alternatively, it could have become a net loss.

I hope that my work in the future will allow me to become more than just a detriment.

No, I must become more.

In exchange for all Orsted has done to protect me from Hitogami, I don't know what I can do.

Orsted may be able to just move freely into his next loop, but this is the only time for me.

It was a miracle that I was able to start my life over once already.

Miracles do not occur twice.

In this life, I must live more fully.

For example, if I lived the life of Rudeus Greyrat over and over.

If the current me continues to drag Orsted down, then I'll become a burden.

Far from useless, my existence itself might be problematic.

There is the possibility that I would be unceremoniously cut down, forget being saved.

I must do my best here, there won't be a next time.

If I'm detrimental to Orsted, the me in the next loop will be fooled by Hitogami in the same way, warned by the future me, and then... killed by Orsted after picking a fight.

Alternatively, I might be killed at an earlier stage:

during my childhood in Buena village, or during the time I was Eris's tutor.

He could also target me on the return journey to Asura.

It seems like what will happen depends on the circumstances from here on out...

Orsted has been kind to me.

He should have many reasons, but a large part of it should be cold calculation.

His kindness could just be a means to scope me out for a subsequent loop; I don't know how I'd feel about that.

That is a possibility, I must not forget it.

Still, I was spoiled up until now.

Somewhere in my heart I believed, that by becoming a follower of Orsted, that he would somehow get aid to me when I really needed it, somehow.

I was thinking like that.

I must not be such a child in relation to Orsted.

Let's take that to heart once again.

Now, the return report.

Eris also might have been naive concerning childbirth.

That is to say, she also has times when she goes into an emotional slump.

Zanoba and I moved towards my home.

Julie needs to be handed back over.

I could keep her at my home for a while, but Julie and Zanoba will be happy to be reunited.

By the way, Ginger has been busy trying to find Zanoba a place to sleep.

The dormitory of the university should be usable, but...

After giving notice of withdrawal, can he really return to school?

Graduation was only a few months away; what a waste.

I wonder if Jinas could do something if we asked him.

That fellow is reliable so he should be able to study at the university under a magic guild after graduation.

"Anyway, Zanoba, in the future, come to me if you need anything."

"It is I who should say that to you."

Just having Zanoba around in the foreseeable future, for my sake, I'm happy.

Development on the Magic Armor can continue and I will not need to give up on the doll salesproject.

As for the matter with Zanoba being out of a home, I may lend him the money if he wishes.

Borrowing and loaning money can be a source of trouble, but I wouldn't regret even just giving it to him.

While I was lost in thought, we arrived at my house in no time.

With the treant entwined around the gatepost and the emerald green roof, it's a house overflowing with a natural LOHAS atmosphere.

As we approached the front gate, Beat opened it for me as usual.

"Well, I hope Julie hasn't been a bother to Shishou's family."

"Julie is fine. Her and Aisha are close friends..."

Whoosh!

The moment I enter the grounds I hear a particular sound made by the wind.

I immediately recognize that sound.

After all, it's a sound I've heard millions of times.

It's the sound of practice swings.

Has Norn returned to the house?

Whoosh!

No, anyway, that's a pretty good sound for Norn.

Although I haven't practiced the sword with her recently, when I was teaching her, it was a sound like whuhmp and wobble.

Now the sound is 'whoosh'.

It's the sound of a sword swinging straight.

Even I may not easily make such a good sound.

It's a sound like Eris –.

And, when I viewed the source of the sound, I could not believe my eyes.

There was a woman waving that stone practice sword I had made a long time ago.

The woman's hair was bright red, as if someone had thrown primary color paint onto it.

She was easily swinging that terribly heavy stone sword with one hand.

That woman who was expecting.

Eris.

"Oh, Rudeus, welcome back. You are late."

"Wa-wa-wa-wait! Eris! What are you doing!?"

I hastily ran up to her.

No good.

She's doing this despite being so close to her due date.

She's waving that awful heavy thing around like it's so light.

That's going to put a lot of stress on your stomach...

Her stomach.

"Wuh?"

Eris's stomach is slim.

She's slender.

Where's my Baby?

"Wuh?"

I try to touch it.

Oh, wow, it's a six pack.

And it's tight.

This is not the belly of any pregnant woman I have ever seen.

"Eh?"

What is this?

Perhaps the muscles of Eris's brawny six pack, perhaps they have permanently compressed our baby into a tiny package...

What the hell.

No, I shouldn't panic yet.

Maybe it's just been pushed downward into her.

"Or maybe here?"

"What are you doing!?"

I was hit hard when I moved to grab her butt.

I look up at her from the ground.

With her feet spread apart shoulder length, her arms crossed, and her chin stuck out, Eris looked down at me.

She just bluntly said to me,

"I gave birth!"

"To what?"

I answered on reflex.

Even though there is only one correct answer.

"A child!"

"Who did?"

"Obviously I did!"

Eris.

Our child.

She gave birth.

" .... "

I sat up in the seiza position.

"Ah, then... it came, tell me about it, when...."

"It came ten days ago! It happened late in the night, but I somehow managed."

Ten days ago.

What was I doing?

Certainly, I would have been in Shirone.

In the Inn perhaps, that day with Roxy...

No, it doesn't matter.

In other words, it was that?

"I didn't.... make it back in time for the delivery... ?"

"Well, you ought to have come home a little earlier, it's a damn shame!"

Eris said that with a smirk.

Yeah, it was a voice that seemed to say "I can do it on my own."

What should I do?

I wonder if I should show a broad grin.

Though I don't really have that much of a reason to feel guilty.

Originally, we had considered such a possibility.

However, I am filled with regret.

"Hey, why... aren't you happy?"

As if confused, Eris frowned.

There is no reason to not be happy.

"Uuh, I'm happy, but also, it's a complicated feeling..."

"Ah! That's right, naturally it's a boy! He's named Arus, after the great hero of humanity."

But, I wonder if it is okay to be happy.

I failed Orsted's job.

Zanoba's brother Pax died.

There is some hope remaining, but I still failed.

In this situation, if I receive such happy news, then is it fine to be pleased?

"Master~!"

While I was lost in thought, the front entrance swung open.

A small orange haired figure came flying out of the front door.

That person ran straight past me to the shadowy figure at my rear.

She ran right for Zanoba.

While trying to leap towards Zanoba, she stumbled, and it became a scene where she was embracing his thighs.

"Ah, Julie, my disciple! I am back!"

Zanoba picked Julie up with both hands, and lifted her up so their eyes met.

Julie, tears pouring from her eyes, squeezed Zanoba's sleeve.

"Julie has been looking forward to your return Master!"

"Yes."

It's a deeply moving reunion.

She seems to have not been bullied by my family, it's obvious from such a moving scene.

A moment later, Julie said something jaw dropping.

"Julie, about master, adores him!"

"Ah, so that was the case. I hadn't noticed..."

"Again, please don't leave me again. Please let me be by your side when you die!"

She began to cry out her grief.

From the crying you can see that behind the scenes of this incident, Julie was incredibly worried about Zanoba.

Zanoba made a face like he was taken back and, before long, smiled softly.

".... Yes, be at peace. After this we will remain together."

"Mastaaaaaaaaaaa~r"

When Julie began to cry, Zanoba gently pulled her head into his shoulder.

Zanoba seemed kind of delighted.

In the end,

Pax certainly died, the job was a failure, and we lost to Hitogami.

However we all came back alive.

Neither Zanoba, Roxy, Ginger, or I died.

We didn't lose a single person.

Let's celebrate.

I'll say it happily.

"Eris!"

I wasn't going to fight against the feelings that had suddenly started bubbling up inside of me.

I embraced Eris, and then kissed her.

Even though she was surprised, Eris responded well.

She returned the embrace, and I was kissed back.

Then I rubbed her ass and stroked her back, by the time I got to her shoulder, she was kissing me deeply.

When I moved my hand down and rubbed her chest I was allowed to kiss the ground after being hit.

"That was too much!"

"I'm sorry!"

"Whoa!"

I immediately got up and put Eris in a princess carry.

It was the only option.

I need to go see the face of my child.

"Hey, my boy, where is he?"

"In the house!"

Eris was unusually obedient and wrapped her arm around my neck.

Then, like that, we went toward the house.

"Yes.... Shishou!"

"What is it Zanoba!?"

"This is it for me today! In the future, I'll come and thank Roxy-dono!"

"Yeah!"

With that exchange, Zanoba left.

He likely doesn't want to intrude on our family's affair.

I also dash into the house.

Through the front door I entered the living room.

There, two girls there sitting on the couch, holding a baby.

"Look look, Norn-ane, he smiled, just now he smiled!"

"Aisha, Aisha, let me hold him too."

"Here, gently support his head and neck."

"I know that already, I've already helped Lucy and Lara... Ah, this child is groping my breasts, could he be hungry?"

"Here you go. That's just because he's our brother's child, right?"

"A baby won't do that kind of thing!"

Two 14 year old girls, holding my son; the youthful energy is overflowing.

My sisters, and my son.

Oh, it sound like I'm saying some indecent thing.

"... Eris, I'm going to set you down."

"Gotcha."

After I put Eris back down on the floor, the sisters notice me.

They look up at me, two people with smiling faces.

"Oh, nii-san, welcome back."

"Onii-chan, welcome home."

They are smiling.

Both of my sisters are here smiling.

Seeing that, suddenly, the face of Pax appeared in my mind.

I remember the self mocking smile of a man who had given up.

"I heard from Roxy-ane that it was a bad time."

"Now see here, Norn-ane."

"Oh, yes... that's right, Brother. This is Arus-kun, your son."

Norn handed me the baby.

This is Arus.

His hair is red. His eyes also look just like Eris's.

It's unreal.

I wonder if that's because I wasn't here when he was born.

An uneasy feeling welled up in me.

The baby watched me, and moving his tiny hand reached out and touched my chest.

He gently poked me, pat-pat, as if he was looking for something soft.

However, my chest is tight.

"Aaya~! Agyia~!"

He begins to cry immediately.

All of my anxiety was swept away at the same time, relief spread out from my heart.

There is no doubt.

This is my boy, Paul's grandson.

"Huh? Arus, this is your papa, okay? It is not a stranger, okay?"

"Ni-Nii-chan are you alright?"

Aisha and Norn cast anxious looks my way.

Those two people were holding my child and saying 'cute'.

They held him with a smile.

They love him.

Surely I love these two as part of my family.

Thinking about Pax.

He was killed.

Zanoba has no children, but Zanoba did have siblings.

His younger brother's children, his older brother's children.

They were massacred...

He wasn't able to love them.

He wasn't able to be loved by them.

They never mutually loved.

Ah.

Zanoba, he meant this.

I wonder if he wanted this kind of relationship with Pax.

" .... !"

The moment I realized it, tears came flowing out.

"Hold on! Why are you crying!?"

"Yeah, somehow my tears just fell."

"It can't be helped, I have an idea. You should stop crying if I embrace you..."

"Stop that..."

My baby's head bobbled around, I took him and sat down between Norn and Aisha.

For a while my baby and I were crying between those two.

Until that moment, why didn't I have any recognition for Pax?

I wonder why I didn't realize the feelings Zanoba had for Pax at an earlier stage?

If it's me, I should have been able to understand Pax's feelings.

Hearing my cries, footsteps sounded from upstairs.

Lucy and Sylphy appeared in the living room, and then after a brief moment, Roxy, holding Lara, followed them down.

Then from the kitchen, Zenith and Lilia came.

Sylphy should have heard from Roxy what had happened.

Looking at me blubbering, she just stroked my head without saying anything.

Lucy trying to imitate it, climbed on top of my knee, and gave me a pat.

"Rudeus is always such a crybaby..."

Finally, Eris patted my head.

Everyone is so kind.

"Aisha... Norn..."

Crying I called out to my two little sisters.

"I'll help you anytime you need... If you are in trouble, don't hesitate to rely on me... You might think I'm unreliable, but no matter what, I'll do everything in my power..."

Those two looked at one another.

Rather then helping them, maybe my crying face is troubling them instead.

I don't know.

Maybe they won't be able to rely on me in an emergency.

"Yeah, I know."

"Yes, I understand."

But, those two nodded.

That's good.

Everything is fine.

"Gusu~tsu."

While sniffing I look up at Roxy and Lara.

In her arms Lara is making her standard impudent face.

Certainly, this time, my life wasn't in danger.

However, without Roxy, it might have been critical.

Even though I have strengthened my determination, I am still weak.

If she had not been by my side, I may have folded at some point.

Once again, Roxy is dependable.

And then I wouldn't have even taken Roxy with us if it had not been for Lara.

Roxy and Lara.

This time, there's no way I can thank the both of them enough.

"Roxy, ...thank you for your hard work."

"Rudy too, thanks for your effort."

Anyway, it's over.

This time, it was a hard one.

I doubted things unnecessarily, to the point that I'm mentally worn out.

All I did was increase my stress, I couldn't manage Orsted's task.

I let Pax die.

It was a nightmare.

But now, it's all over.

There will be other things to do from tomorrow on.

Before waiting on the next incident, there are things that need to be discussed.

"Everyone, please pay attention to what I'm about to say."

That day, for the family, I explained about Hitogami.

Not only Hitogami, but also about Orsted.

Until now, it was the two of us fighting.

I told them that Lara might be the savior, why I cooperate with Orsted, and the other details.

Then when I was finished I asked for everyone's cooperation.

From now on, Orsted and my forces would need to increase.

The entire family nodded.

Sylphy and Eris, not to mention Roxy.

Even though Norn and Aisha seemed puzzled, they as well.

Lucy, without firmly understanding, made a serious face and also nodded.

It was refreshing.

Now the only secret I'm still holding onto is that I am reincarnated from another world.

I've returned to the start.

Let's organize the information.

First up, how to defeat Hitogami.

To reach Hitogami, five treasures handed down through the Dragon Tribe are necessary.

These five treasures were manufactured by the Dragon Tribe in ancient times.

Respectively, each of the Five Dragon Generals holds a treasure, and the Dragon God possesses the secret skill necessary to open the world's door.

The me from the future realized that one of the treasures could no longer be acquired and fell into despair.

Perhaps that treasure was the one held by Laplace.

If I think about the words Orsted used, then he must be killed.

Then I should assume that the treasures can only be obtained by sacrificing the lives of the Five Dragon Generals.

Mad Chaos Dragon is already dead.

Probably Orsted's doing.

His treasure has been recovered.

Of the Five Dragon Generals, only four remain:

[Holy Dragon Emperor] Szilárd

[Dark Dragon King] Maxwell

[Armored Dragon King] Perugius

[Demon Dragon King] Laplace

Maxwell and Szilárd might already be dead.

Orsted has not said anything about them to me.

Still, that is killing your allies and harvesting them; it's something I need to think about, or perhaps just accept with a guilty conscience.

It doesn't seem like he's on bad terms with Perugius, after all...

Anyway.

In order to get the five treasures, the resurrection of Laplace is essential.

Laplace must be resurrected through reincarnation.

He'll be born as a baby.

Orsted specifically said that he had attempted to kill Laplace effortlessly as a baby.

However, that was a failure.

The resurrection takes place in an unknown location, from there Laplace gathers followers to wage war on humanity.

That way Laplace has to be killed during the war in order to get the treasure.

Even though Orsted can do it, it's tiring.

That becomes a major detriment in the fight against Hitogami thereafter.

Therefore, the current loop is a failure.

That's what Orsted said.

However, I did not feel resignation from him.

It felt like he was extremely disappointed, but I would not say he has given up.

If I think about it, it seems like this situation is still within Orsted's prediction.

For example, Ariel's affair.

Orsted had said that 100 years from now, Asura will fall into a crisis.

If Ariel became king, it would be possible to overcome.

Afterward, certain talented people would be born in Asura, is what he had said.

That this crisis is the war with the reborn Laplace is likely.

The Kingdom of Asura is the world's largest nation.

If it can resist for a long time, then Laplace's forces will wear down.

It will also aid in limiting Orsted's magic consumption.

Or perhaps, from the time Orsted became aware of my existence, he may have considered the possibility that Laplace won't come to be born in the same place as usual.

My presence may have been sufficient to disturb that relationship flag.

Why does Hitogami prevent it?

That question comes to mind, but I squash it instantly.

Thinking about it, although Hitogami cannot see the presence of Orsted, he regards the Dragon God as hostile.

For a long time, Laplace was an existence that waved the anti-Hitogami banner.

If Orsted works towards Laplace's revival, then he is up to something.

If Hitogami notices some pattern during the hundreds of years at the start of Orsted's loop, and decides he wants to obstruct that and interfere with him, then it's something I can understand.

The Dragon God's aims will only become harm for Hitogami.

In any case, this means that we'll be slightly diverging from the history which Orsted knows from here on.

This is the end of traveling the world on Orsted's orders setting flags.

Since the plan has been knocked out of order, such things are no longer important.

Laplace is reborn.

War occurs.

If Laplace isn't defeated, we can't reach Hitogami.

Hitogami can't be defeated by an Orsted who has been worn down.

So it becomes Zanoba's proposal.

I can collect companions.

Separate from Orsted, to enhance our strength, I'll gather allies while moving freely.

This is all in preparation for the war which will take place in 80 to 100 years.

I will organize the Anti-Hitogami faction, gathering men to defeat Laplace and support Orsted.

I'll create Orsted's armed forces.

Probably, I'll die before the battle takes place.

But Orsted will overthrow Hitogami for sure if I bequeath him an organization of companions.

With my life, I'll guide the future.

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Winter gradually ended, and spring arrived.

Collecting comrades.

I discussed that with Orsted and we came up with 3 courses of action.

The first is to construct an organization for intelligence & random duties that's focused on intelligence gathering.

For that, we'll use the Rudo Mercenary Company that Aisha and the others created.

Have it collaborate in every way with Orsted behind the scenes, then expand the organization globally.

Link them all and gather each country's information in the main office.

Even if you don't go to the main office, if you go to the branch office you'll be able to find out in detail what's happened around there.

Rather than supporting Orsted, that's more of a system that supports my actions directly.

The second is people with political power.

Or perhaps, people who seem like they'll have political power later on. And winning them over as comrades.

Orsted said that Laplace will start a war when he's revived.

Thinking about it properly, he ought to wage war on each of the human nations.

At that time, how well each country is able to respond should depend on whether or not they know that will happen.

Thus, we'll make sure that influential people are informed in advance that there will be a war, arouse their caution, lend them our meager support, and gradually set things up for 80 years in the future.

When waging war against Laplace, whether the Rudo Mercenary Company can take action effectively should depend on whether or not each country is cooperating.

The third is a group of warriors who will be focused on battle.

Tentatively speaking, they'll be focused around Orsted.

We'll gather comrades who will fight Laplace in place of Orsted.

We'll have them fight Laplace in place of Orsted.

If the curse is lifted and they work together with Orsted, it would be nice to have them accompany him in the decisive battle against Hitogami too.

Who'd be good... is something that was decided after consulting with Orsted.

"People who already had the fate of fighting Laplace, and who won't easily become Hitogami's disciples."

That was the conclusion.

People like the Ogre God and the Dwarf God, who don't have a relation to Laplace in the present era but will confront him later.

The Water God Style and the Sword God Style don't have a relation to him in this era either, but their disciples will confront him.

Also, we plan to contact North God Karuman III and Death God Randolph who are long-lived.

There's also people who have personal grudges against Laplace.

Ruijerd is one of them.

For people whose whereabouts are unknown, the Rudo Mercenary Company searches for them, then I go there directly and use kowtow diplomacy.

Depending on the case, there's a possibility I might need to help them out and then pressure them into returning the favor.

For now, the plan is to contact every single strong-seeming person.

Now then, even when we gather those people, there's an existence which serves as a bottleneck.

Hitogami.

Knowing him, he'll probably use his disciples to interfere.

Hitogami's disciples are basically impossible to identify in advance.

According to Orsted, it seems there are people with a low or high possibility.

But in this loop, it seems like people with a low likelihood have become disciples, and it's difficult to distinguish them.

With all the actions I'll be taking, people outside of Orsted's expectations will end up becoming disciples.

As for a countermeasure against that... honestly, I couldn't come up with one.

So I'll just stop thinking about it.

In the first place, I don't know what kind of standard Hitogami uses to decide on disciples.

Orsted said, "He has a tendency to choose people with strong fates."

However, in recent times, people with weak fates have also become disciples.

To begin with, I don't really understand what determines the strength of a person's fate.

It seems like a rule that only Orsted and Hitogami know.

Even if I consult with Orsted about each and every rule, I get the feeling that I'll just gather unnecessary anxiety and that just thinking about it is pointless.

For beginners to a game, there's a way of conducting yourself suited to beginners.

For now, I'll establish the motto "Don't believe in revelations from dreams" among the guys who become our comrades.

But even so, disciples will appear.

When someone seems suspicious, check if they're a disciple, and in each case, kill them.

It's a tough job, but I'll do it to the best of my ability.

Aside from me having it tough, there's no problem with just continually increasing our numbers from now on.

After all, Hitogami only has 3 disciples.

When it comes to increasing our numbers, the more we do the more we'll be at an advantage.

For example, if we have only 5 people, and one of them becomes a disciple and betrays us, our military strength goes down 20%.

The enemy's strength also increases, and the battle becomes risky.

But if we have 10 people, or 20.

Or 100, or 1000.

We won't become unsteady if just 1 or 2 people betray us.

If 1000 people manipulated by a leader became enemies, that would be bad,

but I'm basically the leader, so it's fine.

I'm a little worried about what happens after I die, but there are many people more excellent and capable than I am.

Someone capable of entrusting things to should appear.

Even now, there's Roxy and such.

Also, aside from gathering comrades, there are many things I need to do or obtain.

The first is securing a method of contacting Orsted.

In the previous incident's fight, Pax was allowed to die because of a lack of communication.

Of course, there were many causes besides a lack of communication.

But... If I'd had a secret method of contacting Orsted, I should've been able to avoid it.

I'm not thinking about completely relying on Orsted.

But from now on, I'll be taking action separately from him even more often than now.

For that reason, a method of contacting him is indispensable.

When the situation is important, there ought to be more cases where it would be better to act after consulting with someone rather than acting based on my own judgment.

If you know about the other person's dilemma, you can also rapidly take action.

Although I can't imagine a scene in which I save Orsted.

In any case, as I thought, a cell phone is essential.

Even if it's not a phone, it would be fine if it can send information one-way.

With all this in mind, I tried consulting with Orsted about it.

While explaining about the existence of something that can make phone calls, I asked if a similar thing existed or could be constructed.

"So it's a magic item that can send voices or writing."

"Even just writing would be good, but basically I was just thinking it might be good to be able to exchange information even when we're far away, or have a discussion when we're having trouble deciding something. It can't be done, right?"

I figured it would be impossible.

Society isn't that convenient.

"There are similar magic items among those of the dragon race. If those are reproduced, it would probably be possible."

That's what I'd been thinking, but Orsted's answer was unexpectedly optimistic.

"Ooh, so there are things like that."

"Yeah, you should have seen them too."

Seriously.

Where was there something like that?

If so, I should have thought "That's convenient, I want one too."

"The Seven Great World Powers stone monuments, and the adventurer guild cards."

"Ooh!"

I see.

Now that he mentions it, that's true.

The adventurer guild cards had voice input, and the Seven Great World Powers stone monuments have the same words but are scattered throughout the world.

Haah.

I see.

So the the adventurer guild card was a rip-off of the dragon race's creations.

Come to think of it, it did give off an "overtechnology" vibe...

"A bit of improvement is necessary, but I'll try making it."

"Eh? Orsted-sama will be personally making it?"

"At any rate, since you've appeared, my schedule keeps getting thrown out of order. If there's a need for it, it would be good to make it... I'll make use of it in the next loop, too."

And thus, it was decided that Orsted would be personally manufacturing it.

It was a happy miscalculation.

Since it seems like Orsted is thinking about recruiting me to be his comrade in the next loop too, I'm truly happy.

"It's possible I won't be able to make it, so keep that in mind."

"Yessir, boss!"

And so the telecommunications business was approved.

One more thing.

Looking back at the failure last time, there's something I need to create.

A method of transporting the magic armor.

Last time, the Magic Armor MK-I that we went to great lengths to bring ended up only being used for transportation.

It took a lot of time to transport it from the city to the fort.

It wasn't brought into the castle, and wasn't even made use of during the battle with the Death God Randolph.

From now on, I don't expect to fight with Death God-level people very often.

But there still ought to be a lot of enemies I can't face with the MK-II Revised.

I want to do something about it.

Of course, to resolve that, we're advancing development of the MK-III which is small and has good performance.

But it will still take a lot of time to produce the MK-III.

Zanoba is all-out collaborating on it, but it's not something that will be complete in 1 or 2 years.

And so, I came up with an idea.

Regarding whether it would be possible to summon the MK-I as-is.

According to the lessons I had with Sylvaril before, it seems like I can't summon inorganic matter, but...

Well, you know, if I just do a little more of this or that, or change my way of thinking, I get the feeling I can summon inorganic matter.

This is something I intend to personally test out a little.

If it's no good, then I'm okay with that.

Well then, the course of action regarding gathering comrades has been set.

For the time being, we'll expand the Rudo Mercenary Company while establishing connections with each country's powerful people and making them comrades.

At present, it should be fine to act so as to make each country's powerful people into our comrades.

First of all, Cliff and Ariel.

The relative of the Pope of the Milis religious order, the next queen of the Asura Kingdom.

Those two who are like half-comrades will officially be incorporated into Orsted's faction.

Which of the two will be first?

Of course, Cliff who lives close by.

If Cliff becomes a comrade, I can form a connection to the Milis religious order.

The Holy Kingdom of Milis is a strong nation.

When it comes to the war against Laplace, they'll become an extremely strong military power.

Battles are about money and numbers, after all.

When the time comes, it won't be bad to have a connection.

I could say a lot about Cliff, but let me just say that he's my true friend.

He's been cooperating regarding Orsted's curse, so it should be fine to just get a verbal commitment from him.

I can imagine him immediately saying "Okay."

Thinking that, I headed toward the apartment where Cliff lives, but unfortunately it was the usual "that".

I heard Elinalise's carnal voice and immediately turned away.

The walls of that house are thin.

What's with that "You can't, Cliff! Clive is watching!"

Then do it when Clive is sleeping, sheesh...

For now, I just left him a note saying "I'll come by in the evening."

I decided to go to Zanoba's house.

Zanoba is no longer a prince.

He sold off his royal things to raise money and took up residence near my house.

It was a snug two-story house.

It was created so that he'd be able to manufacture dolls, so the first floor is wide open like a garage.

The living space is mostly on the second floor.

It seems like he's living there with Ginger and Julie.

It has plenty of space for three people to live in.

Although I don't know what'll happen between these three people from now on...

Maybe they'll get married or something.

Anyhow, for the time being he has savings, or rather the money he received as royalty, so he's fine,

but from now on it's just going to decrease, so we decided to pay him a salary for working on the production of the magic armor.

It's research and development costs.

Zanoba took it, but he didn't have a very pleased expression.

"I didn't make it on my own, so for me alone to receive money somehow feels wrong."

He said that with his eyebrows in the shape of a ノ丶.

It's not like I don't understand what he's saying.

The magic armor is something that myself, Zanoba, and Cliff made together.

Zanoba alone is receiving the R&D funding for it.

It doesn't seem reasonable.

But be that as it may, if he says that, the most unreasonable person is me.

I wear the magic armor, go to work, and receive compensation for it.

In other words, up until now only I've been getting money.

With the magic armor that all of us made.

The magic armor isn't something that we made to earn money.

But even so, humans are living things who kill each other for the sake of money.

If he says that we should be fair, then we should pay Cliff too.

Then again, Cliff doesn't lack money, so it's questionable if he'd accept it.

Well, enough of that.

At the very least, if someone needs money, there's enough to pay them.

There isn't anyone among my acquaintances who's greedy enough to overcharge to get an obviously excessive amount of money.

I personally also have enough flexibility when it comes to money to give it to someone who needs it.

Humans really need to treat one another well when they have enough money to comfortably do so.

Well, the magic armor is necessary, and Zanoba's figure manufacturing craft is also necessary.

You pay money for what's necessary.

That's natural.

That's the way it is, so for now you could say that Zanoba has a steady livelihood.

But when entering, I properly knock.

That's called courtesy between close friends.

"Zanoba, it's me! Open up!"

I rang the bell a few times while calling out to Zanoba.

"Ooh, Shishou. Please, please, come in."

The response was extremely quick.

But I'll be extra considerate.

"Really? It's okay to open it? I'm really opening it? If you want to stop me, now's the time? When I start to move, it's too late to stop me?"

Last time, I wasn't careful enough and it was a really close shave.

"I don't really understand, but I will not stop you, so please enter."

"Really? There's no woman changing clothes next to you or anything?"

"I'm saying that it's okay."

I believed in him.

I believed in Zanoba.

Even if the world turns upside down, I'll believe in Zanoba.

"All right, pardon my intrusion."

When I opened the door and took a step forward, I was already in Zanoba's workshop.

In the spacious room, two manufacturing desks had been placed, and wooden boxes and dolls were scattered here and there.

Zanoba sat at one of the desks.

Julie was with him.

If I just say that, then it's like usual, but the atmosphere was a little different today.

Specifically, the place Julie was sitting was a problem.

Usually, Julie sits at a desk that's placed a little ways off from Zanoba, and makes figures.

But today, she wasn't sitting at that desk.

"....."

Julie sat on Zanoba's lap.

While sitting on his lap, she applied color to a figure with a serious expression.

As for Zanoba, he was prudently shaving down one of the the parts of the magic armor above her.

Shaving dregs were falling onto Julie's head, but she didn't seem to mind.

"Zanoba..... When I wasn't looking, you sure got close to Julie, didn't you?"

"Fumu, is that bad?"

When you combine Julie's shortness with Zanoba's tallness, they look like brother and sister.

Well, this is in the safe zone. If it's just at the level of sitting on his lap and making dolls together...

It should be fine to conclude there's no suspicion of obscenity.

No, it's not like it's "out" if they do it, either.

There's no laws about age of consent in this world, so I won't find fault with him.

But it's kinda, you know.

I made such an effort to be considerate, so I wish they'd separated.

"No, it's endearing."

Saying that, I dragged over a stool from the corner of the workshop and sat on it.

"So, Shishou, what brings you here today?"

"Umu."

Of course, I didn't visit Zanoba just to chat with him.

I've entrusted Zanoba with the production of the magic armor, but there's one other job I'd like to entrust to him alongside that.

"Actually, Zanoba, today I came to deliver to you a notice of personnel change."

"Haah... A notice of personnel change?"

"Yes, a notice of personnel change."

While saying that, I took out a piece of paper from my chest pocket.

I held it out to Zanoba reverently with both hands.

"Oops, excuse me."

Zanoba hastily set aside Julie, brushed off the shaving dregs from his chest, and respectfully received it.

He's a man of etiquette.

"Fumu... 'Zanoba Shirone has been appointed to the position of marketing supervisor for the Ruijerd figures' is written here."

"Umu, accept it modestly."

"I'm fine with accepting it, but..... wasn't that project postponed?"

In brief, this notice signifies the start of the project to sell Ruijerd dolls that has been planned for some time.

You might ask why now, at this particular time.

But the current circumstances are exactly why we must do it.

To elaborate.

From now on, we'll be winning over powerful people from each nation,

and at the same time gathering comrades to fight against Laplace.

But there are several people whose whereabouts we don't know.

For example, that's right, Ruijerd.

In the original history, he'd be in the demon continent,

but in this loop he traveled together with me to the central continent.

Recently there haven't been any letters, and I don't know where he is.

Since it's him, I don't believe that the unthinkable happened to him, but he's in a situation where I can't immediately meet him and request his help.

Well, it's not like he's in hiding,

so while searching around, we might find him.

But to be frank, he's the first person that I want to ask, "Please cooperate with us to defeat Laplace."

That's how I feel.

I want to do whatever it takes to find him and directly ask him.

I want to give him the chance to exact his revenge on Laplace...

That's the public half of it.

I simply want to meet Ruijerd after a long time.

It would be nice to meet him and once again work together toward the same goal.

That's the other half.

They're basically selfish reasons, but that's how I ended up deciding to begin the sale of the Ruijerd figures.

Instead of a simple search, this plan will speed things up.

And creating a better image for the Supard tribe has been the plan for some time.

I've tentatively set up other public justifications too.

For example, regarding the magic armor.

It's true that Zanoba, Cliff, and I have felt like we're at an impasse with just the three of us working on the weapon called the magic armor.

At this rate, there's a possibility that the MK-III won't be made.

Hence we'll begin large-scale figure sales.

As we scale up our business, we'll solicit help from craftsmen and train them.

Specialists who are familiar with Zanoba's and Cliff's techniques will increase, and if each one repeats trial and error, there will be a higher possibility that some innovative idea will be produced.

No matter what world you're in, it's important to cultivate your engineers.

"...So that's how it is."

I explained the above in detail to Zanoba.

"It's true that it's just something I want to do, but I also want to improve our development of the magic armor and figures from now on. I want to entrust the management to you who understands it better than anyone else."

"Fumu..."

"To support you, I'll give you members of the Rudo Mercenary Company who I've had my eye on for a while. Of course, Aisha or I will assist you with setting up the first shop..... Will you do it?"

"Yes, leave it to me."

Zanoba readily nodded and kneeled respectfully.

Julie who was watching from the side quickly went down on her knees too.

"Grandmaster! What would it be best for me to do?"

"Julie, stick with Zanoba and follow his instructions."

"Yes!"

I'll be having Julie take on a lot of work, too.

From now on, she'll be entering the mass production structure for the early line of Ruijerd figures.

Earning money for Zanoba's sake.

If she hears that, she'll probably be motivated.

"Well, we'll leave the details for a later day. That's it for today."

"Understood."

For the time being, the project has taken a step forward.

Evening arrived as I approached Cliff's love nest.

It seems that their liaison has ended, as the apartment has fallen silent.

You know, with them doing that every day, their neighbors probably can't live in peace...

No, normally they do it in the school's laboratory, so it should be just at night.

"Hey, Rudeus....."

When I stepped into the room, a haggard Cliff greeted me.

He seemed energetic from the time she was pregnant until shortly after the child was born, but recently he always has a pale face.

I'm worried that his internal organs will fail soon.

"Ara, Rudeus. It's rare to see you."

In contrast, Elinalise was gleaming.

She offered her breast to the baby with a satisfied look on her face.

She was naked above the waist, and wore just panties below it.

It might be that they're taking a short break now, and after the feeding is over they'll continue.

"Yeah, there was just something I want to take care of."

All things considered, an oujo-sama type blonde beauty breastfeeding a baby while half-naked makes for a prettier picture than I'd imagined.

Since she's an elf, her entire body is slenderly well-proportioned.

Her usually slutty attitude, and her current Virgin Mary-like manner.

This might also be a kind of gap.

When I look at Sylphy and Roxy, I also sense a kind of gap.

Recently, I sense a gap with Eris too.

When that Eris cradles an infant, she just stands still and lets her breasts get sucked without raising her voice or punching the person sucking them.

The appearance of a woman who has become a mother is truly mysterious.

"Rudeus, would you not look at her so intently?"

"Eh? Ah, I'm sorry."

Since I was thinking about this and that, I got a warning from Cliff.

Sorry, sorry.

It's not like I was looking at her with a dirty mind.

"Lize, too. There's a guest, so at least put on some clothes."

"Ara, Cliff..... Are you jealous?"

"Yes, I am. Although Rudeus might be something like family to you....."

"I understand."

Elinalise shrugged while withdrawing to another room, still embracing the baby.

"Rudeus, you too. You have three wives, so would you not look lustfully at someone else's wife?"

"Lustfully? I....."

Wasn't doing that.

Is what I wanted to retort with, but it's true that I was watching her.

Even I don't want Sylphy and the others to be seen naked.

I'll apologize.

"No, I'm sorry. I'll be careful next time."

"Yeah....."

Cliff sighed and sunk back into the sofa.

He looks tired, but he also seems like he's kind of in a bad mood.

I wonder if there's some problem with his sex life.

"So, what's up today?"

"Right, well, I have a little favor, or maybe I should call it an invitation....."

Cliff looked at me with glazed eyes.

It feels hard to speak.

Maybe I should come again.

No, before doing that, how about I at least hear the reason.

".....Did something happen?"

"Nothing in particular....."

Cliff started to say something, then shook his head.

"No, this is a good time. Since it's something I'll have to tell you about anyway....."

That's a very profound lead-in.

It reminds me of the previous incident with Zanoba.

"The truth is, I got a letter from my grandfather in the Holy Kingdom of Milis."

The pattern's the same too.

In which case, maybe this is a trap to lure out Cliff.

Maybe another war.

Maybe another of Hitogami's traps.

No, either way, I'd been thinking of asking Cliff to be an intermediary with the Holy Kingdom of Milis.

The person himself seems to have that intention, too.

I won't tell him something half-baked like "I'll bring you back."

Of course, I certainly want him to stay in Sharia, but I'm focused on my objective.

Cliff stood up and took out a letter from a shelf.

This also gives me a strong sense of deja vu.

I'm sure that in that letter,

Cliff's grandfather talks to him about how much money has been spent raising him.

And why that money was spent.

For the sake of him aiding his family's faction.

When will you help us?

Now, right!

Something like that is probably written there.

I must read it with caution.

"Oh, it's not that serious a problem."

Cliff scratched his cheek while saying that.

He has an uncomfortable expression.

"We already talked long ago about how I'd return once I graduated. He's just concerned about the cost of travel and the journey back."

Told that, I looked at the letter.

It started off with words of concern for Cliff's body.

After that, advice about how if the travel costs are too much, to show the enclosed Milis religious order leadership insignia to the Milis church.

A stern part about how the conflict is in an unfavorable situation, and he should resolve himself if he returns, and that if he's not resolved he doesn't have to return.

Lastly, he closes with words about how although he'd written some severe things, he wants to see Cliff's face again and looks forward to his return.

Overall, it was a heartwarming letter full of concern for Cliff.

I've never met Cliff's grandfather, but he seems like a nice guy.

I wonder what part of this is a problem.

"To be honest, I'm hesitating."

When he says hesitating, I suppose he's referring to that stuff about resolving himself.

"My intention was to immediately return to Milis after graduating.I've been training for that, and up to now that was always my intention.I had the confidence that I could fight my way through the scheming within the Milis religious order and win."

"I thought so."

Cliff has always been going on and on about that.

He said that after graduating, he'd return to the Holy Kingdom of Milis, and succeed his grandfather...

Although recently, he'd appreciated how difficult it is to become the successor to the Pope, and had been steadily training as a priest.

"But....."

Cliff sat in the sofa with his head in his hands.

"I've gotten married, and have a child now."

With just that, I understood his worries.

In short, it's the same type of thing that I'm always worrying about.

"The Milis religious order readily targets the weak... the enemy's family."

"....."

"Lize is one thing. She has the ability to protect herself.But Clive can't even stand on his own feet yet.I..... don't have the confidence that I can protect him."

I understand his feelings of worry.

You always want the people who are important to you to be in a safe place.

"First of all, I haven't even told my grandfather that I've married.If it's known that the Milis Pope's grandson married an elf, an unexpected scandal might occur.He might be dragged down by that and get overthrown."

The Milis religion has strong feelings toward other races.

The elves are a people of the Great Forest, so they aren't rejected that much,

but some of the radical factions persecute anyone who isn't human.

And Elinalise isn't looked upon that well by other elves, either.

"When I keep going in circles thinking about this, I no longer know whether I should return or not, and I just let Lize spoil me..... Recently, that's been repeating..... Only now do I finally understand why Zanoba acted so stubborn back then....."

Cliff himself probably wants to return, and thinks that he needs to do so.

But he'd be exposing his wife and child to danger.

Furthermore, because of his wife, his grandfather might even become in danger.

In this situation, is it okay to continue on your own path?

He doesn't know.

I don't know either.

But today, I came here to talk with him about this issue too.

The current me is capable of sending him a rescue boat.

"Cliff-senpai."

".....What?"

"Would you be willing to officially join Orsted-sama's faction?"

Cliff looked at me with a puzzled expression.

My way of phrasing it may have been poor.

But I don't want to say "become my comrade" and have him misunderstand.

It would be better to say it clearly.

"What do you mean by that?"

"If you become Orsted-sama's subordinate, Orsted-sama and I can go all-out to back you up.It would be possible to protect Elinalise and Clive while guiding Cliff-senpai's faction to victory."

Cliff furrowed his brow.

"If I receive that backup, what should I do?"

"Mainly, we'd have you prepare for Laplace's revival."

Saying that, I then spoke about the plan.

The plan 80 years later with Orsted playing the leading part.

I had already talked to Cliff about Hitogami, but I thoroughly talked about everything starting from the basics.

"....."

After finishing talking about everything, Cliff had a complicated expression.

"What do you think?"

When I asked that, Cliff was silent for a while.

He folded his arms, shut his eyes, and groaned languishingly.

"Hmmm....."

It shouldn't be a bad deal.

Cliff also knows that Orsted's radiated fear is from a curse.

Although he doesn't know the disposition of Orsted without the curse...

Even so, I won't betray Cliff.

If he doubts me, I'd be sad.

"Would you..... give me some more time?"

At the end of his pondering, Cliff squeezed out that response.

"The graduation ceremony will be happening soon. I'll decide by then."

When one decides is a personal decision, so I had no choice but to nod my head.

I wondered why he couldn't just simply agree.

But Cliff himself might not even know why he's hesitating.

"If you're so inclined, please consult with Elinalise-san too. Because there's no worry you need to bear on your own."

"Eh? Yeah, that's right. Thank you."

This time, Cliff nodded meekly, expressing a frail smile.

Elinalise heard our conversation just now.

From a while now, I've been noticing blonde hair flickering through the crack in the doorway.

If it's her, she'll be able to skillfully guide Cliff.

That result might not go the way I think it will, but.....

If so, that's fine.

"Then, I'll come again."

"Yeah. Sorry about all this."

"No, I also have times when I'm worrying or troubled."

Saying that, I left Cliff's room.

At the end, I didn't forget to wink at Elinalise.

For now, I'll hear Cliff's response at the graduation ceremony.

There are about 2 months left before the graduation ceremony.

In the meantime, how about I advance the creation of Zanoba's Ruijerd figure shop?

During the next two months, Zanoba and I were engaged in setting up our first store front.

In order to accomplish this, we got the support of a knowledgeable professional.

He's a member of our mercenary group.

As a former merchant, he seems to have owned a store for a short period of time.

However, he failed and lost everything...

I don't expect a lot from the advice of someone who has failed.

If you don't understand why you failed, then it's easy to repeat the same mistakes.

This is coming from me, a person who has repeated his mistakes often; it's reliable.

However, failing is an essential part of any process.

The experience of those who have repeatedly failed still has value.

In addition, a person won't grow if they simply stop when they fail.

No one needs to achieve 100% success.

The achievement rate may be around 60%, but their world will still change with a passing mark.

Successful experience will change a person.

He will surely become a splendid talent in the future if I seed him with a successful experience.

Thus, persuading myself, I set up our first store while listening to the advice from that guy.

On the outskirts of the workshop district, it's a small warehouse.

After modifying it, it has become a warehouse with a store front capable of holding our stock.

We'll be fine even if our inventory doubles and we need to expand the store.

However, at first just having a small shop is good. It would be nice to just meet our current sales target.

As long as we are making some money, it shouldn't be a problem if our stock piles up.

Well, we will decide what to do after measuring our progress in the future.

Then it was time for the Ranoa Magic University graduation.

The graduation ceremony is held in the grand auditorium.

Lined up with the rest of the graduates is Cliff.

In fact, Zanoba is lined up in the back as well.

Even though he dropped out he has been allowed to participate in the graduation ceremony with special permission.

He is a special student, and most of their classwork is self study anyway.

It wouldn't be wrong to say that it was also because Vice Principal Jinas was very sympathetic.

Zanoba did not seem to be interested in the graduation ceremony himself.

However these kinds of ceremonies can be a meaningful transition.

It feels like a carnival.

It's the usual participants.

There are about 500 graduates, and with 200 to 300 school staffs lined up together.

Roxy appeared a little unsteady last time, but now she fits in properly.

Is it the result of becoming accustomed to it?

Even if she's the only small silhouette up there, it doesn't seem awkward.

Rather, it feels very natural.

The only students who have to attend today are the student council.

Led by Norn with that muscular faced Kiritsu, a diverse group containing Demon and Beast race members is lined up.

When Ariel was the student council president it was a group composed primarily of the Human race.

When the head of an organization changes, the people serving underneath will also vary.

I had thought that even during the entrance ceremony last year, that Norn seems to have attracted Beast and Demon race students.

I don't hear any bad rumors about her from the student body either.

She hasn't achieved the kind of infatuation Ariel inspired, but she seems to have been recognized as a dependable student council president.

As her brother, I can hold my head high.

By the way, this time I got permission from Jinas to sit down in the lowest seat under the student council.

Oh, no matter how many times I see it, the graduation ceremony is an impressive thing.

"Graduate Representative, Brooklyn von Eruzais!

I hereby grant a certificate proof of Magic Guild rank D to you!"

The Graduation Representative this time is not Cliff.

I'm sure I haven't heard the name of this representative, but it sounds familiar.

It's a name from the royalty or aristocracy of Neris Dukedom, one of the Magic Triumvirate.

It's named for the Ranoa Kingdom, but the University is financed jointly by the Magical Triumvirate.

With this kind of ceremony, prioritizing the nobility of the Magical Triumvirate may be an unspoken rule.

"We respectfully recognize Brooklyn von Eruzais!"

"May you venture on the path of magic."

Cliff, watching on, has a listless face.

In the past Cliff would have raged, "Why am I not the representative!?"

Actually, if you only look at the results, there is no one above Cliff among all of the graduates.

As for his final grades, he reached advanced rank in all four attack magics, advance rank in healing magic, advanced rank in detoxification magic, intermediate rank in barrier magic, and advanced rank in exorcism magic.

On top of all that, there is his thesis on suppressing curses.

He did not reach Saint rank in anything, but no one comes close to his achievements.

Even if you look at the history of the university, there should hardly be anyone.

As far as I know, such a great person could only be Roxy's level.

Because I only learned healing and detoxification at the university, I don't count.

In addition to that, Cliff also qualified as a Milis father.

His habit of combining with Elinalize every night had no effect on his grades.

Everything he reached for at school, he acquired it, and became an adult both physically and mentally.

He married a beautiful wife and had a child.

He became a flawless Riajuu.

{ C-Editor's note: Riajuu is internet slang for somebody who has a good life. }

However, taking that into consideration, perhaps, he is lamenting not being the representative.

That listless face, it's troubled.

The matter from two months ago that he said he would decide on, he still hasn't told me his decision.

However, that kind of thing should be sufficient to trouble him.

Two months may not be enough time to make that kind of decision.

After the graduation ceremony ended, I immediately joined up with Zanoba.

Ginger and Julie are dressed up with a bouquet pinned behind them.

No one else is dressed like that.

I wonder if it's a tradition of Shirone.

"Zanoba, congratulations on graduating."

"Ah! Shishou! Thank you very much!"

Zanoba is wearing the Ranoa Magic University's uniform.

Although it is designed for young people, rather than Shirone's formal wear, it suits him.

"I had turned my back on anything related to My own graduation.... So I was taken aback when a few days ago I suddenly received a letter from the University."

"It's nice isn't it, to have this kind of event to mark transitions in your life?"

As expected, having a ceremony at life's important transitions is best.

That Sylphy could not also participate in her graduation ceremony is something I regret a bit.

However, Zanoba may not recognize it as anything but a hassle.

He is royalty.

"Or perhaps you dislike this kind of thing?"

"No, I thought it would be troublesome at first, but after I've come here, it turned out to be unexpectedly not so."

While we were talking Zanoba was overlooking his surroundings.

The graduates and alumni were circling around to greet the teachers.

A heartwarming scene unfolds.

No, the person at the center of that crowd is Norn.

Holding her hand is a Demon Race boy looking guy with a blushing bright red face.

Norn's face appears troubled, and the student council officers surrounding them are grinning. I wonder if this is a confession event.

Or possibly it's something more pleasant, and that student is just there to shake the hand of the president.

Norn's handshake event.

I wonder if alot of the Norn Guards(fan club) will buy Ruijerd dolls, if I included Norn handshake tickets.

No, making money isn't my purpose for selling those dolls. Still...

A little ways off, surrounded by girls, is Roxy.

About five schoolgirls are lowering their heads to Roxy with tearful faces.

Roxy is smiling slightly, but it looks like she's holding something in. An emotional young girl, crying, throws her arms around Roxy.

With a troubled expression, Roxy pats the girl's back, pon-pon.

The crying began in earnest as it spread to the neighboring schoolgirls.

In addition, graduation events are taking place in various surrounding locations.

The graduation ceremony's particular, slightly damp, atmosphere is refreshing.

However no one came close to Zanoba and me.

I do not attend school much anymore and have few acquaintances left here; somehow it's a little lonely.

Well, that's fine.

After this, I have reservations at a tavern.

Pursena, Rinia, and my family as well.

Nanahoshi was also invited, it should be a fun banquet gathering with everyone together.

Orsted can't really attend, but received the congratulatory address.

Just because this event is lonely doesn't mean I don't have buddies.

Well, I'll just go home nice and quick.

"Rudeus-sama."

As I was thinking that a man approached me.

With blonde fluffy hair, it's a guy about 20 years old.

He kind of reminds me of something.

Where did I see this kind of person before?

"Nice to meet you, my name is Brooklyn von Eruzais."

Oh yeah, this man was the graduation representative!

I just saw him a little while ago.

"Ah, Graduation Representative, congratulations."

"Thank you very much."

When I lowered my head he also gave me a return bow gracefully.

"However I was only able to graduate at the head because of my family's influence.

In test results, I was second place to Cliff-sama the same as always."

"Again with the modesty..."

I almost break out in a cold sweat.

I wasn't thinking when I just opened my mouth.

I don't know how long these two people have been competing with their scores.

"However, thanks to my family's standing, I was able to get a victory against Cliff-sama at the very last moment. I ended up winning...."

Indeed, because he was the graduation representative, if you look at the results, it is a win.

It's enough to be called a victory, even if it's not really one.

"... so, Rudeus-sama."

Brooklyn looked directly at me.

His eyes were filled with sincerity.

I wonder what this is about. Do you mean he's here to confess, maybe?

He's going to confess now that he's finally won over Cliff?

It's that kind of setup?

No stop, I have two wives and a husband and children...

{ C-Editor's note: Referring to Eris as husband. }

"From you, I would like to request a duel."

That's different.

A duel.... ?

Recently, probably because it's become known that I am under Orsted, such fellows occasionally show up, but...

But I wonder why it is you want a duel because you won over Cliff?

"Why?"

"Yes, I was interested in how strong I was from before.

And then, over the last several years, I've understood that your strength is beyond the average level."

Well I do stand out...

But come on, that isn't even okay as a joke.

Maybe I should just give him one or two knocks on the head and then leave.

"Yes, Rudeus-sama, would it be alright to proceed?"

"...I guess so?"

"I have wanted to challenge you so much.

Ever since the time you defeated the Demon Lord Badigadi in one-hit."

Brooklyn said this while strongly clenching his fist.

"I come from a warrior family.

When I return to my home country I will inherit a position where I am responsible for my subordinates.

Then, at that time, the opportunity to test my own ability will disappear."

"When you gain that great position, you won't be able to indulge in your own convenience."

"Exactly. So now, this is my last chance; please accept my challenge!"

Brooklyn swiftly bowed.

I understand the situation.

All young men want to know the measure of their own strength.

This young man knew that he was above average.

He finds people who are stronger than him.

He can see he will probably lose, but he still wants to challenge himself.

There is just one thing I don't understand.

"How does this kind of thing spring from defeating Cliff?"

"Eh?"

When I asked him that, Mr. Brook's face went blank.

"I had heard that in order to challenge Rudeus-sama, that a person had to defeat his Six Demon Group.

Rinia-sama, Pursena-sama, and Fitts-sama graduated, and there is no longer any sign of Badigadi-sama....

Only Zanoba-sama was left to defeat..."

" .... "

Six Demon Group...

Come to think of it, there was something like that.

I have no idea who began saying that kind of thing.

If you do not defeat everyone, or something, you can't challenge me.

This guy, he has been dutifully obeying that...

"Then against Zanoba, you won?"

"I was able to win more than once in a mock battle, during class, yes."

"I see."

When I glanced over at Zanoba, he diverted his eyes.

... Well, in a battle of only magic, Zanoba can't be expected to win.

However Cliff held out this whole time, so this guy has come sliding up here.

I don't think that he was able to finally beat Cliff, but since graduation would rob him of his chance to try, he is asking in this way now.

I see.

It's to commemorate graduation.

"As expected, I have to defeat even those who have graduated..."

His intention is to completely honor that rule.

Even to the last distinction.

It is similar to confessing because you have nothing to lose.

"No. It's fine. Let's do it."

No matter what world it takes place in, you'll want to do something for your graduation ceremony.

" .... ! Thank you very much!"

When answering me, Brooklyn bowed swiftly.

"Zanoba, sorry, but I'll have you be the referee."

"I understand, Shishou."

I entrusted my jacket to Zanoba.

Things like the Magic Armor flashed into my mind for an instant, but even without it... I'll be fine.

To start the duel off we moved to the schoolyard, for the whole thing, I thought I better allocate three hours.

The result: I won.

I have been training with a Dragon God (Orsted) and a Sword King (Eris) on a daily basis.

There was no struggle, it was like taking candy from a baby.

I've stopped going easy on others.

Brooklyn seems to have known how it was going to go as well.

He thanked me with a bright face.

Just that, should have been good enough.

Afterwards, having seen us, other graduates came to test their skills against me.

They had all kinds of reasons I didn't understand. Perhaps they won a footrace against Cliff, or an eating contest against Zanoba, whether that's the truth doesn't really matter.

Onlookers also gathered in large quantities; I'm a popular person somehow.

Then I, having no real reason to reject anyone, received everyone's challenge.

It's a graduation ceremony, and, in the first place, it wasn't me who said people had to defeat the Six Demon Group.

There was no nagging from Norn today, and she used the student council to help reduce the onlookers.

I don't really want to cause a commotion, but I can't say no to the feeling I see in these guy's faces during their graduation ceremony.

I'm sorry Ms. President.

"Phew"

After that, I dueled with about 20 people.

Because I train on a regular basis, it didn't really tire me out.

Everyone was happy.

They all left with satisfied faces.

I think that once they return home this will become a fond memory for them.

Finally, no one was left.

Because she had to stay and clean up the venue, Norn and I stayed back, everyone else was gone.

Only Zanoba and his two guests remained.

"As expected, Shishou is popular."

Zanoba seems tired after continuing to referee the matches.

Somehow, this guy has no stamina.

"I'm tired... What about Shishou? Aren't you tired as well?"

"No, I'm fine. However, before the party, it would be nice to change out of these dirty clothes."

"Hmmm... I see."

After saying that, Zanoba looked down at his own clothing.

Mud had splashed up onto him as a result of the magic, it had dried and caked.

Of course, he was in the midst of battle as well.

"Then, let's quickly go home. What about your sister?"

"Norn said she needed to participate in the cleanup. She knows the meeting place, so it should be fine if she comes back on her own."

"Is that so..."

Then, Zanoba looks away from me suddenly.

His line of sight is focused behind me and slightly upward.

Looking back, I try to follow his view with my eyes.

There.

I found it immediately.

Short dark brown hair peered out from the roof.

Beside it golden blond curls blew in the wind.

"Julie, Ginger."

"Yes."

"Can you go home ahead of me and prepare a change of clothes?"

"Of course."

Those two nodded and left.

They had decided to no longer be in a master servant relationship, but no matter how you look at it, it's still the same.

I suppose it's not something you can change immediately.

"Well then Shishou, let's go visit."

"Yeah."

I nodded at Zanoba's words and then entered the school.

"I was watching the whole thing. Rudeus is strong."

As we entered the roof, Cliff said that looking tired.

At his side was Elinalize.

I knew she came to the graduation ceremony, because my house was asked in advance to look after Clive.

Oh, she is dressed in her uniform even though she has quit from school.

I don't know what the rules are for those uniforms at the school.

Anyway, it's the graduation ceremony today.

It shouldn't matter where she wears it.

"Is that what's expected from the 'Dragon God's Right Hand?"

"Please don't tease me. It was like that even before the fight with Orsted."

"Yeah, that's right."

Saying that, Cliff leaned his weight against the rooftop railing.

"Cliff-senpai, why are you up here anyway?"

"I don't really have a reason, sometimes I just want to climb up to high places."

Cliff said so while looking up at the sky.

Seeking high places.

Sometimes people do that.

Because I am not very good with heights, the place I go is Paul's grave.

"Anyway, congratulations on graduation Cliff-senpai."

"Thank you."

I went up next to Cliff and pushed my weight against the railing in the same way.

I do not think that Cliff will jump off, but it comes to mind.

Zanoba also moved to the opposite side of Cliff.

Elinalize stands off to the side, just watching the three of us.

Ah, looking at us now, it's a youthful setting.

If I think about it, Cliff is in the full swing of youth.

Twenty two years old.

A parent graduating.

He seems to have a lot of troubles.

No, no.

That's a stupid thing, couldn't I have him tell me about it at the banquet today?

He doesn't know about it, it would be trouble if one of the leading men canceled at the last minute.

"Cliff-senpai, after this, what are you doing?"

Is my timing okay?

It doesn't matter if you come back with us, or if you slip home for some war time with Elinalize.

That's my intention when I asked him.

" .... "

Cliff answered my question with silence.

Is it hard to reply?

Perhaps, you haven't got to enjoy your uniform play with Elinalize yet?

"... I've talked it over with Lize, and considered it."

Cliff paused for a few seconds and then spoke.

"I want you to wait one year."

For a moment, I did not understand what I had been told.

The reservation at the tavern is for today.

There is no way we can wait an entire year.

"Well, until your child has grown a little more, is what you mean?"

Zanoba's words help me straighten my thoughts.

Back in January Cliff had said that he would 'give me an answer before the graduation ceremony.'

He was trying to give me that answer just now.

No, I had not forgotten.

I had thought it would be fine to hear it after today because of the graduation and banquet.

"Yeah, Clive is still pretty small. At least until he is weaned, I want to watch over him."

With a serious face, Cliff looked down over the Magic City Sharia.

When you look from up here, the entire cityscape can be easily seen.

My house stands out a bit because of the green roof...

"To go to the Holy Land of Milis from here takes two years.

However Rudeus, if I use the teleportation magic at your place, it becomes possible to shorten the travel time.

I don't know if I can do with less, but a grace period of a year should be fine at least."

It seems Cliff believes that it is absolutely necessary for him to return home two years after graduation.

It's a matter of duty.

"That magic, I can use it?"

"Of course, no matter what, you can use it."

"Thanks."

Teleportation magic is taboo.

It's not something people would use even in an emergency, Cliff may have some hesitation about employing it for a private matter.

"And then, Rudeus. About the matter of joining your company, or becoming your associate..."

Cliff seemed to be having trouble saying it.

Is this the kind of flow where I'm refused?

At least if he will listen to reason, I'm sure I can persuade him...

"About that, I'd also like you to wait."

"To wait?"

"Ah, I'm sure, with the Dragon God Orsted's backing, I can achieve a high position in the Milis religious order."

We could raise him to the top.

Orsted should be familiar with the internal workings of the Milis order.

There is a possibility that, because of his long series of loops, he knows the weaknesses of the order's leaders in this period.

"However, I feel that would be useless."

" .... "

"For me, my own strength has been my best asset so far. How far that strength can take me in the Milis order, it's something I would like to know as well.... A chair made for me by someone else's hands, I don't want to sit in it."

Cliff clenched his fist as he said that.

I can understand.

It's the same as the people who challenged me to a duel earlier.

It's the desire to test one's own ability.

It's the part of Cliff which is still a boy.

"As a result, once I stand at the top of the Milis order, I will become your associate."

Hmmmm.

Cliff wants to stand at the top, but in this situation it seems I won't be able to help.

Just falling from power is fine.

I should just find another inroad to the Milis Order, and Cliff, he could even just become the exclusive helmet craftsman.

I'm reluctant to put him in a position where he will be murdered.

I really don't want a dead friend.

Or, since Cliff wants to be challenged, should I just let it slide.

"And so, Cliff, you intend to go alone in a year? What about your family?"

Zanoba spoke instead of me.

If that's so, Elinalize and Clive, I wonder what they will do.

Cliff has a hard face.

Rather, it's a troubled face, it doesn't seem apologetic, but it's a face full of decision.

"I'll leave them."

"... For how long?"

"At least until I'm full-fledged."

Full-fledged.

You mean, in short, you don't know how long.

Looking over at Elinalize, she is still with her arms folded at her stomach, and her eyes are closed.

Is that acknowledgement?

But what good does that do?

Also, wouldn't it be better if Elinalize is near Cliff and can watch over and support him?

A version of Cliff's magic tool that will do more than ease her curse is still years away.

No, there is nothing for me to say here.

Cliff discussed this with Elinalize and came to this decision.

This might be a big turning point for Cliff.

"I understand."

If I respect Cliff's wishes, there is a risk.

If Cliff dies because I let him slip out of my reach, I will lose my connection to the Holy Milis Kingdom.

I will also lose the person who is best at studying curses.

But, there is also the possibility for a return.

By struggling alone, Cliff may also slightly grow.

After he joins up with us, Cliff who has grown should be someone who can be relied upon more than now.

I don't know how it weighs against the risk, but there should be a benefit.

If I think about it like that, there shouldn't be a problem.

Cliff has decided his path, Elinalize has acknowledged it.

Then, I think I should respect their opinion.

"Then, in one year, thank you."

"Ah, you're welcome."

Saying so, Cliff holds out his hand.

Grasping his hand, I nodded significantly.

However, considering nothing will happen until Cliff becomes full-fledged, it might be more then three years from now before he joins us.

Then at that time, I'll employ Cliff. I need to draw the distinction.

Yeah... First, we can go ahead and get in touch with Ariel's side.

Doll sales with Zanoba have just begun, and I must work to increase our mercenary force as well.

Speaking of which, I also want to foray into the Asura kingdom.

For one year, I think, we can work towards the capture of the Asura area and then decide on our future plans.

It'll be busy.

... But before that.

Why don't we just celebrate the graduation today?

"Alright, Cliff-senpai, let's put an end to this difficult talk. Today, let's go someplace and make merry."

"... That's right!"

In this way, the graduation ceremony of Zanoba and Cliff came to an end.

"There's a letter for Nina."

That summer a letter reached Sword King Nina Farion.

The Holy Land of the Sword is a place covered by perpetual snow, where it is always cold, but that day was one that could be spent warmly, almost like spring.

The head of the dojo, Sword God Gull Farion said, "You may as well do as you like, there's no sense in training on a day like this." before decisively taking a nap.

"A letter?"

Since Nina was diligent, she was earnestly training hard, but her hand was stopped by the arriving letter.

"...Is...sol...te... Ah!"

Dripping with sweat, Nina received the letter from the deliveryman with a broad smile.

On the back of the letter was the coat of arms of the Water God Style along with a nostalgic name.

Isolte Cruel.

Several years ago she was Nina's training partner, now she is the head of the Water God Style.

She is currently working as a swordsmanship instructor in Asura Kingdom, she should have taken over as the manager of the Water God Style dojo there.

She was someone who had been Nina's friend, but neither of them had spoken since Isolte had left the Holy Land of the Sword several years ago.

And so the arrival of the letter was unusual.

"... Let's see."

Nina ripped into the envelope with joy, and took the stationary from inside of it.

However, the moment she saw the densely packed script, her expression glazed over.

"I wonder what is written here."

Nina could not read the characters.

She is just about literate enough to read the name of an acquaintance, but her skill does not extend to the point where she can read something this long.

In the Holy Land of the Sword this isn't something to be embarrassed over.

(Somebody else can read it.)

Nina was born and raised in the Holy Land of the Sword.

However, among those who live at the dojo, there are some who were brought up and properly educated.

Someone else should be able to read it.

Nina went into the back yard.

Several disciples had settled in there, and had taken to chatting leisurely in the sun.

Usually this would be the point where Nina would thunderously scold them for slacking.

Because of that, many of them rose and hastily began making excuses.

Today is an unusual day where the dojo's master personally declared a holiday.

Nina did not scold them, but instead asked if anyone could read her letter.

They each looked at one another, then one of them raised his hand.

Nina held the letter out saying, "If you can read human language." and then passed it to him to be read.

The content was concise.

It was the events of the past few years leading up to the present.

Reida had died, and somehow or another Isolte had taken over the dojo.

As a sword instructor she found herself quarreling with Ghyslaine frequently.

She had been reminiscing fondly about her time with Nina.

Nina could imagine the stuffy fastidious Isolte's face angered by Ghyslaine's blunt speech.

Then, from the last line of the letter, her face became serious.

"Soon, the coronation for Her Majesty Ariel will be completed.

One month before and after the coronation is a festival to raise the spirit of the entire country.

Therefore, at that time, please come and play no matter what."

Immediately as she heard it, Nina decided to go to the Asura Kingdom.

She did not worry for a moment.

Speedy snap judgment is the motto of the Sword God Style.

In Asura Kingdom's capital of Arus, its thoroughfare had become packed with people.

The crowd was thick enough that you would bump into someone if you stumbled one step to the side and disappear into the crowd several meters in.

The density is just like a certain Obon festival's third day.

It was the eve of the coronation in the capital city of the Asura Kingdom, Arus, and people had gathered from all over the world.

There are those who came to the country with the hope of glancing the next ruler of the world's most powerful nation.

To offer congratulations, there are nobles from other countries who have been dispatched as goodwill ambassadors.

Unemployed swordsmen have gathered for the chance at work in case the government services will be hiring at this time.

Predicting simple jobs with straightforward rewards, adventurers had gathered.

Bounty heads trying to escape from their pursuers taking the opportunity to hide like a tree in the forest.

The merchants who came in order to pursue a money-making scheme, selling a dubious product in a place were many people have gathered.

So on and so forth...

Every race dwelling on the Central Continent had been gathered in this country.

In addition, the White Knights of Asura were performing a parade that day.

In an attempt to catch a glimpse of the admired Knights, the townspeople had stretched out their legs into the thoroughfare.

"Whoa..."

Meanwhile, while craning her neck restlessly, Nina walked towards the center of town.

This was the first time in her life she had seen such a crowd.

This girl had thought she had seen large numbers of people in many towns before, but the crowd here was beyond her imagination, she couldn't help but become confused.

"Tch, watch where you're walking!"

"Now... which one of you... where?"

The opponent she thought was selling her a fight vanished into the crowd.

This was a first for her.

She has been a Sword King for some time. With her characteristic sharp senses, never before has she failed to understand the source of abusive language.

This time, the other side was allowed to walk away with only words as a response.

Perhaps he did not even see Nina's face.

(In this city, words like that... I wonder if such a thing is like a greeting.)

In the Holy Land of the Sword, someone who approached her with a mouth like that would have been sent to the healing magician in an instant.

You must not think that someone is trying to pick a fight with you even if they are rude in this city.

"Hey, hey, pretty onee-san, why don't you come over here for a little bit?"

"I-I.. I'm pretty?"

As she was walking along in a daze, she was abruptly stopped by a person with the air of a merchant about him.

He had a small shop nearby, and seemed to be selling something.

"Yes, yes. This is the first time I've seen a woman as beautiful as you... By the way, it seems like you aren't familiar with the capitol, is this your first time visiting?"

"Yes, but how did you know?"

"It's obvious at first glance. The way you are jostled about in the crowd is proof that you are a person from another country."

To hear that her movements were obviously that of someone from the country, Nina blushed.

She had previously stretched her legs out into other cities.

But, from the point of view of this urbanite, the places Nina had thought were cities was still in the countryside.

"It's a terrible crowd of people. Are all of them here to witness the coronation?"

"Yeah, there is that, but there is also going to be a parade of the White Knights, so everyone is gathering in the street for that."

"I see..."

"There are signboards everywhere instructing people who wish to see the parade to head for the main streets. As for the people with no business there, they should keep to the back streets..."

"That's my fault, I can't really read..."

"Oh, alright alright, if you don't intend to view that parade and you don't have business here, you can go out the back here and down Sarruten Avenue, if that's what you want, alright?"

"Is that okay? There's no toll?"

"Nooo, that's free of course. Ah, that's right. If you can't read, inside I have a product that might be good for you. It's a doll which comes with a picture book. At the end of the book there is a part to help you learn the characters; it's a popular item."

"I can't afford such a thing as a book..."

"It's okay, it's okay, our book is much cheaper than a common text. Two Asura large copper coins... No, for you, I'll go as low as an Asura large copper coin and 8 copper coins. How about it?"

Before she had noticed, Nina was making her way down a less crowded street, clutching a doll and a picture book in her hand.

The contents of her purse had been reduced by exactly 1.8 Asura large copper coins.

This is the result of that man cutting off her speech and continuing to talk in rapid succession.

It had the appearance of a scam, but did not really give off that kind of feeling.

The speed at which things developed paralleled that time in which Sword God Gull Farion joined in a training session.

Nevertheless, 1.8 large copper coins.

That might be a cheap price for a book, but it is still a lot of money from the point of view of Nina.

However Nina felt that it would disgrace the name Sword King, if she did not repay him for the directions.

(Like this, it's fine.)

Thinking that, Nina began to walk.

Sarruten Avenue was about 2 meters narrower then the main thoroughfare.

It was kind of damp and there were underpasses every so often, it gave off the feeling of a local path, but just as the merchant had said, though it wasn't as wide as the main street it was comparably less crowded.

Well, it was only not crowded when compared to the previous street...

Even so, by getting away from the people coming in and out of the center of the city, Nina was able to progress more smoothly.

"This way, I'll make it to Isolte's dojo by this evening somehow."

1.8 large copper coins, is probably not such a bad trade for that information.

While thinking so, Nina looked down at the picture book and doll in her hand.

It was a doll of a Demon race with a spear; it's the same person as on the cover of the book.

Perhaps, he might be a hero.

The unusual thing was, it was a Supard race.

She didn't know what kind of story it was, Nina, as a warrior, wanted to try fighting a Supard race.

According to her friend Eris's story, the Supard race is fiendishly strong.

Eris is a mad dog. Even a devil would turn his eyes away from her and cross the street when faced with her killing intent.

The Supard race that she talked about so proudly,

Nina was a little interested in it.

(Besides, if you can use this book to study like the merchant said, studying between practice might also not be a bad idea.)

As she was walking, lost in her imagination, cheers sounded out from the direction of the thoroughfare.

Apparently, the parade seems to have begun.

After hearing all that noise, Nina became a little interested.

Her original intention was to go right to Isolte, but now she kind of wanted to go toward the parade and watch.

"Eh?"

On the edge of Nina's field of vision she thought she saw something, just a glance.

It was something she had certainly seen before, a woman with red hair caught her eye.

"Eris?"

Why is that girl here?

Her eyes, hopefully, chased after the girl.

This was surely her.

Two meters above the elevation of the thoroughfare that red head suddenly appeared.

She only saw her from behind, but, based on her demeanor, Nina was convinced.

There was no doubt.

It was Eris.

"Eri-s."

She didn't understand why that person was here. A nostalgic feeling clung in her chest and her voice was arrested.

"Look, Lucy, do you see it?"

"I see! It's sparkling!"

She had suddenly stopped. The reason was a nearby little girl receiving a piggy back ride.

"Eris, I wanted to let her ride on my shoulders."

"No good, wouldn't you just lick Lucy's thigh anyway? Yesterday you did something similar to me."

"How rude! That's not something I would do to my own daughter!"

"Is that so!"

"Well if it's you I would certainly lick it clean..."

Eris was having a conversation with the man standing next to her.

He was someone familiar to Nina.

Something which had become a bit of a trauma for Nina, the Demon Lord Badigadi.

Someone had killed him with a single blow, he's that magician.

He's regarded as 'The Right Hand of the Dragon God' and, recently, he has been sighted in many different places.

It's Rudeus Greyrat.

" .... "

Nina received some kind of shock.

She knew that Eris went to find Rudeus.

She knew Eris went to join up with Rudeus to fight Orsted.

Because Eris did not send any letters after that, Nina assumed she was dead, and yet she had heard rumors on the wind that Eris had appeared in the Asura kingdom alongside of Rudeus.

Rudeus then became 'The Right Hand of the Dragon God', and so Nina assumed that Eris had been forced into the Dragon God's camp.

Nina thought, surely she has become stronger, stronger than in the past.

However, the Eris which can be seen right now, she was in a place far from Nina's imagination.

While arguing jokingly with a man, those two people.

That girl getting the piggyback ride, Nina wondered if she could be Eris's daughter.

Eris married and raising children, this is something she couldn't possibly have imagined.

Eris, that beast, that mad dog, how could she become like that?

Then the pair of them, coming sightseeing peacefully, flirting with her husband...

"... I'll go meet Isolte."

Thinking that, Nina removed herself from Eris's line of sight.

She had thought that, becoming a Sword King, she had finally leveled the field against Eris, but now she felt a tremendous sense of defeat.

By the way, though they were not visible to Nina, just on the other side of Rudeus stood Roxy and Sylphy. In the immediate vicinity, it should also be known, were two other people, Zanoba and Julie.

After that, Nina traveled to Isolte's dojo.

There was no frivolous atmosphere here, and that combined with the smell of sweat set Nina's heart at ease.

After greeting Isolte, she was introduced to her disciples.

Everyone had a female presence, or perhaps the male presence was just more sophisticated.

(Either way, these don't feel like swordsmen...)

After having been shown around the dojo, Isolte led Nina to her home.

While she was staying in Arus, it had been arranged for Nina to be at Isolte's house.

There was space for her at the house where Isolte lives, the reason being that it contained an extra room.

Formerly it had been the room of Water God Reida. It was quite tidy.

Other than that thing with Reida, Nina was relieved to find no male presence in Isolte's home.

Water Emperor, sword instructor, knight:

she should certainly be popular.

If that Eris is married and has children, it wouldn't be weird for Isolte, who has a sparkling clear atmosphere, to have found a man.

It would not have been funny to be introduced to her husband and children upon arriving at her house.

Because she had been expecting something like that, she was relieved.

"Nina-san. By the way, at the close of the parade there is going to be a little gathering. I know you are probably tired from your long journey, but would you come along and participate? No matter what, I want to introduce a Sword King to various kinds of people."

Nina stowed her luggage, then paused and took a single breath to consider Isolte's suggestion.

"Yeah, that sounds nice."

Nina answered lightly.

She didn't really understand what this small gathering was about, but it wasn't like she had any other plans for that evening.

She could start her sightseeing tomorrow.

She thought that would be fine.

Then, in less then an hour, she came to regret her answer.

Of course, some things occurred before that.

At first she thought it was 'something funny'.

She was led by Isolte to a large mansion near the country's royal palace.

That place, despite being a small gathering, wasn't small at all.

The thought was, "She cheated."

After that, she was brought into a luxurious room where she was asked to choose a luxurious dress, which she was then forcibly stuffed into by more than one maid.

This thing, it's absolutely a noble's party or something.

The thought became, "I shouldn't have come."

Why did I agree to this so easily?

Why did I come so nonchalantly?

Why didn't I resist when I was made to change my clothes?

If it was the ordinary Nina, at any point she could have resisted and escaped from that place.

However there was one way in which this deviated from the ordinary.

This was not a battle using swords.

She was packaged in a dress she was unfamiliar with, it was hard to walk in those abominable shoes, and her swords were taken.

Her waist was lonely, her suspension was faltering.

In that state, Nina was dragged along by Isolte and introduced to people at the party venue.

There was only one slight relief for Nina.

The people who were introduced to her at the party were not only nobles.

Although there were many nobles, there were also knights and those of common birth such as the ace of the Magician's Guild from another country. These were people from the real world who Nina could understand.

Some of them were also fooled, just like Nina; these people all had puzzled looks on their faces.

Knowing that she wasn't alone, these people gave her a little peace of mind.

She calmed down; Nina is a Sword King.

Once she ascertained the other party, then it becomes possible to evaluate whether or not she can win.

Knowing the opponents around there were just small fry, her mind can become calm.

Nina finally cleared her mind.

When she did, she realized, 'I'm hungry.'

Her appetite returned.

Thinking about it, she had not eaten since noon.

Swordsmen of the Sword God Style are unanimously heavy eaters.

Even when secluding themselves in the forest for ascetic training, they will not skip a meal.

It was inevitable that the variety of food at the party venue would captivate her sight.

For a person without hesitation, after being offered great food and drink, the result is the need to be excused to the toilet; that was unavoidable.

Although she was able to arrive at the toilet with the guidance of a maid, after she was finished there was no longer a maid to help her struggle with the unfamiliar clothing. Because of this, in the mansion which was like a labyrinth, there was no way she wouldn't become lost while searching for the original venue.

(Huhm, I wonder if I've gone mad...)

While walking vaguely down a dimly lit hallway, Nina sighed from her heart.

In any case, after coming to the Asura Kingdom she was overwhelmed by the atmosphere of the place; she could not regain her condition.

The idea that being a Sword King brought her to the level of world class had been shattered to pieces.

"Like in the past, maybe I've been moving without thinking..."

After becoming Sword King, shouldn't obtaining disciples have been possible?

Or perhaps, after becoming acquainted with Eris, Nina was influenced by her personality?

Unlike the old days, it may not be possible to succeed while moving without thinking about the consequences.

At this rate, becoming a strong swordsman is something that has become distant...

"Come to think of it, that Eris, I forgot to tell Isolte about her."

If Eris was in the same town, she wanted to be able to do three man practice with her.

As soon as she thought that the scene from earlier that day came into her mind, and she shook her head to push it away.

(That isn't the Eris that I knew anymore...)

Whatever, quickly she'll go back to the venue.

Finding an appropriate place to leave, she'll return to the house.

Although it is an uncomfortable place, Asura has lots of attractions.

With Isolte as a guide... she could spend days exploring.

The town seems like a festival, so it should be quite fun.

Afterwards, it would be a good idea to visit the local Sword God Style dojo.

(Alright..... huh?)

In front of Nina's renewed determination appeared a door with light leaking from it.

The door is small, so it won't be the party hall.

However, the person inside should know the way to the venue.

It'll be fine if she just asked that person.

Mildly relieved Nina inched closer to the door...

"–Your Majesty Ariel, also would not want that thing to be exposed."

Hearing such an overt threat, she stopped.

(Her Majesty.... Ariel?)

In this country there is only one person called that, even a hick like Nina knows this.

Ariel Anemoi Asura.

In spite of being exiled for nearly 10 years in the Ranoa kingdom, she came back like a comet and won the throne, a charismatic queen.

It is no exaggeration to say that all of the revelry in the capital Arus is taking place just for her.

"... That thing? What are you talking about?"

"You don't remember?"

Nina concealed her footsteps and approached the door.

From the doors gap she peered into the middle of the room.

(.... !)

In that place were two people, a man and a woman.

Sitting in the chair was a blonde, and beside her was a man with light brown hair.

The face of the man standing beside her, it was familiar.

"I have some ideas..."

"It's –"

It was Rudeus Greyrat.

He was making a smile completely different from the smile he had worn earlier in the day with Eris. It was an obscene smile belonging to a different person, which he produced close to Ariel's face.

Nina quickly assessed the situation.

(He's pressing her for sex!)

The man named Rudeus Greyrat, in addition to Eris, had two other wives.

Also she had heard rumors somewhere that he was a very lustful person.

In addition to that, she had heard the story that he had put in considerable effort behind the scenes to back Ariel into becoming Queen.

Since he is working under Orsted, he probably helped Ariel as his minion.

And, perhaps, he intends to have sex with Ariel using a story or something from that time as leverage.

(I'll cut him down.)

Nina is immediately determined.

She doesn't understand what kind of material Ariel is being blackmailed with.

She doesn't know how much stronger Rudeus is.

Right now, she doesn't even have a sword.

But, deciding not to care about such things, Nina intended to kill the man in front of her eyes.

There was no point worrying about it.

Isolte is a subordinate of Ariel.

Seeing her friend's boss being blackmailed, there can be no hesitation in cutting him down.

Although the current Nina would normally think, 'I should just wait a moment,'

in the past few hours, stress had built up inside of her.

However, in that instant, from behind her, blood thirst washed over Nina in a wave.

"Ttsu!"

She rushed to look to her rear.

There, wearing a bright blood red dress, stood a demon.

"Eris!?"

Why didn't she realize this person would be here?

Eris was with Rudeus.

Here was Rudeus.

Then it wouldn't be odd for her to accompany him to this mansion.

"Nina... ?"

Eris made a puzzled expression for an instant, but then her face strained.

"You, just who do you think you are directing that blood thirst towards?"

This is bad.

Eris, in that state, does not stop.

If she notices Rudeus in the other room then there will be two opponents.

If it's two on one, Eris doesn't have a sword, but then she would be sandwiched between her and a magician.

"Oh? Eris, you came back?"

By the time Nina had thought of it, it was too late.

The door behind her opened and Rudeus came out.

Nina instantly realized she could no longer win at that point.

However she still faced that beast of the Sword God Style.

Nina pulled power to her abdomen and feet.

"Now, Rudeus-sama, just give up.

We can't leave our guest waiting."

Seeing the expression of Ariel's face as she looked at Rudeus, the power let out of Nina.

She did not have the face of someone asking for help, there was no desperation there.

Nina felt that something was wrong. Many times in the last few hours she had felt the same thing.

".... you aren't being threatened?"

" .... ?"

Ariel saw Nina crouched down with a puzzled expression.

Ariel was not acquainted with Nina.

However, Ariel regarded Nina's expression, the expression of Eris, her own conversation, and Nina's position, and instantly realized what was going on.

"No, I had asked Rudeus for a favor and was declined.

Because I wanted him to accept by any means, I prodded a weakness of Rudeus a little, but he splendidly countered me.

Hearing only the latter part, you thought I had been threatened, and were trying to help me?"

Nina nodded, her eyes swimming in bewilderment.

Ariel caught her arm quietly and helped her to stand.

"Thank you very much. This is the first time we have met. I am the Asura Kingdom's next Queen, Ariel Anemoi Asura."

"Oh, ah, eh?"

The next Queen of Asura, Ariel, is so close. Moreover she is actually introducing herself.

Her understanding couldn't keep up with the situation, and so Nina found herself looking towards Eris.

She had an annoyed expression, but she sighed and decided to throw her friend a life line.

"This is Nina."

"Eris-sama, is she your acquaintance?"

"Yeah, she is Sword Saint Nina Farion. We trained together in the Holy Land of Swords."

Eris chimed in even though she didn't know why Nina was here.

"I've become a Sword King as well! The same as you!"

"... Oh yeah? Congratulations."

She said that curtly to Eris, but otherwise Nina remained silent.

It had seemed like Nina was just meaninglessly proud of being a Sword King.

However she was just correcting Eris.

"Well then, Nina-sama. The party tonight is something that was organized by myself and Rudeus-sama. I think later there will be an opportunity to share stories, but first of all, please go and enjoy yourself."

"Ah, ye-yes..."

With that, Ariel smiled gently and walked down the hallway with Rudeus.

Nina saw them off with a sigh.

Today, truly, is just a series of crazy things.

"Hey, why are you here?"

Then, she turned towards the voice of Eris behind her.

She was wearing a bright red dress with her hair up, it was quite becoming.

Accessories such as a necklace and earrings, she was also wearing them. It was like a real noble's daughter.

".... Eris... that dress, it looks good on you."

"That's because Rudeus chose it. It's only natural!"

Eris pushed out her chest and carelessly boasted, she didn't seem like that previous beast of a person at all.

(Eris, you haven't changed so much after all.)

Well.

This was probably a good chance.

"Say... listen Eris... about Isolte..."

Nina, with a sigh, started to complain to Eris.

By the end of the day Nina still did not quite understand the purpose of the party.

Rudeus came back after that and returned to the venue with Eris.

"Dragon God Orsted is your ally! If you accept now, I'll throw in this detergent. It's great. There is no contract fee, when a certain guy awakens in 80 years or so you simply have to lend forces to Dragon God Orsted. For the next 100 years and beyond Orsted Corporation is on your side. Please cast your vote accordingly!"

And, he said a lot of things which couldn't be understood but just nodded at.

It seems Rudeus was gathering allies.

That thing a little while ago was a misunderstanding, now she was ready to lend her strength to Eris's husband.

However, Nina could not think of a way to go about it.

Because the fight would take place more then 80 years in the future, it was unrealistic for Nina to try and save her power to lend to Orsted.

Others, like Nina, were also puzzled.

But, eventually everyone nodded.

Since it was being asked by Ariel, there wasn't a person in the place who could say that they were reluctant.

After the party:

On the recommendation of Eris, Nina was supposed to stay bottled up at the party venue.

Isolte was also together with her.

About this mansion, apparently it was a thing that Ariel bestowed to Rudeus. Eris boastfully told them to make themselves at home.

That night there was conversation among those three people for the first time in a long while.

Isolte grumbled, that soon she too would find someone, to the Eris who wouldn't shut up about Rudeus.

To speak to these two guys in person, it made Nina remember the old days, it was downright nostalgic.

The contents of their talks had changed a little compared to then, but what had not changed was how much fun it was.

After being alone all this time, it seems like it was a good idea to come to the capital Arus.

Then, by the time the next day had dawned, that strange sense of defeat and jealousy had faded; Nina had regained herself.

Before the end of Ariel's coronation ceremony, Nina had plenty of time to enjoy the capital city Arus.

The attractions, the crowds, the dojos, she went to all the places she had thought about going.

She wasn't alone.

While there were many days that Isolte could not be there because of work, Eris always followed along for some reason.

At first, Nina couldn't figure out why.

Every time Eris opened her mouth she would talk only about Rudeus.

There were many times when she thought it wasn't the place to talk about Rudeus at all.

But Nina finally understood Eris after they were together for a long time.

It seems that Eris wanted to entice Nina; she was soliciting for Rudeus.

Her awkward stories didn't get to the point, but she was sincere, and her desperate words moved Nina's heart.

She didn't quite understand, it seemed to be the same thing as Rudeus's speech, but it was something she should think about.

Once the coronation ended, Nina returned to the Holy Land of the Sword.

She thought about things the entire way back.

The war in 80 years, she had agreed to join Orsted's camp.

The happy Eris, bright Eris, the unlikely energetic Eris.

That Rudeus who was next to her.

While thinking about them she rode her horse forward.

A conclusion, of course, she never reached one.

However, once she looked at the person who welcomed her to the Holy Land of the Sword, she was hooked and something suddenly clicked within Nina.

The person greeting her was her cousin.

He was a master swordsman who was always chasing behind her, but very soon he too would be a Sword King. The young man's name was Jino Britts.

Once she saw him, Nina said the first words that popped into her head.

There was no hesitation at all.

Because speedy snap judgment is the motto of the Sword God Style.

"Hey, Jino. Shouldn't we get married?"

After a few months, a married couple of Sword Kings was born, but that's another story.

Let's talk about my sisters.

Norn has been working hard as the Student Council President.

Recently most of the students have come to recognize her as [Student Council President, Norn Greyrat].

The number of students who recognize her is comparable to Ariel's term as Student Council President.

Norn is a popular Student Council President.

In the general student population, there are many who call her Norn-chan familiarly.

Norn seems reluctant, but it's just a nickname.

Ariel was a Student Council President to be relied upon, while Norn has a more familiar feeling.

Just, partially because of the SS (Norn Greyrat Official Fan Club), she doesn't seem to have any romantic involvements.

She also seems to have gained a position like the school mascot.

Of course, not only has she been working hard on the Student Council, but also towards her studies.

The other day, she achieved the intermediate rank in the Sword God style.

Compared to her surroundings her growth has been a little slow, but this should be considered normal.

She seems to be taking other various classes as well, and is working hard studying magic.

I don't know the details, but I've heard students say [Every time I look around I see Student Council President Norn.]

Although she didn't excel at one thing in particular, she has become well-rounded.

Aisha has been sticking to Arus-kun like glue recently.

One reason is probably that Eris is awkward with childcare,but my baby boy is cute, so I'm not bothered.

This might be favoritism.

I don't know whether this is good for my three children, but even I've been saying [Arus-kun is cute!] like a favorite phrase recently.

Of course, it's good.

But, there's also a part of me that's a little worried.

Though it could be said that I worry too much...

For instance, whenever Arus was hungry, he would puff out his chest and cry without pausing for breath.

The crying should at least pause for a moment when he breathes...

Whenever Arus is held to someone's bosom he laughs happily, Aisha doesn't know what to think about that.

But I still worry.

Whenever I see breasts, I start thinking about my children.

Well, I just worry if it's enough.

About the Rudo Mercenary Company, things are going well.

Although I declared it as the intelligence branch of the Orsted Corporation, and said we would expand it on a global scale, I don't have the human resources, the buildings, or the permissions necessary to organize a branch office in another land.

Rinia and Pursena have done well holding the reins.

Aisha has the best mind for this sort of business.

All of them are working hard.

By the way, Norn and Aisha will be 15 years old soon.

I don't think I need to go over this again, but in this world the 5th, 10th, and 15th birthdays are marked with a celebration.

The 15th birthday is especially important.

After 15 you're considered an adult, and nobles often celebrate with a large party.

It's a coming of age ceremony.

For people in this world, it could be called their most important day.

And, although I shouldn't need to say this, I think we'll hold one celebration for both of them.

That will require an even bigger celebration.

I've gotten plenty of money from Orsted,

so we can afford to rent a huge venue,

with my influential acquaintances, many people should come with gifts,

and I'll treat Norn and Aisha like they're the only princesses in the world.

I excitedly told Roxy and she said,

"Aisha aside, Norn might prefer something more subdued... Shouldn't we avoid such a big celebration?"

And with that, I was brought back to reality.

We're not nobles, so celebrating in our house would be considered enough.

After that, Roxy patted me on the head and said [Because I never got to celebrate Rudy's 15th birthday, I'm excited too.]

Although I didn't really care about my 15th birthday.

Well, because Roxy is stroking my head, I'll let myself be spoiled.

Like a cat.

At any rate, my plans might have been overkill.

I woke up thanks to Roxy.

"For the time being, let's think of a good way to have a two-person celebration as a family."

So we decided to discuss it with everyone, except Norn and Aisha.

Late at night, we held the meeting in the basement.

The entire family, except Norn and Aisha, sat around one dimly lit candle.

"Welcome, in the darkness–"

"Excuse me, Rudy, I need a bit more light to be able to write..."

Roxy, acting as the record keeper, interrupted the greetings to complain.

The atmosphere (mood) is important.

"No, if the light leaks out, Aisha may notice."

"In the first place, why are we hiding?"

"Even if you ask why..."

I wonder if it's OK not to hide it.

For example, you'd expect to receive a gift in return for anything you gave on Valentine's Day.

"Hiding the preparations will be difficult, they will enjoy the celebration all the same."

And, Lilia.

In terms of preparations, not hiding them might be easier.

Well, that's right. Rather than focusing on sneaking around, we should focus on magnificent preparations.

"Hmm..."

But, that's right.

We don't need to go out of our way to cover it up.

Thinking back, both my 5th and 10th birthdays were surprise parties.

So naturally, I thought surprise parties were the norm.

Thinking about it, both Norn and Aisha expect a celebration.

In that case, there's no reason not to tell them.

"Then, we should involve them in the preparations."

Let's do it in a big way.

That way, we won't need to worry about buying gifts.

Aisha is on good terms with all the merchants in the shopping district.

And if I'm sneaking around like this, Aisha might say something like [Oniichan isn't here, he must be out buying lovely panties!], and follow me.Of course, I don't intend to buy panties.

That's just a parable.

Well, the other day, I did go out to buy panties to have Sylphy wear, and Aisha was grinning when she saw me, so it's not really a parable.

"But, the presents should still be kept secret."

At Eris's words, everyone nodded in agreement.

"The presents may be secret, but wouldn't it be good to discuss what we plan to get them?"

Sylphy said that after Eris.

What she said was reasonable.

On that day, my two popular sisters would be getting many gifts.

Norn who's popular in the Student Council and the SS, and Aisha who's popular in the shopping district and the mercenary company.

If two random people give them the same gift then there's no helping it,

but we should try to avoid that within the family at least.

"So, what does everyone think? Let's decide now."

And so, the meeting's agenda changed to the contents of their presents.

Though, everyone already seems to have decided in advance to some extent.

Lilia planned to give Norn a handkerchief, and Aisha an apron.

Sylphy planned to give Norn a book, and Aisha a quill pen.

Roxy planned to give Norn custom-made armor, and Aisha a trowel (magic tool) for gardening.

Eris planned to give Norn a sword belt, and Aisha a normal belt.

They seemed to know what gifts to get for each of them.

Everyone seems to have put in a lot of thought.

Of course, I did too.

I decided to give Norn a figurine of Paul I started production on a few days ago.

Paul loved Norn, he wanted to see her become an adult more than anyone else.

He would have shown her a heartwarming face... Well, anyway.

However, in regards to Aisha's gift, I'm at a loss.

I don't know what she would want.

Aisha seems to like cute things.

She has girly hobbies that you wouldn't expect because of her tremendous talent, she likes cute frilly clothes and cheesy glittery accessories.

That's also good though.

But, recently she's been receiving consultation fees from the Rudo Mercenary Company, so she can afford to buy whatever she wants.

"Just to be thorough, may I hear what everyone got for their own coming of age ceremonies?"

I decided to ask everyone for the time being.

Research is important.

"It was a long time ago, but I received a hair ornament from my parents. It was white and a little feminine."

Lilia said that.

I don't know what Lilia was like when she was 15 years old, but she doesn't seem like someone who would have worn accessories.

After all, she spent most of her youth training in a dojo.

"Because of the Metastasis Event I didn't have any celebration... Ah, but I did get various gifts from Ariel, like clothes and shoes..."

Sylphy received clothing.

Until she was 20, she always dressed boyishly, at least when she was in public, I wonder if those clothes were her gift.

"I didn't receive anything in particular. The Migurd Race doesn't have such a custom."

Is that the case, Roxy?

But, you liked the hat we gave you as your wedding present.

"I, Ruijerd recognized me as a warrior... and from Rudeus... 'that'!"

Eris, that's...

That's an embarrassing thing to say, Eris and I had our first time together.

It was an equal exchange.

Come to think of it, Aisha favors me.

Could it be, would she be happy to receive me?

Definitely not like 'that', Aisha isn't Eris and I won't go along with that.

But before going that far?

In a restaurant with a view of the sea, I would dedicate a toast to her eyes,

going back to a room, staying with her to the end, until she falls asleep.

Treating her like Cinderella for a single night...

Even saying it is embarrassing.

I'm not a valuable enough gift.

"Umm, I haven't figured out what to give to Aisha."

"Aisha-chan would like anything as long as it's from Rudy!"

Sylphy said that with a laugh.

Maybe so, but that's why.

That's exactly why, I want to give her something especially good.

... Better yet, I could get her something expensive that she can't afford.

Like a 100,000 carat diamond.

If I ask Orsted, he should know a place.

I wouldn't even hesitate to go into the belly of a behemoth.

"My gift to Rudy was the best thing I'd ever received."

Roxy's statement was sobering.

You're right!

"I see... I'll try that..."

I got my answer, and nodded deeply.

My gift was decided.

Then, over several meetings, preparations advanced at a steady pace.

We've planned the day and asked Aisha and Norn to keep their schedules open.

They were delighted to have a birthday party.

Although I thought Norn would say [That's too much!],

She honestly said [Thank you!] and lowered her head.

This honest attitude was rare for Norn... Come to think of it, Norn is normally distant, but that's only at school.

Because of her position at school, that may be unavoidable.

Aisha's reaction was [Great!] with an excited face.

At least that's what I expected, but her reaction was different.She had a surprised expression and muttered [I see, so I'm an adult now...] as if I only just noticed.

Because she was so clever, I wonder if she always thought of herself as an adult.

If you'd like, I can tell you that you've always been mature...

No, stop that.

I am not an adult who can call other people adults with confidence.

If I say something bossy here, I'll likely be ashamed in the future.

Anyway, they've been notified, now they just have to wait.

The day of the event.

Norn went to school as usual.

"I'll return as soon as possible."

Norn seems to be looking forward to it.

Aisha also left for the mercenary office early that morning.

... Although, she returned before noon.

She seems to have finished most of her work ahead of time.

I thought she would come back with gifts from the employees, but she was empty handed.

"Did they give you anything?"

"I-, they congratulated me for my birthday. But the Beast Race doesn't have that kind of custom."

However, various people congratulated her, so she seems to be in a good mood.

I wonder if her acquaintances in the shopping district did anything for her.

Well, she is just a customer...

Generally, you wouldn't hold a celebration for a customer.

What's important is the spirit.

It's important to congratulate.

"Hey, Onii-san. Can I watch the preparations?"

"Oh, of course."

I went to help in the dining room, while Aisha watched our preparations come together.

Lilia and Sylphy moving between the kitchen and dining room.

Eris and Roxy bringing back mountains of ingredients.

Me putting up decorations in between helping them.

Silently, Aisha watched.

Today is her day, so she can enjoy watching; and although it's hard to tell while we're still in the middle of the preparations, everything should be done by the evening.

She's just watching.

As if to keep herself from interfering, Aisha watched expressionlessly.

Midway through, Zenith sat down next to her, and silently patted her head.

Leo also came and laid his head on Aisha's knee.

Every now and then someone would leave to tend to Arus when he cried, then return.

Lucy came and asked [Aisha-nee, want to play?], and Aisha smiled saying [I-, I'm sorry, I'm actually a little busy.]

With absolute patience, without moving, she watched.

I don't know what she's thinking about.

Maybe she's thinking about what it means to be an adult.

Or maybe she's thinking [What bad skills.]

I don't know.

Meanwhile, the afternoon became evening.

While Aisha watched, the preparations had been steadily completed.

The dining room was decorated.

In the corner of the room, presents for the two had been stacked, piled like a mountain.

On the table, food was put out to cool.

The main course will be started after Norn returns.

After that, we were only waiting for Norn to return.

I wonder if she's behind schedule.

We'll have to go get her if it gets too late.

Although I thought Norn said she would come home early.

"I'm here!"

Norn was carrying so many gifts she could barely hold them in both of her arms.

She had large bouquets in her left hand.

And she carried a wooden box, a hair ornament, some strangely shaped objects, and a broken bag in her right arm.

"I'm sorry I'm late.

I had a lot of stuff to carry back...

I was going to leave it in my dormitory, but I couldn't fit it in my closet.

While I was bringing everything home, my bag broke on the way..."

At school, she was congratulated by a lot of people, and seems to have gotten a lot of gifts.

It's only natural for so many people at school to celebrate Norn's 15th birthday.

As expected of the Student Council President.

Hopefully she didn't get anything weird.

Like hair-filled cookies...

Anyway, I welcome Norn, now we can start the celebration in full swing.

The flow of the party was the same as the dual birthday party they had a few years ago.

I had a few opening remarks.

I gave a short speech about how after their 15th birthday the world will recognize them as adults.

I didn't think I'd ever give that sort of speech, but that's what I ended up doing.

I slipped and carelessly said something bossy.

Mostly, I talked about the [Attitude of an Adult].

You may not have to ask permission to do things from now on, but you have to be responsible, like Sylphy.

You mustn't forget to keep learning, like Roxy.

And to have a goal, like Eris.

Then Lilia talked about when Paul and Zenith were young, and when Norn and Aisha were born. When Zenith patted her on the head halfway through, she was almost on the brink of tears.

After that, we presented their gifts.

Opening her gifts, Norn smiled like a blooming flower.

She especially liked the armor Roxy had custom made for her.

Roxy had the armor modeled after Paul's old armor that's on display in Zenith's room.

Its size was adjusted to fit Norn, and the chest was altered for a woman to comfortably wear.

Together with Eris's sword belt, and Paul's beloved sword at her waist, she looked like a swordsman from head to toe.

Roxy and Eris must have remembered Norn asking about becoming an adventurer before.

The figurine I made of Paul was given last.

It's my masterpiece, standing at 30cm tall, you can even see the emotion on his face.

I had to make it from my memory, in a modern Japanese sense it might be classified as [Something I can't afford to mess up.]

This world doesn't have photographs.

Just by looking at the figurine, you couldn't help but remember Paul, Norn received him with tears in her eyes.

Then after receiving the gift, Norn said.

"For this, thank you. From now on I'm an adult, I'll continue working hard. Please continue to support me in the future."

Our chests welled up with emotion, this is good.

Lilia also burst into tears.

Norn, you've become really excellent...

Now, Norn was happy, but what about Aisha?

Aisha was also joyful.

But, watching her, I felt something was strange.

Of course, she's not blatantly frowning.

Every time doesn't have to be [Wow, amazing! Cute! Thank you!] or [Just what I wanted!] overflowing with joy.

On the surface is the usually bright Aisha, who seems to have enjoyed the party.

However, I wonder.

Something was still strange.

The Aisha reflected in my eyes seemed to have cooled down in some way.

She was acting almost like she was in a performance, with fake smiles and laughter.

I think, maybe because she was watching the preparations...

My gift to Aisha, was a pendant.

A Migurd pendant.

... This, because Ruijerd has the original, is a replica.

It's not something expensive or genuine, I handmade it.

"Aisha, this pendant, gave me the chance to grow.

Although it may not have any meaning to you,

I'm giving it to you as proof that you're an adult."

I felt happy when I received mine.

So I wanted to give it to Aisha. But, why not Norn...

I don't know why.

Just, this was something important to me, so it seemed natural.

"... Thank you."

Aisha didn't show her 'happy face'.

She had a blank expression.

And, as if thinking deeply, she stared at the pendant.

After opening the presents, we enjoyed dinner and the cake.

There was also a surprise.

Before the night came to a close, more students stopped by with gifts for Norn.

They seem to have bought them in a hurry after hearing about Norn's 15th birthday.

Many people came.

Meeting me, some faces turned blue, but I finished things without any trouble using a shining Rudeus-brand smile.

After all, a smile is the best welcome.

... Sorry, that's a lie.

The moment they saw my smile, they tried to escape.

Sylphy caught them, and had them bring their gifts to Norn, so things ended without any trouble...

That's just rude, guys.

Probably because she got gifts from so many people, Norn's pile of gifts gradually became a mountain.

Compared to Aisha, who only had gifts from our family.

Aisha smiled at that,

a fake smile, masking her discomfort.

Other than me, nobody has noticed Aisha's forced smile.

Maybe I'm just overinterpreting, Aisha might not care.

I wonder if I should discuss it with Sylphy...

While I was thinking.

Suddenly, I heard something from the front door.

I heard a large commotion, and Leo barking.

"I wonder what it is..."

Eris grimly picks up her sword from the corner of the room.

I wonder if Orsted came.

No, there are a lot of people.

Orsted wouldn't bring so many people.

While thinking that, I went to the front door.

When I went outside, I saw a huge number of bad guys.

A huge number of hairy guys with sharp teeth were standing at the gate.

All of them wore a familiar black cloak.

It wouldn't be strange to consider them intimidating.

However, their appearance was very rough.

Some were hurt, and there were guys with their cloaks in tatters.

The two biggest delinquents in town stood at the front.

Those two had disheveled hair, as if they'd been quarreling.

"It's Rinia's fault, because she made a mistake with yesterday's work we were late nano~."

"Ah, of course Pursena would say that nya~."

"Of course. Because it was Rinia's fault nano~."

"I caught the scent of the prey, but that guy was attracted to the smell of our camp nya~. It took too long to kill because of that nya~."

"You shouldn't have done that nano~, camping out in such a place is bad."

Rinia and Pursena.

Arguing as usual.

Well, it's playful.

They're accustomed to it, they were standing next to each other with their hands on each other's backs.

"Oh, Boss nano~."

"Ah, you guys, greetings nya!"

At Rinia's order, seeing me, they all lowered their heads.

Then, I could see something behind them.

Three wooden pallets. Three piles.

"Boss! We've brought gifts nya!"

"We've been in the forest since yesterday, everyone helped out nano!"

It, it was a huge monster.

A wild boar-like monster.

One you would find living in the woods around this area.

At least until yesterday...

"... You guys, you weren't in the office today?"

"It's fine nya~. We left the minimum number of personnel nya~."

"That's right. We adjusted it so there wouldn't be much work today nano~."

That must be why Aisha returned early, because the office was empty.

When she got to the office in high spirits, nobody was there.There wasn't any work to do either.

She might have thought people would come if she waited, but nobody came as the morning passed.

Well, that would explain Aisha's mood.

"Ah, adviser nya!"

"Everyone, it's the adviser!"

I turned around, and saw Aisha.

She was looking at everyone in front of the wild boar.

"What, this..."

"Adviser! Happy birthday!"

At Pursena's words, everyone bowed in unison.

Congratulations, congratulations, their loud voices will disturb the neighborhood.

This scene looks like something from a Yakuza rally.

Then, Aisha lowered her head.

".... Aha."

Aisha laughed.

Seeing that, as if she couldn't contain it, she laughed.

"There's so much, I can't eat all of that... Wow, ahahaha!"

While saying that, in the middle of speaking, she burst into laughter.

While she was laughing,

everyone could see that she was genuinely happy.

Everyone had a relieved expression and smiled brightly.

Today I've been witnessing Norn's popularity,

but Aisha has been accepted into her own community as well.

"Hey Oniichan, can I bring everyone into the garden to eat?"

At that suggestion, when I looked at the crowd, I noticed some guys wagging their tails.

I don't know the details of the Beast Race's traditions, but they'd normally give their prey as a gift, then get to eat it during the festivities.

They're hungry, they have saliva dripping from their mouths, and growling stomachs.

"Oh, of course!"

At those words, Aisha had a full-faced smile.

Then a feast began in the garden, Norn guided the stray students who showed up with gifts to join in.

The wild boar was put on a fire to roast,

and a liquor merchant that Aisha knew from the shopping district supplied drinks.

Norn sighed, probably because it was far from a quiet coming-of-age ceremony, and would disturb the neighbors.

For the most part Norn didn't have an unhappy face, and didn't say anything to dampen the mood.

Aisha seemed to be enjoying it from the bottom of her heart.

The feast continued for awhile, but became a party after the mercenaries ate their fill.

People left by twos and threes, until only Aisha was left, and she said.

"What it means to be an adult... I don't know, but it doesn't seem unpleasant."

Compared to Norn's self-awareness, Aisha's words sounded childish.But, it's such a thing.

Aisha to Aisha and Norn to Norn.

As for people, there are adults and there are children.

Regarding Norn and Aisha, I hope they each get closer to their ideal.

"Yeah, I don't know either."

I answered.

I think Aisha doesn't have to force herself to act like an adult.

Thus Norn and Aisha became 15 years old.

The following year went by in the blink of an eye.

Today, it's my turn to graduate.

It's the Ranoa Magic University graduation ceremony.

It's my graduation ceremony.

My view has always been one from the side of the student council.

This time, I had to squeeze into my uniform and sit among the graduates.

Surrounded by classmates I don't really know, I listened to the principal's speech.

The principal's speech, I've heard it a few times, it's the same as ever.

Maybe he reads it off the same document every year.

A time when currently enrolled students would hear it doesn't really exist, so there's nothing to worry about.

However, it's not very stirring.

I haven't spent much time at the school itself.

I've also taken few classes, and in the end stopped coming even to homeroom.

It feels like I'm enrolled in name only.

Nevertheless, in regards to my research on the study of chant-less magic, I submitted a paper on its teaching methods and received the proof of membership of a C rank magic guild.

I guess, with that, it's just hard for me to call this a moving experience.

However, I have many fond memories.

Reuniting with Sylphy, becoming friends with Zanoba and Cliff, sexually harassing Rinia and Pursena whenever possible, talking about memories of Japan with Nanahoshi, drinking with the laughing Badigadi...

Saying farewell to this place.

I think I'm about to cry.

Oh, I do have an emotional attachment to this place?

It's deep indeed.

Well,

I accomplished everything I had to this year.

Primarily, I laid the groundwork in the Asura area.

Staying in the Asura Kingdom for a few months, we created a subdivision of our mercenary group, a Zanoba Shop branch office, and a factory for the production of goods.

All of which we achieved with Ariel's assistance.

Thanks to Ariel, we'll smoothly be able to gain associates.

When I asked her if she would be willing to cooperate with Orsted in the future I received some reassuring words, "That was my intention from the beginning."

With that in mind Ariel gathered men from her own faction together and threw a party.

It was set up under the premise that, with my backing, they would be able to forge a connection with the 'Dragon God' of the Seven Major Powers.

Although fundamentally we only gathered people under Ariel, it was just members of her faction.

In short, it was people who have the backing of Ariel. Ten or twenty years from now they will be in key positions within the kingdom.

The majority of them were Ariel's yes men.

However, there was also a slightly different type of person there.

That is Water Emperor Isolte.

I don't understand exactly what chain of events led her to be brought along, but the Sword King Nina was also at the venue for some reason.

I'm glad that the Sword God Style and Water God Style are cooperating with Orsted.

I told Eris that I would entrust persuading Nina to her, but, in the end, I wonder how that will turn out?

It sort of seems like the three of them were playing around for a while, but I haven't heard the results.

My expectations are low, but that I was able to make a connection to a talented person like Nina through Eris is helpful.

Honestly, about the revival of Laplace in 80 years, most people don't seem to get it.

So, I think some of the language in my solicitation might have been said carelessly.

However, Ariel holds their reins.

If that's the case it should be fine.

She's our dependable Asura Branch Manager.

When I reported to Ariel that, "Eris has given birth to a boy, he's my third child." she was extremely pleased.

Then she said with a mischievous face,

"That's right. In that case why don't we set up a betrothal between one of your children and a member of the Asura royal family?

If we do that wouldn't our relationship become even stronger.... ?"

From her, I think that was said seriously.

On reflex I thought, "Don't joke around." Although I was strongly repulsed, I'm producing a lot of children; it might be good to make a connection with powerful people through marriage.

To everyone else, excluding Ariel, I appear to be Orsted's mysterious supporter; it's probably a little scary.

However, it might be a relief if a member of my family were engaged to a relative of Ariel at this time.

Ties of blood are deep.

However, I don't intend to use my children that way.

No, I might consider it if one of the children seriously starts talking about wanting a royal wedding or wanting to become a princess.

Anyway, it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that I have things in the Asura area completely within my grasp.

The nobles led by Ariel, the Water God school, and if we're lucky we might get some people from the Holy Land of the Sword.

The manufacturing facilities and the store front for the Ruijerd figure sales are also doing well.

This, when combined with the Mercenary Troupe's transportation unit, should allow the Ruijerd figures to spread throughout the Central Continent.

It's perfect.

If I'm able to, using this method, meet up with Ruijerd sooner, I'll be really happy.

The next step is to advance into the King Dragon Kingdom, and make preparations to use the Death God Randolph as a go between to form that relationship.

There isn't an existence like Ariel this next time, so it's going to be difficult to deal with.

I expect it to take at least two or three years longer.

Asura Kingdom was the tutorial stage.

From here on out is the real game.

Let's talk about the research results.

First is Zanoba.

This past year he has been occupied with directing the setup of our store's sales and marketing, so he has not been able to do any research.

There was no other way.

In the space of a year, he launched stores in both Sharia and Asura.

It's been hectic.

However, because of Ginger and the guys from the mercenary group acting as managers, and because Ariel is the brains skillfully supporting our financial affairs, the shop itself is doing well.

The dolls and picture books haven't exploded in popularity, but are steadily selling.

The table of exercises for reading and writing in the latter part of the book seem to be especially popular.

I don't understand why the bonus material is the most popular part, but the result is good.

Essentially, without the sponsorship of Ariel and Orsted, we would have had to close down immediately after we opened; there is no reason to be hasty.

Next let's talk about Cliff.

He spent this year deepening his relationship with his family and furthering the curse research.

It's all for dispelling Elinalize and Orsted's curses.

Although there was no breakthrough on that front.

He seems to have come across some tall hurdles.

He was successful in improving the effects of the magic tool, but it is still incomplete.

However, thanks to his work, Elinalize can now go more than one year without needing to be sexually active.

The person herself, however, still has an unquenchable libido.

Finally, there's me.

This time I have also reaped some results.

While moving between The Magic City Sharia and Asura Kingdom, I was thinking about a method to summon the Magic Armor.

Perugius had said that the method was nonexistent, so I went to Nanahoshi for advice.

Meanwhile, I discovered a certain law.

This regards bidirectional transfer magic circles.

What is on top of the circle when the transfer is invoked is 'exchanged'.

In other words, for two magic circles A and B, whatever is on circle B will move at the same time as circle A.

Because of the timing of transfer circles being based around the moment that things are placed on top of them, it is a very difficult law to observe, but if you think about it, it's likely.

It's a good argument, isn't it?

Still, realizing this was a huge boon, and it allowed me to hit on a groundbreaking idea.

The Magic Armor, I can place it over a bidirectional magic circle in advance.

I can then carry around a scroll with the sister transition magic circle, lay it out, and trigger the transition magic.

Then presto, the Magic Armor sitting on that circle will automatically be exchanged with whatever is on the circle I invoke.

Following this idea, I set up the Magic Armor in the basement of the office and tried it out; it was a smashing success.

As a result, it is now possible for me to summon the Magic Armor MK-I no matter where I am in the world.

It's the birth of a Gund*m! It's that kind of guy.

Nevertheless, it takes a huge scroll that has to be prepared in advance, and the weighty armor tears the scroll each time it is summoned, so each sheet is single use.

The number I can carry is limited.

Similarly, if another pair of scrolls is made, it can become a way to escape using transfer magic. This discovery has produced versatile results.

Then there is Orsted.

He is skillfully moving forward.

The telephone... He wasn't able to make it, however he did manage to produce a lithograph communication device.

It apparently uses the same construction as the "Seven Major Powers Stone Monument" which was built by Technique God.

What is drawn onto the main lithograph is then copied onto the sub lithographs, it's a mechanism like that.

If each person walks with a main and sub, then instant communication by letter is possible at any time.

However, this is also heavy, and carrying it around at all times would be rather difficult.

Moreover, it consumes quite a large amount of magical power.

Setting it into a foothold would be desirable.

It's a fixed telephone.

For now, the first pair has been installed in Orsted's office and a private room of Ariel's.

Every night Ariel is down on her knees watching the shining lithograph, 'Show me the Rider's defeat by any means necessary.'

This research has that kind of feeling.

Then we should talk about the things concerning the children.

First is Lucy.

My eldest daughter is five years old.

Her birthday party was held just this last month. She received gifts from the whole family and was in a state of delight.

She has grown up quite energetically.

It feels like it was just the other day that she was toddling around and speaking with a lisp. Now she walks with firm footing and, although her speech isn't perfect, she can speak clearly.

Her favorite words are 'no' and 'stop'.

Furthermore, she is receiving special classes in black magic from Roxy and Sylphy.

Every day she practices magic in the morning, and then spends the evening with Eris swinging a stick around.

It's completely like my former life.

Lucy seems to view it as natural, but when looking from outside it appears terribly Spartan.

Because of that I might indulge her carelessly.

As a result, when she sees my figure she'll jump up with, "Papa!"

Super cute.

In addition, she became aware of her status as the older sister after having come through her five years old birthday celebration.

These days she skillfully gives Lara and Arus attention.

As for the thing where Lara and Leo are always together, she seems to view him as some kind of brother, and loves him along with Lara.

A few days ago, she took a brush and combed out Leo to unmat his fur.

It was a really heartwarming sight...

However, afterward it was discovered that the brush was Sylphy's.

It had been taken without permission and filled with dog hair; she was furiously scolded.

"But, Mama and Leo, they're both white!"

was Lucy's excuse.

Children say the damnedest things, and I let a chuckle escape my mouth. This only added fuel to Sylphy's anger, and she didn't speak to me for the remainder of the day.

It was only from Lucy's arbitration that I was forgiven.

"From now on I'll use Papa's brush, so forgive Papa."

Oh well.

Because of the flow of the conversation, I lost a brush, but that's a cheap price.

Then there is Lara.

The future messiah has become two years old; she still has the same sullen face which never cries.

However, that isn't to say that she lacks energy.

This girl, who can now toddle around, spends her time traveling around the house.

She doesn't stick to anyone, but instead just wanders wherever her curiosity takes her, here and there throughout the house.

This kind of independence, it's something she inherited from her mother.

It's dangerous to take your eyes off of her, she is never in the place you think she is, but she has the guard dog Leo always by her side, so that helps keep her out of dangerous things. It isn't a problem.

If she falls asleep then Leo curls up around her as if to protect her.

Lara, herself, seems to think of Leo as a convenient servant or something for her own use.

Recently we've caught her firmly clinging onto Leo's back as a method of transportation.

Once when Eris took Leo out for a walk she discovered that he was wearing some kind of backpack-like thing; that was Lara. That kind of thing is troubling.

Leo may be reliable, but that kind of thing makes me slightly anxious.

Oh, I don't know the reason, but Zenith appears to be Lara's favorite.

She just sits on Zenith's knee and looks up at her.

It's a heartwarming scene of a grandmother and grandchild, except that there isn't any conversation.

Finally there's Arus.

The eldest son has become one year old, and he loves breasts just like his father.

He loves them, both large and small. Of course he loves his mother's, Eris's, but also the smaller ones of Sylphy and Roxy, all the way up to the large ones of Rinia and Pursena.

While being pressed against their chests he is filled with happiness, just smiling and looking delighted.

He seems to understand that the sizes are not ranks.

However, he gets so excited that he's likely to pee a little; it makes me a tiny bit anxious about his future.

By the way, when I hold him, he cries. He also cries immediately when I pick him up.

Even if he's sleeping peacefully, if I pick him up he'll become fussy. Then when he wakes up he'll cry with a, 'What the hell is this!?' kind of feeling.

He seems to exceptionally dislike the chests of men.

I might just cry too...

Ha, I am slightly lonely after all, but there is no helping it since I wasn't even there for his birth.

At the same time, I am worried about just how easily he will hand out his chastity to various women.

After he grows a little older, it might be a good idea to clearly, exactly, educate him. Yeah.

The kids leave that kind of impression.

Generally, this year was filled with achievements.

I want to say, "Let's all try and do just as well next year."

Well, the graduation ceremony wrapped up while I was reminiscing on the past year.

Of course, I wasn't the valedictorian.

Not even considering how much class I skipped, I didn't even take a final exam. It's not possible that I would be asked to be valedictorian, and even if I was I would refuse.

I tried rather hard to avoid a duel tournament after the graduation ceremony.

For some reason it feels like a girl confessing to a powerful man in order to gain social status.

I ran into vice principal Jinas at the front gates and was greeted with, "I am glad I recommended you."

In particular, with respect to Jinas, perhaps I am still being taken care of.

I want to make sure Norn can go to school, and even Lucy in however many years.

When I told him so, Jinas was so moved that he began to cry.

Then it was evening.

We all gathered together at our regular bar.

It was going to be a farewell party for Cliff.

But this also serves as my graduation present. I graduated without taking any tests and don't even get my own party.

Still, I'm happy.

So, Cliff's journey to the Sacred Country of Milis is in one month.

He's going to pick a fight.

It's his own battle.

The how and why of the fight, I don't exactly know.

I understand maybe half of it, but the other half is unclear.

For Cliff, joining the fight has been difficult until now.

In the middle of that, he took the poison fang of Elinalize.

By making full use of detoxification to change that scratch into experience and love, he's become ready to fight now.

"I'll become an executive officer in the Milis religious order by any means. Once I have, then I'll return for Lize and Clive."

With that declaration, Elinalize had been in a trance listening.

She is strong.

If it were me, and, for example, Roxy declared, 'I'm going to the Demon Continent to become a Demon King!' There is no way I would be able to calm down.

Just trusting in success and waiting.

That's easy to say, but really believing in it and waiting for the results knowing that a terrible conclusion is lurking in the future... I don't think many people can do that.

Regarding that matter, Elinalize seems to completely trust Cliff.

Even if she doesn't place blind faith in him, to some extent she has made a clear decision.

She should have some anxiety, but she is trying to make sure that it isn't noticed by Cliff.

She hasn't reached her age by simply putting on airs.

At that time, that is what I was thinking.

"Rudeus, can I borrow you for a minute?"

It was only after the party was over that my perception changed.

Elinalize, as soon as the party ended, was calling me outside.

At that time, I was in a complete harem state.

Sylphy was asleep, using my right knee as a pillow,

Roxy was drinking, riding on my left knee,

Eris had approached and rested her head on my right shoulder.

My hands were touching soft things to both the left and the right, and, partially because of the effects of the alcohol, I was thinking, 'Perhaps tonight I will be able to have three people at once.'

"... Yeah, sure."

But, after looking into Elinalize's face, my drunkenness cooled down a little.

Her earnest expression was unbecoming at a party.

I could easily imagine what her business was.

It was obviously something you should not be speaking about when you are drunk, I knew that too.

Immediately I neutralized my intoxication with detoxification magic, stood up, and peeled the three wives off of me.

"What? Rudy is cheating? Cheating is wrong. Cheating is only okay when it's with me... nn~tsu..."

Sitting down the drunk Roxy, I silenced her with my lips.

"Mmm, Rudy's thighs, nnn, I wonder if they need to be padded..."

I placed Sylphy's head onto Roxy's lap.

"Rudeus... I, also, my second son will be a good boy."

I placed Eris's head on Roxy's shoulder.

"Well, let's go."

I came out of the tavern along with Elinalize.

"Hey Rudeus, about Cliff, there's a request I want to make."

Right away, Elinalize cut to the chase.

I had somehow knew that it would be about Cliff.

Elinalize, this entire year, has been worried.

It's expected that she would be worried.

"Although, saying these things, it might be bad for Cliff... after all I'm a little anxious about it."

Elinalize said this while exhaling white breath.

From her perspective, Cliff is still very much a child. She has taken him and loved him as a husband, but there are probably also feelings for a brother and a son inside of her.

Even if she doesn't show it, she should be anxious.

"Is it because he'll be going alone?"

"Is that okay?"

Unintentionally I asked again.

Elinalize should be respecting Cliff's decision.

"At first I thought it would be alright if I just watched over the way his decision went... Isn't it important whether this goes smoothly or not? Although Cliff is a child that can work hard no matter what, it's a hard thing to go into that circle of people...."

Like a child, bashful in front of strangers...

No, I understand.

Certainly, Cliff has such a place in his character.

After all, until graduation, he never made any friends outside of us; I can see that.

Even though it's the Sacred Country of Milis, Cliff will be alone, a black sheep; that Cliff who always makes the greatest effort will still be trying his best.

Oh, that's dangerous, some tears seem to be coming out.

"... But, I've promised not to help."

I also want Cliff to succeed.

I want him to skillfully climb to the top of the Milis order.

He doesn't have to rise all the way to the top, but I want Cliff to go as far as he can go.

Separate from collecting comrades for Orsted, I want to help him as a friend.

However, I was told not to help.

It may have come from his mouth a year ago, but I agreed to it; it's that kind of thing.

"You can't do anything?"

" .... "

"At least in the beginning, that's the way it has to be. There's nothing I can do, but if Cliff becomes troubled I will immediately set out, just like that."

"Hmmmmm..."

I don't intend to call such a silly thing a promise between men.

I'm also worried about Cliff.

He is strong, but there can be things which are harder.

It might be that the hardest part will be the first hurdle.

Not being able to clear that first hurdle, and then overexerting himself, Cliff could go down.

I don't want to see that.

It might be best if I lend my hand in the beginning.

Cliff might be reluctant, but even the power of your friends is still your own power.

The people who will help him in an emergency is something Cliff earned at school.

Looking at it that way, I am one of Cliff's forces.

Of course, I should not help too much.

" .... "

Alright.

I've let my gut decide.

But will the member collection for Orsted be alright?

While Cliff was busy in Milis, I was planning on trying to expand our activities into the King Dragon Kingdom.

I could leave it to Aisha and let her make the move.

I wonder if it would be problematic to change my next target to Milis...

Making a Zanoba shop in the Sacred Country of Milis's home turf will be difficult.

However, if we limited it to just forming a mercenary group, that shouldn't be a problem.

For the time being I could just set up a mercenary group and continue to attract human resources and intelligence.

About the shop, if Cliff is successful, it would be nice to do some behind the scenes work again.

"I understand, I'll also go to Milis."

"....! Thank you, Rudeus!"

Even Elinalize, I'd want to take her.

If we entrust Clive to my house, we could go and help Cliff in the Sacred Country of Milis.

However, she has promised Cliff.

At home, raising Clive, she has to wait.

"Well, I'll use my own judgment on whether or not to aid Cliff, but thank you in advance."

"Of course I understand."

Elinalize let a sigh of relief escape her chest.

One way or another, she just wants to support her husband...

I also don't want him to be dissatisfied with his bride...

After all, he has a good woman.

Then the farewell party was over.

I brought back my three drunken wives, then I laid each to bed.

The children were already in bed.

To be able to come home drunk even though I have young children, it's all thanks to Lilia and Aisha.

To thank them, I returned to the living room.

Because of the thing with Elinalize, I want to discuss the next branch construction with Aisha.

Once I entered the living room I was faced with a heavy atmosphere.

Norn had left the party midway.

Lilia and Aisha were house sitting.

Those three people, with difficult expressions, I met face to face.

"What's this?"

"Ah, Onii-chan.... it's about this."

In front of those three people was a single letter.

I took it up.

The name of the sender was "House of Latreia".

I remember; it's Zenith's home.

At last, all the way from the sacred country of Milis, a letter arrived.

Even though it's addressed to me, it's already been opened. Well I guess that's fine.

Looking at the body of the letter, it reads,

I have received your report. My daughter Zenith is in a state of insanity. As soon as possible, I want you to return Zenith to the Latreia family household. If they are also with you, please bring Norn Greyrat and Aisha Greyrat. ~Countess of Latreia, Claire Latreia.

Those are some terribly short sentences.

Or maybe it is better to say they are steady.

No, there isn't any reason to read ill intent into this letter.

It's just written commands.

"To receive this kind of letter now..."

Then, I had started to ask a question but stopped.

Thinking about it, I had sent out a letter around five years ago.

From here to the Sacred Country of Milis it is pretty far, even by horse it takes two years.

The mail in this world is not very developed.

It's not surprising if a letter gets hung up in some strange place.

If the mail carrier is attacked by a demon, there is a possibility that the letter itself will be lost.

So, getting a reply five years later, you could say that is reasonable.

"Hey? Is this all there is to the letter?"

"Yes, that's it."

Lilia answers me.

There is no concealed extras or a second letter, nothing like that.

"Is that so..."

Considering the few years it takes to send the letter here, it's pretty short.

No, that might be the reason.

The Latreia house would also know it would take a long time to travel the long distance and reach us.

Taking into consideration the fact that it may not even reach us, only what was important was included.

It is written out like an instruction manual in order to make sure the other party gets all of the information they need. It's reasonable if you consider that.

The commanding tone is just to let us know they want us to visit no matter what.

"Hah..."

".... Obaa-chan, she hasn't changed."

.... And, the reactions of the two sisters were rather different.

Norn blatantly sighed, Aisha received the letter with a cold look.

Both of them were wearing a face like her name wasn't something they wanted to hear again in their lives.

To see the reactions of these two, this person called Claire, I could see she has the kind of personality to write this kind of letter.

" .... "

By chance I looked toward Lilia and even she was making a troubled face.

I wonder if she's really that unpleasant of a person, this lady named Claire...

I don't know because I haven't met her.

"Danna-sama, do you intend to go to her?"

Watching Lilia, she suddenly raised her head as she said that.

My answer was already decided.

It was just, I had been looking for an excuse to go to Milis.

This is timely.

'Nice timing' is what I would call it.

"More or less, because of this letter, we have no choice but to take Mother to Milis."

" .... "

" .... "

The sisters and my step mother exchanged significant looks with one another.

Apparently I said something wrong.

I wonder if this woman named Claire is no good.

But, if you are told that your daughter is crippled with memory loss, you'll want to see her.

It's a parent thing.

I wanted to look for a way to help Zenith, they should be the same.

Zenith seems to have run away form her home, but according to Paul's story, the house of Latreia had been funding the Fedoa search team.

That is also more or less something we owe them for.

They also seem to be somewhat of a force within Milis as well, so this will be a good chance to introduce myself.

"Well, anyway, I was planning to move into Milis someday.

You can also think about it this way.

This just came about at the right moment."

"Oh, hold it, wait, Onii-chan. Weren't we planning on working into King Dragon Kingdom starting next month?"

Aisha said that in a panic.

Of course, that was my original intention.

Form a mercenary group in King Dragon Kingdom, while relying on the Death God Randolph and Princess Benedict's connection, and get a sponsor to help manage another Zanoba shop.

Aisha had been making arrangements to help me.

It was just like in the Asura kingdom, I had relied on Aisha during the launch of our mercenary branch.

Then she along with the talent she collected along the way would launch the mercenary group.

Then the hired soldier corps is brought online during the subsequent month.

Two months later, the soldier corps is ready to leave Aisha's hands and move independently.

Her skill is magical.

"Now that this letter has come, it needs to be handled quickly. Milis needs to take priority... incidentally, we'll also be able to greet Grandmother."

"Ehhhh~ .... "

Aisha had a blatantly unpleasant look on her face.

Even though we just celebrated her coming of age ceremony a few months ago, this part of her hasn't changed.

"... Onii-san, I do not want to go."

Norn said so.

She said it with finality.

It's fine if she doesn't go; if she doesn't want to go, she doesn't have to.

She was making the same unpleasant face as Aisha and speaking seriously.

"School is important for me right now, there is also the student council. I can't make time for this for months."

" .... Well, that may be."

Even though I've graduated, Norn is now a senior.

She has one year left. After those classes and the final, she'll have to graduate.

Unlike me, Norn has been through six years of actual school.

I don't want Norn's six years to be wasted.

"Well, Onii-chan. I also, ummmm... Yes, the rice! I can't go because there is a favorable harvest of Onii-chan's rice!"

That's what Aisha came up with.

I know better.

Aisha created a field on the outskirts of the mercenary land, and there is mass producing rice.

Because she has already handed over responsibility to others, Aisha herself is not needed in the field.

I know all about that.

Because I do, I can easily point that out to her.

However, Aisha is in a foul mood.

If I forcefully bring that up, it might trouble our work.

That is to say, without Aisha, I'll have trouble raising the next branch.

It probably won't work out with just me.

Ah, it's like that.

Isn't there a choice other than to go to Milis and confront this?

"I understand Aisha, if you do not want to see her, that's not an unreasonable request.

But, at least come with me to Milis.

Lilia, Mother, and I can go to Latreia and handle that, you can devote yourself towards the mercenary group work.

"... Hooray! Thank you Onii-chan!"

Aisha was suddenly smiling.

Is she really so unpleasant?

But, Lilia doesn't seem to blame Aisha either.

Her scolding fist would ordinarily answer such behavior.

"I understand Danna-sama, I'll accompany you."

Lilia was as expressionless as always, but it's very likely that she does not want to meet Claire either.

Given her position, I understand.

Zenith was a Milis adherent.

Her mother also, will surely be a Milis adherent.

In the Milis religion, I do not know how you would normally treat a person's second wife.

At the least they won't be very welcome.

"Lilia, I'm just multiplying your trouble."

"No, it's a matter of course."

By myself, I can't completely take care of Zenith.

I need Lilia or Aisha.

It would be bad if neither of them came.

"Well, Aisha. This way, I'm going to ask that you switch your target from King Dragon Kingdom to the Sacred Country of Milis."

"Alri~ght! When do we depart?"

"That's right.... Aisha, I hope to leave soon."

Better yet, we can match ourselves with Cliff.

Although there isn't a particular reason, there is some distance between the teleport location and Milis.

Rather than travel separately, it might be better to go together.

"Well, after one month."

"Roger."

Even so, about my grandmother.

I wonder what kind of person she is.

After witnessing Norn and Aisha's reactions, I'm a little afraid to meet her.

As for the wives who are drunk and asleep, I'll just tell them about this tomorrow.

We are changing our target from the King Dragon Kingdom.

The next mercenary branch will be created in the Sacred Country of Mills.

Aisha told me to start preparing even while she complained.

In addition to the papers for King Dragon Kingdom, she started to write a stack for Milis.

Looking at it, it's probably a document about the kinds of human resources in each country.

Because we don't have direct support from the country this time, collecting talented people is going to be more time consuming.

For the time being, we are looking at about half a year.

For the time it will take to get on track, that's not really an unreasonable assessment.

Also, about Cliff, I told him at once.

By chance, this happened, that from Zenith's home I somehow received this, so let's go together.

Cliff had a wry smile and did not seem to hate it.

"That's to say, somehow, I thought you would find a way to follow me."

Is that so?

I could feel the trust behind that; his words were bathed in relief.

Unexpectedly, Cliff might have also become anxious.

With Zanoba he had said it was good that I was following along, but, this time with him, he had wanted to stick to himself.

The level of fellowship I feel from Cliff is enough to surprise me.

If only it had been that simple to begin with,

Cliff-senpai.

Now, towards Milis, there are four people going other than Cliff:

Aisha, Zenith, Lilia, and myself.

Sylphy will be staying at home because without Lilia or Aisha the number of people who can do housework has dropped.

Because of the unpleasantness surrounding the demon tribe in the Sacred Country of Milis, Roxy is staying home as well.

Eris had been prepared to go, but Lilia strongly opposed.

The wife Eris had better not go to that Latreia house, or there will definitely be a fight.

I don't really get what she means though.

However, according to Lilia's words, that person named Claire Latreia is a pretty finicky individual.

It is better for her to not meet Eris, at least I understand that.

It wouldn't be funny if Zenith's home became a source of danger.

Also that kind of journey would be difficult with young children.

For that reason, I had to give up on Eris.

Unusually, it's a situation where the wife does not come along.

... Well, sometimes things like this happen.

—

Then, as we were gearing up and preparing to leave.It was discovered that Sylphy was pregnant.

Sylphy became pregnant.

It's our second child together.

It's right before the departure.

If this was in the past, I would be at my wit's end as to whether or not to leave.

However, this is the fourth child I've made right before going on a long business trip.

I'm still a bit anxious, but I'm much more composed now compared to the past.

It's truly auspicious.

What should the name be?

I wonder if it's a boy or a girl.

Lucy, will you get a little brother or a little sister?

You're going to become a big sister again, aren't you?

And, I was running around the garden in glee but...

"Madam Sylphy is... W, what should I do...!?"

Lilia was panicking.

She, who was always calm, had a blue face and was hesitating on whether to go...

"My purpose is to take care of madam Zenith... But, the pregnant Madam Sylphy is the only one who can do housework... If something happens..."

She will travel with us to Milis in order to take care of Zenith.

Meanwhile Sylphy will be left with the housework.

That was the plan, before finding out Sylphy was pregnant.

Well, Roxy could help with the housework, or we could even hire a temporary maid.

Though I may think that, leaving my pregnant wife alone for several months still makes me feel slightly uneasy.

Lilia was at a loss.

She doesn't know whether she should follow and take care of Zenith or stay and help Sylphy.

When I see Lilia upset like this, I feel like I should be more concerned.

Maybe I shouldn't be innocently celebrating.

Originally, when I became Orsted's subordinate, I prepared myself for this type of situation.

But, thinking back, I assumed there would be a trusted caretaker like Aisha or Lilia there in my absence.

Perhaps, this might be bad.

I'm starting to get flustered...

"Ummm, I'm fine. It's the second time, and there's also Roxy and Eris, Grandma too."

Sylphy said that to comfort Lilia.

Certainly, this is Sylphy's second child.

She knows what to do.

There are many people she can rely on too.

Roxy would often be out of the house, so it might be best to have Elinalise check in regularly.

Even Eris should be able to help out if the need arises.

Yeah, that's right.

During Sylphy's first pregnancy, only Aisha and Norn were here to help.

Aisha has experience from taking care of three pregnant women now, but back then she was still inexperienced.

If I think about it, the current situation is better.

And this time I'll certainly be back before even a year passes.

So it's fine.

"That's right, we can manage it! I'll protect them!"

"I'll be a bit anxious because I won't be in the house during the day, but someone will always be around, so I don't think there's any danger."

Eris agreed, Roxy too.

However, there are still many reasons to be concerned.

Lilia looked down at Lara, who was standing while grasping the hem of Roxy's robe.

"However, there are other children, increasing the burden. I do not know what will happen..."

Certainly, you can't predict what children will do.

Both Lucy and Lara are actively moving.

Those two would never attack Sylphy with a malicious intent.

But, what if for example Lucy hits Sylphy with magic during practice?

Or Lara tries to leave the house riding Leo, and Sylphy tumbles down the stairs in a panic.

... I could keep going on forever.

Anyway, kids are accidents waiting to happen.

I'm uneasy.

There's no need to say who caused Sylphy to become pregnant.

When Sylphy said [Because of my race, I may not be able to have any more kids], I responded with [We won't know until we try] and never even considered family planning.

No, it's not like I was just playing around.

We earnestly wanted another child.

But it's been 5 years since Lucy was born, so I thought Sylphy was right about not being able to make more and recently have been doing 'it' without concern...

Anyway, there's no helping it.

I am responsible.

I, when my wife is pregnant and having difficulties, must leave her side once again.

It's been like this for all three so far.

Even so, why, I wonder why there's always a pregnancy before I leave on a trip...

I wonder if this is Hitogami's curse.

Maybe I should delay the trip to Milis.

We could delay the trip for about a year, wait for Sylphy's delivery, and then depart afterwards.

But there's a chance that Roxy or Eris would get pregnant, and it would be a continuous cycle...

In any case, given the time it takes to travel to Milis, the other side shouldn't expect us for another year or two.

It was the same situation for Cliff.

However, there's Cliff's matter.

Elinalise wanted me to watch over Cliff at least for the beginning.

Cliff will go with or without us.

I think things will be OK, but he might be irreparably cornered if I left him alone for a year.

Both Sylphy and Cliff are unlikely to be in danger.

Neither case is more urgent than the other.

I need to choose one of the two.

Cliff or Sylphy.

Work or Love.

If I think about the future, I should hurry along my plan to open a Mercenary branch office in Milis, and assist Cliff in becoming the future Pope.

That would be the best outcome for me.

But, is that alright?

If it causes Sylphy and the children to cry, then isn't it meaningless?

I have to keep in mind why I'm working for Orsted.

I can't lose sight of that reason.

"....."

While I was thinking about it...

Suddenly, Zenith moved.

"Hm? Madam Zenith?"

She suddenly moved without warning, almost like she was sleepwalking, and grabbed Lilia's hand.

She seemed to be putting in a lot of strength, since Lilia was stumbling while being dragged along.

Zenith's destination was Sylphy.

"Err... Zenith, san?"

Sylphy seemed confused.

Zenith took Lilia's hand and gently placed it on Sylphy's shoulder.

As if she were trying to ask Lilia to look after Sylphy.

As if to say she would be alright on her own, so Lilia should stay behind.

"You, madam...!"

Lilia's eyes were moist.

This is the strong will that Zenith sometimes shows.

Everyone in the family noticed how she shows it whenever her children or grandchildren are involved.

Rather than having Lilia take care of her, Zenith wants her to take care of Sylphy and the child that will be born.

Everyone understood.

"I understand."

Lilia wiped the tears from her eyes, and nodded at Zenith.

Her face showed that she no longer wavered.

"Aisha!"

"Y-, Yes!"

Lilia called out to Aisha, whose mouth was agape.

"In my place, take care of madam Zenith, and safely escort her to the Latreia house. I will not permit selfishness!"

"..... Yes!"

Aisha was lost for a moment.

She probably doesn't want to go to the Latreia house.

But she isn't a bad child that can say 'no' in this situation.

"Rudeus-sama, for this, thank you in advance."

"... Yes, it's no trouble."

If Lilia is watching over her, Sylphy will definitely be fine.

I strongly believe that.

I can do my job in the Holy Kingdom of Milis without worry.

"Sylphy."

"... What, Rudy?"

However, there's one thing left to say.

Something very important.

"I love you."

"Yeah. I love you too."

Sylphy stood up, and gently put her arms around my back.

I buried my face in her hair and hugged her without squeezing too tightly.

"Our child's name, I'll keep thinking."

"Yeah, let me know when you return."

Sylphy laughed shyly.

Ordinarily, I would be uneasy.

However, Lilia is with Sylphy.

She's my dependable second mother.

Then, after hugging Roxy and Eris, we departed.

We started to move.

Myself, Aisha, Zenith, and Cliff.

Only us four.

Although we carefully selected our luggage, we ended up bringing a lot.

The lithograph for communication and summoning scroll for the Magic Armor MK-I.

As usual I'm wearing the MK-IIB, so the weight is no problem.

But, even with abundant strength, I only have two hands and one back.

The size of a person doesn't change, and it's hard to move while carrying luggage larger than your body.

It's like carrying a large bundle of cardboard.

I met up with Cliff in the suburbs while carrying that mountain of luggage.

Cliff was surprised when I told him that our traveling companions had decreased.

But, hearing about Sylphy's pregnancy, he congratulated me with a bright smile.

"From my point of view, your situation cannot be praised enough... Milis teaches [The birth of a new life is a joyous occasion in any circumstance.]"

"I thank you for your words."

"I pray to Milis that our children become good friends."

Even if the Milis religion doesn't approve of my lifestyle, they don't find fault in my children.

Well, there's a good chance my children will also have multiple partners...

Cliff probably has a sermon prepared for that.

No, I'll have to lecture them. That's right.

"By the way, Cliff-senpai, do you know anything about the Latreia house?"

"The Latreia house..."

Over the past month, my sisters and Lilia have told me various things about the Latreia house's Claire-baachan while wearing uncharacteristically unpleasant faces.

In summary, she's extremely stubborn and strict.

Norn said [My only memories of her are of her getting angry at me for not doing well enough] while looking away, and Aisha said [She got angry at me for doing better than Norn-nee] while sighing.

Lilia only said [She's a person who values lineage and the Milis doctrine.]

In short, these three people, while they were staying at the Latreia house in Milishion, seem to have been persistently harassed about things like family and social standing and marriage.

However, regarding Claire, I didn't worry very much.

Although what I've heard makes meeting her a bit scary...

I already know someone stubborn and strict.

Although he's deceased...

Sauros Boreas Greyrat.

Eris's grandfather.

That old man had different values than Claire, but he still fits the description to a tee.

If I conducted myself civilly, he would respond accordingly.

Claire is a human being too.

If she respects blood ties, then technically I have the blood of the Greyrats and Latreia.

The part about respecting the Milis doctrine is a bit scary, so I should hide the fact that I practice polygamy.

In any case, I was able to get along in Eris's house full of loud and violent people.

If Claire is something like a female version of Sauros, then I'll probably be okay.

My sister's memories paint her as an unpleasant person, there's still a decent possibility that when I meet her she turns out to be a good person who's just a bit stubborn and hot-headed.

Ruijerd was like that too.

Anyway, I have no intention to stop a mother from reuniting with her daughter.

But just in case, I'll ask for more information.

"They are key members of the anti-Magic Race faction, and are a prominent family that has produced many excellent temple knights."

"Hmmm."

Temple Knights.

If I remember correctly, my aunt Therese was a member of the Temple Knight order.

I wonder if she's doing well.

"I was still small when I was in Milis, so I don't know many details, but Norn-kun described them as strict."

Norn seems to trust Cliff, and seems to have consulted with him when she had problems at school.

By the flow of things, she seems to have talked to him about being branded as [worthless child] by the Latreia house.

She was always compared to Aisha, and called a good-for-nothing who lost to the mistress's child.

Cliff seems to have told her something along the lines of [Do not worry about being compared to others, you must simply strive to improve your current self.]

As a result, Norn became the Student Council President.

It's something unsaid, but Norn seems to respect Cliff.

It's not at the level of 'love'.

But, if not for Elinalise, there's a chance that the two of them could have gotten together.

Ah, then the anti-Magic Race Latreia house and the pro-Magic Race Grimoire house would have a connection.

Oh, no no.

Norn is different.

She's a child of the Greyrat house.

She has nothing to do with the factional strife in the Milis religious community.

"When we return, I pray that you don't join the Latreia house and become my enemy."

"There's no way I would become Cliff-senpai's enemy."

"Of course I trust you. But sometimes there are things that can't be helped..."

Cliff said so, and smiled wryly.

If you think about it, it can certainly seem like it will lead to trouble.

The Latreia house is allied with the Order of the Temple Knights, part of the anti-Magic Race faction, and an enemy of Cliff.

It would be natural to think that I would be connected to that house.

No, I'm only connected by blood.

I am of the Greyrat house in the Magic City Sharia.

I am Orsted's subordinate, [The Right Arm of the Dragon God] Rudeus Greyrat.

I am Rudeus, Cliff's friend, that is who I am.

"I won't be actively helping Cliff-senpai, but I certainly won't become an enemy. If you think this is a lie then we could always betroth one of my daughters to Clive."

"Oh, that might be good. The engagement of your daughter and my son... Yeah, not bad..."

"Ah, please wait a minute. After all, a parent deciding their child's marriage is..."

"I know, I know. It's just a joke. Come on, let's get going."

Cliff began to walk with a smile.

It's really a joke, right?

But since both Lucy and Lara are so cute...

Surely both of them will grow up to resemble their beautiful mothers in the future.

Clive-kun would grow up watching those beautiful sisters.

Lucy would probably be his first love.

Clive-kun is Elinalise's son, he may confess and start dating her at an early age.

Rather than some person of questionable background, he's Cliff's son.

If Clive-kun insists, and lowers his head saying "Please, father-in-law", I won't oppose them going out.

Of course, I have no right to be called father-in-law by you, but–

"Oniichan, let's go."

Aisha said that, leading Zenith by the hand, and I pulled myself together.

"Oh, sorry sorry."

I'm getting ahead of myself.

While thinking that, we followed Cliff.

I stopped by the office to greet Orsted.

Then went through the basement to use the magic teleportation circle.

We had previously established a teleportation circle near Milis.

We were teleported into the depths of a forest not far from Milishion.

We're in the basement of an abandoned mansion.

Even if I ask myself why there's an abandoned mansion in the forest,

it seems that in this world villages near forests are frequently swallowed up.

This is one of those villages.

It's mossy, and the mansion's basement is full of ivy.

In such a place, the magic formation glows dimly.

The mansion is neglected, but perhaps because it's supported by the trees it won't collapse soon.

Although occasionally adventurers come from neighboring towns, so I hid the room to the magic formation with a secret passageway, and I left a treasure chest in the room with the entrance to the passage.

I only left some useless magic items in the chest, but most adventurers will be satisfied with that and return.

We're moving on foot from here.

Because Zenith is essentially disabled, traveling is slow.

There aren't any strong monsters in the vicinity of Milis, but it's still necessary to advance steadily.

Oh yeah, speaking of monsters.

When I visited this forest with Orsted to install the magic formation,

I remembered seeing a certain monster for the first time.

A goblin.

Green skin, about half the size of a human.

Lustful and belligerent, they are the world's weakest class of monster.

Living in tribes, they occasionally capture members of other races and impregnate them.

They can't be communicated with and view people as enemies, attacking on sight.

But in truth, there are those who think goblins may not be monsters but members of the demon race.

They live with a very primitive lifestyle in caves in the depths of the forest.

Living in cave-type dwellings, they survive as groups of hunters.

Although the craftsmanship is poor, they use simple tools like clubs and stone knives.

Also, although I only caught a glimpse, it looked like goblin parents show something like love for their children.

I don't think they're that different from primitive humans, they're simply treated as monsters because of their low intelligence.

If they could understand their words, things may be a little different.

But, this is Milis Continent.

Such a creature would never be acknowledged in the Holy Kingdom of Milis.

Possibly, Goblins might immediately attack people only because of bad blood from past times.

Surely, the goblins share a history of struggle with Milis.

If I think about it Goblins are a pitiable creature.

Maybe it would be a different story if they inhabited the Central Continent.

Rather than a demon, they might have been recognized as a low-class Magic race...

While thinking that, I effortlessly eliminated any Goblins that came to attack us along our route to Milishion.

No, I'm not about to start a Goblin Welfare Organization.

I won't forgive goblins for attacking me even if they're pitiable.

After exiting the forest, we're about 7 days from Milishion.

We stopped in a village to buy a horse-drawn carriage.

Even if I said carriage, it's more like a poorly constructed cart, but it will be better than walking.

The lithograph is heavy, after all.

We followed the highway on the carriage.

The countryside has more plains than Asura Kingdom, many farmers here maintain grazing fields rather than crops.

Asura Kingdom has scenery like America's fields of wheat,

this landscape is more like a pasture in the Alps.

Asura is green and yellow.

Milis is green and blue.

Both are consistent in terms of greenery.

The abundant plant-life is evidence of their prosperity.

We encountered a lot of monsters on the way, but that's only in terms of the Milis continent.

Compared to the Magic Continent and Northern lands, Milis Continent is lukewarm.

—

And, we arrived.

The capital of Holy Milis country, Milishion.

A beautiful city surrounded by rich nature and protected by seven towers.

The city where I once reunited with Paul.

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We arrived at the capital of the Holy Kingdom of Milis.

I've finally come back to this city after such a long time.

Although I visited Milis when I installed the teleportation circle, I didn't visit the capital.

So, this is only the second time in my life.

Even now I remember the scene I saw when I was approaching the city from the north.

The river flowing from the Blue Dragon Mountain into the lake, the pure white palace floating in its center, the golden cathedral along the riverside, and the silver Adventurers' Guild.

The seven towers encircling the city, surrounded by a vast meadow.

... Ah.

"Dignity and harmony, It exemplifies the two; making it the most beautiful city in the world."

I think that was it.

Even though it was so long ago, I still remember that line.

How nostalgic, that book.

Ah yes, [Walking the World] by Adventurer Bloody Count.

It's an amazing name, I wonder what kind of person would have that kind of name.

While traveling, I never heard of an adventurer by that name.

He might be from a considerably long time ago.

I wonder why Paul had such a book.

Well it's fine.

Milishion is beautiful from the south as well.

You can't see anything unnecessary thanks to the high towers and walls.

Only a pure silver-like palace glistening in the light.

The beauty of that palace stands out, the walls conceal everything else.

Simplicity is best.

"Yeah, this city is the most beautiful in the world."

Cliff said with a sigh.

He seems to have overheard.

"But surely its contents are the dirtiest in the world."

In Cliff's eyes, only the white palace had been reflected.

Now, that beautiful palace might be intimidating.

From now on, this city is a battlefield. Thinking so would only be natural.

Actually, I think Asura kingdom is dirtier.

Ariel, and the other nobles, are pretty sleazy.

In Asura Kingdom, you could say, the dirty parts were on the outside.

I'm not trying to sugarcoat the Holy Kingdom of Milis.

In certain aspects, surely Milis is dirty as well.

"...Cliff-senpai."

"Still, I'm no longer a senpai?"

"Cliff... If something happens, please tell me."

This time, I'm in a casual position.

Even so, I want to help Cliff.

But it's only at the level of going to buy juice at a convenience store, which is all right.

"Well then, for the time being... let's take a carriage to my family's estate."

"Ussu, by the future Archbishop's command."

On this day, Cliff returned to Milishion.

After about 10 years.

There are four entrances to Milishion.

Last time, we entered from the Adventurer's District.

That's because when an outsider uses any other entrance it becomes a troublesome thing.

Anyway, as we went around the wall, I remembered that lively entrance.

It's the same this time.

However, because Cliff is here, there's no need to wait at the entrance.

The entrance to the Adventurers' District on the south side was the closest.

Though in truth, it matters little when we're this close.

Rather than passing through the center of town, it might be faster to avoid the traffic by following a side street. Cliff should want to hurry.

However, Cliff spoke.

"I want to see the town again for the first time after such a long time."

Ahh.

After all, being away for so long, it's his first time back in 10 years.

Though he'll likely be here for many years to come, today is a special day.

The road home, remembering it from the old days, is soaked in nostalgia.

There won't be a lot of opportunities, now's his chance.

"Alright."

So, at Cliff's request, we rode in the front of the carriage.

"I've missed this..."

Cliff said that to himself as we passed under the gate, and looked back out at Milis.

Cliff was born in the Religious District, I've heard that he rarely visited the Adventurers' District.

Yet, looking out from the gate at the Adventurers' District, he smiled.

Hmm, I wonder what memories he'd have here.

When I last came here, I only stayed for around a week.

The only memory I have here is Paul.

If I remember it too deeply, tears start to come out, it's an unforgettable memory.

So, looking around, I can't help but think of the future.

From here on, I'll be working on opening a mercenary branch-office in this town.

Around us, adventurers are strolling about.

Compared to Asura Kingdom there are a lot of Beast Race and Elves.

Adventurers' ranks vary, but you can guess from their clothes.

15-16 year old boys and girls wearing second-hand equipment are obviously fledglings.

Wearing new equipment, beginners are around 18 years old.

Adventurers in their 20s wearing a mix of new and worn-out equipment are mid-level.

Although their equipment can look worn out at first glance, veterans can be seen wearing various magic items, which are some of the highest-grade gear.

Though their professions vary, in the capital of Milis' religious community, there are many magicians who specialize in healing but few in offense.

In the Magic City Sharia, you'd see veteran warriors and swordsmen, and lots of fledgling magicians.

The dream of being an adventurer sprouts for magicians at the Magic University, and veterans come to scout them.

There were mostly humans and Beast Race.

Well regarding the Beast Race, they may have just followed Rinia and Pursena then ended up staying.

In Asura's capital Ars, you would only see fledglings.

Because there's so much schooling, there's a bit of a professional bias.

Also, there were only humans.

Other races, and most experienced or veteran adventurers, don't linger in the capital.

There are probably so many different races and skilled adventurers in Milis because the Great Forest is so close.

The Beast, Elf, and Hobbit races come from the Great Forest, and Dwarves from the south.

After piling up experience in central Milis, adventurers head north to fight stronger demons in the Great Forest.

But, because there's no Adventurers' Guild in the Great Forest, they use Milishion as a base.

Some adventurers familiar with Milis will spend the year traveling between Milishion and Saint Port.

As a result, in this city, which headquarters the Adventurers' Guild, adventurers are treated without bias.

Well, in this situation, I wonder how it would be best to launch the mercenary branch.

In Asura Kingdom, I had Ariel's connections, so things advanced easily.

There were disenfranchised swordsmen, merchants, and nobles who all welcomed the work in Asura.

Swordsmen who were raised in dojos without the dream of becoming an adventurer, or the connections to become a tutor.

Merchants' sons, who studied all their lives to be merchants, only to have the family shop taken over by the eldest son and forced into independence.

And, although they were all educated, there were also the third and fourth sons of the lower nobility who wouldn't receive any inheritance and couldn't be married off.

We attracted talent, and presto, we gained influence in every district, and started taking on the work that the country's soldiers couldn't.

Ultimately, Ariel introduced the fifth son of a senior aristocrat to become the branch chief.

Iya, I had a long interview with that guy before I acknowledged him, but I was happy with his results.

While wearing sunglasses Aisha asked something like, [You, for those two years after you left home, what were you doing?]

He replied [I hid my identity and interacted with the commoners. By doing so, and at the same time learning the differences in culture, I was able to learn the importance of knowing each fellow worker well.]

His reply was articulate and thoughtful, [Oh, this guy] is what I thought.

In fact, he was good at bringing people together.

He was familiar with the differences between the social classes, so when disputes occurred, he was a guy who could easily understand and resolve it.

He didn't have charisma, but he wasn't dislikable.

Well that settled it.

He's better suited to this than me.

Well, that's just an aside.

Now, I want to launch a good mercenary branch in this country.

I need human resources and a branch manager.

And directionality for the mercenaries.

Aisha seems to have written something like a memo, but we can only start making decisions after seeing what we have to work with.

Therefore she's looking around restlessly like me.

But, it's still too premature to decide everything now.

Though there are a lot of adventurers in the adventurers' district, there's also the religious district, the shopping district, and the residential district.

Not just adventurers, we should try to include the other locals as well.

After seeing the religious district and the residential district we should be able to draft a plan.

"I didn't notice last time... but there are a lot of different races here."

"Because the Great Forest is nearby."

I keep looking around while I answer.

Really, there are a lot of races.

A group of dwarves that must be around 10 years old, a group of elves with thin limbs that look almost like dead trees.

There are also a lot of different beast races. Dog, cat, rabbit, deer, rat, tiger, wolf, sheep, bear...

Incidentally I thought, when looking at livestock like pigs and cattle, do these guys think nothing of it?...

No, even if I see a monkey kept at a zoo, I don't particularly feel a sense of camaraderie.

They're different creatures.

"Oh, oh...!"

"Ah, it's dangerous if you stand...!"

Looking back, I suddenly saw Zenith standing up on the horse-drawn carriage.

Aisha panicked and tried to sit Zenith back down in a hurry while she staggered and pointed at something from the shaking carriage.

Beyond her finger, it's a monkey.

Iya that's rude.

It's a man with a face like a monkey.

That reminds me, there isn't a monkey-like tribe in the beast race.

Well, I wonder if monkeys are rare in this world.

Zenith is happily pointing at him.

Nuu, that monkey, I've seen him somewhere before.

That said, it's not someone from the beast race...

"... Oh."

"Ooh!? Hey Zenith-senpai! What are you doing in a place like this!"

It's a demon race (Gisu).

"Geez, I never expected to see you in a place like this."

Gisu spotted us and immediately jumped onto the carriage.

There was no hesitation at all.

But I'm not about to cast an acquaintance aside.

"What amazing luck! How should I put it, this is once in a lifetime luck!"

Gisu seems exceptionally happy to meet us.

He's got a full-face smile.

Seeing that puts me in a good mood too.

"Half the work, half the house."

"Yeah yeah, by the way, I haven't seen any tears of joy–"

Gisu wasn't listening, and began telling us about what happened after we parted in Sharia.

Gisu, Talhand, Vera, and Shera arrived on schedule in Asura Kingdom.

There, they sold the magic stones for a fortune.

Vera and Shera retired from being adventurers with their share.

They returned to their hometown.

Sometime after, because they had so much money, Gisu thought it would be smart to start doing some kind of business.

Well, about Gisu, how should I put it, he's addicted to gambling.

I don't know much about it, but in Asura Kingdom there's a so-called gambling town.

Gisu can normally handle himself gambling, but with that much money he couldn't help but lose control.

After just a few months Gisu had lost everything and then some.

"Well, everything fell apart, all I had left were the clothes on my person, so I put that life behind me and ended up here."

Surely, if you'd kept going like that, you would have ended up at the bottom of the ocean with concrete boots.

Talhand prevented that.

As he was about to leave on his next adventure, he stopped by to greet Gisu, and saw him in that state.

Although Talhand was disgusted, he sold off a pair of gauntlets he had made to help Gisu out.

Those gauntlets were made with the magic absorbing stone, apparently Talhand spent his entire fortune on development costs.

Thanks to Gisu two people were broke.

Those two couldn't afford Asura Kingdom's high prices, so they journeyed south.

If it were me, I'd still help a friend in a rough spot, but to that extent and then starting a journey together, I wonder if it's because they've known each other for so long that this kind of thing is just a mutual understanding.

Talhand helped Gisu, so Gisu helped Talhand.

Well, that's friendship.

Just like that, those two left behind Shirone with its bloody civil war, ignored the Kingdom of the Dragon King rumored to be complicit, and returned to Milis.

They came back to their old home.

Afterwards, Talhand returned to his hometown, and Gisu became a party of one.

"That bastard, doing something like going back to his hometown, what's with that."

Gisu was complaining, but somehow I understood.

After such a long journey, it's normal to start missing your family and want to meet them.

He's homesick.

It's Nanahoshi's chronic disease.

"Gisu didn't want to go home?"

"Me? That's stupid. There's nothing interesting at all about returning to such a remote place."

Is that so.

I always miss my home.

Just touching Sylphy's chest restores my strength, even Roxy's chest will rise to the occasion, and it feels like hours fly by with Eris. All under one roof.

"That bastard, even though there were so many unpleasant memories."

"Well then, maybe he wanted to go fix some of those unpleasant memories."

No matter what happened, if time passes, things change.

Even if something is unforgivable as a teenager, in the 20s it becomes something understandable, and in the 50s it doesn't even matter anymore.

Talhand too, in his heart, might want to reconsider things.

"Maa, Talhand aside, I'm resuming my career as an adventurer here."

After Gisu separated with Talhand he seems to have resumed adventuring.

However, he doesn't seem to be able to find any work.

Well he's a demon race and has no combat ability.

"So what is Senpai doing here?"

"With mother in such a state, I received a summons from her parents' house. I took the opportunity to travel here with a friend, and make an appearance."

"Huh... Zenith's parents' place..."

Gisu saw Zenith's sorry state.

Although Zenith normally has a blank look, she seems to be in a good mood.

I wonder if it's because of Gisu.

"Well, I've heard about Zenith's home somehow, too... that seems, pleasant...?"

"... What have you heard?"

"I don't know the details, but they say it's a stubborn house."

Gisu shrugged.

Information like that, I heard it before coming.

But, there's no choice but to go.

"We're almost at the district's boundary. It's too bad, but I should get off here. If a demon race enters the religious district it'll cause trouble."

At Gisu's word, I stopped the carriage.

Gisu immediately jumped down.

"Well, it was short, but we should meet again sometime. Stay strong, Senpai!"

Gisu waved and walked into an alley...

As he was leaving, he looked back.

"Senpai! Would you listen to a request!?"

"What is it?"

"What Paul said in the labyrinth, do you remember?"

What he said in the labyrinth.

Even though a lot has happened, I still remember those words.

Probably, it's that.

"Yeah."

At that, Gisu nodded with satisfaction, and turned to leave.

A sudden meeting, and an abrupt departure.

It really was a chance reunion.

Even so, although it was by chance, it was nice to see a familiar face in such a tense atmosphere.

While thinking that, we entered the religious district.

By the time we got to Cliff's house, the sun was already setting.

Cliff's house was more ordinary than I expected.

An ordinary single family home, it looks like it could fit a family of three or four, it's snug.

It looks just like the neighboring house.

How should I put it, in the religious district, the houses are all uniform.

Because it's the Pope's house I expected something similar to Ariel's estate, it's kind of anticlimactic.

"It's unexpectedly small."

"Housing for the clergy is provided by the religious headquarters. However, because grandfather has a room at the headquarters, this house isn't used."

Cliff explained to me, without getting angry at my rude comment.

To put it simply, it's like corporate housing.

"Since we're already here... It's late, please stay."

At Cliff's suggestion, I suddenly had a thought.

Zenith's family home, it's in the residential area.

That's right, it wouldn't take long...

Although I have a hunch they wouldn't want us visiting so late.

Visiting in travel wear, that might not be a good idea.

We could set up an appointment to visit them, but we'll be staying in the adventurers' district... so we'd have to come all the way back here.

"Well, thank you."

I decided to accept Cliff's offer.

We unloaded the luggage, stabled the horses, stored the carriage, and brought everything inside.

But, while I was dealing with the carriage, I noticed a white cloud of dust.

"Gah!"

The dust had an acrid smell, Aisha let out a cute sneeze.

"Keho... terrible... Jiisan, doesn't seem to have cleaned..."

Cliff held a cloth over his nose, swearing.

He probably didn't expect Cliff to be back yet and left the house unattended.

In any case, the house is really dusty.

"To thank you for letting us stay here, we'll help you out with the cleaning... Aisha."

"Ah, sor...ry?

"Eh, me?"

Aisha said in disarray, and Zenith gave a reproachful look.

No, Zenith is expressionless.

However I can feel it from her eyes.

Aisha also gave me that kind of look.

Wasn't I supposed to entrust the cleaning to you?

Wasn't that it. Every time. Something like, [Leave it to me!]

We have to express our gratitude...

"Of course it's a joke? I'll help too?"

"Of course."

And so we began a night of housecleaning.

We fully opened all the windows, even with wind magic it was rough, so we finished up by sweeping.

After that, we wiped everything down.

Since nothing had been used in several years, I used hot air to clear any bugs out of the beds and blankets.

The kitchen was also considerably dirty, but Aisha somehow managed it.

Meanwhile, Cliff and I gave the living room a rough cleaning.

We finished in three times the normal speed.

The Red Comet Aisha.

{ C-Editor's note: The Red Comet is a character from the Mobile Suit Gundam manga and anime series. }

Then, using the food leftover from the journey, we had a light dinner.

"Cliff-senpai. Congratulations on your return."

"It's still too early. I have to meet with Grandfather."

While toasting with cups of water, we enjoyed a meal of dried meat and soup.

As food goes, it's a little bland, but it's fine.

I was troubled over how many ingredients we had left, so I had an underlying motive to finish them.

"Rudeus, what are your plans for tomorrow?"

"For the time being, I will visit the Latreia house."

"I see, do you plan to stay there?"

"I think that will probably happen."

Even if they have a bad reputation, they're Zenith's family.

Even if we stay for awhile, it shouldn't be a problem.

For establishing the mercenary branch and assisting Cliff when the time comes, staying in the Latreia house may limit my freedom to act... but I won't know until I try.

Well, after the greetings, I could always stay somewhere else.

"So, I'll need to hire someone to do the housework..."

"If you'd like, every couple of days I could send Aisha over?"

"No, that's fine. You guys are going to be busy too, it's just something to think about."

Cliff said with a shrug.

We slept in the guest room.

Three people in a small room. The family, sleeping shoulder to shoulder like the 川 character.

... And, Aisha's body is already that of an adult.

The bed is small, it can't fit three adults side by side.

So we left the bed to Zenith, Aisha and I slept on the floor.

We made a makeshift bed out of blankets and cushions we borrowed from Cliff.

Because there's carpet on the floor, it isn't exactly camping out.

It's time to go to sleep.

Then, I noticed Aisha looking at me.

"Ehehe, Oniichan, I wonder if Sylphy-ane would be jealous..."

"Well, during this journey, it was fine right."

"Yeah, but somehow, ehehe..."

Aisha laughed and huddled next to me.

She has a cute smile.

If it were Sylphy, I would already be past my limit.

Sylphy, too, would have...

But I don't feel that way about Aisha, and she doesn't particularly draw close to me too.

I like Aisha, but it's a familial love.

But, it's fine without physical contact.

It's a strange feeling.

She's still cute...

"I have an abrupt question, you, about what Lilia said, what do you think now?"

"Okaasan has said a lot of things?"

"To be a maid, and work for me, stuff like that."

When I asked that, Aisha had a blank look.

Then, she put her hand on her chin and had a look like she was thinking intently.

"Hmm, it's not disagreeable... but, perhaps, for Sylphy-ane, it's different. Something like this... I wonder if it's selfish..."

"No, I understand. It's different."

It was a fuzzy conversation, but something clicked.

It felt alright.

"Nfufu, well it's a given, that Oniichan is loved."

While saying that, Aisha curled next to me and pressed against my body.

Warm and soft.

A good holding pillow.

"... Someday, when you find someone you love, you can start a family of your own."

As I said that while enjoying my new pillow, Aisha suddenly sat up.

She seems to have taken my comment seriously.

"So. Have you given it any thought?"

"What kind of person would that be I wonder..."

Aisha's lover.

It's hard to imagine.

An excellent-type, or an unreliable-type.

Aisha can choose who she wants,but I don't like the idea of arranging a match.

Aisha normally hangs out with a certain crowd.

The mercenaries... there are a lot from the Beast race.

Would one of those guys fall for Aisha?

My little sister isn't a bone for some dog to chase after!

If I ask Orsted, he should be able to tell me about the type of guy that Aisha marries...

Now now, let's just forget about that.

If I heard something like she's single for the rest of her life, it would be pitiable.

Oh, that's right.

I need to confirm something before going to sleep.

"Aisha, tomorrow, when I bring Zenith to her parents' house... what do you want to do?"

"....."

Aisha inched away from my arm.

But returned.

"I will go. Okaasan, because she asked me to earnestly."

"I see..."

"Yeah."

Hearing Aisha's reassuring reply, I was also relieved.

Tomorrow we visit Zenith's house.

That's the plan, but I don't know how it will go...

Going alone to a house with such a high status, I'm a bit uneasy.

Afterwards, I'll work on installing a mercenary branch.

If I can establish a good connection with the Latreia house, things should go smoothly.

We need to adapt to the environment.

"Well, I'll be in your care."

"I understand. Leave it to me."

"Really, I appreciate it. Cleaning today too, thanks... Well, goodnight."

"Don't mention it... good night..."

While listening to Aisha's sleepy voice, I fell asleep.

Zenith's parent's house was huge.

Just as I had imagined it to be.

A large gate, two lion statues standing on both sides, a long stone-paved path leading from the gate to the entrance, a fountain in the middle of the path, and a green lawn cut in a strange form.

And inside, as if enshrined a white beautiful mansion was honorably standing.

It really feels like an aristocrat's house.

If I imagine one, this is exactly what it feels like.

Aristocratic district, the location of the residence.

Among other things, this location especially is lined up with buildings of high class noble people.

The atmosphere here bears resemblance to that of the Asura's aristocratic district.

Nevertheless, it's a huge house.

Cliff's house was a disappointment but Zenith's house was as expected.

Although, I for one also possess something like this mansion in the Asura Kingdom.

Since it was something I received from Ariel, I can't be too boastful about it.

At least I possess something like this mansion.

In a way it holds an atmosphere of integrity, but it should be identical in extravagance.

Therefore, it's nothing to be afraid of.

I don't feel nervous.

"Haa....."

Next to me, Aisha just sighed.

She is looking towards the mansion with an unpleasant face.

Right now, we are standing in front of the gate and waiting.

Me dressed up in noble-like clothes and Aisha in a maid uniform brought from our home.

And Zenith put on a noble-ish attire as well, just like me.

We were apparently entrusted to the guards stationed at the gate entrance by a person.

I was trying to show the letter, but the moment the guards took a glance at Zenith's face they immediately hurried towards the mansion.

There are no signs of them returning yet.

"Listen, Onii-chan, I'll warn you in advance, Obaa-chan is a REALLY unpleasant person."

".....How many times have I heard this now?"

I'm afraid of this advice.

However, I think I am a typical individual who in a way possesses resistance against unpleasant people.

Because I myself was a low-life during my previous lifetime.

Compared to that, most people can be pardoned.

Therefore, it should be alright.

Even if the other party is rebellious and can't be endured.

Talking about Zenith's present state of mind, we can at least grieve and mourn the circumstances together.It might be impossible to do anything more than that, even though it's plenty enough.

"Ah."

While I was thinking, several men and women were approaching from the direction of the mansion.It's not just the previous guards.

But people with the appearance of a maid and a butler are also there.

A group of 12 people are approaching this way with a fast paced movement.

The maids, lined up in two rows along the edge of the path before the gate.

The butlers standing in the front, lined up evenly from shoulder to shoulder facing towards us.

It's just like an "honorable greeting formation" often seen in a manga of a rich system.

It was also done frequently in the Asura kingdom.

When the guards opened the gate, the butlers deeply lowered their heads.

Matching their rhythm, the maids also bowed their heads.

"Zenith-sama, welcome back on your return. We were all eagerly awaiting you in our hearts and minds."

They lowered their heads towards Zenith.

But Zenith being the same as usual, with an absent-minded face, as if they didn't even enter her field of vision.

"Well then, Rudeus-sama, Oku-sama is waiting. This way."

"Yes, please take care of us."

The butler didn't mind it and bowed to me and then turned around on his feet to guide us.

Not a single word towards Aisha.

I wonder if that guy treats her as a maid while wearing a form of servant uniform himself.

In that case, I should have let Aisha wear a different type of cloth.

It's my younger sister-like dress.

A frills-type dress.

While I was considering such things, passing the long paved path, we went inside the entry hall.

As expected, the inside was overflowing with elegant furniture and refined articles.

Of course, it can't be compared to the Asura Royal Palace or Perugius' castle, but I think the hobby is not bad.

"Well then, please wait here."

The location we were guided to was the so-called drawing room.

The couch was facing towards a vase put at the end of the room. And a maid standing at the edge of the room.....

In spite of waiting for a long time, Oku-sama did not appear.

Even though I was strongly hoping and waiting for the trip to finally end, but now I wonder if I have to prepare to appear in front of the public.

Anyhow, first I let Zenith sit.

After that, I let myself sit next to her.

When I suddenly looked over, Aisha was standing at the side of the chair.

"Aisha sit down already."

"Eh? But, I think it should be good if I keep standing....."

"You're my little sister, this is a place for visitors. Sit down."

"......Yes."

After I said that, Aisha sat down next to Zenith.

"....."

Now, we wait without any conversation between the three of us.

This reminds me of the time when I went to Philip's place for the interview.

At that time, Sauros abruptly came and went all the while shouting.

It's nostalgic.

It would be fine to skillfully do it just like that time but.....

It was how things were done during Sauros's time.

Certainly, it was a kind of initiation when greeting oneself.

I thought in any kind of world the courtesy should have been giving oneself's name first.

For now, let's just proceed with that.

"Oku-sama, this way please."

While I was considering things, the door opened.

The one who entered was a nervous looking old lady with blonde hair mixed with white.

And a fat middle-aged man wearing a lab coat with a beard on his face.

I don't even have to ask who is the Oku-sama.

I immediately stood up, while holding my hand in front of my chest I made a light nod.

"Nice to meet you honorable grandmother, I am Rudeus Greyrat, today—"

"....."

The old woman did not even so much as glance at me.

She bypassed me while I was still greeting her and moved to a position where she can see Zenith's face.

And then, stopping one step away, she observed Zenith's face seriously.

What a deeply moving reunion.

.....Or so I thought, while harshly breathing Claire said in a cold voice.

"Certainly this is my daughter, Andel please."

As she said that, the bearded man moved.

While passing through my side, he took action and held Zenith's hand.

And then, touched her blank face with his hand.....

"Please wait a moment, what is this all of a sudden?"

I interrupted in a state of confusion.

"Ah, I am late in introducing myself. I am Claire-sama's physician in charge, My name is Andel Berkeley."

"Thank you for this politeness, I am Rudeus Greyrat. Are you the doctor?"

"Yes, today was actually Claire-sama's diagnostic day but her daughter came at just the right time for me to take a good look at her....."

I see.

So that's how it is.

Claire-obaachan, she came hurriedly in such a short time just to see Zenith.

I get it, I get it.

"If that's how it was, mother–"

"Who taught you that sitting here is a good thing!"

Just as I was about to say that, a reprimanding voice soared at the back.

I turned around to see a quivering Aisha get off the sofa in a hurry.

"Even though you're a mere maid, while the landlady is still standing you have the nerve to keep sitting! Just who taught you such a thing!"

"P-please forgive me."

Aisha was hanging her head down while looking like she was about to cry.

No no, wait wait.

How come? Just wait a moment.

This pace is too fast. Why are you ignoring me? Hey, I'll cry.

"I told her to sit there."

The moment I said that with a strong voice, Claire slowly faced towards me.

Ah, oh no. I've said it now....

Gah, the hell with it.

"Even though she is wearing a maid uniform, she is still my little sister, she only wore those clothes because it was easier to move around in it and made her look after mother to the utmost, it would be problematic if she is treated as a maid."

"People are identified on the basis of their clothes, in our house people wearing maid uniform will be treated as a maid."

It was also those kind of house rules.

"Then, what kind of treatment will people go through wearing clothes such as mine?"

"Of course, they will be treated suitably."

"This means that people with such an attire will be ignored, is this how this house works?"

While spreading my hands apart, I look down upon my clothes. The clothes doesn't look odd.....I think.

These clothes, I wonder where I bought them from. If I remember correctly, I think it was in Sharia.....

I wonder if I should have brought the Asura kingdom ones should it have sufficed?

But, those ones are for partying.....

"No, the reason I ignored you was because.....an unknown person suddenly called me grandmother. For many years, the number of imposters have increased here. Until the authenticity is verified, I judged it would be better to not reply."

".....I see."

Well, in this big of a house, if it turns out that the only one daughter had eloped with an unknown person,

people claiming to be of the same lineage will often come out to gain favor.

Although I was greeted, I was not told about anything like proving my identity.

Even these clothes are not really enrolled as the crest of the Greyrat's.

If one thinks about it, something like that can be prepared anywhere.

There are stripes going back and forth, though that doesn't indicate anything.

"This Zenith is the real one. Aisha over there, I remember her too. Do you have any evidence to prove that you are indeed my grandson?"

Evidence, to call for more proof.

I came together with Aisha and Zenith, and even handed over the letter.

Is there any more??

"Is it necessary?"

"What do you mean?"

"I have brought my mother.....Zenith and Aisha, I also brought the letter that came from you. Is it really necessary to show any more proof?"

As I said that, Claire shook with a twitch on her eye-brows.

"Then, I cannot acknowledge you as a member of the Latreia."

"I don't mind, I am a member of the Greyrat's....the present family head, today is my first time straddling around this household. I have no intention whatsoever of being a member of the Latreia household."

The feeling to curry favor exists.

It's also for the sake of the mercenary group.

However, if the opposite side is that vigilant of it, there is no need to reveal the front.

For now, the purpose of Zenith's homecoming exists.

Whether Claire is somewhat amused or not, with her eyebrows twitching and her body quivering a little, she approaches me with a glare.

"For the actual head of the Greyrat family, you sure are surprisingly cheap-looking.

After all, the Latreia are a distinguished family of earls.....while the Greyrat are only a large part of the four feudal lords of Asura. Moreover, rather than the earl himself, to introduce yourself to the Madam Earl herself while lowering your head is....."

"Indeed I have inherited the kinship of a large part of the four feudal lords of Asura but I'm not the main root of the feudal lords, in the first place it doesn't mean that I hold a rank of nobility. Even though I am the family head, I am no more than the backbone of my family living among the general population. In addition, even if I had possessed a higher social standing, meeting my grandmother for the first time and bowing to her as a greeting is natural to consider. Right."

"......Ho."

It looked like, Claire's mood changed and she was gazing towards me with a look of despise.

No, it might be my imagination.....

Anyway, it seems this person is of a high pedigree.

This is bothersome....

For the time being, I'll keep them in check.

"Apart from me being a noble, I have a personal fellowship with Her Majesty Ariel who was crowned just last year, I myself am the subordinate of 『Dragon God』 Orsted who is ranked second of the Seven Major World Powers. It would be acceptable to not make light of that."

It's okay if it's neglected, but Aisha's aforementioned matter also exists.

To the bitter end, I made it explicitly clear that this position is as close to it as a matter of fact.

Listening to my words, while closing her mouth to form a straight line, Claire rose her chin up.

As if evaluating, she observed me with a scrutinizing look.

"This here is the proof of being a Dragon God's subordinate."

I showed her the bracelet containing the crest of the Dragon God.

After Claire looked at it for a few seconds, unaware of the butler standing at my side I heard him saying something in a low voice.

While nodding the butler said. "Certainly, This is the Dragon God's–".

I don't think it's very much popular but, that butler, he seems to know about this crest.

Something like this can be forged as many times as it takes.....it would be troublesome to say something like that.

"I see.....I understand."

While saying that, Claire quickly pulled down her chin, with both hands on the side of her abdomen matching the rhythm.

And then, in a natural manner lowered her head.

"My name is Claire Latreia.

Wife of Temple knight party ・ Sword group 『Battalion chief (Large Leader)』 Count Carlyle Latreia.

Currently, I have received administration-ship of this estate.

Please humbly pardon my previous impoliteness."

Was I able to prove my social position.

Or was my attitude able to crossover some kind of hurdle.

I can't comprehend it but Claire was lowering her head and was apologizing.

Nevertheless, 『Battalion Chief』 of Temple knight party.

Zenith's younger sister, Therese was also a member of the Temple knight party, this house has probably a profound relationship with the Temple knight party.

"Well then, once again.

I am Rudeus Greyrat.

Son of Paul Greyrat and Zenith Greyrat.

Currently, I am working under 『Dragon God』 Orsted-sama.

Please don't mind about the previous matter. I as well didn't give enough forethought to my preparation.It is obviously natural that you would be so vigilant."

While both of us lowered our heads, this matter came to a conclusion.

Phew.

With this I took a breath of rest.

Only the greetings ended up taking an extremely roundabout way, somehow it's managed now.

"Then, by all means, please take a seat."

"Yes, please excuse me."

I prompted her to take a seat on the couch.

"First of all about your long journey, thank you for your hard work. I thought it may take you several years more but I give you my gratitude on acting so quickly."

Claire made a pop noise while clapping her hands, and the door opened.

From the door, a maid pushing a cart entered.

Above the cart in plain view was a tea set.

Tea ceremony, huh.

All right, I'll show you my tea skills that I forged in the sky fortress.

Oh right, before that I'll let Aisha sit.

She is not a maid, but my little sister.

It would be troublesome if she is not treated as a guest.

In that case, if they are insistent I'll rather leave a place like this.

"Aisha, sit down already."

"Eh? But....."

"Today, you're not a maid, but you're here as my relative, sit down now."

While looking intermittently towards Claire, Aisha quickly dropped her lower body.

Claire who said nothing, only her eyebrows twitched.

For now, she seems to have allowed it.

Taking a glance at Zenith's direction.

She was still being examined by the doctor.

Things like tongue and eyes were being looked at.

Well, seeing those places, I can't except to do anything.....

Apart from Claire too, rather than hearing about the message of memory not recovering, showing her to a doctor that she can trust should be understandable.

"Mother is.....we tried with our greatest effort to cure her but we were not able to find any methods."

".....In a far away village, the means to remove this curse might be limited."

Ah, with a 'clank' the words came.

To call my hometown village-like!

.....But you know, I perfectly anticipated that you would say something like that.

This is well within my scope of expectations.

"Certainly, Millis is advanced in healing magic as compared to Sharia but.....I was able to request help from Orsted-sama who has the knowledge of every single piece of magic and Perugius-sama who is well informed about summoning magic."

"Perugius? One of the three heroes? .....it's hard to believe such an abrupt story."

But it is.

I can understand not believing such a story.

But I can't lead her astray now after coming this far.

Well, I am going to live in Millishion for a few months anyway.

In the meantime, Claire will realize that curing Zenith might just be impossible.

Well, it would be problematic if she is subjected to unreasonable medical treatment.....

"By the way, how is Norn doing."

While I was thinking of talking a bit more concerning this strange topic, the topic somehow abruptly changed.

Norn?

"She is enrolled in Ranoa Magic University. Since it would have affected her studies, I left her behind."

"Is that so, I thought she was not able to score much results, is she doing firmly?"

"Yes, she is right now standing at the top of the school as the student council president."

While I exaggerated a bit, Claire seemed to had an unexpectedly surprising face.

Inside her mind, Norn must have been a no good child.

Well, if she is compared with Aisha, that will happen.

"Is that so.....when will her graduation complete?"

"It's not yet decided."

"What about marriage?"

"Any state of love affairs are still unidentified."

So to say, Claire frowned.

I wonder what I said to make her annoyed.

"Then, bring her here after graduation."

Not able to say yes or no to the reply that was a commanding tone.

Did she not take into account the distance between here and Sharia.

Even though it takes 4 years for a round trip.....

Well, in reality there is the Teleportation Magic Square, coming and going back can be made in a week's time.

"That is no problem but....."

"A satisfactory companion cannot be found in something like a back country that is Ranoa kingdom, I will choose one at my own discretion."

Eh?

What is she talking about?

Choose one at her own discretion?

"Are you going to make Norn marry someone?"

"That's right, if there are not going to be any marriage proposals from the present heads of the family, I will take it upon myself to guide her towards the non-existent path."

"No no, please wait a moment, isn't that something for Norn to decide....."

"What are you talking about? Marrying a girl of this house is the duty of the head of the family."

.....eh?

So what?

While thinking that, I look at Aisha.

She just shrugged her shoulders. With an attitude of "Isn't it so?".

Possibly, in the nobility of this Milis sacred country, it might be common sense.

Right, that's right.

In the previous world as well, the parents had the decision to choose a suitable partner for their kids.

Only I did not come nicely, it's a surprisingly common idea.

However, we don't have such a rule in our house.

Norn if you want to marry someone, Nii-san will readily accept that person, only if you bring him to a joint party with several students so that I can express his approval.

".....I will make sure to take responsibility about Norn's circumstances."

For the time being, it would be better to say this.

"Is that so, I understand.....being the head of the family you ought to be more reliable."

I was reprimanded by my superior.

It has been like this since a little while ago.

It feels like I am being looked down upon.

But, let's calm down for now.

This is well within my expectations.

I understood that this person being unpleasant was not a joke.

In the first place our way of thinking is different, only objection and quarrel will take place side-by-side if this keeps on.

Today is our first time meeting each other.

First of all, it is necessary to start with knowing each other.

The demands come after that.

"—-It seems to be over."

While I took a deep breath, Mr. Andel returned with Zenith.

Aisha immediately stood up and helped her sit down on the sofa.

"How was it?"

"The body itself is healthy, she looks much younger than her actual age."

Or so he said.

You did it, Zenith.

Even though you didn't make yourself look younger they are approving you as a young woman!

.....Or, is it the opposite?

Would it be fine to think of it as a bad thing?

Whether it is the influence of the curse....or the like.

"Is it alright if I wanted to ask some questions regarding the family?"

"Of course, you can ask anything."

"Well then—-."

The contents of the question spanned many divergences.

What is her usual diet, in what amount, to which degree she exercises, and whether menstruation was taking place or not.

From questions regarding physical health,

To what degree she is able to live her everyday life, her usual behavior, and whether she has a wound in her heart.

To questions regarding mental health.

I fluently answered all the doctor-like questions.

Somethings that I didn't know of, Aisha was there to answer them.

Lilia might have been able to give a detailed explanation about all this, since she is not here it can't be helped.

"I see, I understand."

After writing down the answers in a small memo, he bowed.

And then, went towards Claire and started consultation while muttering.

"How is it?"

"Let's see. I don't think there are any problems. There is always one maid looking after her in constant attendance. There aren't any illness or injury on her. Even her mind seems to be stable."

"What about children?"

"Menstruation is taking place, that being the case to give birth..... If several people are nursing her in constant attendance it is possible."

"Alright."

What is 'alright' with this.

It feels like you have yet to give me the remainder of the story.....

"It feels as if the conversation is going towards mother's second marriage."

I said that with the intention of a joke.

But, I got a cold-hearted look coming from Claire's direction instead.

A mighty terrifying look.

Without even saying anything, I can feel her enforcing intention from that glance.

".....In this holy country of Millis a woman's worth is regarded based upon her ability to give birth. If a child is born, the possibility of being ignored as a human can't exist."

I just want you to wait for a moment.

Can't be ignored.....Really?

No, calm down.

Even if it's not ignored, it's still not confirmed.

She is just reciting the general knowledge of this country.

I don't believe that there is such a thing whether a woman's worth is based upon her ability to give birth, if this is something obaa-chan has decided by herself, then she might be under the impression that this is the truth.

"Ah, that's right. You should cut your bonds with the Priest of the Pope's faction."

"Eh?"

"I am well aware of your friendship with the Priest of the Pope's faction."

Yet again an abrupt change of subject, confusion is about to be born.

I was not able to seize authority to lead the conversation, I think it's because Claire has been speaking with a strong voice for a while now.

Or, I wonder if I have failed in initiating my response.

It's the former.

"Certainly, I get along well with Cliff... but why is it necessary to cut my ties with him?"

"Currently, the Latreia have started to move as the Cardinal's faction, any person working under the Pope's faction is not allowed to be associated with."

The Cardinal's faction, it might be about the demon race's ostracism.

I think the Cardinal is at the top right now.

"Not particularly... I don't have any intention of supporting the Pope's faction by myself, won't that suffice?"

"No, it can't be permitted, if you want to stay at this house you have to abide by the rules of this house."

Hmm.

Hmm.

Well, certainly, since Cliff's position as a Pope is more or less guaranteed, I'll end up getting completely backed by the pope's faction.

It's not like I don't understand such a strategy, if you comprehend it as such.

It's not that kind of a feeling.....

"Cliff has looked after me in school. He has also aided in Norn's growth.....shouldn't it be alright to at least associate with him as a friend?"

"It can't be done, if you want to associate with the Priest of the Pope's faction no matter what, you will not be permitted to stay at this house—"

It's hopeless.

Alright, I understand.

Then, it's fine.

For today, let's stay at a different place.

Alright, it's fine. I'm not angry. I'm not angry at all.

I'm perfectly calm. I'm the calm and clever Rudeus.

There is no reason to panic. I was aware that Claire was this kind of woman. I was prepared for this.

My relationship with a friend would become an interference was outside my scope of assumption but.....we were incompatible like oil and water.

At least without quarreling I'll give my greetings and leave this house—-.

"—-Leave Zenith here, and quickly depart."

My thoughts suspended.

"Just in case, from now on you will be permitted to straddle around the threshold of this house, apart from being a person of another house to the bitter end—-"

"Leave this place? What do you mean by that?"

The words that came from me was a reply to the previous line.

My consciousness flowed away for several seconds.

While looking at me and giving me a cold stare she started saying.

"Now that we've come this far, there is no other choice. Even if this thing is able to give birth to a child then the path to marriage is still left."

It's dry inside my mouth.

My field of vision is getting covered by darkness.

It's like being inside a black fog.

"....."

What is that, somebody is shouting.

It's me.

I'm the one who is shouting.

No, I just said that only in a sense? No way, I said that seriously? Me.

However, the words did not come out.

My mouth was just flapping about.

"This young woman will be married to the nobility of the Cardinal faction. No matter how many times she gets divorced, there are no problems."

A person who can't even follow their own intention, just who are you pressuring her to marriage.

Calling your own daughter "this thing".

Treating her like an object.

"This healthy body is a blessing in disguise."

I have never once heard the sound of a blood vessel tearing.

It's not supposed to be heard.

It's just that kind of humor.

Whenever Eris gets angry there might exist some kind of auditory hallucination to be heard.

Usually after that I faint so I don't really remember anything.

Today was the first time for me to hear my blood vessel get teared.

Before I realized it, I was walking while pulling along Zenith's arm in the middle of the evening.

I don't remember anything I said after that.

I just remembered shouting with a loud voice.

However, the contents are a little vague.

No doubt, the abuse that I ordinarily never use suddenly jumped out from me.

I remember Claire widening her eyes.

I remember the maids peeking at us with questioning faces.

I remember declaring to go back, taking Zenith's hand while she stood up, Claire bluntly saying "Zenith is no longer expected to be sane."

Those words poured oil onto my heart, losing myself in my rage, I used magic with my fist that was tightly clenched.

I remember.

There, "Go for it, Onii-chan!" Aisha's voice brought my mind back a little bit.

After that Claire called out for palace guards, I kicked them like leaflets, cutting my family ties with the Latreia, I rushed out of that house as it is.

"Fuu~~....."

Before I noticed, we already made it to the border of the holy district.

Because of my anger episode, my field of vision is turning round and round.

It becomes irritating if I recall it.

I never thought I would hear such disgusting words like that.

Ah, shit.

What healthy body is a blessing in disguise.

I shouldn't have come here, I didn't want to hear such words.

What was that? That self-centered baa-san.

No of course, It's fine to ignore the first greeting.

Well, even if an unknown person suddenly calls you obaa-chan, you can just draw away from them because of their actions.

I can understand if you bring Norn's fiancee to talk things over.

Even in the previous life, I heard distinguished families had something like that.

They are operating by abiding those ways of general knowledge.

Yeah, I understand.

But, Zenith is no good!

She has memory loss and can't even live properly by herself.

For what reason someone would even consider to make her a bride granted her condition!

Moreover, her body is healthy? Being able to give birth to children is a blessing in disguise considering menstruation?

The married Zenith will receive nursing at daytime and will get embraced by her husband at night?

I know what that is called.

A dutch-wife.

And what if she gets pregnant? Will you bear it? Will you consider bearing it?

Even if she does give birth, what about Zenith's intention?

What about my feelings? What do you think will become of the children that are left behind?

What do you know about a person's mother!

What do you know about your own daughter!

Substantially, what's up with this function!

Means of treatment?

A machine to give birth?

Don't joke around!

She came back here for the first time in a long time!

What about Claire!

But make the cream stew!

"Fuu....."

The last strange word that came out finally calmed me down a little.

My stomach was making a "guruguru" sound.

That's right, I am hungry.

I didn't eat anything at noon.

I want to eat anything other than stew.

"O-onii-chan....."

I turned around on being called.

Aisha was fidgeting.

With a troubled face and considering what to say.

"Aisha."

I immediately reached out my hand in silence and hugged her.

She didn't resist me but rather completely settled within my arms.

I understood the reason why Aisha or Norn, even Lilia had spoken so ambiguously.

That's right.

About such a painful meeting.

I don't know what kind of things that person said to Aisha and Norn while they were being raised.

But, it must have been an undoubtedly unpleasant experience.

"Sorry for bringing you along."

"No. It's fine. But we weren't able to make a connection."

Knead?

Rice?

Rice-plant?

Connection.

{ C-Editor's note: The three words, in Japanese, put together sound like 'Connection'. }

Ah, that's right.

I was thinking of borrowing the assistance of the Latreia's to my side in order to form the mercenary group.

"Well it's alright, I don't want to borrow such assistance."

I'll make a different connection.

I'll ask Cliff to try and see if trust can be formed with his grandfather.....

It might not do to ask so much of an influential person like Cliff... well, it's fine.

If that doesn't work out, we'll just have to go along without any connections.

No matter what, I'm tired for today.

Let's return back and take a rest...

But, even if I return, there is no place to stay at.

Right now if I choose to lodge at the adventurer's district it will be late night by the time we reach there, Zenith will also have to walk till there somehow.....

Alright, let's lodge at Cliff's house again.

While thinking that, I turned towards Cliff's house.

After the encounter with Claire, I returned to Cliff's house with a dejected heart.

Right before me, an unbelievable scene was unfolding.

Wow, inside the house Cliff was hugging an unfamiliar woman.

A plain looking woman.

Bright chest-nut colored short hair, freckles on face, short height.

Though she typically looks thin overall, she seems to have a trace of rotundity because of her bashful impression.

She doesn't resemble Elinalize at all.

If Elinalize is like a cat in heat, this person is a castrated dog.

Certainly, there is no resemblance.

It's a lie.

Cliff-senpai.

What, seriously, the person who so strongly lectured me.....

The reason you didn't bring Elinalize along was for the sake of meeting that person?

Were you playing with Elinalize all along?

Even though you have a erotic partner, she still gave birth to your child....don't you feel anything in your heart?

Please say that this is a lie, Cliff-senpai.

After continuing from what happened at the Latreia, if even Cliff-senpai does such a thing, I'll stop believing in anything anymore.

Ah.

Dammit, where is the love.

Sylphy, Roxy, Eris.

Anyone's fine, hold me tight and whisper love to me.

Then I'll be able to persevere for just a bit longer.

"Ah, Rudeus, at the right place. Hey, can you get the box on the top of that shelf? With my height, I can't reach it even if I use a stool."

"Ah, yeah."

By the time it took me to notice, Cliff had already separated from the girl.

It didn't particularly feel like they were blushing.

Only the feeling of supporting someone who has fallen off from the stool.

"Wendy, did you twist your ankle?"

"No, it's fine, thank you."

While hearing such conversation I took down the box that was on top of the shelf.

The dust which wasn't able to shake off during the cleaning the other day was blown off and the box was handed over to Cliff.

"Sorry.....I think this is probably it.....alright. I'm glad, with this I can somehow make it tomorrow."

Cliff took out some kind of crest from inside the box.

It's a crest of the Milis Church.

For the work, I guess?

"So Rudeus, what is it? Weren't you supposed to stay at the Latreia House for today?"

While listening to that I set myself on sail.

I really wanted Cliff to listen to today's story.

"Yeah, about that, listen to me will you——"

While entrusting my anger to him, I explained to Cliff regarding my circumstances.

About the thing that took place at the Latreia House.

About Claire's speech and conduct.

About me not being able to stand it and leaving the house in a fit of rage.

About how I'm a little calm right now but my anger yet to subside.

Recalling it all irritates me.

".....Well"

Listening to my story, Cliff frowned.

For a saint like Cliff to not keep up his straight face, he might be able to understand listening to the current story.

".....Certainly, in the nobility of Milis there exists a custom where the parents get to decide about marriage, there also exists the saying about woman giving birth but.....Still I think that letting a person who can't converse with oneself tying the marriage knot is an idea of it's own."

"You don't agree?"

You ungrateful fellow. You meanie.

Even I can't support it that much.

I can't believe such a person as her is Zenith's mother.

"Further, Miss Claire might be a little confused. Her daughter is suddenly like that. Try to think about your own children as an example.....understand?"

Cliff said that to me while persuading me.

The feeling of him getting angry together with me exists.

However, from Cliff's standpoint he's listening to the story from only my side.

He might be calmly considering things from the opposite standpoint as well.

I'll give it a little bit of thought as well.

My own children.....

About Lucy.....it's difficult to imagine something like that yet.

Let's predict about Norn then.

Norn goes out on a journey at the same time of her coming-of-age ceremony, finally returns back only to find out that she is now crippled.

Even that, coming with an unfamiliar man and a child and a concubine's child at that who is not related to you by blood.

Certainly, there would be confusion.

You would somehow think that but.....

"Granted the confusion in what way will it conclude to marriage?"

".....Unexpectedly, might it not be comprehensible if you think about it? Leaving aside the talk about children, if she gets married into nobility, she'll be able to receive assistance."

I didn't think about that.

Since the function already left, it felt like a waste that you reused it without discarding it.

You're a parent of a person.

After taking great pains to come here it's your own daughter.

What is that.

Dammit.

I remembered Claire's face when I was acting violently in the mansion.

While I was kicking and scattering the guards blasting them with the Rock Cannon, she had a cold-hearted face.

As if saying that she had done absolutely nothing wrong yet why is this person acting so violently, so to say it was a face like that.

But then again, the filter presently inside my eyesight is at stake.

It could be that Claire's feet were cowering and her face had a stiff expression.

Even if that is the case, the words that came out of her mouth can't change.

"In any case, I understand such circumstances. Please make use of my house to your heart's content."

"Thank you very much."

"This land is under the Pope's ownership, even if the Latreia who have been trying to do something, can't interfere here."

After listening to that, I suddenly noticed that I did not realize the possibility that a person of Latreia could do something.

I separated with Claire.

We shall never have to meet again.

I will believe that but the other side might not.

For the sake of regaining Zenith, there is the possibility of some kind of trick to exist.

Then, it should be fine to send Zenith back to Sharia.

"Even for your mother, after finally returning to her hometown to be sent back immediately is a bit pitiable."

"Mu."

Mills is Zenith's hometown.

If you say it like that, certainly even she would want to see and visit several places for a bit longer.

I also have the feeling to take her to visit several places after I find some free time.

"But, you know...."

"While going outside, it's fine to entrust Wendy to look after you. She is a little bit clumsy but a trusting companion."

While saying that Cliff looked toward the unfamiliar woman.

"......Cliff-senpai, who is she?"

"Ah, forgive me. I'm late in introducing her. She is Wendy. If I have to say it.....that's right, her connection with me is just like you and Sylphy."

"I understand, I have acknowledged the details."

The connection like me and Slyphy.....

I understand, so that's how it is.

The entire mystery is now solved.

For one thing, old geezer's reputation is the same as always.

"I'll keep this a secret from Elinalize-san."

"No wait, just wait a minute, don't just assume things, it isn't like that."

A panicked Cliff ended up explaining things.

It seems today formalities are to take place in the Church Headquarters, simultaneously after this, in order to continue living here some provisions are necessary.

For one thing, they seem to have decided to hire a Maid.

So Cliff visited the orphanage on his own foot where he had lived in his former days.

In the orphanage, as a kind of vocational training for children, they have been taught housework and even cooking.

Such orphans were recruited for assistance for a cheap price.

"Wendy is the first senior among them all, very soon the orphanage will no longer be able to let her live there after she ages.

Therefore for that reasoning, for a short while, I have accepted to help her out in her commuting from there.

This will also give actual results out if she is to do housework at my place."

The point is, that girl was finally hired as a teaching practice-like flow.

Working at Cliff's house who was the Pope's grandchild meant trust could be made apart from producing results.

An advantageous employment find.

"My name is Wendy. I can do ordinary housework and the like. Please give me your regards."

The same as Sylphy.

To say it like that, I thought she was an addition to his relationship but.....

In other words, she is just a childhood friend that he played with during his former days.

However, I can't figure out how old Wendy is, I hope misunderstandings don't occur while living together with a girl this young.

No, it's fine if it's Cliff.

I can live on my own as well, so it's fine.

"....."

Anyway, the moment I rushed out of the Latreia house the plan ended up as a failure.

If it's become like this, I think it should be a good move to return Zenith to the house at once.

But at the bare minimum, I wanted to let Zenith look around the town, since I felt indignant about Claire's treatment toward her.

Still... I'm thinking carelessly.

It would be better to aid Cliff in his growth to adulthood by completely repressing the Latreia.

But such a future is not the only one that may come to be.

"Aisha, what do you think?"

".....Eh?"

I'm troubled, I need consultation.

Let's listen to Aisha's opinion.

"Do you think it should be good to send mother back to home at once?

Or else, it might be good to stay at this house for a short while, showing her around the town and visiting several places when there's free time?"

After listening to that, Aisha started thoroughly considering it while crossing her arms.

However, she immediately raised her face up and looked towards Cliff.

"Is this house really safe?"

"Yeah. It's a small house, but it's unlikely that the Latreia could simply interfere here. It would become a big problem if they did."

"Assuming they were willing to cause such an incident, what's the likelihood of the Latreia interfering?"

"It should be almost non-existent. Since their household would also be put in that position."

Position, huh.

That old woman is a person who gives priority to her pedigree, probably taking such things into consideration.

She is stubborn and an unpleasant person to deal with but her mind is not the one at fault.

"I think it's fine that way."

With her arms still folded, she said that.

"But perhaps for that house... that person, Zenith's mother, to become like that, they no longer value her... I think."

Certainly.

For the Latreia, Zenith's utility value should have been low.

That is why Cliff frowned that time, it's just how people accept the common knowledge of this country even if it's something like getting married to a partner who can't even talk.

When such a thing is forced, I'd think the relationship after marriage would be frail.

If you think about it, it might become possible to get your hands on the original source of support from the Fittoa Region search party...

That being the case, if such a request was made, I wouldn't think it was worth the asking price.

An affectionate relationship isn't needed, as long as they're good looking.

Treating someone like that should not exist.

"This one time they discovered how scary onii-chan can get, they didn't even give chase to us just now... I don't think they have such an obsession with Zenith."

Yeah, that's right.

After leaving the Latreia house, I returned back while leisurely walking but no one was pursuing us.

I thought the guards would at least be able to pursue us in order to report back.

I can't understand whether they might be afraid of me, or they just simply gave up.

But, she was aware of my friendship with Cliff.

I don't know where she got that information from but.....anyhow, now that we've come this far, if it's found out that I've taken refuge here I'll leave it as is.

"I think it should be alright to live in a place of power where we can be protected from the opposition rather than being able to live in a nearby place in some way or other."

"I see."

The risk is great but the return is little.

That means it's unlikely that they will regain the higher-hand.

As expected of Aisha.

She considered things nicely.

"If that's how it is, Rudeus."

And then Cliff interposed with his mouth.

"Tomorrow, I'll be meeting my grandfather, won't you come with me? The problem regarding the Latreia is now raised, it will become difficult to move around in this country from now on... you're in need of a connection, right?"

"Is it fine?"

"Of course, it's up to you whether you want to become a shield for my grandfather's back. I'll just introduce you two and won't interfere anymore."

"I see."

Cliff should hate me intervening.

I also had no intention to come to Cliff's assistance.

However, I haven't grasped how much of my existence has been acknowledged.

After the introduction, if I can incorporate him in the ally camp, it will end up becoming Cliff's achievement.

If I can put up with that, he can get me introduced to the Pope.

I must advance the progress of the mercenary group and not just only Zenith.

Regarding being a shield for the Pope's back, those two functions can be done effectively.

Apart from that, it's not necessary for the Pope to protect Zenith.

Furthermore, just by having some form of connection, the opposition will have more difficulty interfering.

"...Please take care of me."

While calculating my thoughts, I bowed my head towards Cliff.

Well, there are still some things to consider.

Let's regain our spirit and proceed.

The next day.

After eating breakfast we started proceeding towards the Church Headquarters.

Aisha stayed behind to take care of Zenith.

The Church Headquarters was standing out as a golden building with an onion mounted on the top of it.

{ C-Editor's note: Like the onion domes of the Russian Orthodox church. }

The holy country of Mills, with the motto of peace, was overflowing with white and silver color.

In such a country, only this building had an exterior that was clownish and gaudy in its gilded splendor.

The onion mounted at the top is in bad taste, it really feels so out of place.

The moment you see it from far way it looks fine.

An isolated gold is accented within silver and white.

But, if you look closely you won't continue in any way.

Here's just another world.

However, it's different for the people living inside a house with such bad taste.

At any rate, this is the Milis Church Headquarters.

It's a place bustling with upwards-compatible types of people like Cliff.

It looks like a building with bad taste but the holy men have decided to inhabit there...

Of course, there is no way I can understand that.

Even in my previous era, the political and religious leaders were estimated to be dirtied by gold.

It seems to be generally the same for this society as well.

It's not necessary for people holding political power to smooth over the outward appearances to a degree, ultimately they won't even say beautiful things.

Well, it's no problem if I associate with those guys at the surface level too.

I'll set my mind to become well-known as well.

By appealing to my profound relationship with both Orsted and Ariel, I'll make myself big.

It was strangely effective in the Latreia house.

Therefore, it might come to light that Claire took such a thing too lightly.

I'm big, a big man. Not your average run-of-the-mill person.

For that reason, I wore my robe today.

This is my uniform.

I'm 『Dragon God's right-hand man』 Rudeus Greyrat.

I was enthusiastic about it too, and yet.

"I'm extremely sorry but people without any license are not allowed to pass here."

I was stopped at the entrance of the building.

"Really? Will it not work with only my license? I thought people with company could enter some time ago..."

"Since the former days, the rules count for only one person."

"Is that so. Well... in the former days, because there were kids they were overlooked...?"

While looking at the crest that I found yesterday Cliff made a troubled face.

It pretty much seems to be a license.

By the way, today he is dressed in official clothing as the priest of the Mills Church.

It seems he was sewing the priest clothes to attach the crest at the chest area during last night.

"If father Cliff has a license, I think a temporary license can be issued from the inside. Although it takes a little time."

"....Ah, that's right. Forgive me Rudeus. I'll come back right away with a license so just wait around here."

Cliff said that while apologizing to me.

"I understand. There is no need to rush, please go at your own pace."

I obediently saw off Cliff going into the rest of the way inside.

Crushed from the outset...

But, it was not like I was turned away from the gate.

For the moment let's stroll around the grounds.

The grounds within were wide, the building was huge as well.

It seemed to be lightly 4 times that of the Latreia house.

The building has four storeys, if you look at it from above, it looks like a structure piled up with □ and ◇.

□ is inside ◇.

It was not like an eight mountain star but rather a square was inside a square.

At the external part of □ lies the office of the headquarters.

An office worker related to the organization and a typical reverend father perform business-like procedures.

Besides that, permission to enter the faith and funeral arrangements are also accepted,

it seems something like marketing of symbols is also carried out.

As one must expect from a headquarters, everything performed here is under the influence of the Milis Church.

Inside the ◇ exists residence wards and office rooms for the staff and what seems to be an idol shrine.

Typical standard of permitting only the important people and no one else.

It seems even an office worker is not informed as to what is performed inside.

So to speak, it's the center department of the Milis Church.

It's evident a license is necessary.

While I was looking around several places the sun ended up rising high.

I got hungry.

Nevertheless, it might have been a failure.

Cliff should not have finished the feedback report yet.

He personally took an appointment for the Pope during yesterday, he might be able to effectively adapt to him since the Pope is a member of the family.

However, I am a stranger.

When the grandchild abruptly comes home, hurriedly reporting that he wants you to meet with a strange guy, it would be natural to be wary.

The matter concerning Zenith was a somewhat unpleasant experience but I have not forgotten about Elinalize's request as well.

I want to avoid pulling Cliff's leg as best as I can.

"Taking a few more days, I ought to have made my own appointment if that was possible..."

While walking and considering such things, I arrived at the courtyard.

There are four courtyards in the headquarters.

□ and ◇ that can be piled up at the time, it was the triangular part of the four corners.

There seemed to be many trees planted to match the rhythm of the four seasons respectively.

Spring is the present season, I reached the spring garden by coincidence as well.

In the garden of spring, multicolored flowers were blooming in profusion.

Particularly, yellow to white, bright shades of pink flowers are numerous.

While observing that I proceeded to walk at ease.

In the former days I used to check up the names of the flowers with the plant dictionary on one hand but I still can't figure out this strange plant at all.

No wait, I recognize this pink flowering tree.

Since it was a sakura-like name it remains in my memory.

I heard about it from someone the other day too, what was it.

"Look, the Saraku are in full bloom!"

Right, right. It's Saraku.

In the northern part of the Asura kingdom, inhabiting the trees on the mountainside.

During the beginning of spring this plant makes pink colored flowers bloom, it's known as the 『Spring summoning tree 』 in the Asura kingdom.

It's also popular among nobles because of the unique aroma coming from its wood.

But because it is a tree that inhabits the mountainside, it's expensive.

Currently the Asura royal family has managed the cultivation of Saraku forest and have also exported to foreign countries.

And I was taught all this by Ariel the other day, in the Asura kingdom.

"Yes, it looks really beautiful!"

"The Saraku really suits Miko-sama!"

"Do you know? These Saraku were dispatched from the Asura Kingdom during the current Pope's enthronement..."

"Oh, hah. Miko-sama is always so simple-minded."

I heard the voice with a bad feeling.

While thinking what was going on I tried to look in the direction of the voice.

"Here, look look, it's like being inside a rain of Saraku!"

"Miko-sama who is standing within those flower petals....looks like a fairy."

"It's beautiful!"

There stood the otaku princess.

While fluttery dancing within the falling flower petals, a woman wearing a frill dress on herself just like a princess was going round and round with her palms facing upwards.

It might be good to call her a young lady.....since she is probably around 20 years old.

Her looks are pretty but she is a little bit plump.

Wendy also looked a little plump but her arms and legs were slender, this person has some thickness in places like her upper arm and thigh.

Both of which gives off a feeling of poor health, Wendy has Calorie deficiency whereas this person lacks exercise.

Men are swarming around such a woman.

There are 7 men.

A fitting number for an omen.

Those men are affirming and giving high praise to the girl each time she says something.

Thus, having such an ingratiating attitude.

It might as well be good to call her an ordinary princess.

It kind of looks like an otaku circle since there aren't any handsome men around.

{ C-Editor's note: Otaku is a Japanese word that describes people with obsessive interests, particularly in anime, manga, and video games. }

It's just some guys having a sense of intimacy with excited faces.

They are all wearing blue cuirass (chest armor) which doesn't look otaku-like.

".....Aare?"

However, they are excited with a sense of intimacy but a sense of relief doesn't come forth at all.

The atmosphere feels like a tingling sensation at the back of the neck.

Blood thirst?

No, it's natural.

If you naturally think about it, that princess is the real deal or she is possibly an excellent person to follow.

And, those guards as well, are not just simply otakus.

Looking at their demeanor and muscle count, it's clear that they have a remarkable set of ability.

They seem to be Advanced rank in sword play, almost to the extent of Saint class.

And then, they might have finally noticed me.

Just in case for today I prepared the Magic Armor 『Mk. II』 and wore it beneath my robe.

It doesn't look like I have any weapon or a staff on me but the appearance is decently insecure.

They might be vigilant.

But, what is it.

This feeling.

Uneasiness, it's more like a noisy (zawazawa) feeling.

I can't explain it well.

This feeling of uneasiness.

.....It's possible that one of them within the group is an apostle of Hitogami.

Shall I try to investigate a little bit?

No wait, think about it.

Think about my 『Incident rate during the word 'Hitogami' getting out of my mouth』.

Don't let the word Hitogami out of my mouth.

I'll ask a very leading question.....

"Ara? You're an unfamiliar face. Are you entering the faith?"

Puzzled over what to say, the other side ended up talking first.

"Ah....."

The young lady is looking this way with an innocent face.

With her upturned eyes while linking her arms behind her back and leaning her front.

The pose which breaks down all my reason when Sylphy does it.

Roxy doesn't do this pose.

If Eris does it, I won't be able to move about just like how a frog is stared down by a snake. A resolution to die will be necessary.

"What is the matter?"

Ah, what do I do. There's no time to think about such things.

Um, um.

I'm not entering the faith.....um.

Asking a very leading question about Hitogami, um.

"Do you believe in god?"

It was in an instant.

In an instant three of them among the otaku unsheathed their swords and thrust at me.

The remaining four brought the princess back and hid her behind them.

This is no longer an otaku-like atmosphere.

Right now it's an atmosphere of mercenaries in a battlefield.

Their stagnant pupils are floating with a glaring stare.

Scary.

Dangerous, these guys are dangerous.

I shouldn't have said something.

No, I don't think I chipped them.

"God exists."

"Milis-sama itself is a God."

"Why can't you comply with such an obvious thing?"

"Could it be that you don't believe in Milis-sama?"

"You don't believe in god?"

"Infidel....?"

"Heretic!"

While the otakus said that with each of their mouths, those eyes were steadily becoming muddy.

Not good, at this rate I'll be mistaken as a witch.

"S-Sorry... I accidentally blurted out something strange while I was deep in thought... please forgive me."

Let's apologize for now.

That's right.

Here is the Milis Church Headquarters.

Milis is called as the place where only believers of god exists.

At such a place, that thing is unheard of.

I was a suspicious person.

Please forgive me in someway or another.

"Grave, what to do?"

"It's fine for you to decide, Dust."

"Then let's kill him. He's probably a heretic. He's strangely calm... that's not it either, he has sinned by indoctrinating such a ridiculous thing to Miko-sama."

"Alright that's fine, let's kill him."

An amazingly quick decision.

Preparedness is a virtue.

I would have hesitated if it was me.

"No no, please wait, calm down, please listen to my story first..."

If I act violently here, it'll become troublesome for Cliff, this beautiful garden will become awful as well.

You don't want to see the Saraku tree blown off into small pieces. Right?

Mutual crisis is not beneficial, you'll understand if we talk.

Even though I believe that, my consciousness suddenly shifted.

My foresight eye suddenly opened and showed me the moment the sword is thrust at me.

I started pouring magic in my magic armor.

I want to avoid battling but I don't have any hesitation since they didn't forgive me even though I apologized.

I'm in a bad mood since yesterday.

"...Are you seriously planning on doing that?"

When I said that those guys suddenly shook and their eyes flared up.

My foresight eye displayed the swelling up strength in their body and filling their limbs with power.

Here it comes.

"Wait!"

A dignified voice reverberated.

Only for a short while, it's a nostalgic voice.

Whether that voice held some coercion power, those guys' powers were drawn out in an instant.

"What are you doing!"

One woman knight was approaching here.

Her age is approximately in the middle of 30s.

Wearing the same garments as the otakus, a blue chest armor.

A harsh looking face that gives off a brave yet calm impression.

However, that face is a face I recognize.

"Captain, this heretic was inflicting danger to Miko-sama."

One of the otakus nonchalantly said it.

Don't tell a lie.

"That's false accusations, I just wanted to see the Saraku..."

"You be silent."

While thrusting a sword at me one of them said that in a low voice.

I think there is no reason for me to be silent.

"Heretic...?"

And then finally the knight woman looked towards me.

"Ah!"

And then finally noticed.

With a broad smile on her face.

"Rudeus! Is it Rudeus? Wow, it's been a long time!"

Thus while looking at the swords thrust at me, she raised her voice.

"Put down your swords, he is my nephew!"

While the otakus put down their swords with a surprised face I closed my foresight eye.

Therese Latreia.

Zenith's younger sister and my aunt.

The person who assisted me during my voyage from the Milis Continent to the Central Continent.

It seems Therese is the leader of those guys.

On her command, the otakus drew back their swords in a flash.

For the time being they also apologized although it had a sense of reluctance.

I again apologized for blurting out such a strange thing but they looked dissatisfied because of their killing intent towards the changed me.

Now they just took the Princess at a distance and are on their guards.

"Do you remember me? Did you forgot because we only met once?"

"Of course I remember. You were really a great help concerning the voyage."

Well, leaving those guys aside for now I started chatting with Therese.

It's really nostalgic.

"Nevertheless, I had heard the stories that you showed yourself at the head house but to think you would come to the headquarters as well. Ah, did you possibly come to meet me?"

"No, an acquaintance of mine is willing to introduce me to the top brass.....Therese-san, I see you came back here."

Certainly, the last time we met I heard about her transfer to the West Port City.

It's been 10 years since then.

It wouldn't be strange if she had returned.

"Ah, well, various things happened."

Therese shrugged her shoulders with a wry smile.

It's probably something hard to talk about.

I won't pry into personal matters.

But there was something else I wanted to hear about.

"That story about me showing up at the head house, is it being circulated?"

"Ah, it didn't seem like the quarrel with mother is."

"Quarrel... that was a quarrel alright."

"I also heard that mother made you angry. Anyway, it's like her. I guess she ordered you to do this and that?"

"That's right! Please listen to me!"

The aunt that I encountered after a long time.

I thought for an instant whether she is an ally or not but my slippery mouth can't stop.

Before I realized it, I ended up talking about everything that happened yesterday.

As I thought, I still have much more anger left within me.

Or seeing a face similar to Zenith with a bright smile on it, I might be feeling relief.

"I wonder if they let this kind of thing be overlooked in this country?"

"No, it's not possible no matter what... even if it's mother, that... I think she might be mistaken... but, well... Rudeus-kun, couldn't it have been something you said that angered mother? That woman, because she was told something unreasonable, she responded unreasonably in kind, tit-for-tat..."

"...What about it. I wanted to endure it as much as possible and talk things through without getting angry."

"Hmm."

Therese crossed her arms for a little while and groaned with a gallant face.

It wasn't even a tit-for-tat feeling.

It felt like it was decided from the get go.

"Well, if the next time you went to the head house listen to the matter very carefully. Mother is a bit stubborn but she's not a bad person. Most likely, it's a trifling misunderstanding."

"....."

Therese unceremoniously said so.

Even if it's really a misunderstanding, myself getting angry was certain.

I don't want to talk about mediating the relationship.

It's been a while since I thought about something like not even socializing on the surface with a person.

Well, if it's truly a misunderstanding, after I receive a sincere and faithful apology, I'll also apologize regarding the fact that I suddenly raged.

"At any rate, Rudeus-kun has grown big! Ah, no, it would be better to say that you matured as a man... are you around 20 years old right now?"

Therese changed the topic by effectively making use of her nature.

I don't want to keep talking about Claire as well.

"Yes, I'm already 22 years old."

"I see! It's already been 10 years after all... ah, that's right, How is Eris-sama? Is she doing well? Since she has an amazing vitality!"

Therese is in high spirits just like a child.

The gallant behavior she had just some time ago is now nowhere to be found.

That gallant face before had a close resemblance to Claire-baasan, but...

No no, let's stop that.

"Eris is healthy as well. Last year, she gave birth to a child."

"Child...? Ah, I see, you two got married! Congratulations!"

"Thank you very much."

"Is she here as well?"

"No, she is house-sitting in Sharia. Because of the child rearing."

"I see I see, though it's a difficult matter, do your best by uniting the strengths from the both of you."

Both of...

Ah, that's right, this person is a Milis believer as well.

It should be better if I keep the matter aside concerning me being married to three wives.

Well, I'll be silent for now.

I don't want to throw water on this long-awaited happy moment.

"I see, marriage huh... that little Rudeus-kun and Eris-sama are now married... haa..."

Or so I thought, but suddenly Therese has a dejected spirit.

It seems the word called marriage is a NG word.

Looking at this reaction, she is probably still unmarried.

Or possibly divorced.

Um, how old was this person again.

Zenith being around 38 years old, since she is younger... somewhere around 35, perhaps.

In this world people become adults at the age of 15, from there if you consider most people getting married until reaching the age of 20...

Um.

"Is your direction towards work going well?"

It should be better to stop talking about marriage.

"Uh? Ah! This and that happened but I returned back to being the Miko-sama's escort. For now, I manage those guys."

Therese said that while glancing at the group.

Among the group of seven, two of them are vigilant of this side and the remaining are reduced to following the princess.

They are peaceful guys if you see it like this.

"They are a scary bunch."

"Ah... since an assassination attempt was incurred, the guys within the Temple Knight Party having particular high battle ability ended up becoming guards, it's appropriate for a short while, to have them en masse, sort of..."

Previously, Therese stated that the Temple Knight Party is a gathering of fanatics.

In that sense, it probably meant "seeming".

From my faux pas to "let's kill him" was an instant change.

It was formerly Orsted's way of doing things.

"Well, they just have a little insistence on their doctrine, they aren't such bad guys... since everyone likes Miko-sama very much."

That's scary.

I get the concern for their belief in god but don't end up not looking around the surroundings because of that.

Even the God of you all guys will be generous.

"Say, Therese? Can I also join in the conversation?"

That time, an abrupt voice came from the back.

The otaku princess was peeking in this direction.

It looked like the entourage behind her would unsheathe their swords anytime.

"Just now, I heard the name called Eris, are you perhaps an acquaintance of that red-haired Eris-sama? That swordswoman?"

She is the Miko, huh.

They just call her Miko Miko but I wonder what her real name is. Is it Nurse.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Miko Miko Nurse computer game. }

Let's try to ask... no, I'll give my name.

I was called cheap when I gave my name to Claire before but saying your name like that is the courtesy of a warrior.

"I'm late in my introduction. My name is Rudeus Greyrat.

I have taken on the task of serving the 『Dragon God』 Orsted, the Sword King Eris Greyrat is my wife."

Dragon God and Sword King.

Hearing those two words increased the insecurity of the entourage.

Reacting to the matter regarding Dragon God, as I thought an apostle is mixed within them.

No but it's seven all in all, it might not be relevant.

"Wow! Is that how it was! Eris-sama is the benefactor who saved my life 10 years ago!"

If it's 10 years ago, then that means during the time I came to Milishion.

Certainly, I also remember that story.

The story of how Eris set out for Goblin extermination but ended up exterminating an assassination.

"Can Eris-sama be seen here?"

"Unfortunately no, because she has to look after the child she is house-sitting."

"That's regrettable."

When the princess displayed a sad expression the entirety of the circle's eyes hanged down.

It's a little charming.

These guys really do like her.

But wait, even though I gave my name no name is coming back.

I wonder if I can just call her Miko-sama.

"But, in that case it will become something like... I was saved by 『Dragon God』 Orsted-sama."

"What?"

That is not related.

Me and Eris as well, that time we didn't know about Orsted's full name.

However, right now I'm a subordinate of Orsted, Eris accepts that and assists me.

It can be said that Eris is Orsted's subordinate as well only just barely.

About that thing, I wonder if Orsted coming to my help will become a thing.

...Can't be.

Let's stop telling lies that can be easily exposed.

"No, at that time me and Eris as well were not acquainted with Orsted-sama.

However, if Miko-sama were to bestow her sense of obligation,

Then in the future, when Orsted-sama will be able to hold back his hostility he will gratefully receive it."

"...? A person I haven't even met holds hostility?"

"It's because Orsted-sama is cursed as such."

When I said that the princess approached me looking at my eyes fixedly.

Round and cute eyes exists within that plump face.

Both eyes don't particularly differ each other in color.

She probably doesn't have a demon eye.

However, it came to me like an intuition.

She is doing something.

I can't understand what she is doing.

I didn't seem to be fixed in place because of her, nor did I bear the feeling of being suffocated.

But the feeling that she was doing something remained.

"...It seems like you are telling the truth."

For a short while, the princess nodded with a serious look.

"Do you get it?"

"Yes, I understand."

While looking at Therese and the followers, their faces don't look like as if a miracle has happened.

That means, this is this child's 『Ability as a Miko』.

Similar to Zanoba's 『Superhuman strength and defensive power』...

Ability to see through a lie just by eye contact...

No, something like reading the thoughts of the other party.

Or else, it might be a distinction.

"...Is that your power?"

"Yes, that's right."

I wanted to hear the details but the entourage is scary.

It's safe not to hear it.

What to do.

Orsted didn't said anything regarding this Miko.

"Hee..."

This is bad.

I noticed that something happened, it feels like a dangerous sign has been put up in my direction.

No matter what I heard, it feels like the entourage is ready to attack me anytime.

But, it's also a waste to not hear it.

I can't meet her again.

I must ask her and hear it.

"Suu... fuu..."

Firstly a deep breath.

"Miko-sama. Pardon my impoliteness, is it fine if I ask just one thing?"

I'll take permission before inquiry.

Such steps are important.

Above that, it's not investigation and extraction, it's only just one question.

"Yes, by all means."

"Recently, does a person calling himself a god come out in your dreams and leave something like an oracle?"

"No, recently, of course, and in the time until now, that has never happened. And surely, after this, I'd think it will remain impossible."

The princess spoke flatly.

Looking at me, listening to my words.

Not until now, and not afterwards.

For some reason I believe it.

That means this is somehow related to her power.

Possibly an ability to deny Hitogami to meet her.

As I thought, "reading someone's mind", is it?

Hitogami, even more than me, would likely be troubled by having a mind reader on hand.

"Thank you very much."

I drew out the energy from my shoulders.

It's fine if she is not an enemy for now.

Even if Miko-sama is lying, I'll believe for now.

"Now it's my turn!"

"...! Yes, by all means, anything."

More than this what do you want to hear?

If you can read minds then is it not necessary to hear?

For now, it looks like that ability can't be usually invoked.

It can't be invoked no matter what without direct eye-contact.

Then the other person should just stop looking... or something like that?

"Please inform me more regarding Eris-sama!"

"...Yes."

Such a thing.

Well fine.

Anyway, she's not an enemy, if she is not involved with Hitogami, isn't it fine to believe her.

In addition, let's follow along about how good a guy President Orsted is.

The company insurance even covers Mikopre-existing conditions.

In the 80-years to come your peace of mind is guaranteed, when the accident occurs, the excellent staff of our company will help you.

In addition, we are recruiting for excellent staff at any time...

No, from now on when I want to become the back shield of the Pope, would it be bad if I appoint Miko's hand guards?

"Rudeus! Rudeus, are you not here!"

When I was considering what to do, a voice could be heard from far calling out to me.

It's Cliff's voice.

It seems like he finally obtained a license.

"Ah... Forgive me Miko-sama. It's time."

"Eeh! Seriously..."

The princess lowered her eyebrows followed by the entourage's eyebrows hanging down as well and gives rise to my sin of bad habit.

Amusing.

And of great interest.

Even I am a person who wants to talk a bit more.

However, for now let's look forward to the future.

"I'll be staying in this town for a while, so we'll talk again about Eris next time..."

"It's a promise!"

I bowed to the princess and entrusted a message to Therese.

"With that Therese-san, if you are going to the head house, tell Claire that 「I'll carry the responsibility for my mother's problem so interference is futile」 please convey that for me... also, if the Fittoa Region Search Party needs collateral for their support, they will be paid in gold given the suggested amount of money."

"...Got it, I'll convey that for now."

"Please do."

After bowing to Therese as well, also greeting the entourage with my eyes, I left from that place.

Nevertheless, a miko.

At first glance she looks like a burriko in the box.

{ C-Editor's note: A burikko is a girl or woman who acts cute and/or innocent through a series of scripted gestures. }

Possibly she was a otaku princess but I felt something that was not bottomless.

Clearly, I said that she is not an enemy,

it looked like she knew about Hitogami's circumstances.

Let's keep at it and be vigilant.

Ah, I forgot to ask her full name...

Well it's fine.

While I was thinking that, with the license now in my possession I moved towards Cliff's place.

"I will store your luggage."

Before entering, we were searched.

I guess they were looking for weapons to confiscate.

From my favorite knife, to my scrolls, I had to leave everything behind.

However, my armor itself wasn't considered a weapon, so I didn't have to undress.

Cliff didn't say anything, probably because he trusts me.

In good faith, I also deposited my left gauntlet with the mana absorbing stone and my right gauntlet equipped with the shotgun.

The center of the building was like a labyrinth.

There weren't any straight passageways, every passage was curved.

Moreover, because the passages are all painted white, it's hard to discern what's ahead.

Naturally, this is the heart of the Milis religious community.

Just like a fortress, it was probably designed to withstand enemy attacks.

Following Cliff's swift pace, we quickly arrived at the Pope's office.

The office was guarded by two knights and protected by a barrier.

"I'll tell you now, you won't be able to use magic past this barrier."

"Yes."

The barrier must be at least saint or king ranked.

I wonder if these knights can match saint or king ranked skills.

I'm not sure, they might just be here to buy time in the event of a battle.

"Your eminence, greetings."

Cliff's grandfather Harry Grimoire, on the other side of the transparent barrier.

He looked like the good-natured old man I imagined from the letter.

He had a long white beard, and wore bishop-like robes with gold embroidery.

"Yes, thank you."

His voice was powerful like Sauros, but not sharp like Reida.

He had the aura of an exceptional person.

But, he seemed to be conscientious of his own power.

I see, so this is the Pope, I understand, something...

It wasn't his aura, it was his hat.

Just kidding.

"Allow me to introduce Rudeus Greyrat.

We studied together at the Ranoa magic university, he was my kouhai.

His talent for magic surpasses my own, he is an extremely skilled person.

Because of our longstanding association, I wanted to take this opportunity to introduce him to your eminence."

As Cliff made my introductions, the Pope slowly nodded with a gentle expression.

I should probably handle any further explanations.

Cliff introduced me as a friend, the rest is up to me.

We discussed this last night.

"I see, so...

Rudeus-dono, for what reason have you come to me?

Permissions for your mercenary company?

Or, is it for permission to sell your Supard race dolls?

Or perhaps for counsel on behalf of Dragon God Orsted?"

It's different.

Cliff, well it's already too late.

My purpose, the reason I came to this country...

It's fine, it would have come up sooner or later.

Well, it would have been better to end this without an outright explanation.

...Huh?

Cliff was looking between us with a surprised face.

"As one would expect from someone called the Dragon God's right arm.

Without even shifting an eyebrow... So it's like this Cliff?"

I was too slow to notice.

The Pope concluded his misunderstanding in an instant.

"I'm sorry, but I investigated a bit in advance."

He started to read a document with a smile.

"Rudeus Greyrat.

Of the distinguished Notus Greyrat family.

Son of Paul Greyrat, disciple of Sword King Ghyslaine Dedorudia.

After being involved in the Metastasis Event, returned on his own after three years.

Attended the magic university, became acquaintances with Princess Ariel.

Several years later, fought Dragon God Orsted and lost, then joined his camp.

Behind the scenes in Asura Kingdom, orchestrated the defeat of Water God Reida and North Emperor Auber.

Propelled current king Ariel Anemoi Asura to her current position.

Then, while organizing his own private army in various places, appealed for various influential people to cooperate with Dragon God Orsted...

Have I missed anything?"

That was pretty thorough.

But, that wasn't exactly private information.

You could get that sort of information by just asking around.

The person before my eyes is obviously trying to discern what kind of person I am,

It's essential that I'm forthright.

It's not surprising.

There are mistakes.

"There are three mistakes.

From the Demon continent, I did not return on my own.

I borrowed the power of a warrior from the Supard race, Ruijerd.

Furthermore I did not defeat the Water God Reida or Auber alone, Sword King Ghyslaine and Sword King Eris aided me.

And, most importantly, I am the disciple of water king-ranked Roxy Migurdia."

"Hou, this is an honest one."

The Pope nodded with a [Fumufumu], and jotted something down on the paper in his hand.

I don't know what you're writing, but at the very least add that I'm Roxy's disciple.

"So when it comes to your reason for selling the Supard race dolls, it's to repay that debt?

It's not a scheme to overthrow the government by increasing the literacy rate?"

"Correct."

"Hou"

Even if the literacy rate rose, why would the government be overthrown...

I guess that's the same theory as a cooper putting holes in his barrels, so he can repair them later for a profit.

"Then, appealing for cooperation with Orsted-sama, is there a reason?"

"Around 80 years from now, the Demon God Laplace will be revived, it is to ready the world for that time."

Even at that, the Pope didn't change his expression in the slightest.

He just nodded in consent.

"I see. So, by using Cliff as a connection, you have come to request my cooperation. In other words you want me to join the Dragon God's camp, is that it..."

"No, it's different."

Somehow, talking with this Ojiichan, I already feel like I'm in negotiation mode.

Well that's fine.

Negotiations are necessary.

I guess I'll start.

"I am here to support my ally, Cliff."

"Hou. Supporting Cliff from behind, is that it?"

"No... certainly that was my intent at first, but Cliff said [I want to see how far I can climb with my own power.]

At least, until he is known as Cliff-dono here, I will not be participating."

The Pope's lips curled into a smile as I said that.

He had the face of a grandpa whose grandchild scored 100 on a test.

"Is that so, Cliff said such a thing..."

"Yes. So, today, Rudeus is here as a subordinate of the Dragon God."

He said it honestly.

The other side seems to be studying us.

We may have glazed over some information, but our responses were generally correct.

Well, he might think differently, I don't know yet.

We haven't told any lies.

An honest person may be a fool, but people don't hate honesty.

"I have two requests, your backing for my mercenary company, and permission to sell the Supard dolls."

As for the matter of the Latreia house, I'll leave that aside for the time being.

That's a personal matter, I'll show restraint, it should be possible to form a connection.

"Hmm."

The Pope watched me with a soft smile,

I guess that's his poker face.

Even if he's laughing, his expression won't change.

"I don't think the relationships between people are something easily broken."

The Pope said that as if stating a fact.

Perhaps that's a warning.

I don't plan to abandon Cliff.

I don't think Cliff would abandon me either.

"So, in deference to your ties with Cliff... I will support your mercenary company."

He said that readily.

I expected some kind of quid-pro-quo, but I guess not.

This is probably out of consideration for my friendship with Cliff.

At any rate if Cliff plays his part, it will bring great benefits to the Pope's faction.

For the Pope, this might be a downpayment.

"However, permission for the Supard dolls is difficult."

"Why?"

"I am in the pro-demon race faction, and the pope.

However, recently the anti-demon race faction has grown powerful within the church.

In the present situation, I do not have enough clout to permit the sale of the Supard dolls as an arbitrary decision.

The next pope, surely, will be selected from the anti-demon race faction... or?

The Pope said so, while watching me.

I wonder if he's trying to imply I should say something like [Then I will crush the anti-faction forthwith!]

I wonder.

I could move easily as the Pope's subordinate.

I've already cut ties with the Latreia house, and with the current flow they'll probably be openly hostile towards me.

If that's the case, it would be unfortunate if I had to crush Therese along with the rest of the anti-demon race faction.

But, that would probably count as helping Cliff.

It's a little ambiguous.

If Cliff were to take over as Pope, they would be his opponent.

I guess I'd be clearing his path if I crushed them.

No, in the first place, if I even cooperate with the religious organization, it's because of Cliff.

I wonder if that's OK.

Hmm...

"... For the time being, I take it that I have your support regarding my mercenary company?"

"Yes."

"Then, for today, with your support for the mercenary company, I am satisfied."

I'll keep you on hold regarding the other matter.

It shouldn't be a problem that requires an immediate response.

Originally, I planned to leave the Supard doll sales off the table.

I only came here with the intention to get permission to launch the mercenary branch.

I won't act greedily here.

"Is that so, it's a shame."

The Pope said so with a smile and a laugh.

Cliff still had things to do, so I left the headquarters alone.

"Phew..."

The moment I was out, I let out a big sigh.

That was tiring...

The Shrine Maiden and the Pope.

I met two interesting people today.

Both of them left interesting impressions.

Nevertheless, they each lead different factions.

The pro-demon race faction led by the Pope.

And the anti-demon race faction led by the Shrine Maiden.

The Temple Knights are part of the anti-faction.

The Latreia house as well.

Even good-natured people like Therese,

I would have expected them all to be fanatics.

If I'm asked who I support, needless to say it's the pro-faction, the Pope's faction.

Be that as it may, Therese has helped me twice.

Even though I hate the Latreia house, I'm not ungrateful towards her.

Apart from her followers, the Shrine Maiden herself doesn't seem detestable.

So, being reserved isn't wrong... I think.

As I originally planned, if possible, I want to maintain a neutral position.

A lofty ideal.

Anyway, I should probably plan for more contact with that shrine maiden.

I'm curious about her ability.

Whether or not she's one of Hitogami's apostles... that possibility still exists.

It's difficult as always to discern apostles.

At least, I didn't run into Hitogami's interference setting up the mercenary branch in Asura Kingdom.

Are my actions harmful to Hitogami or not...

At the present, I don't know. It's useless to think about.

So, for the time being, I'll be grateful that I haven't run into any obstacles and act as I always have.

The moment there's a disturbance, when you feel something out of place, is the moment to look for an apostle.

I have to keep my eyes open for suspicious people.

The Shrine Maiden, or Claire.

But, if I'm too focused on them, I'm bound to make a mistake.

For the sake of establishing a mercenary branch as soon as possible, it would be nice to get in touch with Orsted by installing a communication lithograph.

Yeah.

For the time being, I have the Pope's cooperation in this matter.

So, I should get started.

First, to purchase a suitable building for the mercenary branch.

Then set up a communication lithograph, and a magic teleportation circle in case of emergency.

And, report to Orsted.

"Okay. The first step is to select a building."

The next step has been decided.

It would be good to leave selecting the building up to Aisha.

Whether we set up in the adventurer district or the commercial district, she'll know what's best.

Aisha should have a good understanding of the area by now.

Having a trusted business partner, it's really reliable.

The problem is Zenith.

With Aisha out, we won't have anyone to look after her.

Perhaps Wendy could be taught to care for her...

Well, at this point such a thing can't be helped.

Let's have a discussion about it back at home.

I left through town on the carriage and returned to Cliff's house in the religious district.

It's dusk.

My stomach is empty, I'm looking forward to dinner.

I hope there are fresh eggs around here.

Boiled eggs, fried eggs, omelette...

There's bread too, so fried pork cutlets are also possible.

With just an egg, a whole new realm of foods open up, to increase my enjoyment.

Our cook (Aisha) is really skilled.

"Here I am. With an empty stomach–"

"Not coming back until now, what's with that!?"

The second I returned, I heard Aisha's shout.

I hurried inside the house.

There, was the figure of my sister next to Wendy.

"Why did you go out!"

"I-, I mean, isn't it OK."

"Why is the person who went out to be believed!?

Yesterday, you heard it too right!?

Why didn't you explain the circumstances!?

Yet you went out the next day like nothing happened!?

We were waiting, you should have come back sooner!

I needed to talk to you Oniichan!"

"Eh, even so, then, I, after what happened yesterday, didn't understand it well, but it's all right–"

"I just said it! It's not 'all right'! You, you should have taken us with you!?"

Aisha went to throw a punch, but Wendy held her back...

Aisha is enraged, this is rare.

While thinking that, I caught Aisha's next punch.

"Aisha, calm down a little."

"Fine!"

She shook me off.

But, Aisha seems to have become a bit more aware of herself.

"Ah, Oniichan... I'm sorry..."

She clasped her hands and looked down.

"What happened?"

For the time being I'll ask that.

If I raise my voice now, then I'm just as at fault.

However, Aisha looks down with a blue face, and doesn't answer.

She's normally a child who answers quickly.

"Well..."

As if she couldn't stand it any longer, Wendy answered.

"During the day, Gisu appeared..."

"Gisu...?"

"He came to see Zenith-san, and said it was unfortunate she was cooped up even after her long-awaited return home–"

Aisha answered this time.

"–didn't come back."

Those words were dripping with animosity.

What?

This feeling...

"Aisha, calm down, from the start, explain it to me. You can do that right?"

"Yeah..."

Aisha began to speak.

During the day, Gisu seems to have come over to visit.

He's Zenith's friend, he's allowed to visit.

Aisha didn't see his face, but from his speech, the contents of the story, and his clothes, the description matches Gisu.

At that time, Aisha and I were absent.

"Why was Aisha out...?"

"I thought we would need various things if we were going to stay here, so I went out to purchase everything... Wendy, she seemed able to handle things, I'm sorry..."

"Ah, no, it's okay."

Aisha made a mistake in judgment.

It's unusual, but I guess it's possible.

Anyway.

For a while, Gisu chatted with Wendy and Zenith, it was something like a conversation between three people.

But, then, Gisu made a suggestion.

[Isn't holing Zenith up here after her long awaited return to her hometown unfortunate. I'll take Zenith outside and show her the town.]

Wendy consented.

As for her consent, Wendy seemed to be a bit worried about it.

I haven't heard anything about yesterday, either.

Regardless, it's not just Wendy's fault.

She wasn't informed about the unpleasantness of the Latreia house.

I feel like there's something more.

After all, that really is Gisu's wild horse way of speaking.

Somehow, that guy is really good at persuading others.

I wanted to take Zenith to see the town too.

They were supposed to come back within an hour, even if they were careless, it can't be helped.

"I, I immediately went out to look, but I couldn't find them..."

Aisha immediately went out looking for them, but no luck.

She couldn't find them.

The day passed, and they were nowhere to be found even after dusk.

Perhaps they were delayed, but they still haven't turned up.

Aisha was at the end of her rope and couldn't really blame Wendy, then I returned... That's why.

"What should I do Oniichan, because I thought it was all right... This, it's my fault right...? What should I do... What do I do!"

Aisha is unusually upset, she's on the brink of tears.

For now, calming her down is top priority.

"Try to calm down. It's Gisu's usual carelessness, perhaps everything is fine."

"But, now, Zenith-okaasan is missing!?"

"Please be calm."

I'm starting to feel impatient too.

But, Gisu took her out.

That guy has no fighting ability, but he's a competent man to rely on.

That provides a sense of security.

Well, thinking of Gisu...

He might have done something unnecessary, like taking her out for dinner.

He's the kind of guy who returns unexpectedly, saying something like [Sorry sorry, I ran into an old acquaintance and hit it off] while laughing.

"For the time being, let's wait a little longer."

I decided.

The sun has completely set.

Cliff returned with a tired expression.

Zenith and Gisu have not returned.

But, during this time, Aisha and I have regained our composure.

"I'm sorry... but, please don't blame Wendy too much, it's my fault..."

Cliff also went to rebuke Wendy, but Aisha came to her defense.

He probably didn't expect this kind of situation.

Originally, he called for the maid.

Moreover, because he called for a maid at the last minute, he should understand that it wouldn't be a professional.

You can't blame someone's lack of ability.

But blame follows failure.

"I will go out to search. Cliff-senpai, please wait on standby."

"Ah, right..."

Even though I made that decision, it's already dinner time.

Waiting until now to start searching, it might be too late.

But, allow me to make an excuse,

If Zenith were out alone, I would have started searching immediately.

Gisu took her out.

If Wendy's story is true, she should be with Gisu.

That monkey bastard may not be able to fight, but he can do anything else.

From information collection, mapping, shopping, cooking, equipment maintenance, to managing the party's health.

His only fatal flaw as an adventurer is that he's useless in combat.

So, I felt a sense of confidence since Zenith was with Gisu.

But, if I think about it, being useless in combat can be fatal.

If he were caught up in some kind of incident, he might not have the power to protect Zenith,

Gisu should have a high ability to avoid being caught up in those types of incidents though.

But, his skill might not be perfect.

Zenith stepping on some belligerent old man's foot or something, that kind of scenario is possible too.

Passing each other, they make eye contact, and then he socks her in the face.

She's also with a demon race.

If someone from the Latreia house saw them, what would they think seeing Gisu and Zenith together.

They would probably try to bring her back home.

In a quick attack, they might try to take Zenith back.

After all, she's still a member of the Latreia house.

If it's the Latreia house, it's also possible that that Gisu was a fake.

Similar looks and a similar height, teaching him how to talk like Gisu, then pretending to be Gisu to convince Wendy... or something like that.

Although you don't really see those types of guys around.

Also, I don't want to think this, but it's possible that Gisu is one of Hitogami's apostles.

Gisu had been reluctant to enter the religious district, why would he come back here.

That's something to consider, he could be acting on Hitogami's advice...

Worrying won't do anything.

There's no use hesitating.

Regret won't help either.

We've already lost a lot of time.

I have to make a move.

I put on the MK-II and left the house.

"First of all, where should we search? Should we divide the work?"

Aisha followed as a matter of course.

Zenith is still missing... We're both becoming impatient.

If she starts becoming flustered, I have to calm her down.

"No, if you were kidnapped it would just add to the trouble. Let's search together."

"Y-, yeah. Understood..."

Hearing the word kidnapped, Aisha held her breath.

She was probably considering the possibility of Zenith being kidnapped.

Kidnapping in this world, is commonplace...

But it's unlikely.

To kidnap Zenith they would have to go through Gisu, an S-class adventurer, it wouldn't be easy.

If it were me, I would look for a more defenseless target.

"..."

I took a few more steps, then suddenly stopped.

First of all, where should we start looking?

That's not good, I need to compose myself.

Calm down, everything's fine, I need to calm down.

Deep breaths.

"Suu... Haa..."

I have someone smarter than me at my side.

I should consult with her.

"Aisha... Where do you think Gisu would be?"

"Err... the adventurer district?"

"Why's that?"

"Gisu doesn't like being around St. Milis followers, and they tend to stay around the religious district.

That leaves the commercial district and the adventurer district, and since Gisu is an adventurer, it seems likely he'd be in the adventurer district."

"Okay, lets start by searching the adventurer district."

As expected of Aisha, thinking carefully in this kind of situation.

We have to strike while the iron is hot.

"Let's hurry."

"Yeah, oh, that's right. Should we take horses? Or use the carriage?

"Hmm?"

Horses...

I still can't ride a horse.

Though that doesn't mean I'm incapable of riding a horse.

I've had a little practice, I also know how to drive the horse-drawn carriage.

But we won't be able to move as freely with a carriage in an emergency situation.

But that's no problem.

If I'm serious, I can run as fast as a horse.

"I don't need a horse."

"Eh?"

I picked Aisha up in a princess carry.

Then fed mana to the MK-II.

And bent my legs.

I've practiced softening the impact.

"Aisha, please hold on tight."

"Eh...? Ah!"

Aisha stiffened and tightly gripped my robe.

I held Aisha firmly in place.

"... Ah, ah! That's no good! Stop!"

I almost thought I heard something as I leapt into the night sky.

We arrived at the adventurer district, after a mere ten minutes.

Aisha's body was trembling, and she sank down to the ground.

Her legs seem to have given out.

Aisha might be weak to heights.

My bad.

"Oniichan, at least, travel on the ground..."

A lot of my family and acquaintances seem to be bad with heights.

Sylphy's also afraid of heights, and I'm not so good with them either.

Only Eris seems to like high places.

"I would have gotten into an accident running on the ground. Now, let's quickly find mother."

"Uu... can't walk."

"Don't worry, I can give you a piggyback ride."

"No more jumping?"

"No jumping."

With Aisha settled on my back, we began the search.

That said, the adventurer district is big.

Where should we start...

"Oniichan, we should check the taverns. It's dinnertime, we might find them eating somewhere."

"Ah, that's right."

In response to Aisha's advice, I began trotting down the street.

We checked the taverns down the street, looking for Zenith or Gisu.

Because it's dinnertime, the taverns are crowded.

However, it's unnecessary to check every person one by one.

By asking the tavern keepers, we can check quickly.

A woman with a blank expression with a monkey-faced demon race man.

They should stand out.

Even this late, the adventurer district is still crowded.

Adventurers were returning from requests with their spoils.

Merchants were busy doing business with the adventurers.

After work, the adventurers were flocking to eat.

Tavern keepers were herding hungry adventurers into their bars.

Occasionally the sounds of a fight between adventurers or mercenaries rang out.

Probably because of the late hour, there are few carriages on the road.

So the possibility of Zenith being run over as she's walking about is low.

With that I feel a little relieved.

"Monkey face? Ah, Gisu?

That guy, doesn't he stay at the [Spring's Eve]?"

We've already checked three inns.

Gisu has been in this country for awhile.

So just about everyone has seen him around.

"Did you see him with a woman?"

"A woman...? Hmm...?

The clerk tilted his head.

But, I'll know after I check.

I asked the clerk for directions to [Spring's Eve].

After tossing him a copper coin, we hurried to [Spring's Eve].

I have a bad feeling.

The [Spring's Eve] inn was on skid row.

Prostitutes lined the streets, while men with vulgar expressions passed by.

The red light district is probably nearby.

This is Milishion, there shouldn't be such a thing...

Even so, men were watching us with curiosity.

A serene silence follows us, I wonder if we're floating.

"Haha! Wha! What kind of play is that?"

"Oniichan, it's embarrassing put me down!"

Nope.

They were staring at me piggybacking Aisha.

I let Aisha down, and the stares stopped.

[Spring's Eve]

It has a normal front, but there's a lot of tough looking guys coming and going.

Well, after coming to this world, I've become pretty tough as well.

I can enter this kind of place without being afraid.

Frankly, those guys at the Rudo-Mercenary office in Sharia are more intimidating.

The idea that Zenith might be in such a place makes me anxious though.

Gisu, what are you thinking...

If, that guy playfully says something like he sold Zenith to a brothel, I won't forgive him.

I'll have two fists waiting for him.

"Ra~ssha~!"

As we came through the entrance, we heard the hustle and bustle of the bartenders along with energetic voices.

It's not a particularly bad atmosphere.

It looks bad from the outside, but there's a bright atmosphere inside.

As for the class of visitors, there aren't only bad looking guys, there are also a lot of ordinary adventurers.

Immediately after confirming the room, I went to pull aside the nearest clerk–

"But I was too clever for that, so I said [These three magic circles might be traps, what if there's another passage?]"

There.

Towards the back of the bar, a monkey-faced man, bragging proudly to a group of young adventurers.

It felt like a familiar scene.

There was one boy with spiked hair.

The other boy had a nose piercing.

And an honest-looking girl.

Three people.

Zenith isn't with them.

I don't see Zenith anywhere around here.

"Then, just as I suspected, we searched the floor, and there it was, the hidden passage to the boss room..."

Gisu noticed me as I approached the table.

He had an [Ah] face.

"Gisu."

"Y-, Yo senpai. I was just talking about you. You guys, this is [Quagmire]."

Three people with frightened faces,

Like girls, they cowered in their seats.

What...

What kind of reaction is that.

Forget it.

That kind of thing, there are more important things to hear.

What first...

Alright, first, I should determine if Hitogami is involved.

"Gisu... that's bad luck. To become my enemy."

"Haa? What?"

"You've heard it, haven't you? A revelation, from that guy. Now that it's come to this, what to do..."

"Whoa, dream? What?"

I pointed my finger at Gisu's laughing monkey face and started pouring in mana.

Stone cannon, high-speed rotation.

I kept increasing the speed until a high pitched [Kyuuiin] sound could be heard, like a drill.

The startled young adventurers started to get up.

"Don't move."

They instantly froze.

Then, I met Gisu's eyes, and asked again.

"What were you told, tell me everything. Tell me and I'll spare your life."

"Oi, o-, oi seri-, seriously, st-, stop it... th-that's no good! I-, I don't know, I was bad, stop, don't bring it any closer!"

I inched the tip of my finger towards Gisu's head.

Then Gisu leapt up from his chair and prostrated himself on the spot.

And, without an ounce of shame, began apologizing.

"I-, I did something wrong! And for that I'm sorry! I have angered Rudeus! But I don't know what I did! Please tell me! I did something bad, I'm sorry! I am truly sorry!"

What's this?

This, this isn't what I expected.

It left me dumbfounded.

I guess he's not Hitogami's apostle...?

I don't know.

However, after all this... I feel like I'm the one who should apologize.

"... What happened to mother?"

"Ah?"

Gisu raised his face with a puzzled look.

He was red-faced and drunk, staring with a blank look of confusion.

If this is an act, it's amazing.

"My mother. Zenith."

"...? No, after showing her around town, she was taken home?"

"She didn't come back, that's why I'm here."

I crossed my arms, and one of the boys let out a laugh.

I looked over, and Aisha was in the same pose nodding.

This isn't the time for jokes, it happened by chance.

I gave the kid a scowl, and he stiffened up with a [Hii].

"Eh... but... I definitely sent her home?"

"How?"

"We were near the edge of the adventurer district. Then, we met up with that guy from your house, and I entrusted Zenith to him."

.... What?

I sent someone?

My house?

Cliff and I were at the at the religious headquarters.

Aisha was out shopping, Wendy was at the house...

No, that's not it.

It's not MY house.

"Was it, someone from the Latreia house...?"

"Yeah yeah, I checked their coat of arms? Without a doubt, they were from the Latreia house."

My heart's starting to race.

The Latreia house, Zenith, was taken.

Calm down, focus.

First, Gisu took out Zenith.

But why?

"In the first place, why did you take mother out?"

"Even if you ask why, I haven't seen Zenith and Senpai in such a long time, I just wanted to try talking for a bit..."

He did it on a whim.

Okay. That seems like the normal Gisu...

No wait, that's strange.

"You, why did you know where to find Cliff's house?"

"I asked by the Latreia house first.

Well, I didn't really want to go, but I thought it would be okay because of Senpai...

Then, I heard you and Zenith were staying somewhere else, so I asked for directions."

"I thought you hated entering the religious district?"

"Yeah I don't like to go without a reason, but that doesn't mean I'd never go."

Gisu's excuse was a little airy.

Vague.

Well he's been drinking, it's no wonder the story is confusing.

"...."

I get it.

I understand what happened.

In other words, the story was something like this.

Yesterday, I left the Latreia house in a rage.

But, we returned to Cliff's house on foot, so we could have been tailed.

Careless, I never noticed, they must have found out where we were staying.

The Latreia and Grimoire houses are in opposing factions.

They probably wanted to 'save' Zenith, it's not hard to imagine.

That said, it would be difficult for them to attack the Grimoire house.

Their faction may have the upper hand, but a scandal like that could take them down.

So, the Latreia house used Gisu.

A man from a demon race who nonchalantly introduced himself as my friend.

Normally, they would turn someone like that away.

But, despite being part of the anti-demon race faction, they must have come up with a plan to use him.

They used him to get Zenith outside the house.

Gisu didn't immediately bring Zenith out, and they had to take into account any other escorts.

However, there were no other escorts.

I was out, and Aisha had left with bad timing.

Those Latreia guys lucked out, and were able to smoothly secure Zenith.

After all that, they'll probably just play dumb.

As for Gisu?

They'll probably pretend not to recognize him.

They'll say something like [There's no way we would associate with a filthy demon race.]

Zenith has been kidnapped, they must be holding her somewhere.

She must have a caretaker or someone I can follow.

"O-, oi, Senpai, what's wrong...?"

".... Never mind that. You, when you went to the Latreia house, what did they say?"

"Eh? Ah, something like Zenith would miss seeing her hometown since she just came back and that I should take her out..."

It's not Gisu's fault then.

He didn't know anything.

He went to the Latreia house because I was the one who said I'd be staying there.

He thought that was my house, and they answered his questions, so he had no reason to doubt them.

In such a situation, it can't be helped that he became a puppet.

It was my own carelessness.

I should have checked on Zenith today.

Because of that single mistake things had become like this.

After all this, I wish I had stealthily taken Zenith out to see the town.

Regrets are useless.

I need to rescue Zenith.

"Gisu... Actually–"

After hearing the story from Gisu, I decided to ask for his cooperation.

In this kind of situation, I'd like to have Gisu's support.

Even so, this guy is also responsible.

I don't think he's one of Hitogami's apostles.

"... Seriously?"

When I finished my explanation, Gisu had a bitter face.

"I see, yeah, I thought it was a little weird. Senpai wasn't staying at the Latreia house... I thought Senpai was just... taking her out, something like that..."

A discrepancy in information.

A weakness was shown, and the opponent exploited it.

But anyone could have made that mistake.

It's time to save Zenith.

"I understand. I want to cooperate."

"Yeah."

With Gisu, we decided to immediately go confront the Latreia house.

Even though it might be useless.

By the time we arrived at the Latreia house, the town had already fallen silent.

Dinner has passed, it's evening, people are probably preparing to go to sleep.

I intended to rush over here, but I had two passengers.

There's no helping that it slowed me down.

Aisha was half in tears muttering something like [Oniichan's a fibber.]

"We're here."

Now then, the Latreia house still had their lights on.

But there was nobody at the gate.

There's no doorbell either.

I need to call someone over to let us in.

Should I yell?

... If I were a normal visitor, what would I do.

No, if I were a normal visitor, I would probably turn around and leave.

What do I care.

"It's Rudeus! Get out here!"

I let out a shout while I banged on the gate.

I don't care about disturbing the neighbors.

They may not think it's a great cause, but the justification is there.

They abducted Zenith, they're in the wrong.

But if the person who claimed to be from the Latreia house and took Zenith from Gisu was a fake, then Zenith really was kidnapped.

Even though I intended to cut my ties with the Latreia house, this is their problem too.

"...."

There's no answer.

I continued banging on the gate and shouting.

The metal gate started to warp from being hit by the MK-II.

"I want to have a chat about a matter concerning my mother!"

Still no answer.

Better yet I'll just break the gate.

"This gate is going to break if you don't send someone out!"

Nothing, they seem to have declined my offer, so I started packing mana into my right hand.

It's a mistake if you think you can stop me with a gate of this caliber.

"O-, oi Senpai wait! That's no good!"

I was stopped.

The blood seemed to be rushing to my head.

But, we're in a rush.

The other day, Claire was talking about marrying Zenith off to have kids.

Find a partner, hold a wedding, decided a house, start a family...

I guess that kind of thing would take time.

And if I investigate the Latreia house, then sooner or later I'll find traces of Zenith.

But there's one thing.

If the only goal is making children, then presto.

All you have to do is prepare a man and a woman, throw them in bed for half an hour, and it's done.

There's the idea of [Fait Accompli] in this world too.

{ C-Editor's note: Fait Accompli meaning something that has already happened and is presumably irreversible. }

When we find Zenith, it might already be too late, she might already be despondent.

I don't think that old woman would do something like that to her own daughter.

I want to hope so, but I have no idea what that old woman is thinking, wanting to marry off her invalid daughter.

So we need to act quickly.

But breaking down the gate might be hasty.

Even one shot from my Stone Cannon would be loud enough to wake the neighborhood.

I don't know about the laws in this country, but destroying the gate would probably be frowned upon.

If people gather and call the guards... If we're labeled as criminals, it will only end up causing trouble for Cliff and the Pope.

I need to think this through, I can't act rashly.

"Alright. Then let's sneak in, I'll unlock the gate with earth magic–"

"Sneak in? What are you going to do?"

A voice from the other side of the gate.

Before I had noticed, five men and women had gathered on the other side of the gate.

Three soldiers, one butler.

And, dressed in elegant attire, one old woman.

"At this late hour, what business do you have with this family?"

"...."

Claire Latreia.

I guess she heard me yelling.

Or, did she prepare to meet me beforehand...

"Claire-san... isn't your method a little too underhanded?"

"What are you talking about?"

"You used Gisu, to kidnap my mother."

As I said that, Claire looked at Gisu and lowered her eyebrows.

"Kidnapped? I know of no such thing."

"Going senile, eh? I guess this was to be expected..."

I winked at Gisu.

He returned a nod, and signaled at one of the guards.

"That guy. He came to pick her up."

"...."

He pointed at the guard.

That guy quickly put on a befuddled expression and shrugged.

He's trying to pretend he doesn't know.

"In this house, I have strictly forbidden associating with demon races.

Dealing with such such a filthy demon race, such a thing is impossible."

Claire gave Gisu a cold stare and said it flatly.

"If Zenith has been kidnapped, then we will send out a search party.

Of course, this demon race may be lying,

So I intend to hear his story in full detail..."

"Ugh..."

Gisu let out a groan and edged back.

Then silence.

Gisu is probably thinking that he might not survive tonight.

If that happens, then I probably won't be able to find Zenith.

I should make the first move.

"Then, you, even after all this, intend to deny knowing my mother's whereabouts?"

"We know no such thing. Even if there was, we would have no obligation to share such information with someone who has cut ties with this house."

Saying one disagreeable thing after another, this old lady...

Is it strategy?

What's the point of provoking me?

Perhaps, this fellow, could be one of Hitogami's apostles.

I can't read Hitogami's intent...

Possibly, she really might not know?

If it comes down to that, has Gisu been telling lies?

Why would Gisu lie?

Well he is a liar, but he doesn't tell the kind of lies that get people hurt.

"Claire-san..."

"What is it, Rudeus-san. If you still believe I am lying, would you like to search my estate?"

Claire let out a snort and sent me a cold look.

She's certainly confident.

She might have already moved Zenith to another location.

"When you search and don't find anything, please leave it at that. After all, you don't have any relation to the Latreia house, now do you?"

"...."

I probably have a bitter expression.

Even though this suspicious person is in front of me, I have no way to tell if she's speaking the truth.

I need to keep talking, but words aren't coming out.

I'm worried about Zenith.

But, judging from this old woman's eyes, I don't feel like I can get Zenith's location.

Rather, I could abduct Claire, and force the location out of her.

No, that's no good, let's not.

I have no evidence.

Only Gisu's word.

But, if it's true she was abducted by the Latreia house...

Wait, wait, calm down.

First of all, I need to focus on this conversation.

I knew she would play dumb from the start.

"Mother... what relationship does she have with the Latreia house..."

"That child is my daughter. As her mother, I have a duty to take care of my daughter who has strayed from the path."

"That! By marrying her off without considering her own will!?"

"...."

"I am Zenith's son. My father told me to [Protect my mother even if it costs my life]. I have a duty. Until I die, it is my responsibility to look after her. So please, return mother..."

"....."

Claire did not answer.

But she averted her gaze like she was unable to bear looking at me.

Why are you making such a face.

What is she thinking?

She's losing her composure.

Even Therese didn't say she was a bad person.

She's just difficult.

That's right.

Yeah.

I have to endure it, I have to keep her talking, and figure out her intention...

"The palace guards have arrived."

It was different.

Claire didn't avert her eyes.

She was looking behind us, out into the street.

There, guards, with lamps in hand, were running towards us.

"That is enough, piling up accusations in such a place, will I have to report you?"

I glared at Claire.

I gave a cold glare to this stubborn old woman who wouldn't listen to a word I said.

In my head, a vision of holding this old woman hostage and demanding she return Zenith flashed.

This gate is virtually nothing to me.

I could burst through the gate, hoist the old hag by the neck, and shout [Bring Zenith, NOW!] to those guys.

It wouldn't even take two seconds.

Only an instant.

But, would that bring Zenith back?

Looking at this old woman's cold-hearted face...

The other day, I went on a rampage.

From what I heard later, I blew away 6 or 7 guards.

Now there are twice as many guards surrounding me, and probably more on their way.

But, the only thing separating us is the gate.

"... Even if I have to take you hostage, I will find Zenith."

"Then do it. If you think that will bring Zenith back."

Arrogant.

Where does she get the courage to say that?

She should understand, I won't hesitate to act violently.

Don't you care about what happens to you?

Why do such a thing?

Shit, I can't read her intent.

Do you want me to go on a rampage...?

In front of the palace guards?

"Claire-san, could it be, you have been receiving divine revelations in your dreams?"

"... Ha? Asking that so suddenly? Divine revelation?"

Claire, for a moment, broke her cold expression.

She had a blank face. Completely, without any idea.

Gisu had a similar face earlier.

This, no.

She's not one of Hitogami's apostles.

However, that expression only lasted for a moment.

"... Hmph."

She averted her gaze, and focused on the approaching palace guards.

"Temple Knights [Bow Division] of the city guard! We heard reports of a loud noise, what has happened?"

"These people–"

"–I understand. We will withdraw for today."

Saying that took my last ounce of reason.

It's time to return.

While feeling depressed, I walked down the street of the residential area.

My thoughts are running in circles.

I understand that I am not calm.

It's hopeless, anger and frustration are consuming my thoughts.

"...."

I have no idea where Zenith is.

But, after that exchange.

In the face of that silent response.

I am convinced.

Claire took advantage of Gisu to kidnap Zenith.

I have no doubt.

Though I was also at fault... But without even coming to talk, to abduct her one-sidedly, feign ignorance, and then send me away...

Damn...

"That went badly... I'm no good in those types of situations."

"No, Gisu. You're not bad. You were thinking of mother, and even went to the religious district for her, didn't you?"

"A-, Ah..."

Gisu isn't a bad guy.

He was just used.

Although I think the timing was too good.

"Gisu... Mother, can you find her?"

"It's possible, but it might not go well?"

"I guess..."

Gisu is a demon race.

Just walking through the residential area, he attracts the eyes of passing soldiers.

Searching the religious district would be next to impossible.

I need to search for Zenith.

"...."

But, even indirectly, he can be useful.

I don't care about the methods as long as we can find the place.

I also have an idea.

Rudeus Greyrat is the enemy of the anti-demon race faction starting today.

Claire-baasan, you caused this.

I'll do it...

"Aisha, Gisu... This may be a little dangerous, but please help me."

"Of course... Oniichan... what do we need to do?"

Aisha asked in an uneasy voice.

I calmly looked down at Aisha and said...

"Kidnap the Shrine Maiden."

Gisu lurched up.

"Huh!? What kind of crazy stuff are you saying without warning!?"

Then came up to me and grabbed me by the shoulders.

"What the hell!"

"The Latreia house has deep ties with the Temple Knights. The Temple Knights are part of the Cardinal faction. The Cardinal faction is led by the Shrine Maiden, shouldn't she have the most influence here? So she'll be the most effective hostage. With her, we can definitely get mother back..."

I mean, using the Shrine Maiden in a hostage exchange is just an idea.

If our opponents have resorted to kidnapping, then it would be suitable as revenge.

"Yeah it might be effective, but think about the consequences! Even if Zenith is returned safely, the entire country of Milis could become your enemy!?"

Milis doesn't matter.

If it comes down to it I have Orsted's power and Ariel's authority.

I can give up my activities in this country.

Zenith is more important.

Fighting against Hitogami is also important, but I won't let that stop me from protecting my family.

"Senpai might be able to manage somehow, but I'm a demon race! I'll be killed just for knowing you!"

Gisu sounds pitiful.

Hearing the word 'killed' cooled my head a bit. I need to calm down.

The Latreia house, as well as the Temple Knights, would certainly become my enemy, but everyone around me would also be put in danger.

The army corp meeting at noon today was massive.

I don't know what to do.

The Pope won't take much heat, but Cliff would be targeted.

Thinking back, Aisha and Zanoba were killed by knights from Milis in the future diary.

In other words, if Milis becomes my enemy, I won't be safe even if I return to Sharia.

Moreover, it would definitely turn into an obstacle later on.

There are Milis followers all over the central continent.

The mercenary company's activities may be hindered.

Originally, I came here to become an ally of Milis.

If they're still hostile when Laplace revives...

That would definitely benefit Hitogami...

No, Hitogami couldn't predict that I would kidnap the Shrine Maiden.

This is just paranoia.

In any case, kidnapping the Shrine Maiden, it's a bad move.

No.... Wait.

Kidnapping the Shrine Maiden, didn't the Pope imply something like that.

If it goes well, then I might be able to rescue Zenith while crushing the Latreia house and the Cardinal faction.

I wouldn't mind siding with the Pope.

Anyway, if I want to sell the Ruijerd dolls, it's unavoidable.

Cliff should be able to understand.

It's regrettable about Therese.

Therese is the captain of the Shrine Maiden's escorts.

I'll be repaying the kindness of the woman who helped me twice, 10 years ago and yesterday, with enmity.

... Shit.

"Aisha, what do you think?"

I should ask for Aisha's opinion.

She was looking down with a serious and troubled face, but looked up at my words.

"Kidnapping the Shrine Maiden, I think that's going too far."

"I see."

"This isn't like my Oniichan who's calm and composed all the time... I think."

Your oniichan definitely isn't calm.

But, well, I see what she means, just now, that definitely wasn't calm.

If I don't calm down, it will be too easy to make errors in judgment.

Yeah...

Alright, calm down... I need to cam down and think.

First of all, blaming everything on Hitogami right now might be over-thinking it.

Thinking that guy is involved just leads to paranoia,

This is a problem between me and the Latreia house.

For now, that is.

Although I think the possibility is low from her reaction, but it's possible Claire is trying to bait me into a conflict with the Cardinal faction...

Anyway, I'm a man of the Pope's faction.

Doing that kind of thing to a man from the Pope's faction would be effective.

Claire's actions have had the opposite effect.

In the present situation, even if I suspect Hitogami's involvement, my only option is to annihilate any potential apostles.

This time, I can't just go around killing people,

And, like I learned in Shirone, the suspicious guys probably won't appear before me.

There's no use worrying over it.

So, for the time being, I'll act without assuming Hitogami's involvement.

"Alright. Kidnapping the Shrine Maiden is overkill. I'll stop."

It's not necessary to take a hard line yet.

I already have the Pope's backing.

Even Therese was friendly today.

If I speak with those two, I may be able to mediate a solution.

Before resorting to force, there are other things to try.

I went to the religious headquarters today for this kind of reason.

Even if that stubborn old woman has some plan, and arranged some strange man for Zenith, there wasn't a feeling of fait accompli.

Whatever the circumstances may be, kidnapping is just a means to an end, I need to put all of my actions to good use.

If that's the case, I will not hesitate to reduce the Latreia house to a vacant lot... No, calm down. Use of force is a last resort.

"I need to discuss this with various people. First of all, let's ask around. Someone should know about the Latreia house's movements."

As I said that, Gisu and Aisha had a look of relief.

With that answer, I seem to have been able to calm down.

"But, just in case, Gisu I want you to search for mother's whereabouts. Searching may be difficult... If you'd like, you can employ someone to help. I have money."

"Ah. Okay."

"What about me? What should I do?"

Aisha gripped her fist tightly and asked that while I was speaking to Gisu.

She might feel responsible too.

"... Well, Aisha, please keep looking for a suitable location for the mercenary branch."

"EH!? What about Zenith-okaasan?"

"Installing the communication lithograph and setting up a teleportation circle is an urgent priority. I need to consult with Orsted-sama about Hitogami's involvement."

"Oh, I see... That's right. And then?"

"Please assist Gisu in locating mother."

"Okay!"

Aisha nodded vigorously.

It may be difficult for Gisu as a lone demon race, but with Aisha they should form a strong team.

I have confidence in them.

"... But, if mother is in a dangerous situation, I will move regardless of the consequences. So both of you, be prepared to leave at a moment's notice."

"Ah."

"Understood."

They both gave a powerful nod.

Tomorrow I'll visit the religious headquarters again.

The next day.

I went into the room protected with the barrier once again, and met with the Pope.

Cliff was standing to the side.

"Your eminence, I am pleased to meet you in good health."

Cliff is also aware of last night's events.

I've fully explained to him the reasons I didn't return with Zenith.

As he showed indignation towards the Latreia house's reckless actions, I asked him to help me borrow the power of the Pope.

As a result, I was granted an audience for the second day in a row.

Since the Pope is very busy, it took some time before I was allowed to meet him.

"You seem weary, Rudeus-sama."

"You can tell?"

I touched my cheek.

Although I just shaved, I can feel some remaining whiskers.

I got angry remembering Claire's speech and conduct and couldn't sleep last night, as well.

I'm sure my face is a horrible mess.

"Yes. Is today's audience concerning that matter?"

The Pope's behavior suggests that he has seen through me.

The details of Zenith's case may have already reached him.

"To tell the truth, my mother was kidnapped last night."

"I see. Who is the perpetrator?"

The Pope looked at me with a slight smile on his face.

Looking at how he asked me who here, he most likely already knows.

I'd like to think that there's no chance of the Pope having been pulling the strings, but...

"It was the Latreia house."

After I told him the details concerning yesterdays events, the Pope squinted slightly.

"So you wanted to ask me to help you in your search?"

"Frankly, yes."

The pope stroked his beard as if he were pondering.

Scratching his Santa Claus-like beard.

Then, he looked at me.

His face held a slight smile, but it didn't reach his eyes.

"Well then, what shall I have you do..."

"Your eminence?"

Cliff let out a baffled voice in response to the Pope's words.

"He is my friend. This isn't about the faction, it's about family. I don't think it is right to bring up bargaining points..."

"That is why I bring them up, Cliff."

The Pope admonished Cliff in a gentle tone of voice.

"This is a problem of the Latreia house. It's not as if we can't intervene, but we shouldn't interfere with matters of other houses. If the Grimoire house were to meddle in their affairs, the Latreia house won't take kindly to it. But if we were to treat it as mediation by the Pope, we can get them to listen. This is an issue between mother, daughter, and grandchild. If we were to force ourselves in, the Grimoire house will owe a large debt to the Latreia house."

From the Latreia house's viewpoint, it would be like using a shrimp to fish up a sea bream. To the sea bream, it won't be worth it if it doesn't get anything substantial.

"Does your eminence have anything he desires from me?"

"Let's see, it would be quite simple to put it into words, but... It sounds like too good of a story for me. For the [Right Hand of the Dragon God] to come to me while troubled and ask for assistance... In the first place why would the Latreia house purposefully make an enemy of you, who is called the [Right Hand of the Dragon God]?"

"... I don't know. Maybe they aren't aware of that fact?"

Thinking back, Claire seemed to have been looking down on me from the very beginning.

Even though she acknowledged Aisha, she ignored my initial greeting, after all.

"Despite appearances, Count Latreia excels at gathering information. I'm certain he wouldn't miss information on someone as powerful as you, and I don't think he would make light of it."

By Count, he's not referring to Claire.

He's talking about Claire's husband, Carlyle.

"... I've never met the Count, who's the head of the family. It could be the uninformed Countess acting on her own."

Even if Claire heard the information, people have their own senses of values.

I'm not a noble, nor do I hold an important office in any country.

Even if she hears that I am the underling of some warrior who she only knows is called the Dragon God, she wouldn't really understand.

Even if I say I have connections with Ariel, she wouldn't know how close a relationship we hold.

She may think I'm simply a powerless person borrowing someone else's authority.

From the view of Claire's common sense, I may not have any merit.

"The Latreia house's Claire-dono certainly sometimes stresses pedigree too much... Thinking of it that way, it may be possible..."

The Pope thought while stroking his beard, and nodded.

"Well, I suppose it's fine. There is the saying 'nothing ventured, nothing gained', after all. Then, Rudeus-dono... what can you do, specifically?"

What can I do, huh?

In other words, he probably means [How far are you willing to go].

Basically, how strong my sincerity is.

"Let's see..."

What came to mind is what I suddenly thought of yesterday.

The plan I suddenly thought of that was naturally shot down.

However, it's a possibility.

"I could do something like kidnapping the miko-sama."

As soon as he heard those words, Cliff cried out.

"Kidnapping!? What the hell are you saying, Rudeus!?"

"Basically, I'm saying I can strike at the vitals of the anti-Demon Race faction."

"That's not it! If you go through with this you may completely destroy the Latreia house! You're saying that you intend to destroy your own house!"

I slowly turned to face Cliff.

"I have nothing to do with that house."

I turned my gaze away from the speechless Cliff.

The Pope had a smile on his face.

"Of course, that's only in terms of what I'm willing to do for your eminence. If I wanted to, I could reduce a town to ashes or make a forest into a vacant lot."

I lay out all my cards.

However, the Pope stroked his beard again.

It may seem like too good of a story for him.

He may think that it's someone's trap.

I don't mind if you're cautious of me.

At the very least, I don't have a hidden agenda.

I'm only thinking of saving Zenith.

"I'm against this!"

Cliff suddenly cried out.

"Kidnapping is a crime. No matter how much they are opposed to you, Grandfather, if you step in, the situation can be resolved!"

"..."

"Rudeus, you as well! Why would you want to stoop to their level!? This isn't like you... isn't the blood rushing to your head?"

Blood rushing to my head?

That's certainly the case.

I'm completely fed up with Claire's way of doing things.

I'm angry at Claire Latreia.

It's a miracle that I haven't resorted to violence.

If it wasn't Zenith, I wouldn't be this enraged.

When Eris was wounded by the North Emperor or Roxy was almost killed by the Death God, I wasn't infuriated.

They had determination.

They followed me of their own will, and had resolve.

If they ended up dying, I would certainly mourn.

I would respect their will, and grieve over their lack of strength.

However, currently Zenith doesn't have that determination.

When we were called over by the letter, I took her along without her saying whether or not she will go.

On top of that, she may be wed to some man she doesn't know and made to bear his children.

If, for argument's sake, Zenith had that determination, and came here of her own will, the story would be different.

If in refusal she fought and lost, and ended up like that. That I could still pardon.

Although I say 'pardon', I only meant that [I wouldn't become enraged].

If it came to that, feelings that would make me want to kill myself would enter my heart.

Something other than wrath.

Misery, or some other sort of sense of helplessness.

Rather than anger, a much more bitter emotion.

That's right.

I want to give Claire those feelings.

It's your fault the miko was kidnapped.

After being blamed and told to take responsibility, a troubled and helpless Claire.

I want to see that.

In short, I want revenge.

... I'm despicable, aren't I.

"Rudeus, it's not too late, you can still talk this over with them. If you want I could be there with you."

"Cliff-senpai..."

"The Latreia house offered to help you search for your mother, didn't they? That should have been out of consideration for your mother and sisters. Couldn't it be that in this case you are simply misunderstanding each other, and if you share your thoughts with each other you can come to an understanding?"

Listening to Cliff's words, I was slightly moved.

However, I immediately reverted.

Even I want to talk it over, if possible.

However, that old woman won't even listen to anything I say.

I don't feel like I can reconcile with that old woman at all.

Our ways of thinking and senses of values are too different.

It's almost as if we weren't even speaking the same language.

"... You may be right."

However, I think it over after having calmed down slightly.

It's only a difference between mine and Claire's senses of values.

Just as Cliff said, if start from the beginning with a third party present, we may be able to come up with a solution.

The Pope is not a candidate, due to his standing.

Mediation will turn into the trading of favors.

Cliff also isn't very suitable.

He still doesn't have much standing in this country.

Claire likely won't listen to anything he says.

However, there's still someone who I can consult with.

Someone who will likely be heard by Claire, and can't trade favors between the factions.

Rather than the Pope, I should have consulted with that person first.

"I'll try consulting with Therese-san... Your eminence, my deepest apologies, please forget about the kidnapping matter."

"That's probably best."

The Pope said that and smiled softly.

"Among the knights of the Order of the Temple, she has an particularly respectable way of thinking. She'll surely lend her assistance to you..."

At the Pope's words I bowed my head, and Cliff let out a sigh of relief.

Starting the next day, I began consulting with Therese.

However, there was a slight problem.

She's the leader of the miko's guards.

She's the [Middle Leader] of the Order of the Temple's Shield Group.

She normally stays together with the miko and protects her.

As for what that miko, she normally doesn't do much of anything at all.

Like the Pope, the miko is normally confined to the center of the church headquarters.

She seems to have frequently gone out in the past, but since the assassination attempt, she doesn't leave the headquarters unless on church business.

Staying in the headquarters are a number of Temple Knights and users of exorcism or barrier magic, and the miko herself has a little under ten people as her personal guard.

She's in an extremely secure position.

Meeting Therese who is always with that miko is quite difficult.

Letters won't reach her, and she won't come out even when called.

It's almost at the point where I wish I had gotten the Pope's help instead.

Of course, it's not like meeting is impossible.

According to the Pope's information, she's not trapped inside her room year-round.

Once every several days, for just a short time, she's allowed to go out as far as the park inside of the headquarters.

It's the miko's free time.

She goes out to the park that's open to all believers, looks at the trees and flowers, has silly conversations with her guards, and listens to the occasional commoner.

To the miko that lives an extremely confined lifestyle, it's the one and only thing she has to look forward to.

I'll aim for there and meet Therese.

Be that as it may, openly waiting there for them to come out will arouse unnecessary suspicion.

The miko is a VIP, after all.

Regardless of whether I have business with Therese, if I prowl around after her the Order of the Temple will naturally have their eyes on me.

As such, I wander the park nearly everyday.

As if it were only natural, I escort Cliff to the headquarters, and as if it were only natural I pass the time in the park.

My surface reason will be that I am there since I like the Sarak trees.

Furthermore, I bring a canvas with me and draw pictures.

The pictures can't be finished in a single day, so it becomes an excuse to visit every day.

At the same time, Aisha and Gisu are moving on their own.

Aisha is searching for a building at max speed.

Gisu is searching for Zenith while his hires are observing the Latreia house's servants.

Of course, there are no results yet.

While doing such, I ran into the miko on her free day.

"Ah, Rudeus-sama! You have come today as well!"

When the miko saw me, she rushed straight at me.

"You promised me! Please tell me about Eris!"

As she wished, I talked to her about Eris.

Eris had many interesting episodes, and the miko listened to me talk with a delighted expression.

Her guards were vigilant towards me.

Their jobs are to keep suspicious people away from the miko.

Of course, I'm not a suspicious person.

My identity as Cliff's friend is known, and I'm acquainted with Therese, the leader of the guards.

After talking with the miko, I consulted with Therese.

She seems to have heard about Zenith being kidnapped.

She earnestly advised me.

"I can't imagine mother being that high-handed... Anyway, I'll have a day off soon. During that time, I'll talk with mother. Don't worry, Zenith isn't going to be married of to some other man while you aren't aware."

Therese said that while thumping her chest, which is just as large as Zenith's.

How reliable.

"However, mother was strongly opposed to me joining the knights, so she may not listen to what I have to say."

"... What should we do if that's the case?"

"At that time, I can go to father or brother, there are many people I can consult with. Just leave it to me."

Truly reliable.

Several days passed.

Zenith still hasn't been found.

According to Gisu, none of the servants have been showing suspicious movements.

There weren't any trying to make contact with someone outside, either.

Of course, there were no signs of Zenith entering or leaving.

Therefore, Gisu assessed that the probability of Zenith being inside the estate is high.

The building for the mercenary company has been secured.

It's a former bar near the commerce district.

Aisha is currently in the process of preparing preserved food and clothes for the company branch.

I'm setting up a communication lithograph and emergency teleportation circle in the basement.

The teleportation circle is the type that uses magic crystals, and since it connects to the scroll I carry with me, it can only be used once.

Well, I probably won't ever use it.

Anyway, using the communication lithograph, I immediately consulted with Orsted.

I told Orsted about the circumstances, and was given some information, as well as his conjectures on Hitogami's intentions.

First, about the miko.

She has no name, and is simply referred to as the miko.

When she was taken as a miko by the church, her name was discarded.

From then on, she was treated as an important person in public, and a tool in private.

That miko's power is [Memory Reading].

By looking into someone's eyes, she can see their memories.

Her job is interrogation.

She is called upon during interrogations within the church and trials by the country, and examines the suspect's memories.

Bishops and nobles who committed what should have been a perfect crime can be convicted on her words alone.

She is a powerful lie detector, and her power is acknowledged by the king.

This strengthens the cardinal's faction, and weakens the Pope's.

However, seeing memories...

She can only see them, but I still had my hopes.

That maybe she can recover Zenith's memories.

According to Orsted, her power only allows her to see them so it's impossible, but...

If I get a chance, I'll try to get her to examine Zenith.

However, it doesn't seem like the miko's power can be used by outsiders.

The church, or rather the cardinal's faction, have a monopoly on her power, so permission is needed in order to use it.

Even for the royal family or the pope, without the cardinal's permission they cannot receive her help.

Just because I get along with her, it doesn't mean I can ask her to come with me to the Latreia residence and expose Claire's falsehood.

By the way, about this powerful miko.

She seems to be fated to have an extremely short life.

It seems that no matter which loop, she usually would die around age 10, and would never live to see age 30.

Whether you consider her fate or power, her chance of being Hitogami's apostle is close to zero, according to Orsted.

Now, as for the Latreia house.

Currently, there are 4 people in the Latreia house that have reached adulthood, excluding Zenith.

The current head of the family, Count Carlyle Latreia.

His wife, Countess Claire Latreia.

The eldest son, Temple Knight Edgar Latreia.

The third daughter, Temple Knight Therese Latreia.

The eldest daughter Anise has married into the family of Marquis Birnkrant.

The household of Marquis Birnkrant is around one day to the west of Milishion.

Hence, she is currently not in Milishion.

The same goes for the eldest son Edgar.

As a platoon leader in the Order of the Temple, he seems to have moved to the same town as Anise.

The head of the family, Carlyle, is a battalion commander in the Order of the Temple.

It's quite a busy post, so he usually stays at the Order's lodging house while working, and only returns to the household around once every 10 days.

As I found out the other day, Therese usually stays at the headquarters as the miko's guard.

She basically doesn't even return home for holidays.

In other words, Claire is essentially managing the estate on her own.

I also asked Orsted about Claire.

Claire Latreia:

Eldest daughter of the Latreia family; stubborn from the moment she was born; the house's education raised her to be a person strict with both herself and others; once she decides something, she will never yield and will keep the same opinion until the day she dies.

Her husband Carlyle married into the family.

She has one son, and three daughters.

As far as Orsted knows, she doesn't particularly leave her name in history and doesn't have any large accomplishments, just a regular noblewoman you can find anywhere.

She likes people that are fair and righteous, and hates crimes.

Orsted also judged her not to be someone who would kidnap someone by force.

Furthermore, he gave me the details about the power struggle in the Church of Milis.

As I already knew, the Church of Milis is split into the Pope's faction and the Cardinal's faction.

They split around 300 years ago.

Until then the Church of Milis followed the scripture saying that 'all Demons should be destroyed' and rejected the Demon Race.

However, when a certain priest read the scripture that said 'all races are equal under Milis', he said 'then are the Demon Race equal as well?' and caused a division in the clergy.

Ever since, the Demon Race Acceptance faction and Demon Race Expulsion faction have been continually in conflict.

Presently, it's something like this:

The Pope's faction: the Demon Race Acceptance faction. Currently the larger faction. Cliff's grandfather is the Pope. The majority of the general populace in the Kingdom of Milis and the Order of Instruction belong to this faction. (The Pope's faction, the Acceptance faction)
The Cardinal's faction: the Demon Race Expulsion faction. The faction that the miko belongs to. The Latreia house and the majority of the other old noble families and the Order of the Temple belong to this faction.
The royalty and the Order of the Church are neutral.

Until 50 years ago, the Expulsion faction was in control, and non-human races in Milishion were strongly oppressed, and there were many quarrels with the inhabitants of the Great Forest.

However, after they put an end to the escalating conflicts with the Beast Race, the Acceptance faction's influence rose.

For the following 30 years, the Acceptance faction had complete control, but then the miko was born, and gave her support to the Expulsion faction. The archbishop that was part of the Expulsion faction rose to Cardinal, and the Expulsion faction is currently rising back up.

That about sums it up.

Lastly, about Hitogami's involvement.

From what Orsted said, there don't seem to be any people of importance currently in Milis.

No matter how much the Kingdom of Milis falls, they won't side with the Demon Race when Laplace starts a war.

To both Hitogami and Orsted, which faction wins out doesn't matter at all.

But then, the most ideal situation for me is if Cliff becomes Pope.

There is the possibility of Hitogami acting to prevent that.

However, even considering that the recent development is strange.

I can't see the meaning in kidnapping Zenith.

Honestly, it seems fine to consider Hitogami's involvement to be minimal.

"If you're not sure about someone, kill them. It may thwart Hitogami's predictions."

is what Orsted always says.

This time, I'm starting to get the feeling that I should really do that.

So far, that's all we have.

I probably should have gathered this much information beforehand.

Well, this visit to Milis was rather abrupt, and I was optimistically thinking that I would just arrive, give my greetings and shortly depart.

When I go to the Kingdom of the Dragon King, I'll make sure to do a better job preparing.

Another few day pass.

Therese came bearing good news.

"Mother implicitly confessed to confining Zenith."

"Ooooh!"

Therese used one of her few vacation days to meet with Claire.

While being cross-examined, it seems she indirectly admitted to using her subordinates to deceive Gisu and kidnap Zenith.

Thus, she is definitely confining Zenith somewhere.

"However, as I expected mother seemed a little off... it's like she's hiding something, or is conflicted. I don't think she's seriously considering marrying Zenith off, but..."

"I see... so, where is she being confined?"

"Sorry, I couldn't get that out of her."

Therese's expression became gloomy.

She tried to get Claire to cough up Zenith's location, but failed.

After that, she tried to persuade Claire to return Zenith to me.

Something like, I'm not sure what Zenith's current condition is, but I'm sure you won't be able to easily find a marriage partner for a widow with a mental condition.

Something like, I'm sure you don't acknowledge Rudeus, but he is in a position to immediately be granted audience with the Pope, you should interact with him more seriously.

Something like, that kind of person said that he'll care for Zenith until he dies, so isn't it fine to entrust her to him?

However, Claire gave some meaningless reply and evaded the topic.

"She ended up moving the topic to asking me when I'll finally get married... Sorry. When she says that it always turns into a fight..."

"..."

Gisu said that after the kidnapping, there have been no suspicious movements.

Claire was acting as if she were hiding something, or conflicted.

The information from Orsted that she's not the type of person to forcibly kidnap someone.

Something may be going on after all.

...Even if something's going on, I don't have any obligation to take that into consideration.

She didn't take my circumstances into consideration, after all.

She was making light of me.

"Well, the Latreia house wasn't even able to arrange a marriage partner for me. I'm sure that they won't be able to quickly find one for Zenith."

"Huh? Ah, that's right. That's definitely the case."

I don't really understand the logic there, but if Therese says so then it's certainly true.

"Anyways, mother is just being stubborn. Next I'll close in on her from her surroundings. I've already passed the story on to father, and I've called brother and sister back from the countryside. Although she's like that, mother respects the opinions of men. If father or brother talks to her, she will definitely listen."

"You've been taking care of everything... I can't thank you enough."

"You don't need to thank me. Mother's in the wrong, after all."

Therese is handling things well.

To the point that I wonder why she's so devoted.

Even though we've only met once or twice...

"Therese! Is your conversation over?"

When the conversation came to a pause, the miko came over.

"Yes, miko-sama! I express my humblest apologies for taking time for personal matters while on duty!"

"It's fine. He's Eris-sama's husband, after all. Favors must be repaid. Milis-sama is always watching over us, after all."

I see, Therese working so hard to help me is also because of Eris.

I get the feeling that this is the first time that someone was thankful for something Eris had done.

Alright, once the children are a little bigger, I'll come back with Eris.

"Miko-sama, it is almost time."

"Let us return to your room."

"Rudeus-dono, thank you as always."

Recently, the miko's followers have become lenient around me.

Certainly at the beginning, since I had connections to someone from the Pope's faction, the guards made preparations to strike me down several times, but recently they haven't really been flaring up at me.

They still remain vigilant, but since I'm more or less neutral in regards to the power struggle, they have been thinking of me as a safe person to associate with.

No, I've been giving it my best as well.

I never showed any intention to harm the miko, I haven't been strangely humbling myself in front of the miko, and I've always been trying to entertain the miko with humorous stories.

Whenever she's with me, the miko is always in a good mood.

After she returns to her room, she seems to look forward to my next visit.

It's the result of my efforts.

Furthermore, there's also the fact that Theresethe Guard Commander treats me cordially.

When the commander isn't at all vigilant, it may seem silly to be on guard.

Honestly, I'd like them to be more on guard.

Like this, kidnapping the miko would be a piece of cake.

However, there's a chance that Therese's efforts prove fruitless, and Zenith doesn't return.

If my back is against the wall, and there's nothing else I can do, I'll do it.

Whether it's kidnapping the miko or raiding the Latreia house, I'll do whatever it takes.

My number one priority is Zenith.

If I don't rescue her, I won't be able to face the dead Paul, or Lilia who I left Sylphy in the care of.

Based on that, I avoid eye contact with the miko.

I don't know to what extent her ability to read memories will let her read someone's thoughts.

If I meet eyes with her, she may not be able to tell that I'll resort to kidnapping her if necessary.

However, I don't want to take any chances.

Whatever the case, I'll make sure not to initiate eye contact with her.

I don't think any of the guards noticed that I'm avoiding eye contact.

Even if they did, the headquarters seem to be full of people who avoid eye contact with the miko.

Anybody would find it unpleasant to have their memories read.

Nobody should find it strange to avoid eye contact with her.

Kidnapping her would be easy.

All I would need to do is hide a scroll with a teleportation circle on it in the ground underneath the chair she's always sitting in.

To carry out the kidnapping, I just need to put magic power into the magic circle behind the guard's backs.

When the miko disappears before my eyes, I'll surely be doubted.

However, they won't be able to prove it.

The ink would disappear, leaving only the paper.

Save rare cases, nobody would notice that I used a teleportation circle.

The teleportation circle connects with the mercenary company's branch office.

That area is filled with food and clothing to establish the mercenary company.

While carrying out negotiations, Aisha will watch over the miko.

However, I'd like to avoid this if at all possible.

That would be inexcusable to Therese, who is in charge of guarding the miko.

She has truly been treating me warmly.

She felt indignation at Claire's high-handed methods.

To help with persuasion, she got in touch with her siblings in a town away from Milishion.

Although I still don't know what Lord Carlyle who should be nearby thinks...

In any case, Therese is seriously trying to persuade Claire.

I don't want to take advantage of her and carry out the kidnapping.

"Therese-san. If you have time, please introduce me to Lord Carlyle, aunt, and uncle. Not only should I give them my greetings, I'd like to personally ask them for their assistance as well."

"Sure."

However, even with that.

If necessary, I'll act on my own.

Even if it's dishonorable, I want to fulfill the promises I made to Paul and Lilia.

If it comes to that, though, I'd like to sever my ties with Therese beforehand.

When I am sure that Therese will not be able to persuade her, I'd at least like to not use any cowardly tricks, and beat down the guards from the front to kidnap the miko.

It's opposite of what I prepared for.

"Instead of Zenith who has such a magnificent son, why can't they try to find a partner for me?... *sigh*"

To the Therese who was grumbling while departing, I once again bowed my head.

I'm really not that magnificent.

Another few days pass.

It's been 14, maybe 15 days since I came to this country.

New information arrived from Gisu and Aisha, who participated in the search after securing a base.

Yesterday, someone from a clothing store came and went from the Latreia house.

When Aisha and her helpers tied her up, they found out that she had received an order for a wedding dress, and took measurements for it from a woman in the Latreia household.

Since the woman was described as slightly past her prime with a vacant look in her eyes, it's definitely Zenith.

Furthermore, Claire seems to have had her butler go out in secret yesterday to contact someone in the church.

From the course of events, I guess a marriage partner has been found.

If that's the case, we're almost out of time.

However, we shouldn't rush.

Currently, the Latreia house's eldest son and eldest daughter are headed here after receiving Therese's call.

According to the contents of the letter that previously arrived, they are going to tell Claire "No matter how you look at it, there's no way you should marry off a daughter that can't even speak."

I still haven't met Lord Carlyle.

As a battalion commander, I'm sure he's very busy.

But then, according to Therese "He's not the type of person to permit Claire's current actions."

Aisha also remembered that "The head of the family treated me kindly."

I don't know what he's going to say regarding this case, but I would like to meet him soon.

If the whole family including the head are opposed, Claire can't simply do what she wants.

Even if she manages the household, she's not the head.

Even if she tries to do something, it's just a matter of time.

You could call it, checkmate.

I can't be thankful enough to Therese who quickly changed the situation.

Even if that doesn't work, we already know Zenith's whereabouts, and I've grasped the estate's combat potential.

If we go to Therese beforehand, we can get a rough sketch of the mansion and a conjecture on where Zenith's being held.

Of course, if the family head becomes an ally, it won't reach the level where we need to perform a raid.

Just slightly forcefully find Zenith and censure Claire.

If it's like that, it will end as merely a problem between me and the Latreia house.

Good.

Somehow, it seems we can put an end to it simply as a problem between me and the house.

Without causing trouble for Cliff or the Pope, we can use the whole Latreia family besides Claire as intermediaries.

There have been twists and turns, but it looks like it will settle into the ideal form.

Yup.

It's a good thing I didn't rampage back there after all.

If I properly consult with my surroundings and remove the obstacles, there's no problem at all.

There was no need to kidnap the miko.

Back then, I wasn't thinking straight.

If you try to find a way to break through everything in one shot, you may end up doing something outrageous.

Steadily taking care of everything one by one.

If you do that, then look, you can properly corner the villain.

I can't get revenge, but she won't be able to continue.

"..."

While thinking such things, I headed for the headquarters' courtyard.

During these 14, 15 days all these Sarak trees' blossoms have fallen.

However, in my picture they are in full bloom.

Let's let the pink petals fall today as well.

That picture will also be finished soon.

Even I think that it's an awful drawing.

In the beginning, the miko's cronies were making fun of me to their hearts' extent.

However, when I added in the miko wearing a white one-piece dress, they changed their opinions in an instant.

It was a storm of praises.

They are a simple lot.

The miko also said that she'd like to have the picture when it's done.

If my pictures are fine with you, you can have as many as you want.

Incidentally, I'm also thinking about secretly making a figure to show her.

Now that I think about it, even without weakening the Demon Race Expulsion faction's fighting power to raise the Pope's faction's influence, if the miko uses her authority to say "I approve of the sale of these figures!", it will probably be enough.

At first I won't sell Demon Race figures, but if I sell more and more figures and then make a Demon Race one as part of the series...

No, it's still impossible.

The miko doesn't seem to have that much authority.

"...Huh?"

Suddenly, I felt something was out of place at the entrance.

I can feel people's presence.

"...Have they already arrived?"

Normally, a while after I enter the park a number of guards will enter the garden and patrol, and then the miko will come out.

There usually isn't anyone there around this time, I wonder if they started the patrol early.

Or maybe, it's someone else entirely.

I stepped foot inside the garden.

The completely flowerless Sarak trees.

Set up underneath that, my easel and canvas.

I can't see the figures of any people.

I thought I felt their presence, but I guess it was my imagination.

Since when I think about it, it's not like I have an eye like Ruijerd's.

"Hm?"

In that one place, there's something I don't remember.

On top of the easel.

On top of the easel is a burning candle.

Standing alone, a single candle.

The flame was slowly dancing in the light of the sun.

Now that I get a closer look, I can see footprints in the flowerbed.

One set of footprints.

They lead to the other side of the Sarak tree.

Someone seems to be hiding behind its trunk.

"...Therese-san?"

While calling out, I opened the eye of foresight.

No reply.

Something's wrong.

"Is someone there!?"

While letting out a stronger voice, I instill the Magic Armor with mana.

Ready for battle.

While distributing my attention to all my surroundings, I approach the Sarak tree.

If they don't come out then it's fine.

While keeping my distance, I'll attack with magic once I reach a blind spot.

So I don't damage the tree that the miko likes... Wind magic.

Victory goes to he who strikes first.

"Huh?"

The mana I'm pouring into my right hand is dispersing.

Something's not right.

Once I noticed that, it was already too late.

When I took a large back-step, I slammed into the wall behind me.

When I looked back, there is nothing there.

No, there was an invisible wall.

"...!"

I immediately look to my feet.

There, hidden in the light of the morning sun, is a magic circle that's faintly glowing with a pale blue light.

"...A barrier, huh."

It's a barrier magic circle that I remember seeing before.

When you try to leave the area cordoned off by the magic circle, an invisible wall obstructs you.

When you try to use magic within the bounds of the magic circle, it disperses.

"It's a King Ranked barrier, Rudeus-kun."

A voice could be heard from behind the tree.

Slowly emerging from the tree's shadow is a woman clad in blue armor.

A head that resembles Zenith's is hidden behind a boorish helmet.

Not just her.

From the shadows of other trees in the thicket, men covered in armor are appearing one after another.

The ones who gather around the otaku princess, otakus.

Also known as the Order of the Temple.

Or at least I think so, but their faces are covered by helmets with weird shapes.

"Sorry, but... we received information that you were attempting to kidnap the miko-sama."

I was astonished.

The knights were circling the barrier to surround me.

The only one who gave away her whereabouts, Therese, spoke from right in front of me.

"Therefore, we will now begin the Inquisition."

The men wearing helmets stabbed their swords into the ground, scabbard and all.

A strange sound echoed throughout the surroundings.

Hello everyone.

Rudeus Greyrat here.

Presently, I'm surrounded by those guys.

You know, those guys in polished blue armor. Eight knights were closing in around me.

Today I think I'll take a moment to introduce them one by one.

Knight #1, Therese, directly in front of me.

Therese Latreia.

Yep.

My aunt, one of Latreia's lot.

Out of all the Temple Knights in the expulsion faction, she has a slightly different nature.

She was sympathetic to me despite my ties to the demon race...

Rather, demons and humans, we're really not all that different, are we?

You'd normally show me a kindhearted face, but what kind of expression are you wearing now?

Your face is hidden by a helmet, so I can't tell.

Let's proceed clockwise, to the right.

And, on Therese's right...

A man wearing a skull-like helmet.

The side of his breastplate is cracked.

That injury looks familiar.

I don't know his name, but he looks like a knight with a name like [Skull Ash].

He's a skull-head, no doubt.

Next to him...

A man wearing a garbage can-like helmet you'd see on the street corners of Milis.

Out of the 7 other people here, only you chose to wear a red cloak.

The Miko really likes that cloak, she would always wipe her dirty hands on it.

I think his name was [Dust Box].

And to his right...

A man wearing a smooth helmet with the words [Sleep Peacefully] engraved in it.

He's probably over two meters tall.

Once I'd seen the Miko ride on top of his shoulders to pick fruits off the trees in the garden.

His name was something like [Grave Keeper].

Number four...

He's wearing a helmet like a bamboo broom on his head.

His armor is featureless.

Well...

Broom... cleaning...

Ah, perhaps this guy was called [Trash Sweeper].

Three remaining.

Honestly I can barely tell them apart, I won't be able to remember them.

If I'm not mistaken, they should have names like [Death] or [Grave].

Whenever the Miko would call out to them, they would proudly puff out their chests.

They were code names that made my back itch.

Oh, that's right.

[Black Coffin].

[Burial Garment].

[Cortege Head].

It was something like that.

The team name... what was it... um...

"It is time to commence the inquisition! Inquisition Chief of the [Defense of the Holy Sepulcher (Anastasia Keep)], Therese Latreia initiating!"

"Hah!"

The seven knights surrounding me stabbed their swords into the ground.

That's right, they were called the [Defense of the Holy Sepulcher (Anastasia Keep)].

I think Therese told me that once.

"Then I shall begin questioning the accused. Are there any objections!?"

"No objection!"

"No objection!"

"Objection! Movement for immediate execution!"

"No objection!"

"No objection!"

"No objection!"

"No objection!"

"Objections dismissed!"

Aw, Dust-san looks depressed.

That's right, finding out the facts incidentally, after passing judgement with a smirk and no investigation, that's no good.

... Ah, it's my turn.

"Rudeus Greyrat stands as the accused!"

Um... Please wait a moment.

I can't swallow this situation.

Somebody, give me a hint.

Here's what happened...

In order to rescue Zenith I met with Therese, the captain of the Miko's guard, at the religious headquarters, to lay the groundwork for negotiations, and was captured in a king-class barrier.

According to their story, I'm apparently suspected of being a heretic plotting to kidnap the Miko.

Ah, that's right, thank you inner monologue.

Okay.

Yeah, I might have considered kidnapping the Miko once or twice.

However I gave up on that, I came here to ask Therese to help negotiate for Zenith's release.

In other words, this situation is some kind of mistake.

Has somebody been spreading false rumors?

I haven't told my kidnapping idea to that many people.

Aisha, Gisu, Cliff... and the Pope?

The Pope is the most likely suspect.

Or, maybe Gisu was caught, and spilled everything after being tortured.

... Is Aisha safe?

"The trial has begun! Defendant Rudeus, you are required to answer all questions honestly."

"... Yes."

I don't understand the situation.

For the time being I should settle down and listen.

If I start acting violently here it will only send me back to square one.

"Defendant Rudeus Greyrat.

Have you or have you not been distributing books claiming that demon races are not evil, in order to seduce the hearts of believers?"

They seem to have been investigating me.

Well, the Pope also knew.

I wonder if they have a database somewhere.

"No."

"Please answer honestly. Are you claiming that our investigation was misinformed?"

"I'm not freely distributing the books, I'm properly making money."

"That can't be possible, selling them at such a cheap price."

Well, I guess it is cheap.

I'm more focused on volume than profit margins.

"Therese you should also understand, I–"

"The defendant is not permitted to speak outside of directly answering questions."

I just want you to listen for a moment.

I have a reason, to help Ruijerd.

Even you should know that Therese.

We've spoken about this in the past.

"Defendant Rudeus Greyrat.

Do you worship the demon race and revere them as God?"

"..."

There's no use answering these kinds of questions.

"No, I do not believe in God."

"Unbelievable!"

"The accused has lied!"

"It's a lie!"

"Liar!"

"He must be lying!"

"It is my judgment that the defendant is lying!"

"That's a lie!"

"According to the majority vote, it is concluded to be a lie."

It was concluded.

A majority vote, how democratic.

That's right.

I guess an inquisition is this kind of thing.

"This is the last question.

Defendant Rudeus Greyrat.

Have you planned to kidnap the Miko, the symbol of the Milis religion?"

"No. I may have said as much as a joke, but it never reached the level of creating a plan."

Well when I said it, it certainly wasn't a joke...

But that doesn't mean I'd made preparations.

Take it with a grain of salt... it was a joke.

"Lie!"

"The accused has lied!"

"It's a lie!"

"He's lying!"

"It's a lie!"

"It is my judgment that the defendant is lying!"

"That is a lie!"

Right.

Well this is an interesting turn.

I absolutely can't start laughing at my own inquisition.

That's no way to determine if someone is lying, but laughing at this farce won't help.

However, that was the last question...

"According to the majority, it is concluded to be a lie."

At Therese's solemn words, the seven knights struck their swords.

Wow, that's intimidating.

If I hadn't been observing their substance this past month, it might have gotten to me.

"As a result of the trial, the defendant Rudeus Greyrat is hereby recognized as a heretic."

"No objection!"

"No objection!"

"No objection!"

"I object, such a judgment is unnecessary! I recommend sending the defendant home to tend to his rice harvest!"

"... No objection!"

"No objection!"

"No objection!"

"No objection!"

When I butted in with my objection, they glared at me for a moment.

I'm sorry, it was Trash-san's turn.

"The inquisition has been concluded. For the crime of attempted kidnapping, the judgment is capital punishment!"

"What, is that like the death penalty?"

I don't really expect an answer, but I decided to ask anyway.

"No... your life will not be taken.

Your hands will be cut off to prevent the use of magic, then your arms will be sealed within a barrier and encased in earth."

I got my answer.

Well, this isn't a situation to mess around in, what should I do...

Their goal is to confine me.

I'll have plenty of opportunities to attack later.

However, they plan to seal me.

They plan to cut off my hands, and me in a barrier.

Furthermore they plan to encase my arms in earth.

If that's the case, I won't be capable of magic or swordsmanship.

I guess that's the meaning behind being [sealed].

If you do that, I won't be able to touch my wives' breasts.

I'd have to go back to using artificial arms...

Zariff's prosthetic hand doesn't have a bad sense of touch, but it doesn't feel very good for the person being massaged.

After all, a human hand should be warm and soft, and there's no warmth in a prosthetic hand.

"Therese-san, do you like to cripple people as a hobby?"

"... Isn't it a good hobby not to kill people?"

I feel like I've gotten a glance at her true nature.

I wonder if she really thinks that way.

The hands are used to kill people if they're allowed freedom...

Even though it's the opposite... I need these hands for love, not war.

"Er, but if I embrace my wife without any hands, won't I look stupid?"

"Ha? What...?"

"Eh, ah, for example, embracing my wife... pleasurably, you know."

"Che!"

After being told such an embarrassing thing twice, she finally got it and clicked her tongue at me.

What for...

Meh.

Even if you catch me being ero, it's not like I need your approval.

"Well in that case, I guess you guys aren't just going to let me escape?"

"That's right."

"That trial was a joke, are you serious?"

"That's right."

"If you called over Miko-sama, I could prove my innocence... Certainly Miko-sama should be at such a trial?"

"... A gathering of seven Temple Knights has more than enough authority to convict a simple heretic."

"In other words, you do not plan to call Miko-sama over."

"That... is correct."

I can't see Therese's expression under her helmet.

But her voice was trembling, just a little.

"You've been kind to me up until now, was that all an act leading to this moment?"

"... No, we, even Miko-sama had accepted you. This is your betrayal Rudeus-kun."

"This is not my betrayal, I trusted you Therese, and came to get along with Miko-sama who is important to you."

"...."

No answer.

She should have heard me.

Ha...

It's a pity.

It's really a shame.

This time, I really intended to get along with both sides.

I tried to restrain myself, I denied my rage, I was going to try to rescue Zenith peacefully.

"Therese, what will become of my mother?"

".... I will take responsibility in persuading Claire. But at this time, that is irrelevant."

Fumu.

Judging from her answer, it doesn't seem that Therese is the main culprit.

"I am certainly not a Milis believer, though I do have a connection with the Pope... But you understood that from the beginning, didn't you? So why–"

"Haven't you asked enough questions?"

My question was cut off by a cold voice.

No sign of an answer.

Though I suppose this wasn't a 'give and take' in the first place.

"Then allow me to ask a final question, was this information given to you as a divine revelation in a dream?"

"No. This information is from a credible source. We would not trust the words of an incredible person."

"Even if the God in the dream calls himself Milis?"

The moment I said that, the knights around me began shouting protests.

"Milis is not an oracle!"

"That is why Milis is God."

"Even if there was a divine revelation, such a thing would not be given to lowly knights such as ourselves!"

"Only Miko-sama could be worthy of receiving such a revelation."

"That's right! Milis-sama doesn't even call out to the Miko!"

"Milis is God!"

"Those who doubt God are the devil!"

Then, surrounded by those voices, Therese proudly said...

"Yes, that's right. Well said everyone... Rudeus-kun, our faith is absolute."

"... I am relieved to hear that."

For the time being I may be surrounded by fanatics, but there doesn't seem to be an apostle of Hitogami among them.

Everyone here seems to be a pious Milis believer.

It's enough evidence just listening to them.

"...."

I lifted my hands out of the sleeves of my robe.

The sound reverberated through the cool air.

My left hand is equipped to deal with this kind of situation.

"[Absorption]"

I activated the magic absorbing stone in my palm.

The barrier at my feet disappeared without a sound.

The Temple Knights' eyes opened wide.

"Well then, shall we begin the fight?"

"All hands! Spread out!"

At Therese's command, the Temple Knights jumped back.

I sidestepped towards the Temple Knights as they were trying to take distance, and started generating rock bullets with both hands.

Speed and hardness so-so.

Only to the degree that they might die if I hit them in the vitals.

Firing.

You're up first, Dust Box!

"Support!"

"Goodbye!"

The two rock bullets I fired towards Dust were deflected by the Temple Knights at his sides.

In their hands were something like translucent shields.

Elementary ranked barrier magic, [Magic Shield].

... Is that really elementary ranked? I was stopped by an elementary ranked spell?

"Dust, Grave, Skull right flank!

Trash, Coffin, Burial take the left!

Cortege and I will act as a mobile unit!"

Three people on each side fired magic off in unison.

Fire, water, and earth.

Three different attributes, not that it matters.

"[Absorption]"

While dissolving the magic with my gauntlet, I fired rock bullets to counter.

But, they were repelled.

The guy casting the barrier magic seems to be defending from behind.

"–With your blessing the small ember becomes a searing flame! [Flamethrower]!"

"–Bring down your majestic sword of ice, and strike! [Icicle Break]!"

At the same time magic was fired off from the other side.

Fire and water.

That's not it! The third one had his hands on the ground.

An Earth Lance!

"[Absorption]!"

I dissolved the fire and water magic simultaneously.

At the same time I countered the Earth Lance by creating a quagmire to disable it.

Oops, I was too slow.

I can't fire a counter.

But my legs still work.

I instantly back-stepped to avoid the magic flying at me from the other side.

Only one spell.

Only a fire spell. It looked like a normal [Fire Ball]?

Only one?

There are three enemies on that side, why not three?

I don't have time to think about that.

I aimed my hands at both their left and right flanks.

"[Stone Cannon]!"

Because I had gained some distance stepping back, I saw it well.

The Temple Knights' formation had three people on each side.

Among them, two people had translucent shields, and jumped to defend from my rock bullets.

Well played.

Though I'd increased the speed and mass of the rock bullets from earlier, they easily deflected them.

That style looks familiar.

The Water God Style.

I see, it can even be used in conjunction with barrier magic. That's amazing.

"Spirits of the earth! Answer my call and rise fourth to pierce the heavens! [Earth Lance]!"

"Magnificent spirits of the water, I appeal to the Emperor of Thunder! Bring down your majestic sword of ice, and strike! [Icicle Break]!"

In that moment, two of the Knights without the shields fired off spells.

Naturally, I dissolved them... Now, what to do.

The enemy has separated into a left flank and a right flank with three people each.

Among those three people, two use barriers to deflect my magic.

Because I've only been firing two bullets at a time, their two barrier strategy has been serving them well.

The third person counters by firing off an attack spell.

Then the flank that I didn't attack momentarily drops their shields.

And, when I'm defenseless, they fire off three spells.

They were able to fire off spells with three different attributes because they didn't leave two on defense.

I guess they're a bit short on information about me, since they're unaware that my magic absorption stone can simultaneously negate all magic.

At first they were only able to use magic to attack me from one side, probably because of the distance.

At that distance I was able to break into the core of their formation.

It should be possible to get an attack in while they're chanting...

They should be particularly vulnerable while their shields are down...

But, it won't work unless I break into their formation.

... That might not be a good idea.

Well, let's see how you like this?

"[Fireball]!"

While deliberately shouting loudly, I started packing mana into the spell.

Enough to generate a fire ball about two meters in diameter.

It had the size and heat of an advanced ranked spell.

But compared to the rock bullet's speed, it's slow.

Gently, I threw it like a slowball.

Aiming for both flanks.

"Support!"

Two knights stepped forward with barriers to block.

But, the magic barrier has a weakness.

"Ran Ma [Disturb Magic]!"

"!?"

I dissolved their barriers with [Ran Ma].

Both of the barriers protecting the left flank fell simultaneously.

Barrier magic, like most spells, continues to consume mana as you use it.

It's the same even for elementary ranked barrier magic.

In other words, even if they aren't chanting, I can negate it with [Ran Ma].

The right flank will still be protected, but, this is their loss.

"...!"

And the moment I thought that, something came flying at me from behind.

While looking back, I brought my right arm up to defend.

With a loud [Ga~an], something broke into pieces and shattered.

A brown rock, flying towards my face, was reduced to debris.

I received some of the impact around my elbow.

It was a rock bullet.

This was the first time my opponents have used that spell.

"Rudeus can use magic with both hands!

Two people are on defense, if an attack comes switch.

There's no room for mistakes!"

Therese and another person had snuck up behind me.

Now, I have to defend from the rear as well.

"...."

Before I noticed it, I had been surrounded.

I'm beginning to fall behind, that was a blunder.

No, I wonder what kind of countermeasures they have for close-combat.

The knights who received the fireball earlier are alive and well, with the exception of some smoke coming off their armor.

"Rudeus-kun. We are the strongest in the Temple Knights. You have no chance of winning."

"Really?"

"In the past ten days we have investigated your fighting style.

Thanks to your fame, we were able to arrange countermeasures."

Fumu.

Then, why haven't you drawn your swords?

I only use magic.

No, in the current situation, they may not be able to avoid my magic in close-combat.

Of course, I still have some tricks up my sleeves.

They might be weary of that, and avoiding close-quarters combat as a precaution.

Given my present situation, their strategy could be called effective.

But, if this becomes a fight of attrition, then I will have the upper hand.

They might have more countermeasures...

Then, it's about time I made my next move.

"Rudeus-kun, please surrender! You may have been able to use your magic tool to escape our barrier, but this is your loss, give up!"

"Hou?"

"The entrance to the garden is blocked by barrier magic! Help will not come!"

Is that right.

If you say it like that, then it's perfect.

They must have carefully devised this strategy to capture me.

I can't win with half-assed tactics.

I have to be thorough.

I might have to experiment in order to break through.

But, if I lose as a result, that would be disastrous.

"...[Quagmire]."

It's time to get serious.

— Therese's Perspective —

At the same time Rudeus let out that murmur, my feet sunk into mud.

We were given information about this magic as well.

It's the same as Rudeus Greyrat's nickname, [Quagmire].

Normally, this magic would just produce a slick puddle at your opponents' feet.

But, as expected, this is a massive spell.

The entirety of this huge garden has become a muddy swamp.

Miko-sama's beloved Saraku trees and Balta trees began to creak as they started to sink into the mud.

But, you can't stop us with something like this.

Trash has already started the chant to counter it.

"...[Dense Fog]."

In the next instant, we were swallowed by a vast white fog.

This is bad!

"Stay alert! First we'll counter the quagmire, do not accidentally attack your comrades in the fog!"

The next moment, purple lightning leapt over the ground.

It was too fast, in an instant I heard a sharp [kii~] and the sound of an explosion.

"Do not panic! Our armor is resistant to [Electric]! Make sure he doesn't escape! Go!"

[OK!] echoed out from the fog.

All right.

According to our information, Rudeus is weak in close combat.

All of the members of [Defense of the Holy Sepulcher (Anastasia Keep)] are advanced rank or higher swordsmen, and capable of all advanced rank attack and barrier magic.

Even standing alone we are powerful, we are all well-versed in one on one combat, the fight is still in our favor.

Though I'm only around the intermediate rank in the Water God Style, Cortege is nearly saint ranked.

Even if Rudeus has power on par with an emperor ranked magician, it will not be possible for him to break through our defense.

We have not made a mistake in our strategy.

"–We are countering the [Quagmire]!"

"[Shifting sand]!"

As Cortege finished his chant, Trash's voice was heard.

The mud at our feet quickly turned to sand, and we freed our feet.

I'm sorry, Rudeus-kun.

[Quagmire] can be countered with the advanced rank magic [Shifting Sand].

But this isn't something they would have taught at the magic university.

Research for countering melded magic is still in its infancy...

I wonder if this is the first time his quagmire has been countered?

I don't know what you were planning, but this is checkmate.

Of course, I don't believe you were plotting to kidnap Miko-sama.

Miko-sama truly treasured your friendship.

You were sincerely worried about Zenith, and asked for my help...

I understand that was all you wanted.

But, it can't be helped.

Because these are instructions directly from the Cardinal.

Regardless of the authenticity of the information, we have to follow our orders.

Only Dust was truly enraged, because he earnestly loves Miko-sama...

At the very least, your life won't be taken.

I give you my word.

To be labeled by the Cardinal as a heretic and only deprived of your hands is an incredibly lenient judgment.

Therefore, we aren't even using poisoned swords.

It's all right, Rudeus-kun.

Although you are still young, don't you have a good bride?

With Eris supporting you, you'll be able to survive even without hands.

Moreover, you're even the Dragon God's subordinate.

I heard about it when I was a child, the Dragon Tribe has a mysterious power.

By some chance, it might be able to break our seal.

You can live out the rest of your life in a place our eyes cannot reach.

And, as for Zenith, I'll manage somehow.

But even though I told you that...

"–Resist the [Dense Fog]."

Cortege's voice brought me back out of my thoughts.

At the same time, I suddenly had a sense of discomfort.

... Something's strange.

What is it?

Nothing has happened.

That's it. After creating the dense fog, Rudeus hasn't moved an inch.

Will he try to escape? Or continue to fight?

However, even if I can't see more than a meter ahead, I should still be able to hear him.

After the initial [Electric], there was nothing.

Has he already escaped?

A [Quagmire], followed by [Dense Fog] and then [Electric] certainly stopped our advance.

Using so many different magics, but it's already too–

"–[Wind Blast]!"

The wind magic cleared the fog in an instant.

"..."

"...."

"..... Eh?"

I can hardly believe my eyes.

After the fog lifted, Rudeus was gone.

All that was left was a torn, crumpled scroll.

And a huge... rock?

A statue?

Armor?

"... Summoning magic?"

I muttered those words to myself... Then, in the next moment...

The huge armor began to move.

This is beyond imagination, huge. It was moving at a tremendous speed.

— Rudeus' Perspective —

I may have been at a disadvantage, but it's time to take the kid gloves off.

The fog is rapidly clearing.

Those guys are dumbfounded, they weren't prepared for this.

While opening my foresight eye I confirmed the positions of the guys with the barriers, one shot, two shots, three shots.

I easily penetrated their defenses.

Then smashed them with the MK-I's shield.

Of course, I went easy on them.

I only knocked them out.

They probably aren't dead.

At the same time I took another three down with the Gatling gun.

I swung my left arm in a wide arc.

There was a sound like a loud hum as my Gatling gun spat out a stream of rock bullets.

The three folded like twigs as my rock bullets crushed their shins.

I took care not to blow their legs off.

I also avoided their vitals, they shouldn't be dead, just stunned.

But, just in case, I nailed each of them in the head with another rock bullet to make sure they were out cold.

Two left.

I took a step back before turning around, like Orsted taught me to.

If an enemy attacks from behind, you have to use quick footwork to avoid them.

I didn't feel an attack coming, but it was just to make sure.

When I turned around, Therese was in front of me.

Her eyes were wide, and her mouth was hanging open, watching me.

The one next to her started to unsheathe his sword to defend her.

But, too late.

You're too slow.

If it had been Eris, she would have cut him down ten times before he had drawn his sword.

With the MK-I I can easily deal with this level of speed.

These guys can't compare to my training.

Before he could unsheathe his sword, I swatted him away with my fist.

He was blown away before he could make a sound, and crashed into the wall of the headquarters, stunned.

Therese was still standing there with a frozen look of amazement.

She had a face as if she had no idea what had happened.

"W-, what..."

To her, I gave my minimum considerations, and knocked her out with a rock bullet rather than my fist.

Done.

After all, the MK-I can only be described as overwhelming.

I was able to finish off my opponents before they had a single opportunity to attack, and unceremoniously broke through all of their defenses.

I wonder if I'm being immature?

Therese, and the other Temple Knights, were scattered on the ground around me.

Nobody died.

Unless I find one of Hitogami's apostles, I'd like to avoid killing as much as possible.

That's my rule.

I was able to afford it this time.

"Haah~... I feel refreshed."

Recently, perhaps because I've had so much frustration accumulating, that was awfully refreshing.

After all, it's no good if you don't go on a rampage once in awhile.

At least according to Eris...

No, that's too violent.

However, what should I do now?

After all this, the Temple Knights will undoubtedly turn into my enemy.

To begin with, who was I betrayed by?

The only ones who knew about the kidnapping idea were me, Aisha, Gisu... also Cliff and the Pope?

What about that girl in Cliff's house?

First of all, it absolutely wasn't Aisha.

If she wanted to betray me, she wouldn't need to do such a thing.

It would be something like [Oniichan, give me a piggyback ride!] and then, while I was enjoying the feeling of her breasts on my back... she'd slit my throat.

Or she could just mix some poison into my drink.

Cliff and Gisu are also unlikely.

They're in similar positions.

They wouldn't need to use such a roundabout way to get rid of me when my back is exposed.

Then, is it the Pope?

Would the Pope try to kill me off with this timing?

What would he gain?

No, maybe it's the opposite.

Perhaps he simply wanted me to remove a few Temple Knights from the board.

From the Pope's perspective, even though I gave him my support, I never actually did anything to support him.

Perhaps this was his plan to put me to use.

And then, while I stall her escorts, the Pope has the perfect opportunity to kidnap the Miko...

Wait wait.

Therese said that the information came from a credible source.

For her, would the Pope be a trustworthy source?

The Pope is her enemy.

Above anyone else, wouldn't he be an untrustworthy source?

In the first place, there's also the possibility that accusing me of plotting to kidnap the Miko is just a coincidence.

Although there's a grain of truth, someone could have just made it up.

Wait.

Rather than thinking this is an accident, I should consider Hitogami's involvement.

Once again, it's possible that one of Hitogami's apostles is lurking behind the scenes.

Yeah, compared to a betrayal, it seems likely that guy was involved.

What is Hitogami's intent?

I can't see the future, I have no idea.

Everything bad happens because of that guy.

"...."

I have no idea who the culprit is.

Thinking about it is useless.

I have more immediate problems.

The problem is determining who my enemies are.

Currently, I don't know what has happened to the Miko.

But the Temple Knights guarding her are already in this state...

From this, I can assume the Cardinal's faction will start moving against me.

First of all, they tried to arrest me for attempting to kidnap the Miko.

From here on out, they'll probably go after Cliff who brought me here, and Cliff's grandfather the Pope.

Ara?

I guess that means this wasn't the Pope's plan?

Uugh, it's troublesome to even come up with potential culprits.

What should I do...

What can I do...

I could gather everyone and escape from the capital?

No, what about Zenith?

I can't leave without Zenith.

I need to go to the Latreia house and rescue Zenith...

But, what if she isn't there?

If they're carrying out this kind of strategy, wouldn't they move Zenith to another location?

Still, do I just keep fighting with these knights until Milis is destroyed?

That seems like something Hitogami would want.

Meh.

Still...

I could do it...

For the time being, I'll evacuate Aisha, Cliff, and Gisu.

Then I'll go to the Latreia house to rescue Zenith.

If that doesn't work, I can always go up to the palace and capture one of the royal family to use in a hostage exchange.

That could also work.

It's all good.

I'm tired of thinking.

"... Ah."

Suddenly, a voice.

Someone looking out from the edge of the garden warped by my quagmire...

In front of a door in the headquarters that could only be unlocked with a special key, a lone girl stood.

Standing there, key in hand.

Alone.

"...."

It felt like she was looking into my eyes.

I tried to look away, but it was too late.

She had a look like she saw through me, and smiled.

Then opened her arms towards me.

I recognize that gesture...

It may have been intuition...

It was a split-second decision...

I kidnapped the Miko.

If eating poison, finish up the plate.

That's a saying.

If eating poison, don't forget to eat the plate.

That saying came about back when hard baked bread was used instead of a dish.

The hard bread would absorb flavor from the main dish, like meat, and then you could tear off pieces and dip it into soup to soften it up before eating.

So eating the plate means eating everything.

Swallowing everything despite the fear of poison.

It's the spirit of a feast.

... No, that's a lie.

The truth is, since he'll die anyway, he might as well keep looking forward and finish his meal, rather than die with an empty stomach.

I don't usually eat plates.

If the poison is going to kill me anyway, then there's no sense in eating porcelain and ripping apart my mouth.

But that's also a lie.

Well...

I'm currently sitting in the property that Aisha prepared for the new mercenary branch office.

It's in the commercial district, in the basement of an old tavern that went out of business.

Barrels of preserved food were littered about, and there was a row of half-finished black cloaks.

I used a teleport scroll to get here.

Bi-directional travel.

That's why I set up this magic formation.

And, there's a girl standing in front of me.

A usually cutesy girl with childish gestures.

But her actual age is over 20.

"Truly, this is a quaint office."

The Miko girl sat down.

I didn't do anything like tie her up.

She sat with a [plop] on the dusty stone floor.

In the end, that's what happened, I took the Miko with me.

"What is your intention?"

"Huh?"

"Coming out with such timing, you didn't even try to run away..."

Thinking about it, the Miko came out with perfect timing.

Her timing was so perfect, it was almost as if she was waiting to make her appearance.

And then she was obediently caught.

"... I came out by chance. I didn't know there would be a fight... I was surprised because the garden was suddenly covered by a fog."

That's an unexpectedly hasty decision.

"Are you lying?"

"Yes, it's a lie. I read the memories of my caretakers, and found out that Therese was going to do something to you, so I came out."

"Ho~o... so you came to help me?"

"Yes. So, I went out, and once I saw your eyes, I realized it."

The moment she met with my eyes, she read my memories.

She was able to see right through the MK-I.

The abilities of Mikos really are mysterious things...

I don't even really understand the principle behind Zanoba's superhuman strength.

"We are friends. I want to help."

"...."

I silently turned my fingertip towards the Miko.

That's the poison dish.

I've already kidnapped you, there's no going back.

There's no backup plan.

I have to make a move.

I have two cards here.

Myself, and this person.

That's it, I have to assume the worst case scenario.

The Pope, the Cardinal, Therese, and Claire are my enemies.

Cliff, Aisha, and Gisu are already in Hitogami's clutches.

Although only an hour has passed, the Temple Knights must have mobilized.

Even though I didn't think anyone saw me teleport, I have to assume that I was seen and that the Temple Knights will arrive here at any moment.

Since there's no time to reset the MK-I's summoning setup, I already used a bog to hide it underground.

That would be the worst case scenario.

Just thinking about it makes me feel helpless.

All I have on hand is my own power, and the Miko.

With these two cards, I have to overcome this situation.

"Miko, before I can trust you, please answer my questions."

"Of course."

I need to question the Miko.

She did say she wanted to help me.

But before I put my trust in her, I need information.

"Please describe your ability as a Miko."

"Don't you already know?"

"I would like to hear it again directly from you."

It may be different from Orsted's information.

I need to reconfirm it.

"I can see the surface of a person's memories."

"Surface?"

"Yes. I can see a little bit of what a person is thinking and the memories associated with it."

"Isn't that the same as being able to read minds?"

"No, I can only see the past, the longer I look into someone's eyes the farther back I can see..."

She can see a person's memories...

But she can only see memories related to a person's present thoughts.

That kind of thing.

"Can you only look?"

"Yes, I can only look."

"It's not possible for you to return a person who lost their mind to their original state?"

"I cannot. If I used my power in conjunction with healing magic, it might be possible to come up with some kind of way..."

She can't restore Zenith's memories.

"... So you're not able to freely read your target's mind."

"Well, I can guess as much."

So she can only see memories related to what her target is thinking.

However, it's not like someone can just stop thinking in the middle of a conversation.

If someone asks [What did you have for breakfast?] then that's obviously going to be their next thought.

"Then as a guy with a shady background, I'd like to avoid making eye contact with you."

She's basically a human lie detector.

She can condemn anyone she doesn't like.

All she needs to do is make eye contact.

Even if she were to tell a lie, nobody would know...

It wouldn't matter.

The Miko is that kind of existence.

I understood as much by watching Zanoba.

Someone like that is of incredible political importance.

"But Rudeus-sama never looked away before."

"Because I wasn't doing anything shady."

Before, I wouldn't avert my eyes from the Miko.

But I'm getting desperate.

If she can see my memories just by looking into my eyes, then it would save time explaining everything.

"Oh? Is that okay? If you look into my eyes like that, I'll see everything..."

"...."

"Huh, Orsted-sama has such a curse... I see, Hitogami... His first advice... Ara?"

The Miko suddenly blushed.

What's wrong?

Did you see something erotic?

Well, if you were at my inquisition, you would have seen something like that anyway.

You've probably seen stuff like Milis priests' affairs before.

"So, two people at the same time... being in love with two people... Ah, an altar... eh? .... EH?"

At last, the Miko finally looked away.

She broke out into a cold sweat.

Her breathing was also rough.

She seems to have seen something she shouldn't have.

"What did you see?"

"Impure memories... And, a book, one that isn't allowed by the Milis religion, and... a strange ritual..."

"Then you have seen into my soul."

"Y-, yes."

The Miko retreated a little bit and adjusted her skirt to cover herself.

I have my peace of mind.

Roxyism may not be as white as the Milis religion, but it's still a beautiful blue.

It's not something out of an ero-doujinshi.

"Let's return to the discussion."

"Yes..."

I cleared my throat.

I'm sure I should be embarrassed right now.

In any other situation I would certainly feel ashamed.

Like getting caught being intimate, or suddenly blurting out some dirty line.

But this is different.

I didn't suddenly blurt anything out.

I have restraint...

Anyway, let's continue the talk.

"First of all, why did this happen. Miko-sama, who do you think the person behind this is?"

"The Cardinal, or perhaps the Pope trying to frame him. I do not think Hitogami is involved."

In other words, it's the head of Milis' Expulsion faction.

The Latreia house isn't involved...?

Then I might be able to launch a surprise attack...

"You don't think the Latreia house was involved?"

"Possibly, but I don't think they were the mastermind."

So it's unrelated to Zenith being kidnapped.

That's good.

Anyway, it's either the Pope or the Cardinal.

Both of those guys are suspicious.

"Why don't you think Hitogami is involved?"

"If his eminence followed the advice of Hitogami, he would not be a true Milis believer. Even though his eminence is a bad person, he is a pious Milis believer."

"But, what proof do you have?"

"If I look into someone's eyes, I will know."

I guess that was a stupid question.

But, can I believe her...

"If you cannot trust me, then use me as a hostage to exchange for what you want."

"As a card alone, you are not enough. The Temple Knights should already be prepared for that. If I tried to initiate a trade, in the end–"

"I am the will of the Temple Knights."

The Miko interrupted me and said that.

Then continued with an airy smile.

"The Temple Knights... rather, the entire Expulsion faction will lose their chance at victory if I die."

"In other words, you're confident that the other side will negotiate?"

"I take my value to them as a point of pride."

Really...

I don't want to see something like Aisha being cut down before my eyes.

"Even the Temple Knights wouldn't be that stupid and incompetent.

By now they could have captured Aisha and started looking for this location.

No, it's not even necessary to capture her. If they had been watching me, then this location should be known.

Even if I try to initiate negotiations, there's also the possibility that the Temple Knights try to rescue you."

"Then, I'll go with you when you start the negotiations."

"That's a bold idea, but if we're surrounded on the way, then it may become an all-out-war."

"If Rudeus-sama is there, wouldn't it be possible to brush them aside?

After all, you were even able to hold your own against people like Orsted and Auber."

You saw that too?

Well, it's possible.

I'm not bragging, they're small fries, I've gone up against far worse odds.

As long as I don't hold back.

If I fought with the intent to kill, then even those guys I just defeated awhile ago could have been wiped out instantly.

"If we were to be attacked, I think it would be by the Pope's faction rather than the Temple Knights."

"Why's that?"

"The Temple Knights do not want to risk my death.

However the Pope's faction would."

The Pope's faction would ostensibly move to protect the Miko.

But, even if she's killed during the confusion of a fight, they would profit.

"The Temple Knights could just use barrier magic or something to recapture you though."

"Out of all the Temple Knights, you have already defeated their strongest group.

If you consider the nature of the Temple Knights, they won't be able to come up with a stronger force.

Acting against you would be too dangerous."

... The strongest in the Temple Knights, were those guys?

Come to think of it, they did say they were the strongest.

Yeah they had good coordination, but...

No, I can't call them weak.

They were able to parry my rock bullets with barrier magic, and counter in rapid succession.

Even against the MK-I, they still tried to fight without being daunted.

They seemed to be around the advanced rank in the Sword God Style and Water God Style for the most part, and were capable of a minimum of intermediate attack, barrier, and probably healing magic too; taking that into consideration, they were a considerably high spec party.

Their individual strength might not be that high, but with the seven of them together, I can understand them being called the strongest group.

Therese didn't have much combat potential, but she had a good head for battle, her command was admirable.

I don't think I would have lost, even without the MK-I.

But, they could have managed to pull something.

Anyway, I've already defeated the strongest guys, so certainly...

No, but they were only the strongest Temple Knights.

"What about the Knights of the Order of Instruction, and I think I've heard there's an Order of the Church too?"

"The Order of the Church is the only other group of knights currently in Milis.

Although they act within the church, they don't interfere in these kinds of matters.

The Knights of the Order of Instruction are not currently in this country."

That's reassuring.

Hearing that gave me a confidence boost.

I can just take the hostage, and brazenly go out demanding negotiations.

This one is Orsted's subordinate! What do I have to worry about by being attacked!?

{ C-Editor's note: He is referring to himself using the formal Japanese version of the pronoun 'I'. }

The fact that the Miko hasn't already been ripped apart limb from limb and tossed in front of the church is only because of THIS ONE's generosity.

{ C-Editor's note: Now he is referring to himself using the very formal Japanese version of the royal 'We'. }

Maybe, if you get on your knees to apologize and meet my demands, I'll spare the Miko's life.

While I go through that act I'll just have the Miko cooperate and determine who Hitogami's apostles are.

Of course, a few bad weeds might end up being overlooked...

Depending on how the negotiations go, I should be able to get out of the country safely.

I'd have to give up opening a mercenary branch here.

In a few years, if Cliff gains influence, I might be able to ask again.

But depending on the flow, if the Pope is one of Hitogami's apostles for example, Cliff might have to give up gaining influence in this country...

It can't be helped.

Sorry Cliff, there's no choice.

"If you're worried about the other knights, it would be good to move quickly. If Rudeus-sama's friends have been captured, then time is not on our side."

"That's right..."

Still, it's only been about an hour since the kidnapping.

Even considering the worst case scenario, if Aisha or Gisu is caught and tortured... No, it's still too early.

However if I keep hiding myself, the other side will become impatient.

When you don't know what to do, you get impatient, everyone is the same.

Alright.

From here, it's a gamble.

It's no good if someone dies in exchange for the Miko.

I need to be prepared.

I need to want it.

Even if I can't have it...

I need some sort of trump card.

"... I wonder, Miko-sama."

"What is it?"

"Why are you siding with me? Allowing yourself to be captured so easily..."

The Miko gave me a puzzled look.

Then smiled softly.

It was a smile worthy of the symbol of the Milis religion.

"I am only alive now thanks to you and your Supard friend."

Is that what she understood from my memories?

Or did she see Eris's memories in the past?

I don't quite get it, but I guess Ruijerd and I did bring Eris to Milis.

However that answer is slightly suspicious.

"Since you're still not convinced, it's because I'm really angry that my subordinates tried to kill the first friend I've made in such a long time."

"...."

"Telling me all sorts of fun stories, even drawing me a picture, Milis-sama said [Thou shalt not be discourteous. Thou shalt not forget kindness.]"

"....."

"Originally, if you asked me for help with your mother's matter, I had planned to lend you my power in secret... But, you never asked."

When I remained silent, the Miko started to make a pouting face and sulk.

"Generally, Rudeus-sama, wouldn't someone in your position normally consider someone like me an enemy at first glance, and not hesitate to kidnap them?"

"Yeah..."

I never really considered you an enemy.

That's why I wanted to hear your story after kidnapping you.

Alright.

In any case, what's done is done.

I fell behind, and ended up in this situation.

Thinking about what could have been won't improve my current situation.

In the next act, I need to take a dominant position and make my stand, otherwise I won't be able to accomplish my goals.

My goals are as follows...

First, rescue Zenith.

Second, ensure the safety of Aisha, Gisu, and Cliff.

Third, try not to trouble Cliff.

Fourth, install a mercenary branch.

Fifth, permission for Ruijerd doll sales.

Sixth, establish Milis as an ally.

For now I'll focus on the first two.

Alright, then it's time to make my next move.

I now have a card in hand.

I have a very strong card in hand, the Miko.

I'm also a strong card in my own way.

If possible, I would have liked to have someone else.

Someone unrelated to this situation, someone who could make preparations.

I need to turn things around, this is the time for a pre-emptive attack.

"This mess would have been settled leaving nothing but a grudge if I'd just brought Eris along..."

"Yeah, I would have liked to see her again."

Then, it's time to begin.

I returned to the religious headquarters.

It's been two, maybe three hours since that fight started.

I didn't see a single Temple Knight in town, like a charm.

At the same time I determined that Gisu and Cliff hadn't informed on me.

We initially escaped using a teleport scroll.

The existence of that type of teleport magic is not generally known.

With that in mind, it would make sense for the Temple Knights to blockade the entrances to the headquarters, thinking that I should still be inside.

After about an hour, the field commander might judge that I could have escaped the area.

In order to search the city, they would probably request the main force of the Temple Knights, and take another hour organizing the search corps.

It wouldn't be strange for some sort of delay to occur, so that adds another hour...

Though the entrances to the city might already be blockaded, but they shouldn't be moving in full scale yet.

Mobilizing such a large organization is always difficult.

Cliff and Gisu, only those two know about the teleportation magic.

Gisu was present when I installed the magic circle in case we needed to make an emergency escape.

And Cliff even helped me draw the magic circles in the office's basement back in Sharia.

If they had betrayed me, then the Temple Knights would have known exactly where to start looking.

So I immediately discarded that suspicion.

But, it wouldn't be funny if the Pope or the Cardinal guessed that I'd used teleport magic.

They might be able to obtain that kind of information.

Or Hitogami could be informing them from behind the scenes.

... When I think about that, I have a strange feeling.

It's been two hours, I feel like my opponents are falling behind...

Could Therese have been moving at her own discretion?

While thinking that, we approached the religious headquarters.

Then, guys wearing blue armor poured out in droves.

"Miko-sama has..."

"Rudeus has appeared with Miko-sama!"

"Call for support!"

Droves of knights were pouring out in a stream.

Not just from the headquarters, from the surrounding area too.

I was quickly surrounded.

Will it really be all right?

"Rudeus-sama, do not separate from me."

"...."

I grabbed onto the Miko's arm like it was my lifeline.

Although it's not like I'm holding a knife to her throat, some of the Temple Knights started to stir.

But they didn't attack.

The Miko was right.

"Treating Miko-sama that violently...!"

"You, Rudeus... Even I have not touched the miko like that..."

"Taking Miko-sama hostage, you are a disgrace to all Milis believers! Impermissible!"

One of those seems like a slightly strange thing to get angry about...

However they seem to have decided that I'm holding her hostage before I even said anything.

Well, naturally.

I annihilated her escorts and whisked her away.

What else could it be.

Even the mastermind behind this whole incident would see it that way.

"Captain, let's do it...! After fighting the [Defense of the Holy Sepulcher (Anastasia Keep)] he can't have much mana left!"

"Wait, even so, he might still have enough strength left to harm Miko-sama."

"It's okay, if we all attack in unison, even that guy would defend himself instead of harming Miko-sama...!"

There's only one guy arguing.

I wonder, is he a direct pawn of the mastermind behind this incident...

"Miko-sama, there, whose underling is that? Is he being manipulated by Hitogami?"

"No, that is one of the Pope's underlings. Hitogami is uninvolved. He doesn't even seem to know the details."

I asked her in a whisper, and she whispered back a response.

Well, without knowing any details, I can understand thinking that.

Alright.

For the time being, I should start.

"I demand to speak with his eminence the Pope! Clear a path!"

I shouted as loudly as I could.

The knights started to stir again hearing me act so arrogantly.

"What did you say!"

"You bastard, how dare you ask for an audience with the Pope!"

"Release Miko-sama now, and receive judgment!"

Several people had already drawn their swords.

But, when the Miko started trembling in my grasp, the knights hesitated and returned their swords to their sheathes.

Ahh, wow, so that's the power of a Miko.

After watching those guys from the [Defense of the Holy Sepulcher (Anastasia Keep)] I started to understand...

This girl is more like an idol than a princess.

Well then... let's start the script.

"My name is Rudeus Greyrat!

A representative of the Dragon God Orsted!

In the name of my lord, I do not intend to harm the Miko, the symbol of the Milis religion!"

I raised my right hand.

The bracelet I got from Orsted shone brilliantly on my wrist.

It may be weak as an ID card, but it should at least work in a bluff.

"But, if you do not meet my demands, I will make no such guarantee!

By making enemies of me, know that you are turning the entire Milis religion into an enemy of the Dragon God and his subordinates!"

I decided to open the negotiations aggressively.

I properly prepared my lines.

I used Orsted's name without permission, but it's no problem.

He doesn't really have any other subordinates, but it's no problem.

"...!"

The Temple Knights winced, and took a step back.

With that they should understand that I'm not some random kidnapper, I'm a big wig in the organization.

As long as they understand that, I'm OK.

"I demand an explanation of my matter directly from his Holiness!

This is a demand directly from the Dragon God's representative!

I demand to know where my mother is being detained!

The fate of the Miko's life is dependent on the answer!"

I just want to talk in the end.

Suddenly, being accused of kidnapping, and then convicted in a farce of a trial.

I'm angry.

I'll demand an apology and reparations.

I'll take that opportunity to make Zenith's matter the entire Milis religious organization's problem.

"...."

"What...?"

"Taking Miko-sama hostage for such a reason is..."

However the Temple Knights didn't clear a path.

Slow.

Can you not let me through because there's no one important enough here to make the decision?

If I wait a bit, will a commander come out?

"Open the way!"

"Move!"

"Do you intend to let Miko-sama die!?"

While I was thinking, the back suddenly became noisy, and a group of four men and women appeared.

Among them, three looked familiar.

They were members of the [Defense of the Holy Sepulcher (Anastasia Keep)].

Their armor looked like it had some painful dents in it.

Therese was with them.

When she saw me, she lowered her eyes apologetically.

Another person was with them, a man in what looked to be his late fifties with a white beard.

Although he had deep wrinkles on his face, he had sharp eyes, his age had not weakened him.

I don't recognize him.

He's wearing the same blue armor as everyone else, so he should be a Temple Knight.

But, his armor's design is a little more elaborate.

It felt like it was an upgrade from Therese's armor.

Presently, I'm surrounded by normal Temple Knights.

Only a short distance away are the rest of the [Defense of the Holy Sepulcher (Anastasia Keep)].

And Therese, the commander of the elite Temple Knights, is with them.

This guy seems to be something like the king of the Temple Knights then.

"Temple Knights, Sword Group [Battalion Commander] Carlyle Latreia."

... Ah.

This person... is Carlyle.

My grandfather...

"Despite our current situation... Nice to meet you, Rudeus Greyrat, son of Zenith Greyrat."

I got my answer in an instant, as Carlyle focused in on me.

His gaze is sharper than Claire's.

Can a married couple really be that similar?

This might be troublesome...

"Is that right?"

".... No."

I thought upon his meaning for a moment, then shook my head after remembering my interaction with Claire.

I am here as Orsted's subordinate.

I am Zenith's son as well... but I'm not here in that position.

If you don't insist on equal footing, then it's impossible to negotiate on equal footing.

"I am the Dragon God Orsted's representative, Rudeus Greyrat. I demand an audience with his Holiness."

"Hm."

I stuck out my chest, lifted my chin, and struck Eris's pose to answer.

For a fraction of a second, it looked like Carlyle showed a gentle smile.

However his expression immediately stiffened.

"Very well, I will guide you there."

While keeping a tough face, Carlyle turned heel.

Therese was making a difficult face, and followed Carlyle.

"... What about them, Miko-sama?"

".... Therese only followed the Cardinal's orders. Carlyle did not make eye contact, so I do not know."

I consulted the Miko again in a whisper.

Convenient.

Carlyle is undetermined.

He doesn't feel like an enemy, but he gives off an odd feeling, I'll keep my eye on him.

Disregarding the other Temple Knights, I followed after them.

We were guided straight into the center.

I was in the middle, there were members of the [Defense of the Holy Sepulcher (Anastasia Keep)] to my front, back, left, and right.

They aren't wearing their helmets anymore.

They're all firmly walking on two feet, they must have received healing magic.

Although I remain on guard, it doesn't seem like they intend to attack me.

I easily broke through the king class barrier they boasted about.

Then, crushed them head on.

But I didn't kill anyone, they should clearly understand that I was holding back.

The difference in strength was obvious.

Moreover, I have the Miko.

They shouldn't be stupid enough to challenge an opponent they lost to only a few hours ago and jeopardize the Miko.

I mean, these guys should be completely embarrassed.

Especially Mr. Dust.

He's been deliberately avoiding eye contact for awhile now.

But I don't sense any malice.

No hostility either.

He doesn't even seem that guarded towards me.

Rather, he's positioning himself as if he were protecting me.

"...."

We've been walking through the center for a few minutes.

Before I noticed it, I lost my sense of direction.

The passages almost felt circular, but we also went around a few 70 degree turns...

When I came here before, I thought these passages were tricky.

They're like a labyrinth.

"It's like a maze."

"Yes. In case of emergency, these halls were designed so people like the Pope and I could easily escape."

The Miko answered.

The walls also seem to be covered in a kind of barrier.

For a moment, it was almost quiet enough that you could fall asleep.

"Yes!"

"Miko-sama knows all these passageways!"

"We used to run through here playing tag!"

Then all at once, her lackeys started boasting.

So, it really was designed to let important people escape.

However, I can't help but feel lost.

There's no way I could find my way out of here...

I'd probably have to blow a hole through the ceiling.

The walls... since they're covered in a barrier, I wonder if the magic absorbing stone would work?

Yeah.

I may have come in here nonchalantly, but I'll be OK.

"We're still not there? I'll be troubled if we have to go much further."

"Only a little further."

Carlyle responded without looking back.

Really?

This doesn't feel like a trap.

I'll be cautious, I'm keeping an eye on the guys behind me as well.

Then, suddenly, those guys start shouting.

"Carlyle! Don't be impolite! At the very least look at him when you speak!"

"Rudeus is holding Miko-sama's arm!"

"What if he becomes angry and harms Miko-sama!"

"Please look, look at the dents in this armor! Only someone with superhuman strength could do this to the Temple Knights' armor!"

"Even if he becomes a little displease, if Miko-sama is bruised..."

"Everyone be quiet!"

Therese had to scold them to shut them up.

At the same time, Carlyle paused and faced me.

"It is only a little further."

"... Very well."

I nodded again, and resumed following him.

It couldn't have been more than ten steps later...

Carlyle stopped in front of a door and knocked.

"We have brought Rudeus Greyrat."

It really was just a little more.

Sorry, I didn't mean to rush you.

Come to think of it, even though I completely lost my sense of direction, we only made two turns.

I might be able to find my way back.

"Please, enter."

I heard the Pope's voice from within the room.

Carlyle murmured a light prayer towards the door, and then opened it.

While holding the door open, he motioned to invite me inside.

"Please enter."

"Yes, excuse me."

I entered the room holding the Miko's arm.

Well, I kind of feel like I should have let go of her arm by now...

No, no.

I can't relax my guard.

"...."

I entered something like a conference room.

There was a long table, with ten or so seats arranged so you could sit face to face.

The Pope was there, Cliff too.

There was another person who looked similar to the Pope, wearing an expensive looking vestment. I wonder if that's the Cardinal?

Aside from Carlyle, there was another guy wearing an expensive looking set of armor.

White armor.

Behind them stood seven knights, with their arms crossed.

Two of them had familiar faces.

They were the Pope's bodyguards.

Everyone was facing me.

It looks like I interrupted a heated debate.

Holding their breath, silently, they were watching me.

And, at a somewhat secluded place at the table.

There were two people sitting alone.

One person, an old woman with her lips tightly closed.

She was glaring at me.

Claire Latreia.

And, next to her.

It was...

Finally...

A woman absentmindedly looking up at the ceiling.

Just under 40 years old.

The woman my father loved more than anyone else.

My mother.

Zenith was sitting there.

Ara?

Wait.

... Why are these two here?

What is this?

I still haven't made any demands.

I didn't tell them to bring Zenith.

[Bang].

That sound broke the silence.

The door closed behind us.

The Temple Knights arranged themselves as to protect the door.

They stood opposite the other knights in the back of the room.

Only Therese was seated.

"Well then, now that all the actors are on the stage, let's commence."

The Pope sat back and said that.

Apparently, in the last few hours, something seems to have changed.

I thought I took the first move, but was I beaten to the punch?

Hmph.

"Rudeus-sama, Miko-sama, would you please take your seats?"

I wonder if I've fallen behind.

But, this situation, it's not bad.

I can work with this.

When seeing Zenith and Claire, I don't think I let my trembling show.

I wasn't sure I could win.

I wasn't confident everything would go well.

However, I believed that I can at least do something at this moment.

I finished simulating escaping with Zenith in an instant.

I can't use the teleport circle with this many people around.

However, I've already grasped the capabilities of the Temple Knights here.

I'm not sure how strong the Temple Knights behind the Pope are, but if I believe the miko's words, there is no way they surpass the members of [Anastasia Keep].

I am certain I can retrieve Zenith.

Now that the situation has become like this, I've essentially completed one of my goals.

I can rescue Zenith.

I can also protect Cliff.

I can even secure Aisha and Gisu.

I'll just escape like that.

I'm a little worried about Aisha and Gisu, but I can get information on them in this conversation.

Anyways, while thinking about it, I boldly take my seat.

I escorted the miko to the neighboring seat, and forced her into the seat while holding her arm.

Before seating myself, I spoke out in a very calm voice.

"You've really saved me a lot of trouble by gathering here."

It slid right off my tongue.

I haven't had that sort of feeling in a long time.

"Since there are many here who I am meeting for the first time, I would like to start with self-introductions. I am Rudeus Greyrat, representative of [Dragon God] Orsted-sama and have given up on forming a friendship with the Church of Milis."

At the mention of the Dragon God, the surrounding people were slightly bewildered for a moment.

Nobody here has met Orsted in person.

Naturally, none of them know Orsted's goals or what he is fighting against.

Possibly, there may be some who have never heard of the Seven Major World Powers.

However, there are none who are unfamiliar with the term [Dragon God].

That is a title that is just as well known as [Demon God].

"Presently, for certain reasons I have taken the miko-sama's life into my hands."

I pointed at the miko with the index finger of my right hand.

Tension filled the surroundings as I gathered mana and created a small flame like a lighter.

"It is extremely regretful that the situation has come to this. I didn't think that I would have to take a prisoner and sully the name of the overwhelming super-being Orsted. However this is for my own protection, and the safety of those under me, and a necessary measure for the following negotiations, so I hope you understand."

"Overwhelming, super...?"

"Ahem."

I made a slip of the tongue.

I didn't intend to joke around.

"Now then, as for why I had to aim for the miko's life and disgrace my master..."

I looked around my surroundings...

Suddenly, my gaze stopped on Claire.

She wrinkled up her eyebrows.

"I would be grateful if someone gave me a proper explanation. Otherwise, the [Dragon God] Orsted and his subordinates, including me, will truly become the enemies of the Church of Milis."

It's not a threat.

It's in the case that the top brass of the Church of Milis are being manipulated by Hitogami.

I need to take that case into consideration.

"..."

At my words, the conference became deadly silent.

Nobody returned my words.

None of them told me to bring it on.

I wonder if it was because of the battle earlier.

Or maybe I said something strange.

I'm sure I took on a pose that showed that I am angry.

"I can understand Rudeus-sama's fury."

The one who answered is the one who is sitting directly across from me.

The man who is sitting the furthest from the door.

With Cliff by his side, the most important man present.

The Pope, Harry Grimoire.

"However, as Rudeus-sama said earlier, there are many here who he has never met. I would like to go through introductions one by one, is that alright with you?"

"..."

"It won't take much time."

I think about his intentions.

Is he stalling for time?

Are they currently moving to secure Aisha?

No, there aren't that many people here.

It won't be bad to know the others in the room with me.

To make demands, the proper sequence must be followed.

In order to be heard, preparations must be taken.

Simply shouting whatever I want at them has no meaning if the other party isn't prepared to listen.

"I don't mind. I was getting too impatient."

"Thank you... Cliff, if you would."

"Yes. Everyone, I am Cliff Grimoire, grandson of Pope Harry Grimoire."

Cliff stood up and said that, then took a step backwards.

It seems he is in charge of progressing the discussions.

"Then, if Cardinal Leblanc would please start."

At Cliff's words, one person stood up.

A man wearing vestments that look just as expensive as the Pope's.

If I were to describe his face in one word, it would be 'fat'.

A perfectly circular face, like a certain hero with Anpan for a head.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Japanese children's fictional superhero Anpanman. }

However, this man is in charge of the Demon Race Expulsion faction...

"I am Cardinal Leblanc McFarlane. I manage the Order of the Temple and assist his eminence the Pope."

So this man is Number Two of the Church of Milis.

If I'm not mistaken, his job is to assist the Pope... so it's kind of like a King and his Prime Minister.

Of course, the Pope and Cardinal seem a little different from the religious organizations I'm familiar with, so it may be something else.

But this Pope and Cardinal are certainly fighting.

They're aiming to be the next Pope.

Although I don't know if they do anything like an election every few years or something...

While I was thinking that, the Cardinal immediately returned to his seat.

So by introductions, they're just giving their names and positions.

"...Sir Belmondo."

At Cliff's call, the man in white armor sitting next to Leblanc stood up.

A one-eyed man with scars on his face.

He looks around 40 years old.

Since he's wearing white armor, he's probably in the Order of the Church.

But his facial expression can only be described as grim.

If I remember correctly, the Order of the Church are the chief knights protecting the country.

He's probably angry at me for causing a disturbance in town.

"Lieutenant Commander of the [Arrow Group] of the Order of the Church, Belmondo Nash Venick."

The man said that and sat down.

I get the feeling I've heard that somewhere before.

He's glaring fixedly at me.

However, he's not saying anything else.

That's probably his natural look. Like Orsted or Ruijerd...

Ah, I remember now.

If I remember right, the knight that Ruijerd knew had that kind of name.

That's right, Galgard. Galgard Nash Venick.

Gouache for short.

"Are you perhaps related to Galgard-san?"

"...I'm his son."

"A while back, I was in the care of your father."

I see.

Even though the father is in the Order of Instruction, the son doesn't always enter the same Order.

Nonetheless, it's not like he's an incompetent son, his position of Lieutenant Commander is proof of that.

"... Sir Reilbard."

After that was another knight in white armor.

It was an unfamiliar name, but he named himself as a Battalion Commander of the [Arrow Group].

This something group is like a regiment of the army.

A Battalion Commander is basically the next most important post after Commander, Lieutenant Commander, and Regimental Commander.

"... Sir Carlyle."

"Please forgive me for my rudeness earlier, I didn't intend to ignore you."

Carlyle Latreia excused himself from an introduction.

I wasn't sure if that was alright, but now that I think about it the Pope and Cliff didn't introduce themselves either.

If that's the case, I wonder if Claire will go without an introduction as well.

As I thought that, the introductions continued.

The archbishop and the Group LeaderRegimental Commander.

For the time being, I'll remember their names.

I'm not sure whether or not there's a need to remember them, but there's no harm in knowing their names.

However, if possible I would like to have exchanged business cards...

"...Claire-dono."

Claire's name was called.

I wonder why she's among these dignitaries.

She may have been called as a suspect.

Or maybe she was the one who spread the rumor of me planning to kidnap the miko.

Why did she bring Zenith?

There are many things I want to know right away, but I get the feeling that an explanation is coming.

I'll be patient for now.

"Countess of the Latreia house, Claire Latreia. This is my daughter Zenith. She's in this state because of an illness, so I beg your pardon."

Claire said that with a prim face and took her seat.

For now, this is everyone.

The knights acting as guards didn't introduce themselves, but I guess this means they have no right to participate in the discussion.

"Well then, let us begin. Taking turns with Rudeus-sama, let's describe what has happened."

At the Pope's words, the conference started.

"Well then, Rudeus-sama, first I would like to make the context clear, is that fine?"

"I don't mind. I also want to know what has happened."

Since the Pope worded it like that, they probably only became aware of the circumstances a moment ago.

It's been a few hours since the disturbance.

To gather up the cardinal and the top members of each knight order, the circumstance seems a little too good.

However, although I say 'top', the leaders of the orders are not present.

The people gathered here are probably all the members that could quickly come after the miko's kidnapping.

Nevertheless, for the related Order of the Temple to not be present feels odd.

"Well then, where should we start... at any rate, I've also only just heard the circumstances. I still haven't been able to put it all in order."

After the Pope said that while scratching his brow, one man raised his hand.

Belmondo.

It's Besh-san.

"We're probably the ones with the least information. We simply came here following the cardinal's summons. In order to collect the corpse of the person who killed the miko and caused damage to the country."

Damaged the country.

That is to say, a [Miko] is one of a country's most important possessions, as can be seen from Zanoba's case.

Even if she is managed and appropriated by the Church of Milis, she's an existence that would trouble the country if she were to go missing.

At the very least, she's important enough that they couldn't disregard the summons.

"However, upon coming here we learned that the guards were merely knocked out and the miko kidnapped. On top of that, the kidnapper returned to the scene of the crime while infuriated, and claimed that he was in the right."

Saying that, Besh scowled at the cardinal.

"The summons we received do not match the current situation. As such, we will be adopting a stance of neutrality."

Besh said that and returned to his seat.

While smiling, the Pope directed his vision to the cardinal.

"Cardinal-dono, please detail your reasons for sending such a summons. Not to me, but to Rudeus-sama."

The cardinal stood up expressionlessly.

From that conversation, it seems the attack was the cardinal's doing.

"I received a notice from a member of the Latreia household. That there was someone who made dangerous proclamations about kidnapping the miko while on the roadside..."

Someone from the Latreia house, on the roadside...

Ah, it could be that I was followed while on my way back from my second visit to Claire's house.

I didn't notice at all, but I was causing such an uproar when I left.

They may have sent someone to make sure I didn't do anything.

Even if that's not the case, I had that conversation on the roadside.

It wouldn't be strange for someone to overhear it.

It wouldn't be unlikely for that to have reached the ears of the Latreia house.

The walls have ears, honest Mary.

There are traitorous Mary's everywhere.

"When we investigated who made that remark, we came across Rudeus Greyrat-dono. My subordinates discovered that Rudeus-dono was using his relationship with Therese to skillfully draw close to the miko-sama."

According to the cardinal, it would usually be fine to ignore that kind of remark.

That type of prank is an everyday occurrence, the Order of the Temple doesn't have enough spare time to mobilize based on every insult that is spoken on the streets.

However, he has a close relationships with demons, and is close friends with the grandson of his eminence the Pope, who pushes for the acceptance of the Demon Race.

In addition, he separated from the Latreia house over some issue.

Furthermore, shortly after quarreling with the Latreia house, Rudeus quickly approached the miko.

And to top it off, Rudeus has more than enough power to kidnap the miko behind the backs of her guards, and murder her.

Both motive and ability were present.

"Thus, I forestalled him."

"I see... However, that differs from the testimony of the Order of the Church. There's a large difference between kidnapping and murder."

"Most likely, the people we sent to contact them exaggerated a bit."

The cardinal spoke nonchalantly.

However, looking at the situation, his intentions are obvious.

He wanted to frame me as having attempted to murder the miko, and make it seem as if the Pope was manipulating things in the background.

However, I'm sorry to say that your treasured Temple Knights were defeated.

Let alone the miko, it was plainly shown that I didn't even intend to kill the Temple Knights.

"Now then, as for the Latreia house... before we hear Sir Carlyle's story... let's hear from Rudeus-sama. Is that alright with you?"

"..."

For a moment, I considered rejecting that.

However, thinking it over carefully, there is no need for me to lie.

There's nothing for me to feel guilty for.

"Certainly, I did propose kidnapping the miko, but that was purely because of the blood rushing to my head. I didn't mention it again after that, and didn't put it into practice."

"Then why did you draw close to the miko?"

"In order to resolve the issue with the Latreia house, I was consulting with my aunt Therese. I suppose that looked like drawing close to the miko."

"I see. However, if that is the case then why did you actually kidnap the miko?"

The contents of his speech sounded like a cross-examination, but the pope's voice is just as kind as usual.

As if to say that everything will be fine if I reply honestly.

"I said it earlier, but it was only to ensure my own safety and protect the people important to me. Naturally, I got Miko-sama's permission as well."

"Is that true?"

"Yes. When I looked into his eyes, I could see that Rudeus-sama has done nothing to feel guilty over."

The miko said that and scanned the surroundings, and the pope and cardinal casually averted their eyes.

It must be difficult for people who have done nothing but things to feel guilty for.

"However, if that's the case, why annihilate the guards? Couldn't you have persuaded them with words?"

"I was suddenly trapped in a barrier, given a farce of a trial that I had no right to speak in, and was told both arms would be cut off. There was no reason not to resist."

However, looking back, there certainly wasn't any need to completely annihilate them.

It would have been smarter to leave only Therese standing and smoothly persuade her.

The miko was just about to come out, after all.

When she saw that I didn't act even with the miko in front of me, surely even Therese would...

Nope, impossible.

I had no way of knowing that the miko was about to come out, and if I remember the atmosphere back then, I don't get the feeling that it would have been possible to persuade them by talking it over.

It was a trial with a predetermined result.

In my previous world as well, I've been bullied that way before.

"I see... Then..."

The Pope slowly spoke, cutting to the heart of the matter.

"In the first place, what kind of issue was it that you had with the Latreia house?"

Claire's body shook with a start.

Seeing that, the gloomy feelings within me resurfaced.

Claire's egotistical speech and conduct from that time were revived in my mind.

I can endure anything being done to me.

However, those words about Aisha.

Those words about Zenith.

That cruelty towards Gisu.

"That countess, abducted my mother, who is standing over there, and confined her in a place beyond my sight."

As I spoke, my irritation gradually rose.

"She tried to force my mother who couldn't even speak to marry some unknown man against her will, and make her bear his children."

My voice is getting rougher.

"When I opposed that, she used cowardly methods to kidnap her, and pretended to know nothing when I questioned her!"

Those around us shuddered in fear.

Therese and the other Temple Knights wore grim faces and had their hands on their swords.

The miko was grimacing slightly.

It seems I was grasping her too tightly.

"... Well, that's how it was."

My words suspiciously cut off, and my story was left unfinished.

However, my fury seems to have been passed on to the listeners.

Their gazes closed in on the Latreia house from all directions.

They glared at Carlyle and Claire, and sent pitying eyes towards Zenith, who was blankly staring at the ceiling.

"Then, Sir Carlyle, Madam Claire. From those words, the fault for this case seems to lie with you. Let us hear your views."

Carlyle and Claire exchanged glances for a moment.

I wonder what they're planning.

At the very least, there's no sign of the cardinal intending to help them.

"My wife did that of her own accord, I had no knowledge of it."

Carlyle said that with an unruffled expression.

He's casting her away.

This man is casting away his own wife.

No, if Claire normally acts that way and Carlyle's irritation grew day by day, isn't it natural to cast her aside in this situation?

If it was me, no matter how many problems Eris causes with her violence, I wouldn't cast her aside or abandon her.

I can't say with confidence that after a long married life I won't come to dislike the parts of her that are disagreeable.

However, I would definitely never cast her aside or abandon her.

This bothers me a bit.

I remember something Cliff said long ago.

In Milis, when a woman gets married, her family gives the groom a betrothal gift, but in exchange, he will definitely provide aid should something ever happen to the bride's household.

Of course, what is meant by household isn't clear, but is Carlyle seriously considering forsaking Claire...?

"Of course, I fully intend to take responsibility as the head of the family, but I would like to make known that this matter was not done with the full consensus of the Latreia house."

I wonder if adding that on is part of his sense of responsibility.

"I see. Then madam Claire, how about you?"

"..."

Claire doesn't answer.

She simply presses her lips together in a straight line and remains silent, like a pouting child.

"I will take your silence to be a confirmation."

The pope said that and looked over the listeners.

Then, before anyone could say anything, he raised his voice again.

"Then, the perpetrator of this incident was Madam Claire. Sir Carlyle will share responsibility. I would like to end this with Madam Claire receiving punishment and Sir Carlyle taking responsibility. Are there any objections?"

I get the feeling that something is being distorted.

That the topic was being manipulated.

That the conclusion was decided from the start, and the conversation smoothly flowed towards that.

"No objections!"

The cardinal responded faster than anyone else.

"... No objections!"

"No objections!"

When everyone was nodding in agreement with the cardinal's words, Claire's face became blue, but it didn't lose its primness.

I wonder if she's not going to say anything.

An excuse, or something.

Well, I'd get in a bad mood if she gave some poor excuse, so it's fine.

As for me, as long as Zenith is returned, it's fine.

I'll never approach the Latreia house again. I won't let Zenith, Norn, or Aisha approach it ever again.

That's the end of that.

"Is that okay with you, Rudeus-sama? This incident was caused against our intents. We had no intention of harming Rudeus-sama, or making enemies of Orsted-sama, and would like to maintain an amicable relationship."

I looked at the pope.

His smiling face hasn't changed.

I looked at the cardinal.

When our gazes met, he let out a squeak and started pouring sweat.

"O-, of course we don't desire conflict with Orsted-sama either. No matter how Orsted-sama knows of Laplace's coming return, we have no intentions on sparing our cooperation in defeating him. We would like to put off the matter of the sale of Demon Race figures until a later conference, though..."

After that exchange, I somehow grasped the flow of the situation.

In this case, the mastermind was the pope.

Most likely, the ones who leaked the matter of the miko's kidnapping was the pope's underlings.

Using the Latreia house's name, he manipulated the cardinal's faction into suspecting me of attempting to murder the miko.

Or possibly there are spies from the pope's faction in the Latreia house, and used the fact that I was in fact heard by their servants, it doesn't matter either way.

He couldn't be sure whether the cardinal would move or not.

However, from the cardinal's viewpoint, I must have been a troublesome existance.

I'm friends with the pope's grandson Cliff, and am the subordinate of the Dragon God.

It must have looked that I had an issue with the Latreia house, and the pope used that as a pretext to send me as an assassin and draw close to the miko.

It's no wonder he thought that he had to get rid of me.

That he didn't mobilize the entire Order of the Temple was either because he was underestimating me, or that he predicted things would turn out this way.

The pope knew I wasn't going to kill the miko.

Either that, or he didn't mind even if I did.

Naturally, even if I couldn't win against the Order of the Temple and was killed, there would be no demerit for him.

I may be Cliff's friend, but I'm not part of the pope's faction.

The pope didn't have to dirty his hands, or agree with the kidnapping.

He had confidence that even if he were questioned by the miko and his plan were discovered, in the worst case he could use Cliff as a scapegoat.

Furthermore, if Orsted came, he could proclaim that I fell for the trap of the Demon Race Expulsion faction.

He must have been thinking that if it came to that, he could establish a cooperative relationship with Orsted on his own.

And then, this situation.

The conclusion that he can punish the Latreia house.

I'm sure that both the pope and the cardinal thought that it didn't matter who was sacrificed.

The decision to make an example out of Claire was surely because of the fury I held towards her.

If I can get revenge on Claire then I'm satisfied.

The pope is overjoyed that he can damage the Latreia housecardinal's faction.

Only the cardinal's faction is upset.

I get the feeling that I was dancing on the palm of his hand, but...

Well, that's fine.

I can get Zenith back.

I can get revenge on Claire.

And following this flow, it seems I'll be able to establish a mercenary corps as planned.

"I don't mind."

"Then according to convention, Claire Latreia will be sentenced to 10 years in prison for the crime of treason."

"Fue!?"

I let out a strange sound.

"Do you have any objections, Rudeus-dono?"

"... 10 years?"

"Of course. She abducted the family of Rudeus-dono, who is a close associate of the Dragon God-sama, and incited the attack on the miko."

"But, that's..."

"Not dealing properly with people that possess power invites this kind of disturbance. If Rudeus-dono wasn't someone with such good sense, the miko-sama would have lost her life long ago. Thinking of it that way, 10 years is still too short."

Is that... the case?

But that's right.

It became such a situation that this many people needed to be gathered.

I'm sure there are other people who will be receiving punishment, but Claire gets 10 years of imprisonment.

10 years...

It's by no means short.

10 years ago I had just separated from Eris.

So, it's not short at all.

Be that as it may, there's no helping it.

In the first place, Claire's methods were dirty.

If she hadn't kidnapped Zenith like that, it wouldn't have turned into this.

"..."

"Since you seem to have no objections, by this informal trial with the presence of at least three bishops and at least three Battalion Commanders, Countess Claire Latreia is hereby sentenced to 10 years in prison for the crime of treason. Sir Carlyle's sentence will be decided later in a formal trial."

"No objections."

"No objections."

The cardinal, archbishop, and knights solemnly declared such.

"Then, Belmondo-dono, please have the Latreia couple restrained by the neutral Order of the Church. The other involved parties will be judged later with due form."

The pope exchanged looks with the Order of the Church, and raised his hands.

Besh and the other two immediately stood, and briskly circled the table to where Claire and Carlyle were seated.

When they passed in front of Therese, she furrowed her brow for a moment.

One of the Order of the Church produced something similar to manacles from his breast pocket, and shackled Carlyle.

Carlyle silently complied, and followed the Church Knight to the exit.

Claire didn't move.

As she stood up, her whole body was shaking.

Her facial expression was unchanged, but she was trembling from head to toe.

"Now then, Madam Claire."

"I-, I am..."

The Order of the Church were slowly approaching Claire.

Claire will be arrested, and put in jail.

It has a bad aftertaste to it, but I guess with this the case is closed.

"..."

Suddenly, I met eyes with Cliff.

He was looking at me with a flustered, bewildered expression.

Why are you making that kind of face?

Certainly, even I find it a little hard to stomach.

With this kind of vigilante justice, she's sentenced to 10 years.

I think it's too overbearing.

However, isn't this your society's rule?

I received a similar treatment from the Order of the Temple.

In that case, isn't this due process according to your people's rules?

"Now then, Madam Claire."

So as not to incite Claire, Belmondo slowly reached out.

While fearfully looking at those hands, Claire tried to escape...

"Hn!"

The next instant, Belmondo was pushed away.

While his heavy armor vibrated with a clang, he stumbled a step backwards.

Belmond immediately lowered his stance, and prepared to draw his sword.

The one who resisted, wasn't Claire.

It was the woman who sat between Claire and Carlyle.

Zenith was standing before Claire.

She spread her arms as if to block the way.

She was looking at Belmondo with a blank face, yet hostility could clearly be felt from her actions.

She protected Claire.

"...!"

I was even more confused.

Why was Zenith protecting Claire?

Was it a spontaneous action?

However, up until now she had moved on her own in certain circumstances.

Whenever she moved like this, she was acting for her family.

Did she have no idea what was going on, and reflexively protected her mother?

"..."

I have the feeling I'm missing something.

At times like these, I was always mistaken.

If I calm down, and think things over carefully, I may discover what I was overlooking.

However, there's no time.

Belmondo will momentarily push aside Zenith, and take Claire away.

Should I stay out of it?

Is it okay to stop him without thinking of the consequences?

Wouldn't it be better if I asked questions first?

But, Claire, to Zenith...

"Please wait!"

While looking back at the perplexed me, someone raised a voice to stop Belmondo.

A person of small stature interposed himself in front of Zenith.

Someone who was looking at me with eyes of criticism until just now.

It was Cliff.

"These overbearing methods aren't right."

He stood in front of Belmondo to cover Zenith.

"Forcing an old woman against the wall and making her into a sacrifice like this will not be forgiven by Milis-sama!"

"A mere priest dares to object to an official Church decision and proclaim himself as a spokesman for Milis-sama!?"

The cardinal speaks up in a loud voice.

"Then, do you think Milis-sama will forgive such actions, Cardinal!? When the husband has abandoned his wife and only the child is standing to protect her mother, ganging up on the mother to take her into custody!?"

"You say child, but she is merely an adult who has lost her mind!"

"Age has nothing to do with it!"

The cardinal made an indignant face to Cliff who was expressing flat refusal.

He immediately turned to face his subordinates, the Temple Knights.

A face as if to say to shut this man up.

However, the one he was looking towards was Therese.

Cliff as well, looked at Therese.

"Middle Leader of the [Shield Group] of the Order of the Temple, Therese Latreia-dono! She is your mother as well! Is this okay? Milis-sama said [A knight must never forget his loyalty. However, there are times in which the ones whom one loves must take precedence]. To you, is your mother someone not deserving of your love? Did you feel no love for her as she raised you into who you are today? Even if you haven't, do you feel no debt to her when you think back on your past?"

Therese made an agonizing face and turned away.

While maintaining his infuriated expression, Cliff moved his line of sight.

His eyes stopped on me.

"You too, Rudeus!"

Just as usual, he pierced me with a completely unwavering gaze.

"Doing things like this, are you satisfied? Doing something unlike yourself like taking the miko hostage and trapping your own grandmother, throwing her into jail, are you satisfied with that!?"

"..."

Hearing that, I fell silent.

Cliff's way of speaking is strange.

I didn't intend to take the miko hostage.

The one who sentenced Claire to prison wasn't me.

In the first place, it's undeniable that Claire was in the wrong.

Isn't it natural to be punished?

It's not something that should be overturned with those emotional words.

"Certainly you may have been quarreling with her, but don't you always reach a solution considerate of the others' feelings when disputing with your family? I heard it from Norn-kun. Even though she was so cruel to you, you came to help her when she was down, without letting the past get between you. This time as well, you put in so much effort to conclude things peacefully. You consulted with grandfather and Sir Therese, and were about to reach a peaceful solution. Is it really okay like this?"

It looks like he's misunderstanding something.

Trying to find a peaceable solution was for the sake of the mercenary corps and Cliff.

It wasn't out of consideration for her as part of my family.

But Cliff probably doesn't want to hear that kind of fault-finding.

"..."

"Answer me! Rudeus Greyrat! Is this okay with you or not!? Depending on your answer, you may receive my scorn!"

For some reason that resounds in my heart.

Something that pierces through me.

Why is that?

Certainly, I don't think it's good for my family to be imprisoned.

But, Claire is different.

She never tried to see me as part of her family.

She is different.

She isn't family.

"..."

However, there's still something bothering me.

I don't know what it is.

However, if I don't take care of it, I can't answer.

"Cliff-senpai... Before I answer that, can I ask Claire-san a question?"

"...?"

Without waiting for Cliff's reply, I turned to face Claire.

With an attitude that was mixed with fear, but full of resolution, she caught my gaze.

"Why, did you kidnap my mother...?"

Claire didn't change her expression.

She simply answered as a matter of course.

"For the sake of my daughter, and the house."

"Do you really think that forcing your daughter who is in this state to marry is for her own sake?"

"Depending on the time and circumstances."

Without realizing it, I was clenching my hands into fists.

I was putting power into my hands, and grinding my teeth.

Why is this person like this?

Even though if she said that she wasn't thinking, that she was mistaken, she may be able to escape this situation.

"..."

The others looked to me as if waiting for my decision.

As if I'm the one who has the right to decide.

No, I have it, don't I?

I'm still holding the miko's arm.

The playing field was never level from the beginning.

"Which is more important to you, your daughter or your house?"

"They are both just as important."

My irritation rose at her non-committal answer.

Why doesn't she try to persuade me?

She should understand that I have the advantage in this situation.

If she says she wants my forgiveness, I'd stand down.

No, I won't completely stand down, but she won't be stuck in prison for 10 years.

No one died, so I would be satisfied with a lesser sentence.

That's why.

Just do it.

Stop fooling around.

Just apologize...

At my hesitation, Claire snorted roughly.

"You don't need to force yourself. I don't expect to receive your help. If doing something for my daughter is deserving of punishment, then I shall accept it gratefully."

"...!"

You, Wh-... Ah... Shit, I don't give a damn anymore.

Zenith covered for her, Cliff covered for her.

After that, that is what you say...

I can't forgive you anymore.

"If that's what you're going to say, I won't... Hm?"

As I started to say that, I felt a prod on my shoulder.

When I looked over, the miko placed the hand of the arm I wasn't grasping on my shoulder.

"Rudeus-sama."

"What is it?"

The miko wasn't wearing her usual naïve face, but was expressionless.

She was expressionless, but I could see something behind that expression.

She was giving off the atmosphere of a saint.

"Please help her."

"Why?"

I won't be deceived by the atmosphere.

I no longer have any intention of forgiving Claire.

At least, she never had any intention of reconciling with me.

She's just a worthless mother who tried to take control of her daughter.

She probably couldn't stand the grandson who tried to get in the way of that.

When things didn't go her way, she threw a tantrum like a spoiled child.

"Claire-sama is truly only thinking of her daughter and her house."

"If it's just thinking, anyone can do it."

There's no point unless you consider the standpoint of the other person.

Even if you have good intentions, you have no business forcing someone against their wishes.

Furthermore, this time you were forcing things in an undeniably wrong direction.

Nobody would wish for that.

"Rudeus-sama, you are included in the [house] she was thinking about."

"What do you mean by that?"

"She was also thinking about you while doing this."

About me.

If that's the case, then why did this happen?

How did it turn out like this?

I don't get it.

Someone explain this to me.

"Please believe me. I understand from looking into her eyes."

Right.

Her power as a miko.

By looking into someone's eyes, she can see their memories.

In other words, Claire had a reason for doing this.

I don't know what that reason could possibly be, though.

"Claire-san, about Miko-sama's words, could you please explain? I don't understand your reasons."

"There's nothing to explain, I have no idea what she's talking about. I'm sure even Miko-sama tells lies. I've never given someone like you any thought at all."

A standoffish attitude.

That's it.

Cliff, Miko-sama.

No matter how much you try to cover for her, even I can't give in to that.

Certainly, there are a few things I'm reluctant about...

However, let's just put an end to this.

"I have no intention of reconciling with someone who never tried to get along with me from the very beginning..."

As I said that with a sigh, Claire once again nodded with a prim face.

Cliff looked at me with a painful face, and the miko put on a sorrowful expression.

Therese gave Claire a glance, Belmondo began to move, Zenith—

—Before I realized it, Zenith was standing in front of me.

"..."

She slapped me on the cheek.

There was no power in it.

A weak strike that left no marks.

"Huh?"

However, for some reason it hurt.

It feels like the place I was struck is heating up.

"...!"

Tears suddenly started gushing out.

Before I could understand why, Zenith had passed by my side.

When I turned around, there was the handcuffed Carlyle, who was watching over the course of events before leaving the room.

Since he was behind me, I never saw his facial expression until now.

However, on his face was a complicated expression mixing worry, impatience, and regret.

He was also struck.

As expected, a powerless open-handed slap.

Zenith walked with an unsteady and unreliable gait.

Nobody stopped her.

Not the Church Knights, not the Temple Knights, nobody.

Zenith walked the room in which time had stopped.

Finally, she stood in front of Claire.

She slowly raised her hand, and with an open hand...

No, it wasn't a slap.

She was touching Claire's cheeks with both hands.

As if trying to look through it, she stared at Claire's face from close up.

From my position, I can't perceive Zenith's facial expression.

However, Claire who could see Zenith's face underwent a dramatic change.

First, she opened her eyes wide.

After that, her lips quivered.

Her cheeks, her shoulders, her body, all trembled.

When the shivering reached her fingertips, as if slowly being moved by those trembles, both of Claire's hands rose, and grasped Zenith's hands as if to envelop them.

"O... A... Aa... Aaaaah..."

From Claire's mouth, a wail that was neither a cry nor a groan escaped.

Claire brought Zenith's hands up to her face as if to kiss them.

From her eyes, tears spilled out one after another.

At the same time, as if unable to withstand the trembling, Claire crumbled from the knees.

"Ah"

At the same time as I heard a voice from behind me, someone quickly passed by my side.

It was Carlyle.

With both hands bound, he ran up to Claire.

Then, while sitting by her, he spoke.

"Claire, let's stop being obstinate."

"A... Aaah, dear... Zenith is... Zenith is..."

Claire clung to Carlyle while crying with a disheveled face.

Carlyle looked as if he were going to try to hug Claire's shoulder's, but after looking at his handcuffs and deciding it was impossible, instead laid his hands upon Claire's, that were still covering Zenith's.

"It's okay. Even if you don't strain yourself, it'll be okay."

Carlyle said that and stood up.

While scanning the room echoing with Claire's cries, he spoke.

"I beg your pardon. We will explain everything now. May I ask for the verdict to be postponed until afterwards?"

At Carlyle's words, the room that was frozen in time began to move once more.

I think his words were directed to everyone present.

However, the pope, the cardinal, Cliff, Belmondo, Therese, and the members of Anastasia Keep, were all looking towards me.

The miko was tugging on my sleeve.

Tugging with both hands.

At some point unknown to me, I had released her hand.

"... I understand."

I reseated myself as if collapsing.

The cheek that Zenith slapped still felt hot.

From birth, Claire Latreia had a vain and stubborn personality.

She was a child who didn't acknowledge her own mistakes, and refused to apologize.

To that child, her mother, who would become Rudeus's great-grandmother, Melody Latreia, said this:

"Become an upstanding person."

That can be called mistaken education.

Claire was stubborn and couldn't recognize her own mistakes.

If she doesn't make any mistakes, there's no problem with being stubborn.

That's what one may think, but there can't possibly be a person who never makes a single mistake throughout one's life.

Regardless, the education was a success.

Claire became a strict person.

Not upright, but strict.

Someone strict both to herself and others.

Through her education, she came to realize that she couldn't live her life without making mistakes.

Thus, in order to not make mistakes, she aimed to be a person who disciplined herself harshly.

However, there was a side effect.

She became someone who also treated others strictly.

Strict with both others and herself.

That is the person called Claire Latreia.

However, even if the education was a success, she wasn't cured of her vanity or stubbornness.

Whenever the strict Claire faced hardships, she answered with effort.

However, the vain Claire would never let others see the effort and struggles of her suffering or agonizing self.

The strict Claire came to expect the same from the people around her.

However, the obstinate Claire would not change that even when circumstances called out for it.

A truly unpleasant person.

In the eyes of others, she succeeds in most things without trying, yet compels others to show the same results as her, and rebukes them for complaining.

If you pointed out her mistakes, she would never apologize.

A cold person who doesn't care for the hardships of others, and doesn't try to understand their feelings.

Of course, there were those who could see through to her true nature.

People who recognized the efforts she put in behind the scenes.

However, that was it.

Even if they could see her efforts, they didn't tell others about it.

Compassionate people told her, "I recognize your efforts, but others won't unless you stop hiding it."

However, she didn't change.

"My mother's education, my own way of doing things, they're not mistaken, so there's no need to change", is what she thought.

As a result, upon her graduation from the Milis Holy Kingdom's school for nobles, she was valedictorian, and thoroughly disliked by her peers.

Even upon reaching adulthood, she couldn't become a bride.

As the eldest daughter of the Latreia house, she did receive a number of proposals, but all the noblemen who came face-to-face with her and saw her strictness and stubbornness would leave as if running away.

"If I can't become a wife, I can simply become a nun."

Upon reaching 18 years of age, Claire said such.

As a lady of the Latreia house, instead of receiving the label of spinster and bringing shame to her house, that was preferable.

It was a common way of thinking among women of the Holy Kingdom of Milis at the time.

There was a young man named Carlyle Granz.

Carlyle was a beginner Temple Knight, and a direct subordinate of Claire's father, Order of the Temple [Sword Group] Middle Leader, Ralkan Latreia.

One night, Claire's father came home drunk.

He was normally an austere person.

Mostly to himself, but also to Claire and Claire's mother, he was always severe and strict.

Thus, for him, returning in that state was a rare occurrence.

Of course, it wasn't the first time.

To her husband, coming home in this untidy state, Claire's mother would lend her shoulder.

She would strip him of his armor, give him water to drink, and beautifully lend him her shoulder, before carrying him to bed.

At times like these, Claire's mother didn't reprimand her husband.

She understood that being a Temple Knight was a stressful job.

Unfortunately, that night Claire's mother had business at her parents' home.

Claire saw her father's weaknesses for the first time.

Claire reprimanded her father.

"As the head of the Latreia house, what kind of conduct is this, are your lessons to us just words?" and such.

This drunk father, to the daughter who saw his weaknesses for the first time, could say nothing.

At that time, the one who butted into the conversation was Carlyle, who carried Claire's father home.

"There's a reason the captain was drinking today. One of our knights fell in battle. It wasn't anyone's fault. However, we were drinking in mourning. The captain was drinking heavily, but that was out of regret for the one who perished. Even if you are the captain's daughter, I won't permit you to slight his feelings."

At those words, Claire fell silent.

She could think of nothing to say.

However, she didn't get angry.

She silently assisted her father.

She gave water and lent her shoulder to her apologizing father, but couldn't support him on her own, and Carlyle helped her in carrying him to his room, changed his clothes, and put him to bed.

And the whole time, Claire didn't say a single word.

She knew she was mistaken, but couldn't apologize to her father or Carlyle.

Her obstinacy wouldn't permit her to apologize.

However, Carlyle saw through her.

He saw her acknowledgment of her own mistake hidden in that sullen face of hers.

"You are a kind person."

Carlyle said that as he departed.

At that time, Claire couldn't understand what was being said to her.

However, she realized that the youth in front of her, probably one or two years her junior, saw through her.

After that, Carlyle was invited to the Latreia house at every opportunity, and was eventually taken in as Claire's groom.

The two of them had 5 children altogether, one boy and four girls.

Claire raised them strictly.

She gave them a harsh education, just like she had received herself.

The eldest son became a Temple Knight.

The eldest daughter married into a marquis' family.

The two fulfilled Claire's expectations.

They became a fine gentleman and lady that wouldn't bring shame to their family no matter where they were shown in the country of Milis.

Claire had the most expectations for the second daughter, who was born slightly late.

She was superior, even compared to her two older siblings.

No matter how you looked at her, she was beautiful and pure, a specimen one could be proud of.

Zenith Latreia.

She ran away from home.

Betraying Claire's expectations, she fled from home to become an adventurer, and cut off all contact.

Claire would call her a [stupid daughter].

"She made the most foolish decision possible, so make sure that you don't turn out like her", she would spit out in anger to her other children.

That was the first time in her life she showed that much emotion.

The daughter she favored the most became her greatest disappointment.

That was a greater shock to her than anyone else.

The third daughter, Saura, also was a disappointment.

She got married to a certain baron.

However, that baron lost in a power struggle. Saura got caught up in that struggle, and lost her life.

It's rare in the country of Milis, that excels in healing magic, for wounds to be fatal, but that's how it turned out.

The Latreia house made sure that the person who killed her saw a fitting end.

However, Saura won't return.

Claire mourned.

She mourned just as much as anyone else.

As if unrelated to Claire's sorrow, the fourth daughter, Therese, also went contrary to her wishes.

Unbefitting of a woman, she joined the Order of the Temple.

Claire also spoke out against her in abuse.

"There's no way a girl like you can get by in the Order of the Temple.

Even though if you had properly done as I told you and become a fitting lady, you would have married and become happy" and such.

Therese scornfully said "Dying in a power struggle is happiness?" and caused a big fight.

Claire said "Never set foot in this household again!" and threw her out.

At this time, Claire didn't think she had misspoken, not even with a single particle of her being.

Neither Zenith or Therese will last for long.

She was certain they would return to her, begging and in tears.

Ten years passed.

Zenith still hadn't gotten in touch.

Before anyone noticed, Therese experienced exceptional success and became the captain of the miko's guard.

"It's simply that the miko is a woman, and so needed a capable female guard."

That's what Claire thought, and she wasn't wrong.

Therese had high practical skills and commanding abilities, but as a knight her power was only average.

But, whenever she attended parties with her husband, Claire would be showered with words such as "As expected of someone from the Latreia house, she can experience great success in any field."

Even though she is stubborn, Claire is strict with herself.

If she understands she is mistaken, though she won't apologize, she will revise her way of thinking.

All the more if the daughter she thought was mistaken had been showing great results.

Claire forgave Therese, and reconciled with her.

Be that as it may, whenever meeting face-to-face with Therese, what came out of Claire's mouth was not an apology, but haughty words such as "I'll specially forgive you."

If Therese hadn't gotten used to interacting with people with disagreeable dispositions in her job as a Middle Leader of the Order of the Temple, or if she hadn't grown with siblings used to her mother's personality, they would have gotten into another fight.

At this time, Claire still had not forgiven Zenith.

"However, if Zenith were to show up, I might allow her to talk it over with me" thought Claire.

A few years later, Paul came to the Latreia house seeking assistance.

There was a magical disaster in the Asura Kingdom.

A teleportation incident affecting the Fedoa region.

Paul came as the captain of the missing people's search squad, and requested assistance from the Latreia house.

When Zenith was revealed as one of the missing people, Claire naturally gave her approval.

Arguing down Carlyle, she produced both money and personnel.

She wanted to find Zenith quickly, and tell her "You see? This happened because you disobeyed me!"

However, Zenith couldn't be found.

One year, two years passed, yet her whereabouts were still undiscovered.

During that time, her husband Paul began to waste away.

Without even trying to hide his suffering, he drank even with his daughter present.

Claire thought that before Zenith, she should do something for her granddaughter, Norn.

She considered sheltering Norn in the household, and tearing her apart from her father.

And then, providing her with proper education to make her into a fine lady.

Claire believed that would be for the best.

Of course, Carlyle opposed, thus she couldn't forcibly separate Norn from Paul.

Claire impatiently passed the days while watching over Norn.

While she was doing so, Paul recovered.

From Therese's story, it seems that his eldest son, Rudeus, struck down Paul and corrected him.

Then, Claire grew interested in the person called Rudeus.

But then, taking into account the fact that he didn't even show up at their place to give his greetings, she looked down upon him, thinking such a thing to be expected of Paul's son.

After that, Paul was confirmed as a bigamist.

His mistress, Lilia, and her daughter, Aisha, came to Milis.

Claire is a follower of Milis.

Taking in two wives, she didn't think such a thing could be forgiven.

However, Paul wasn't an adherent of Milis, and Claire knew better than to force her religious beliefs on others.

Several times a month, she had Paul's daughters show themselves at the Latreia residence and receive education.

Studies in good manners and customs.

To Claire, such things were a necessity, and it was only natural to study them.

Norn couldn't surpass Aisha, and was constantly sulking.

Claire hated that attitude.

It wasn't that Norn quickly gave up on things that could be done with effort.

She was afraid of losing to Aisha, and would skip crucial steps.

Seeing that, Claire said to Norn that there was no need to beat Aisha.

She instructed her to simply aim for a level of ability befitting a lady of the Latreia house.

It was Claire's way of motivation.

However, it didn't work on Norn at all.

Claire tried to motivate her in every way, but nothing worked.

The mistress's daughter, Aisha, made fun of Norn, and that angered Claire.

The angry Claire became emotional, and mistreated both Aisha and Lilia.

In the end, both Norn and Aisha left her without becoming what she wanted them to.

A few more years passed.

No news of Zenith's discovery arrived, and Claire remembered the days with her grandchildren.

Her grandchildren from her eldest son and daughter reached adulthood one after another.

They were all raised to be fine Milis nobles that wouldn't bring shame to their family no matter where they were to be shown.

Already, there were no children to be found in her surroundings, and her grandchildren have all become independent.

Norn and Aisha.

The two of them should be reaching adulthood soon.

"I wonder what happened to them.

Thinking back, only those two turned out differently than what I wanted.

As expected of Zenith's daughters.

I wonder what kind of education Zenith was giving them..."

While thinking that, Claire immediately halted her train of thought.

After all, Zenith had no chance to educate her daughters.

Almost immediately after they were born, when they were still only one or two years old, the teleportation incident happened.

Zenith was never given the chance to provide education to her daughters once they had become aware of their surroundings.

Norn was raised only by her father.

Aisha as well, because of the teleportation incident, was never given a proper education and taught to be respectful to the daughter of the legal wife.

Whatever else Zenith was, she was diligent in her studies.

At one point she was even called the ideal daughter of Milis, a splendid lady.

"Even if she became an adventurer, had she been able to teach them properly..."

The truth is, Claire missed Zenith very much.

She wanted to meet her.

She was sure that even if they met, only words of rebuke would come to mind, and Zenith would find her a nuisance, but even so, she wanted to meet her.

She got a chance to do so.

News of Zenith's rescue arrived from Rudeus.

News that Zenith had lost her memories and had effectively become a cripple, but even so, was still alive.

The contents of the letter were brief, stating where she was found and what happened there in a concise writing style.

In an excessively concise manner, it stated the matter of Paul's death.

It declared his intent to find a cure, but it made no mention of bringing her back.

Claire replied to the letter immediately.

No matter what, she wanted to see Zenith again.

A few more years went by.

During that time, Claire searched for methods to cure Zenith.

She spoke with doctors and healing magicians throughout Milis, and visited the library of the Church of Milis a countless number of times.

She even researched in the books left behind by the Demon Races.

Normally such a thing would not be forgiven, but she believed that looking through the whole, long history of the country, precedents could be found.

And then, she found it.

It was quite suspicious, and she wasn't sure whether or not it was true.

A completely unbelievable, nauseating method.

However, there had certainly been a successful case in the past.

It wasn't a demon remedy.

There seems to have been a similar case among the elves.

A woman appeared in a mindless state, but after having carnal relations with many men, she reclaimed her spirit.

A completely untrustworthy description.

That's not something that should be attempted.

However, after carefully searching for evidence, she found it.

It seems that person really did exist.

To this day, she still needs to have carnal relationships with men.

Claire was troubled.

Would it be okay to try it?

Zenith would surely hate it.

But, even so.

If there is no other method...

Just as she was done convincing herself, Rudeus came with Zenith.

Zenith came with her son Rudeus and the mistress's daughter, Aisha.

Only the three of them.

It was only 3 years after sending the letter.

Claire wasn't used to sending letters over long distances, but she knew that Rudeus hurried over.

"First, I'll greet him with words of gratitude.

Then, I'll confirm the progress of her current treatments and the plans from here on out.

If there's time, then we'll talk about Norn and Aisha's current circumstances."

As soon as she saw Zenith, all those thoughts were blown away.

The minute that Claire entered the room, saw Zenith's face, and drawing close, saw her vacant gaze, she was overcome with emotions so strong that it felt as if her heart was being torn apart, and entrusted Zenith to the family doctor, Andel, with a sigh.

Andel is the family doctor entrusted with Claire's own deteriorating health, and has been told the general outline of Claire's discovered healing method.

Claire regretted ignoring Rudeus due to seeing Zenith again after a long time, and turned to face him.

Suddenly, she noticed the young woman in maid clothes huddled at the end of the couch.

A young woman with dark brown hair.

She hadn't forgotten her.

However, what immediately caught Claire's eye was her appearance.

A maid outfit.

"Aisha-san, it has been a while. Today... what have you come to do?"

"Eh? Ummm... That is, I came to take care of Zenith-okaasama."

At that reply, without thinking Claire's voice grew rough.

Taking care of her.

In other words, she came as a maid.

If that is the case, then there is no reason for her to be sitting while Zenith and Rudeus, the heads of the household, are standing.

Claire naturally intended to rebuke her.

However, Rudeus cut in.

Naturally.

Claire had messed up on the order of things.

The Rudeus who she met for the first time was a youth who closely resembled Paul.

Whether she wanted to or not, his face brought Paul's to her mind.

That drunkard Paul, who didn't even have a fragment of character.

That Paul.

If it weren't for him, Zenith may not have fallen into this state.

In Claire's mind, those emotions welled up.

As a result, in the following exchange with Rudeus, all of her bad side was on full display.

With a vain and stubborn personality, while ignoring the mistakes she committed in his presence, she took on a haughty attitude.

But Rudeus stayed sincere.

To Claire's sarcastic words, he answered with sound reasoning.

That fair-and-square attitude improved Claire's evaluation of him.

Their conversation went just as Claire had originally hoped it would.

The current progress of Zenith's treatment and Norn's current circumstances.

As far as Aisha went, the earlier reprimand made things awkward, and Claire stayed silent.

Rudeus seemed a little estranged from Milis's common sense, but he had self-awareness as the head of the household, and declared he would properly care for Norn.

Claire re-evaluated him.

He was still young, but he was a wonderful youth with awareness as the head of the household.

That's how he was reflected in Claire's eyes.

Claire didn't know what to make of his position as the subordinate of Dragon God Orsted.

Claire wasn't very knowledgeable about military affairs.

However, if he has a friendship with the Queen of Asura Kingdom, he certainly holds a good pedigree, emergent though it may be.

With great pedigree comes great responsibility and achievements.

Claire could perceive that the man in front of her is probably even more important than she is aware of.

Such a man is the son of that Zenith.

Thinking of that, Claire experienced a complicated feeling of being both vexed and proud.

However, that brings about a problem.

The method for treatment she was about to try is something that will undoubtedly bring about rumors.

To have a woman be slept with by a great number of men isn't something that can be forgiven.

Would Rudeus really accept that method of treatment?

When she hinted at it, his anger exploded.

He loves Zenith, even more now that she has fallen into this condition.

Naturally.

And Claire thought that he surely doesn't know of that method, and has not tried it.

Should she tell him?

About the remedy.

About how the source may be questionable, but it still gives a hope for treatment.

Or maybe, if she told him of the method in detail, she could get approval.

"However..." -thought Claire.

The youth in front of her has a future.

From what she's heard, he's friends with a priest from the Pope's faction.

At the same time, she's also heard rumors of the Pope's grandson returning to Milishion.

Since it's such a long trip, it wouldn't be strange at all for them to come together.

Honestly, Claire couldn't care less about that power struggle.

However, if Rudeus is moving as part of the Pope's faction.

Not as the Latreia house, but as the Greyrat house.

If he intends to join the Pope's faction as the subordinate of Orsted.

If he intends to take action here in Milishion.

That treatment method will become a ball and chain for him.

Trying out that remedy on his own mother will undoubtedly become a scandal.

Everyone in this country will be talking about him behind his back.

He won't be able to keep on living in this country.

"Should I tell him about that treatment?

Should I let him participate?"

Nay, concluded Claire.

It's best for him to be unaware of it.

He shouldn't be told of his mother being forced to have relations with many men.

It's best if he stays unrelated.

It's something Claire did on her own.

It's not related to Rudeus, who has nothing to do with the Latreia house.

It's probably best to keep it that way.

Not trying out the treatment wasn't an option.

In any event, Claire had already waited 20 years.

She waited 20 years to meet her daughter, and talk with her.

And so, Claire began mobilizing.

She intended to bear all the consequences herself.

She intentionally angered Rudeus, and drove him from the Latreia house.

Using her servants, she kidnapped Zenith.

However, her actions stopped there.

The Zenith that was brought to the house.

The Zenith that has grown, and is starting to become old.

Her daughter that is still beautiful, and usable as a woman.

Is it really alright to let an unknown number of men sleep with her?

Of course it isn't.

There's no way it could be.

However, even Zenith wouldn't want to be in these conditions, where she is a continuous burden to her son.

If she could talk, surely she would beg to be cured.

Claire rationalized it that way.

A rationalization that made even Claire herself sick to her stomach.

She wanted someone to stop her.

Right now, she's trying to do something she mustn't do.

But she can't stop herself anymore.

She worried.

She suffered.

She spent the entire day in the room with Zenith, at wit's end.

This Zenith, which kept wasting away day after day, would occasionally show a human-like response, further hurting Claire's heart.

The one who stopped her was Carlyle.

Carlyle heard the current state of affairs from Therese, and the rest from the family doctor, Andel.

About the unreliable treatment, and Claire's suffering over whether to try it.

His wife was forcing herself to do something unforgivable.

To that wife, he gently said this:

"... Before trying that method, let Miko-sama see her."

If they can see Zenith's memories, something may become apparent.

They may be able to steel their determination.

Alternatively, they may give up on that method.

Carlyle put forth a petition to get the miko to look at her memories.

Using his authority as a Large Leader of the Order of the Temple to its full potential, he got his petition approved while hiding Zenith's name and avoiding Rudeus's notice.

Plans were made to have the miko, who normally doesn't look at memories on personal reasons, check on Zenith.

That was for today.

Today was the day that Carlyle and Claire were to secretly bring Zenith to the Church's headquarters.

Then the kidnapping incident happened.

— Rudeus's Point of View —

"And thus, we came here."

The story ended there.

Claire's eyes were deep red, Carlyle had a grave expression on his face.

The others had various reactions.

There were some who were grimacing, while others had their arms crossed with difficult expressions.

Therese covered her mouth in shock.

The miko was smiling as if to say she was aware from the very beginning.

Cliff... was expressionless.

Maybe he has heard all this before.

However, hearing that story, I could understand.

What Claire was trying to do is something unforgivable.

Even if she did it all just because she was "trying to help", that sort of thing, to her daughter, is unforgivable.

I can't forgive it, and neither can society.

The Milis doctrine can't forgive it.

I don't know if it is illegal in this country, but looking at the expressions of the audience, it is undoubtedly something that will besmirch the name of the house.

Certainly, had I participated in that, my objectives in this town would have been impossible.

That's why she didn't involve me.

She tried to do something about it on her own.

She worried on her own, and accepted the consequences on her own.

But, unfortunately, Claire was mistaken.

"That remedy... is from 200 years ago, correct?"

When I said that, Claire raised her face in surprise.

"Th- That's right! 200 years ago, a girl with the same symptoms was found..."

"And that girl was chased from her village as a result of those actions."

"... For you to know that, don't tell me you've already tried it?"

"Of course not."

That case.

It's probably Elinalise.

Of course, it differs from the truth.

From a similar state to Zenith's, it took her decades to regain her sanity.

She didn't become a bitch until later.

However, second-hand information is often incorrect.

It's not strange for second-hand information to be distorted.

"I haven't tried it, but I have spoken to that woman in person, and heard it from her."

I may not have written about Elinalise in the letter.

There were many things I was keeping secret at the time.

"Is... that so?"

Claire dropped her shoulders as if all her strength had left her.

However, her expression does look slightly relieved.

"Then, everything I was doing was meaningless..."

"That seems to be the case."

"... Is that so..."

If she had told me about the treatment method on the first day, I wouldn't have exploded like that.

"No, no, grandma, I've met that woman and it's completely different from the story.

That kind of thing won't cure her."

I would have laughed it off like that.

Yup. Probably.

"You should have told me."

"... If you hadn't known about the ineffectiveness of that method, would you have refused to try it?"

"..."

I couldn't answer.

I can't say no.

If Elinalise said, "I was cured by having sex," would I have tried it?

I probably wouldn't have tried it at first, and searched for another method.

However, several years have passed since then.

If no other methods came up, I wonder what I would have done.

After worrying, I wonder what kind of conclusion I would have come to.

"However, you already knew... How foolish I've been..."

Claire said that and once again let out tears.

Trying to do something inhuman to her own daughter, she probably couldn't bear to show her face in public.

There are still ill feelings left, probably.

Depression probably grasps her heart.

I feel refreshed.

I can finally understand her actions until now.

For her daughter, for the house.

There were no falsehoods in Claire's words.

Furthermore, this situation.

The situation where this case was attempted to be put to use in the power struggle.

She at least tried not to reveal what she was trying to do.

She wanted to bear the weight of this sin by herself.

That way she could at least protect the Latreia house.

To protect Therese and the uncle and aunt I still have not met.

Of course, the way she went about things was mistaken.

She can't deny that.

There should have been a better way to do it.

There should have been many other ways to approach the problem.

However, that was for mine and Zenith's sake.

For her daughter, for the house.

That's why me and Carlyle were struck by Zenith.

"Haaa..."

I let out a sigh.

Then, I turned to Cliff.

The Cliff who suddenly covered for Claire.

"When did Cliff-senpai hear about it? This story."

"This morning. I coincidentally ran into them at the headquarters."

"... Why didn't you stop them at the time? You also know about Elinalise-san's case, right?"

"As far as the specifics, I was only told that the method is something unforgivable as a person."

I guess that's the case.

She never told anyone before, even to Cliff she would be hesitant.

"I was planning to tell you sometime today, but... Sorry."

It was certainly impossible in this situation.

This is Cliff, after all.

I'm sure at that time he censured Claire and Carlyle.

"What you're doing is wrong.

Quickly return Zenith and apologize to Rudeus" and such.

Then, losing to that attitude, Carlyle explained the circumstances.

Hearing something unforgivable, he would have wavered in his own way.

Probably would have fallen silent, too.

That's why, when I didn't even ask for an explanation, he admonished me.

All he needed to do was to stop me here.

Just tell me that Claire was properly thinking about Zenith.

He thought he could once again see signs of a peaceful solution.

I can't say that his methods were good...

But he was sympathizing with Claire's and Carlyle's feelings.

You could certainly say it's like Cliff.

At any rate, I understand now.

I feel refreshed.

"Now then, I ask you once again."

As soon as I've settled my feelings, Cliff addressed the entire assemblage.

"This case is the result of a woman trying to save her daughter. Using this to gang up on and torment her, can you really say that is in accordance with Saint Milis's teachings?"

The pope was smiling.

The cardinal was sullen.

The Order of the Church and the Order of the Temple were making slightly relieved faces.

They all looked at Cliff.

"This case was merely an accident. Furthermore, it was an accident where fortunately not a single person passed away. Caused by a lone mother, a kind accident. It certainly took time and caused a disturbance. It temporarily brought about a foul mood, and there were those that were injured. However, what say you. Shouldn't we let this all be water under the bridge, and forgive her, and judge her with generosity?"

Cliff said that, and looked at me.

"Rudeus, you have the right to decide. You have been the most hurt by this, and won your battle."

I let go of the miko's hand long ago.

However, the miko has been sitting at my side all along, smiling.

As if saying she knew this would happen all along.

An attitude as if she had seen through everything.

This person.

"I think it's fine."

I said that calmly.

I still have a few reservations.

However, I just need to talk with Claire more in-depth later.

If I talk more with that person, my ill feelings will also vanish.

"However, let me present three conditions."

I have conditions.

Conditions for me releasing the miko.

It may be shameless, but three of them.

"First, for Miko-sama to look at my mother's memories to see if she can recover them."

"Of course it's fine. There were such plans in the first place."

I was talking to the cardinal, but the one who answered was the miko.

As if to say she already understood.

I wonder if she already knew that she was going to be examining Zenith today.

If she knew about it, then she let herself be abducted by me in order to guide me here.

It's possible.

"However, I can't recover memories, so I probably can't cure her..."

"But I'd still like you to try. Your holiness the Cardinal, do you mind?"

"Not at all."

The cardinal seems to be in a good mood.

Probably because it doesn't seem like the Latreia house that's in his faction will be receiving damage.

"Second, in exchange for this case being water under the bridge, you must provide your full assistance to [Dragon God] Orsted."

"Naturally, I have no objections."

"..... Same here."

The pope naturally gave his approval, and the cardinal nodded as well.

It looks like getting approval for the Ruijerd dolls will also be possible.

It may have been better if I struck the cardinal just now, but it seems like things will settle in an overall beneficial way to me, so I'll let it go at that.

"And then, for the last one."

I looked at Claire and Carlyle.

The two looked back at me stiffly.

"Please allow me to reconcile with the Latreia house."

At those words, first Therese made a relieved gesture.

Carlyle lowered his head apologetically.

Claire burst into tears.

She cried while making sobbing noises.

Cried while making a voice that seemed to say both "I'm sorry" and "Thank you."

Zenith gently stroked that Claire's face.

Thus, the curtain drew on the case in Milis.

Afterwards, a contract was written.

Let's take a moment to summarize it.

The full picture.

The Miko was safe thanks to Rudeus.

The Milis religious community was held responsible for the incident.

The church shouldered the responsibility, and proclaimed that they would fully cooperate with Dragon God Orsted and Rudeus Greyrat, and, moreover, support them.

There was no formal decision regarding the treatment of the demon race, that was left as a legal question to be settled at a later time.

It was that kind of thing.

The two principal offenders, the Pope and the Cardinal, naturally signed the contract.

The cold sweat running down the Cardinal's forehead was really cute.

The Miko was returned in exchange for the contract.

As for the parties responsible, it was decided that a trial would be held at a later date in order to have them take full responsibility for this incident.

I don't know how that will turn out, the Cardinal might flee before receiving his sentence.

Well, tracking people down is part of my job description.

If they're not one of Hitogami's lackeys, then they're just a minor nuisance.

Even if the Cardinal was taken out of the picture, the Expulsion Faction wouldn't disappear.

For the time being, everything has worked out.

The incident has been resolved.

Afterwards, Zenith, Cliff, and I returned to the house.

On the way back, Cliff sighed and apologized.

"Sorry."

I looked back at him, puzzled.

"What's this, suddenly?"

"If you think about it, this kidnapping incident originated from my careless remarks.

Even though we reached a good resolution,

Taking credit for that would just be self-important lip service, I felt like I was just blundering about."

"I suppose."

It wasn't really like that though.

You acted following your beliefs, argued without reserve, and led us to that good resolution.

It's the usual Cliff-senpai.

"I'm not worried about it, we can reflect on this matter and make use of it next time."

"Ah, yes."

Cliff shrugged... Normally, in Cliff's position, someone would be more worried about their own situation.

Wendy was waiting for us when we arrived home.

Only Wendy.

"Ah, welcome back."

I suddenly started to worry about Aisha and Gisu, they're safe right?

While we were drawing up the contract, I asked the Cardinal and the Temple Knights but they just responded with [We don't know.]

Are they busy preparing some sort of trump card, or...

"Aisha-san, Gisu-san, it's safe!"

My worries were groundless.

Two people came out from under the floor.

"Phew, welcome home, Oniichan... and Zenith-okaasan."

The two of them let out a sigh of relief.

Hearing their circumstances,

Apparently Claire and Carlyle left for the religious headquarters early this morning, and after learning that, they immediately set out to inform me.

But, it was already too late.

By the time they arrived at the headquarters, the Temple Knights had already begun to move.

I had already moved to make contact with Therese, and Claire was already inside the headquarters.

With all these pieces moving, they knew something must have happened.

Thinking that, they remembered my instructions, and returned to Cliff's house.

They planned to wait until night, and then make their escape from the town.

"The Temple Knights came looking here several times, and I properly turned them away!"

Wendy seems to have done her job correctly this time.

However, the Cardinal was targeting Aisha and Gisu as I suspected.

Dangerous.

"Oniichan, since Okaasan has come home, that means...?"

"Ah, yes, it's over."

I explained the details to Aisha and Gisu.

After I'd finished explaining, Aisha's eyes were twinkling, and she started talking in a voice of admiration.

"Something like that, Oniichan, you're a hero!

Even with your back up against a wall,

You wrapped everything up in just a day!"

Saying something so absurd...

What kind of unsightly hero would I make.

The next day.

I took Zenith to the religious headquarters for the Miko to give her a neurological exam.

Two people, Carlyle and Claire, came to pick us up at Cliff's house in a horse-drawn carriage.

While we were riding in the carriage, I was chatting with Carlyle.

He seems to deeply regret what had happened, and apologized profusely.

I don't intend to keep blaming him for that.

Even if he was a little at fault...

People make mistakes.

What's important is to reflect on it, learn from it, and move on.

Around here, it would be embarrassing for me to talk about the proper way to deal with one's problems; I'm hardly in a position to be whining about the failures of others.

You can't keep moving forward without overcoming failures.

He shouldn't be beholden to me to move on.

Although Carlyle was talkative, Claire hadn't spoken a word.

Out of the five people riding in the carriage, only she was silent.

I wonder what she's thinking about.

Should I ask her?

While I was procrastinating, we arrived at the headquarters.

I went through the normal formalities, and was granted an audience in the center of the headquarters.

We were brought to a room, this is probably the room the Miko normally uses.

Just like when I met with the Pope, it was a room divided by a transparent barrier with two chairs and a window.

It was a little dim, six escorts stood guard.

Therese wasn't among them.

I wonder if she was replaced...

Anyway, it looks like the escorts are going to stay for the examination.

Well, I shouldn't need to be particularly cautious of them this time.

All of them had embarrassed expressions and avoided looking in my direction.

I don't need an apology.

You guys were just doing your jobs.

And I was just doing my job when I knocked you guys out, so we're even.

We were both just doing our jobs, so it's all good.

In any case, we should all try to get along.

If these guys hold a grudge, I'll have to watch my back.

So we should try to get along as well as we can.

"Then, I'll start."

Miko and Zenith were sitting in the two chairs, facing each other.

Dust held Zenith's head, and had her meet the Miko's eyes.

Then, the Miko brought her face closer and had a look.

It almost seems like an eye exam.

"...Oh."

Looking at the Miko, Zenith's eyes glistened.

Her eyes seemed brighter.

... Still no expression though.

As they were staring into each others eyes, it looked as if faint streaks of light were darting between them.

Until now, I'd never seen such a light.

"As one would expect of Miko-sama..."

"As divine as ever..."

Her lackeys were gushing under their breath.

Until now, such a light did not come out.

I wonder...

No, that light might only appear when she gets serious.

Like fire magic becoming hotter and brighter as more mana is used,

This kind of phenomenon might just be visible when the Miko seriously uses her abilities.

It really looks like a line of light...

"...."

Claire was tightly grasping her hands in front of her chest as she watched.

She had a pose like she was in prayer, I braced myself as well.

Right now, the Miko is looking into Zenith's memories.

The depths of the labyrinth...

Maybe a memory of being trapped in the magic crystal...

If she can find whatever caused this in Zenith's memories, then we might be able to figure out a cure.

Just give me a hint...

If we can just get a hint, maybe one of my knowledgeable acquaintances can figure something out.

Orsted, or Kishirika...

"... Ah."

The Miko raised a small voice, and trembled with a start.

Dust immediately let go of Zenith and put his hand on the Miko's shoulder to comfort her.

Download complete?

"...."

The Miko stood up, wide eyed.

Looking directly at me.

"Rudeus Greyrat."

"Yes."

I straightened myself up after hearing my full name being called.

"I have seen the memories of Zenith Greyrat."

"How is she?"

"Before the Metastasis Event, she lived in Buena village, part of the Fedoa Territory, raising Norn and Aisha while working in the village's clinic."

You're starting from there?

Well, yeah. Not speaking about what you've carefully observed. It seems appropriate to speak on it after all that.

"After she was separated from you, Zenith thought about you every day. Did Rudy eat properly, is he properly changing his clothes, how many girls has he called out to..."

Oi.

I'm sorry.

Well, it's not like I was really fooling around back then.

That was back when the government of the Rudeus Lower Continent was at peace.

That was still several years before the invasion of the defenseless Sylphy Country.

I can hardly remember a time before Sylphy.

"Her memory was dyed pure white in worry about you, and then it's temporarily interrupted."

The Metastasis Event.

I was an eye-witness to that moment.

But, most people didn't even survive long enough to comprehend what had happened, being teleported before they noticed...

Back then Paul was still in his prime, and so was Lilia.

"Afterwards, her memory becomes pitch black for a while."

"... For a while, what?"

"That's right. For a long time, like time passing by in a dream."

So there's no memory of becoming trapped.

That means she must have been teleported directly into the crystal in the labyrinth.

But something like that should be really unlikely...

However, it's still possible even if it's unlikely.

After a teleport, there's always the possibility of ending up buried in a wall somewhere.

Well that shouldn't happen if the magic circles are properly linked, but that's not the case for random teleportation circles...

That Metastasis Event really was a surprise attack.

If I remember correctly, it was caused because Nanahoshi was teleported to this world...

Well, that's already in the past.

Even as a person who was wrapped up in that incident, I don't think teleportation magic should be treated as a taboo, as long as it's properly managed.

If it were properly studied and implemented, then it would have been possible to deal with a disaster like the Metastasis Event more quickly.

Yeah.

I should advise Ariel about that.

If I submit a research report on teleportation, Ariel could probably figure something out.

... Ara?

But, then, how did Gisu find out about Zenith...

He's certainly good at collecting information, but how did he know about the Teleport Labyrinth...

...?

"Then, she had a dream."

I returned from my thoughts at the Miko's words.

For the time being, let's postpone Gisu's cross-examination.

"A dream?"

"Yes. A dream. In it, she had the sensation of being carried like a stuffed toy."

"... A stuffed toy."

{ C-Editor's note: Talhand carrying her out of the labyrinth. }

"Yes, it was a pleasant dream."

Then, the Miko closed her eyes.

As if she were describing images on the backs of her eyelids, she began to speak fluidly.

"She had a dream of living comfortably in a strange house.

Spending time with Lilia, basking in the sun, caring for the garden..."

Then, the Miko's tone changed.

She began speaking from Zenith's perspective.

"Paul died, Rudy married Sylphy-chan and had a daughter.

But as I thought, Rudy brought home more women. First Roxy-chan, then Eris-chan... however, everyone, even Sylphy-chan, was happy.

Although Norn complained, she properly went to school and made friends, and she would never forget to say [Okaasan, see you later!].

In the meantime I got along well with Aisha. She really seems to like flowers. She would casually chat with me about things like [So does Zenith-sama like apples and daffodils too?]

I think it would be fine if she called me Okaasan too, but then Lilia would make a troubled face. Aisha is still sensitive about that topic.

Roxy-chan has started teaching at a school near the house.

According to Norn, she's a very popular teacher.

Even though she still looks like a child, she's from a demon race that doesn't age quickly and has already lived for many years... But, Rudy loves Roxy-chan very much, so age doesn't matter.

Then I met Eris-chan for the first time, she really loves Rudy as well.

When no one was looking, she came to me with a bright red face and said [I am still inexperienced, please treat me well!]

I couldn't help letting a smile out. I see why she didn't want to say that in front of Rudy; but being humble is good too.

Then, Eris-chan's face turned a deep red and she squeezed her arms.

She usually puts on such a brave face, so cute!"

Those were her memories from the past several years.

But, I remember it slightly differently...

Norn rarely called out to Zenith.

And even when Aisha talked with Zenith gardening, Zenith never reacted.

But, perhaps, from Zenith's perspective...

She seemed to be engaged in everyone's conversations.

"And then, Rudy's children.

Lucy is a precocious child. Though she's still small, she has to grow up to be a good Oneechan.

Sylphy-chan has been working hard to teach her, practicing magic with her every day on Rudy's behalf.

I used to be so exhausted raising my own children. I can't help but feel that I've lost, being surrounded by so many good mothers.

I'll be all right, even if my kids have all grown up, I can still try my best at other things.

Everyone doing their best is too adorable.

Lara really took a liking to me. From the moment she was born, she was able to talk. She would always call out to me.

[Obaachan, Obaachan!]... Then Leo would call out to me [It's serious! It's serious! Lara-sama has wet herself!]

These days, she enjoys sitting in my lap with Leo and basking in the sun. We would talk about things like my home town, or where her Papa grew up.

Arus loves breasts. He seems like Rudy when he was younger.

When I hold him, he really likes clinging to my chest.

I guess he's fine even with grandma's breasts.

It looks like he inherited something bad from Paul and Rudy.

Like Rudy, I'm worried that he might make a lot of good girls cry, but you'll make them happy in the end, right?"

Before I'd noticed, my eyes were starting to get hot.

Tears were falling like raindrops.

Lucy isn't really around Zenith much, and Lara doesn't speak.

More than half seems to be Zenith's own delusions.

Looking out through those vacant eyes...

At least the world Zenith sees is affectionate.

"Oh that's right, and speaking of Rudy, that child became the subordinate of an amazing person.

Dragon God Orsted.

A distant disciple of the Dragon God Urupen, one of the [Three Heroes who Vanquished the Demon God].

Apparently he's incredibly strong, and everyone is frightened of him, but he doesn't seem that scary to me.

He really just wants to get along with everyone, especially Rudy.

He often comes to check on the house.

Once in a while I try to talk to him but I'm not that good with talking to strangers. I become completely flustered.

But he's a kind person. Whenever Lucy is troubled in magic he teaches her some tricks... since they are difficult tricks Lucy generally isn't able to understand them.

When I let him try to hold Lara, though he nervously holds her in his arms, the way he does it looks very kind.

But, Leo and Arus aren't very good with him.

The other day, when Arus started crying very loudly, he ran away when he saw Eris-chan was coming.

Such a strong and gentle person. Becoming the subordinate of such an amazing person, I don't really understand it but I'm proud of it.

Even Paul would surely think so."

I wonder if any of this is true...

Something like Orsted visiting the house never happened...

Has he been checking on the house without me knowing...?

"Rudy has grown up splendidly.

Norn and Aisha have come of age, and Sylphy-chan is about to have another child.

Lilia becoming flustered not being able to look after me, foolishness.

Between caring for me and the children, shouldn't caring for the children be given priority?

I'll leave Lilia to care for Sylphy-chan, I'll be fine going to Okaasama's place.

You don't have to worry so much, I used to be an adventurer back in the old days after all.

I'll be with Rudy, Aisha, and Rudy's friend Cliff-kun...

Ufufu, going on a journey with Rudy, how exciting!"

Those seemed to be Zenith's more recent memories.

"Okaasama looks like such a granny now.

She's completely different from the old days. Rather than scold me, she just sobbed [Zenith, Zenith].

She was worried if I was hurt, or fell ill, and showed me to a doctor.

As you can see, I am very much alive.

She's so prone to worrying, showing me to the doctor almost every day.

That tough Okaasan, with a crying face, didn't scold me at all.

Every day she would come to see me with a worried face.

Ah yes, father came too.

Otousan seems to have grown a beard.

In the old days he never would have done such a thing, he seems to have had a long, successful career.

He said my condition didn't look good with a wry smile."

Claire suddenly buried her face in Carlyle's chest.

Carlyle was stroking his beard, also with tears in his eyes.

"It's just that, Okaasama and Rudy developed a bad relationship.

Rudy snapped and got into a fight with Okaasama.

I wish you would just reconcile...

Then, sure enough, Rudy managed to corner Okaasama.

He's just like Paul at that age, Rudy is really strong, he's not going to go easy on her...

So I had to properly mediate the situation!"

Then, the Miko opened her eyes.

That's it?

"Fuu..."

The Miko rubbed her eyes and sighed.

Then collapsed back into her seat.

Her lackeys immediately went to her side.

They gave her a cup of water and a hot towel, they must have prepared it beforehand.

Then massaged her shoulders and arms.

They're treating her just like an idol.

"I'm sorry, that was everything. Was it of any help?"

The Miko looked dead tired.

Using her ability must be really exhausting.

I'm worn out just from watching her.

Reading all of Zenith's memories, and downloading them into her brain.

Then watching an entire impromptu play of Zenith's life.

With that much information being processed in an instant, of course it's tiring.

I could also use a shoulder massage.

"No, but thank you very much."

I still don't know a method to treat Zenith.

But, I was able to understand Zenith's feelings.

That alone makes my trip to Milis worthwhile.

"At least I know that she's happy.

And that she remembers Paul, and that he has passed away.

I understand her present condition now."

Zenith understands what's happening around her.

She has thoughts.

Although the Miko's tone made it seem as though she was in a dream-like state, there were no contradictions in facts like the number of children.

Or their personalities... But Lara was slightly different.

Lara is certainly attached to Zenith.

In Zenith's eyes, Lara might be trying to convey something with all her might... possibly.

"I was also able to learn something else."

"...?"

"She... I don't know how, but she seems to be able to read peoples thoughts."

Read thoughts?

"Because she's in such a state I may not be reading her memories correctly, but there's something I have to tell you..."

The Miko said so in a hushed voice.

Then gestured to me to lend her my ear.

Her lackeys behind her immediately covered their ears.

I brought my ear close to the Miko.

Then, she spoke in a very quiet voice.

"Zenith is a [Miko]."

At those words, I nodded slowly.

I suspected as much.

It was very likely she had some sort of curse.

"If this becomes known, it will cause an uproar, so I recommend you keep this hidden."

"Of course. I swear, as Orsted's subordinate, I will defend her."

"Truly, as one would expect."

Well, after letting her get kidnapped, I might be a hypocrite for saying that.

But I intend to live on such a feeling.

However, I have learned two things.

One, Zenith's ability.

The ability to read thoughts.

It's still not clear, but at least it doesn't seem like an ability that could lead directly to her death.

That gives me a sense of relief.

The other thing, Gisu.

There's a discrepancy in something he said.

Come to think of it, that guy's movements have been strange throughout this entire mess.

Despite knowing the Latreia house is part of the Expulsion Faction, he approached them, then took Zenith out.

I'll have to question him thoroughly.

"Miko-sama, I am very glad that we were able to meet. There must be something I can do as thanks."

I still don't know how to cure Zenith.

But, she seems to be in a better state than I thought.

She is conscious.

Even if it's a feeling like watching a dream.

Perhaps she might suddenly wake up.

"Thank you. Then there are two things, is that okay?"

"What can I do for you?"

"Could I have that bracelet?"

"Bracelet?"

I looked down at my arm.

There, Orsted's bracelet was shining.

"Yes."

"... But, this bracelet is not something I can remove, and it wouldn't have any use to you?"

"It won't matter. People already know you are working for Orsted-sama at a glance."

I'm already identified as Orsted's subordinate pretty much everywhere.

So, in other words...

"Miko-sama, do you also want to join Orsted Co.?"

"Yes. If I die before I become 30, it will be unpleasant."

"I see."

Come to think of it, her fate was described as weak.

In that case, she's destined to die.

She could die of an illness, but she doesn't really have bad health, so she'll probably end up being assassinated.

But, under Orsted's protection,

Now that the Cardinal's position has been weakened,

And with the Pope as my ally, it would become difficult to interfere.

Though it's not absolute.

Hmm...

Well, that should work.

"Then, I'll make arrangements to provide a symbol of the Dragon God within a few days."

"Thank you! With this I'll make it past 50!"

I need to repay her for her help properly.

I'll get her something with the Dragon God's crest, I'll even throw in a free guardian beast summoning.

"And your other request?"

"Please commute Therese's sentence. As it is, she'll be demoted and sent far away."

"But, that can't be helped?"

Although she was just carrying out her orders, she failed to protect you.

"Eh, well... Because she was defeated by Rudeus, the Cardinal suffered a serious blow. If she's sent away, she may end up being killed. And she was always a kind-hearted guard."

She's already served her purpose.

If the Cardinal's faction killed Therese as revenge, that wouldn't be funny.

Even though it turned out like this...

She's still someone I'm indebted to.

She was used too, she had to follow her orders, being killed for something like that is too much.

"Okay."

"Thank you. Then please sign our petition."

One of her lackeys immediately produced official-looking documents.

Preparation is good.

I wonder if this was their intention from the beginning.

"Well then, Rudeus-sama. I look forward to working with you?"

Thus, the Miko became one of Orsted's subordinates.

"Rudeus-sama."

Afterwards, while we were waiting in the carriage, Claire spoke.

She no longer wore that cold, stubborn expression.

This must be her nervous face.

"Although this may not be an appropriate place to hold such a conversation, when I calmed down, I realized we would likely be too busy to speak after this, so let's talk now. Will that be all right?"

I nodded in silence.

Did she find out... Is she angry that I have three wives?

Even if it's all right with two people, three people might be...

It's not something that would be permitted in the Milis religion.

"It's about what I did."

"Okay."

It was different.

It seems to be something about herself.

Yeah.

She's not trying to denounce me, or blame me.

No, she might still be difficult.

Without changing her expression, she started speaking.

"What I was attempting to do... was not something permissible as a human being."

"Yeah..."

Even if it was to help Zenith, that was going to far.

After all this, I don't want to have a carefree chat about it in a place like this.

"So, please give me penance."

"Penance...?"

"Yes, penance. I took Zenith away from you, and tried to do something awful, such a crime requires a suitable punishment."

"I think your apology was enough?"

"Such a thing is not enough. The punishment must fit the crime."

I can understand that.

If everything could be settled with an apology, the police would be unnecessary.

In an incident like this, the perpetrator would normally receive severe corporal punishment.

But, I don't blame Claire.

Even though Claire might not be satisfied with that.

"... What kind of punishment would be fitting?"

"To be whipped, or to have both arms cut off... Even death would not be an unfitting punishment."

Err...

That seems like overkill.

"After listening to Zenith's story, how could I act so selfishly? Even considering doing something like that to my own daughter, I deserve to burn in hell. Such a stupid person only deserves the hammer of judgment."

Her fist was trembling.

Were we listening to the same story?

I never heard such a thing.

I heard something else.

Zenith forgave her.

I didn't understand it at the time.

But, she could sense Claire's anguish.

Now I properly understood.

Claire, at that trial, without a single ally, when you were trying to bear the brunt of the blame yourself, you were forgiven.

That's why Zenith slapped Carlyle and I, but didn't slap Claire.

Although I thought something like that was too far-fetched at the time...

It wasn't.

Well, Claire still needs a reasonable punishment.

Claire herself, rather than forgiveness, wants a punishment.

Until she receives one, she won't budge an inch.

Hmm.

I mean, I wonder what I should do with someone so stubborn.

Alright.

"I understand... well then..."

"...."

Claire looked tense.

I'm bad, let's go in a selfish direction.

"Please convert."

"You mean, to your religion? A faith of the demon race?"

That's not it.

I didn't mean a religious conversion.

I'd be too embarrassed if you converted to Roxyism.

In this case, what should I say?

Well, the phrasing isn't worth worrying about.

"No, I don't mean stop being a Milis believer. I'd just be thankful if you left the Demon Race Expulsion faction."

"You mean, the Latreia house as a whole?"

"Only Claire-san is fine. My wife is actually a demon race, so describing them as [filthy] is no good. And I'd like you to accept the differences in our beliefs and education policies."

"...."

"Ah, and next time, if something happens please consult me. I should be able to find a solution... I think."

Claire watched me with a blank look of amazement.

Then nodded immediately.

"Yes, of course."

Claire didn't look like she needed anymore convincing.

Does she understand that's the punishment?

I can't tell.

But, she seems to have given it some thought, and nodded again.

"Henceforth, Claire Latreia is of the Demon Race Acceptance faction, and will act as such. I will trust you, and won't interfere in your religion or educational policies."

"Thank you in advance... But, don't overdo it. Forcing yourself too much is bad."

"... Of course."

For the time being, if this Baachan becomes a little more lenient, she shouldn't cause any trouble with my wives and daughters.

Right now she seems fine, but she might just be restraining herself.

The next time we meet... Well, if we quarrel, then I apologize in advance.

"Then it's settled."

"... For your kindness, thank you."

Claire was silent at first, but nodded with a serious face.

That's an awkward way to apologize.

After that, I returned to Cliff's house.

I've arranged to stop by the Latreia house some other time, my first priority is Gisu.

There's a lot I need to hear.

Regarding this matter, and others.

Thinking back, that guy's timing was always too good.

It's about time I heard everything in detail.

"Well then, I'm going to go look for Gisu."

I left Aisha and Zenith in the house.

Then immediately left to find Gisu.

"Oniichan, wait for a moment!"

I was stopped by Aisha.

She sounded urgent, and held something out to me in her hand.

"This!"

In her hand, she was holding a letter.

A letter with a wax seal.

On the front was written [To Rudeus].

"As soon as Oniichan departed, Gisu-san came and left this letter with Wendy!"

I silently received it.

Leaving it with that timing...

I have a bad feeling.

I tore off the seal and immediately began reading its contents.

"To Rudeus.

Yo, Senpai.

After returning from listening to the Miko, now that you're reading this letter, you've probably figured it out.

Did you figure it out?

Hey, you figured it out, right?

If you still haven't figured it out, then this letter is my mistake... Oh well.

Now, Senpai probably has doubts.

About how I found Zenith's location.

About why I took Zenith out at such a convenient time.

About way back when I first met with Senpai.

About how I coincidentally met Senpai in the Dorudia tribe's village.

You're probably wondering about that.

However, that much could only be expected from the S-class adventurer Gisu-sama.

Let me explain.

Everything, all of it, was on Hitogami-sama's instructions.

Hitogami-sama gives me advice, and I follow it.

In short, I guess that makes me one of [Hitogami's Apostles].

So I deceived Senpai.

Are you surprised?

After all this, what do you think?

Or, are you mad?

You're probably mad.

Ha, that's natural.

But, ever since I was a child, I've only been able to survive thanks to God-sama's advice.

When I was half-dead, whenever I was in a pinch, I would be saved if I could just hear His voice.

For someone like me, who doesn't have the power to fight, that voice was salvation.

It was like that for Senpai too, right?

You were able to return from the Demon Continent because of Hitogami-sama's help.

You were able to meet Ruijerd-danna, obtain a demon eye,

Have me sent to get you out of jail, and rescue your younger sister.

Hitogami-sama even helped find Zenith.

After all that, Senpai.

You betrayed Hitogami-sama.

Why would you do something like that?

Hitogami-sama is a good God.

He gives us advice for our own sake.

Senpai brought God's wrath down upon himself.

Senpai betrayed God.

Even if we were used, we recieved his favor, and we remain because of that.

Well, I'm not good with letters.

At least, before my hometown was destroyed, I thought so.

Hitogami-sama used me to destroy my hometown.

Hitogami-sama just laughed in the end. You and I were used like that, huh.

Of course I was angry?

I was deceived, I was taken advantage of, stop screwing around.

Nevertheless, at that moment, Hitogami-sama called out to me.

He said something like "I've been helping you until now, so a thing like this should be okay."

Maybe he was just trying to stir me up.

It was like pouring oil on a fire, I wonder if he felt good sneering at me.

But, I thought, it was already a sunk cost.

That's right.

If I thought about it, this was just a trade for all the help I'd been given until now.

Honestly, even I bear a grudge with every fiber of my being... But that doesn't matter.

I guess Senpai doesn't think the same way.

While reading, you're probably thinking something like [Oi newbie, what are you thinking?]

However, even if Senpai disagrees, it was different for me.

From my perspective, Senpai is ungrateful.

Turning fangs towards your benefactor.

So Senpai, you might hate me, but I've chosen my side.

This time, I played wait-and-see.

In order to measure Senpai's ability, I set a trap using the Temple Knights.

Although you easily cut your way through...

Anyway, that's just like Senpai.

But, it was a failure that you had to show your trump card.

{ C-Editor's note: His trump card was the MK-I summoning technique. }

I'll gather more war potential for next time, face you magnificently from the front, and make a declaration of war.

Then take your head.

I resent you Senpai.

We had fun in jail, and I won't forget traveling together on the Holy Sword Highway.

Exploring the labyrinth as well, I hadn't been that excited in a long time.

That's just an indiscretion.

That's all.

There are grudges and there are debts.

Even if I resent Hitogami-sama, I'm still in His debt.

Even if there's a grudge, I return favors.

It's my jinx.

From Gisu Nukadia]

I immediately rushed out of the house.

"Gisu!"

Gisu was an enemy the entire time.

He even saw me fight using the MK-I.

He said he's gathering war potential.

That guy, what does he mean?

He said that the next time will come from the front.

Believing that is difficult.

I don't know.

If that's true, I have to stop him.

No, not stop him, I have to kill Gisu.

First of all, I have to go to the commercial district.

I leapt over to the mercenary branch office.

I immediately sent Orsted a summary of the letter, Gisu is Hitogami's Apostle.

Then, without waiting for a reply, went to chase after Gisu.

But I have no idea where to start looking.

I won't even be fucking efficient searching alone.

Thinking so, I leapt to the religious headquarters, and put Gisu on the wanted list.

Furthermore, I asked to mobilize the Temple Knights to search Milishion and its periphery.

That bastard is an Apostle of Hitogami.

Gisu knows the future.

He's a man who became an S-class adventurer with no combat capability.

There's no way I can catch him.

Gisu Nukadia.

The last survivor of the race called Nuka tribe.

Combat experience is weak.

Has a specialty in other things.

Even though he doesn't stick to using magic or sword he has continued being an adventurer; currently his rank is S-class.

That was the man named Gisu known to Orsted.

『....Until now, Gisu's movements never changed no matter what action I took. Therefore, I thought he was not an apostle.』

Orsted.

He came to understand how this world and people operated with his own actions,

from there he somehow located apostles and the like.

The history which he interferes with, the history which is not interfered with.

While knowing all of it, Gisu's movement looked consistent in whichever loop he went back and forth.

He lived as an adventurer and died as an adventurer.

No matter what occurred around his surroundings, there weren't any odd movements at all.

Orsted has a specialty in seeking out the hidden apostles of Hitogami.

Just like Gisu, people not having high combat strength exists; those who are going to keep secretly watching are among those who have heard about the fight with Dragon God from Hitogami.

They don't operate publicly and move just like shadows, they help a different apostle in need when necessary.

Such apostles were all but killed by Orsted.

Because his loop exists, it was easier to find and kill them.

But Gisu was the only distinction.

It was only Gisu, there was never a point where he was particularly dubious much less about him being Hitogami's apostle was not even suspected once.

That guy couldn't take up action appropriate for an apostle of Hitogami no matter what.

For example, even on the verge of getting killed, he didn't.

『But that guy is an apostle in all of the patterns, he kept it hidden and stuck through it.』

Regarding the loops until now,

Gisu ・・・・claiming himself as an apostle is a nonexistent event.

Though doubtful, there was also the thing it said about killing.

But, even if he was about to die, even in the midst of getting killed, it meant that he never once opened his mouth until his final moments.

『And thus I, that the history that I was following was a delusion....that's why I couldn't win....』

With the exchange of only that sentence, it could be seen that Orsted was downhearted.

He didn't realize the possibility of Gisu being an apostle up till now.

If it's Hitogami, he might not be able to hold back his laughter.

That guy, if only he hadn't noticed Gisu then.

Well, it might be that he didn't consider him as an important piece at first.

『However, you've done well.』

But, we can't imagine how many of such apostles exist.

At any rate, Orsted can loop in time but Hitogami can't.

Even if he wants to create a similar apostle, it shouldn't go all too well.

『That guy is Hitogami's trump card. Next time there won't be any.』

Therefore, I think the possibility of Gisu being Hitogami's trump card, the final stronghold, is enough.

The final apostle Hitogami was hiding.

That Gisu... if it's him saying it, a poor pin won't come.

{ C-Editor's note: A pin is a victory in wrestling where an opponent is pinned to the wrestling mat. }

Orsted thinks with this he has gained victory.

That might be.

He has his loop in place.

Even if he loses this time, it will be fine to just kill Gisu the next time.

If that happens, he will once again be closer to victory.

But, I am in dismay.

I don't know what Gisu will try to do.

No matter what, since he seems like such a chivalrous man that I am in dismay.

"I want to win in this loop."

With the anxiety in my chest I wrote the letters and send it off, 『It means that that guy doesn't have anymore tricks left.』 and such were the content of the letter received.

With such a clumsy excuse I laughed a little bit.

One month has passed since Gisu was detected as an apostle.

I have been searching for Gisu ever since.

The chivalric orders were mobilized and the Milis continent was searched.

Both the Milis Church and Latreia House are also actively cooperating.

Although the hands of investigation are only expanding, he has probably been able to get away.

Of course, it's not only just Milis.

I immediately contacted the Dorudia tribe and asked them to put him on the wanted list in the Great Forest.

I also informed Ariel to have him on the wanted list in the Asura Kingdom.

I requested Roxy to circulate the demand in the Ranoa Kingdom.

Although, it doesn't feel like he will be captured that easily with only that much.

In the southern and north-eastern part of the Central Continent.

Begaritt Continent, Demon Continent, Heaven Continent.

Many places where my hands cannot reach, the world is vast.

It's also not known in which direction he escaped to.

Is it the north or the west?

If only I had some influence in the Kingdom of the Dragon King, but if it was concluded that he escaped in the direction of the Demon Continent...

With the death of the king the Kingdom of the Dragon King is facing various difficulties.

The Demon tribe is inconspicuous in the vast Demon continent.

If Gisu is moving while using the Teleportation Magic Square behind my back, the possibility that it's neither of the two also exists.

Gisu is left at large.

Nothing but unpleasant premonitions.

Honestly, arresting him had to happen at this timing.

I considered self-defense when I realized that he can't be caught.

He said this time would be fair and square in his letter.

With the war potential to be able to defeat me.

It's an unbelievable story.

Gisu's words are filled with lies and deception. How can I believe it.

Or so I usually think, but...

If I try to consider it, Gisu should have been easily able to kill me this time.

Since I trusted him and also showed him my defenseless back.

But that guy didn't mess around.

To the bitter end he screwed me around in his trap with his ingenuity.

It's true that the trap was destroyed afterwards.

The fact that Gisu could have kidnapped Aisha was also true.

Since she is average in her usage of sword styles and magic, he might have determined it as impossible.

Even so he should have gotten a chance, but he didn't do it.

Then isn't it fine to believe in the contents of the letter.

Despite the instructions of Hitogami, it may be that it is Gisu's way of doing things to be dignified to the last.

It will be a failure if a perfect measure is not chosen when it's time to kill someone.

It's a jinx.

Although it lets you believe something like that but in reality it's the opposite.

While hiding in a closet in Cliff's residence with a poison knife in his hands, while I am asleep and then shluk, such a possibility also exists.

{ C-Editor's note: Shluk - Not a real word but a knife stab sound effect. }

It might be his goal to make me not notice something by trapping me in a maze of such thoughts.

It can't be helped even if I think about it.

For now, we were not attacked.

It's not that Gisu had assembled his war potential in advance.

Right about now, he might be assembling the war potential capable of defeating me.

That's what I would like to think but I don't know when we will be attacked, that feeling doesn't disappear.

Scary.

Now then, while I was searching for Gisu, Aisha had steadily formed a branch of Mercenary Group.

Selection of branch chief, recruiting group members, establishing the direction of the work.

Originally it was something that couldn't be done unless I was consulted with but Aisha did all of it herself.

The thing about the Latreia who are taking care of Zenith also exist, it's an overwhelming performance.

Such an Aisha, she might be making a smart move considering the situation.

Approximately one month has passed after Gisu's disappearance.

Eris came here after being dispatched by the Holy Kingdom of Milis.

She came from the Teleportation Magic Square to protect me.

She was perfectly armed.

Not in casual wear but two swords attached to the body coat of the Sword King.

With an appearance to be identified as a notorious swordswoman when anyone looked, with a dignified look she came over.

"Now that I've come, it's alright! I'll have everyone split in two!"

While getting cheered up Eris said that to me.

"That Gisu is an idiot, huh! To go against Rudeus! Despite saying 'I'm no match for Senpai, I'm no match for Senpai!' all the time.

While watching the cheerfully declaring Eris, my fear faded.

At least, the fight will occur in a few days, I don't think I'll be killed.

Or so I thought.

"Eris...."

The relieved me hugged Eris.

As I was rubbing her chest, I was beaten to death.

Within my fading consciousness, I understood.

That this was Gisu's strategy all along.

-FIN-

Setting the joke aside.

I'll try to sort this out in a calm place.

Firstly, from the state of affairs 『Gisu will appear from right in front after assembling his war potential』 if we're to believe such a case, then from now on I have three courses of action.

Search for Gisu.
Strengthen the magic armor(myself).
Scout opposition war potential.
If I try to line it up, those things have not changed for the present.

Rather than focusing on the war potential 80 years later, the focus has just changed around several years later.

But, Gisu is not an ordinary guy.

Even if he calls it fair and square from right in front, it's not clear in what kind of form will it come.

Is he approaching with numbers or with quality.

According to Orsted, taking off with a complete set isn't enough to defeat me.

But, I experienced the violence of numbers just the other day.

Temple Knight Party are able to fight like that, there are several people with the talent of being a major world power class.

If such a thing can be prepared, at least my victory will be simple.

Just kidding.

However, assembling such talented people should take time.

And the amount is also not that much.

One year, two years.

It should be fine to look at it take around that much time at the least.

But, if the assembly is finished, I think I'll be defeated.

It's not like I won't be defeated by getting caught by such a trap that was prepared scrupulously taking several years.

Temple Knight Party was able to do just that after all.

I can't imagine Hitogami's apostles not being able to do more than that.

That's why, I consider obstructing it beforehand.

Go around each nation of the world to forestall the increase of their comrades.

If an opponent has already turned in, it's fine to crush each one of them.

In short, the business hereafter, I have to move with the possibility that everyone is an enemy.

At least, the possibility of Gisu residing in the Kingdom of the Dragon King and Demon Continent is high.

Particularly, the probability of the Demon Continent seems to be high.

Such as Atofe, it seems like she will delightfully lend her strength when she hears about defeating me.

Demon continent was scheduled to be the last but I must go there as soon as possible.

But, as order of preference goes, KDK should be good first.

There lives God of Death Randolf who won against me wearing the 『Mk. II』.

He's a reliable chess piece.

I want to control it first.

The course of action was decided.

The Mercenary Group is not on track yet but I have the support of the Latreia and the Religious Organization.

While receiving work from two big-shots, I intend not to keep the matter to maintain itself.

I was able to do the bare minimum.

For once, let's return to headquarters(Sharia).

From there, concerning the movement hereafter, move closer to Orsted once again.

But, before that I intend to go to various places and address them.

I proceeded to go towards the Latreia House, while introducing Eris I announced my repatriation.

"Is that so."

Claire's excess of manners were inadequate, even while looking at Eris she didn't frown.

She might be abiding by that thing which I said.

But she had an absolutely deplorable face.

"Of course about Zenith, will you be taking her back?"

"Yes, I will carry the duty and look after her."

"I understand."

Zenith has been looked after by the Latreia for this one month.

Since then Zenith has been looked after by the Latreia House in place of the busy me and Aisha.

It could be called that she missed the Latreia house since she frequently moved around there.

Strolling within the residence grounds, revolving around the garden.

Whenever there is the case of accompanying her with the housemaid she tries to leave to walk outside.

As usual, she remained in her blank state but I understood that she was fully enjoying her hometown after such a long time.

Looking at her, all the gentlemen and ladies of the Latreia house made a really sorrowful looking face.

Eldest son Edgar, eldest daughter Anise.....because of Gisu, I wasn't able to greet them.

But, for the time being, "The next time I come back I will definitely greet them" and entrusted this message.

"Finally, I just regret not being able to see Norn's face."

"I'll come again and bring Norn and my children as well."

There were some twists and turns but....

Claire is not a bad person.

She is an unpleasant person but she is not evil.

There is no problem if I just have to show her my wives' or children's faces.

This time for sure I'll get it over with just greetings.

"No, most likely, to call it from my age, it won't be strange even if this is the last parting of this life."

Last parting of this life.

Her age has already crossed over 60.

I don't know about this world's average lifespan but her able-body still has some ways to go.

But, the round trip from Sharia ranges approximately 4 years.

It's not a close distance.

And it's not like I would immediately return back after arriving, the next meeting might be slightly more than 10 years.

Claire will be about more than 70 around that time.

No matter what happens, there is nothing strange about aging.

Or so you would think.

It would be fine to just use the Teleportation Magic Square but.

I won't know from where the pressure gets hanged if it turns out that the Teleportation Magic Square is used in excess by the public.

Since it's a taboo in this world for once.

In Asura Kingdom, in the Kingdom of the Dragon King and perhaps even in the royal family of Milis, it might be that they have installed it to make use of it just in case.

But, it might be that the 3 large world nations are hiding them.

"Rudeus-sama. For taking Zenith and bringing her here. I truly thank you very much."

While saying that Claire lowered her head.

It seems just the other day she got on the carriage together with Zenith and went to watch something like a drama.

Claire had a frown the entire time but the maid said that she hasn't seen Oku-sama being this happy for the longest time.

"In the near future, I will come again."

When I realized I had already said those words.

"But....."

"I'll definitely come."

I said it with a strong force while packing my belly with strength.

Thereupon, Claire loosened up her face with a puff.

"Zenith possesses a truly good son."

Claire said that in the end.

I also went to Miko's place to greet her.

I have two souvenirs.

A bracelet that is similar to mine and a scroll to summon a magical beast that came from Orsted.

This bracelet was made by a craftsmen of Milis who was requested by Aisha within this one month.

Normally a jewel is fixed in the pedestal but a stone is embedded into it.

The stone that I crafted with Earth Magic posses a black lustre and the crest of the Dragon God is carved into it.

Anyone who sees it, will be understood as a subordinate of the Dragon God.

While holding such things when I called out for the Miko, her entourage came out.

Within them Therese's figure was also there.

She had evaded a relegation.

The petition in which my name was written seemed to be useful.

Well, it was typically a demotion instead of relegation, she was not a captain anymore.

Under the captain that has been newly dispatched, she was settled down under the sub-captain position.

By the way, the new captain was not a very flexible person.

Bracelets aside, such a questionable thing like summoning magic being used within the Religious Organization was rejected as outrageous.

Not to mention, such an unreasonable thing was persisted by the entourage. "This is a gift towards the Miko from Dragon God Orsted-sama's subordinate(Rudeus) to defend her! How does a mere captain have the authority to deny it!!"

Mr. Captain at this rate you surely won't be able to have a successful career.

The animal that came out of the scroll was a silver colored owl.

Probably around 1 meter long.

It's small compared to Leo but it's existence is still there, with golden colored pupils it felt like divinity.

No one came out from Pergius's spirit series.

Those are ultra rare so they would probably not come.

This time it's gonna be dedicated to Miko so the pack would also be different.

In any case, it was nice that a sacred beast-like animal came out.

It could be that Mr. Captain would have been persistent in denying it on the spot if a thing like a huge spider with a black lustre had come out.

"I'll take care of it!"

Miko's eyes were sparking while looking at the owl.

When she stretched her hand to stroke it, the owl's eyes narrowed while feeling good.

The animal became emotionally attached to her immediately after it had been summoned, it looks like the Miko is very much honored with this summon.

"Well, please take care of it."

It's not a pet.

Therefore, it wants to obediently protect you.

"Well then, till next time."

"Yes, Rudeus-sama too, be in good health!"

Finally, I also bowed to the below mentioned Therese, 『Defense of the Holy Sepulcher (Anastasia Keep)』.

I will meet both of them once again.

Finally, it's Cliff.

If it's about Cliff, everything is going the favorable way for him from the start.

The incident the other day made Cliff well-known to both the parties of Pope's and Cardinal's.

"Cliff Grimoire persuaded the right hand of the Dragon God, Rudeus and rescued the Miko-sama."

"He talked about the justice within the quarrel between the Pope and Cardinal and made way for the path of righteousness."

"A model believer of Milis. A splendid man."

How the rumors were plausibly flowing.

The rumor has an interesting origin.

According to what I heard, it seems like the great commander of the Temple Knight party and the sub-captain of the Order of the Church or such spread the rumor.

Therefore underling of knights and priests seem to have recognized that as a credible source that for some reason the Pope got an amazing right-hand man.

And then, driven by such rumors, Cliff seems to have taken on the work himself.

A ceremonial occasion of great nobility.

No matter how much political strife exists the duty of a priest doesn't change.

And then, it can be said that Cliff also gained practical experience in Sharia some way or another.

Even though he is a rookie the things that he can do are numerous, it looks like he is viewed as an exceedingly superior man of talent.

Such a person like him is considered a nuisance by other people but.....

Well, it can't possibly be helped.

Suddenly an excellent person has entered not to mention the grandchild of the Pope.

It won't be strange even if there are people burning with the flames of jealousy.

Dealing with that in some way is Cliff's duty.

Even so there is no need to worry in surplus.

If it's the present Cliff.

That Cliff.

He will display a splendid overtake even if something happens.

But, there is only one concern.

"Then, Cliff-senpai. I'll be returning temporarily."

"Ah....take care of Lize for me."

"Of course. I'll make sure not to flirt."

It seems Cliff has not yet confided to anybody about him being married.

Although he has declared her to be her partner in his mind.....

It's not like Cliff.

However, I can understand that proclaiming that he's married to Elinalize is difficult.

The rumor of Elinalize The Bitch are widespread even among the adventurers at this side.

Particularly, within the veterans that are now currently active, the children that were snatched away in the beginning also remain.

If it is a talk about such a marriage.....it should be fine to not do it yet.

It will be alright to announce it when the talk behind the back grows big enough to be safe, that kind of form probably isn't poor.

At any rate.

It's not like he would consider hiding it until his last breath.

But, from now on, it's possible that the talk about formal marriage can come up in this case.

Even if it's Wendy, the maid who returns after night falls, a young man and woman under one roof is....

No, it's alright.

It's Cliff after all.

It's not my personal matter.

That person who preaches with such pride, it shouldn't be possible for him to have an affair.

Right, it's not about me.

....If it's like this I'll end up holding the flag and making sure of it.

Really, give it your all, Cliff-senpai.

"Cliff-senpai as well, make sure not to flirt repeatedly. Milis-sama is watching."

"I can't possibly do that. I don't have time to spare for such things."

Cliff has been really busy these days.

Work is on track, furthermore people have started acknowledging him as the Pope's right arm.

To see his worth influential people and nobles are also approaching Cliff.

"Is it really? Since senpai has been popular these days. If you were to accidentally push down Wendy-chan or the like."

"Wendy is like a little sister to me. If it was about you, would you meddle like that."

Even I don't meddle with my little sister!

You're being impolite.

When I made a face and became disappointed, Cliff dropped his glance with a sigh.

"Nevertheless.....I really wanted to perform with only my own power but."

I replied with a laugh.

"If this was not Cliff-senpai's own power then just what was it?"

"Haha."

I intended to say it in style but I was nose laughed.

Certainly, Cliff brought me along and he settled the problems I created for him.

It feels like it took the form of a match pump.

{ C-Editor's note: A match pump (matchiponpu) means deliberately causing a problem and then resolving the problem for the sole purpose of taking credit for the resolution, e.g., strike a match to start a fire then use a water pump to extinguish the fire. }

However, taking appropriate action by himself within such a thing, Cliff was recognized for that.

It's absolutely because of Cliff's strength.

".....Regardless, I give you my thanks. I think it was because of you that I was recognized a little bit."

"It should be me who should say that, because of you I got acquainted with Milis. I was able to establish the way of Mercenary group as well."

About the marketing of Ruijerd's dolls.....might be a little difficult for now.

It seems if we proceed to make progress in marketing now only a few people would buy it.

The Mercenary group is not yet stable and there are still numerous problems left but.....

Whatever, if a problem occurs, even so it would be fine to add it to Cliff's promotion.

"From this point on, I'll do it alone."

"Right, please give it your all."

The plans have changed a little bit but I should have been able to carry out Elinalize's promise.

Cliff is already safe.

I don't know in what form the other priests will come into contact.

However, it will not be an exaggeration to say that the start has been decided well.

This time, I'll leave it to Cliff.

The fight between the Pope's faction and the Cardinal's faction still has some way to go.

Within them, Cliff will try his best, I wish for him to raise results.

Well, if it doesn't work out, it will be fine to make him our company employee after he returns.

I want you to be at ease.

"In this one month, forgive me for not helping you out....."

"No, please don't mind it."

My fight is my own, Cliff has his own fight.

"However, if Hitogami's underlings try to do something, please message me at once through the lithograph. I will immediately come running."

"But of course."

Cliff gave a strong nod.

Even if he wasn't able to assist me he is still my comrade.

But, he should not be that weak if he is going to need my protection.

"Well then, Cliff-senpai, be in good health."

"Ah, you too be in good health."

"Or so we say, but we might be able to meet again after about a year."

"I want to be able to introduce Lize almost magnificently by that time."

Right right, there is the matter concerning Elinalize's curse.

It's not like we're parting for a very long time.

"....And then, you should be able to at least stop calling me senpai."

"Well, that has already become a habit, I think it's impossible to do that within my entire life."

When I said that, Cliff shrugged his shoulders and wore a bitter smile.

—

Thus, the battle in Milis was over.

The conflict of the Latreia house, the internal dispute of the Mills Religious Organization.

And Gisu's betrayal.....

Various things happened but, once again thanks to everyone my objective has been decided.

The next enemy is Gisu.

The same time as Rudeus was saying goodbye to Cliff.

Two people were reuniting.

The location was the Church headquarters, the Spring park.

The beautiful garden where multicolored flowers will bloom in spring.

There are a number of trees slanting diagonally because of Rudeus's [Quagmire] the other day, but their life force hasn't weakened.

As proof, to replace the Sarak trees, the Balta trees are letting their flowers bloom.

In front of those trees, two women are facing each other.

One with blond hair, one with red.

Therese and Eris.

And then, behind Therese.

As if hiding behind her back, the miko stood.

While rubbing her knees together bashfully, she huddled behind Therese.

In addition, men wearing some kind of blue armor are standing in the background.

"Come on, Miko-sama. It's Eris-sama. Rudeus made time for us to meet."

Therese called out to the miko behind her back in a gentle voice.

However, the miko just bashfully curled herself up.

"Bu-, But... it's that Eris-sama."

For her, Eris is an object of admiration.

Ever since she was aware of her surroundings, and every time something happened and she was allowed to go outside, she had to look into the dirty memories of adults.

In a world with no freedom, she lived a life with no hope.

When she fell into a trap while travelling and was surrounded, she thought nothing except that it was scary, that she didn't want to die.

The one who appeared at that time was Eris.

An air of superiority.

Her movements were straightforward, yet no one could catch her, and what stuck in her memories was the afterimage of her fiery red hair.

It was striking.

At the time, the miko had no idea what had just happened.

It's good that the child is safe, said Eris.

The miko didn't realize that the said child was herself until after returning to the headquarters.

That was when she realized that she had been saved.

Then the miko remembered.

When looking into the fiery-haired woman's eyes, she learned the name of her savior.

Eris.

So her name is Eris.

While thinking that out loud, a strong admiration for Eris was born in her own memories.

Since then, the miko would imitate her.

Whenever she saw something she would loudly declare her impressions.

Whenever she decided something she would plainly declare it in a loud voice.

Whenever it was, she would use a bright and cheerful voice.

She wonders how much time has passed since she started that kind of conduct.

She didn't think she would ever meet Eris again.

She wanted to meet her, but she never said it out loud.

She understood that she didn't have that authority.

However, Eris came to Milishion.

When the miko heard that, she couldn't endure anymore.

To the cardinal, to the pope, she desperately begged to anyone she could.

Begged to meet Sword King Eris.

The Mad Dog Sword King is a dangerous person, but I still want to meet her.

I want to give her my thanks.

That small wish was easily granted.

The endeavor to let the extremely dangerous Mad Dog Sword King and the miko meet was allowed because Rudeus guaranteed that "If anything happens I'll take responsibility for it."

However, now that Eris is before her, she has no idea what to say.

Thinking that it would be rude to read her memories, she didn't meet her eyes.

"..."

Eris stood before the miko with her arms crossed.

She already finished naming herself.

She named herself as Rudeus's wife and one of the Sword Kings.

After Therese's following introduction and thanks for their first meeting, around five minutes have passed.

"Come on, there isn't much time."

Eris stood with good manners.

It's rare for this girl with a quick temper, but this time she was strictly ordered by Rudeus.

[The person you're meeting with is my savior. Please don't be rude... Well, you'll probably end up being arrogant, but just don't hit her.]

She will follow her instructions.

But as expected, this is getting on her nerves.

She hates waiting.

"Won't you hurry it up?"

"Ye-, Yes!"

At those words, the miko jumped with a start.

The worry that she was offending Eris won out against her shyness.

"Um, I'm the miko! Thank you so much for saving my life earlier!"

"Earlier...? I don't remember!"

"Eh?"

To the Eris that declared that in a loud voice, the miko reflexively looked into her eyes.

"... ah."

And then, seeing that there wasn't even the slightest trace of herself in Eris's memories, a saddened expression floated onto her face.

There's no helping it.

She knew it would be like this.

There's no way she would remember.

However, there were thoughts that it might be possible.

That it might be possible for her to remain in Eris's memories, even if just slightly.

That maybe she would say something like, "Oh, you're from that time? You've gotten big."

Those thoughts were lingering in the depths of her heart.

Since she longed for Eris so much.

However, looking at her face, hearing about that time, Eris didn't remember a thing.

Possibly, if she spent more time reading Eris's memories, she may find some traces in the corner of her mind...

But after hearing about the past, what lurked in the corner of Eris's mind was the memory of Therese hugging Rudeus as he sat in her lap and rubbing his head.

The miko is the [Miko of Memories].

She is aware that memories are that kind of thing.

However, that doesn't stop it from being a shock.

"However, you saved Rudeus! I'm grateful!"

With her arms crossed, the tall Eris let out a delightful voice.

After hearing that voice that seemed to blow away her shock, the miko shook her head as if to shake off her thoughts.

"No... It's only natural to save Eris-sama's husband."

Even if the one in front of me doesn't remember me, that doesn't change my admiration or gratitude.

To the miko who thought that, Eris hurled out words as if in pursuit.

"So then, tell me your name! Since Rudeus says he'll be in your care from now on as well, I'll remember it for you!"

"Eh?"

A name.

She doesn't have a name.

Until now, the miko didn't feel inconvenienced by that.

However, now that Eris says she'll remember the miko's name, she doesn't have one to give.

She's missing something important.

She finally gained an awareness of how big a loss that was.

"Ummm... That is..."

"Miko is that thing, right? The same as Zanoba?... That's not a name, is it?"

At the word 'Zanoba,' the miko once again looked into Eris's eyes.

It seems that mikos from other countries have names.

She couldn't see anything about that miko besides his name, since Eris didn't have much interest in him.

Still, it came as quite a shock.

"Why, you!"

"Miko-sama is Miko-sama!"

"Are you mocking her!?"

"A name is unnecessary!"

"Where is your god!?"

However, with the uproar in the background, she calmed down a little.

It didn't inconvenience her until now, and there's nothing that could be done if she doesn't have one.

It can be thought of that way.

"My deepest apologies. I don't have a name."

"Hnnn... Is that so?"

It didn't bother Eris.

The miko was relieved at that.

This is the first time in her life that she hesitated so much to look into someone's eyes.

"However, I'm surprised. I heard you won't be coming to Milis."

"Since Rudeus got scared again, I came over... Um, I hurried!"

The teleportation magic circles should be kept a secret.

Eris understood that as well.

Of course, the miko already knew about the teleportation magic circles, and was chuckling to herself.

"Is that so, as expected of Eris-sama!"

"Fufun, of course!"

Eris's mood improved, and the atmosphere of the area became gentler.

Seeing that, the miko started thinking.

I'll flatter Eris more, and improve the atmosphere even more, she thought.

It's something the miko would normally never think.

"Umm, that is, I've always admired Eris-sama!"

"I-, is that so?"

"Yes, how can I become like Eris-sama?"

At that, Eris looked down on the miko.

Fluffy cheeks.

Plump arms and legs.

An overall lacking in tightness, unhealthy body.

"You want to become like me?"

"Yes! I want to become cool like Eris-sama, not just in how I talk... Eh?"

Before anyone noticed.

Before anyone noticed, Eris had drawn her sword.

Of all the people present, only two of them were able to react.

The two who were especially gifted at swordplay among the Order of the Temple.

At the same time as they noticed, those two despaired.

Eris's sword was unsheathed.

They couldn't see her sword fly at all, but they could feel the sense that something, or someone, had been cut down.

Cut down.

Who was?

That much doesn't even need to be said.

"You!"

"How dare you–!"

What was severed was the miko's wrist... or rather, a branch around half it's width from the nearby Balta tree.

"..."

"....."

Seeing that, the Temple Knights returned to the background as if nothing happened.

Eris picked it up and quickly pruned the hindering twigs.

The miko looked at Eris's sword that was drawn at some point, thinking, that's a pretty good sword, huh, none of the Temple Knights have swords that good, and such while absentmindedly watching Eris's movements.

Before long, the twigs were all removed and the branch had become a wooden rod around 100 centimeters long.

"Here."

And then, Eris handed it over to the miko.

"...?"

To the miko who looked on in puzzlement, Eris turned sideways.

And then, changing her grip on her sword from one-handed to two, she held her sword aloft... and swung it.

A sound as if it were crushing evil rang as if to destroy the silence.

"Try it."

"...Eh? Ah, yes."

The miko imitated Eris and held up the wooden stick.

And then, with a small shout, she swung it down.

However, it was a 100cm stick.

It wasn't something used for drying clothes, it was slightly heavy with a strange center of gravity, and the miko unsteadily stumbled a step or two forward.

After seeing that, the background shouted, but we'll leave that aside.

"Ummm... by 'like Eris-sama' I meant..."

"Lower your hips more, let out the strength in your elbows, and be more aware of how you move your back. One more time."

"Ye-, Yes!"

Without really knowing what was going on, the miko continued to swing the stick.

Each time the miko swung the stick, Eris gave advice.

"..."

"Call out each time you swing! One, two, one two!"

"One, two, one, two!"

The Temple Knights didn't stop this scene.

They weren't really sure what was going on, but they could tell that Eris didn't intend to harm the miko, and so they saw no need to stop it.

There was also the fact that the miko looked lovely swinging the stick around.

Only the captain tried to stop it and had to be held back by the other followers, but in the end it was simply the background scene.

"Haah... Haah... Eris-sama..."

Once she had repeated around 30 times, the miko let out a shaking voice.

"I can't... feel my arms..."

"I see. Then it's fine, you can stop now."

As she was told, the miko lowered the stick.

From her back to her wrists, her body was numbed with exhaustion.

It seems like if you were to put your ear close to her muscles, you would be able to hear them creaking.

"U, Ummm..."

The miko looked up at Eris with an uneasy expression.

She doesn't know why she was made to swing the stick around.

Eris may have simply been trying something out.

She must be disappointed.

She will probably scold me, saying "Do you think you can become me like this?"

Such sad feelings welled up in the miko.

"Starting tomorrow, do that every day. Also, doing it in this garden is fine, but start running."

"Eh?"

"If you don't know what to do, ask them."

Eris looked straight at the miko.

As if drawn into those eyes, the miko read Eris's memories.

What could be seen there was her severe daily training in the Holy Land of the Sword.

Sharpening herself through running and shouting without food or water.

"You can become like me."

Eris stated that definitively.

If Rudeus was here he may have said "No, that's definitely impossible..." with a wry smile.

However, Rudeus was nowhere to be found.

The miko turned around and looked into Therese's eyes.

Her own training was etched into her memories.

In the other Temple Knights as well, though it wasn't to the same level as Eris, there were memories of the effort they put in.

You can become like her.

It will probably be tough, it isn't easy for anyone.

However, you can become like her.

"I... wonder if I can do it?"

"I think it will be fine. We can't let you use a sword or magic, but as far as training your body... Everyone will teach you together."

The one who answered was Therese.

She looked around at the background while saying that, but quickly returned her gaze to the miko.

While looking into the miko's eyes, she gave her honest opinion.

"However, please promise not to raise a hand if assassins attack, even if we were to be completely wiped out."

In Therese's memories were nobles who had challenged opponents with crude tactics and perished.

This was Therese's kindness of asking not to become like them.

"Yes. I swear to Milis-sama."

The miko nodded delightedly.

A gentle atmosphere permeated that place.

Possibly lured in by that atmosphere, the silver owl that was wandering the garden returned.

It angled its head and looked up at the miko, and cried out "Hoo."

"Oh... what happened?"

When the miko bent down and extended her hand, the owl stuck out its forehead as if presenting the place that was itchy.

The miko stroked it with her fingernail, and the owl's fluffy feathers stood on end, and it narrowed its eyes in pleasure.

Seeing that, Eris became sorely tempted.

She loves the Beast Race.

However, that isn't limited to the Beast Race, she loves all fluffy creatures.

She has lots of opportunities to touch dogs and cats, but not birds.

She can cut down a flying bird, but it's rare to get this close to such a large bird without it getting vigilant.

"... Hey, can I touch it too?"

"Yes! Of course!"

Gaining permission, Eris crouched while breathing wildly.

Seeing that excitement, the silver owl winced and faltered backwards.

Eris stopped her movements.

"..."

I can't move too quickly here. Animals instinctively fear creatures faster and stronger than themselves.

They'll be obedient if you completely dominate them, but if you want to get along with them you have to make sure you aren't scary.

That's what she heard from the Rinia who she completely dominated in bed.

Eris slowly and carefully extended her hand, and touched the silver owl.

The silver owl's plumage that seems hard from afar were very soft, and increased Eris's excitement.

She wants to immediately hug it tightly and bury her face into its feathers, but she can't go that far.

If she were to do that it would run away, just like Leo, Rinia, and Pursena.

However, it's fine if she doesn't go that far.

While thinking that, Eris rubbed the silver owl all over.

The silver owl was frightened like an impala being tormented by a tiger, but none of the people there paid it any mind.

"Do you like it?"

"Birds are good, too."

After enjoying that softness for a while, Eris stood up with flushed cheeks.

Fur is nice, but feathers are extraordinary, thought Eris.

Suddenly, she noticed something.

"What's his name?"

"Eh? Name?"

The miko tilted her head at that question.

Well, a name...

"When keeping an animal, it's common sense to give it a name."

"Is that so?"

"Yeah, that's what Rudeus said before, after all."

The miko was suddenly worried.

Not only has she never named anything before, she doesn't even have one herself.

She's not allowed to name herself, but it's certainly convenient to have one.

"A name..."

Seeing the deeply troubled miko, the background began to become flustered.

I'll decide it, no I will, but Miko-sama should decide it herself, and such.

"Eris, it's over."

At that time, Rudeus returned to the park.

He had finished saying goodbye to Cliff, and was feeling slightly sentimental.

However, there's no time to be immersed in sentimentality, a battle is coming up.

I am a robot. He stiffened his face while thinking that he has to move like a sentinel.

Seeing the miko in the park, he tilted his head.

"Ummm... is something wrong?"

"We ended up trying to decide on a name."

"A name..."

Rudeus looked around the park.

The troubled miko, the flustered followers.

The new captain who didn't seem like he could swallow the situation.

Therese who was simply wearing a wry smile.

He immediately understood the situation.

That's certainly troubling, he thought.

I'm sure Eris had no ill intentions, he thought.

"Ah, how about Rudeus-sama decides on a name?"

And then, the miko proposed that idea.

I can't decide myself, but there's no problem if Rudeus does it, she thought.

"Eh? Is it okay if I do it?"

"Yes, of course."

Being told so, Rudeus made a difficult face.

He looked between Eris and the miko.

He didn't want to choose a bad name, but since it was so sudden nothing is coming to mind.

"Then, how about... Nurse?"

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to his joke earlier about the Miko's name being Nurse. }

"Nurse, huh? That's a good name! From today onwards, your name is now Nurse!"

The miko bent down and pet the silver owl at her feet.

Seeing that, Rudeus shouted "Ah!" in a small voice.

"Is something wrong?"

"No, it's nothing."

Rudeus turned his gaze from the miko.

He turned his face away like someone with a guilty conscience.

She tilted her head at that, but the miko was satisfied.

She got to meet the Eris that she looked up to, and decided on a name for the owl. She even decided what she should be doing from tomorrow on.

She thought that today was truly a good day.

"Eris-sama. Thank you so much!"

"I'll come again someday. When I do, I'll come to see you again."

"Yes, please!"

Eris was also satisfied.

She was satisfied just being able to touch the owl.

The background was satisfied, as well.

They felt a bit of dread when Eris drew her sword, but they are satisfied that the miko looks satisfied.

They are looking forward to teaching her in detail on how to train her body from tomorrow on. All of them are.

Only Rudeus was turning away with a face that says "Oh, shit!"

Only Therese noticed that facial expression of Rudeus.

She noticed exactly who he was trying to name.

However, she didn't say it out loud.

She just smiled wryly.

The silver owl Nurse looked at that miko with its head tilted.

Thus, Eris was able to gain another disciple.

From the next day the miko became more and more slim, and the Temple Knights treated her more and more like an idol, but... that's a story for another time.

Mushoku Tensei: Isekai Ittara Honki Dasu - Volume 22

—Lilia's Point of View—

That day, Elinalize-sama had visited us.

She came to our house once every few days and proceeded to make small talk about how a wife should be.

Getting married, settling in a residence, even giving birth to a child, her husband going to a distant place, she would be lonely. Since I am a wife as well, I can properly understand such a feeling.

However, her behavior is as usual, and something like loneliness cannot be sensed.

She might have a bit of composure.

Perhaps because of that, she frequently comes along and we receive consultation about the ways of a wife.

At what age and how should a child be given education, from matters like that to trivial talk.

"I wonder how soon until Aisha learns to behave more like an adult."

"Let's see. It's not like she can't do something like that.....until a time comes when she personally thinks it's necessary, she most likely won't do that."

"Personally, meaning?"

"If she will be able to love a man or the like....."

"Would it be bad if it's Rudeus-sama?"

"You should know it as well. The reason Aisha behaves like this is because she is Rudeus's little sister."

"A little."

"Then it's necessary to find a different person for her. A partner who doesn't turn his face when Aisha doesn't behave herself like an adult."

"Hmmm~....."

That day, the one taking the advice was none other than myself.

Elinalize-sama looks much younger in appearance than me, but as I thought, it must be because of an old-woman's wisdom, I have to give a firm response.

"That is absolutely right....not relying on someone younger; people who carry excess admiration for adult woman are good."

"Excess admiration?"

"Yes, if it's Aisha, since the thing that is called reality can be taught while satisfying the longing of such boys.

I am well aware of the fact that Aisha can never be together with Rudeus-sama.

Rudeus-sama as well does not wish for it, nor does Aisha.

Having said that, I don't think she will ever bring a companion for a formal marriage interview.

"Well, I would like it if it doesn't become like that."

"Yes.....huh?"

Incidentally, when I hung my head and answered, Leo's figure was slowly revealed in the dining room.

Lara-sama and Lucy-sama were riding on his back.

Probably playing Horse-horse.

"Wau!"

Leo barked towards me.

What might it be? Given that he is very smart, he doesn't usually bark without any reason.

Don't tell me, did something happen to Sylphy-sama's body.....!

"Wau, wau!"

While wagging his tail, he is watching me and the entrance alternatively.

No, that's not it. This happy-go-lucky attitude... If something had happened to Sylphy-sama, he would have cried out.

Towards the entrance.....is it a guest?

No, Leo doesn't wag his tail during a visit by guests.

Ah, it could be that Roxy-sama had returned?

On the occasions Eris-sama returns, Leo shakes his tail, but remains quiet without barking.

While thinking about such things, I raised my back and heard a 'gachari' sound from the entranceway.

As I thought, it must be Roxy-sama.

Since Eris-sama opens the door with such force as if to break it.

In order to receive her, I rushed towards the entranceway.

"Ah, Lilia-san, I've just returned."

"Welcome home, Rudeus.....sama?"

The one standing at the door was Rudeus-sama.

Eris-sama and Zenith-sama; Aisha is also there.

But they've returned much earlier than the arranged schedule.

Even though the planned schedule was to stay in Millis for half a year, it's only been approximately one month.

On top of that, Rudeus-sama's facial expression is unusually stern.

I immediately understood at once.

Ah, that something might have happened.

Most probably, Claire-sama would be the cause.

Claire-sama is not too flexible.

To add up, Norn and Aisha as well were somewhat treated bitterly.

Being a pious adherent to Millis, by no means do I think of her as a bad person, but I can't flatter her as a good person either. Her affinity with Rudeus-sama might be the worst.

Most likely, they might have gotten into conflict because of their difference in opinion regarding the family.

"Might something have happened?"

On hearing that, Rudeus-sama's already stern expression warped more.

I thought if it was Rudeus-sama, he might be skillfully able to do it.....either way, a hopeless matter is hopeless.

"....Yeah, well."

Rudeus-sama was prevaricating the words with a halfhearted attitude.

"Is it Claire-sama?"

On hearing that, Rudeus-sama made a blank expression.

"No, I had a fight with Ms. Claire, but we were able to reconcile; I don't think she is a bad person."

With those words, I simultaneously tilted my neck and felt a bit relieved.

Even though I thought that I would become an obstacle if I had gone along, I had been worrying so much for this entire one month; it looks like that was just needless worry.

But then, just what might have happened?

"Then, just what?"

Rudeus-sama made a difficult face and then turned his eyes away.

Aisha is standing with an unpleasant face on his side.

It looks like some kind of different problem has risen up.

Looking at Aisha's complexion, is she the problem?

"Did Aisha make a mistake?"

Just before this, I was consulting about her with Elinalize-sama, but even though this girl is already 15 years old, she still hasn't become quite an adult.

Even though she has the ability, no matter how much time passes, her mind is still that of a child.

Before "A prodigy, with this I'll be able to repay my favor to Rudeus-sama" I would puff my chest out and call her my child, she would remain a child prodigy forever.....

"No, she perfectly made sure of the matters at hand."

"Then, just what?"

I thought in an instant that any more than this would be intrusive, but I still tried to hear it.

"W-well.....it would be good to gather everyone else since it would become a long story if I speak."

"Certainly, I deeply apologize."

"No....ah, but it's not only just bad news, for one thing I also have good news."

While saying that, Rudeus-sama made a forced smile and proceeded towards his room with a quick pace.

Eris-sama went ahead afterwards with an anxious look.

Aisha and Zenith-sama were the only people left.

Aisha was angry, but it looked like Zenith-sama was in a good mood.

"Aisha, were you able to perform firmly?"

".....blundered a little."

That's different.

She isn't mad, but feeling a little down.

That's unexpected.

Aisha is a girl who wouldn't make any thoughtless mistakes since before.

Even if she blunders, she is a child who would get over it after a while.

That is, if she is informing me with such honesty.....though she's a child, even if I think she is a child, she might have become a little bit more of an adult.

"Is it a serious mistake?"

"No, Onii-chan immediately settled the case."

"....."

Then, just what might have happened.....?

Not to mention Rudeus-sama was making that kind of face.....

No, we'll be speaking afterwards to confer, so let's just wait till then.

Firstly, I must aid Zenith-sama, who just returned.

"....."

As I was thinking that, Zenith-sama turned her face towards me.

And then, while being in a good mood, she extended her arm towards me and came forward.

I grasped that hand and accompanied her to her room.

Afterwards, just when the evening was about to pass, all the members of the family gathered.

On Rudeus-sama's command, every member.

At that place, Elinalize-sama was also present along with Norn and Roxy-sama, who just came from the school.

Of course, we usually gather like this whenever Rudeus-sama returns home after a long period.

Still, the number of times Rudeus-sama himself proposes to gather all of us like this are few; he generally considers Aisha or Sylphy-sama's feelings and then finally gathers all members of the family. He does that many times.

On top of that, Rudeus-sama's serious face...

Something might have definitely happened.

While putting myself on guard, we heard the report.

"Reporting now, firstly, the activity in Millis came to a close with a success. Cliff was able to skillfully merge into the business. Be relieved."

Claire-sama created a small amount of trouble, but Cliff-sama was able to establish himself in the religious organization just as planned, and the launch of the branch of the mercenary group was also a success.

On top of that, the Millis Organization now owes a huge debt to us, and making Miko-sama a subordinate of Orsted-sama was also a success.

It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that it was a huge success.

Elinalize-sama gave a sigh of relief after hearing that Cliff had successfully risen himself up in the society.

However, the real problem comes after that.

"Gisu was Hitogami's apostle."

Gisu.

Paul-sama's former party member and a member of the demon race.

It looks like he was the source of trouble this time; he left and vanished after proclaiming a declaration of war at the end.

It struck to no one that Gisu had become an enemy.

He had been socializing together with us since the events of the Begaritto Continent. At that time, he was continuously worried about Paul-sama's and Zenith-sama's health.

Still, his figure doing preparations for the sake of news gathering or labyrinth research was diligent and sincere, or so I remember.

Gisu frantically operated in order to help rescue Roxy-sama.

Having a remarkable ability as a warrior, he encouraged the party members, mapping the area himself as though it was a natural thing to do and then selling the maps; he helped the sad and gloomy Paul, unbeknownst to him.

I can't understand that such a person was acting like that in order to trap Rudeus-sama and Roxy-sama in a bind.

"I was thinking about it since when you contacted me to put him on the wanted list....might it not be some kind of mistake?"

Roxy-sama said so.

With her skill as a labyrinth researcher, she had acknowledged Gisu with only but a glance.

That, excluding the area of combat, someone more reliable doesn't exist.

"It would have been nice.....if it was a mistake."

While saying that with a bitter smile, he took out one letter from his breast pocket.

Roxy-sama received that letter and read over the contents, which made her usual sleepy expression cloudy.

However, she immediately understood and accepted it with a nod and passed the letter onto me.

Thereupon, I was finally able to consent to it.

The contents of the letter did seem like Gisu's.

Apart from the goofy nature and jokes, but somewhere, the one who left behind that one slight core was none other than Gisu himself.

He didn't particularly hate Rudeus-sama or Roxy-sama, nor was he trying to trap them from the very beginning.

He may have become an opponent necessary to deal with, but he is not someone who has a grudge towards us; a feeling like that.

"Even though he's usually random; to say Gisu behaves like such a gentlemen occasionally is just like Gisu, isn't it....."

Elinalize-sama spoke while passing a sigh.

Come to think of it, during the old days in the inner palace(reserved for women) of the Asura Kingdom, things like this frequently occurred.

In that country with violent disputes over authority, even though no hate was involved, the occurrences of people becoming each others' mutual enemies were numerous.

It's just that, now that they had become enemies, they had the tendency to fight fair and square.

This letter might have something to comply with such an intention.

"I must apologize to everyone for the matter that we are indebted to Gisu, but I will probably fight with Gisu.....and end up killing him."

While declaring that, Rudeus-sama's face looked awfully painful.

One might not think that, but Rudeus-sama actually acknowledges Gisu as well.

Considering what I heard from Eris-sama, their relationship was good enough to the point that they called themselves out with nicknames like 'Senpai' and 'Newbie'.

Gisu as well, he talked about Rudeus-sama's achievements as his own, and it looks like he had some fondness for him.....

It could be that the one hurt the most is Rudeus-sama himself.

"Rudi...."

Sylphy-sama can't find the words needed to be said after looking at Rudeus-sama's expression.

Roxy-sama is making a stern expression as well.

She's also just like me, who had a personal history of uniting with Gisu's party and receiving assistance.

However, Roxy-sama's decision was too quick; her face doesn't particularly show any hesitation.

Rather, she has a face like, "If Rudeus loses, I will..."

"In any case, I will once again be available in the house for a short while. Even though we have Leo's protection, I don't know what Gisu will try to do.

Everyone should take extreme caution so that danger doesn't befall you."

In the end, Rudeus-sama firmly brought this matter to an end.

Of course, it does not even need to be said; we don't have any intention of becoming Rudeus-sama's weak point.

Rudeus-sama should go into battle with peace of mind; I have the intention of protecting this house while cooperating with the family members and naturally looking after myself.

This is one good part of Rudeus-sama; that he always looks back here frequently without sympathizing with that resolution, but he also has a small lonely place when he isn't dependent.

Our existence might be seen as somewhat frail on Rudeus-sama's degree.

"I understand Rudi, if Gisu has become an enemy, then tell us what work we can do. If there is something that needs to be done, please give a call out."

"Me too, though I can't move around very well yet, I'll become Rudi's strength."

Roxy-sama and Sylphy-sama are just like before.

The faces of Eris-sama and Aisha displayed agreement as a matter of course.

Norn-sama was feeling a bit uneasy, but ascertained herself with a strong nod.

"Thank you. Tomorrow I will go and consult with Orsted-sama again; for now, let's end this family meeting....."

"Ah, Onii-chan."

While Rudeus-sama was declaring the breakup of the meeting, Aisha called out to him.

"You have to tell them about Zenith-sama as well."

"Ah, that's right."

The matter regarding Zenith-sama.

I could feel my body stiffening up after listening to that.

At the same time, I recalled the mistake Aisha was talking about that I didn't touch upon.

My tension is rising.

However, Rudeus-sama smiled with a puff.

"Actually, the matter regarding mother's curse was made clear."

It looks like it was not a mistake, but good news.

"Her curse allows her to read other people's minds; she can't read all of it, but.....she appears to have a precise comprehension about our situation."

After saying that, Rudeus-sama started telling us about what Miko-sama had told him.

From there, the talk shifted towards how Zenith-sama sees this world now.

Listening to that story, tears started spilling over from my eyes.

At the same time, her memories of life up till now have been flowing like surging waves.

Come to think of it, there were lots of times that she showed some ideas.

She took initiative during the garden's maintenance, and when Lucy-sama was very small, it looked like she knew before Lucy would cry and then moved accordingly to precede it.

Moreover, what would this matter be called.....

Zenith-sama actually knows about Paul-sama's matter and understands it.

I thought that she might not know that we had suddenly lost Paul-sama.

I thought that if her memories came back, it would surely be a painful experience for her.

But, Zenith-sama already knew about everything.

On top of that, she had accepted it and was looking forward.

If I think about it, the tears just won't stop.

"Lilia-san....."

"I apologize.....Rudeus-sama...."

Within everyone who was moved to tears, I was the only one who continued to cry out with a 'waaaa' while covering my face.

Recently, I feel like nothing but crying.

Since when I was young, I never cried so much that I would sink in my own tears.

I considered myself as a human who was not moved emotionally by anything.

This must be because of my age.

I kept crying while Aisha patted me on my back,

After some time when I stopped crying, Zenith-sama immediately brushed me gently on my head, and I started crying again.

—Rudeus's Point of View—

I finished reporting to my family.

Just like always, it was kind of sufficient; I got a reliable answer.

Particularly, Roxy and Lilia might have some place in their mind about Gisu, but they didn't show any complaint or disapproval, and were in agreement with the fight against Gisu.

President Orsted is the next person to have the staff meeting with.

Even if I say staff, Ariel, Cliff, and Miko are not here, but.....

Still, Sylphy, Roxy, Eris, and Aisha – with these four people, I was sitting with Zanoba to have him make something for me.

While moving with the horse-drawn carriage that is owned by the Mercenary Group, I picked up Zanoba in the middle and am now on my way to the office.

"Then, Zanoba, I'll be relying on you about the matter concerning the Magic Armor."

Along the way, we were planning about the powering up of the Magic Armor.

Resuming development of 『Mk. III』.

One more thing to add to that is the matter of the preparation of a trump card. After watching my Magic Armor, Gisu might come up with something; I want to add measures on this side for once as well.

"I understand Master, since the amount of workers has recently increased here, it might just be possible."

"In that case, let me help you out as well."

While listening to my plan, I entrusted Zanoba, who was striking his chest.

The one who cut in our conversation was none other than Roxy.

"I have also been increasing my knowledge regarding magic battle formations; I think I can assist you on that."

An assistant, huh?

Certainly I would be grateful, but is it ok?

Honestly, its construction and maintenance is very complex to the point that even I am not able to do it sometimes.

"Is it really fine? ...I think it's too difficult to just dabble in."

"Geez, Rudi, just who do you think you're facing towards and inquiring with?"

"S-sorry, that was rude of me!"

I recovered the balance of my mind!

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to mind control in the Final Fantasy IV role-playing video game. }

Even though there is no such thing that Roxy-sensei isn't capable of doing!

Just what am I saying?

I am a foolish guy! Good grief, it would have been good if I died!

"Even I have been continuously studying for Rudi's sake.

I could help out with the maintenance and improvement after looking at Zanoba's or Cliff's research papers....."

"Sensei....."

Come to think of it, she was depicted as a Fire Saint Class in Magic in Shirone, right.....?

It was not because she was able to do that in the former days; it could be that doing Magic training after coming back from Magic University might have given out results.

"I understand. I'll let you look after the Magic Armor and entrust my life to sensei!"

"Entrust it to me."

I was thinking that the Magic Armor's progress would not advance much further since Cliff is not here; it's a pleasant miscalculation.

If Roxy made the Armor, it would be tremendously strong.

Even if the raw materials only consist of cardboard, perhaps it would be able to crush three Orsteds put in order?

"Don't underestimate me like that just because Cliff is not here."

While saying that, Roxy puffed her breasts.

Looks like she has self-confidence in this. If that's the case, then the plan for improvement may also become true.

"Hahaha, I just can't match up to master's master!"

With Zanoba's single sentence, the entirety of the carriage was wrapped up with laughter.

"....."

Inside it was an unexpectedly quiet character.

It's Eris.

While deep in thought, she is looking outside the window.

Eris might also be recalling the things regarding Gisu.

Eris said one thing or another and fairly got emotionally attached to Gisu after meeting by chance with him in the Great Forest.

There is also the memory of her getting taught cooking by him.

Eris's compatibility with various people is poor; Gisu was someone who matched her rhythm.

"......?"

Sylphy, who was sitting next to me suddenly grasped my arm tightly.

"Rudi, you alright?"

".....Eh? Ah, I'm alright."

I didn't quite get in what way or how I'm alright, but for now I gave that answer.

The matter regarding Gisu was a big shock, but still it's alright.

Sylphy's stomach has also increased a little bit from before.

It was discovered that she was 3 months pregnant; it's been 1 month since then, so estimating some more time, it can be assumed that she's more or less 5 months in.

"What about Sylphy?"

"Unlike others, I was not particularly acquainted with Gisu, so..."

"I see."

That was not something I was expecting to hear, but I guess it's fine if that topic is not touched upon.

She might have some composure because there is a second person.

However, caution is advised.

A long time ago, Hitogami also said that.

Something about how fate becomes ambiguous during pregnancy, so it becomes easier to kill women with strong fate.

The fact Hitogami said that remains, so a Demon Beast was summoned for protection on Orsted's advice.

That's why it should be fine, but as I thought, some anxiety still remains.

What to do?

I want one more relief ingredient.

If there is something that can be done...

I think I'll be able to do something.

Ah.

"I think until Gisu is dealt with, we should stop doing erotic things."

I thought the words that came out of my mouth weren't mine.

Sylphy was staring in puzzlement, Roxy with a gaping mouth, and Eris was doing side-long glances; all three of them respectively looked at me.

"Ummm.....if Rudi wants that, I don't mind?"

"I don't mind, but.....do you want to have a Buddhist prayer?"

"I might have mentioned this before, but it's easier for Hitogami to aim at us during pregnancy. Gisu might also be aiming for that, so let's stop for a short while."

They look like they've heard that for the first time.

Did I not tell them about it before?.....

I told them, but they might've forgotten.

"It can't be helped."

It looked like Eris was discontent, but she didn't object.

She muttered that while returning her gaze back to the window.

"But I don't think Rudeus will be able to abide by that promise."

That's a bitter comment.

I don't have much confidence in the lower half of my body.

I am untrustworthy.

I might be calm right now, but it's the male instinct to shoot when the bullet is loaded.

And then, if the firing hammer is cocked, I'll probably shoot if it's now or never.

"I don't think even Sylphy would be able to reject."

"Uuuu.....even I will be able to uphold it if that's what Rudi wants."

"No way. Rudi will say 'just a little,' and then you'll allow it while saying 'if it's just a little', right?"

".....I'll probably allow it."

That might be possible if I just feel them up. If I can at least hug them to replenish my energy.....

'Just a little' – that feeling is fatal.

"That's why I will always stay beside Rudi, and if he tries to do something, I'll hit him."

If I try to do something erotic.

Eris will hit me.

I'll lose consciousness. And forget about it by the time I wake up.

It's perfect.

"I'll be in your care."

Alright, from today onwards I am the abstinent Rudeus.

Be strong.

We arrived at the office.

If you look at the place, it emits a strange atmosphere like that of a Devil King's castle; Orsted seems to relax here without the helmet when he makes a stay.

No, it's wrong to just arbitrarily decide only on the atmosphere.

Perhaps, it might not be.....ah, just now, I had a hunch that the atmosphere softened.

Thought so, it's here.

"Ah, President Rudeus! Adviser Aisha! Thanks for your hard work!"

The instant we entered, a young woman sitting in the lobby vigorously bowed to us.

A women who is a half between the human race and long-eared race(elf-race).

She might have the long-lived blood of the long-eared race, but she's still quite young.

She's Orsted's secretary, who was hand-picked from the many candidates that were carefully screened repeatedly.

She stays here throughout the daytime and devotes herself to office work, communicating with Orsted by exchange of words without accidentally meeting him, who sits inside the room.

What was her name again?

"Thank you for your hard work. Is the President present?"

"Yes, he has been staying in the room since this last month."

For 1 month, that means he's been staying there for almost the entire time since I've been to Millis.

It looks like he's not out of the office much recently.

It gives off the feeling of a shut-in.

No, he might have seen the situation of my house.

According to the Miko's observation of Zenith's memories, he visited quite a number of times.....

"But, if I am the Chairman and Orsted-sama is the Company President, then it feels like my authority is sort of greater than him."

"Huh.....then, what should I call you?"

What would be good?

If Rinia is the leader, Aisha the advisor, and if we assume I am the Chairman.....

"Commander-in-Chief.....or something like that?"

".....Should I comply with that?"

"That's right, umm, I look forward to working with you."

Anyhow, it looks like we're done with her ignorance.

Any big problems have not risen up till now.

Her wages were settled with a boost as well and she might be tolerant about the amount.

"Are there any problems besides that?"

"No, there are none."

"Is that so? If there are any complaints, immediately say them; we'll grant the request as soon as possible."

"....Eh!?"

She got surprised.

Why was she surprised?

Certainly we don't have any Labor Standards Act, but we surely intend to become a white company.

{ C-Editor's note: In Japan, a white company is one that is fair, honest, and has good working conditions. }

"I apologize. I ended up saying that because Orsted-sama talks like that."

"Ah, is that so....."

"We have already gained a lot of convenience."

Even if it's usually indirect and such a suggestion is done, one would put himself on guard if it's a contract with the devil itself.

It's only thanks to the helmet Cliff made which alleviated Orsted's curse.

I wonder if it's fine.

"Even though I am much obliged, it's a pity that I can't even look at his face."

"It's because of his curse. The moment you see his face, the feeling that you're getting now would probably be changed to resentment or suspicion or the like."

"That's a rather dreadful thing."

"Yeah. That's why, you must never open the door when Orsted is working inside."

".....Be-bedding?"

"Ahem."

Well, it should be fine if he'd put the helmet on at that time.

Even Orsted wouldn't put it on at all times.

"In any case, I'll be making use of the conference room now."

"I understand."

I passed the office worker and opened the door.

Orsted was as usual, writing in a book on his desk.

With the helmet equipped.

"Rudeus, is it?"

"I have just returned."

When I bowed to greet, Orsted closed his bulky leather notebook with a snap.

"What were you writing about today?"

"The same, information sorting."

"Is that right?"

I tried to take a peek in that notebook once when Orsted wasn't around, but it was written in Dragon Race language, so I wasn't able to read it.

One would think that it contains necessary information, since Orsted doesn't usually tell me about important things.

Having said that, if it is something like a diary, then it would be like trespassing his privacy.....

"Were you not immediately leaving for the Kingdom of the Dragon King?"

"Before that, I would like to revise this time's report in the meeting hereafter."

"I have already informed you over the Lithograph; there is nothing else more from me to tell you."

"I expected to come back, and since our movements will change from now on, it's my obligation to report."

"....I see."

Orsted said that with a sigh and reseated himself on the chair.

I told the 5 people that I bought along with to sit on the chairs and then sat myself.

"Why bring them along?"

"I am concerned about Gisu's people, so just in case. I also wanted your opinion, so..."

On taking a glance at those five people, the girls looked demure.

The straightforward hostility isn't there like before.

Eris is almost displeased.

"Then, make it brief."

I cleared my throat with a cough.

"We've already discussed this over the Lithograph, but it looks like Gisu is assembling war potential to kill me from right in front.

We don't know whether it's true or not, but I am considering assembling strong comrades of our own to oppose them."

"Yeah."

"Firstly, we need to call dibs on Death God in the Kingdom of the Dragon King and then Atofe; after that we'll think about the North God.....are you aware of North God's whereabouts?

After Atofe, I intend to call out at least the upper positions from the Seven Major World Powers.

Rank #5 『Death God』.

Rank #6 『Sword God』.

Rank #7 『North God』.

They're arranged in this order, but prior to the meeting with Orsted, it was likely that it would be easier to call out to North God.

That is why North God would be given preference over Sword God.

"I don't know. Those guys are wanderers. Just a little alteration in history and they end up at the opposite sides of the world. The distinction can't be gripped with this many changes."

"How does it look like usually?"

"Second Gen North God in the Begaritto Continent and Third Gen North God ought to be in the Strife Zone in the Central Continent."

Both of them are too far, and it doesn't seem like there is a landmark for them.

Then that means it would be better to give up on the North God.

"If war is that important, Ore God would be a nice installment later on. That guy can mass-produce good quality armor if he gets accustomed to the war, but has a weak point when it comes to fighting himself."

"Understood. Then, next would be Sword God."

For now, the sequential order is Death God, Atofe, and Sword God.....

I want to call out to even more various people.

For example, the Seven Major World Powers' ranking superiors.....

At the top of the Seven Major World Powers is 『Technique God』, 『Dragon God』, 『Fighting God』, and 『Demon God』 in sequential order.

Other than the Dragon God, the others are missing or sealed, was it like that?

Huh?

"Which reminds me, won't Technique God become our ally? Certainly, there is the matter regarding him split into two and Demon God, but won't he cooperate if he hears about our fight with Hitogami?"

"Futile."

"Because of his memories being vague? Then, let's just work out how to restore Demon God Laplace's true spirit back by combining him.....ah, but if we do that, Perugius-sama will get angry. But, that piece is appetizing....."

"Stop it."

With those powerful words I held my tongue.

"I don't have any intention of becoming those guys' comrade."

Those guys.

I somehow understood with those words.

Orsted sees Laplace and Perugius as the same rank as him.

Probably not just those two, the rest as well; similarly, those people who are known as the Five Dragon Generals.

".....But then, ummmm, Perugius-sama won't stay silent if it's something relevant to Laplace, right?"

"If they become enemies, then I'll deal with them."

".....I understand."

I can more or less guess why he's so obstinate.

Orsted's curse won't be effective against Perugius.

Despite the curse' effectiveness, Orsted will not become friends with Perugius.

An obstinate refusal.

The derived answers are not too many.

However, I hesitated to ask the reason.

For some reason, I can't ask.

It's impossible to ask now.

『The 『Treasures of the Dragon Tribe』 that lead to Hitogami's place, are those the life force of the Five Dragon Generals?』

If I end up asking that, it feels like Perugius or Orsted will become enemies.

As of now, the unknown matter must be put in advance.

"Well then.....let's talk about it some other time."

"Yeah."

I decided to change the subject.

It's not a good thing if I persist the matter unreasonably even though it's in vain.

Since I can say with confidence that I am his subordinate, I must abide by his decisions as well.

"I received quite some influence during this one case, but I didn't have enough stuff like a little bit of Orsted-sama's 『influence』, so I have a preposition."

".....What is it?"

"Although I got used to calling myself 『Dragon God's Right Hand』, but even now there are people who don't feel frightened or how should I put this, there are still many who don't yet understand just how frightening 『Dragon God』 is, that is why.....

Would it be fine to just pick up an easier title like 『Dragon King』?

A very appropriate title like Mud Dragon King would be fine....."

Well, it's just a name.

Orsted's popularity is low, but Perugius is famous.

It's the same rank as that Perugius, and such a really amazing thing will be easy to circulate if you think about it.

"No good."

Huh?

"There are many who call themselves the Dragon King."

He is glaring at me.

A terrifying glare.

I can comprehend the anger beyond that helmet.

What is this? Danger, danger, my feet are shivering.

"They live as they please with that tiny pride of theirs and die because of a foolish enemy."

"....."

"But you are different. Therefore, don't call yourself that. Rudeus Greyrat."

"Ah....um....yes."

It was unexpected.

That he would so strongly reject it.

I thought he would say 'You can freely name yourself'.

Not good, my trembling isn't stopping.

"Tch....."

"Eris, stop it!"

While I stopped Eris who was trying to come forward before, she clicked her tongue.

It's alright. It's not a fight. It's not a discord.

I just made the President a little bit angry by saying the exact opposite about his management policies.

So please stop rising your back while gripping your hand.

"That was an obtruded preposition. I'm very sorry."

"I don't mind."

After I bowed, the anger vanished.

Apart from his premise of moving through his loops, even Orsted has things that he can't concede to.

I seem to have stepped there thoughtlessly.

I don't really care; something like a nickname, it doesn't matter, anything is fine.

Something like authority, I can just put that in any other part as many times as I like.

For example.....something like borrowing Ariel's, Asura Kingdom's authority.

Alright, let's go in that direction.

"Well then, apart from receiving Ariel's authority someway or other.....who should we find to make a comrade after Sword God?"

".....Perhaps Biheilir country. Fierce God lives there."

Fierce God.

Someone like that exists?

"Is it fine to make him a comrade?"

"No, I investigated that guy thoroughly; he's a person who has a high possibility of becoming an apostle. If Gisu is recruiting him as a soldier, then it should be fine to just crush him."

Crush them to forestall it.

I see. That method also exists.

Increase this side's pawns and decrease that side's pawns.

In order to not fight with all 5 people in one go, a method to crush each and every person.

"Are there any others who can become possible enemies?"

"Let's see.....with the exception of Fierce God, there aren't many important people.....『Hades』 Vita who lives in the Heaven Continent's labyrinth 『Hell』. The Demon Continent's 『Unpleasant Demon King』 Kebura Kabura; it would be fine to crush both of them.

Also, it's fine to choose the former as the last if you're proceeding in this direction, since it's just small quantity of bones."

"I see."

Those are some terrific names.

Would it be fine to just not fight them.....

They just have a 『high』 probability of becoming Hitogami's apostle.

Presently, we don't know anything as of yet.

They haven't yet become apostles.

Then, wouldn't it be fine to make them a comrade before that?

It's not like we won't be able to escape an urgent problem without making some sacrifice.

It's fine to just fight at that time if it's unnatural.

I mean, if I go around killing companions who don't even know how they are related is... I don't want that.

"Well then, I'll be taking the method of making them into comrades or neutralizing them."

"That is right."

For the present, it's been settled what to do about who.

Next time will be details.

"Then, on to the next topic. It's about the visit to the Kingdom of the Dragon King—-"

After that, we concentrated on the preparation to go to KDK and gave that situation a closure.

Still, I hadn't thought that he would get so angry when I mentioned about the Dragon Race.

I'll be careful from next time.

Kingdom of the Dragon King.

This kingdom can only be described as unorganized.

The heights of the buildings aren't uniform, and the people are all dressed irregularly.

There was no attempt at city planning; an adventurer's inn was built right next to what looks like a noble's mansion.

A Sword God Style dojo was built right across from a North God Style dojo.

But even if there's no impression of unity, it is a vibrant place.

There's no history of social castes.

This is a country built on meritocracy and imperialism.

After arriving in such a country, naturally I went straight to the Royal Palace... Not really.

"Since we have no social standing here, we can't move using authority."

That's what I learned in Milis.

When dealing with a government, I need to make myself known so I'm not taken lightly.

When in Rome, do as the Romans do.

... Although it's a little different this time, I need to act and make preparations accordingly.

Therefore, we're heading to the embassy.

What embassy?

Of course, it's the Kingdom of Asura's embassy.

Ariel is a major shareholder in our company.

So naturally the Kingdom of Asura is a backer for the Orsted Corporation.

No, wouldn't it be the opposite?...

Orsted is backing the Kingdom of Asura.

Well, at any rate, borrowing the Kingdom of Asura's influence will ensure things won't turn out as poorly as they did in Milis.

I'll borrow a formal set of clothes and a carriage from the embassy,

Then head to the palace with a letter bearing Ariel's royal seal.

Of course, I sent Ariel a copy of my directive and received permission.

She responded [In the case of a decisive battle, you can count me among your war potential.]

Over the past several years, she seems to have been reinforcing her war potential and solidifying her position.

If I asked for something like bodyguards, she could probably set me up with some.

Well, I don't know about their strength, or how useful they'd be...

"...."

After confirming the situation, it seems that the embassy only has one room for us to change in.

"Aisha, if you like any of the outfits, you can bring them back home with us, so choose quickly. Eris is waiting."

"Hnn... Onii-chan, I can't decide... After all, I wonder if a green outfit is best? Eris-ane is wearing red, brother is wearing gray..."

Aisha has been prowling around in her underwear, unable to decide on an outfit since earlier.

By all accounts she's definitely a woman, taking this long to choose an outfit.

Because Aisha requested [I want you to decide, Onii-chan], Maid-san gave me a criticizing look while I stayed to watch Aisha change.

However, despite asking me to decide, it doesn't seem like she's really leaving the decision to me.

Even if I suggest something, it'll just end up as [No, that clashes with Eris-ane] and we'll end up looking for something else.

Last time, her maid clothes were troublesome.

Therefore, there's no objection to wearing a more proper outfit... but for it to take this long...

A frilly, light three-piece dress.

Since I've been surrounded by people who don't spend much time on preparations, this is new, but as I expected, it's tiring.

"I mean, I shouldn't be the center of attention, so should I maybe choose something plainer?"

"No, even if it's flashy it's fine. Yeah, your cuteness would even stun the Death God."

"Answer seriously!"

I got scolded.

But, seriously.

It wouldn't be strange for Aisha to meet a man in such a place.

She might catch the eye of a noble boy in the Royal Palace, and it would be something like a Cinderella story!

I'd like to see that.

It would be troublesome if she brought home someone strange...

Aisha has said it herself, the job this time isn't really job-like, and she's free to love whoever she wants anyway.

"Well then, wear the dark green one. It's plain enough, and it will match Eris's dress?"

"Eh... that skirt is a bit short... it would show too much leg."

Well, it should be fine.

Although I want to say that, Maid-san jumps in and says [Then that's no good], and discards the dress.

"Uu..."

With a groan, Aisha returned to picking out a dress.

Well, seeing her in her underwear, she's growing into a healthy adult.

She's growing in the appropriate places.

Apparently our family has the [nice body] gene.

The kind that attracts bad insects during the day.

Zenith and Lilia are also like that,

And Paul's family, the Notos Greyrats, love big breasts.

Therefore, my grandmother must have also had a huge chest back in the day.

It's hereditary.

"... Hey, Onii-chan."

"Hmm?"

"Uffun~nano."

Suddenly, Aisha bent slightly at the waist and struck a pose with her hands behind her head.

I've definitely seen that somewhere before.

"Who taught this to you?"

"Pursena. If I do it like this, she said it would be an instant knockout."

"That's not right. Using her pose right now can only be considered a misfire... You shouldn't have so much faith in her advice."

"Eeh...! But it was really popular in the mercenary group...!"

"Don't joke around, please choose quickly."

Although we still have a bit of time, we should hurry.

Today's appointment is a meeting with Princess Benedict and her knight Randolph.

They aren't particularly busy either; it's my understanding that they're free all day today.

So we can relax until the afternoon.

I don't think he'll turn into an enemy in the span of an hour.

It's not my motto to wait until the last minute to do things.

Having a bit of flexibility is always valuable.

We should be mindful of the time. We have enough leeway.

"Slow!"

However, people that are always in a rush also exist.

One such fellow just threw the door open with a *bang* and jumped into the room.

It's Eris.

In a glittering red coat, wearing black pants.

She also has her hair done in a ponytail in the style of the Kingdom of Dragon King's nobility.

She looks like an awe-inspiring female swordsman.

But, well, this is actually a style reserved for men.

According to Maid-san, it's considered inappropriate to carry a sword in a dress, so she immediately decided on this outfit.

"You're taking forever to choose!"

"Ah, Eris-ane. Sorry. I can't decide."

"Fuu..."

She quickly walked over to Aisha, her bright red hair trailing behind her.

Then grabbed one of the dresses arranged for us.

A bright, wine red dress.

"Take this!"

"Huh, but, Eris-ane is the one wearing red."

"What, you don't want to match with me!?"

"No, that's not it; I shouldn't attract that much attention because I'm an assistant. Shouldn't Eris-ane stand out more?"

"You're not an assistant! As my younger sister, wear something good!"

Aisha blushed at Eris's speech.

Then laughed with a [hehe] and received the dress.

"If Eris-ane insists, I'll wear this."

She seemed a little happy about it.

I wonder if she was happy that Eris referred to her as her younger sister.

I don't really understand a girl's mind well.

Thus, Aisha determined her dress, and we proceeded to Kingdom of Dragon King's Royal Palace.

The Kingdom of Dragon King's Royal Palace.

It's not as large as Asura Kingdom's Royal Palace, or as refined as Milis.

To describe it in a few words, it was a bloated jumble of buildings with bizarre landscaping.

It seems they've been constantly adding on to the main building out of necessity, but it just oozes vulgarity.

Nevertheless, this is the result.

It had the nature of something overwhelmingly unknown.

If I had to invade this palace, I don't think I could help but hesitate.

Although there's no need to feel overwhelmed this time.

I'm well prepared.

I'm in a carriage drawn by a white horse, in beautiful clothes, with an appointment.

Furthermore, Orsted has a good grasp on the present and future situation of this country.

It might not be perfect, but it makes a big difference.

I have confidence that things won't get carried away.

"Then, Eris, Aisha, are you ready?"

"Yeah."

"Yup."

By the way, this time it's only us three.

Eris, Aisha, and myself.

"If the Death God turns out to be an enemy, Eris and I will stall him, and, Aisha, you spread the [Complete Set] summoning scroll. Then I'll settle things in the MK-I."

"Leave it to me!"

I actually wanted to bring Zanoba and Roxy, but they have their hands full with the MK-III's production.

For the present, it's just us.

Eris and I are the combat force.

Well, that's only in the case that the Death God turns into an enemy.

I'll entrust Eris to the vanguard.

That's why it's necessary to bring two people, in order to deal with such an unpredictable guy.

Although, putting that line of thought aside, it's also important for Aisha to join us in preparation for installing a mercenary branch in this country.

It's not a bad thing to get a feeling for the country in person.

"...."

While we were having that dangerous conversation, we arrived at the palace's gates.

There's nothing for me to say here.

The person that came with us from Asura Kingdom's embassy does all the talking.

From arranging the appointment to addressing the gatekeeper, and all the arrangements afterwards.

Everything has gone smoothly so far, and now we've entered the palace.

"We have arrived."

We disembark the horse-drawn carriage and are guided into the palace.

After all this, I'm starting to feel conspicuous.

A person wearing what looks to be noble attire chatting with a knight was staring.

"Act dignified."

This time, in addition to coming here in the position of Benedict's friend, I've also made it clear that I've come here with Ariel's authority.

To make an enemy of me is for the Kingdom of Dragon King to make an enemy of the Kingdom of Asura,

There might also be rumors floating around of my involvement with the war in Shirone.

It shouldn't be possible for anyone to know that Orsted was the criminal who killed the king.

After this, I'll be in Ariel's debt again.

We were guided through the palace to a simple room.

It was a small room, with a minimum number of maids in attendance.

"Greetings, it's been awhile. Rudeus-dono."

And it seems the guards are at the maximum.

The Death God Randolph Marian.

He stood there like a demon, with Benedict as his master, protecting the infant in her arms.

"...."

Benedict looked at me, with her mouth tightly shut, and held her crying child.

I decided to greet her before Randolph.

That seems like the appropriate thing to do.

"Benedict-sama, I see you are in good health."

"...."

No reply.

But, there may be no helping it.

She probably heard various things back then,

About Zanoba and I, from Pax.

I don't expect Pax spoke very well of us.

"Your son also appears to be in good health. Zanoba will be glad."

"....."

"Hmm? Or is it a daughter?"

Benedict slowly shook her head.

I seem to have been correct, it's a boy.

"Could I ask for his name...?"

"..... Pax."

"He received the name of his father, Pax II."

Randolph supplemented.

So he has the same name as his father.

Pax Junior, I'll call you Little Pax.

I see. That's good.

"...."

"Err... Ah, that's right. Today let me introduce my wife and younger sister."

"I am... Eris Greyrat."

"I am Aisha Greyrat. Happy to meet you."

Awkward Eris and charming Aisha.

Perhaps because they're both wearing red, they look like sisters.

That's not it, they are sisters.

Sister-in-law Aisha.

"....."

Benedict doesn't respond.

She only looks up at Randolph anxiously.

"But Rudeus-dono, I had heard that your wife was from the demon race?"

Thus, Randolph responded.

Since his master refuses to speak, he responded; that seems a little rude.

"I have three wives. That would be Roxy."

"My goodness... That must not have a good affinity with the Milis religion."

"My priest friend preaches to me about it whenever possible."

I turned to Randolph.

"Long time no see. Randolph-san."

His appearance hasn't changed at all.

That sullen skeleton-like face.

At first glance he seems to be full of openings, but that's false.

Looking at Eris's pouting face, I understood that.

"You seem to be doing well."

"Yup, very. I'm full of spirit. Rudeus-dono doesn't seem to be doing so well though."

"A short time ago, an acquaintance turned into an enemy."

"I understand. When I was younger, I had to cut down a friend; it troubled me deeply."

Randolph responded, while sneaking a glance at Eris.

While nodding, he slightly moved to position himself between Benedict and Eris.

"Eris, could you take a few steps back?"

"Why."

"Randolph-san seems to have difficulty talking like this."

Eris had moved to put Randolph inside her range.

While Randolph had been moving little by little to block with me.

The two warriors were each trying to out-maneuver the other, which took the shape of them each slowly moving opposite each other in a slow arc.

If I left things like this, when they each reached their optimal position, a fight would probably break out.

"But, this guy might also be an enemy."

"If he was an enemy, he wouldn't have let Eris in this room with her sword."

Even more so, he definitely wouldn't have brought Benedict here.

He wouldn't bring what he most wanted to protect to a fight with a magician and a Sword King.

He would probably ambush us alone, or maybe with a group.

Since Benedict was in this room, Randolph was not my enemy.

But if this Benedict is a body double, then in that case...

I'd like to think he would have come up with a better trap.

If I try to anticipate everything, the possibilities of being deceived are endless.

For now, let's assume this isn't a trap, and regard this as a tentative trust.

"... Understood."

Eris reluctantly stepped back towards the entrance.

But now she was gripping her sword.

"Thank you very much, Rudeus-dono."

"No, I must apologize, please forgive me. However, this room is a little crowded..."

"What about your friend's story? Should I ask?"

"Of course. That's why I've come."

I spoke about what had happened in the Holy Kingdom of Milis.

And how the demon race man named Gisu turned into my enemy.

Although Gisu has no combat capabilities, he's very resourceful.

And that Hitogami plans to use him as a mouthpiece to recruit war potential.

In order to thwart Gisu, I've had him put on the wanted list in each country, and have started moving to create a counter-force.

"Really, to come out directly and declare war."

"He didn't have a particularly good hand to play."

"No, no, rather I meant that as a compliment. If you break through their tricks head on, one by one, then even the smart ones will run out of bright ideas."

Randolph let out some kind of rattling laugh at that.

I guess he's speaking from his own experience.

Those from the immortal demon race seem to be skilled in that regard.

"Well, that's why. So by all means, I want to borrow your power."

"Although I'd like to help by all means, I have no reason to do so. Furthermore, I don't want to get involved with Hitogami."

"... Even if Hitogami was his Majesty Pax's enemy?"

"Hou, what's this now? Please tell me in more detail."

I explained how Shirone was dragged into Hitogami's scheme.

And who was an apostle.

After Randolph listened to the last, he just laughed.

An eerie [kukuku] laugh that stretched the skin over his skeleton-like cheekbones.

"If that's the case, then don't mind what I'd said, I very much want to avenge his Majesty and destroy his enemy..."

Randolph said that while still laughing.

The first thing I think of seeing that ghastly face is [Treachery], but it's not good to judge people by their face.

All in all, everything's gone smoothly.

At this rate...

"And, there's something I want to say as well... but it's a little crowded here."

Whoops, it doesn't look like this is going as smoothly as I thought.

"What is it?"

"Nufufu, weren't we on opposing sides just a little while ago?"

Saying that so confidently, I'm starting to feel cornered.

But this might just be a friendly conversation for Randolph...

"You have the upper hand, please speak your mind."

"There is a condition. Do you still want to borrow my power?"

He certainly has the upper hand. In this situation, I can only listen to his demands.

Well, what kind of unreasonable demand will I be stuck with?

Or, this might be a ploy by Gisu.

"No, it's not a big deal."

Randolph took a step back.

From his position defending Benedict, as if to reveal her.

Benedict holding her baby.

She looks frightened for some reason.

"Although I suspect all of you are already aware, this country is in a state of chaos."

Kingdom of Dragon King is indeed in a state of chaos.

After Hitogami's plot in Shrione Kingdom was revealed, Orsted killed the king of the Dragon King's Kingdom.

Be that as it may, the late king had his affairs in order beforehand, and had properly chosen a successor.

The next generation king took control immediately, and the Kingdom of Dragon King has begun to regain stability.

But, that's merely the official story.

They still don't know who killed the late king.

Whether or not it was another country that assassinated him.

Or even if it was a member of the imperial court.

The perpetrator aside, they don't even know the purpose.

This has torn apart any semblance of unity in the imperial court,

Those gripped by paranoia can't properly function as a government.

"The chaos itself, is not directly related to us... The Queen's child is now considered a hindrance."

After all, Randolph's primary concern is Pax's son.

Benedict is the daughter of the previous king.

Although she was not treated as such,

And was eventually given to Prince Pax of Shirone to get rid of her.

Well, whatever.

The useless princess was finally put to use. That's all.

But, since the prince died in the civil war, now that Benedict has had his child, it's a different story.

The troops that took control of the Kingdom of Shirone have been steadily rebuilding the country.

Although they can't do anything right now...

However, they still hold a grudge against Pax.

After all, Pax massacred the royal family.

"Personally, before Shirone is rebuilt, I expect that it will be swallowed by the North, but there seem to be a lot of people feeling uneasy about it..."

Because of the royal family's lineage, things have become troublesome.

In a country like Shirone, one with the royal bloodline has the right to become king.

So, for those who currently control Shirone, the fact that Pax's son has survived is something undesirable.

If the Kingdom of Shirone stabilizes in a few more years, they will definitely demand Benedict's child.

In the future, the Kingdom of Dragon King and Shirone Kingdom will likely want to remain on friendly terms.

Little Pax is still the late king's grandson.

Shirone is a vassal state, so such a request would insult the country's honor.

Still, relations with Shirone would only deteriorate if they wouldn't submit.

That's why there seems to be some movement to 'remove' the concern beforehand.

In other words, to kill Little Pax before the request is made.

That way both the Kingdom of Dragon King and Shirone Kingdom keep face.

However, Randolph's presence wouldn't allow that.

"Wouldn't the Death God Randolph stand in the way of that?"

"Many people seem to think that fighting me is a better alternative to going to war with another country."

Well, I guess it would be like that.

Currently, while the Kingdom of Dragon King is in a state of internal chaos, its vassal states have been attacked by other countries.

In such a state, if Shirone, their northern breakwater, becomes an enemy...

It would only be natural for people to feel anxious.

Although from my perspective, Randolph is a much worse enemy.

"As long as I'm here, assassins and the like are meaningless. The way things are going, regarding the child's future... what do you say?"

Even if he survives the assassination attempts, all that's waiting are custody requests from Shirone.

No matter how things play out, a peaceful life does not await Little Pax.

"... If that's the case, even assuming I found a resolution, then it would still be impossible to bring Randolph-san to the final battle with Gisu."

"Yup, it's impossible... However, isn't an ally in the Kingdom of Dragon King necessary?"

"..."

"Having me as an ally will be very reassuring. Everyone says I am reliable."

"I suppose."

Randolph won't participate in the next fight.

But, on the other hand, that means he won't be an enemy allying with Gisu.

He won't be an ally or enemy.

However that doesn't mean he's worthless as a piece.

As he said, even if I can't take him to fight Gisu, it will be reassuring to have collaborators in Kingdom of Dragon King.

Even if it's ten or twenty years later, he might become a linchpin.

It's a future investment.

Orsted Corporation is a company that looks towards the future.

"I understand. Then, I will manage somehow."

Anyhow, our company's president was the cause of this mess in the first place.

That's a match pump.

"Yep, best regards."

And with that, it looks like I've come to an understanding with the Death God...

After my meeting with Randolph, I went back to the Embassy at once.

And thus, once again, we decided to do formalities for the audience with the present King.

I am currently assessed as the Dragon God's subordinate, Ariel's friend, Randolf's friend, and Benedict's friend in the Kingdom of the Dragon King(KDK).

Whether they will allow an audience with the king of a large country or not...

I expected it to be a difficult line, but unexpectedly we easily got permission for audience.

"Rudeus-dono has been quite popular here recently, so it's obvious."

Or so someone at the Embassy said.

I don't have any personal experience, but certainly the number of unknown people that are aware of my name are numerous.

I want you to forgive me for becoming so popular that it's becoming difficult to move, but it's a merit in itself that I was able to manage a smooth audience in a place like this.

Let that be sufficient for now.

"It's obvious if it's Rudeus."

"No, elder sister Eris, if it's the King of one of the best countries, then you can't just meet someone like that. You have to rely on someone if it's that."

"As expected of Rudeus!"

Eris is the same as usual.

Several days later, I made my attendance in the castle and turned up at the audience room of the Dragon King's castle.

Although I am not boasting, I am a little fussy regarding audience rooms.

Asura Kingdom, Shirone Kingdom, Kishirika Castle....be it be an audience room of any castle, some kind of intrusion always happens.

The audience room is made out of vanity.

It has a vast space with magnificent ornaments and sometimes knights wearing silver armor standing in a line can be seen, a place where people show off their power to each other by talking about how great their country is or how awesome their king is.

That is the audience room.

Asura Kingdom is a magnificent place with its spaciousness and splendor.

The audience room of Asura Kingdom is spacious with numerous people and gives off a dazzling impression.

It's probably because it's time for Ariel's coronation that the castle is always in a state of decoration.

Vastness, personnel, condition of expenses, throne, the beauty of the person sitting on the throne.

Any of those things are of first-class quality.

But, I'll say it clearly.

Asura Kingdom's audience room was certainly wonderful.

However, it ranks second in the world.

It's not only just the audience room.

I'm distributing my evaluation over the regular route until one reaches the audience room.

Outside the castle, despite a garden of excellent quality and lined up articles of fine arts that are a delight to visitors' eyes, I didn't meet anyone along the way.

A corridor that continues to be peaceful without a noise.

With a forceful lift in tension, the visitor feels a solemn atmosphere.

And the gigantic doors that lead towards the audience room.

The room that can't even be flattered upon its splendor is waiting before it's open.

With the minimum necessity for it, the decoration is simple.

Furthermore, 12 knights are lined up in front of the throne.

Every one of them is wearing a mask and throwing an overpowering intimidation by not revealing their identities, which in itself feels plain.

All of these are measures to give more attention to the throne.

The one sitting on the throne is the only person not wearing a mask.

That overwhelming feeling of a subtle and elegant existence.....just who would make light of such a mood?

Where is it?

Why hide it? It's the Sky Fortress [Chaos Breaker].

1st in rank is the Dragon King Perugius.

I didn't notice it before, but all of those came from production.

It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that Perugius's taste is the best in the world.

"Oh!"

It was me who gave out a voice of astonishment while observing the audience room of the KDK.

This country's audience room slightly differed from that of Asura's or Chaos Breaker's.

It was a little rough at best.

First of all, there were gigantic armors with helmets standing at the entrance of the audience room that looked like two gatekeepers.

Those might be more or less 3 meters.

Their size might be identical to that of the Magic Armor; just like the statues of fierce guardian gods, they looked down imposingly at the people who come to the audience room.

There isn't any Giant tribe in this world.

There might be a gargantuan race that I am not aware of.

At least, there is no one who can wear this armor in the KDK.

Which means these armors are here to instill fear in the people who come here.

And then when you enter inside, there are armors in front of your eyes.

From the vicinity of the entrance to the throne, there are empty armors and helmets standing in line surrounding the audience room in a circle.

And thus, aside from the carpet of gold thread that continues on towards the throne, the armor and helmet inside is standing as if to protect the King.

It is the iron throne with a dark grey color that they protect.

A cushion is nailed into the metallic throne as if the armor was made into a chair.

The level of comfort looks really poor.

There aren't many decorations.

It's more or less decorated with a mark of an allied country or something like the crest of the Knight Party, but that's just it.

An unrefined stone wall with silver armor and helmets.

'Well, isn't it fine to just line up something this powerful', a suitable feeling like that.

Despite this overpowering feeling of a great number of people standing by and watching me...

.....Since I cannot recommend it to all the people, the evaluation should be four stars.

"The 33rd Generation King of the Kingdom of the Dragon King, His Majesty 'Stelvio von King Dragon' is now present!"

While I was thinking about it, His Majesty the King's introduction ended.

With my face down as it is, I fell to one of my knees and waited for the next words.

"Raise thy head, what is thy name?"

"I am 『Dragon God Orsted's』 subordinate, Rudeus Greyrat. It's my first time meeting you. Your Majesty looks to be in good humor."

Sitting on the throne of that audience room was an ordinary man.

With dull blond hair that doesn't really match with the crown.

His age might be around 40 years.

He looks like Ariel's older brother in terms of his mood.

Prince Gravel the First.

"So it's you, defeating that Water God Reida, that one person who stopped the army invading Shirone alone, the so called Rudeus Greyrat?"

The rumors are again getting embellished by mistake.

It won't be long before I end up being a merman.

{ C-Editor's note: Rumors of him being a merman. }

"No, Water God Reida was dealt with by my master, and we were successfully able to stop the army with not just me, but by my teacher's help, and also together with the army troops stationed at the Karon Fortress."

"What an honest person."

I can't feel the dignity of a King.

Is it because I just met him, or is it because I've seen so many people overflowing with dignity?

"However, Water God Reida and North Emperor Auber are dead; I'm positive that those truths have not changed."

"Yes, I cannot deny that."

"Our Country respects true strength rather than social status. We intend to evaluate highly those who leave behind actual results all the while they are in similar cases of such opposition."

"I'll hold onto those thankful words."

Uh-oh, that is an unexpectedly good feeling.

I generally expect to be looked down upon, but.....

As I thought, it's thanks to my treading on steps.

It might be because of the power of the clothes borrowed from the embassy.

"The opportunity to listen to a story from a person like thou is rare.....but, adversely a person like thou does not need to appear without any business in front of I."

"That is....."

"Oh, wait, don't say it, let me guess."

The King stopped me from talking by pushing out the palm of his hand in front of me and gently brushed his chin.

It was a neat and well prepared beard.

Come to think of it, there are many people in my country who grow out their beards.

There are many shavers in Asura.....it might be their culture.

"First of all, it's not some government service.

Thou should have friendship with the Queen Ariel of Asura.

Which means, other than our country, if thou went to Asura as well, it's profitable. It's because thou should also be able to have a title of nobility as well as government service.

How is it?"

".....It's as you have said."

The King stared even more fixedly at me.

And then he continued while smiling with a broad grin.

"I must provide convenience to someone like thou to come to this country.....well then.....

Oh, that's right.

Come to think of it, there was a strange rumor floating around the streets.....

Shagal, what kind of rumor was it?"

On the King's words, one of the Knights that were standing to his side quickly lowered his head.

His face gave off an air of delinquency. If you looked at him, he was wearing the same armor as Randolf, similar to Knight Party's.....

Ah, no wait, Shagal?

He's a person who has been properly investigated.

"Rudeus Greyrat is calling out to each and every nation to prepare for Laplace's revival that is 80 years from now, or that's how it's called."

Commander-in-Chief Shagal Galgantis.

KDK's 『First Commander』.

A quarter-blooded long-eared race, his rough speech stands out, but he's an able person with his sharp conduct.

Or so I heard, but his ears are short and his usage of words is also polite. Is it because he's in front of the King?

"Oh, that's it."

Even Millis's Pope knew about it, but as expected, you can't make light of a large country's intelligence network.

"And aside the consistency in the call out,

thou put thy organization in each nation and perform business by use of those organizations.....am I wrong?"

"No, you're not."

He's not wrong, but.....

Even so, it feels like the conversation is going towards the wrong direction.

"And thus, just like every other nation, thou have come to me to ask for permission to cooperate.....isn't that right?"

The King has a satisfied look on his face.

Well, yeah.

I had that intention if not for Gisu's matter.

But this time, it's a little different.....

Still, if I deny what he said, it might result in a bad mood after those words spoken with such satisfaction.

It's not like I'm uninterested, but...

"Special permission is necessary for doing something so selfish. I don't dislike that attitude of thine."

The King continues to talk with a good mood.

He might have been looking forward to my arrival after obtaining the news about my movements.....

No, that can't be.

"However, it also affects what's called prestige of this country when I permit something immediately when demanded.

It will be troublesome when foolish crowds of people descend down upon us after hearing that the King will grant anything if requested."

"....."

"Therefore, that one condition.....what is it?"

The King made a puzzled expression when I silently raised my hand up.

We're starting to lose the sight of conversation little by little.

This fellow can't be dealt with properly.

"I apologize for interrupting, Your Majesty. Though what you say isn't wrong, what I came for today is because of a slightly different matter."

".....Hoh."

I'll tell him about the previous matter.

"It's regarding Benedict-sama's child."

King's expression changed.

The worn atmosphere too.

"According to what I heard from my friend Randolf, it looks like Benedict-sama's child.....Pax-sama is a burden to deal with, so there is some kind of movement going on right now regarding his disposal or so I've heard."

"What about it?"

The King didn't imitate timidness and overbearingly spoke out.

"Now that she has become a mother, there is no use for her as a political maneuver. At any rate, there is no need to let a person live who would become a hindrance sooner rather than later in this country."

"What about Randolf-dono? If you kill that person, Randolf-dono would immediately run away."

"The Kingdom of the Dragon King is not a lesser country which can be easily influenced by one of the Major World Powers."

Well, it's only right.

There will be no reason to go with the matter of killing Little Pax otherwise.

"In other words, the reason you came here was to appeal to spare that child's life?"

"......No."

I said that while looking directly at the King.

"I thought whether I can accept it or not if it's something that is not necessary rather than sparring life."

"Ha."

The King responded with a nose laugh and turned his sight to the Knight Shagal on his side.

"Did you hear that, Shagal?"

"Certainly, with these ears."

The King stamped his feet with a 'don' and bent his posture forward.

Putting his elbow on top of his knee, he stared at me as if glaring.

His attitude is different from before.

This might be this King's true nature.

"Then I shalt ask. Rudues Greyrat, what kind of mutual benefit will that proposal have?"

However, there is no need to panic.

No need to feel nervous.

Perugius's way consisted of dignity.

"Well then, let me gladly serve my story."

All of the internal conditions of this country are within our company's control.

The President knows everything.

What would become of the result because of my movements and things like that.

"First of all, after the death of the former king, the vassal states of the KDK are being attacked by at least three countries. From the country of Strife Zone in the North."

"....."

"Even you say it's under control, a vassal state can't become that if not for support.

The KDK has suffered a serious wound in the middle of this disorder that is war, yet even now you are coping with your absolute extent."

"What.....about it?"

"I can bring a stop to it all."

Since it's Ariel who is stirring up that war anyway.

Given that they force the sale of weapons on them by agitating the countries that can't help but attack the KDK.

Asura Kingdom is rich and I am much obliged to them as well.

But, money doesn't grow on trees.

That is why they occasionally do dirty work.

Well, even if Asura Kingdom stops doing something like that, they produce vast amounts of gold.

That is why, if I had to say, then there is a stronger meaning behind KDK's harassment.

If I tell her to stop, she would stop. Probably. No, surely.

"After that, Your Majesty. Since the King's death came to pass, a loan was borrowed from the Millis church in a hurry because a large sum of money was necessary, right?"

"....."

"Currently, although the loan itself was paid back, you ended up permitting the Temple Knight Party's sojourn in the domestic.

With the Temple Knight Party forcibly inducing their religion in the domestic, little problems are slowly but surely staring to rise."

"And you can stop that?"

"I can stop it."

If a little bit of loan is still left, I can't interfere though.

But, if there isn't, I can't let the harassment of KDK by Millis Kingdom to pass through.

If I give a call to the Pope or the Miko, the Temple Knight Party would immediately return back to their country.

I might end up owing a debt to Ariel or the Pope, but it's no problem.

It's an advantage to have connections at a time like this.

We'll consider about the demand when the time comes.

"Furthermore, in the case a problem arises between Pax and the Shirone Kingdom, let me take responsibility and face the full brunt of it."

In that case I should take Zanoba along.

With Zanoba and Randolf, that's three people.

It will take the form of Pax's battle of revenge.

"How about that?"

I'll give 3 marks to my presentation in outline.

It must be satisfactory to make the best use of the troublemaker as an advantage.

"......."

But I can't outstrip the King's expression.

He's glaring at me with a scary face.

Was something insufficient?

"I think that is sufficient."

The one who send out the lifeboat was none other than the Knight Shagal.

"Rudeus-dono can speak for both the Asura Kingdom and Holy Kingdom of Millis.

He has authenticity.

Rudeus-dono's proposal won't work as a big plus for us since we already had a countermeasure plan for our country, but.....according to the inquiries on the streets, it looks like Rudeus-dono has a firm grip on Queen Ariel's and Millis's Miko's weaknesses.

It will be a plus to have a connection with the well-known Rudeus-dono.

The form it will presently take to cover up the big minus with the small minus, therefore the plus will—"

"Shagal, be silent for while."

Shagal shut his mouth in a hurry on the King's peaceful words.

"I understand about the advantage being there."

Then, just what are you dissatisfied with?

"But, I can't make light of this man's attitude.

It's like we're playing right into his hands."

Ah, I should have deprecated myself and praised him more.

I might have gone a little bit too far.

It's difficult to adjust such a thing.

"I didn't mean to say to accept it if it isn't agreeable.

Treatment of Benedict's child should be done by the parliament itself.

Like hell I would change that decision on one person's suggestion that suddenly arrived."

"That is why Your Majesty, doesn't it explain itself that the Parliament is the last resort?

Would you bequeath the mayhem to sprout in the future or lose the 『Death God』 sooner?

I'm in favor of the former by the parliament, but if there is a better choice to choose from, then there isn't anything strange about that."

"That's not it. That's not it at all.

I'm just worried over how to protect the dignity of the KDK's history.

If it was known that I performed indecisive politics as soon as I became the new King, it would affect the loyalty of the future subjects."

The King is worried about his honor.

Looking at Shagal, he looks like a supporter.

However, it doesn't look like they have any dignity left now that they have unfolded such a conversation in front of me.

"Hmmm....."

Well, it's fine to just decide at your own pace while bearing in mind that there aren't any personnel here.

With people like the Prime Minister; at your own pace.

It's understandable that it is not a bad story if properly talked with.

On top of that, even if it's declined, I have already prepared my next move.

All of the personal information of the leader of this country is already obtained and arranged.

People liked, people not liked, weaknesses; if I remove the obstacles while making use of all of those, it might be possible to change his opinion.

Since they will likely pull back later, I don't want to do that much.

".....Kirk, what do you think?"

The King called out to the young man sitting a little far out.

His age is around similar to mine.

With blond hair just like the King and a slight beard.

I have examined him as well.

Kirkland Von King Dragon.

Currently the first Prince and next in line to become King.

Extraordinarily smart and excels at political abilities.

But, a pitiable future awaits him.

The future called unrequited love.

Currently, he has fallen in love.

He went to the Asura Kingdom's crowning ceremony as an ambassador and fell in love with Ariel at first sight.

Afterwards, he comes to Asura Kingdom countless times and confesses until he becomes 25 years old. An honorable defeat.

Whether Ariel cruelly rejected him or not, thereafter Kirk floats the flag of Anti-Asura.

"I think we should take that proposal."

Although he has not yet been rejected.

As of now, he expresses his friendship with the Asura Kingdom.

"Until the Strife Zone is suppressed, not letting the public know that we have a hostile relationship with Asura Kingdom has always been my opinion.

I'm well aware about the friendship between Queen Ariel and Rudeus-dono.

We should consider accepting Rudeus-dono's proposal and also include the link of cooperative relationship with Dragon God Orsted, on the grounds that it will become hard for Asura Kingdom to interfere just like now.

Above all, I advise that the following should be done for the sake of our country."

An aura of an able person is floating from the one who clearly said all of that.

There's a huge difference between us.

About half of that speech might have an ulterior motive regarding Ariel.

It might be because he's an able person that I can't even feel an atom of guilt in him.

Probably the personality of a handsome man (ikemen).

"Hmmm...."

The King looked up at the ceiling after hearing those words.

As if the answer is written there.

"Alright.....then, let's accept that."

The King said with a sigh and returned his gaze to me.

That reply might have already appeared within him. He just couldn't consent to it in the middle of that expression.

"Thank you very much."

In accordance with the manners, I bowed my head.

But suddenly heard a voice from above.

"Tis fine, raise thy head."

The presence of a King changed again.

I raised my head after he asked me, only to see a bitter smile on his face.

There is no dignity here; it's just the bitter smile of a tired person.

"The Kingdom of the Dragon King is currently in this state.

This situation of disorder is continuing because of an indecisive King with no dignity.

I apologize to you who are staring at 80 years later and preparing accordingly; I might be able to provide cooperation of little significance."

"....Well."

Ah, so this is it.

This is the true nature of this country's King.

I recall Orsted's information while discerning that.

King Dragon King Stelvio's time of reign is short.

After 10 more years, he comes down with a severe disease and transfers the throne to his son.

After Kirk becomes the King, KDK shows a terrifying display of progress.

The real KDK starts from there.....Stelvio is only a character who connects that.

Therefore, I didn't consider much about this character.

But, why is it?

I have now become interested in this country's King out of importance for Shagal and Kirk.

I ended up being pleased with just a little bit of conversational exchange.

"I have a fondness for such things."

He sits on that throne surrounded by armors.

He must properly do his role as a King without any talent.

However, he was likely never corrupted while helping his surroundings, and he lived to the utmost as a king. No, it is likely he lives.

While at least acting as a King.

"Hahaha, fondness. You are an impolite fellow. Rudeus Greyrat."

"Please excuse me for that."

He is undoubtedly a person who can't leave anything in history.

It's not like he would gain some kind of great benefit even if he associates himself.

But I want to get along with him as long as he lives.

I thought that genuinely.

Thus we were able to save Little Pax's life.

Benedict was released from her everyday fear and Randolf was greatly delighted.

It will also be a congratulatory matter that the KDK won't lose Randolf.

I also took this opportunity to fulfill my first goal of "Putting Gisu on the wanted list" and took a breath of relief.

I'll look upon the matter of Mercenary Group's establishment sometime later; it should be fine if I take that matter during that King's reign.

From now on, we are on cordial terms with KDK.

It would have been excellent if not for this match pump....

I will be taking a debt from Ariel and Pope this time around, but I'll pay it back eventually.

We don't know what would become of this one case of Little Pax in the future. When that time comes, I will settle that matter again along with Zanoba.

"Well, you saved me. At this rate I would have taken my master and was about to destroy KDK."

Randolf said that with a clattering laugh while we were parting.

This man might or might not have that power in actuality, but he certainly has the resolution.

Whether to let the soldiers die fighting with Randolf.

Or let the dispute with Shirone Kingdom rise in the future.

Why choose the former? Isn't that foolish?

I might be thinking like that because I tasted Randolf's strength in person.

"However, if His Majesty the King has been satisfied with this, then the things that I'm capable of doing are lost as well. That is not good."

He's trying to say that he has no intention of leaving Benedict's side to the bitter end.

Well, it should be good if the case is that.

"Is Rudeus-dono acquainted with the Demon Emperor Kishirika Kishirisu?"

".....Yeah, I've met her at least twice."

"If you're searching for a person, then I recommend searching for her first."

I see.

There was Kishirika as well.

Roxy said that she used her powers to find Zenith.

The one who gave me the demon eye of clairvoyance.

If we ask her, she will definitely tell us about Gisu's whereabouts in an instant.....though I won't be able to reach there immediately, but it should considerably narrow down the possibility.

Why didn't I think of that before?

Well, I don't really know whether she is an existence who can be relied on much.

"I don't know what she will demand as compensation, but if you take this ring and say it's 『Randolf's wish』, she should be somewhat able to listen to an unreasonable request."

"Oh!...."

So it's not necessary to treat her to food.

"I understand. Well then, I'll be accepting this."

For one thing, I received a white ring from Randolf.

It's probably made out of some kind of bone.

An ominous item. It seems to be cursed, but.....it's a profitable piece of equipment.

"Well then, Rudeus-dono, I pray for your good luck."

"Be in good health as well Randolf-san."

And thus, we left behind the Kingdom of the Dragon King.

Next is the Demon Continent.

To Demon Lord Atofe's place.

Demon Continent, Guthrow region.

It's one of the most severe areas of the Demon Continent.

The monsters living on the Demon Continent, when compared to the other continents, are extremely strong and numerous.

However, even on the Demon Continent there are distributions.

Like how the Biegoya region has many Acid Wolves and Pack Coyotes, this region is overflowing with monsters that are much stronger than the other regions.

Able to release a petrifying breath, the Basilisk.

Flying freely through the sky and attacking with its powerful jaws and poisonous claws, the Black Drake.

Imitating a pond, the enormous Lake Slime.

Extremely nimble and covered in hard scales that resist magic, the White-fanged Serpent.

Besides that there are areas that are covered in poison gas and deep valleys, so this region is called the worst part of the Demon Continent.

There are few towns or villages, and the ones that exist are transforming into secure fortresses.

Even Adventurers rarely come here...

However, it is said that those on journeys to sharpen their combat skills have this region as their final goal.

After all, this region has the fortress once built by the immortal [Five Elements Demon King] Necross Lacross, the strongest fortress on the Demon Continent.

The one ruling here is Demon King Atoferatofe.

The [Immortal Demon King] of the Guthrow region.

400 years ago she was a powerful warrior for Laplace, who clashed countless times with the party of the Armored Dragon King Perugius.

Among martial artists, there is a legend about her that is thought by many to be true.

[You who desire power, travel forth.

You who desire power, set your gaze on the Demon Continent.

Journey through the Demon Continent, reach Fort Necross.

Journey through the Demon Continent, gain audience with the Immortal Demon King Atoferatofe.

Display your power to the Demon King, and thirst for a greater power.

You shall gain a overwhelming power that you have never seen the likes of before.]

And the ones who follow the legend and set out on a journey are never heard from again.

Nobody knows the truth...

I know it, though.

Most die along the way, and the rest are forced into Atofe's elite guards.

Occasionally there are those who return... but even if there are only one or two people who tell the truth, the rumor shouldn't disappear.

That rumor is probably erased by Atofe's associate, Moore.

It's a cruel trap.

Playing with the naive hearts of martial artists, a devil's trap.

Well then.

The members that are going to meet her number three.

Me, Eris, and Roxy.

Aisha is in charge of mediation with Asura and Milis on behalf of the Kingdom of Dragon King.

By the way, we're bringing alcohol as a gift.

According to Orsted, Atofe seems to be fond of alcohol.

Well, even so, it will probably turn into a fight.

Fort Necross was about three hours from the teleportation ruins.

That's not such a great distance, but the teleportation ruins are in the mountains, and furthermore, it's in the middle of a Black Drake nesting ground.

We traveled on foot while shooting the black flying dragons out of the sky, turning the defeated drakes into yakiniku, and the discovered eggs into tamagoyaki.

{ C-Editor's note: Yakiniku is Japanese grilled meat cuisine and Tamagoyaki is a type of Japanese omelette. }

From fairly high up the mountain, we descended while sometimes evading the attacking monsters but other times routing them, and arrived after a full day.

This is the first time I've been to a teleportation ruin so close to human habitation...

Or rather, this is the first place where people live that I've been to that's so thick with mana.

"Well, we can afford to take it easy."

When I turn to face her, Eris is gleefully cutting apart the attacking monsters.

It's as if she's saying it's the result of her daily practice.

Although she certainly has never skipped out on practice swings, she shouldn't have had that many chances to fight...

It seems she's been hunting the monsters around the town when I wasn't looking.

"As expected of such a feared place... Just thinking of coming here alone gives me goosebumps."

Roxy's fatigue is showing.

She's been trying her best to find a route that avoids the monsters.

It's no exaggeration to say that it's all thanks to her we were able to protect the gift of alcohol.

"Roxy still has a long way to go!"

"Back in my adventurer days I moved around more, but recently I've just been working at a desk..."

"If you're like that, you'll be looked down on by the students."

"You're right... Then, please help me practice sometime."

"Of course!"

While listening to Eris's and Roxy's conversation, I looked down at the fortress spread out beneath us.

The overall color is black.

It's probably made from the same materials as Kishirika's castle.

It's not too large.

It seems to be just a castle and town protected by thick ramparts.

It's not a rare sight in this world.

What classifies it as a fortress is probably its structure.

It is separated into five blocks by the ramparts, and goes up like a staircase.

The three bottom ones are a normal castle town.

The second from the top contains buildings that don't look inhabited and something that looks like a sports ground. They're probably military installations.

At the top, a black castle-like building towers imposingly.

That's probably the keep.

We end up approaching it from behind.

From back here, it looks pretty defenseless.

Although since the rear is guarded by a mountain, it's only natural.

"Ah, someone's there."

As we drew closer while thinking that, we saw people standing upon the rampart.

There are around five people wearing black armor, outfitted with helmets.

They are watching us, and seem to be raising a bit of a fuss.

"Do you suppose it would be bad manners to enter from this side?"

"No, there's no such etiquette. They're probably talking about how rare it is for travelers to approach from the mountain.

When Roxy plainly said that, Eris rapidly progressed forward.

What should we do if arrows rain down from above?

Though I was thinking that, the people on the wall weren't showing any signs of attacking.

Before long, we reached the rampart.

There seems to be a rear gate, since I confirmed the existence of a large door.

Since it's a black gate on a black wall, it's not visible from afar, but looking up close it's quite obvious.

[O heroes! Congratulations on reaching Fort Necross!]

It's the Demon God Language.

It's been a while...

Like how you never forget how to ride a bike, learned languages aren't forgotten so easily.

Rather, what did they mean by heroes?

[What admirable spirit, crossing the demon mountain!]

[Is what you seek the honor of being a champion? Or perhaps it is the Demon King's power!?]

[Whichever it is makes no difference to us!]

[If you want to pass here!]

[You will first have to defeat us, Atofe's elite guards!]

In other words, we can't enter here.

It's only natural.

No country would let an unknown man enter through the rear gate.

[I understand. We will circle around to the front.]

It's not particularly a problem if we go in through the town.

We'll obediently circle around here.

We're here to ask a favor, after all.

[.....]

[...]

The black armors went silent.

They're all asking their neighbors what to do.

I've heard about Atofe, but I never heard anything about fighting here at the gate.

Did I say something wrong...?

[Ah, if you could tell Moore-san that Rudeus Greyrat brings tribute for Atofe-sama, it would be a great help.]

It may be better to tell them up front that I'm no one suspicious.

While I was thinking that and about to turn around,

[Wait! Are you a visitor for Atofe-sama!?]

That was shouted at me.

[Yes, I have talked with her a little before! I would like to give her my greetings!]

[I understand. We're opening the gate!]

Ooh.

They seem to be willing to let us in.

It's bothersome going around, so it's good that we can go right in.

[I wanted to enter from the front, though.]

Eris complained, but I think it's better to enter from here.

Please excuse me from an attraction like having to defeat the Shitennou to proceed.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Sailor Moon anime series. }

We arrived in Fort Necross's audience chamber.

It doesn't have a ceiling.

It's an open-air room.

There's a long staircase sandwiched between thick pillars carved with devil-like images.

At the top of the stairs is a large, spacious room.

The room is surrounded by candles burning with violet flames, and in front of each candle is a soldier clad in black armor standing at attention.

The room is completely open, with no walls or handrails. If you approach the edge, you could probably look down on the castle town.

In the center is an ominously decorated throne.

No, this probably isn't an audience chamber.

This is probably that.

The place where in dire times, a giant magic circle is engraved to call out an ancient devil.

Then, the hero's party will fight the demon king to prevent it.

This is that kind of place.

It's not an audience chamber.

It's a battleground.

"O heroes, well done in coming this far!"

Now then, sitting on the throne is a woman.

She's wearing the same black armor as the others around us.

Her height is around the same as Eris's.

With a gleeful face, she spread her mantle.

The evening sun descending over the mountain cast a profound shadow upon her.

It appears to be a very impressive and fantastic scene.

It appears to be.

"I am the immortal Demon King, Atoferatofe Raibaku!"

We entered through the back gate, met with Moore, and waited for about 2 hours to be brought to this battleground.

Were they making preparations during that short time?

Or did they anticipate this fantastic scenery and wait for evening?

Either way, I'll give them 4 stars.

"How admirable, coming this far with the body of a human!"

"O brave ones who overcame countless trials! I ask you thus!"

"Is what you desire the prestige of being a champion? Or is it the title of hero! Or perhaps... the Demon King's power?"

What a distasteful question.

If you answer 'champion' or 'hero', you get beaten up and made into a subordinate, and if you answer 'Demon King's power,' you are made into a subordinate without getting beaten up.

It's an extreme multiple choice where you can only answer [Yes].

"Fufun..."

Ah, somehow Eris started grinning.

That's right, you like this kind of stuff, don't you?

"Atofe-sama... mumble mumble..."

Right then, the nearby black armored Moore whispered something into Atofe's ear.

It's probably about the programme.

Even though I said that I came to apologize, she's been saying hero this and hero that, so there is probably some kind of misunderstanding.

"Shut up! It's too bright here and I can't understand!"

Atofe Punch!

Moore-kun is blown away.

"Show me your face!"

Atofe left her fist that blasted Moore out and rapidly approached.

And then, she was right before my eyes.

"Ah."

As soon as our eyes met, Atofe's expression rapidly changed.

She is glaring.

And then, she spoke in a low voice.

"It's you..."

Her voice sounds like she's saying 'I found you.'

Scary.

"... It, it's been a while."

"After working with Perugius, to catch me in a trap, you, without concern, came here..."

Atofe has a ferocious smile on her face.

However, that is within expectations.

That's why we brought a tribute.

It's no exaggeration to say that we came here to apologize.

"About that, I would like to give my apologies..."

"It's fine. You're making a much more manly face than last time. It's a good face, full of resolve. The heroes that challenged me all had that kind of face."

Atofe isn't listening to me.

She's just closing in on my face with her eyes spread.

Then she smiled, showing her teeth.

I could see her growing fangs.

"It's the face of someone prepared to die."

H, Huh?

That's strange.

I should have predicted this... Huh?

Why, are my legs trembling?

N, Not good, the trembling is spreading to my whole body...

"Hm?"

Then, my vision was filled with something red.

Red hair.

"Get away."

Eris forced herself between me and Atofe.

"Who the hell are you?"

"Eris Greyrat."

"Hooh."

Atofe took a step backwards.

Then, she stared into Eris's face.

"That's a good expression, good killing intent, and you're even carrying good weapons. And your guts to prepare to cut me down..."

Atofe shot Eris a sharp gaze.

Eris stared back with a beast-like glint in her eyes.

The tension is rising——

"Are you a hero?"

"That's right."

No it's not.

What the hell are you saying?

"That woman is determined and observing the surroundings... a magician?"

"... That's right. My name is Roxy Greyrat. It's an honor to meet you."

Roxy slightly lowered the brim of her hat and gave a greeting.

I think it's pretty obvious that she's a magician just from looking at her clothes, though.

"You also have a good expression. You want to fight me?"

"... If Demon King-sama is planning on killing my student, then yes. Though I am not worthy."

Aah, even the calm Roxy is planning to fight.

Which means I'm currently cowering that much.

Enough that she thinks she has to protect me.

That's no good.

I've got to pull it together.

"Kukuku, that's interesting. The three of you are all Greyrats... For three people who just happen to have the same name to gather and come before me, is truly interesting."

That interpretation is certainly interesting.

Both Eris and Roxy are my wives.

Yup.

Okay, I've calmed down.

"Atofe-sama, before fighting, can you listen to what I have to say?"

I stimulated my shivering legs, and turned to Atofe.

"Why?"

"Because we came to talk."

"I hate talking. Since you Human Race people always say things I can't understand."

"I think what I have to say is pretty easy to understand."

Then I exchanged looks with Roxy.

She put down the bag she was carrying and drew out a wooden box.

I received it from her, and held it out reverently in both hands to Atofe.

"First take this. It's an apology for last time."

"What's this?"

"It's wine from the kingdom of Asura."

"Alcohol!"

Atofe's complexion changed.

Just like my information.

According to Orsted, among the heroes that fought her were those that challenged her to a drinking contest, planning to defeat her when she was dead drunk.

They ended up losing though.

In the drinking contest, that is.

"During the Asura Kingdom's coronation ceremony, it was presented to the crown by Lord Notos Greyrat, an extremely rare and expensive good."

"Is it tasty?"

"Very."

Or so I answered, but I never tasted it, so I don't really know.

According to Ariel, this is wine that was produced 100 years ago.

About its taste, the fields and warehouses that produced it were regulated by the royal purveyor, who said it would be a waste to drink it all up, sealed it in the depths of the warehouse, and declared that it wasn't to be brought out except in special circumstances.

However, it's been 100 years since then.

The royal family had many important events, and it was all used up.

However, that's only concerning the royal family.

There are still some remaining in the storehouse of the producer, Notos Greyrat.

For Ariel's coronation ceremony, 10 bottles that were in the storehouse were presented.

Part of Philemon's brown-nosing.

The current price would be around 300 Asura Gold Coins per bottle.

It's worth 1 Rinia.

That's why it should be quite delicious.

Of course, it's not like I bought it.

When I asked Ariel what a good alcohol would be, she gave me one of these.

Later on, when I asked someone else for its worth, I was surprised.

She immediately consented to the matter of the Kingdom of the Dragon King too, lately she's been selling me a lot of favors, and it's kind of scary.

It seems like sometime she's really going to take one of my children...

"I see, so it's tasty."

"Yes. So please forgive me for the previous matter."

"I forgive you; I'm much more lenient than that Perugius. Something like that is nothing to me."

"Thank you very much."

I guess this means that we're even?

She might forget after drinking, though.

"However, I won't forgive Perugius. I'll kill him someday."

Please feel free.

That's something between the two of them.

I'm sure Perugius won't bow his head for forgiveness.

"So, is that all?"

"No, there is something else."

I took out one more bottle from Roxy's bag.

This is something I got from Orsted.

This one isn't in a box, and the maker and price are unknown.

The glass bottle seems old, and is losing transparency, and some sort of pattern is carved in it.

However, Orsted said that Atofe will be pleased with it.

So I think the contents should not be bad.

"This is——"

"Oi!"

It was snatched away.

"Don't tell me... It can't be... Moore!!!"

At her sudden scream, the black armors became discomposed.

In the rowdy atmosphere, one person calmly approached.

It's the man whose face caved in and collapsed in a pool of blood, Moore.

"Look! What do you think!?"

Moore took the bottle and carefully examined its surface.

Then, seeing the marble-like deposition inside, he took a deep breath.

"It's exactly the same as what we saw before."

"Right!? You, where did you get this from!?"

"From my master, [Dragon God] Orsted, who wishes to get along with Atofe-sama."

"Dragon God...! Then, there's no mistake...!"

Atofe looked at the bottle while trembling from head to toe.

"This is without a doubt, what Urupein sent for mine and Kal's wedding, the phantom alcohol passed down through the Dragon Race!"

Oh, so something like that happened.

Then of course she would be pleased with it.

"Its name is [AleschneilDragon God Jewel Spirit]!"

Whoa, what an amazing special technique. I'm getting goosebumps.

Or rather, it's ale, huh? The glass was so dark I couldn't tell.

"That's the only time I've ever drank this. I've searched far and wide, and finally I have it once again!"

Tatarata~

{ C-Editor's note: Tatarata - Not a real word but something like a trumpet fanfare sound effect. }

Atofe held the bottle so joyously that it seems like that sound effect would play.

In any event, if she's pleased with it then that's great.

I should say as expected of Orsted.

He knows well who would like what.

I feel sorry for Ariel, but this match is Orsted's complete victory.

"Then, that alcohol——"

"I've decided! I'll defeat you and take this alcohol!"

Atofe declares that with wine in her right hand and Aleschneil in her left.

What she wants, she takes by force.

Truly a Demon King.

"I'm giving it to you!"

"What!?"

"It's a small gesture of friendship from the Dragon God Orsted to Immortal Demon King Atofe!"

I reply in a loud voice.

Question marks are rising from Atofe's head.

When three question marks have risen, her head burst.

"You! Don't chicken out! Fight me!"

"Even without a fight, I'm giving you that alcohol!"

"I don't get what you're saying!"

So she doesn't get it...

Is that so...

I'm pretty sure I made it easy to understand, though...

"It's not a banquet, it's not a congratulatory event, it's not as an apology. In that case, why would you offer something like this?"

Moore followed up nicely.

That's right.

It's no good if I don't explain that, right.

"Right. To tell the truth, in the near future I'm going to be fighting with a man called Gisu. He said he was going to gather powerful troops to defeat me... I was thinking I would like Atofe-sama's assistance for that fight."

I'm not going to touch the topic of the coming war against Laplace.

According to Orsted, if I ask her to help in the war against Laplace, she would definitely not give her approval, and it would end up becoming a fight.

It's not like she feels a sense of duty towards Laplace.

It's simply that it's too complicated for her to understand.

In the future that Orsted knows, Atofe will unmistakably serve Laplace.

It's definitely safer to not try persuading her.

It's probably best to request such things from Moore later.

"Okay, I understand! I'm not an idiot, after all! It's fine! I'll do that!"

Atofe definitely does not understand it very well.

She's nodding with the same face as Eris when she says "I understand" when she really doesn't.

This kind of answer means that Atofe probably won't be taken along by Gisu's cajolery.

"So then, is the talk over?"

"Yes."

Thus, I gained Atofe's cooperation.

The Death God and the Immortal Demon King.

Getting the two people who defeated me to this side feels like a large advantage.

I don't know where Gisu is or what he's doing, but it looks like things are favorable so far.

But I'm glad. At first I was thinking it would turn into a fight and was on guard, but it's great that we won't have t——

"Okay, now let's duel!"

——Huh?

"Earlier, you said [before we fight]! Our conversation is over. Then, next we fight!"

Huh? I said something like that?

No, but, huh?

I gave her alcohol, and was forgiven.

She promised to fight on my side... there shouldn't be any more reason to fight.

That's strange, Orsted never told me about any of this.

"I am the Immortal Demon King, Afoteratofe Raibaku! Heroes, all three of you, come at me at once!"

Why the hell...

I'm bewildered.

Roxy also has question marks above her head.

The elite guards aren't moving, so this is probably the Atofe Standard.

However, an astonished atmosphere is floating this way.

Moore has a "There's no helping it" kind of expression.

There's only one person who stepped out in front as if to say she's been waiting for this.

"I'll be your opponent."

It's Eris.

As if the distance to her opponent doesn't matter, she walked right up in front of Atofe and brought her face close.

"Hoh, you want to fight me one-on-one?"

Their faces are close enough that you could think they may be about to kiss.

"There's no need for Rudeus to take on someone like you."

"You've said too much, little girl."

Atofe fell for that obvious provocation, and let out killing intent.

"In these past 100 years, you're the only one to say something like that to me."

If she wasn't holding a bottle in each hand, that would have been a cool line.

However, if she fights like this, the bottles will surely break...

Or so I was thinking, but Moore said "I shall take care of these" from beside them, and carried them away.

"Someone like you is fitting to be one of my elite guards. I'll beat you to a pulp and make you my subordinate."

"If you lose, will you do what Rudeus says?"

"Sure."

Fight, win, make an ally!

Easy to understand means something like this, huh?

I messed up.

I made a bit of a misunderstanding.

'I'll give you something so forgive me for earlier, and I'll give you something else so become my ally' is too complicated for Atofe!

In any event, I knew from the beginning that it would likely turn into a fight.

Fight, win, and make Demon King Atofe into a supporter.

We made plans for that, and properly prepared.

Let's do it.

Thus, our fight with Demon King Atoferatofe began.

Summary up to the previous time-The battle with Atofe began.

"I am the Immortal Demon Lord Atoferatofe Ryback!

I'll bestow you with the title of hero if you can defeat me.

If you lose, I'll make you my puppet and use you until your last breath!"

Spreading an overwhelming killing intent was Atofe.

Moreover, the one who was opposing her was the figure of a hero.

"Sword King Eris Greyrat!"

Eris held one of the Sword God's Seven Swords 『Phoenix Elegant Dragon Sword』 above her head and confronted Atofe.

"Sword God Style, huh!"

She happily unsheathed her sword without separating eye-contact from Eris.

"I'll tell you beforehand, the Sword of Light is ineffective against me."

"....."

Eris isn't agitated by Atofe's words.

Even she knows that.

She has heard about the Legend of the Immortal Demon Lord.

Immortal Demon Lord Atofe can never be defeated.

She doesn't have any technique.

Her sword is dull and slow.

She just can't die.

No matter how many attacks she takes, no matter how many fatal wounds she sustains, she won't die.

She will rise even after receiving any type of attack.

And then gain victory at the end.

That is the Immortal Demon Lord Atofe.

There are only less than 10 veterans, including one of the Three Heroes' Demon Slayer, who were able to oppose her during Laplace's military campaign.

Feared as the symbol of dread, the only one who was said to have solely defeated her was the North God Kalmann.

Eris is having an insight.

She is thinking, 'Can I defeat that Demon Lord in front of my eyes with my strength alone?'

Nay.

It's impossible with just one person.

Exaltation can be felt for challenging a legendary being, but she doesn't hold any techniques to defeat Atofe.

However there is no need to lament over that.

Even if she doesn't have a playing hand, there is a person who already has one.

Since the arrangement of that situation has already ended in advance before coming here.

"....."

"Hey, say something."

Eris doesn't talk.

"Well, there was a fellow like you who concentrated all the nerves and fired an extremely powerful blow....."

"....."

"Fufu, I remember it since I have good memory.

Although that blow never did reach me and I smashed that person with my fist like a frog."

Atofe might have recalled about that time.

She glared at Eris while a wicked smile 'kukukuku' rose to her face.

"How about it? Eris Greyrat.

It's a once in a lifetime gamble.

Would you expose ungratefulness in front of your trusting comrades.....or is it honor?"

"....."

"My neck is right here. If you take my head back home, you will be regarded as a hero of the Human Race and leave your name in history for eternity."

Striking her neck with a 'tonton' is Atofe.

With an expression that is overflowing with self-confidence.

'This woman won't be able to kill me.'

That sort of self-confidence.

The surrounding Imperial Guards are sighing.

'Ah, Atofe-sama is getting negligent again!' and sighing.

Nevertheless, against heroes, letting them get one attack in is an unavoidable disposition for the race of the Immortal Demon Lords.

"Not really, I don't want something like honor or anything."

Eris said clearly.

"But I'll slice off your head."

"Well said! Eris Greyrat! Now, come!"

Atofe's shout reverberates.

The evening sun falls behind the mountains, the surroundings are wrapped up in slight darkness, and the violet flame lighted on the candlestick shines upon the two people.

Atofe's eyes that glitter with burning fire.

Eris's eyes that are undauntedly staring back.

The gazes of the two cross and their killing intent collides together.

A critical situation of two people.

"Ah....."

However, the Imperial Guards weren't watching the two of them that time.

They were looking behind Eris.

There stood a giant.

A stone giant was standing within the slight darkness having a height of 3 meters.

Where the hell did it came from?

Is it summoning magic?

No, there are no traces of how it was done.

Furthermore, a blue-haired magician is standing separated several steps from that giant.

As if to say it's a success, the giant suddenly grips its hand and looks up from behind.

"Ah~...."

The reason Eris of the Sword God Style, possessor of a seemingly rough disposition, didn't attack-

A person who was standing within the Imperial Guards understood it and let out a voice of admiration.

The reason is that while Eris was stalling for time, Rudeus was busy in preparation.

He summoned the Magic Armor 『MK. I』.

"Oh.....Ooohhh....."

The shadow standing behind Eris.

Atofe groaned, looking up at it.

There is a remembrance.

That armor. Even before Laplace's military campaign, during the Second Great Human-Demon War.

She remembers seeing it before it was sealed.

Its form is slightly different.

Its color is slightly different.

However, those are trivial things.

Like hell are there many instances of this sort of armor in this world that can be collected!

"Fighting God Armor.....!"

Atofe was looking up dumbfounded and muttering—-.

"GAAAAAAAaaaaaa!!!!"

Eris attacked.

—Rudeus's Point of View—

Eris's sword took flight.

Straight towards the left nape of Atofe's neck, who was looking up at the Magic Armor. With the shortest distance.

The Demon sword that transformed into a long straight beam of silver light glides towards Atofe's nape while keeping the overwhelming power of bloodshed as it is.

And without change goes through—

"Su!?"

It stopped.

The sword came to a halt midway through Atofe's neck.

"....."

Atofe's sword was sticking into Eris' right shoulder very deeply.

Eris' right arm lost movement with just that.

It didn't stop.

It was stopped.

By a thrust of the sword into the gap of bone and bone like a support rod, though expressed as the strongest sword technique, Longsword of Light was stopped.

"GAAAAAaaaaa!"

Eris gave up on her right arm in an instant.

Using only her left hand, she swung the sword.

By all rights, something like a neck is severed in just one strike of the Longsword of Light.

But the power is halved if it's dealt with just one hand.

Only 1/3rd of Atofe's head was left while adhered to her torso as it is.

That would naturally result in death.

But the enemy is Atofe.

The Immortal Demon Lord Atoferatofe.

"SRRaa!"

Atofe, who was looking like a half-corpse, kicked Eris in the air.

Roxy caught from behind Eris, who was blown off with an unpleasant 'begon'.

{ C-Editor's note: Begon - Not a real word but the sound effect of being blown off. }

Eris continued to look towards Atofe with ferocious eyes while the top of her shoulder was gushing out blood.

Her turn was up till now.

"oooOOHHHH!"

Atofe turned towards me while raising her roar.

She prepared her sword as if to defend and took up a forward-bent posture.

And thrust her sword into me as I was preparing the Gatling Gun.

Since Eris was blown off, I started shooting in a straight line.

"『Shoot it thorugh』!"

A rain of rock cannonballs poured down.

First step. Atofe's armor was smashed into several small pieces.

Second step. Atofe's shoulder was torn to pieces and the sword danced in midair.

Third step. Atofe's upper half of the body that became full of holes was blown off and separated from her lower half.

There isn't a fourth step.

The lower half of her body, now without the upper half, while waning and shaking violently, fell.

This spectacle is bad for the heart.

Since she is the Immortal Demon Lord, blood isn't coming out, but if blood had spurted out, I might probably feel sick.

I can't get used to becoming a murderer.

There is no way I can get used to it.

I was able to do it because I knew that she wouldn't die even if I fired the Gatling Gun from such close range.

That's right.

She won't die, right? Even though things may appear this way.

"Did we do it?"

Roxy inquired while applying Healing Magic to Eris and anxiously surveying the Imperial Guards.

Until Atofe gives the order, they won't attack.

Everyone, there is no need to worry about Atofe.

I have absolute faith towards the proprietress of immortality.

"Not yet."

I replied while being vigilant.

"Is it our turn after this?"

"No, that's unreasonable."

"Look at the floor. Hasn't the black weekday steel been gouged out?"

"Even that armor doesn't make any sense. What's that magic....."

"Before when he fought Atofe-sama, that guy used a rock shell with amazing power. It's probably that."

"Ah, I see. So it's a rapid firing rock shell."

"Which means, apart from the armor, that staff(?) might be a magic tool."

I am getting analyzed for some reason.

What a careless bunch.

But they probably know that Atofe won't die from just that.

Atofe revives.

The scattered pieces of flesh draw near towards the large piece of meat.

Little by little, those pieces combine and start returning to their former size.

I guess it returns back by itself even if you pull out the hair, unlike a certain parasitic creature.....

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Parasyte: The Maxim manga and anime series. }

It also feels like a life force that will regenerate from a small piece of meat by cell division even if the pieces of meat don't entirely return back.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Dragon Ball Z anime series. }

Such a creature can wear armor on its body and even use martial arts.

She'd obviously be powerful.....

Atofe returned back to her previous form as I was thinking that.

However, as a result of blowing her full of holes, her upper half is naked.

I ended up seeing the muscles more forged than Eris's and large breasts not inferior to Eris's.

Is there any significance in forging those muscles even though she is such a creature.....?

There probably is.

Rather, the matter of forging them becomes even more meaningful to her than it is to humans if you consider that the cells won't die.

Very interesting.

"Do you still want more?"

After the regeneration finishes, I ask the now unarmed Atofe.

With the resolution to fight.

However, it's not like opposition won't come if it comes to fighting seriously.

Moore, who is looking from behind, will be deemed as a hostile opponent if we have to erase Atofe here in all seriousness.

He will commence the attack by leading the Imperial Guards when he judges us as hostile.

Or so I've heard from Orsted.

We've also more or less come up with a plan if it comes to that, but.....

Well, it's better to satisfy Atofe by knocking her down many times over.

I don't know how many times I will have to face her, but I'll keep her company until my magic supply is exhausted.

"Don't want it!"

Or so I thought, but Atofe shouted.

Thereupon, Moore rushed over and put a cloak on her.

"I'll immediately go and pick up a change of armor, so..."

"Humph!"

Atofe sat down on the ground with a 'plunk' and crossed her legs.

She doesn't intend to fight.

But she's looking at me, seemingly annoyed.

That's really unexpected.

I certainly thought that she would be rushing towards us like a wild boar while reviving.

Or give the order to her surroundings and siege us.

"....."

She was disregarding Eris, who was standing next to me and setting up her sword.

Roxy, who was preparing the staff was also standing behind oblique to me, but I guess there is no need for her turn.

"....."

Atofe is fixedly staring at me.

Silently and motionlessly for a short while.

"Moore, do you remember?"

And said that with a sigh.

"No, during the Human-Demon War, I was still...."

"That's right. That's how it was."

Atofe muttered with an unusually calm and low voice.

"It's different from that time.

It was more golden in color during that time.

Its power and speed are there, but such a weapon didn't exist."

Atofe might be talking about the original 『Fighting God Armor』.

The strongest armor made by Laplace.

"But the Human Race was like that.

At first, they were weak. Absurdly weak. If we invaded, they would easily collapse and run away.

But they steadily changed after a short while.

When I realized it, they had changed their personnel, armor, and weapons.

Their method of fighting was like that too.

They would become firm, fall apart, and lie in wait within the mountains and across rivers.....

While doing so, they became stronger little by little.

Kal said that it was the strength of the Human Race."

Atofe's face is settling down for some reason.

The way she's talking feels somewhat intellectual as well.

The Immortal Demon clan probably enters a wise-man state after regenerating once.

"Did you build that?"

"Yes."

"I see....you're strong, truly strong."

Atofe said that with a refreshed face.

"It's a pleasant story. Since Father wasn't able to win against the Dragon Race after many hardships when the worthless Human Race were able to overtake....."

Atofe slowly stood up.

With Moore on her side, she looked up at me with her arms folded and talked.

While I wasn't able to catch up with her meaning, she continued.

"I recognize my defeat. As promised, I will be under your jurisdiction while you continue to live."

Thus, Atofe became a comrade.

"Rudeus Greyrat, you are a hero who defeated me."

Incidentally I became a hero.

After that, a party was held at Atofe's fortress.

It's a party for the subjugation of the Demon Lord.

The organizer is the defeated Demon Lord herself.

Imperial Guards are the staff.

Participants are also the Imperial Guards.

On the occasion of the party, a large military drill was organized.

Organized in the center of the arena, such things as tree persons are put in order for athletics and a carpet made out of beast leather is spread out to encircle the circumference of the surrounding area with all of the guards eating and drinking.

Demon Lord Atofe was defeated.

Having said that, the people captured by Atofe weren't released.

It'd be troublesome for me if Atofe's war potential of Imperial Guards decreases; Atofe definitely might have understood that situation too.

For now, it's just like before.

They're not all cops and robbers and we can't proceed to release all the members just like that.

Well, if some fellows want to return no matter what, we'll send a few of them little by little when we get the chance.

If it's just a little, then even Atofe won't notice.

Although every member of Atofe's Imperial Guards is absolutely enjoying the party.

They don't seem to have the intention to fly the banner of revolution.

"Today is an auspicious day. Drink! Sing! And Fight!"

Even though Atofe was defeated, she was in a really good mood.

A party hall right in the center of the arena.

She's glowing in satisfaction by waging fights against fellow subordinates over there.

It seems she's pleased to receive the alcohol I gave her, looking at how she's shouting "Delicious!" each time she takes a drink.

It's a really mysterious feeling, but it slightly resembles that of Badigadi's around there.

Things like drinking and singing first before a duel.....

They're siblings after all.

The Immortal Necross may have been a fellow like that too.

"Hahahahaha, that's good!"

"Crush 'em good!"

"Your guard is down! Raise it! Raise it! Woww...."

There are many hand-to-hand fights that are being performed in the arena.

It's a manly fight with only bare hands without armor nor weapons.

There are robust men of the Imperial Guards who tightly grasp their fist and knock their opponents hard.

Ah, no, wait. That's not a fellow guard. It's not even a man.

"The victor is Eris!"

The one in the arena is Eris.

That fight might not have been enough for her.

The Demon Race of Atofe's Imperial Guards are knocked down by movements like those of a ferocious stray dog.

They were said to be the elites, but Eris too isn't holding a sword.

If it's a fist fight, whether they are equally matched or one of them goes easy on another.....

No, they're not holding themselves back.

Some players that have fainted are scattered around the side of the arena.

As if Eris has already beaten the crap out of at least three people.

They are hurt, but Roxy arrives and uses healing magic within a second, so it should be fine.

You've become strong, Eris.....

"AHHAhahahaha! Strong aren't you! As one would except from the comrade of the hero! Who's the next one!? Who will dare?"

"Fight me! Demon Lord Atofe! Get down here!"

"Ahhahahahahaha! You're an even bigger fool than Kishirika if you're challenging me to a fist fight! All right, I like it! I'll become your enemy!"

Atofe suddenly threw her clock off while getting her upper half naked and comes down to the arena.

The grounds were filled with nothing but shouts of joy.

The party is now at its climax.

Will Eris win or Atofe?

Odds are probably higher for Atofe. However, if it's Eris, a totally unexpected result could——

"Rudeus-dono.....Rudeus-dono!"

"Oh, excuse me."

I'm not participating in that party.

I'm in the middle of a meeting at the fort's room with Moore regarding the matters hereafter.

Even though I should have been the leading actor.....the party is now at its climax.

I wonder for what reason the party was held.

"Ahem, I understand the regarding circumstances.

Search and kill that apostle Gisu and Hitogami and also provide backup when it comes to war.

Search for Kishirika-sama. Establishment of an intelligence organization. Provide backup during Demon God Laplace's war.

Is that roughly all?"

"Yes."

Unlike Atofe, Moore was a person who understands conversation.

Listening to my request, summarizing it, he's positively considering it.

Perhaps he holds Atofe's intelligence characteristics; he might have been born by jumping out of that narrow skull.

"Aside from the former two, the latter two, especially regarding the war with Demon God Laplace, we probably won't be able to provide support."

"Is it unreasonable after all? Because of the debt to Laplace or the like....?"

"Atofe-sama was defeated by you personally. If you die, that will be over. Or will you be able to live even until 80 years later?"

".....I guess that's difficult."

Personally until the end.

I, individually.

It might be possible to let them think that Roxy defeated her, but.....

Well, it can't be helped.

This too is probably fate.

"Assisting the Mercenary Group is difficult as well."

"Is it a territory conscious thing after all?"

"Atofe-sama reigns over this region, but the ones who control it are the Imperial Guards. Building a different organization is convenient to make use of, but we can't look after their troubles."

".....I understand."

Mercenary group too is overdoing it.

Just building it should be fine, but we mustn't forget that the head of the neighboring organization is Atofe.

If a problem occurs, to settle it, strength is needed instead of wit.

Surely, such an incident might occur, and before you realize it, destruction would have set in.

"Regarding the search for Kishirika-sama, let's send out letters containing Atofe-sama's sign to the Demon Lords of various areas. They will surely lend a hand if it's just a search."

"Please do."

"There is no need for you to request. The one delivering the letters will be you. Since we don't know the exact place of the Teleportation Magic Circle."

"Ah, yes."

That's right, now that he mentions it, these people already know about the Teleportation Magic Circle, so there is no need to hide it.

Teleportation Magic Circle.

It's a taboo for the Human Race, but it might not be a taboo for the people of the Demon Race who have longevity.

"Since Kishirika-sama doesn't run away without a particular reason, she will probably be found out immediately."

"It's better if she's found as soon as possible."

"It depends on the speed of the letter's delivery, but.....she might get discovered within this year."

I can't find where Kishirika is as usual.

"Just why does that person wander around like that?"

"Well it's unclear to me just how the members of the ancient demon race think."

"......But of course."

In my opinion, I think Moore is also from one of the ancient demon races.....

I don't know how long they live, but if it's the Immortal Demon race, they might live for centuries at a time without getting affected.

"However, Rudeus-dono sure has become stronger. There's quite a difference if we compare you from before when we met."

"It's the power of the Magic Armor."

"Such an honorable honesty."

"There is no conviction in my honesty. I was able to obtain Atofe-sama's power by making her surrender, but I myself haven't dramatically become any stronger."

『Strength』 can be produced.

It's an agglutination of magic and skill.

It doesn't mean that I can just obtain that 『Strength』 with my power alone.

Me, Zanoba, Cliff, and Roxy too these days.

If not for them, the Magic Armor would never have seen completion nor operation.

"You're the second person after North God Kalmann whose strength was recognized by Atofe-sama in just one blow, and she decided to come under your jurisdiction."

"I think I am inferior in regards to the level of the Major World Powers."

Before long, the one defeated would have been me if she had kept resurrecting and continued fighting again and again.

Since I don't have an inexhaustible supply of magic.

"We'll readily supply if there is insufficiency.

Be it skills, armor, or comrades.

Atofe-sama has come to recognize all of those.

Therefore, she always hangs around all of the members.

Since that is the strength of the Human race."

He's probably saying that.....the strength of the human race is the power to put things together.

Making use of weapons, armors, and comrades as well, while accommodating all of those with strategy and tactics.

No matter the enemy, we won't utter cowardice.

For this reason, Atofe accepted defeat and Moore is praising me.

I'm somewhat content with that.

"However, just like Atofe, we the Imperial Guards still have the swordplay of North God style.We don't think you fought in all seriousness."

"I'm deeply impressed by those words."

Atofe fought alone this time.

But that is the minimum force as far as she's concerned.

She still has much more power to bequeath.

I don't know where she will intend to use it.

The future me was outwitted by Moore and was defeated.....

I just happen to see a vision of conflict with the Imperial Guards, so for that reason I prepared something in advance just in case.

Roxy was there for that reason.

She possessed scrolls for every hypothetical situation.

If we're able to pin Moore down even for just a short time, we could at least prepare our retreat.

Or so I thought, but it might have been risky if the Imperial Guards had genuinely participated.

"Moore! Moooooorree! Bring Rudeus here!"

And a callout came from Atofe.

The loud voice which called out to Moore resounded till here.

When I looked out the window, Eris was falling face-down and Roxy was rushing towards her in a hurry.

Looks like she lost.

Well that's obvious.

"We should start going soon. Please use the Lithograph that was installed just now for making communication."

"Yes, but before that."

While saying that, Moore presented a box that was located to his side.

Looking like a large Japanese dictionary.

A box that has an ominous demonic pattern carved into it and feels like I'll be cursed if it's opened.

It was unexpectedly light after I held it.

"From Atofe-sama, I hand this over to you from us."

".....And this is?"

"When you're caught in a dilemma, please open this. It will definitely become your strength."

I see.

The enjoyment of trying to open it, is it?

"Well then, shall we go?"

"Yes."

I put the box in the baggage and left the room.

After that, I sat next to Atofe, watching the competition from a special seat and treating myself to alcohol.

A team competition of 5-5 by the Imperial Guards.

Moore and others are showing off very flashy magic.

The rest are doing acrobats like the Chinese Athletic Association and musical instruments are being played resembling a former troubadour.

Although I wasn't able to enjoy much looking at them.

For some reason, Atofe who was sitting next to me was naked above the waist the whole time and continued to do so.

Good gracious, I am in trouble as to where to look.

The abstinent Rudeus has become greedy because of the abstinence itself.

"....."

When I started taking glances, before I knew it, Eris who was sitting next to me pulled my ear and Roxy who was sitting on top of my lap blocked my field of vision towards Atofe.

It was an enjoyable party.

An assembly of dozens of houses. Crude fences.

Small fields with pakkun flowers on the sides.

{ C-Editor's note: Pakkun flowers are the piranha plants in the Super Mario Bros. video games. }

Middle schoolers flocking to a large cauldron.

All of them were just as before, just as in memory.

"I trust you're still healthy, Father-in-Law?"

"I wonder about that..."

It was as if time had stopped in the Migurd village.

About two months had passed since Atofe was recruited.

During that time, I made rounds delivering letters to demon kings in various locations.

With Atofe's letter and Orsted's recommended tributes in hand, we went from one end of the Demon Continent to the other...which is to say with the teleportation circles.

The demon kings were a colorful bunch.

Bagraa'Hagraa, the gourmet Plundering Demon King who resembled a pig.

Rinebine, the Demon King of Faces who could only have an expression like that of a Moai statue.

Sahmedy'Nohmedy, the Demon King of Light who always emits light from his body.

Patlsetl, the Alluring Demon King whose semi-transparent body was concealed by a veil.

And the list goes on.

We even met Kebrakabra, the demon king of Displeasure that Orsted had warned about.

He was a spherical demon king with open holes throughout his body, and was constantly emitting the stench of vomit from the so-called holes.

We had went to all the locations with the resolve to fight.

They're demon kings, after all.

When thinking of demon kings, Atoferatofe or Badigadi are the idiots at the top of the list.

They aren't the type to listen to what you have to say.

Or so I thought, but they were surprisingly communicative.

They were delighted like children when I gave them gifts, and when I gave them Atofe's letter, they would mutter, "A hero...?" with their faces pale, avert their eyes, and hang their heads.

Some were even unable to control their bowels while entreating, "Please don't kill me".

Kebrakabra, the demon king of Displeasure was even one of them.

I came to a good understanding of just how feared and irregular Atofe is.

Demon kings are basically a bunch of nice people who simply just do what they want to do.

If you give them a firm request, they'll consider it with a serious expression.

However, while I had also asked about the search for Kishirika, most of them had replied "I'm not sure about that far off" for the things related 80 years from now.

The long-lived demon kings apparently don't think about future matters.

On the way, we stopped by the town of Rikarisu both the town that Badigadi rules over and where Kishirika's castle is located.

The crater town that Kishirika had once set up as a stronghold.

Badigadi wasn't there, nor did it seem like he had ever returned upon asking around.

No matter where I wandered to, the soldiers would only shrug.

For the time being, I gave a letter to the defending soldiers and requested they not just search for Kishirika, but Badigadi too.

There were a few demon king castles left and it was looking like things were going to end without a hitch.

When we got to that stage, Roxy called out to me.

"Would it be alright if I visited my hometown for a little bit? Don't worry, it'll be over right away and I'll quickly come and go on my own."

Like hell I would let you go alone.

I promptly returned home, grabbed Lara and a betrothal gift, and returned to the town of Rikarisu.

And upon ending a three-day journey, we arrived where we're presently at, the Migurd village.

Just Roxy, Lara, and I.

Eris had said this and that and restrained herself.

I told her to at least thank them for the sword...but upon realizing that even she had remembered the thing called restraint, I was deeply moved.

Rokary, Roxy's mother, froze upon seeing Roxy.

Well, not quite; she wasn't looking at Roxy.

She saw me standing intimately next to Roxy, the child Roxy was carrying, and then froze.

Some people in the village took a look at Roxy and then stared intently at her.

I'm sure they were trying to use telepathy, but Rokary was different.

Her thoughts had certainly come to a complete halt.

She was petrified for about 5 seconds or so.

"Mother, I've returned."

Spoken out to, Rokary then trembled.

"R-Roxy, who is this man, and this child?"

"My husband and child."

"...!!"

The next instant, Rokary made an expression as if to say "Oh!" and surveyed her surroundings in a fluster.

Almost simultaneously, the nearby Migurds looked at the spot we were at, so she was probably yelling something with telepathy.

Or maybe she was calling for Royn, Roxy's father.

She might even be saying, 'Eek, Honey, Roxy brought home a man!'

"...."

"...."

The silent gazes hurt.

However, I'm Roxy's man.

I must behave myself in a way that she won't be embarrassed.

I folded my arms, aligned my legs, and threw out my chest, cladding myself in Psycho Power...

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Street Fighter V video game. }

"Mother, is Father around?"

"Y-yes, I just called for him. He's at the elder's home...so I'm sure he'll be back right away."

"Then, please let us wait at the house. When too many gazes gathered on Rudy, he started making a weird pose, as you see."

Whaat!?

Weird!?

It was the pose of a venerable evil leader, though...

"Now then, Rudy, this way."

"Alright."

Abiding Roxy, I followed after her.

The luggage feeling heavy on my back was likely the pressure from meeting the father-in-law and mother-in-law.

I want to think that the affectionate posing didn't belittle my beloved Roxy.

"Thank you for having us."

Glancing about while following after the two, we entered the home of Roxy's parents.

Come to think of it, I didn't ever go inside their home last time I was here.

Maybe they'll let me see Roxy's room from when she was little.

Well, I already know there's no concept such as a private room in this community, though.

"I wonder if there's enough food in storage..."

"No, we'll be leaving before long, so don't worry over us."

"But Roxy, you've finally returned, so stay a while."

While listening to Rokary's lonely tone, I sat down near the hearth, and Roxy promptly sat down beside me.

"We're rather busy, you see."

"Is that so..."

Rokary looked rather dejected.

If were inclined to, I think staying 3 or 4 days would be fine...

But Roxy isn't all that fond of her hometown, so it may only be natural she would want to leave quickly.

"Nevertheless, you returned so suddenly...and with such handsome gentleman in tow, too..."

Rokary once again looked at me, and after a fairly unrestrained examination from head to toe, she suddenly bowed her head as if realizing something.

"Oh, how slow of me. I'm Roxy's mother, Rokary. It's nice to meet you."

Meet me, huh...?

It goes to figure she wouldn't remember me when we only met once over 10 years or so ago.

"I'm Rudeus Greyrat. We've met once before."

"We have..."

"Yes, around 10 years ago, once. Ruijerd had brought me here."

"You're acquainted with Ruijerd Supardia? But he was last here..."

Hearing Ruijerd's name, Rokary put a hand on her chin as if pondering it.

Eventually, she let out a small voice, seeming to have something come to mind.

"Are you by chance the small human child who was with Ruijerd when he was going on his journey?"

"That's exactly right."

"Oh my...! How nostalgic! You've certainly gotten bigger, I see. Only a little less than 10 years have gone by, but when humans get so big, they're already splendid adults, right?"

"Right. I think of myself as an adult, though lacking in many areas..."

There, I placed my hands on the floor and bowed my head.

"It's a fairly late notice, but I've wed your daughter."

"...Oh, certainly. Erm, are you fine with this girl?"

"This girl is very fine."

I spoke, looking at Roxy, and her face went red.

"Um, is Roxy being a proper wife for a human? There's friction between humans demons, isn't there? She isn't being a bother, is she?"

"Regardless if there is some, I'm constantly being helped by Roxy. The most reliable one in my home is none other than Roxy."

"Is that right..."

Roxy poked me in the side.

Wondering what it could be, I looked over at her, and she spoke to me in a whisper.

"You're flattering me too much."

Not a word was exaggerated, though.

"But, such a handsome... Are you really fine with our daughter?"

She repeated the question she had just said.

Even Rokary seems fairly flustered.

"Rudy has two other wives as well. I have a position similar to a concubine, so even if I were more or less unworthy, no problems will arise."

Roxy interjected.

Roxy doesn't have a single unworthy point about her, nor have I ever treated her as a concubine, though...

"Is that right... But..."

"Mother, you're making it embarrassing, so please cease."

"Oh...ok. But I'm still worried. You were always unsociable and silent back then..."

"I understand my own faults. But as you see, I've still given birth to a child, and am fulfilling my duties as a wife."

Duties makes it sound businesslike.

Even if, for example, she never gave birth, my love wouldn't waver, though...

But maybe it is better to say it that way.

"Rudeus, is this true?"

"Yes. At the very least, my love for Roxy will never run out. I swear to God."

My love is agape.

It's infinite love.

"I see..."

Rokary wore a bewildered expression.

It's probably best to show with action after all.

Thus, I tried embracing Roxy's shoulders.

Oh, she caught my hand.

You've got it wrong, Roxy, I wasn't thinking of trying to touching your butt, I thought, but she grasped my hand.

Roxy's hand was very warm.

"Like that, I see."

Rokary seems to have reached an understanding.

Then Lara, who was sitting next to Roxy, suddenly turned her face toward the outside.

"Oh, Royn's returned."

Looks like the father-in-law has arrived.

I'll have to once again give him my regards.

I'll brace myself.

I was ready to prostrate myself any time.

Things went smoothly with Royn.

He had a similar reaction to Rokary.

He would say similar phrases, and I would say similar responses. It was very smooth operating.

Looks like I won't have to prostrate after all.

"At any rate, congratulations, Roxy. I'm glad as long as you're happy," Royn finally said, being moved to tears, and grasped Roxy's hands.

"Thank you, Father."

Roxy and Rokary were also tearing up.

I wonder if I'm actually making Roxy happy.

In the first place, what is happiness?

I'm not certain, but I want to maintain my love for her.

"Still, Roxy married, huh... The Roxy that would trip over nothing and be a moment from crying when she was small..."

"Please leave out these kind of stories in front of Rudy."

When Roxy was little, eh?

I'm sure she was adorable.

Or maybe her outer appearance wasn't all that different from right now.

If I had met her at that time and grew up together...I'm sure our relationship would be different than it is currently.

Well, regardless of the relationship, I don't think the destiny where I respect Roxy would be replaced.

"Still, I never thought I'd see my grandchild's face."

Seems like Royn was getting emotional.

His words were that like of chiding, but he lifted Lara up in a good mood.

Lara, like always, didn't struggle and simply stared at Royn.

Seeing this made Royn break out into a grin.

"I see, your name's Lara. Being able to clearly say your name, you're a clever one.

"Huh?"

"Huh?"

I think Roxy and I let out a voice at the same time.

Lara has yet to say her name.

Or rather, she has yet to say anything at all.

'So what is this...? '

I thought, when Roxy came to a realization and stared at Royn.

"...Can our girl use telepathy?"

"Huh? Yeah. She still has a little difficulty with it, but is clearly understandable."

Roxy and I exchanged glances.

The shocking truth that just came to light.

That our little girl was an esper.

Thinking it over, it really isn't that strange of a thing.

Roxy can't use telepathy, but both of Roxy's parents can.

Which means it just isn't hereditary.

"You weren't aware?"

"...None of us can use telepathy, you see?"

"Really...? But Lara says she often talks with grandma."

Grandma.

In this case, Lara's grandmother...doesn't refer to Rokary.

It's Zenith.

"Ahh..."

At the same time, I reached a sort of understanding.

Miko had said so, that Zenith can read others' minds.

Thus, Lara was quite the chatterbox in Zenith's memory.

The always silent Lara who wore a stern expression.

She had happy memories of chatting with Zenith.

I see, telepathy.

Lara had always been talking with telepathy, which is how she was able to converse with Zentih.

"...."

For some reason, I'm relieved.

But Roxy didn't share my feelings.

She had a somewhat troubled expression while hanging her head.

She might be thinking about how her daughter can do something she herself cannot.

It was getting dark here.

"Really... Eh? What should I do... Lara, it's Daddy~"

I said, standing up and brushing Lara's head.

Lara didn't smile or anything, just staring at me.

She's probably saying something.

"She says she has no idea what you're saying."

Oh dear?

Oh, right, I was speaking in the Demon God language.

'Lara, it's Daddy~'

This time I used the human language and peered at Royn.

"She says she knows that."

Oh, she knows.

I suppose that's natural, there's no way she wouldn't.

I say it often enough, anyway.

Nevertheless, how dry.

I think even an "I love you Daddy" would be fine even as just lip service.

Recently, even Lucy been saying it.

I suppose language and telepathy aren't related, though.

Maybe spoken words come off with a different nuance...

I suppose so, otherwise conversing with Zenith would be difficult.

"At any rate, I was thinking she was a bit of a late bloomer, but I'm actually a little relieved."

"She's still young, so she can only speak with her head, but I'm sure she'll be speaking with her mouth before long."

Royn said with a nostalgic smile.

"I'm sure what you two are feeling is the same when we had Roxy."

"What do you mean?"

"We also thought Roxy was a bit of a late bloomer when she was born, since she couldn't speak..."

Roxy, the only one in her family who can't use telepathy and Lara, the only one in her family who can.

They are similar situations.

The apple doesn't fall far from the tree.

All the same, I'm relieved.

Our girl is growing up just fine.

I really was worried she had no one to speak to at home, but it was nothing of the sort.

Zenith clearly has been, and likely Leo also has some sort of telepathy power as well and has been conversing with Lara with it.

Once she's able to speak with words, she'll be able to interact with the other family members as well.

It's just a little longer.

"Lara is just like Roxy, isn't she?"

"Ha ha ha. Right, just like her, particularly her eyes."

Royn was happily laughing and Rokary was enjoying herself, too.

Even Lara, in some way, looked like she had an expression of enjoyment.

After that, I paid back the money they had lent me times ten, and presented them the betrothal gift.

I was grimacing inside at the Great king Land Tortoise cooking I haven't had in so long, while on the outside I was saying how delicious it was.

It was a fun time.

I'm glad I came here, I thought, but Roxy's expression didn't liven up.

She didn't cheer up all the way to the end.

In the end, Roxy and I decided to stay the night in the village.

Maybe in consideration of being a married couple, we were staying at a vacant house nearby Roxy's parents' house.

The three of us were sleeping with Lara in the middle in an unoccupied house with a little dust still remaining.

Were this a hotel, I'd feel something over there only being one bed and two pillows lined up.

Though it's not like I can do that stuff when Lara's with us, and right now I'm Rudeus the Abstinent anyway.

Even with Roxy lying next to me, I can keep my hands off of her.

But seeing Roxy lying down with her eyes shut certainly isn't helping.

I started to feel maybe just a little was ok.

I'm getting excited, or rather, I am excited.

Well, let's think about it.

I began a life of abstinence for a little while so I can't have any children.

To flip it around, anything fine as long as it can't end up with children.

Fate won't go amiss just from the act of ejecting the evil matter.

Roxy is safe.

That said, if you'll pardon me here—

"Rudy."

Faah!

I'm sorry.

It was just a passing impulse.

"Are you still awake?"

"Zzz zzz."

"Skip the pretend sleep. Didn't you just look me in the eyes?"

I reluctantly opened my eyes.

Roxy, who was lying next to me, was staring at me with a serious expression.

"It's about Lara."

Lara was already sleeping soundly.

Usually she had the most brazen expressions, but her sleeping one was that of an angel.

"To be honest, I had been thinking that was how it was."

What is, I couldn't bring myself to ask.

It was what she spoke of today.

The fact that Lara can use the Migurd racial ability just fine.

"I had been quiet up until now...but every time I saw Zenith and Lara staring at each other, I considered the possibility."

"It never came to mind for me."

"I'm sure. You've been quite busy these few years, always moving around."

I haven't been watching over my children, is what it felt like she said.

Well, if I had assert one or the other, maybe it would be that I haven't.

Maybe I've just been watching the cute parts and doting on them.

I haven't done a single thing that would count as raising or educating them.

Frankly, I've just been taking advantage of Sylphy and Roxy for that.

"What kind of expression is that? I'm not blaming you for it."

I appreciate that she can say that.

No matter how much I worry and reflect over it, my hands are currently full with the Hitogami stuff.

I have no resources to devote to raising children.

"It's just, I was thinking a little."

"About what?"

Roxy was stroking Lara's head.

"I was born in this village. Once I became aware of my surroundings, I grew up always feeling alienated."

"...."

"Thinking back on it, those days were really difficult. Leaving the village, going to a town where they came to mutual understanding with words, making acquaintances there, and when I began my life as an adventurer, I keenly realized that the world I lived in was right here."

She can't do what everyone else can.

Not being able to do just such a simple thing.

When asked why she couldn't do such an ordinary action, she wouldn't even know.

Just unable to do it and spoken of as a useless failure by her peers, and she even recognized herself as such.

But that really wasn't common sense.

She was glad she couldn't do it.

When Roxy knew that, she undoubtedly had an indescribable sense of freedom.

"If Lara is raised as it is, maybe she'll have the same thoughts I did. I may be glad I left the village, but Lara isn't me. There aren't any other races that can use the same ability as the Migurd."

Roxy, then, suddenly looked away.

But she may be right.

The Migurd don't leave the village often.

Even on the Demon Continent, I had almost never seen a race like the Migurds.

It may not be exclusive, but they are a self-enclosed race.

I can't say that Lara won't feel alienated in the future.

"So I was thinking..."

Roxy said, still facing away.

She had a troubled face as if she had no confidence in her own idea.

"How about leaving Lara with my father and mother?"

"...Huh?"

"I wondering that it might be best to live in the Migurd village as a Migurd until she's 10 or 15, until she's grown to some extent. Afterwards, wouldn't it be for the best to decide if she should leave or stay in the village? That's what I was thinking."

"...."

I want to be with my son and daughters as much as I possibly can.

I think that's the obligation as one who conceived them. I view taking responsibility as including that.

Minus the Hitogami stuff, I want Lara to be raised somewhere I can see.

But Roxy was telling me something she had thought hard over.

She isn't saying it because she wants to escape from responsibility or because she wants to resign from childcare.

It's because it will be hard on Lara.

She's saying it because Lara wouldn't want to go through the same things she herself had.

A child with blue hair who has a different means of talking with others.

There's no way there won't be painful times.

It goes without saying a parent can't shoulder the child's pain.

"I'm against it... But if you think it's for the best, then I..."

The words wouldn't come out.

I can't choose.

Should I prioritize my own feelings or Roxy's suggestion?

I could only keep silent, unsure.

"I'm sorry, Rudy. Please forget this. The conversation never happened."

Roxy said after a brief period of silence.

That was where we ended the day.

Roxy and I slept with our hands held.

The Migurd village was a quiet village.

You can't hear any conversation.

Since the villagers talk with telepathy, there were no conversations in the village.

Maybe some of them would greet Roxy, but she couldn't hear it.

But Lara probably could.

The conversations of the people preparing food over there, or a lover's quarrel inside a home, or all other kinds of racket.

"Seeing this lack of change, I can understand the richness my past ten years had...or rather, the bustle human livelihoods have."

Roxy spoke, turning her gaze to our daughter that she was carrying.

Lara, as always, was staring at Roxy with a surly face.

I don't think this village would change even after another decade.

Or even were there to be a change, we wouldn't notice it.

"Then, take care, alright?"

"It's alright if you stay a little longer..."

Royn and Rokary were seeing us off at the village entrance.

They looked rather lonely.

"Could I hold Lara once last time?"

Royn asked, and extended his arms.

Grandchildren are cute no matter where in the world you are.

It didn't appear like they have any intention of having children aside from Roxy.

"It's perfectly fine, here."

Roxy held out Lara, who she was holding, to him, or at least tried to.

"What's this?"

Lara was firmly clinging onto the neck area of Roxy's robe.

It was like a scene I had seen somewhere.

"Come now, Lara, say goodbye to grandpa and grandma."

"...."

Lara, making use of both her arms and legs, was clinging onto Roxy like a cicada.

Just like that, she looked over at me.

The usual surly and brazen face she always had was...gone.

Her mouth was warped, her brow furrowed, and she had an expression that looked like she was going to cry at any moment.

It was an expression asking for help.

"Ahh... Ha ha ha. Nevermind, it's fine after all."

Royn spoke with a wry smile, waving his hand.

"She's saying she doesn't want to be separated from Mom.

"...!"

Roxy looked at Lara, surprised.

Upon seeing Lara's expression close to crying, anxiety filled Roxy's own expression in the blink of an eye.

"No, want to be together..."

Lara said, as if squeezing out the words.

Our little girl, who had never spoken before, asserted herself for the first time.

"...."

Perhaps, Lara had heard last night's conversation.

Even if she hadn't, maybe she had a dream where she was left behind due to it.

Maybe all we did was make her meaninglessly uneasy.

"It'll be just fine."

Roxy hugged Lara tightly in silence.

Her lips were tightly pressed together while holding back tears.

As both mother and daughter were making the same expression, Roxy spoke.

"We'll always be together."

With those words, Lara relaxed with a relieved expression.

"Roxy, when will you come back next?"

"Let's see, once Lara is a bigger... I think we'll come again in about 10 years.

"...Alright, that's good. Take care, ok?"

Rokary said, not seeming to think of 10 years as all that long.

And thus, we departed the village.

The two saw us off at the village entrance until we were out of sight.

It was a bit awkward at times, but I'm glad we visited them.

Eris and Sylphy's parents are gone, passed away.

Roxy's parents were estranged, but even so, parents are still parents.

I think that as long as they're alive, you can visit them as many times as you want.

"Now, Rudy, things are going to get hectic again."

"They sure are."

Before that, I'll tidy up the immediate tasks.

With such thoughts in mind, we returned to the town of Rikarisu.

We've finished going around and greeting each of the Demon Kings.

They've each given me their consideration.

Using Atofe's name is really convenient.

For now, everything has been going smoothly.

I've been getting along well.

Almost to the point that I'm starting to think it's gone too well; we haven't run into any issues.

Gisu has been strangely silent.

There hasn't been any interference from Hitogami either.

I've been diligently checking back in on the house, and there's no sign of any interference with my family.

I've had a look at the information on world affairs that the mercenary company has been collecting, and there haven't been any strange movements.

At least, my actions don't seem to have conflicted with Gisu's plot.

Gisu's letter might have been a bluff; he could be plotting something entirely different...

Or something like that, I don't know yet.

Even if I don't know, it's important to keep moving forward.

For now, there haven't been any Gisu sightings.

He's hiding himself well.

At least until I make a request of Kishirika, but she hasn't been found either.

Well, finding Kishirika is only a matter of time.

In the mean time, I've decided to continue networking.

The Holy Land of Swords.

Sword God, Gull Farion.

According to Orsted, he's a man of good character with a hobby of collecting rare swords.

According to Eris, he's not the kind of person to listen to what you have to say.

Once in the past I had also met Nina Farion, although...

Well, I had the impression that she was similar to Atofe.

According to the circumstances, I might have to bulldoze through the negotiations in the MK-I.

If that's the case, then it would be good to bring reinforcements.

That place will be full of people like Eris and Ghyslaine.

At least Atofe's elite guard, even seeing their boss stare down defeat, won't act unless commanded.

If a large number of Sword God-style swordsmen were to attack simultaneously...

I feel reluctant just thinking about it.

First of all I'll bring Eris... but, who else?

It would be unreasonable to ask Ariel to let me bring Ghyslaine...

"You! Clear your plate quickly, don't make a mess!" (Lucy)

"Aa, sorry. Yes, chew~ chew~" (Norn)

While thinking about such things, I was at home, having a meal with my family.

"Don't just eat everything but the bell peppers!" (Lucy)

"Eeh, the bell peppers too? I don't like bell peppers..." (Norn)

"Leaving the bell peppers is no good! Adults have to eat things even if they aren't delicious!" (Lucy)

My daughter is still small, she's five years old.

There's no roof on our house. Our tableware is made of stone, and we're eating mud dumplings with muddy water to drink.

It's surely my fault, I'm not earning enough income.

Such hardship.

"Babu~" (Norn)

{ C-Editor's note: Baby talk (Japanese). He is imagining Norn as a baby or maybe a toddler. }

"Already, but Norn-chan I gave you my breast a little while ago, and you're already hungry again? I guess it can't be helped, say ahh~" (Lucy)

Speaking of which, Norn is already 15 years old.

She'll be 16 years old soon.

She'll also graduate from the magic university this year, we should probably hold some kind of event despite being busy, but she still seems to miss mama's milk.

"Wow~ Mama, thank you~" (Norn)

"That's no good! Baby-talk is no good!" (Lucy)

"Aa... yes. Babu~" (Norn)

My daughter still isn't good with words.

She's still an infant, so it can't be helped.

"Wan wan!" (Aisha)

{ C-Editor's note: Dog sounds (Japanese). He is imagining Aisha as a dog. }

"Already, Aisha's hungry too? There's no helping it, HEY, everyone, time to eat, come to the kitchen!" (Lucy)

Our pet is 15 years old too.

Recently, she's had to balance between housework and managing the mercenary company, almost like a career woman, but she always ends up playing the role of a maid.

Even so, she's still a brutish dog that can't fight against her appetite.

"Wafun~!" (Aisha)

"After you've eaten properly, you can go play with Norn-chan!" (Lucy)

"Wafu wafu, wa~an!" (Aisha)

"Babu~...!" (Norn)

"Yaah, it tickles!" (Lucy)

In a fit of excitement, Aisha jumped up, licking their cheeks.

A truly happy family.

I'll join in too.

"Yay~ Papa~ Papa~" (Norn)

"No! Papa don't do that!" (Lucy)

Rejected.

This must be what's called domestic discrimination.

Although it looks like a happy family, the marriage has lost its passion.

A cold married life, a rut.

I mean, why can't I act like a pet?

I want to hug and lick too...

"*sob* Papa is hated..." (Norn)

"It's different! Papa is great, but he's rarely home, and I'm holding the baby, I still love him! It just can't be helped!" (Lucy)

Maybe not that great, since I'm listening in.

But it can be helped, because I also want to hug the baby.

Love is warmth.

And since I'm warm, I'm happy.

"Um, Rudy... is now a good time to talk?" (Sylphy)

Suddenly, from behind, a voice was heard.

Turning around, from the window of the neighboring house, mother-in-law was... well. That's enough of that.

"Ah."

As I was standing up, the hem of my shirt was caught.

Lucy was holding it, looking up at me with an anxious face.

"Papa, are you gonna go to work again?"

I was considering it an hour ago.

About who I should bring to the Holy Land of Swords, maybe I should just ask President Orsted to make the trip.

Or how should I start the negotiations, maybe I should just go in strong...

And various other potential issues, then Norn brought Lucy over to play.

While hiding behind Norn, Lucy was fidgeting saying [Umm... papa, play?]

I consented without a second thought.

"No, I'm just going to go talk with mom a little."

"... don't go."

"I shall return immediately. Until then, play with your big sisters."

"... Yeah."

Lucy responded with a squeak and hung her head.

I'm reluctant to leave that cute face.

If it were possible, I'd play all day.

It was fun playing Lucy's husband.

But, because my true wife is calling, I must go.

"What's the matter? Sylphy?"

As I head back through the living room after washing my hands, I found Sylphy sitting on the couch.

"Yeah. Um... Recently, Rudy's been busy, right? So, I heard you earlier, and I don't think it's bad..."

Sylphy said with an embarrassed face while scratching the back of her ear with a crunching sound.

I wonder if it's something difficult to say.

"If I heard properly, are you leaving already for the Holy Land of Swords?"

"Ah, as soon as preparations are complete, probably another 2 or 3 days..."

I still have to decide who to bring.

Eris and someone else.

I'd like to bring someone sensible who can understand the Sword God Style.

I wonder if it would really be unreasonable to ask Ariel to lend out Ghyslaine or Isolte...

"How long will you be gone?"

"I'm not sure, probably between 10 to 30 days. I'll be back to visit."

Near the Holy Land of Swords, where famous swordsmen polish their skills, there are also master blacksmiths in training.

I also intend to forge a connection with them.

"Is that so... yeah, well, that won't be in time after all."

"... What?"

"The delivery."

As Sylphy said that, I noticed her belly.

A big belly.

And a slightly larger chest.

They are body changes unsuitable to the slender Sylphy.

"Ah... it's that time already."

No way, of course I wouldn't forget.

Sylphy is always in my mind.

It was just that I didn't realize we were so close to the due date already...

The stream of time is one that flows briskly.

"... can I touch your belly?"

As I said that, I moved in to touch.

Even though I'm just touching her belly, from the depths, I can feel the pulse of life.

The feeling of two hearts beating, something miraculous.

Sylphy is caring for two lives now.

And, after that life separates from Sylphy, it's going to become independent.

"Soon Lucy's little brother or sister will be born."

Sylphy gently placed her hand on top of mine as I was touching her belly.

"This time, Rudy won't be here for the birth?"

"No, I'll be here, in the house."

"But... Rudy..."

"I'll be here."

After hearing my child is about to be born, I can't just say [Well, take care] and leave the house on a business trip.

If I do that, I'll truly lose sight of what I've been doing everything for.

"... Thank you Rudy. I love you."

"I love you too."

Sylphy closed her eyes, and put her hand on my shoulder to embrace me.

Yeah, I'm happy...

"Ah, that's right. Before the birth, we should choose a name. Before you left for Milis, you said you'd think of one, right?"

I sat in a seiza on the floor.

Thus, I decided to stay home for a while.

I don't feel a particular need to rush things.

Nevertheless, I feel a bit uneasy.

As I assumed a seiza pose, bowing with my forehead near the floor, I informed Sylphy that I hadn't thought of a name.
She looked more disappointed than angry.

She was blue in the face, at a loss for words.

Like she had been betrayed by something she had believed in, she had that kind of expression.

But it only lasted for a second, and she followed up with [Well, then, we need to think of one]...

That's the face of disappointment.

I'm wearing out her patience.

Her voice just trailed off after that.

Yeah, that's right.

Surely, Sylphy has, for the last six months, believed in me.

Even when I was far away, she was looking forward to celebrating the birth of our child with me.

Of course, I had every intention of doing so.

I had the intention.

The action, however, I fell short on.

There's no doubt about that.

"Papa. What's wrong? Stomach hurts?"

"No, well a little, I accidentally hurt mama's feelings."

"Then, you should say sorry."

Lucy was trying to comfort me.

But, what Sylphy wants isn't an apology.

She doesn't want some superficial apology.

She doesn't want a heartfelt apology either.

No, what she wants is something more vague... she wants a sense of security.

"Lucy. Even if I tell Mama I'm sorry, I don't think that will help, her feelings will still be hurt."

"But, Papa won't hurt Mama's feelings anymore?"

"I won't."

"Well then Mama will forgive you!"

It's Sylphy after all, I should have understood that from the beginning.

I need to be home for her.

In this kind of situation, I'm probably missing something.

Even if I think I understand, her feelings may be different.

She's been enduring for a long time.

When I left her while she was pregnant to go help Paul.

When I married Roxy, then Eris.

Time and time again, instead of exploding, she's only shown understanding.

I've been allowed to do as I like.

Once again, she's enduring.

When she heard that I hadn't even thought of a name, she was holding herself back.

Surely, even now, she's still enduring it.

I'm the one making her endure.

Everything's fine for now.

However a time will come when her patience reaches its limit.

Just like water overflows from a cup, there's also a limit on what a person can put up with.

At that time, I'll lose Sylphy.

Just like in the diary, she'll up and disappear.

That would be awful.

I want to spend the rest of my life with her.

Together, through the painful times too.

That's just my own selfishness.

Even if she falls out of love with me,

At the very least I want to give Sylphy a sense of security.

I wonder what I should do.

While I was worrying over those kinds of things, the delivery date rapidly approached.

We're expecting it in the next week or so.

Sylphy has been spending her time as if nothing had happened.

In fact, I was starting to think it wasn't such a big deal either.

She's not the type to hold a grudge for this kind of thing.

Perhaps the other day she was just disappointed, and didn't take things too seriously.

I don't think things became awkward.

While I was spending as much time as possible with Sylphy, I was desperately thinking of a name for our child.

Just like that, Sylphy started having delivery pains.

Eris had a calm face and took off sprinting to the doctor,

Lilia and Aisha prepared for the delivery,

Roxy was waiting off to the side as an auxiliary healing specialist,

Leo was taken with the children to another room,

And I was next to Sylphy the entire time.

After a little bit, Eris returned with the doctor.

Under her arm that is, his eyes were spinning, but he immediately set out to prepare for the delivery.

Everyone was familiar with the process.

This is Sylphy's second child, my fourth.

If I count the number of births I've witnessed, including Aisha and Norn, it's five.

If I count my previous life, it's a few more.

Even the doctor is a veteran; there isn't a single inexperienced person here.

With this lineup, I can have peace of mind.

And with everyone present, the delivery began.

There was no panic or confusion, everyone was calm and proceeded smoothly...

"Ugh."

When the head crowned, the doctor moaned.

My peace of mind broke in an instant; anxiety is coursing through my body.

Even though I'm accustomed to the process, delivery then birth.

I shouldn't have relaxed my guard.

I know it's not a breech delivery, because the head was crowning...

There's no way it could be a stillbirth.

Roxy stood up with her staff in hand.

"Do we need healing magic?"

"That's not necessary."

As the doctor said that, the delivery continued.

The delivery proceeded smoothly, with Sylphy letting out as little of her voice as she could.

I don't see anything going wrong.

"... Aah~ aah~"

Then, suddenly, in the quiet room, a baby's cries emerged.

The doctor finished delivering the baby without saying anything.

There doesn't seem to be any problem.

But, the doctor's expression is stiff.

Now I see why.

From a glance at the baby, it's obvious.

The reason why the doctor still has a stiff expression, that is.

The baby's hair was the problem.

When Lucy was born, she had a little bit of light brown hair.

Lara was born without any hair.

Arus was born while I was away, but when I first saw him, he had red hair.

"...."

Sylphy's second child.

The baby's hair, was green.

It's not bright enough to be emerald green.

But, it was green.

Almost similar to Sylphy's old...

"That...."

Sylphy's complexion has gone completely blue.

"Ah... Ah... a lie..."

Roxy, Eris, Aisha, Lilia, and I have normal expressions.

In this house, it's not unusual for a child with colorful hair to be born.

And, I'm also good friends with Ruijerd.

I don't see anything wrong with green hair.

But, Sylphy...

For her...

It's different.

"... Congratulations. It's a boy."

"....."

Sylphy looked at the baby with a hopeless face.

The doctor presented the baby, held to his chest, when Sylphy put up her hands like she didn't know what to do.

"Sylphy."

We should be celebrating.

There's no reason not to celebrate.

Out of appreciation for Sylphy, it's necessary to celebrate.

Afterwards, we need to raise him to become a fine man.

With as many smiles as possible.

In order to create a sense of security.

"Everything's fine, it's fine, thank you."

"..... Rudy... I'm sorry."

Before I could say anything else, Sylphy replied.

"There's no reason to apologize, so–"

As I said that, as if her battery suddenly died, she lost all of her strength.

I caught the baby as he slipped from her grasp.

"Eh?"

"Rudy! Please move!"

Roxy and the doctor suddenly pushed me out of the way.

Sylphy had lost consciousness, they were checking on her condition.

I can't seem to do anything but look on, stunned.

"She's only fainted."

A feeling of relief filled the room at the doctor's words.

I was still frozen in place, holding my naked baby.

Unable to move an inch, just standing there.

Aisha approached with a cloth.

"Oniichan, we need to wrap the baby in this."

"Y-yeah."

As Aisha said that, I took the cloth.

Sylphy was uneasy.

She's had a vague sense of anxiety about her.

And, her uneasiness was proved right when she saw her child's hair was green.

As if she had finally snapped under the tension, or whether her stress had reached a limit, she fainted.

If I'd been better at providing her with a sense of security, things might have gone differently.

I'm sorry.

But, I also feel as if this is a sort of blessing.

Certainly, he has green hair, but there's nothing wrong with that.

Everything went smoothly.

This is my fourth child. I've properly thought of a name.

"... You, why are you here?"

Eris, who was sitting in the corner of the room, abruptly asked.

She was asking me.

I've been acting cowardly, and Eris responded with harsh words.

With that feeling in the pit of my stomach, I turned around.

"Huh?"

That wasn't it.

She wasn't referring to me.

There's a strange guy in the room.

Blonde hair. Wearing a white school uniform, with a buttoned shirt and long pants.

And, a familiar yellow fox-motif mask.

"Arumanfi...?"

Arumanfi was watching me patiently.

Or, more accurately, my baby.

He was patiently watching my green haired baby.

"Rudeus Greyrat. Perugius-sama requests your presence at the sky castle."

It would seem I've been summoned by Perugius.

—Sylphiette's Point of View—

I had a dream.

{ C-Editor's note: She is using the informal masculine version of the pronoun 'I'; what she is comfortable with since she spent many years masquerading as a male. }

Around the time when Rudi went to the Kingdom of the Dragon King.

A child was crying inside that dream.

A child with green hair was crying.

There was some kind of black shadow in the surroundings.

The black shadow surrounded the child and threw something like black lumps at him.

The child was desperately trying to run away, but the black shadow persistently chased after him.

But there was a light ahead of that child.

The child approached the light and the light surrounded the child; the light then drove the black shadow away by throwing a ball of light towards it.

The child was tenderly wrapped up by the light and the child slept peacefully.

When I had that dream, I thought that it was a dream of the past.

That the dream was of the old days when I was being bullied by the village's children.

I thought that 'I really love Rudi, don't I' after having such a dream at this point.

I writhed like a little girl on the bed after thinking that.

Several months after that.

During the time when Rudi went to the Demon Continent.

I had a similar dream again.

But it was a little different from that time.

The child having green hair.

It wasn't my face.

The child who had Rudi's face was being chased by the black shadow.

And for some reason, there was no light ahead of that child's escape.

I rushed towards that child in a hurry and decided to protect him from the black shadow.

I tried to drive it away bare handed as I couldn't use magic within the dream.

The black shadow had been sticking to me and didn't easily vanish.

The child was trembling in my arms.

When I had that dream, I got anxious that something might have happened to Rudi.

He might had gotten injured or had been captured.

Even though Eris and Roxy were there.....

I seriously started considering how should I make my move if that had happened.

In the end, he came back the other day and my anxiety was liquefied, but.....

In exchange for that, a different anxiety rose within me.

The stomach which was getting bigger.

I thought whether the dream was this child's within this stomach.

However, I immediately considered it as needless anxiety.

Rudi will definitely protect the kids.

This child is sure to have the light.

I thought that I had become just a little nervous because of pregnancy.

I immediately forgot about the dreams.

And then Rudi came back from the Demon Continent.

I tried asking him about the child's name.

It had been 6 months since I asked him to think about it.

It would have been fine if I asked after the birth, but since he was leaving on a trip again I wanted to ask beforehand.

".....I'm sorry. I haven't thought about a name yet."

At that time, the thing about the dream crossed my mind.

The figure of the child coiled about by the black shadow and no one would come to his rescue.

I thought that perhaps this child won't be loved by Rudi.

'No, that couldn't possibly be' I immediately thought that, but—

As expected, I had a dream the evening of that very day.

The black shadow was swarming the child who was too far away from my hands reach.

I desperately ran and tried to save him.

But I couldn't make it.

After I finally arrived, the black shadow was disappearing and the child was dead.

I was drenched in sweat after I woke up.

It's just a dream, I'm only nervous.

I could only convince myself of that.

But I ended up thinking about various things after all.

If a child with green hair is really born.....

That child would undoubtedly be persecuted.

Just like I was.

But Rudi will definitely protect that child even if he has green hair.

It's the same for Roxy and Eris as well.

Even though I know that, just why isn't my anxiety disappearing?

I arrived unexpectedly faster at the answer.

I've heard it.

About Laplace's factor.

About the reason my hair color was green.

About why Rudi for a period of time was feeling a little anxious about that matter.

If the child born is Laplace.

What would Rudi do?

It's a little different this time around, but Rudi was originally assembling war potential to fight Laplace.

If my child is Laplace, then what would become of Rudi's work.....?

.....What to do?

By no means do I not have faith in him.

I trust him.

But, what should I do?

What do I want him to do?

I started losing sleep every night as that thing kept spiraling inside my head.

Eventually I concluded that "A child with green hair won't necessarily be born."

It's just; it would have been better if it wasn't green hair.

But it was green.

—Rudeus's Point of View—

We named the baby Sieghart.

Baby girls Lucy and Lara were named after their parents, and baby boy Arus was named after the Hero of the Past, so that's why we named him after the Immortal Hero Siegfried with regards to the previous era.

{ C-Editor's note: Siegfried (Sigurd in Old Norse) was a mythical heroic dragon slayer of Germanic and Old Norse legend. }

At first we were going along with that, but if it's Ranoa, then the names "Something-hart" were numerous, so we quickly changed it.

His nickname is Sieg.

Sieg looked normal.

Frequently cried and often slept.

He peed and pooped.

At least he's far more normal than Lara, who doesn't cry too much and Arus, who cries if I hold him.

A reincarnated person.....

No, let's stop with the obscurement.

I don't think he looks like Laplace.

"Though I am looking at him.....what do you think about my family's child...."

It's been three days since then.

At late night.

The one sitting before me is Orsted.

Orsted is in front of Sieg, who is soundly sleeping within the basket in my home.

Not long ago he was crying, but now he's fast asleep.

Orsted looks somewhat drowsy as well.

By the way, Eris is standing behind Orsted.

Even though it's fine not to be so vigilant about it, she has been keeping her hand on the sword on her back.

"....Were you not able to comprehend my words?"

"No! Of course, I obviously understand your words, I believe them! That's right, Laplace certainly hasn't been born yet!"

"....."

"But, look, were you not talking about it before. That if Pax is dead, then Laplace's place of birth becomes unknown. Which means! My existence made things like that, because of Hitogami, Laplace of this period was, so it could be...."

Orsted gave out a sigh.

With a face like 'Do I have to explain this again?'

"Laplace's place of birth becomes unknown because of Pax's death.....but Laplace's factor hasn't been converged yet. It's possible after 50 years, but no matter how you see it, Laplace's resurrection isn't going to happen any time soon."

I don't remember hearing anything about the convergence.....

But when I believe that.

"Which means this child is?"

"Just a cute baby."

While saying that Orsted tried to extend his hand towards Sieg, but stopped after hearing Eris moving her sword.

It's alright if it's just a pat on the head.....

"Then, what about this green hair?"

Sieg's hair color is green.

A color which is quite similar to former Sylphy.

"It's only green. Laplace's factor or just hereditary....that's probably all."

It's just green.....huh.

It won't particularly become small even if we get closer to it, but.....

"This child is not Laplace. I can guarantee you that."

".....Thank you very much."

Despite giving my thanks, I still have some doubt left.

Orsted isn't flawless.

Even if he says it was like that in the previous loops, this loop has too many irregularities.

In fact, even Orsted can cause some miscalculations.

So if Perugius properly examines him and he really turns out to be Laplace...

That possibility exists.

Or the possibility of Perugius misrecognizing him also exists.

The fact is what a person says and does is never absolute.

"If it's possible, would you be able to accompany us when I go to Perugius-sama's place? That way if he really does turns out to be Laplace, won't you please protect us?"

".....I guess it's alright."

Yeah.

Perugius won't be able to gain an upper-hand if Orsted is standing behind me.

Alright it's settled.

As for this, that is.

"....."

"Why the long face? Is there still something more?"

"No..."

Since then, Sylphy was noticeably depressed.

On the surface she behaves the same as usual, but she often looks gloomy.

She might be feeling responsible for giving birth to a green-haired child.

Of course, no one in the family cares about that.

Only Roxy seemed to understand that scarce feeling, since I glanced at a counseling-like scene between them.

But Sylphy remained depressed.

Even I talked to her about one thing or another.

So what do I do to bring back Sylphy's smiling face?

I don't know that.

"It's because of the family's circumstances, that is why....."

"I see. So then, how soon can you come to Perugius-sama's place?"

"We'll come when Sylphy stabilizes."

I made Arumanfi wait.

That the child has just been born and it's impossible to come so soon.

Arumanfi left after saying a short "I understand," but Perugius might be highly anticipating me.

He even revealed himself with the fastest speed possible.....

Orsted said that my child isn't Laplace.

Be that as it may, Perugius won't consent to it even if he's informed unilaterally.

Not until he's seen it with his own eyes.

It might be hard, but let's take Sylphy as well.

I had a hunch that it would be better like that.

20 days passed.

Sylphy's physical condition stabilized as well.

There are no problems with the child as of now.

Sylphy has been feeling depressed as usual.

With a gloomy face, she has been tightly holding the baby during the daytime.

Many times, her expression looked as if she wouldn't hand this child over to anyone and was worried too much.

"Sylphy, I intend to show Sieg to Perugius-sama."

When I suggested such a thing to her, she held Sieg tightly with a frightened face.

"........No."

As if she had turned back to her childhood, a frail attitude.

Moreover, that expression was not aiming for me during the old days.

But aiming for the ones who bullied her.

"Why.....would you say such a thing.....?"

"So that I can make you realize that our child isn't Laplace by Perugius-sama."

Sylphy casted her eyes down.

"........If he turns out to be Laplace, what will you do?"

"Eh? As I said before, even Orsted-sama says that he's not Laplace....."

"But the possibility of him being wrong is there, right?"

Well, even Orsted isn't flawless.

It might be possible that he was carried away by Sieg's cuteness and said that.

I don't think that's possible, but........

"At that time....."

"At that time?"

"I will protect Sieg even if the Sky Fortress falls."

Sylphy casted her eyes down again after hearing those words.

And murmured an "OK" with a faint voice.

And thus, we had decided to proceed towards the Sky Fortress.

The members were me, Sylphy holding Sieg, Eris, Orsted, and incidentally Zanoba.

I decided to take someone along who can easily persuade Perugius just in case.

".....Welcome. Please come."

The reaction of Sylvaril, who encountered such a large family, was the same as always.

Firstly, a sincere respect towards Zanoba, Eris, and Sylphy.

Just an exterior respect for me.

An unpleasant attitude towards Orsted.

Just as always.

"Well then, this way please. Perugius-sama awaits."

And thus, we go towards the Audience room through the usual route.

There is no conversation.

Sylphy, who is holding Sieg, is walking beside me.

Eris is walking as if to protect her with her hand laid on the pommel of her sword.

Zanoba, who looks slightly tense after hearing the situation, is walking behind us with Orsted in tow, whose face cannot be seen because of the Helmet.

We go past the door which was praised before by Zanoba without any change in that formation.

Illusions of white particles could be seen coming out of Sylphy and Sieg.

They might be coming out of me as well.

I thought it was a little strange that nothing came out from Orsted.

He doesn't have the Laplace's factor?

"....."

Sylvaril looked at us silently.

She's smoothly proceeding before us without accidentally saying anything particular.

"Look, Sylphy, it's different as we expected."

"........Yeah."

Sylvaril is walking without looking back.

Passing the corridor which is lined up with stylish interiors, we stand before a splendorous door.

Now that I look at it, the door still looks in good taste.

Is it because he looked around the castles throughout the world.....?

I can understand why Zanoba kept praising this castle that day.

Sylvaril opened that splendorous door.

"Please advance."

We entered the audience room on Sylvaril's call.

The usual scene is spread out there as before.

A large chandelier as if propped up like a large tree.

Curtains painted with the crest of the Human Race and the Dragon Race.

12 men and women wearing masks are standing on both sides of the red velvet carpet.

The Dragon King with silver hair who sat on the throne.

Gorgeousness and greatness.

A scene that will make you forget about its divinity before you even finish talking about it.

You won't find such an audience room even if you search the entire world.

And to top it all off with Sylvaril, it becomes perfect.....

.....Huh, there's one person more.

Ah, Nanahoshi is mixed in.

What's she trying to do now?

"So you've come, Rudeus."

"Yes. I've kept you waiting. Perugius-sama."

I bow my head while standing.

Sylphy, Eris, and Zanoba all have fallen to their knees, but I'm just standing.

I had better fallen to my knees too, but being Orsted's subordinate, I've been constantly taking lesson these days to not lower my back too much.

Sure enough, Sylvaril was a little offended, but Perugius doesn't seem to mind.

But he looks displeased today.

"You've made me wait for quite a bit."

".....That is because my child had just been born."

"Arumanfi was telling me that. That's why I waited. I wouldn't have tolerated if it had been a foolish reason."

As one would expect from a tolerant gentleman.

But considering that, he looks displeased.

He has been tapping the armrest on the throne quite restlessly.

"That expression, this occasion, you seem to know the reason why I summoned you here."

"Yes."

"And then with these members, you've resolved yourself to fight unhesitatingly depending in which way the conversation flows."

"......Yes."

Perugius is glaring at Orsted with a loathsome face.

Orsted's face can't be seen with the black helmet on, but he probably has that angry look as usual.

"However, Perugius-sama, is it a must to fight?"

"Ho! A must to fight, huh! I see, this is why your speech has such confidence in it!"

"Who knows, but, there is no reason to fight.....Sylphy."

I told Sylphy to get up and showed the baby held within her breast.

"Please look at it. This is my 4th child."

"......What about it?"

"Everything about it. Did you not speak of it before? To bring the child here if a son is born to Sylphy and me."

Perugius' movements come to a halt.

The tapping of the finger came to a halt.

I don't care, I'll continue.

"Even Orsted-sama has seen him, but this child isn't Laplace.

Nevertheless, you won't accept it until you have seen him personally.

As for me, I thought whether it would be fine to show him or not but, for the sake of Perugius-sama's friendship in the future, I judged that it would be better to let that thought pass for now."

"......"

Perugius kept his silence.

"However, if Orsted-sama had mistaken his judgment and this child turns out to Laplace, then...."

"......"

"I will fight."

Perugius's eyebrows twitched.

"Weren't you visiting various places for the sake of fighting Laplace 80 years from now?"

"That's right."

"So you will fight in order to protect that Laplace?"

It's contradictory if you say it now.

If this child is Laplace, then I will protect him.

All of the things I've done up till now will completely be in vain.

"After this child matures and if he really causes a war against the Human Race, at that time.....I will take it upon myself to deal with the preparations for the sake of that time."

"Intending to nip the bud, is it?"

"......Yes."

If my son is Laplace.

I think I didn't give it too much thought despite thinking of it as a very scary thing.

Laplace will wage war 80 years from now.

For that reason, I went to each nation to appeal to them so that the burden on Orsted becomes lighter as much as possible.

But wait.

What if I can stop that war?

What happens if I recover Laplace's consciousness and stop the war?

The child has only just born; there is plenty of time for persuasion.

That is to say, we can carry out training for the sake of the future.

If we teach Laplace everything so far and everything from now on, he could be treated as Orsted's comrade.....

No.

Orsted said this.

That Laplace must be killed.

It's probably for the sake of obtaining the Dragon Treasure.

Which means, Orsted will eventually come for my son's life, and that means.....

.....Shit, aren't all the doors blocked then?

No, calm down.

I should be able to see what I want to do if I think in order.

"I will always stand beside my family. I became Orsted-sama's subordinate because there was a person who hurt my family. If even that Orsted-sama will hurt my family, then I will fight him."

"Even if your son becomes the cause for that?"

".....I intend to properly teach him how to judge good and evil.

The kids are still small, but at least until they become adults.....until they become 15 years old, I'll protect them.

Afterwards, if he still disregards my words..... at that time, I will take responsibility and deal it with myself."

"Hou, deal with it, huh, how will you 'deal' with it specifically?"

"......Re-educate him as much as I can."

As much as I can.

Not being able to do the duty even though they're kids.

No....

"You won't say that you'll.....kill him?"

"Given that no matter what kind of life he lives, if he makes a mistake, then I want to give him a chance to start over."

I can't say it like that.

I don't want to say any further than this.

I don't even want to think about the future where Lucy, Lara, and Arus oppose Orsted and are killed in cold blood.

But no matter how splendid the training I give them, if the case is no good, then it's no good.

A person can't be raised as one would expect them to be.

Given that even I wasn't raised as I expected.

Even though he's a child, it's impossible to raise him as a different individual would expect.

That's why I think, I should at least give him a chance.

It's about finding common ground.

"I don't have a child of my own. That is why I cannot understand that way of thinking. It's like your way of thinking is 'You reap what you sow'."

Perugius laughed while saying that.

"However, in order to protect your wives, you became a foolish person who recklessly challenged Orsted to a fight. It's obvious I can't understand. I can't understand, but.....I understand that you have strong faith."

Perugius descends from his throne and slowly walks towards us.

And then said.

A shocking brief comment.

"I can't understand what kind of misunderstanding you have, but I already knew that the child wasn't Laplace."

It was until after 5 seconds that we understood his words.

".....Ah, is that so?"

"Arumafi is my eyes.

I shouldn't be able to mistake him for Laplace.

The eye color is different. Even his magic capacity isn't much impressive.

And even that annoying curse isn't there.....a curse that can shake the innermost depths of one's heart."

Which means since the moment of the childbirth scene, he already knew that my child wasn't Laplace, is that it?

"In other words, this isn't related at all, but did Arumanfi trespass during the private childbirth scene?"

"I give my apology for that matter. It seems he was unexpectedly summoned during the worst timing. Although if your child had turned out to be Laplace, it would have been either the best timing or a fine ordeal."

Ehhhh.

Say that first if it's so.

What's with that?

Ehhhh.

"Let me see."

Perugius stopped before Sylphy.

And extended both of his hands towards her.

"Let me hold that baby as well."

"....."

Sylphy hugged Sieg close to her while being vigilant.

But when I put a hand on her shoulder, she thought a little bit and then handed Sieg over to Perugius.

Perugius held Sieg gently in his hands.

Firmly and gently using his hands as if handling a work of art.

Sieg looked long and hard at Pegius' face.

"Hrm.....green hair and slightly pointed ears. Eyes with a glint, but gives out an affectionate impression, a fine child."

"T-thank you very much."

On thanking, Perugius nodded with a 'yeah'.

"Alright, then let's bestow him with the name 『Saladin』."

".....Eh?"

Sylphy looked at Perugius with a blank face.

"What are you so befuddled about? Didn't you promise before? That if a son is born, I'll name him."

Did we promise something like that?

No, but, I think like we did.

Certainly, I feel like I remember about him incidentally saying to bring him here.

"But, that, this child is....."

"No need for thanks, accept it as a modest gift from me."

Perugius said that arbitrarily, returned Sieg to Sylphy, and then turned back on his heel.

This child has been pretty much named Sieghart, which is a very fine name.

What to do?

I can't reject it now.

Well it's fine.

Sieghart Saladin Greyrat.

The name doesn't sound so poor; it feels powerful.

Speaking of the name given by Perugius should be prestigious.

Yup, it's not poor.

I thought it wasn't bad when I said it.

"Well then, let's move on to the main subject."

Perugius said while heavily sitting down on the throne.

Main subject?

What was the main subject?

Ah, that's right.

Perugius's business was not related to my child – then that means...

A different errand came up, so he summoned me.

"Rudeus Greyrat."

He's looking down on me with a completely different severe gaze than before.

What is it?

What did I do now?

"You bastard, you joined an alliance with Atofe, didn't you?"

Ah.

That....

Perugius and Atofe are on bad terms.

It would have been better if I had sent a word to Perugius before calling out to Atofe.....

"In spite of the war against Laplace, you went ahead and called out to her first.....why didn't you call out to me?"

"That is, because....."

"But it's fine. Listening to your faith just now made me feel gratified. I'll ignore it. From the start, I intended to fight against Laplace by myself."

Is that fine?

"Therefore, there's just one thing for you to do."

Perugius jerked his chin and a girl came out before us.

A girl around the age of 16 years old is wearing a white mask.

A girl who remained young, and before we noticed, was even younger than even me and Sylphy.

Nanahoshi Shizuka

She, who was nonchalantly blended within the 12 subordinates, came out before us and removed her mask.

And said with a meek face.

"The magic circle for my repatriation has been completed."

"I see, finally."

The answer that came from the back was from Orsted.

Nanahoshi tightly grasped her fist in front of her bosom after seeing Orsted.

"Yes. Orsted. Finally.....though it's still not perfect yet."

"So you did it."

Orsted's words were warm.

Those were familiar words, but for this reason only, Orsted congratulated her from the bottom of his heart.

"Yes.....Yes!"

Nanahoshi's voice was getting excited.

She looked up and stopped her warped face, which was just about to overflow from tears.

Even I felt like crying.

Repatriation Teleportation Magic Circle.

The thing Nanahoshi was craving for.

It's been 10 odd years since she's been in this world; she has been living up till now for this moment only.

She only aimed to go back to her home as she overlooked her violent homesickness.

From a concept to hypothesis and from dismissal to conception again.

And then putting the technique into practice after the theory is completed and repeating the experiment over and over again.

It's been almost 5 years since she came to Perugius's place in pursuit of knowledge.

It's a long time.

And thus it has finally completed.

"Rudeus. You might have hated being summoned because you've been busy, right?"

"No."

So I was summoned because of Nanahoshi.

I've certainly been busy these days, but.....there's nothing to hate about it.

I would rather apologize for not being able to help you out up till now.

"Congratulations about your child."

"Thank you very much."

"I was somewhat surprised.....you've properly thought things through....."

Properly....huh?

I wonder about that.

It's about me, so I can't help but think that I can't arrive at a conclusion.

"We need a fairly large magical power for the final experiment. You should be busy with a lot of things, but please lend me your power."

Nanahoshi bowed her head while saying that.

Those eyes had power.

The final step.

With a face as if she's seen the goal.

"Of course."

"It might take 1 or 2 months, are you all right with that?"

".....It's fine."

A month, huh.

I have a motive to refuse, but there's no reason to refuse.

I want to say that I want her to wait until we defeat Gisu, but I don't want to put it in words that she's an unpleasant person.

"Thank you very much."

Nanahoshi again bowed while saying that.

And then suddenly looked in Sylphy's direction.

She's still wearing the anxious face.

Nanahoshi ran towards her and whispered something into her ears.

Sylphy was shook up with a start, and looked at Nanahoshi with a surprised face.

Nanahoshi nodded, and Sylphy who was giving glances towards me also nodded.

"Well then, let's move to the Magic Circle after this."

I don't know what she talked about, but Nanahoshi declared this.

The audience was over.

After that, I gave Perugius one more greeting and left the audience room.

It had been decided that I will go towards Nanahoshi's lab in order to listen to her difficult explanation.

"....."

When we were walking through the corridor, I was suddenly caught by the hem of my clothes from behind.

It was Sylphy.

She was looking down as usual and murmured "Rudi" with a faint voice.

I silently gave the signal to the others to move along with my eyes.

I stopped and everybody went away; now with just the two of us, I turned around and put a hand on her shoulder.

I gently hugged her slender body so as not to crush Sieg.

"Rudi.....sorry, for things. I became slightly anxious. After looking at the green hair, I recalled the old days and pondered what to do after this. I was thinking that maybe this child won't be blessed by others....."

"It can't be helped. Anyone would become anxious. Even I forgot about thinking up a name for him."

"Yeah.....In addition to this, you were constantly going on trips with Roxy and Eris recently, right? That's why I thought 'Will I have to protect this child alone'....."

"There is no need for that!"

When I forcefully denied it, Sylphy was surprised for a moment, but then became shy while laughing.

"Yeah. I know. I knew. Sorry."

"Ah, no, it's fine even if you don't apologize....."

"I just became a little weak."

Sylphy gently stroked Sieg's hair.

Sieg had been sleeping for a while now. I wonder when he slept.

"But it's alright now. For some reason, I was relieved after watching you just now. You said that you will seriously protect them."

Was there a relief factor somewhere within the me a few minutes ago?

It was a grand fruitless effort after all; I declared that I intended to train a kid even if it was impossible. I think it was the figure of a fool who gave out a halfhearted answer....

Anyhow, Sylphy was feeling clear-headed.

"Um.....Sylphiette-san."

"What is it, Rudeus-san?"

"Is it alright to get angry at me because I forgot about the naming of our child?"

"Eeeh.....but I'm not really angryyy.....if I were to name something, anxiety or despair would be more appropriate.

Sylphy said while scratching behind her ear.

That face wasn't gloomy anymore.

What she's saying was awfully stirring my heart, but at least it's the usual Sylphy.

".....Ah, I see, it would had been better if I had gotten angry. Let's see, I'll get angry next time. It's no good if you forget about me and our child!"

"Understood."

I was scolded with a 'No!'

At any rate, looks like it's fine now.

Work and children.

It's difficult to manage both at the same time.

If the situation calms down a little after the matter with Gisu gets settled, then I want to look after the kids a bit more.

"Well, should we go then? You have to help out Nanahoshi too."

"Ah.....now that you mention it, what did she tell you in the end?"

"It's a secret."

Sylphy laughed shyly.

I returned a smile, caught up to everyone, and started walking.

Along with Sylphy.

Flying fortress, basement level 15.

Descending the stairs, one immediately comes into a wide entrance hall.

There, that magic circle is set up.

Teleportation magic circle.

However, its form bears no resemblance to the ones in my memory.

Furthermore, it is wonderfully enormous.

It's around 50 meters in diameter, and 1 meter tall.

It is composed of 1-meter-square lithographs, each 10cm tall.

They are stacked 10 high, and those stacks are repeated in 50 rows and columns.

In addition, above it spans a gigantic arch.

The interior of the arch is carved with closely-packed designs, so it is also probably part of the magic circle.

An extremely three-dimensional magic circle.

No, maybe it should be called a magic device.

"Wow... this'll make Cliff feel bitter."

Zanoba let out a voice of admiration.

The magic device is not only large, but also delicately and precisely carved.

At the very least, me and Zanoba aren't able to make anything like it.

It's probably too difficult even for Roxy, who has been researching magic circles recently.

Maybe Cliff... but even Cliff doesn't have this much experience drawing magic circles.

"It's magnificent craftsmanship."

Perugius threw out his chest as if it were his own achievement.

However, I can understand that feeling.

For one's disciple to have created such a device, it's only natural for the one who taught her teleportation magic to feel proud.

Although I'm sure Perugius himself was involved in its construction.

"How is it, Orsted?"

"For it to be something of this magnitude... I'm astonished."

Even Orsted was admiring the magic device.

Using 25000 lithographs, a three-dimensional magic circle.

Even Orsted has never seen anything like it.

Even the Mad Dragon King's automata had at most 50 parts, and the parts themselves were much smaller in size.

Nanahoshi probably combined magic circles with absolutely no thought given to how large it grows.

"Right? Look at that arch."

"Is that also a part of it? It doesn't seem to be attached, though."

"No, it's something else. That's a device for confirming whether it succeeded. You are aware that teleportation leaves traces of mana behind, right?"

"Yeah."

"That changes depending on the type of the teleportation magic circle. By measuring it, we can determine whether the parallel-world teleportation was a success or not."

"... Is such a thing possible?"

"Fufufu, I never thought the day would come when I could teach something to you, who holds such extensive knowledge."

"..... No, that's not true, I've learned a lot of things from you... a lot of things."

"Hn. How pretentious. Even though you acted as if you knew everything from the moment we met."

Perugius and Orsted were having a friendly conversation.

To the Perugius who was proud at having outwitted Orsted, Orsted's voice held hints of nostalgia.

It was also slightly bitter.

"Rudeus."

Nanahoshi turned around, and came over to me.

"To start with, let's send over something simple. After that, by analyzing the teleportation magic circle's characteristic mana remnants, the monitoring magic circle will adjust the magic circle for parallel-world teleportation. After that succeeds, we'll send over a living thing, and finally myself. Is that good?"

"It's good, but please excuse me from another teleportation disaster."

"Don't worry. There's no need to worry about that."

Nanahoshi repeatedly said not to worry.

That actually makes me worry more.

For the record, she did give me a detailed report earlier, but it has way too much information, and I haven't finished scanning it yet.

However, Nanahoshi has performed numerous experiments to ensure that she doesn't cause a teleportation incident.

Me and Sylphy helped with that as well.

"Are you confident?"

"I am."

Then, I'll believe in you.

You seem to be confident enough.

"Well then, shall we begin?"

"Yes. Then, starting with an apple..."

Nanahoshi probably prepared one ahead of time.

From the basket that was left in the corner of the room, she produced an apple.

Holding the apple, she climbed onto the magic device, trotted to its center, and placed it there.

"Perugius-sama, if you will."

"Uh huh."

Perugius moved to the opposite end of the magic circle.

No, not just Perugius.

His servants moved one by one into evenly-spaced intervals around the magic circle.

Only Sylvaril moved instead to the base of the arch.

"Rudeus goes over here."

At Nanahoshi's instruction, I stood opposite to Perugius.

Right there were two hand-shaped marks that all but said "Place hands here."

"At my signal, insert mana into there. As much as you possibly can."

"Roger that."

As told, I put my hands down.

It's kind of exciting.

I turn my head and look over to Sylphy.

She was staring blankly at the magic circle while whispering with Zanoba.

They also took the bait, so they must be interested.

Eris wasn't taking part in the conversation.

She was in her usual pose, looking up at the arch with a seemingly proud expression.

She probably simply likes big things.

The Orsted who's sluggishly standing behind her is...

"Perugius-sama! Please begin!"

"Yeah."

Whoops, I need to concentrate.

Even though I said concentrate, I just need to pour in mana.

In any case, just concentrate.

"... We're starting."

Perugius and his servants simultaneously touched the magic circle.

In the next instant, the edge of the magic circle faintly gave off light.

However, it was only near the edge.

The tiny magic circles around the edge are strongly shining, but the center remains dark.

A failure?

"Rudeus."

"Yes."

As told, I send mana through both hands.

The next instant. My right hand felt as if it was sticking to the magic circle.

I could tell that my mana was being sucked out with frightening vigor.

For some reason it's only my right hand; mana is being sucked from my left hand as well, but it's weak compared to the right hand.

Should it be strong in the left hand, too?

The moment I thought that, the amount being sucked from my left hand explosively increased.

In exchange, the amount being drawn from my right hand diminished.

Right, left, right, left.

The strength at which mana was being drawn out alternated.

Feeling it carefully, the strength at the fingertips and palm differed slightly.

However, rather than mechanical, I could feel as if it were being manually controlled.

The one who is controlling it... is Perugius, huh?

I can't see his face, but it seems like his job wasn't just starting up the magic circle.

And then, the ones assisting him are his servants.

It's not automatic once started, but needs to be managed; it's correct to call it a magic device.

The radiance of the magic circle increased.

While changing color from blue, to green, to white, the room was filled with an overwhelming brightness.

It's already too bright to see anything.

Is this the intensity of the magic circle?

I've never seen a magic circle this bright.

No.

I've seen it once before.

That was, during the teleportation incident...

Patsu——

{ C-Editor's note: Patsu - not a real word but a sound effect. }

A sound rang out, and the light disappeared.

No, it didn't disappear completely.

The arch.

Only the arch's light continued to faintly illuminate the surroundings.

And then, directly beneath the arch.

The very center of the magic circle.

The place where the apple was.

Where the apple used to be.

In that place, something bluish-white was remaining.

A bluish-white, particulate something.

The particles lightly floated into the surroundings and slowly disappeared.

"The experiment was a success."

"..."

Nobody answered Sylvaril's words.

Without waiting for a response, she filled something in on a nearby piece of paper.

"From here, we will analyze the mana traces and increase the certainty of parallel-world teleportation. However, the data for that analysis is already gathered, so it will not take much time."

While listening to Nanahoshi's explanation, I removed my hands from the magic circle.

"Rudeus, are you okay?"

When she asked me, I thought back to the mana from earlier.

Only one time. With just one or two activations, the mana drain was that much.

If I were to do that repeatedly, it would certainly suck me dry.

"I'm okay, but doing that repeatedly would be impossible."

"I see... Thank you for your work. I pretty much intend to go at a pace of once every 1 or 2 days. Go rest for today."

Nanahoshi said that and bowed her head, then ran over in Perugius's direction.

While discussing this and that with the research team, she was jotting down notes.

She'll probably consolidate the reports for this experiment and make use of them for the next one.

The parallel-world teleportation system itself is complete.

All that's left is to put the finishing touches on that arch, and while analyzing the mana traces and observations, change the teleported objects to be progressively more Nanahoshi-like.

That will take around one more month.

It's troubling to take that much time while Gisu is moving in the background... but there's no helping it.

This is the result of failing to make Perugius a comrade.

Since the experiment started, two weeks have passed.

While I went back and forth between my house and the flying fortress, the experiments continued.

The experiments use up quite a bit of mana.

It's questionable if that much mana can be recovered in a single day.

For the sake of the experiment, I decided that even if someone attacked with this timing, I would try to use as little mana as possible.

Once I decided that, I immediately became bored.

No, it's not like I had nothing to do.

Talking with Zanoba about doll sales, talking with Roxy about improving the Magic Armor, using the lithographs to exchange information with my collaborators, talking with Orsted about our future plans without results, and such.

There aren't many free days.

However, compared to this past year and a half where I continuously traveled, it's pretty easy.

There are times when the mercenary corps branches or the doll sales offices contact me through the communication lithograph to make a decision, but in Sharia, there are many people that I can consult with, and I don't need to think of everything from the ground up.

Furthermore, travel doesn't take much time, so I can spend time with the children before going to bed.

I talk about the day's happenings to Zenith, who can read minds, talk about Cliff with Elinalise when she visits, help teach Lara to talk, watch over Lucy's studies, be made to cry by Arus.

Days with few worries.

I wonder if this is what it feels like to be an office worker who works every day of the year taking an extended vacation for the first time in a while.

I can somehow understand why Orsted hasn't left Sharia recently.

There are times when I wonder if this is okay, but humans need times to rest, and maybe I was in need of some relaxation.

If there was late night fun in bed it would be awesome, but the abstinent Rudeus needs to have patience until he accomplishes his goal.

Now then, after various things, a month has passed.

The experiments finished in the blink of an eye.

The experiments went very well.

As the experiments progressed, the objects sent to the parallel world changed from fruits to animals.

The animals used were larger and larger, and each time the magic circle was adjusted, over and over again.

Eventually a horse around three times larger than Nanahoshi was sent to the parallel world.

The results of the arch's measurements:

The horse was transferred to [a land between 10 meters and 30 meters above sea level in the parallel world].

That is the limit of our ability to measure from here.

There's no way to tell from the mana remains whether it flew to Japan or America.

When adapting the same world teleportation circle patterns to parallel world teleportation, all that can be determined is [whether it went to land or sea] and [the general altitude of the land].

However, by specifying dry land 10~30 meters above sea level, the chances of dying instantly upon teleportation is greatly lowered.

Although we say parallel world, there's no guarantee that it's the same parallel world that we know.

Of course, since we summoned things like PET bottles from there, the probability is high.

But there is no definitive proof.

It's possible that it's actually a different world that is very similar to the one we know.

Even if it is our old world, with vague constraints like land 10~30 meters above sea level, there's a high chance of being sent to a distant foreign country.

And then, there's the road home.

Although there's a good chance of making it to Japan if she teleports with a large amount of food and water, warm clothing, and something that can be exchanged for money... it'll be a rough trip.

However, even then she's going.

She's already resolved herself for whatever may happen.

All that's left is to send Nanahoshi herself.

Taking my mana levels into consideration, the main event will take place in three days.

Two days after the experiments concluded.

Nanahoshi came to my house.

"Before I go, I want to use the bath at your house."

Is what she said, but that's probably just an excuse.

"In that case, how about we have a farewell party?"

"No, there's no need for that."

While saying that, Nanahoshi entered the bathroom.

Right now, she's probably all alone in the bathroom.

I don't know what her true motives are.

Maybe she wants to renew her spirits before the event, or maybe she just wants to say goodbye.

Maybe she wants to spend a night with me to make memories of this world, in which case I should go barge into the bathroom... No, there's no way. It's just a delusion brought about by the abstinent Rudeus's overflowing sexual desire. If I actually did that, Sylphy would probably get mad.

Yesterday, it seems like she went around saying farewell to everyone she knows here in Sharia, so she's probably here for that.

For her last night in this world, she decided to come say farewell to my family.

In that case, what I can do is secretly ask Aisha and Lilia to prepare a more extravagant dinner than usual.

Mostly potatoes.

Norn seems to be coming home today, too, so while it may be meager, at least we can send her off warmly.

"Hey, wait!"

"I don't wanna~!"

While I was thinking that and helping Sylphy look after Sieg, Lucy came running into the living room.

Completely naked.

Like that, she jumped up into my lap.

"Papa, save me!"

What kind of event is this?

Being asked for help by a completely nude woman.

Since when has Lucy been such a devilish woman!?

Anyone who refuses isn't a man.

Leave it to me, whether it's a Dragon God or a Demon King, I'll send them flying!

"Rudeus!"

The one who appeared was a red-haired Demon God.

She's also topless.

That's no good, the abstinent Rudeus is weak to that. It hits my weak spot.

"Rudeus, catch Lucy for me. She hates baths. Even though earlier she said that she needs to take a bath since she was sweating during sword practice."

I caught Lucy.

Sorry, Lucy.

However, you need to take a bath after exercising.

"I don't wanna! Red-mama's violent!"

"Violent? Eris... Hitting me is one thing, but you shouldn't hit children."

"How rude, I don't hit her! I'm just a little... bad at washing hair."

So that's it. When I look at Lucy, she puffed out her cheeks and grumbled, "Yeah, when Red-mama washes my hair, stuff gets in my eyes and it hurts."

I see, so that's the reason.

I'm sorry, Eris.

Even you wouldn't hit children.

"Then, Lucy, why don't we help you learn to wash your own hair?"

"... Papa is... Okay."

Lucy began to say something, but held her tongue partway, and was taken back to the bathroom by Eris.

"I think she wanted to be washed by Rudy."

"...Yeah, you may be right."

But Nanahoshi is in the bathroom right now.

There's no way I can get in.

Ah.

Come to think of it, I didn't tell Nanahoshi, did I? That someone else may come in...

No, I think she already knew.

The custom of entering my house's bath with several people has been here since the house was first built.

After all this time, she probably won't complain about someone barging in.

After a little while, Roxy and Norn came home, and went into the bath with Lara.

Switching out with them, Nanahoshi, Eris, and Lucy came back while releasing steam.

Maybe because it was such a long bath, they were all red.

"Guess what, Papa? Nanahoshi-neechan taught me how to wash my hair!"

"Is that so? Thank you, Nanahoshi."

"You're welcome."

It seems Nanahoshi was taking care of Lucy.

She may have been talking with Eris in the bath, since there wasn't any dangerous atmosphere.

As expected, baths are great.

Naked socializing is the way to peace.

After me and Sylphy had a bath with Arus, it became dinnertime.

The menu is meat and vegetables and rice.

And then potatoes.

Potato chips and french fries.

Junk food.

Nanahoshi made herself inconspicuous at the edge of the dining table, but she helped herself to plenty of potatoes.

Even though when she makes it back home, she can have them as much as she wants.

Honestly, what a gluttonous potato woman.

"This food is pretty good."

She didn't eat only potatoes, but had rice as well.

"You can get rice in the flying fortress, right?"

"But I like the rice here more... I think."

"Is that so?"

This rice is a product of Sharia, Aisha rice.

How about we make the brand name 'beautiful maid'?

The under-20-year-old virgin maid('s gathered brawny men bulging with muscles) made it in a rice paddy that they made while dripping with sweat, my favorite masterpiece.

It was made to suit the tongues of the Japanese.

"This is the last time you'll eat this food... make sure to chew it properly when eating."

"Why did you suddenly take a motherly tone?"

After saying that, Nanahoshi continued to eat in silence for a while.

"..."

At some point, her gaze shifted from me to my family.

Lucy is happily talking about recent events, and Norn is listening to her enthusiastically.

Roxy is talking about this and that concerning magic circles with Sylphy.

Eris was feeding Lara, while Aisha did the same for Arus.

Lilia and Zenith are watching over that.

It's a lively scene that I wouldn't have been able to imagine long ago.

Nanahoshi was watching that scene attentively.

As expected, she misses her own home.

While I was thinking that, the meal ended.

After dinner, Nanahoshi kept the children company for a while.

Maybe thanks to the naked socializing, Lucy became attached to Nanahoshi, and when Arus is held by Nanahoshi, he buries his face in her chest with a broad smile.

Lara is the same as always, though...

"Nanahoshi, why don't you spend the night?"

In the end, because of Sylphy's words, Nanahoshi ended up staying over.

It seems like a natural course of events.

However, the guest bedroom was made into a nursery a long time ago.

Since there is no place for guests to stay, Sylphy ended up lending Nanahoshi her room.

That night, I talked with Nanahoshi.

In the house where everyone had fallen asleep.

In the living room, two people facing each other, illuminated by the moon shining through the window and the light of the fireplace, talked while slowly drinking alcohol.

It was just useless talk.

Stuff like Perugius's hobbies and how much Sylvaril admires Perugius.

Like how Orsted and Perugius have poor relations, but seem to recognize each other.

It was truly useless idle chatter.

"Rudeus, you're already a splendid adult."

While we were talking, Nanahoshi suddenly said that.

"Is that the case?"

"When I first met you, you were a small child like an elementary school student, and the next time you were like a middle school student. To be honest, there were times when I thought you were younger than me... However, recently you've been very adult-like. You got married, and had kids."

"It's not like getting married and having kids makes you an adult, though."

I honestly don't really understand this adulthood and childhood stuff.

There's no mistake that in my previous life, I was just a big child, though.

"That's true. However, recently you've seemed much more of an adult than me."

"Is that the case?"

"Yeah, you've been thinking about various things such as your children and family... In comparison, I haven't been... I haven't changed at all."

"That's not true."

Nanahoshi has changed a lot from how she used to be.

She used to not let anyone approach her.

The invincible Silent Seven Star-sama.

"If it was the you from long ago, you wouldn't have played with my children or anything like that."

"Is that really so... However, that was because of the time when you saved me. Until then, I had never thought to get involved with the people of this world."

"In the previous world, would you have taken care of children?"

"... Probably... No, I might have been a bit cruel, because of entrance exams. My tests were coming up, too."

Entrance exams and tests.

It's got a nostalgic ring.

"I wonder how many years have passed over there."

"Don't say unpleasant things."

"Oh, sorry."

Since she came here, roughly 15 years have passed.

If 15 years passed over there, she would be like Urashima Tarou.

{ C-Editor's note: Urashima Taro is the fisherman protagonist of a Japanese fairy tale who after spending several days at the Dragon Palace beneath the sea, returned home only to discover that 300 years had passed. }

It may be possible that as soon as she teleports, Nanahoshi ages 15 years, too.

"However, I somehow get the feeling that not that much time has passed."

"Why?"

With a drunk face, I told her my thoughts.

"Me and Nanahoshi were run over by a truck on the same day, right? However, I came here around 10 years before you. So the flow of time is probably different between here and there. That's why, you don't need to worry."

"Huh, is that s——"

Nanahoshi suddenly put on a thoughtful face.

"..... Wait a minute. What do you mean, we were run over by a truck on the same day?"

Ah.

"Does that mean that you were there?"

"Ummm, that is."

"Wait a minute, huh, wait..."

Nanahoshi put her finger on her forehead and shut her eyes as if trying to remember something.

She suddenly raised her face.

"The fatass from back then."

Ah, Aaaaah... What have I done...

It's because of the alcohol. Even though I was so careful.

Or rather, that's rude. What do you mean by fatass? Although I was certainly obese...

"Uwah, I see, so it's that person, Rudeus is that person...! Eeeh, you became this cool, Heeeeh...!"

Nanahoshi put her hand to her mouth and opened her eyes wide.

Not good, she's become excited.

I thought she'd be disgusted, but she somehow seems happy.

"Um, Nanahoshi=san... If possible, that is, I'd be thankful if you could keep it a secret from everybody."

{ C-Editor's note: The author writes 'Nanahoshi-san' in this line of text with an equal sign instead of a hyphen and writes using Katakana characters which are used for writing foreign-language words into Japanese; perhaps a subtle reminder to the readers that she is not of this world. }

"Why?"

"... If they find out, they may abandon me."

"I don't think they chose you because of your face, though..."

"Even so, there are things I'd like to keep a secret."

"... I guess so."

Nanahoshi dropped herself back onto the sofa.

So she understands. I thought she'd be obstinate and not cooperate with me, though.

"Since Rudeus is different from me; you're [reincarnated]."

"Yeah."

That's right, reincarnation.

I can't go back to how I was.

It's not like I intend to completely abandon everything from back then, but I don't intend to proactively go looking, either.

In addition, I think my past life is something to be ashamed of.

I do think that I am the way I am now only because of how hopeless I was back then, but shameful things are still shameful.

"I understand. I'll keep it to myself."

"... Please."

Then, I thought back to my previous life.

"Oh, that's right, I was forgetting something."

"What?"

"Since you already know my identity... well, not really, but I want you to deliver this to my home from my previous life."

Saying that, I laid an envelope out on the table.

In this slightly thick envelope, my feelings for my siblings from my previous life are enclosed.

It's been twenty-odd years since I came here.

A lot of things happened in that time.

Because of those things, I think I can proudly say I'm different from how I was back then.

I'll only say that I'm different, though; I absolutely won't say I've become admirable or anything...

Anyhow, an apology for that time, reminiscences, and my current circumstances are all crammed into there.

If, by chance, Nanahoshi is sent to Japan and not a single day has passed, they may wonder what the hell I'm saying...

But, that's fine.

It's like self-satisfaction.

"I understand."

As if it were important, Nanahoshi put it into her bag.

"I'll make sure it gets delivered."

"I'm counting on you."

The destination isn't necessarily Japan.

There's no guarantee that she can make it back to Japan after she teleports.

But even so, she nodded.

"Also, take this."

I handed over one more letter.

Compared to the last one, it's very thin.

"If several years have passed over there, and you have nobody to rely on, no home, and nowhere to go... This letter asks my siblings to, even if just for a little while, take care of you."

"...!"

The hands that Nanahoshi received the letter with were trembling.

"That's..."

"Well, I was a parasite over there, so they may not listen, but... Just in case."

"You were a parasite?"

"Yeah, I was a jobless good-for-nothing."

When she gets there and meets my siblings, it'll get known anyway.

"That's a little hard to believe..."

Nanahoshi said that and looked long and hard at my face.

I wonder if her saying that is proof that I've done my best.

If so, it makes me happy.

"However, if it comes to that, I'll use this thankfully."

As if it were important, Nanahoshi clutched it to her chest and bowed her head.

"Truly, for all you've done for me, thank you very much."

Nanahoshi returns tomorrow.

The experiments were perfect.

That magic circle is impeccable.

However, even so there is a tinge of anxiety in my heart.

The magic circle made with careful preparations and numerous experiments.

Nanahoshi is confident, and nobody thinks that it will fail.

However, there is a point to be concerned about.

There's only one remaining.

At the present, I don't intend to say that and make her anxious.

In the first place, Nanahoshi should already be aware of that.

However, she doesn't say it.

It may be she's already made arrangements for that.

"... Tomorrow, we're getting you home."

Therefore, that is all I said.

"Yes."

Nanahoshi nodded.

I get the feeling that some things can be accomplished as long as you have a strong will.

The day of Nanahoshi's return has finally come.

Only Perugius, his servants, and I were present at the teleportation magic circle.

Nanahoshi didn't want anyone else to see her off.

She's already gone around and said her farewells to everyone.

Our formation is the same as before.

I'm the mana supply, Perugius is the controller.

Nanahoshi is standing in the center of the magic circle.

She's standing there facing me, wearing a traveling outfit and carrying a large backpack.

The backpack was packed to deal with any conceivable situation.

Even though I say that, neither Nanahoshi or I have any experience traveling overseas in our previous world.

She should need identification and something to exchange for cash; also, we don't know if things like magic crystals or scrolls will be usable over there.

So we packed roughly what we thought was needed for a journey.

After that, it's up to her wisdom and courage to get her through.

"...."

Nanahoshi looked at me, I looked at her.

There's no need to say anything more.

We spoke enough yesterday.

Anything else is unnecessary.

"Rudeus! Preparations are complete!"

At Perugius' signal, I placed my hands on the teleportation apparatus.

Everything's proceeding as usual.

We've practiced this experiment many times already.

Although not all of the attempts were successful, any points of failure were identified and fixed.

At this point, Perugius and I are veterans.

Well, even if I call myself a veteran, all I really do is supply the mana.

"Everything's set."

"Nanahoshi, that's good!"

Nanahoshi faced Perugius and nodded.

"Yes, Perugius-sama, thank you for everything!"

"Formalities are unnecessary. Thanks to you, I have also learned many interesting things."

That's all there was to Perugius and Nanahoshi's farewell.

After that, they immediately went back to focusing on what they were doing.

Nanahoshi faced me, and Perugius signaled to one of his servants.

"Then, let's begin."

At Perugius' signal, the teleportation device started.

Everything is proceeding as usual.

Perugius and his servants placed their hands on the magic circle.

As I begin supplying magic power, the edges of the magic circle begin to faintly give off light.

My mana is being drained at a tremendous rate, but I'm already accustomed to that.

Then, reacting to my mana, the magic circle began to shine brightly.

First blue, then green, then white.

While the magic circle was giving off tremendous amounts of light, I was focused on properly supplying the mana.

Thanks to repeating the experiment so many times, I'm accustomed to the timing I need to allocate my mana.

Evenly, without waste, not too much, but not too little.

The magic circle, as usual, started emitting a black light...

Huh?

I don't think there's been a black coloring before.

Somehow, I have a bad feeling about this.

"Rudeus!"

Perugius shouted.

The black light's growing stronger.

I don't know whether I should continue or stop.

I'm not the one controlling the process; I don't know what to do.

"Perugius-sama! Instructions!"

"We need more power-!"

As instructed, I increased the amount of power pouring into the magic circle.

My legs are getting weak; even my vision is going hazy from using this much power.

Yet the black magic circle shows no sign of change.

But, I have a feeling like something's overflowing in my arm.

This is the first time I've felt this.

This might be dangerous.

Very dangerous; should I cut the power?

But, Perugius said we needed more magic power, I need to have faith-

-*crack*...!

Something burst.

Then, as if a breaker tripped, the magic circle lost its light.

All in a split second.

The light normally disappears slowly, but this time it happened in an instant.

Almost as if all the magic was suddenly absorbed by something.

"...."

We're still here.

The candlesticks in the corner of the room are still giving off light.

But the room is shrouded in silence, like a PC shutting down.

And, of course.

Needless to say.

Nanahoshi was still here.

Still standing in the center of the magic circle.

Everyone is dumbstruck.

I am too, the servants look as if they don't understand; a feeling of confusion has filled the room.

"... What happened!"

Perugius shouted.

"What did you do, Rudeus Greyrat!"

"Huh?"

Me?

"Why was the supply of magic cut halfway!"

Cut?

I didn't though.

"I was properly supplying mana."

"Then, why did that..."

The supply of magic was cut?

But I didn't reduce the amount of mana. Rather, I increased it.

Somehow it felt different.

No mana was being released from my hands?

But, I still feel the fatigue from using up an enormous amount of mana.

"If the mana supply was cut, the magic circle should have lost its light."

"That's right... there was definitely mana... but, the flow was interrupted... as if someone compromised the magic circle..."

Looking at the magic circle, it seems like part of it cracked.

Was there a bug somewhere and the device short-circuited?

No, give me a break.

It's not something that would suddenly break.

"Ugh..."

Perugius had his hand on his chin in a thoughtful expression.

Nanahoshi descended from the magic circle.

"...."

Nanahoshi was silent.

She lowered her backpack in silence, almost as if she was sleepwalking, and left the room.

Looking at Perugius...

He's still thinking.

Somehow, his servants also seem shaken up.

What to do...

I want to figure out the cause of failure, but...

No, I'll leave that to Perugius.

I went after Nanahoshi.

Nanahoshi was sitting on the bed in her room.

Her shoulders and head were drooping.

With her head down, I can't see her expression.

Judging from her posture, it seems like a mix between fatigue and resignation.

And, like me, at least a little shock from the failure.

"...."

It's time for an honest conversation.

I had a sneaking suspicion this would be a failure.

That's because of what my future self said.

He said [It fails at the very end.]

Although I don't know if this is the end, or there's more to come.

I never heard the specifics of the failure.

It's not something I would have understood.

I don't even know whether the experiment turned out differently.

Thinking back now, I should have asked for more details, but regrets won't help.

Moreover, my future self said I failed to support her.

I failed to support her, and then Nanahoshi...

Although my future self was vague, I have no doubt she met a sorrowful end.

In other words, that's now.

Here and now, Nanahoshi is depressed, I need to support her.

But, I don't know how to respond.

Failure can happen to anyone, it's no use worrying about, that's... normal.

Even my future self should have said something like that.

No, because my future self became such a hardened person, he might not have said anything at all.

In fact, he might have said something horrible and driven Nanahoshi away.

He was a considerably horrible person; he might have even said something like, [It's probably impossible to return anyway, just become my woman.] and attacked her.

... I'd like to know the failed example.

Well, I'll have to think for myself.

If my correct answer is a mistake, I'd really like to know what went wrong when I try to console Nanahoshi.

Umm...

I guess I'll start as always.

When Sylphy is like this, I'd sit down next to her. Then put my hand on her shoulder.

"Is this how you seduced those three?"

Nanahoshi raised her face and looked at me with damp eyes.

... yeah, that is kind of like making a move.

"Excuse me."

I returned the hand I was about to place on Nanahoshi's shoulder to my knee.

"Um, Nanahoshi-san. Can we talk?"

"Huh? I'm busy."

"Well, even so... being alone at a time like this, it might be better to talk things out, even if it isn't easy. Even if it doesn't solve the problem, we can work on that afterwards; getting your spirit back is more important."

The book Nanahoshi had open on her knee caught my eye.

Japanese was written on the page.

[The hypothesis failed at the final stage.]

That's what was written.

"It was good to hear that I would fail beforehand."

Nanahoshi traced her notes with her finger as she said that.

"If I failed without knowing that, I would have blamed some defect in the magic circle."

Nanahoshi looked up.

She doesn't look depressed.

I seem to have misunderstood the fatigue and resignation I saw earlier.

After all, Nanahoshi considered the possibility of failure.

Well, maybe she doesn't need my support then.

No, it's possible she's still depressed...

As I was thinking, Nanahoshi turned back to her notebook.

"Hey, do you remember my hypothesis?"

Hypothesis, hypothesis...

I have a feeling that I heard something about that.

Somehow, I felt like it was nonsensical.

I don't remember it very well.

"I'm sorry. I don't remember."

"...."

Nanahoshi's eyes were getting moist again.

I'm sorry.

"Well, then I'll give you the outline..."

Nanahoshi began her explanation.

That is to say, she just began reading out of her notebook.

"First of all, the Fedoa Region metastasis event (that summoned me) is not originally supposed to happen."

"Why would something that doesn't originally happen occur? When I heard about your future self, I thought someone from the future sent me to the past... no, more like [Placed in the past.]"

"Because a person who should not originally exist was placed in the past, history changed. The balance of the world's aggregate magic power was broken, causing an adjustment on the scale of the Fedoa Region disappearing to occur."

Ah, I remember hearing about this.

But at the time I had other things on my mind, so I don't remember much.

It's a nonsensical conversation, but...

She's become more energetic, she seems to be recovering from the shock.

No, it's too soon to say that.

She might just be distracted.

I should still keep her company.

"Do you understand?"

"Yeah."

Nanahoshi turned to another page in her notes.

This page was labeled [Who and Why].

"From here on is the main issue.

Someone in the future modified history and I was the outcome.

Allow me to explain why it's because of [The Future].

I was able to come to this conclusion because of Orsted.

He is sent from the [Past] and does a loop in the [Present].

In the present, Orsted can't really intervene, and his loop is the strongest existence until he wins."

Orsted's father, the first Dragon God sent him.

The first generation Dragon God used a secret technique to send Orsted into a fixed-interval time loop.

According to Orsted, he can only escape the loop by defeating Hitogami.

Until now, he hasn't been able to, but sooner or later he should succeed.

He's definitely strong enough.

"I think the fact that we were sent here is related to the fight between the Dragon God and Human God."

"Why is that?"

"Immediately after I was transferred, the first person I met was Orsted. Afterwards I met you, and greatly changed Orsted's fate. We intervened in Orsted's loop."

Orsted loops in order to defeat Hitogami.

I don't know what will happen after he wins.

But, to defeat him, the past might have to somehow be altered.

Nanahoshi and I might have been placed here as some sort of strategic move...

But who would do that?

It's Orsted.

He loops when he loses.

In other words, it's possible that future Orsted brought us here.

"But, it can't be Orsted. He's not capable of that."

Yeah.

Because, even without modifying the past, Orsted would eventually win.

Even if Orsted could alter the past, rather than interfering with his loop, it would make more sense to change events before that.

Like preventing Laplace from being divided during the second Human-Demon Great War.

Alternatively, there's the possibility that future Orsted has already intervened in his past loops...

I have no idea.

"It's not possible for Hitogami either. Hitogami was supposed to win in this loop... even Orsted said as much."

Orsted wasn't aware of Gisu's existence.

Therefore, he was supposed to win a little later.

Like tripping over a small stone, it's completely unexpected.

In this loop, without us, Hitogami would definitely win. That's why there would be no reason for Hitogami to change the past.

"Then, who, for what reason?"

"That is the main subject. Though this is only a hypothesis..."

Nanahoshi lightly tapped a name written in her notebook.

Written there, the name [Shinohara Akihito].

And, directly beneath it was written [Kuroki Seiji], with an X through it and [Rudeus Greyrat] written to its side.

"Yesterday, you told me who you were, remember? At that time, Aki and I... Shinohara Akihito was hugging me, and you had pushed Kuroki Seiji to safety. In other words, it's unlikely he was teleported."

"Three people were run over by the truck that day. Of them, two have been transported to this place. But, the remaining person, has not."

"And, you were transferred here a decade earlier than I was...

In other words, it's likely three people were teleported that day, to different times."

Although I've been reincarnated...

Well, it's not that different.

"It's too coincidental that you were transferred, and then I was.

So, it would make sense if Shinohara Akihito was transferred to the future.

And, Shinohara Akihito met Orsted.

This is the first time this has happened in Orsted's loops.

Future Orsted befriended Shinohara Akihito and, realizing he couldn't beat Hitogami... moved to secure victory."

So someone from the future modified the past...

"... Then, that led to the Fedoa Region's disappearance? That guy, Shinohara Akihito, came up with a method to modify the past?"

"It's not something he could do himself. However, just like we've met many people here, he must have met various people as well.

That's how, he must have found someone with the power to alter the past..."

A miko.

That word suddenly flashed across my mind.

Zanoba has superhuman strength,

The miko in Milis can read memories just by looking into her target's eyes.

It wouldn't be strange if there's a miko with the power to alter the past.

"Has Orsted mentioned someone like that?"

"He did. [A miko who can rewind an object's time.]"

Rewinding an object's time... huh?

That's a little different from what I thought.

Although it's not what I expected, the miko's power is undoubtedly related to time.

"However, the miko has an incredibly weak fate, and dies quickly as a result..."

"And Shinohara Akihito saved the miko."

Everything is clicking into place.

Shinohara Akihito met the miko.

In addition he met Orsted, and probably created a magic tool to amplify the miko's ability.

Nanahoshi and Perugius created this powerful teleportation device.

Cliff and Zanoba created the magic armor.

It's the same thing.

Then, using that ability, he altered the past...

".... But, how is the teleportation's failure connected to this?"

"That's just it."

Nanahoshi turned to another page.

There, written across the top, [My future in case I can't return home.]

"I considered that. I was looking for Shinohara Akihito, and he was looking for me."

"... Ah."

"Well, it's only a hypothesis...

I am unable to return now because I am supposed to return with Shinohara Akihito in the future.

Or perhaps I can't return until some event comes to pass.

Or maybe both."

In other words, that's it.

I'll put it in order.

In the future.

For some reason, a man named Shinohara Akihito was summoned.

Shinohara collaborated with Orsted.

However, it was impossible to win against Hitogami in that state.

Upon investigating, he found the cause was in the past.

Therefore, by amplifying the miko's power, he modified the past.

.... Perhaps that's why I was summoned here.

That's why Hitogami saw that he would be killed by my descendants in the future.

So, the unknown person who was there with Orsted and my descendants was Shinohara Akihito.

However, there's a problem.

He had no way to return to his original world.

So Shinohara Akihito borrowed the miko's power again.

This time summoning Nanahoshi, who's dying to return home.

And because of that, she made the teleportation magic circle.

However, that might have been overdoing it.

So, the entire Fedoa Region ended up disappearing...

Thinking about it, I'm starting to get annoyed at this Shinohara Akihito guy.

If this hypothesis is correct, the entire Fedoa Region was annihilated because Shinohara Akihito was selfish.

Although it's only a hypothesis.

No...

I can't really blame him.

It's possible that Shinohara Akihito was out of other options; his only choice might have been modifying the past.

Doing something like that is dangerous; he may have chosen to modify the past in order to protect something important, even if it could cost him his life.

When I came to this world, my number of important things increased.

My wives, my children, my sisters.

In order to protect them, I became Orsted's subordinate.

Orsted turned out to be a surprisingly good guy, but I didn't know that at the time.

I was sure I would be ordered to do inhumane things.

And I'm sure I would have obeyed those orders, in order to protect my family.

We might be the same in that regard.

The only difference is what we consider important.

"I see... then, Nanahoshi. If you assume your hypothesis is correct, what are you going to do?"

"Well... until I play my part, it won't be possible for me to return home. I already finished the teleportation device. So there's nothing left for me to do."

Her role...

If Nanahoshi's role is completing the teleportation device, then I wonder what my role is.

Leading Orsted to victory?

Or maybe my purpose is to kill Gisu, when all of our enemies are gathered at one point... thinking about it, dealing with Gisu is my primary concern.

Hitogami may have others besides Gisu hiding.

"But, I'm unable to return. So there must be something else I have to do."

"Alright."

"If I think about it, my purpose here must be to send Shinohara Akihito back to our original world in the future."

"Yeah?"

"That's just it, isn't it? I made the device. But if he doesn't know how to use it, he can't return."

Well...

Yeah, even if there's a mana battery like me, it would be difficult to operate the device.

It seems unlikely that Perugius would still be alive.

But, this way of thinking, isn't it too much?

It should be fine to make a manual or something.

"Or perhaps [I'm already in the future.]"

Ah, that could be problematic.

If a time paradox occurs, it might not be possible to return.

If Nanahoshi returns now, future Nanahoshi won't exist.

If it's the future that's changing the past, then the future is the priority, so the magic device's operation might become ambiguous.

"But it might be impossible for me to survive another 80 years. Disease is always a risk."

As Nanahoshi said that, she looked towards a teacup in the corner of the room.

It's easy to forget, but Nanahoshi is already suffering from a chronic illness.

A parallel-world AIDS.

Presently, the symptoms are suppressed by routinely drinking tea made from Sokasu grass.

However, she doesn't know when she'll contract another disease.

Projecting 80 years into the future, her survival rate lowers.

"So what will you do?"

"Therefore..."

Nanahoshi began to answer.

Her solution.

"I'll request Perugius to stop my time."

One of Perugius's servants, Sukeakoto of Time.

It's possible to stop time for whomever he touches.

With that power, Nanahoshi can definitely survive.

For a long time, though it's unlikely to last the entire time.

Perugius won't be able to leave Sukeakoto idle when Laplace revives.

Laplace will revive in 80 years, 50 at the soonest.

And, if Orsted cannot reach Hitogami without defeating Laplace, then Mr. Shinohara will help him...

Nanahoshi will wake up at the perfect time.

"So, Rudeus. I have a request for you."

"... a request?"

I wonder what it is.

"You have to make sure Shinohara Akihito does not overlook my existence.

I'll leave this book to you, to help you set up more teleportation sites.

After that, even though it's taboo, I want you to announce the existence of teleportation magic circles to the world and help advance its research."

"... Will that be necessary?"

"What if my hypothesis is incorrect? I mean, it would be strange if everything fit together just like that. 80% of it could be considered a delusion; there's no insurance. If my hypothesis is wrong, then 80 years later, I'll be able to return properly."

That hypothesis seems pretty reliable.

Even if it's slightly off, I feel like it's pretty much correct.

But that's just it.

It's not necessarily correct.

Even if Shinohara was transferred too, it's not limited to just that.

The reason Nanahoshi can't return might actually be due to a defect in the magic circle.

Although we think it's perfect now, there might be some obscure problem that can't be resolved without a breakthrough.

"Of course, I plan to check on the situation several times a year; things might turn out differently..."

The situation can change.

Her hypothesis isn't necessarily correct either.

And, I want to help Nanahoshi return home to the best of my abilities.

I, also have a reason.

I went through great pains to write the letter I entrusted to her.

"I understand."

I nodded.

Afterwards, we tried again.

Once again, after reviewing the magic device, we tried to send Nanahoshi home.

There was no problem with the magic circle.

Even after carefully examining it, there was no particular damage.

But, it was still impossible.

As if it was being obstructed by someone, the mana supply was insufficient.

Because I know it's not a problem on my end, unless Perugius is lying, it might really be interference from the future.

... Or it could be Hitogami's interference.

Thus, Nanahoshi's return ended in failure.

No, I shouldn't really say it's ended.

After the failure, Perugius announced Nanahoshi was put in chronostasis.

I thought Perugius might object, but he readily accepted.

After being asked to lend Sukeakoto of Time to put Nanahoshi to sleep, after seeing her inconsolable expression for a moment, he just muttered [Is that so] and consented.

They might have discussed it beforehand.

Regarding what would happen if it fails.

"Then, Rudeus. Perugius-sama, for everything that happens from here on out, thank you in advance."

That was the last thing Nanahoshi said before disappearing into her room.

From this point on, she'll only wake up when Sukeakoto of Time's magic is interrupted.

About once a month.

When I think about the fact that I've basically been estranged from Nanahoshi for the past few years, I don't really feel lonely.

It's almost like she's going somewhere far away.

I don't exactly feel lonely, but some other emotions are swirling about in my chest.

I wonder what this feeling is.

In any case, I don't feel very refreshed.

"Rudeus Greyrat."

While trying to sort out those feelings, I was about to leave the Sky Fortress, when Perugius called out to me.

"I hate the word 'fate'."

".... I'm not fond of it myself."

That's a bit abrupt.

I don't know why we're having such a talk now, but I agree.

I don't like the idea of dancing on someone's palms.

"The idea of the future determining the past is ridiculous. I won't accept something like that."

Perugius truly seemed to hate the idea, and looked towards the room Nanahoshi disappeared into.

"The very idea of it ridicules the past, and belittles the present. I won't accept it."

"Even though you say that so plainly, you readily lent your servant to Nanahoshi."

"Pfft."

Perugius let out a snort.

Then fixed his eyes on me with a severe look.

"I believe the magic circle was defective."

"...."

"Nanahoshi seems to have already given up, but I will not. While she is asleep, I will complete the magic circle. I swear it on my title of Dragon King."

Perugius seems motivated.

Although his eyes look a little dark, they seem to have a fire lit in them.

"But unfortunately, I cannot match your aggregate magic power. Rudeus Greyrat. Lend me your power."

".... I don't mind. However, Perugius-sama, why would you go that far for Nanahoshi?"

As I said that, Perugius' expression suddenly calmed.

I guess he doesn't know why himself, and he's just looking towards the future.

And, as if he suddenly had an idea, he raised his eyebrow.

"For the past, this is the future. It was the past just now. And now it's the future. I believe my pupil has made a foolish mistake, and want to correct it. Until Laplace's revival, this is just killing time."

A foolish mistake?

I guess, to Perugius, Nanahoshi's behavior might be like a child sulking in bed.

Even if it's useless right now, in the future something might change.

It's wishful thinking.

"... I understand. I'll cooperate."

"You have my thanks."

"Don't mind it."

It was a comfortable exchange, and I couldn't help but let out a little laugh.

Maybe, Nanahoshi might not return in my lifetime.

But if, for some reason, she isn't able to return, there are people who care for her.

Knowing that somehow makes me happy.

Just like that, Nanahoshi went to sleep.

Until the future.

I feel refreshed, my gloominess from before has lifted.

A strange feeling remained.

Perhaps, even without me, Nanahoshi can return in the future.

Since my future self had a sad expression, without hearing her hypothesis, he must have assumed she committed suicide after hearing from Perugius.

Well, whatever the case, that's one thing done.

Perugius is going to continue with the research, though Nanahoshi might also do something in the future...

Well what's done is done.

It's time to switch tracks.

Nanahoshi is capable of thinking for herself, and choosing her own path.

I also have things I have to do.

Alright.

The next place on the list is Sword God Gull Farion.

Let's go with Eris and two other people.

Simple is best.

Though I'm a little uneasy going without backup, I've heard that the Holy Land of Swords doesn't have many bright guys.

It's full of guys that have discussions with their fists.

But, before that, I need to report to Orsted.

Regarding Nanahoshi's decision.

Although he might have already heard her hypothesis...

Nevertheless, I have to report the outcome.

While thinking so, I headed towards Orsted's office on foot.

"Ah, Chairman Rudeus! Thank you for your hard work!"

When I entered the lobby, the receptionist girl bowed.

This child is energetic.

"The president is waiting for you in the back."

"Gotcha."

While replying, I entered the president's office.

After entering, I closed the door, took a stance with my feet shoulder width apart, and put my hands behind my back.

As always, I bowed to Orsted, who was sitting at his desk.

"There is a report."

"... Let's hear it."

"Nanahoshi's return failed. She believes the cause is in the future; Perugius lent her Sukeakoto of Time to sleep until then."

"I see."

Orsted slowly removed his helmet.

Then placed his hand on his temple and let out a long sigh.

"What did Perugius say?"

"That he believes the failure was caused by a defect in the magic circle, and that he will improve the magic circle in order to return Nanahoshi..."

"Is that it?"

"And that the past cannot be determined by the future."

"That's right. That sounds like something Perugius would say."

Orsted's voice somehow sounded more muffled in emotion than usual.

No, as usual, his voice is level and he has a sour look.

"You've heard about Nanahoshi's matter. What are you going to do?"

"For the time being, I'll gradually consider Nanahoshi's matter.

I think I should head to the Sword God, Gull Farion.

As usual, I would like to request the details."

"I see... I've already compiled information regarding Gull Farion."

Orsted retrieved a stack of papers from a cabinet.

Preparations are good this time.

I'd be fine just talking, but this is good too.

Shouldn't compiling these kinds of documents be my role?

No, it's too late for that.

"I shall gratefully accept this."

"Everything is written in this document. Avoid fighting Gull Farion."

"Yes."

"After that... hmm?"

Suddenly, Orsted shifted his line of sight.

I'm tempted to look as well.

There, stones are lined up in a row.

Although they look like tombstones, they're the communication lithographs I've installed in various locations.

At the bottom of each lithograph, the name of the installation location is written.

Asura Kingdom, Millis, Ouryuu Kingdom (doing well), the magic continent, the number has increased quite a bit.

This is less like a president's office and more like a server room.

Orsted's gaze was directed to a certain point.

One of the lithographs emitted a pale light.

That lithograph corresponded to the one in Atofe's fortress.

The letter was brief.

[Kishirika Kishirisu has been captured.]

Fort Necros, located in the Gaslow region of the Demon Continent.

Deep within the most impregnable fortress in the Demon Continent, within a dungeon seldom used was a prisoner.

"Grrrrrrrr..."

This prisoner had shackles around their hands, balls and chains around their legs, and was wearing pajamas with blue and white stripes. It was a miserable sight.

"Grrrrrrrrr..."

The growl resounding throughout the prison was originating from the depths of the prisoner's stomach.

One might say this sound of displeasure was proof the prisoner did not think of their present situation as comfortable.

Alternatively, the prisoner was just hungry.

"Out!"

Suddenly, the prison door was opened along with two daunting men clad completely in pitch-black armor entering.

They made the prisoner stand and took them outside the prison, the ball and chains making scraping sounds as they were dragged along.

Yet the prisoner showed no sign of heeding the balls and chains, apparently having a surprising amount of strength.

Being lead by the black knights, the criminal exited the prison.

Past a long corridor and up a passage of stairs, the prisoner had arrived at an audience hall.

"Hurry up!"

The prisoner had their back shoved as if receiving a verdict and staggered their way into a circular plaza surrounded by violet candlestands.

Raising their head, the prisoner saw a throne—the throne that the prisoner once sat upon that a Demon King now did.

"Atofe..."

The female Demon King was clad in pitch-black armor.

The moment the prisoner saw her, the prisoner's face dyed with anger.

"...What meaning is this?!"

The prisoner shouted from the bottom of her stomach.

Maybe due to there being nothing in her stomach, her voice left a strong echo.

"Hmph, I follow he is who stronger than me! Just like with Laplace and after, that's all!"

In response, the most feared Demon King on the Demon Continent glared at the criminal, almost becoming irritated.

"How wretched, Necros would roll over in his grave!"

"Father said that I should live however I want to!"

"That is simply because you listen not to what anyone speaks! He merely gave up because you can only live selfishly anyway!"

"I'm not an idiot!"

The Demon King roared.

But the criminal didn't care for her anger, only sneering with an aloof face.

"You are. You've always been a giant idiot and you even know that. You know that you bite at the bait right in front of your eyes without a thought in the world."

"I do not! Kalmann said I was clever! He said I had good memory!"

"Oh, but Atofe..."

The criminal made a declaration, a declaration to the Demon King using words that shouldn't have been said.

"It's naught but flattery."

The Demon King snapped.

She was hair-raisingly angry. The surrounding black knights clung onto her, but were promptly flung about.

But the black knights wouldn't succumb, grouping up and stopping the Demon King in her tracks.

The Demon King flailed her arm about while declaring the death sentence for the prisoner.

"You bitch! Die! I'll kill you! Die again!"

"Heh, heh! Try learning arithmetic or such if it is so irritable."

"Ugaaaahhh!"

The criminal further provoked the Demon King, who mustered all her strength and forced back the black knights.

"Lord Kishirika, please cease this! Please do not provoke Lord Atofe any further!"

"Shut up! This One followed you lot because you told This One you would feed This One something good and all This One gets is poor treatment! This One shan't feel better until This One has said at least that much!"

Yes, the criminal had fallen for a trap, deceived.

She had been lured by the words, "Miss, we'll give you something yummy, so come with us for a moment," by men who had stripped off their trademark black armor, and had fallen into a trap.

Yes, there was bait dangling right in front of her eyes, she followed along without a thought in the world, and she fell into a pitfall!

The promise had been broken; the criminal was given nothing delicious of the sort.

"In the first place, This One has yet to hear the reason why this one has been taken captive! What has This One done?! This One has done no...no...misdeed of the sort?"

Then, the criminal's hands began to fidget and rub together.

She had far too many misdeeds that came to mind.

Thinking about them, the criminal had the delusion that she had done nothing but bad things, her hands stained in wrongdoings.

It was natural for someone to be angry at her.

But the Demon King declared.

"Hmph! You haven't done anything bad!"

Her anger had settled in just a few seconds. Leaving aside if it were someone else, the Demon King knew there was little meaning in getting angry at this particular criminal.

"Then for what purpose?! Even you are not so spiteful a person to imprison This One over nothing! The times when you do this are the times when you're mistaken or when you've been deceived by someone..."

Then, the criminal had realized something.

"That must be it! You've been tricked by someone again!"

"You're wrong! I'm not being tricked!"

"All those deceived speak such! Very well! Tell This One everything about it! There's still time left before it is unrecoverable and This One shall help. So won't you take these manacles off...?"

The criminal presented her manacles in front of her.

The Demon King, in response, faced the fading day after tomorrow.

"Deception is done through conversation, but that isn't what we did. We fought—we fought each other. After the battle, I admitted defeat."

"You lie! As if someone who hates losing as much as you would admit defeat openly!"

"The man I lost to and recognize...is him!"

The Demon King pointed.

There...was a magician wearing a grey robe with an evil expression.

It was a lecherous face that looked like he had 3 women serving upon him.

Alternatively, it was also likely the man was just smiling with all his might.

"Y-You are...Rubens!"

"Close, but not quite."

"C-Certainly with the amount of mana you possess, even Atofe might..."

The criminal was overcome with terror.

She had met this magician just two times in the past.

The first time they had met, she had laughed at his disgusting amount of mana, and the second time, she had laughed at the magic power that could repel a Demon King.

There was no laughing the third time.

She couldn't laugh at the man who made Atofe submit and at the man who captured her.

"Heh heh..."

The magician laughed while quietly overlooking her.

"Truth is, there's something I want to give you, you see..."

"W-W-W-What is it, a requiem?"

"Heh heh heh, it's something much better."

The magician was brimming with joy and made a bright smile.

"Th-Th-This One will be tricked not! Humans always do such! They try to trick This One by using sweet words!"

The criminal offered resistance, but there was no escape.

Her voice was trembling and she was holding down her groin that was on verge of losing control while seeking refuge in a fluster.

"Let's see if you can still say that after seeing this."

The magician lowered the bag that was on his back and reached a hand inside.

What came out was a black box.

"Eek...!"

A small shriek leaked from the prisoner's throat.

A deep black box!

Just imagining what could be in such a black box thoroughly stoked the criminal's fears.

What in the world could be in it?

No matter what it is, it's a deep black box.

There was no doubt something inconceivably horrific was inside!

Because it's black!

"Once you take this, you'll want to do anything I say."

"Wh-What...!?"

He opened the box.

In there were rings the size of a fist, tighly packed inside.

The rings were yellow with a white something sticking to them like mold.

This eerie sight, dangerous color, and sweet aroma drifting from them caused the criminal's hair to stand on end.

"Wh-What are those...? What do you intend to do with them...?!"

"Heh heh, these, you see, are for this."

The magician picked one out by the hand and drew it near Kishirika's mouth.

Simultaneously, two black knights seized the criminal so that she couldn't move a muscle.

"Say 'ahh'."

"S-St... St... Stop iiiit!!!"

— Rudeus' POV —

Kishirika Kishirisu, the Great Empress of the Demon Realm, was crying while eating the donuts I brought.

"So such a wonderful thing existed in the world, these wonders...!"

They were donuts made with eggs and sugar procured from the Holy Country of Milis.

The producer: Aisha Greyrat.

A while back, she had heard from Nanahoshi that there was a food like this and had taught herself how to make them.

Our meals at home are made using plenty of oil, so gathering the ingredients was simple.

"This One knows not what to say...! Mayhaps This One was born to happen upon this flavor...!"

Kishirika had looked like she was in a bad mood when she arrived in the audience hall, but it looked long cured by now.

Must be the magic of donuts.

When were having the donuts sampled, Roxy had tried some too and the result was exceptional.

I'm not sure I've ever seen Roxy look so happy before.

I, at least, can't make her produce such a happy-looking expression.

No, I was the one who made the route to Milis to replenish stocks. Therefore, it could be said I was the cause of that happy expression.

Father-in-law, Mother-inlaw, I'm making Roxy very happy. With donuts that Aisha made.

Regardless, donuts have the magic power to render demons powerless.

"Oh..."

But that magic power was limited since the magic worked on a number of casts system.

Kishirika had finished eating 12 donuts and was making a sorrowful expression.

"Is there no more...?"

"There isn't."

"...If you were to give This One a second helping, This One would grant anything you desire."

"Those are the words I wanted to hear."

I spoke with a smile, and Kishirika made an expression of realization and tightly embraced her own body.

"Kh... So you're after This One's body... No matter how many delicious things you feed This One, This One's body is Badi's... But being allowed to eat such deliciousness... Kh!"

"I'm abstinent for the time being, so I'll pass."

"I see... Enduring it does not do wonders for one's body, you know?"

"Even if I were unable to endure it, I would ask my wives."

"Wives? Ohh, is that so. You were already married. Goodness gracious, humans grow so quick..."

Now then, for the issue at hand.

I came here today just to ask this.

Since Kishirika will reward whoever gives her food, I went out of the way to have donuts made.

"To start, I wish for you to find a man named Gisu using your power."

"Hoh, Gisu..."

"Yes, his characteristics are—"

I told Kishirika Gisu's detailed characteristics and what was thought to be his real name that was written in the letter.

"Hrmm, I feel like I've heard about this fellow somewhere... One moment."

Kishirika, her mouth still dirty, began moving her eyes around.

Her eyes were transforming like a clattering slot machine and suddenly stopped at a certain moment.

They were one of Kishirika's magic eyes, Clairvoyance.

She examined the air with them and began viewing somewhere else with a frown.

"Hoh... Hm... That... Oh, looks good..."

Kishirika mumbled, her gaze roaming.

And once again, at a certain timing, Kishirika came to a sudden halt.

"Found him."

It was in no time at all.

"The Kingdom of Bihaeril, the eastern tip of the northern lands. He is speaking with someone in a forest... Good gracious, such a villainous face..."

Kishirika bent even more forward while letting out an 'Ihihi' laughter.

"Now then, he is speaking to... Hm?"

Instantly, Kishirika's expression dimmed.

"I can't see anymore."

Kishirika made a serious expression, a complete change from a moment ago and she closed her eyes.

She faced toward the sky while keeping her eyes closed, as if resting them.

But after a short while, she slowly opened them.

"This feeling... That must be it. The one you are fighting against currently is Hitogami...isn't it?"

In a complete contrast to her usual self, she was giving off a quiet impression almost like a different person.

"That's right."

"To fight Hitogami means, in other words, you are follower to the Dragon God, are you not?"

"...Right."

"Hrrmmm..."

Kishirika folded her arms and tightened her jaw.

It was a forced thinking pose.

Several seconds later, she again looked up at the sky as if gazing at the moon.

Although currently it was noon, the weather was good; only clouds were passing by.

"And Atofe, you are following this man?"

"Yeah."

"Then...mayhaps this is divine will."

There wasn't a trace left of her usual playful atmosphere, almost like a sage.

I wonder how that happened.

Did the donuts go down the wrong pipe...?

"Lord Kishirika, you know of Hitogami?"

"Indeed. This One has history with him... Honestly, This One thought the connection was already gone."

"History you say?"

"Tis nothing much. A mere 4,200 years ago, This One was used—both This One and Badi, by Hitogami who wanted to kill Laplace."

4,200 years ago...?

Ah, around the Second Human-Demon War.

"If I recall, the Fighting God and Dragon God had fought."

"Indeed. Badi, clad in the Fighting God armor in order to protect me, fought with Laplace, the Demon Dragon King."

"Huh... His Majesty Badigadi had?"

I suppose the truth just revealed could be called shocking.

So the man behind the Fighting God was Badigadi...?

Orsted never told me anything like that.

"The Fighting God armor being lost is an old tale... However, best be cautious if Badigadi appears. Even now, a part of him feels indebted to that damn Hitogami. Mayhaps he will rally with the enemy."

"...Understood."

It's not that I want to fight with the cheerful Demon King.

But him becoming an enemy is something I need to keep in mind...

If possible, I want him to have long forgotten this debt and become my ally.

"Well, for someone who has turned Atofe ally, This One believes you should be able to deal with the current Badi, but please kill him not if you can help it."

Badigadi is Atofe's little brother and engaged to Kishirika. They're family.

Demons may be big-hearted, but I doubt they would sit back and be quiet over family being killed regardless of the circumstances.

"Very well. To begin with, I don't think I could kill him so simply, honestly."

"Indeed. Tenacity is the saving grace for immortal demons, so has it."

Kishirika said, glancing at Atofe.

Atofe was making a confident expression, but I think that it probably wasn't a compliment.

"Also...come just a bit closer."

Kishirika beckoned.

Lured by that, I approached her.

She had her hand close to her mouth, so it was likely a secret conversation.

"Move your face just a little closer."

"What is it—"

"Here, Sploosh."

Kishirika suddenly thrust her fingers into my left eye and I felt a sharp pain.

"Gighaaaahh!!"

I reflexively tried to escape to behind, but Kishirika had a hold on my hair and I couldn't.

I'm wearing the Mark II Magic Armor, so why can't I escape!?

It hurts, it hurts!

Oh, actually, it's probably best to...not run from this.

"Oh? You became docile."

I accepted Kishirika's action.

It did hurt, and was giving me a splitting headache.

I understood what she was doing by suddenly shoving in her finger and fiddling around.

It's the second time, after all.

"It's over."

Finally, Kishirika pulled out her fingers.

Pain still remained in the eye as well as a sense of blindness.

But I understood all too well that I didn't lose my eyesight.

"One gift in exchange for something delicious is This One's personal rule."

"..."

"This eye makes the second."

I was kneeling before Kishirika on one knee while holding the eye that was in pain.

"This One has no concern in this battle, but This One has just a slight history with Hitogami. This one is a freebie and farewell gift."

I took off my hand and my vision was doubled, and as if one eye had been left in the palm of my hand; it was seeing completely different scenery.

It made my head hurt.

"Clairvoyance. An eye only for seeing the distant, but This One is sure you'll find use of it."

Clairvoyance, huh?

I promptly closed my right eye and gathered mana in my left eye.

Adjusting the mana just like when using the Foresight Eye, I tried to see far away.

I was overlooking Fort Necros's entrance from the audience hall.

There, a black knight had his helmet off and was scratching the top of his head.

I moved my sight even more.

When I gathered mana, the sky soared through my vision.

Like a camera that can zoom in endlessly, I steadily kept soaring.

I could see a crater, and in the crater was a town, but I couldn't see the entirety of the town.

I put in more mana to view ever further, but stopped at a mountain.

I could view the fine details of the mountain rocks, and a Great King Land Tortoise yawning, but that was all.

When there's an obstacle in the path, my gaze will be obstructed there.

Ceasing the flow of mana, my sight returned to my original position.

All it can do is simply view far away.

I can't call it easy to use even in flattery, but it's by no means bad.

"This One is sure the you at present can even accustom yourself to using two magic eyes simultaneously."

"Thank you very much."

I expressed my gratitude to her in honesty.

"Indeed. Well then, Rudeus! If you find yourself troubled again, you may rely on This One! As long as it has naught to do with Hitogami, I will aid you!"

Kishirika took off her manacles and cut the chains attached to her legs with a chop.

Moreover, she ripped off her blue-striped pajamas, returning to her usual bondage outfit.

Then, she made a powerful jump.

"Farewell! This One—Bfh!?"

Kishirika landed face-first.

Because Atofe had a tight hold on her leg.

"Hold it."

"What is it? You even interrupted This One's outstandingly cool exit scene."

Kishirika glared at Atofe while blood poured out of her nose.

Atofe undauntedly looked down over Kishirika.

"Listen to my request."

"What is this? This One won't listen to the person who suddenly captured This One and tossed This One into a prison. Hands off, shoo, shoo."

Kishirika wiped her nosebleed while shooing Atofe away with her other hand.

But, Atofe showed no mind to this and grabbed Kishirika by the collar.

The bondage outfit was stretched tight and the apex of Kishirika's small breasts were exposed to all.

Oohh!

No, Rudeus the Abstinent won't be tempted by such a... Kh!

"Tell me where Earl and Alex are. Rudeus needs strong men, right? They should be able to prove their worth."

"Uhm, This One told Rudeus but a moment ago...moreover, This One even gave him a magic eye as a special service... Any more is out of the question."

Earl and Alex.

I wonder who they are.

I'm sure they'll have some use since Atofe is saying so, though...

"Tell me."

"This~ One~ doesn't~ wanna~"

But Kishirika wasn't listening.

Still, I learned Gisu's location.

I may not know what he's up to, but even if it's an unreasonable request, I want to increase my allies.

The more allies, the better.

Unreasonable...?

Ah, that's right.

I had this, didn't I?

I recalled the existence of the sinister skull ring on my finger—Randolph's ring.

"Miss Kishirika, Miss Kishirika. Please take a look at this."

"Oh? What's this? This One finds it familiar, but where..."

"It's 'Randolph's wish'."

"Hm... Oh, Randolph! This One has remembered! That is that fellow's ring!"

Kishirika's reaction was dramatic.

To be specific, her complexion went deathly pale.

"Yes, yes, his wish... Because This One has become indebted to him, because This One is extremely indebted to him... Why is that each time he aids This One, "You can just eventually repay me, eventually, kuhuhuhu," with that laugh... Each time This One sees that smile, This One trembles in fear over what he might request..."

"You'll be even with this."

"Truly?! For true! Then, but a moment!"

Kishirika again stared into the air.

The search time took only a few seconds.

What a handy search engine she is.

"Earl I cannot tell. I believe he is somewhere around Asura, but whether he is in an area with dense mana or using a Magic Eye Seal, it is blurred. Alex is walking upon a road... His course leads him to the Kingdom of Bihaeril."

Bighaeril again...

Is this coincidence?

Atofe nodded in approval over the part I was thinking about.

"I see, then just perfect. Rudeus, if you head to Bihaeril, search for a man named Alexander. He should be helpful."

"What kind of person is he?"

"He's Kalmann III, the North God!"

Ohh, Kalmann III the North God!

He's one of the people I had thought of calling out to if I found him.

So his name was Alexander? I was under the impression his name was Kalmann.

...Huh?

But wait, why is he going to Bihaeril?

Why to where Gisu is?

Is it coincidence...?

Sounds like a trap.

Yep, it's a trap.

"Alright, is that all? This One is going now, ok? No one will grab This One's legs, waist, or shoulders, right? Then, farewell! Fahahahaha! Fahahahahaha! Faha Faha Faahaahaa!"

While I was worried and Atofe was standing behind me with her arms folded, she left behind a Doppler effect and the loud laughter disappeared into the distance.

Was getting caught on purpose?

As ever, she's a person like the tempest.

Regardless, I've obtained Gisu's whereabouts and Clairvoyance.

I bid farewell to Atofe and returned to Sharia.

I've caught wind of where Gisu is, but at the same time, I also obtained information that North God Kalmann III, one of the Seven World Powers, is heading toward the same place.

All I have is a bad premonition about it.

Then, what to do?

Should I move to speak to the Sword God?

Would it be best to move out before Gisu can speak to Kalmann III, make Kalmann an ally, and quickly defeat him?

The latter is better for removing enemies and increasing allies, but if Gisu perceives my coming, he'll just run right away.

Since not running would mean he already has his fighting force in order, the former would be better.

Hmm...

I should still scout it out first.

In addition, I should prevent escape, arrange a force, and corner him with certainty.

It's a pity Kishirika had gone.

Were she here, I would have a more detailed account on the situation.

I suppose I couldn't just somehow keep that handy search engine around forever.

With these thoughts in mind, I had made it home.

"Oh, welcome back nya."

"You came back at the perfect time-nano."

There were two unusual people here, Rinia and Pursena.

They were sitting on my home's living room sofa as if they owned the place.

No, that's not actually accurate.

Sitting as if she owned the place was Eris.

Rinia and Pursena had their heads placed on Eris's lap and were being caressed behind their ears.

They were completely and utterly docile.

"Welcome back."

"Thank you."

Eris, upon seeing me, did not stop her hand and continued stroking.

"Boss, I have a report nya."

"And it's good news-nano!"

The two said while not getting up.

They were purring like they were extremely comfortable.

They've already been completely tamed, it seems.

"Here-nano."

Pursena, still lying down, passed me a piece of paper.

What an attitude...

I don't actually mind, though.

"A report came from the east nya. 'A demon with green hair that was the spitting image of the doll, with a jewel on his forehead—a Supard was sighted'... That's what's written on it nya."

"Oh, at last!"

I took the paper and read through it.

On it was written a concise report of the finding.

It looks like a certain country's trader had done business with a man.

Near him was a stick with a white handle wrapped in a cloth and he wore a metal-plated headband.

He was clad in a heavy robe and wore his hood low, but having gotten a glimpse under the robe due to a strong wind, the man was wearing something like a native dress identical to the dolls'.

Apparently he had bought medicine while trying to avoid attention.

They didn't know what kind of medicine he purchased, but his appearance resembled Ruijerd's.

"...What?"

Having read to the end, my eyes stopped on the final line.

'Location sighted: The Kingdom of Bihaeril, half a day west from the second largest town of Irell. A village near the Land Dragon Forest Valley.'

Bihaeril.

Hearing it three times in one day, even someone as dense as me will get it.

"So that's how it is..."

Gisu, North God Kalmann III, and Ruijerd.

It can't be a coincidence at this stage.

Something is definitely about to happen in the Kingdom of Bihaeril.

Or rather, Gisu is trying to make something happen.

Even this letter might be a trap laid by Gisu.

Maybe he will use Ruijerd as a shield, or just maybe even Ruijerd has been made an enemy.

It's too early to tell, but there is one thing I do know.

If there is a possibility that Ruijerd will be exposed to danger, even if Ruijerd is being used as bait to lure me in, then I have to go.

The preparatory phase is over.

The time for the decisive battle has come.

Mushoku Tensei: Isekai Ittara Honki Dasu - Volume 23

In order to defeat Gisu, Rudeus was able to win over the leaders of the various countries and one of the World Powers as his allies.

He was successfully able to tame The Great Empress of the Demon Realm Kishirika by feeding her and was now aware of Gisu's whereabouts.

Gisu was in Biheiril Kingdom!

However, North God Kalman the Third was there as well.

Should he win over North God as his ally first or should he give a call out to Sword God first?

Just when Rudeus was starting to waver, information from the Mercenary Group arrived that "Someone like Ruijerd was found."

The place he was found at was Biheiril Kingdom.

Thus, Rudeus decided to embark towards the Biheiril Kingdom where the three people namely 『Gisu』, 『North God Kalman the Third』 and 『Ruijerd』 were currently gathered.

The conference room in the Orsted offices.

There, I sat directly across from Orsted.

On both sides, Eris, Roxy, Sylphy, and Zanoba could be seen respectively.

Roxy was keeping the record of proceedings.

"——Is what happened."

I gave Orsted the report of the last sequence of findings all at once.

Gisu, North God Karlmann III.

When I told him that the two of them were discovered in the Kingdom of Biheiril, he was in a good mood.

It never came from his mouth, but he had an atmosphere as if he wanted to say "Good job!"

I also continued my report in high spirits.

"..."

However, as soon as I reported that Ruijerd has been discovered, that good mood disappeared.

To put it plainly, his expression clouded.

"... Ummm, is something wrong?"

He seems kind of mad, but kind of not.

Seeming like a negative aura was overflowing, he glared at me.

After all this time, just being glared at won't cause my legs to quake.

However, if I don't know the reason, I become a little anxious.

"... In the Kingdom of Biheiril, the Ogre God is also there."

Ogre God.

That reminds me, Ogre Island, where the Ogre God lives, is to the east of the Kingdom of Biheiril.

No, I didn't forget.

However, I need a confirmation.

"Didn't you say something about the Ogre God becoming an enemy easily?"

"The current generation Ogre God has been an apostle in a past loop."

I see.

Then, the chance that Gisu's location is a trap has increased.

Alternatively, Gisu's objective may be the Ogre God.

Even if we discuss that in the conference room, we won't understand. Not unless we go there directly.

However, we are currently in the conference room.

Let's focus on things that can be discussed in the conference room.

"I'd like to discuss our plans from now on, that included."

"Yeah."

"For the present, we have this many materials gathered, so I don't think putting it off and not going to the Kingdom of Biheiril is an option."

For the time being, I'll present my strategy.

"There is the chance that this is a trap by Gisu, or rather Hitogami. However, we don't know when we'll have another chance to catch Gisu, who keeps running about, so this could be seen as the perfect chance. I regret not being able to call out to the Sword God, but I think I should head to the Kingdom of Biheiril. Is this okay?"

"I have no objections."

In any event, immediately after hearing of Gisu's discovery, Atofe began moving on her own.

I didn't hear what route she'll be taking, but I'm certain it will be a while before she arrives.

One or two months, or possibly longer.

In order to meet up with her, as well as to tell the people there about her, going to the Kingdom of Biheiril is unavoidable.

"There are 4 things we need to do.

Find Gisu, and crush him.

Find North God Karlmann III, and persuade him.

Find Ruijerd, and persuade him.

Find the Ogre God, and either persuade or crush him.

In that order of priority... if that's okay with you? Orsted-sama."

"... Yeah."

Personally I'd like to meet Ruijerd before anything else, but even so the North God should be first.

As for the Ogre God, it would be easiest if Atofe ran into him when crossing the sea.

If I don't get in contact with her, that's probably what will happen.

Or rather, how should I go about contacting her?

I don't think there's any way other than the communication lithograph established at Fort Necross.

... Well, it may be better to put off thinking about that until Atofe arrives. Or rather, there may be no other option. Not having a means of emergency contact is pretty inconvenient.

"Furthermore, upon locating Gisu, if his gathered war potential is high, I'll call in for reinforcements for our side."

The enemy is in the Kingdom of Biheiril.

However, if after gathering our forces in Biheiril, it turned out that he had already escaped then I would look like the boy who cried wolf.

I'm sure it's something that happens from time to time, but trust in us will still lower.

"I don't think it'll be too late to call in reinforcements after Gisu has been discovered."

The enemy is there, and we're going to have a decisive battle.

It's better not to call in our allies until after that has been decided.

If we repeatedly discover Gisu, call in allies, let him run away, and disperse, and are unable to gather any allies when the time is right, it would be meaningless.

"For that sake, I think we should establish teleportation circles at each location for calling in reinforcements."

The Kingdom of Biheiril is a small country, but even so it has three large cities.

The capital Biheiril.

The second city Irel.

The third city Heilerul.

"In the vicinity of each of the three cities, I will set up teleportation circles."

I throw a glance at Roxy.

"The number of people who can accurately draw teleportation circles is limited, but I thought something like this might happen, and asked my great teacher to prepare a number of teleportation scrolls. Applause, please."

A thunderous applause began.

Confetti danced and fell on Roxy standing on stage.

Roxy held a mic while waving her hand to her fans from around the world gathered in the hall, and they fainted one after another.

In my mind, at least.

"Regardless of whether we do or don't discover Gisu, we'll cut off all his escape routes.

We'll send people to the neighboring countries and monitor the highways.

For this, we'll use the Rudo Mercenary Corps here in Sharia."

Rinia and Pursena.

Aisha will also move, I'm sure.

"Once the escape routes are closed off, we'll search for Gisu. As soon as he's found, we'll call in reinforcements and crush him in one go."

What's important is being certain the enemy is there.

After that, is to make sure the opponent doesn't run away before our forces are gathered.

Fortunately, Biheiril is enclosed by forests, mountains, and the sea, and doesn't have many neighboring countries.

It won't be that difficult to prevent him from escaping.

Of course, when Kishirika found Gisu with her magic eye, she sensed the presence of Hitogami.

In that case, the chances are high that she was detected by Hitogami in return.

There's a chance that he has already escaped.

According to Gisu's letter, if he was trying to make comrades then he would even be able to escape the forest.

Securing the surrounding countries is just for peace of mind.

"I see. Then who will establish the teleportation circles?"

"Let's split the work. The three of us will divide the locations between us."

"... Wouldn't that be a problem, though? After all, Rudi's the one being targeted."

"Yeah."

At Sylphy's words, I nodded.

Putting whether or not to believe it aside, Gisu's letter said that the one being targeted is me.

If I act independently, it's quite possible for me to fall into a trap.

The danger of each of us getting crushed separately also exists.

"However, thanks to Orsted-sama's bracelet, I can avoid Hitogami's surveillance.

Gisu and Hitogami can't sense me or Orsted-sama, or the people around him.

Nonetheless, this is Gisu we're talking about; he may be able to find me with anachronistic methods.

In other words, finding me with normal information-gathering methods.

That's why I'll disguise myself.

Before I'm discovered, I'll quickly establish the teleportation circles."

Regardless of whether or not it's a trap, I shouldn't show myself too quickly.

Thus, I'll use a disguise.

Even disguised, if I gather information to try and find Gisu, I'll be exposed sooner or later.

However, I'll be able to avoid a scenario where immediately after entering the country, I'm surrounded and destroyed.

If I'm lucky and go about it well, even if Gisu has placed a trap, I can still take the initiative.

If there's no trap, it means that Kishirika finding him with her magic eye was outside of both Gisu's and Hitogami's expectations.

In that event, Gisu will probably run away.

On the other hand, Gisu should have business that brought him to the Kingdom of Biheiril.

Until I arrive, he may try to finish his business up until the last minute.

By disguising myself to delay my discovery, I may be able to lengthen the amount of time before he runs away.

There's no reason not to.

"If Rudi wants to hide from Gisu, it may be best to have a diversion."

Roxy gave that proposal.

A diversion.

In other words, make him think that "I sensed a trap and decided not to go to Biheiril."

If the chum they scattered gathered fish, but they could only catch small fish and the one they were aiming for wasn't there, they may become confused.

"A diversion, huh? Any specific ideas?"

Roxy nodded.

"Yes. How about having one of us go to the Sword God?

Queen Ariel said she'll send reinforcements at any time.

Ghyslaine and Isolte should be included in that.

Those two are familiar with the Holy Land of the Sword, and won't turn against us or fall behind.

Even if the Sword God were to become an enemy, it won't be a problem if we gather information beforehand and return without making contact, and even if we can't get the Sword God, we could at least bring Sword King Nina with us."

Sword King Nina, huh?

The person I met in the Kingdom of Asura.

The one who Eris herself wanted to make a comrade, which is unusual for her.

She's no substitute for the Sword God, but if she's on par with Eris, she'll certainly be a battle asset.

If he's an enemy, then quickly return with just Nina. Putting aside whether we can do it, if both Ghyslaine and Isolte are there, I don't think anything is impossible.

"Ah, in that case I'll do it."

Sylphy raised her hand and said that.

Sylphy will go to the Sword God... well, she should be able to handle negotiations.

She's more or less acquainted with Ghyslaine, Isolte, and Nina, after all.

Furthermore, just the fact that Sylphy is going will act as a diversion.

Since the children have already been born, there shouldn't be much merit in killing my wives, but Hitogami is well aware of who I want to protect.

If my wives go different ways, my whereabouts become harder to discern.

However, there is one concern.

"... Isn't it dangerous?"

"Of course there is danger. However, we know Gisu's whereabouts, so I think the danger will be little."

That's certainly true.

Gisu won't want to have the people he had won over as comrades crushed one by one.

If Gisu is somewhere else, his allies should be there with him.

Or so I think, but those thoughts may have been read.

"I think Hitogami knows what is most important to Rudy. If we go, wouldn't it be successful as a diversion?"

Roxy said what I was just thinking as if to emphasize it.

But... Huh?

If you think about it that way, isn't my plan problematic?

Establish teleportation circles within the Kingdom of Biheiril, and gather my forces. However, moving from place to place should take half a day or more.

Isn't it possible for my forces to be crushed individually?

Somehow, it's starting to seem like an all-out war.

This isn't a flag for my scattered comrades to die one by one, is it?

No, since coming to this world, I should have well understood that flags and such have no meaning. However...

"But, I'm a little worried... Maybe it would be better to stop with this plan..."

"Rudi..."

Roxy suddenly heaved a sigh.

As if she can see through my timid thoughts.

"Listen up, Rudi.

Adventurers entering a labyrinth aim to finish the adventure without losing a single person.

If everyone does everything that they can do, the chance of returning alive increases.

Until now, what we considered the [something we can do] was staying home and watching over the children.

After all, to me and Sylphy, Rudy and Eris were fighting in a far-off place beyond our reach.

However, right now, the plan I suggested is [something we can do], and I think it will raise the chance of everyone returning safely."

Chance...?

However, that's true. Nothing is ever certain.

Even if you think it's completely safe and certain to succeed, unexpected situations can occur, and something you didn't think about can cause it to fail.

"I know that Rudi wants to keep us safely locked up at home.

However, even if we're locked up, if you lose, it's the end. We'll all be annihilated.

There's a risk to everything.

Let's brave the dangers, so that we can all be smiling in the end."

If anyone dies, would I be able to smile?

I go to the Kingdom of Biheiril, and when I come back, Roxy, Sylphy, and Eris are gone.

Would I be able to smile then?

No, I wouldn't.

"Rudi, we're already parents.

Let's not just look at ourselves, but into the future."

At those words, Paul's face suddenly crossed my mind.

If Paul were alive, at this moment, what would he say?

When he went to the Teleportation Labyrinth, he took me along.

During the teleportation incident... he had a lot going on, so I'll set that aside.

Before then.

When we were living in Buena village.

At the very least, Paul didn't lock me away at home.

I'm sure he was doing his best to protect me, but in that village where if you walk away a bit you may come across something dangerous, he let me walk around on my own.

Zenith, too, when she wasn't pregnant, worked in the village's clinic.

Even when she was pregnant, during her stable period, I think she went toddling out a few times.

Paul wasn't always right.

He didn't have any clear enemy.

However, right now, I'm still alive.

Thinking of it like that, saying no to everything is a bit overprotective.

No, but the circumstances are completely different...

"Yeah. It's just as Roxy says."

Sylphy gave her agreement.

"We'll bear the risks. When the enemy's defeated, as long as one of us remains to take care of the children, it will be fine."

"... That's right!"

Eris nodded to Sylphy's words.

I don't know if she was able to follow the conversation up to here, but at least she was in agreement with Sylphy.

"..."

Zanoba and Orsted didn't answer, but they didn't voice any opposition, either.

"Okay, then let's go with that. Any objections?"

No objections.

Then, let's go with this plan.

While hiding my presence, we'll split up to find Gisu, and if he's found, we'll close off his escape routes and wait for reinforcements, then crush him.

"Then next, let's work out the specifics."

All that's left are the details.

As a result of our discussions, we were split into the following teams.

The team going to the neighboring countries to close off Gisu's escape routes:
Aisha, Rinia, Pursena, and the rest of the mercenary corps

The diversion team going to the Holy Land of the Sword to get Nina:
Sylphy, (Ghyslaine, Isolte)

The team going to the capital:
Zanoba, Julie, Ginger

The team going to the second city:
Rudeus

The team going to the third city:
Eris, Roxy

After each team sets up teleportation circles, they will separate and search for Gisu and the North God.

Just like Sylphy proposed earlier.

Zanoba will mainly do information gathering.

Eris and Roxy will deal with the Ogre God.

The team that eliminates the escape routes will take orders from Aisha, so it'll probably work out fine.

My job became related to Ruijerd.

The Ogre God who has been referred to as this and that since long ago.

The North God Karlmann III who just so happens to be going to the Kingdom of Biheiril.

Ruijerd who has deep connections with me.

We can't quite predict Gisu's movements, so we ended up splitting our forces.

It would probably be best to leak some information and play it by ear.

The members going to the Kingdom of Biheiril will move out immediately.

If we waste time, Gisu's whereabouts may become uncertain.

I don't want to have to search for Kishirika over and over again to get her to find Gisu.

Sylphy will move out a little after that.

Ariel said she will send reinforcements immediately, but she has her own circumstances.

Ghyslaine and Isolte probably won't arrive in just a few minutes.

Julie, Ginger, Rinia, Pursena, and the rest of the mercenary corps have their own jobs that they're still in the middle of, so we'll tell them to prioritize this instead.

It may be unreasonable, but this is the critical moment.

We have to do this, even if it's unreasonable.

Is this a chance or a trap?

It may be optimistic, but I'm hoping for the former.

Using the communication lithographs, we told the plan to Ariel and Cliff as well.

Ariel immediately responded "I'll give you my utmost support," but Cliff still hasn't replied.

Unlike Ariel who has a lithograph in her room, in Milis we have to send messages to Cliff through the mercenary corps, so it probably takes time.

"Any questions?"

I looked over the surroundings, but nobody raised their hand.

There don't seem to be any.

The one who looks a little worried is Zanoba.

Looking at the state of affairs, higher priority is given to the third city which is closest to Ogre Island and the second city which is closest to where Ruijerd was spotted, but the capital has the most people, so it may be the most dangerous.

Ginger's information gathering abilities are high, and Zanoba's a powerful combatant, but he's weak to fire magic.

'Don't end up dying now.' or so my thoughts.

"Zanoba, be careful."

"I know. However, rather than for myself, I'm worried about the shop."

"Oh, that's right..."

For the record, whether it's the store or the factory, they should still go on even if the top brass isn't there.

However, if neither Zanoba nor Julie are there, if some major trouble occurs, I don't know how it will fare.

"So you wanted to leave Julie behind?"

"Hahaha, I promised I wouldn't leave her again."

Zanoba's really loved by Julie...

Or rather, I wonder how Zanoba feels about her.

I wonder if they've made love.

That's kind of a hard thing to ask.

Zanoba has times when he kind of pulls back one or two steps from women.

If someday he has children then I fully intend to tease him and call him a lolicon bastard, but I don't want to butt into his affairs too much as an outsider.

"Eris too, are you alright?"

"..... I'm fine."

Eris looks dissatisfied.

It seems she wanted to go with me.

However, if she did that, there wouldn't be anyone who could guard Roxy.

Furthermore, if I'm with Eris, we'll stick out like a sore thumb.

She can't do anything covertly.

That's why I put her with the one who stands out the second most, Roxy.

They're also a kind of diversion.

"I'm worried about Rudeus being alone."

Certainly, I'm also worried about myself.

I wonder if I can properly avoid Gisu's attention while gathering information.

Gisu's information skills are top-class.

Unless I move very well, as soon as Gisu knows that someone's searching for North God Kalman or Ruijerd, I'll be noticed by him.

If he notices me too early, he'll naturally run away.

In the first place, nothing good ever happens when I act on my own.

"Well, I'll make it work out somehow."

It would have been better if I had gathered one or two people who are good at gathering intelligence.

Regretting it now won't change anything.

I couldn't predict the situation turning out like this.

"What will Orsted-sama be doing? I'd be thankful if you could stay here to manage the communication lithographs and protect my family."

"...Sure."

"Thank you very much."

Orsted is house-sitting.

He stands out, so he's not really suited for information gathering.

There may be times when we need him, but it's best if he stays here whenever possible and comes to help when the battle starts.

Of course, there is the matter about his mana, so it would be a problem if he participates too much in battle.

He's something like the last trump card.

Or rather, it's for the sake of preserving his mana that he has me as a subordinate.

As such, having Orsted fight can be considered to be our loss.

"..."

Orsted stays silent.

I get the feeling he wants to say something, but I can't see his facial expression because of the helmet.

I wonder if he's concerned.

No, we're about to undertake a massive plan, so he must be tense as well.

"Rudeus. Just in case, you should wear that ring."

"Ring?"

The Death God's ring.

Suddenly told that, I looked at my hand.

On my finger is a rather creepy ring with a skull design.

It's what I got from the Death God. After meeting Kishirika, I started wearing it for no particular reason.

"Can I ask the reason?"

"It's just in case. Simply wearing it has an effect."

"...Understood."

I don't really get it, but if simply wearing it has an effect, then I guess it's fine.

When the time comes, I'll probably understand.

"Also, there's one..."

"Ummm..."

Someone raised their voice.

Orsted held his tongue.

Who's the foolish employee who cut off the president's words?

But looking over the surroundings, no one's saying anything.

No one's raising their hand, either.

However, it was a woman's voice.

Which means the offender is one of those three.

"Chairman——"

If she's calling me chairman, that means it's... huh? She's not here.

"There's a visitor——!"

No, I get it.

The voice is far off.

Everyone's gaze turns to the door.

This is the receptionist Lil elf-chan's voice.

What was her name again?

"Excuse me, I'll go check it out."

I told everyone not to disturb the meeting, but...

It may be an emergency.

I moved from the president's office to the lobby.

"...Uo-"

The instant I entered the lobby, golden light flew into my eyes.

He's golden.

From head to toe, he's covered in gold.

A person wearing shining gold armor was standing there.

"Wha....."

"Hey there."

The golden light casually raised a hand.

In that voice and those movements, I saw the phantom of a certain being.

An even more golden suit of armor.

A golden knight.

I've heard that the Fighting God's armor was gold.

I've also heard that Badigadi once, as an apostle, donned that golden armor and fought with Laplace.

That's it, he's coming to attack.

Gisu was a decoy!

Hitogami salvaged the golden armor and sent in his vanguard!

"This person seems to have come here using the teleportation circles under Her Majesty Ariel's orders."

...As if that could happen.

Looking closely, the armor looked to be gold because of the light, but it's actually a dull ocher.

"Ah, nice to meet you."

The man took off his helmet.

What was under it was a head of black hair, which is rare in this world.

He looks around 50 years old.

He had many wrinkles, and the appearance of a veteran.

"It is a pleasure to make your acquaintance. I am Her Majesty Ariel's knight, Sándor von Grandeur."

"Ah, very pleased to meet you. I am Rudeus Greyrat."

He bowed to me, so I returned his bow.

That's quite a name.

I've never heard of the house of Grandoire, but he's probably a noble.

"Earlier I received secret orders from Her Majesty Ariel, and thus came here."

Saying that, Sándor presented the box he was carrying under his arm.

Earlier... Just now, huh?

We had just finished telling her the plan. That was quite fast.

"I see. And this is?"

"Inside is a magic tool to change your appearance. I was told it was necessary."

Oooh.

Come to think of it, the Kingdom of Asura had those kinds of magic tools.

It's what was used to disguise Ariel.

At any rate, she was quite prepared.

She may have prepared it from the beginning, in case it became necessary.

"Please confirm the contents."

"Yes."

I peeked inside, and certainly, there was a green ring and red ring set that I remember seeing.

The person wearing the green ring takes on the facial features and hair color of the one wearing the red ring.

Using this, I can transform into a completely inconspicuous villager.

"Also, this is the Kingdom of Asura's insignia.

If anything happens, feel free to use this and her name, her majesty said."

He handed over another box.

Looking inside, there certainly is a medal bearing the crest of the royal family of Asura.

Since it's brand new, she probably thought writing a letter each time was bothersome and had it made for me.

It looks like I have another debt towards Ariel.

"Furthermore, we were ordered to give assistance to Rudeus-sama."

Assistance...

In other words, a filler until reinforcements can come.

As expected, it's hard to send a Sword King and Water Emperor on a sudden trip, so she sent some knights that seemed to have some free time.

No, calling him filler would be unfair to him.

He's also a fine reinforcement.

Ariel should have chosen someone who can maintain confidentiality.

Someone who won't talk about the teleportation circles.

"Hm? We?"

"Yes. Come on, say hello."

Sándor gestured with his chin, and the wall moved.

The large suit of armor that was standing like an ornament in the corner of the room moved.

I didn't notice that armor being there... he really has a weak presence.

However, once you notice him, he has quite a presence.

Heavy dark grey armor. He's very wide, and on the back is a gargantuan battleaxe.

It's an axe warrior.

"... I'm, Doga."

".....Ah, nice to meet you, I'm Rudeus Greyrat."

It seems his name is Doga.

He seems to be an armored knight, not an axe warrior.

However, even though his name and build are very rough-seeming, he has a kind face.

He doesn't talk much, but he has the feeling of a kind giant.

He seems to be in his 20s... no, he may even be in his teens.

Sándor, on the other hand, is a middle-aged man with decent looks covered in ocher.

He's also a little wide, but if you compare him to Doga, he's quite skinny.

It's the kind of pair that would appear together during a boss fight in some castle.

"Now, please give me orders. I can do anything you want."

"Uh, well..."

He went through the trouble of coming here, but what should I have him do?

Would the proper thing to do be putting him with the mercenary team...?

No, putting him with Zanoba would also be good.

However, there will probably be fighting.

"...Chandell-san, can you fight?"

"Yes, of course. I'm the strongest knight of the Kingdom of Asura."

The strongest, huh?

However, Ghyslaine and Isolte probably aren't included in that...

"It'll probably become a fight with someone on the class of the major world powers. Is that alright with you?"

"It's alright. From the moment I decided to serve Her Majesty Ariel, I've been prepared to throw away my life."

Hnnnn... then I guess it's fine.

Ariel may also have sent him intending for him to be disposable.

I'll put him with Zanoba.

...No, wait a second.

Isn't it a little strange?

Wasn't it just now that I contacted her?

Even if you say that Ariel works fast, isn't this too fast?

There's also the fact that his timing was too good.

He may really be Hitogami's——

"It's you, huh?"

I turn around, and Orsted was standing there.

Seeing him, Sándor bowed his head.

"It's nice to meet you, Dragon God Orsted-sama. I'm glad that you seem to be able to suppress your curse more than Her Majesty Ariel has said."

I look over, and Lil' elf-chan looks up at Orsted with her hands held together, as if she's deeply moved.

What is this...?

Could this be her first time seeing him?

It's true that he's wearing the helmet, but the curse seems to be surprisingly ineffective.

No, more importantly, what about Sándor?

"Are you serving Ariel now?"

"Yes. I have a certificate, too."

Saying that, he took a note out of his pocket and showed it to us.

It certainly says [Chandell von Grandoise is appointed as the leader of the Golden Knight Order of the Kingdom of Asura].

It bears Ariel's signature and the Kingdom of Asura's coat of arms.

Did he bring it with just for this purpose?

Since I suspected him earlier, that looks suspicious instead.

"You guys go with Rudeus. Gisu shouldn't know your faces."

"Acknowledged."

"Rudeus, that's okay with you, right?"

"Huh? Uh, yes."

He suddenly appeared, and it was suddenly decided.

Well, if Orsted says to do it, it's fine, but...

"Ah, no. It's not okay. Wait a minute. Please don't suddenly decide for me. In the first place, who in the world is this person?"

"Ah, he's——"

Orsted cut off there.

When I look over, Sándor has his finger to his lips.

"If you don't know, it's best if you don't find out.

Right now I am Ariel-sama's knight, and will be giving my assistance to Rudeus-sama."

Since he's saying that, he must be a well-known person.

Who is he?

I don't get the feeling that he's one of the world powers. He looks weak.

A famous person that seems to know Orsted... for example a member of the Dragon Race, like Holy Dragon Emperor Shirard, or Dark Dragon King Maxwell.

Ah, but he doesn't have silver hair.

Can't he just have dyed his hair?

"Will it be okay?"

"If it's him, there's no problem. I was also worried about you acting on your own. However, he's suitable. There's little chance of him being an apostle, and he should be good at information gathering."

If Orsted says that with confidence, then it'll be fine to trust him.

He showed up too quickly, so it was hard to judge him.

"Please leave it to me."

If he's good at gathering information, is he that kind of famous person?

Orsted knowing about him is only natural, and he treated Sándor knowing about him as being natural, so he does seem like someone who deals with information.

I was also worried about acting on my own. That said, I'm also worried about working with someone I don't know.

However, if he's someone Orsted trusts, then there's no reason to doubt him, right?

There's also the fact that he is the reinforcement sent in by Ariel.

Hmm...

Orsted said that as if he's just what we needed.

Which means this man's ability is high, and is very safe.

That's what how Orsted judged him.

Ariel also sent him in as help.

She knows about my situation.

Above that, she sent him as reinforcements for the time being.

At the very least, she trusts him enough to have him use the teleportation circles.

In that case, I'll trust in Orsted and Ariel's judgment.

"I understand. In that case, please participate in the meeting. But though I said that, it's currently about to end."

"Yes, Sir."

After I finish explaining everyone's jobs, I'll ask Ariel.

Thinking that, I invited these two unidentified people to the conference room.

Biheiril Kingdom.

To the east of the Central Continent, the country is surrounded by mountains, sea and forest.

It's not a very powerful country, and it only has 3 major cities.

They are:

In the centre, the capital Biheiril.

To the south, the second largest city bordering the forest, Ilel.

To the east, facing the sea is the third largest city, Heilelul.

Those are their locations.

It doesn't have any special features worth talking about.

I guess the one thing worth mentioning is how large it is.

Despite not having the same level of combat power as the neighboring countries, it covers twice as much land.

It's connected to two other countries by highway.

However, the Biheiril Kingdom doesn't get attacked.

In the east of this northern land is the continuation of a powerful Era.

This kingdom lacking in fighting force, for some reason, isn't attacked.

The reason behind this is the existence of the ogre tribe.

The Biheiril Kingdom has close ties with ogre tribe living on the lone island of Onigashima.

Long ago.

Although I say that, the Biheiril Kingdom was only formed after the Laplace war, so it's 50~100 years ago at most.

At that time, the ogre tribe living on Onigashima, and the humans living on the northern peak of the continent didn't cooperate.

Although there may have been small exchanges with those living in the sea, at the very least, the ogre tribe members in human cities didn't selfishly swagger around.

At that time, the ogre tribe had a problem.

The ogre tribe living on the island were being invaded by the ocean race living in the sea.

The ogre tribe fought. And although they were a combat race, the ocean race's fighting power was too much.

At that rate they would have been wiped out, their only choice that of becoming the slaves of the ocean race.

In front of the ogre race, a human adventurer party appeared.

The adventures, hearing rumors of gold and silver, came to the island.

Where they came from and who they were, the ogre race did not know.

It was most likely a party of 4, no doubt comprised of a group of swordsman, dog, monkey, and pheasant-faced people.

The adventures dreaming of treasure and battle.

What they saw was an impoverished ogre tribe.

The wounded ogre tribe soldiers, numbers reduced through fighting.

The women, living in fear.

The smileless children of the ogre tribe...

The adventurers who saw it, stood up.

It lit the fires of justice.

They swore to save the ogre tribe, and it was then that they conspired with the Ogre God.

Together with the ogres, they infiltrated the labyrinth that was the Ocean race's base.

After a fierce battle, they managed to kidnap the chieftain of the ocean race.

But the price for that was great.

The human adventurers' party had been wiped out except for the swordsman leading it.

Looking at his appearance, the indebted Ogre God swore to be his lifelong friend and offered any help the ogre race could give.

And the shocking truth.

He was the prince of an emerging country on the other side of the sea.

The prince returned to his country, and when he became king, he and the demon tribe took an oath of mutual protection.

To this day, the humans and ogre tribe live in peace together.

Well, that's roughly the story behind the foundation of the Biheiril Kingdom.

I don't really know how much of it is true.

In any case, the Biheiril Kingdom is protected by the ogre tribe, a large combat force. So despite its fertile land, it isn't invaded by neighboring countries,

It is being protected.

The Biheiril Kingdom is that kind of place.

As a group, we are heading towards the second largest city of Irel.

There are 3 members.

Claiming to be a knight of Ariel, the man in sand-coloured armour: Shandor.

His subordinate in grey armour: Doga.

And me.

Using their magic tool I changed my face, and on top of the magic armour [MK II], I had on another set of armour.

In addition, mounted on the back of the MK II are magic tools that Roxy developed.

If the button near the waist is pressed while pouring magic power into it, the scroll in the corresponding slot automatically activates.

With 5 by each hand, there are 10 types of scrolls in total.

Because you don't have to take out each scroll, it's extremely convenient.

But to carry all those folded scrolls ready for activation, it's become like a rather bulky backpack.

Because it looked somehow steampunk, I decided to call it [Scroll Vernier].

{ C-Editor's note: Steampunk is a subgenre of science fiction that incorporates retrofuturistic technology and aesthetics inspired by 19th-century industrial steam-powered machinery. }

Along with the gatling gun, it is the second Roxy Machine.

Magic armor, scroll vernier, and armor.

I, wearing all those and a mantle on top of it all, was a more than 2 meters tall, and looked like a walking suit of armor.

It's the perfect disguise.

While working as bodyguards, practitioners of the North God Style are all over the place, but in this area, for no particular reason, you get people coming here and thinking, "Is there anybody strong around here?"

Visually, it should seem like Shandor is the leader, and we followed him here.

By the way, I'm going by the name "Clay" here.

We're getting around by carriage.

Currently, I'm one of three armored knights, travelling by rumbling cart.

The number of armored knights is three.

Although we do stand out, in this world, it's not too rare a sight.

In the Magic City Sharia, you wouldn't see too many armored adventures, but in the Biheiril Kingdom, you'll see all kinds of people like that.

So, while moving towards our location, allow me to provide a simple introduction for my 2 companions.

Shandor von Grandeur.

Asura Kingdom's golden knight leader.

He was originally a mercenary with no affiliation.

He spent a lot of time in the strife zone, but at the time of Ariel's coronation, headed towards the Asura Kingdom.

He liked the look about Ariel and attempted to serve under her, but during the time he spent trying various methods to work for her, he caught Ariel's eye and she asked him to appeal to her. It was then that he rose to his position.

When I heard the story, it made it seem like all he was good at was kissing ass, but Ariel wouldn't make someone whose only skill is sucking up the knight leader.

In any case, something about him must have stood out.

When I asked Ariel for information on him, there was nothing shady, and the reply I got was that he was a man worthy of trust.

However, she didn't tell me anything regarding his identity. "I don't know~, ufufu~, then it's a secret~" I got the feeling she was messing with me.

But Ariel's knight didn't seem fishy, so I let it slide.

The Golden Knights.

Contrary to the name, the armor isn't all that sparkly.

Even if you change the light, you still can't see any gold. Although, if you polished it, it might shine.

And it's not gold; it's more of a yellow.

The Yellow Knights.

Oh, that sounds kinda strong in its own right. Like the yellow 14.

{ C-Editor's note: The Yellow 14 was an airplane flown by German fighter pilot Hans-Joachim Marseille during World War II. }

"Does the Asura Kingdom even have Golden Knights?"

I'd heard of the black knights and the white knights, but I have a feeling there were never any gold.

"It is a band of knights created by her majesty after she was crowned. Their official duty is that of protecting Queen Ariel, but if it be by her majesty's order, wherever it may be, we will complete our mission. Through the use of forbidden teleportation magic circles if necessary."

In other words, Ariel's own private army.

"Originally, it was founded for "Helping the Cooperators.""

"Oh."

So it was established for us.

She is indeed loyal.

And scary.

What will Ariel request in the future?

Although if Orsted says to return...

"Although since it has just been established, its numbers are but an elite few. I may not look it, but I am a practitioner of the North God Style."

Although he said that while laughing, Shandor did not have a sword.

"Even though you don't possess a sword?"

"I think this is far stronger than a sword."

He said while spinning around a metal rod.

He seems to fight with a polearm.

A polearm user, this is my first time seeing it in this world.

Originally, in this world, because of the impact of the Supard race, pole-like weapons aren't looked upon very well, and as a result, only swordplay was developed.

That said, whatever weapon the Sword God himself used, it wouldn't be odd.

Although he's most likely no longer a swordsman, the North God is probably something closer to a ninja.

"The long reach gives it an advantage."

"Ah. So that's how it is.

With the Sword God Style, it's possible to make someone go flying at an unimaginable distance.

In the Water God Style, no matter what direction the attack comes from, it can be deflected.

Which is why it's strong. By not using a sword, you can use a longer weapon from the beginning."

It's a simple theory.

In my previous world, such thinking was commonplace, and weapon range kept extending.

But it was different here.

Following that thinking, swordsman wouldn't be considered special.

The strength of swordsmen is the fact that their wounds can be healed in an instant with healing magic. Because the people in this world possess such high vitality, enemies must be taken out in a single hit.

So, unfortunately, Shandor's polearm technique is on the losing side.

He may be able to overpower a human opponent, but against something with a high recovery ability, it would be a bad mad matchup.

"Doga over here is also a member of the Golden Knights."

"Yup."

Doga.

He doesn't have a last name.

He was born in the Donati Providence of the Asura Kingdom.

Originally, he was a soldier of the Asura Kingdom.

He was a gatekeeper for the Imperial Capital.

But when Shandor was appointed, he saw excellence in him and he was scouted.

"I'm also scouting."

"Creating the ideal knight band is the job of the captain, after all. From here on out, it is my intention to continue to recruit strong forces."

Job of the captain, huh?

Now that I think about it, Therese, the captain of the Miko's guard squad was the weakest of them all.

In an organization, the leader doesn't always have to be the strongest.

The important thing is their commanding ability.

"But Doga-san, contrary to the name 'Golden Knights', your armor isn't remotely gold?"

"Hah, besides formal occasions, only an idiot would wear such conspicuous armor."

Reasonable point.

Which means, Shandor would usually wear much flashier armour.

"Aah! I get it now. That's why when I showed you the letter, you gave me a suspicious face. If it was going to be like this, I would have worn my formal armor."

"I can tell you it wasn't like that."

With Shandor laughing cheerfully.

It's impossible to see him as a bad guy.

But Hitogami's apostles are neither good nor bad.

Orsted and Ariel both said it was okay, but I alone will remain vigilant.

"Anyhow, there's very little snow around here."

As Shandor said that, I surveyed the surroundings.

The plain around us is lightly decorated with snow.

However, it's not enough to interfere with the carriage.

Originally, it was too much for farming.

The ground was barren and chapped, and the fields wouldn't grow anything.

Even far away, the ground here is known to be lifeless.

Speaking of the ground around here, at this time of year it's usually buried in snow.

But the Biheiril Kingdom has less snow than I thought.

Although the wind is cold and dry, there is simply very little snow.

"I wonder if it's because of the mountain."

"What does the mountain have to do with this?"

"Because the mountain to the west compresses the clouds, I was thinking that's what was stopping the snow."

"Oh... As expected of Rudeus-dono, you're quite knowledgeable."

"I don't know if I'm right."

The weather of this world may not follow the common sense of my previous one.

After all, in the Great Forest, it rains for 3 months straight, or a fertile continent can become a desert.

Unrelated to the mountain, it's a perfectly reasonable possibility that the magic power coming from the forest slightly to the west could be the reason for the lack of snow.

"My uncle was also interested in such things."

"Oh, was he some kind of researcher?"

"Where did clouds come from? Where did they go? How are people born? Why do they die? He spent every day looking at the sky, pondering such things."

I wonder if he was a philosopher.

Although,

I, in my old age, might spend my days like that.

As a 60-something year old man, sitting with Sylphy and Roxy spending our days as grandmas and grandpa...

Ah... no, Sylphy is of the mixed blood Long-Eared Race, and Roxy is from the Migurd race, so they would still be young.

Eris, even as a grandmother would give off an energetic vibe.

I would be the only old-seeming one.

"That's another philosophical thought."

"Philosophy?"

"Philosophy is... Hmm, a magical thing."

"Leave it to me."

On the way, we were attacked by something demonic.

It wouldn't be wrong to say this country has a lot of forests. The highway we were on ran right next to one.

As we were attacked, it gave them a chance to demonstrate their abilities. "The Asura Kingdom is the greatest", is often said, and these men definitely had the ability to support it.

The excellent Shandor with pace and finesse, and Doga, defeating enemies in a single hit with his giant axe.

Is what I saw, or it more accurately, is all I could see.

That said, even the worst of swordsman would understand the situation.

Although it wouldn't even be a fight against a world power, at the very least they would be considered more than a slight nuisance.

As I realized that, we had arrived at the second largest city, Irel.

Second city, Irel

As far as I can see, it's a nondescript city.

It's completely surrounded by walls and street vendors are lined near the entrance.

It's this world's most popular structure.

Even more so than Magic City Sharia, the number of wooden buildings would be a feature if I had to call it that.

A wooden building with an extremely tilted roof is distanced from its neighbors.

Being surrounded by forest, it's only natural that they'd have a lot of wood.

Leaving the horse and carriage at a stable, we walked to the inn.

It was then that I noticed that the number of street vendors began to drop.

It was somewhat quiet.

Because there aren't many customers, the number of vendors is just as small... is the reasoning you would expect, but contrary to that logic, there is a large number of adventures.

Since earlier, we've been passing lot of armor-clad warriors and magicians wrapped in robes.

The number of adventures and street vendors don't match.

There has to be a reason for this, or maybe the problem isn't so clear-cut.

"Woa."

While I was looking around, I had bumped into someone on the road.

"Oh."

They were a large person.

Standing at about 2.5 meters.

Even in my armor, I have to look up.

If there was a Half-Giant race, they would have this kind of feeling.

His skin was reddish brown, and hair, dark red.

Covered in muscles, his arms, legs and neck were all thick.

Most notable was his head.

It was huge.

His jaw was even bigger, sticking out.

And peeking through the mouth were fangs.

Coming from the lower jaw were two fangs protruding upwards.

And on top of that, from the messy dark red hair, two horns were standing out.

It's an ogre.

"Careful now."

The ogre I had bumped into took one look at me and continued down the street.

On his back was a massive pack that he was carrying like it was nothing.

That was my first time seeing an ogre up close; it was very intimidating.

Here in the Biheiril Kingdom, ogres walk around like it's a natural thing.

The humans here also accept it as a matter of course.

Seeing a multitude of races living together would be a rare sight in other countries.

"Clay, don't look around too much, you aren't some country hick."

"What? Oh, Ahh..."

Sharp words from Shandor.

It's a completely different tone from during the journey, for the purpose of disguise.

"There wouldn't be anybody strong around here anyways, looking around would be a waste."

"Yeah."

That's right, we're practitioners of the North God Style.

I should look like I don't have any interest in anything that isn't strong.

Otherwise it would be a waste of the disguise.

"First we have to find an inn. Right, Clay, Doga?"

"Yes."

"Yup."

The coachman-like Doga is the same as ever, but Shandor is completely opposite; he's doing a great job in his role.

Shandor is moving as the leader in order to hide my presence.

I'm Shandor's little brother Clay. Job: Warrior.

Alright.

"Shandor. Arrival celebrations. After the inn is decided, wanna hit up a tavern?"

"Haa, You're pretty stupid sometimes, but every now and then you have a good idea. Doga, take note."

"Yessir."

After that, we headed to the inn.

The moment we entered the tavern, there was a somewhat uncomfortable atmosphere.

"...Hmm?"

It's different from any tavern I've been in before.

That said, it looks perfectly normal

There are plenty of adventurers. There are also a couple of villagers.

1-2% of the customers are ogres, but I can't say that they're the source of the discomfort.

A crowded tavern with many races is not all that uncommon.

I wonder what it is.

There's nothing special to draw everyone's gazes.

There's nobody particularly odd around.

There's nothing particularly odd around.

But something is off.

"What's up, Clay?"

"Doesn't something seem off about this tavern?"

He takes a look around.

But it seemed like I was imagining it.

"...I don't understand. Do you want to leave?"

Shandor suggests that in a low voice.

"No, I want to know where the feeling is coming from."

"Understood."

As Shandor said that, we walked into the tavern with an unsuspecting gait, and headed towards an empty table.

Behind Doga, I followed suit.

As Doga sat down, the chair creaked under his weight.

The chairs of this tavern are unusually sturdy.

While wearing the magic armor, I usually have to keep note not to sit in a chair, but here, sitting normally should be fine.

I wonder if this was causing the feeling.

No, it couldn't be.

"Bring us some food, booze, and introduce us to someone who's knowledgeable about the area. Make it quick, I'm exhausted from the journey. Ahh, put this guy on a different bill. You're a guy that focuses on fruit aren't ya? If you don't have any milk, water will do ya."

While I was focused on the chair, Shandor had already handed the attendant 4 copper coins.

"Thank you for your patronage."

The attendant was also an ogre. A female ogre.

Maybe because she was a woman, she was a lot slimmer than the male ogres.

She had a wide frame and huge breasts... But overall, she looked quite human.

She might be half human.

She's probably not the source of the discomfort.

"Like. I. Said. I told you to stop peekin' 'round like that."

"Ma bad."

Shandor wacked me over the head.

"But ya didn't needa hit me."

"Haa? You wanna go me brah?"

His words may be rough, but the look in his eye says that he doesn't intend to hurt me.

Simply, I should take note that my current actions are suspicious, is what he's saying.

"Nah, it ain't like that... It's just I's a little fidgety is all."

"Fidgety? You got a bad feelin'?"

"No... It doesn't seem bad."

The feeling isn't unpleasant.

It feels like something I've been searching for, for a long time.

It doesn't seem possible, but it could be that Gisu or Ruijerd is here.

I want to quickly confirm the origin of this feeling.

When I think that, it causes me to look around.

The inside of the tavern is rather busy.

It's the kind of tavern you can find anywhere.

With laughter and noise, people eating and drinking.

Even the food is normal. It's the kind of river fish you can find anywhere.

But something is still causing this sense of discomfort.

Something that other taverns don't have that this one does.

"You guys want some information?"

As I was looking around, a man came to our table.

A human.

He had a sly rat-like look to his face.

"Are you the informant?"

"Yep, I know everything about this city. The number of adventurer parties, the peddlers' routes, even the blacksmith's mistress."

"K then, I'll have you teach me a bunch o' things. We just got here, so we'd like to avoid any trouble."

As he said that, he handed the man a couple of copper coins.

"Won't be a problem."

"I don't need to know anything major right now. I understand that you're an informant with a wide range, so can I leave finding work up to you?"

Along with Shandor's shaking question, I gave a fearless smile.

Right now my face is from one of the Rudo mercenary guild, so it should be rather intimidating.

"Jeez that's scary."

The Informant shrugged at my smile and turned to Shandor.

"So what is it you want to know?"

"What I want to know is what's common sense in this city, people's turf, the geography, anybody we shouldn't make an enemy of... Aah, and if any work that seems doable comes up, could you let us know?"

"Ok."

It's not like we'll suddenly hear of Gisu.

I can't get greedy

We are only warriors. Mercenary-like ruffians. We do not carry any demon trinkets.

"Common sense... Quite the request.

The country upholds the laws, and in turn cities can exist.

Aah... But there are a lot of ogres, so take note of that during your travel.

The people of this country live closely with the ogres. Even if you're devout Millis believers, keep any ill will towards the ogres to yourselves.

"What happens if I don't?"

"Nobody will sell you anything and the inns will refuse you.

Even this bar is owned by an ogre. You'd be thrown out and be forced to eat garbage."

Ogres are good neighbors.

Therefore, speaking ill of them will, more so than ogres, make the humans angry.

Sharia also has many races, but there is still discrimination.

They do not live as harmoniously as here.

"The geography... Roughly speaking, if you head north you'll reach the capital, and in the south is a single village.

It's a small village with nothing important; there are a few woodcutters and there's an ambassador, so it's well protected.

There's a labyrinth to the southeast. Information on that will be extra."

"Tell me."

Shandor handed him a couple more copper coins.

For the location of the labyrinth.

We don't have any intention of going, but it wouldn't hurt to know.

After learning about the labyrinth, the conversation will continue.

"People you shouldn't make enemies of, like I said before, ogres.

In this country, ogres and humans receive the same treatment.

Next is... Ahh, that's right.

This isn't someone you shouldn't cross, but there's a place you should stay away from.

The valley of the Earth Dragon."

The valley of the Earth Dragon.

It seems like a few important words have been skipped over.

The place where Ruijerd was discovered was also in a village near it.

"The valley is behind a large forest... But that forest is called the 'Forest of No Return.'

Since ages past, the forest has been haunted by invisible demons, so entry is forbidden."

"Invisible demons?"

"Well... Invisible demons are more like childish superstition.

The Valley of the Earth Dragon, like the name says, is home to earth dragons.

Some budding adventures entered the forest and messed up their lair.

An angry herd of earth dragons couldn't be defeated by the country, and so it was made off-limits."

The man then furrowed his brow as if he was trying to remember something.

"But recently... Since about a year ago, there have been rumors of demons coming out of the Forest of No Return."

"Oh."

"The town's lord created an investigation corps to investigate inside the forest

But even after a couple of days passed, they didn't return.

The invisible demons probably got them, or they fell into the earth dragon nest or, perish the thought, they were taken out by a single magic beast.

Although it wasn't as if they were wiped out.

After giving up on the survival of the first investigation corps, the lord organized a second investigation corps.

One person came back."

That's when he bent down and looked me right in the eye.

The atmosphere's a little like a horror film.

Not at me, but looking at Shandor.

"But he'd gone insane.

He had exceptionally scary eyes.

When the lord asked what happened, he simply muttered, "The demons are here, the demons..." with a vacant look in his eyes.

After witnessing that, the lord became quite frightened and ceased the investigation effort.

'Killed by earth dragons' was the official cause of death announced, and because of this incident, the other word used was forbidden...

The truth is hidden, and has been processed as another unsolved case.

This was... about half a year ago."

"..."

"When you think about it, it was a good thing.

Recently the story has reached the palace in the capital.

The king said "Even though there is a village so close, we cannot leave it alone while we know nothing!"

And so, the King has organized a punitive force.

So currently, members are being gathered in the capital for the force."

The man looked up.

"And so. For the identity and location of the demon, there's a special bounty; we're talking 10 Biheilil gold coins. It seems like the kind of work you can do?"

I see.

Invisible Demons...

It's a little different from the information I heard about Ruijerd's location.

I wonder if it's that kind of thing?

Originally, Ruijerd went to the village without any purpose, and he heard about the demon.

"A demon came out of the Forest of No Return."

And then, "There are invisible demons in the Forest of No Return."

"Invisible demons came out from the forest," would be the information he received.

Hearing things left and right, the information would get mixed up.

The information from the mercenary corps also passed through a lot of hands.

That's why we have to search to pinpoint our opponent.

Although it might be the opposite.

It could have gone: "An invisible demon really came out." → "The demon is a Supard." → "Come to think of it, I think I saw someone with green hair."

No wait, but I have no idea where any of this information came from.

Well, no matter what rumors spread, it wouldn't be odd.

Although with Ruijerd, he wouldn't show mercy to an opponent; it's possible he wiped out the investigation team.

Why would he go into the forest?

Did he go into the forest because it would be a problem if others saw and knew about him?

Hmmm...?

"Ahh, That's great. I got it... Seems interesting. Clay? Don't you think so too?"

"Hmmm, a demon huh... It does seem interesting. The 10 gold bounty is also appealing."

Although an appropriate answer, my head is full of other things.

In any case, we'll have to go to the forest.

With this much information, I can't think that Ruijerd is uninvolved.

"But with the bounty, it's first come first served.

You'll probably need to form a party to participate.

I'm not an adventurer, so if I were to participate, it would be as support."

Shandor winked at me.

I get it.

"That's right, we should get looking."

"Alright. Informant. Additional charge."

Shandor handed him several more copper coins.

"Find us a thief.

The condition is that it be someone that can do a lot as an adventurer and be good at information collecting.

It'd be good if his combat ability is low. We'll do all the fighting.

About the reward... What to do? It's a pain, so when you find our guy, send him to us to negotiate."

"Deadline?"

"It would be good if it was before the punitive force sets out. But that's still far away, isn't it?"

"They set out in a month."

"Well then, for the time being, how about we meet again in this tavern in 10 days?"

"Sure, leave it to me."

The man took the coins and hurriedly put them in his pouch.

And when we stood up, the noise of the tavern disappeared in an instant.

Impressive, Shandor.

With the information on the forest, the search for Gisu has advanced a step.

Although we didn't hear anything about the North God, the conversation didn't head in that direction so it couldn't be helped.

Although I wanted to see a little more of that ability.

"We did it."

"My wife is good at these kinds of things. Seeing it up close, I picked it up."

So he's married.

All the more reason we have to return home safely.

Although he said it rather regrettably.

"Ahem. So, what do you want to do now?"

"While we wait for the informant, we have nothing to do for 10 days... We could take a look around. Doga, is there anywhere you want to go?"

"...I want to see a woodcutter."

"Then a little reconnaissance, We can go take a look at the village in the south."

Although the conversation made it seem like we decided, we had already planned to go to the village in the south since the beginning.

10 days.

From the conversation before, the village is at most a day away.

Tomorrow morning, I'll install a magic communication lithograph and head to the village.

Tomorrow afternoon we'll enter the forest and spend 5-6 days searching the inside.

After that, we'll return and hear the informant's information on Gisu and conduct a progress report over the lithograph.

That is what the schedule looks like.

"Yes, sorry for the wait!"

While I was thinking, the food arrived.

Boiled fish and beer.

Doga had a dark liquid placed in front of him.

It's probably some kind of juice. I'll have him let me try it later.

Alright, in this situation I have no intention of getting drunk.

But not drinking in a tavern would stand out.

Just one.

"Then, to our success."

"Cheers!"

"...Cheers."

Cup in hand, we drank.

When the drink entered my mouth, it was warm down my throat.

The aftertaste was—.

"—PFFFTT!"

Doga spat out his black drink.

"Cough... Cough..."

"Oi!?"

While the surrounding people were looking to see what was going on, Doga was coughing with his head down.

I put my hand on his back and chanted detoxification magic.

But Doga was facing the ground open-mouthed, drooling.

"Oi, get a hold of yourself!"

Dammit, what did he drink!?

Poison!?

This was that feeling!

I thought something seemed off!

And I still don't know where the feeling is coming from!

Is the detoxification working?

Calm down, at times like this, you have to stay calm.

First, if I knew the poison in this drink.

"You! What's your excuse!"

"Ahh! I'm sorry!"

Shandor yells at the nearest person. I have to be calm; I reach for the cup Doga was drinking from.

I hold it up to confirm the smell.

...Huh?

This smell, could it be...

"He was human... I thought because of his size, he was an ogre; I made a mistake."

"Like I said! What did you give him to drink!"

I dip my finger in the liquid and try it.

This taste, I'm sure.

"Umm, it's a drink made from beans, It's a favorite of the ogre-tribe, but it's too strong for humans, so it usually is diluted... I'm terribly sorry!"

"You sure it's not poison!?"

"Umm, it can be if you drink too much... About a mouthful."

"Dammit! Oi Doga! You OK?! OI!"

While Shandor was panicking, I had regained composure.

Now that I think of it, I could smell this ever since I entered the tavern.

It was most likely mixed in with the smell of cooked fish.

The identity of the feeling...

And at the same time I figured out the identity of this drink.

It's true that if you drink too much it's poisonous, but Doga spat most of it out.

He'll probably feel a little sick, but it's nothing too serious.

"..."

I dipped my finger into it one more time and licked it.

Yup.

So it was this.

No doubt.

I cannot be mistaken.

This is soy sauce.

Summary up to now.

Rudeus finally discovers the thing he has been searching for for all these years.

However, it's ultimately inconsequential.

So he paid for it then and there, thus obtaining the small bottle of soy sauce, and hurried back.

—○●○—

The next day.

Our group headed towards the suburbs of the second city Irel to establish the Teleportation Magic Circle and Communication Lithograph.

After that, we headed towards the village where Ruijerd was spotted.

The village near the Earth Dragon Valley was about half a day's travel from the second city of Irel, Bihaeril Kingdom.

『The village of the Earth Dragon Valley』and『The Forest of No Return』, or so they are called, but the official name is Marson Village on the map.

Although it's called Marson Village, the official name isn't well known, so calling it『The Village of the Earth Dragon Valley』works fine.

An empty village.

It's not a tourist attraction, nor does it have any notable features.

Logging and farming on the fertile land near the forest is done, but it isn't a village which was established by gathering people to build something like the Buena Village of the Fedora Region.

The people residing in this village simply came under the jurisdiction of Biheiril Kingdom, with little care being given to who ruled over them.

Probably something like that.

The country isn't the point, it's the people.

As the distance between houses increased, the land became desolate with few signs of civilization, and apart from the quiet.....there was nothing.

The village wasn't completely deserted when we arrived; it was inhabited by humans.

However, they were not villagers.

People who obviously weren't villagers were gathered in a group in front of the village's entrance.

They were equipped with armor and swords on their backs.

Probably adventurers.

No, the atmosphere is a bit too risky if they were just adventurers.

Are they mercenaries or possibly bounty hunters?

"Sandor, is this what it means for too many people to try and get a head start?"

His strength and quick-thinking during the incident in the bar yesterday... Sandor really is a useful guy.

I was in doubt about his usefulness until now, but I can see why Orsted assigned him to me.

I always want to hear opinions in situations like this.

In comparison, Doga isn't very useful.

I'm not saying that he's slowing us down, but.....

It feels like he's just tagging along for now.

Well, I too, am not that great in criticizing a person.

I hope that he becomes useful somewhere along the line.

"No, they might've just come for a preliminary inspection. It would be advantageous for them to start immediately after they obtain information from here."

"But, aren't there too many people here with a head start to hunt one target?"

"Even if there are, there won't be too many. The government is just taking the initiative to dispatch a subjugation force. Even if they jumped the gun and started hunting demons, there is the possibility that they won't be rewarded."

Joining the task force, entering the "Forest of No Return" with the Chivalric Order of the government somehow, confirming the true identity of the demon, defeating it, and then returning safely.

Only after all of that is done will you be rewarded with gold.

Although if you're following the crowd, then it ends up being a contest of luck whether or not you can secure that reward.

And not just luck, but also taking a step ahead at key moments and snatching first place.

As a result, the preliminary investigation is for the purpose of taking a step ahead to snatch first place.

"Then that means we have no involvement with them."

"I completely agree with that statement."

As he laughs, Sandor starts entering the village.

Lodging at a suitable building in the plaza.

At the plaza, you wouldn't believe that the village was deserted considering the crowds of people that were gathering there.

Everyone is frantic.

However, it's somewhat convenient that there is a crowd.

It should be easy to mingle in the crowd and begin gathering information.

"Leave!"

Or so I thought, but I was told instead to leave.

Well, of course, it wasn't actually directed at me.

I heard the voice from the entrance of the plaza.

Some members of the task force are leaving the plaza with unpleasant looks on their faces.

When I looked at the spot where the shout came from, I saw an old woman with a cane yelling.

"Get out! There ain't any demon coming out of this forest! The forest people have been kindly protecting the forest and us! Anyone who wants to hurt the forest people, get out!"

Though unsteady, the old woman was thrusting her cane; she got closer to the large group of men in the plaza and started hitting them with it.

Snap! The sound reverberated in the plaza which could be heard even from where we were.

"You hag....."

"Oi! Forget it, if we cause a ruckus, the Ogre tribe will....."

"Tch!"

The man who was hit tried to draw his sword in a fit of rage, but was stopped by his level-headed comrade, and retreated hastily.

The old woman didn't hobble after them.

While shouting, she was kicking all the other groups in the plaza.

In order to get away from the old woman, the groups were scattering.

What's this?

As she saw the wide space getting clear of people.....ah, she looked in our direction.

She's steadily drawing closer.

"Get out!"

The old woman's cane hit my armor and made a loud "clang!" sound.

There is no damage.

My armor is reliable against an agitated old woman, with its Asuran mark.

"You must not lay waste to the forest!"

The old woman was hitting my armor with a clanging noise while shouting.

"Granny, please calm down."

"What demons! The forest people have been our saviors! And now you're going to kill them when they seek our help! You brute!"

She is in a very agitated condition, looks like she won't listen to anything I say.

There is one thing on my mind though.

People of forest.

It's a new phrase.

I want to hear more about what they are.

"What does 'the forest people' mean.....?"

"If you make the forest people disappear, the demons will attack!"

If the people of forest disappear, then the demons will attack.

Which means, the people of forest are probably defending the town against the demons.

"The people of the forest and the demons, are they separate beings?"

"Obviously! Don't confuse the demons with the forest people!"

"Clay, just stop, this old lady's sanity is long gone."

Sandor came to check on me.

Certainly, a sane person won't hit a stranger with a cane.

But I want to hear about the old lady's story.

"I haven't gone insane! The people of the forest exist! During my youth, I was rescued by them when I was lost deep in the forest! Apart from that, my great grandfather was also saved when he was a child!"

During her youth means possibly 20 to 30 years ago.

This old lady looks a little over 60 years old.

And, the great grandfather of such an old woman, possibly a little over 100 years ago.

But, it's been at most 10 years since I parted from Ruijerd.

Then, perhaps, Ruijerd isn't related to the people of the forest?

But.....ah.

"The people of the forest aren't demons! Why would you try to kill them!? Stupid! Get out stupid! Stupid! Haa.....Stupid.....Haa.....Haa....."

The old woman had been striking at my armor for a while, but before long she ran out of steam and sunk to the ground in exhaustion.

"Granny, would you tell me your story in more detail?"

I estimated that she was calm now and smiled at her.

Ruijerd might not be here.

But, by some chance.....

"I may be friends with the people of the forest."

They may be the survivors of the Supard village that Ruijerd has been looking for all this time.

She was unable to conceal her agitation.

Despite her attitude being like that, she had been calmly talking to me for some time.

Based on this development, is it the Supard race or Ruijerd?

I don't know.

But because of the flow of events in Bihaeril Kingdom, I somehow understood what was going on.

Forest people.

It seems even before the old lady was born, the so called people of the forest were already present.

They rarely ever showed themselves outside of the forest.

But, sometimes, ever so rarely, whenever a villager was lost within the forest and was being hunted or on the verge of death, they were saved by the forest people.

The villagers, including the old lady, don't know who or what they are.

But there was folklore surrounding them.

A long time ago, just shortly around the time when the war against demons was about to end...

Demons that couldn't be seen by the naked eye were inhabiting the Forest of No Return.

At dusk, the invisible demons came out to kidnap livestock and children to consume them.

The villagers hoped to defeat the demons one day, but were ultimately powerless and thus lived in fear.

And then at that time, the people of the forest appeared.

They made a proposal to the villagers.

『We'll take care of the demons, but in exchange, we want to live in the forest. However, our existence must never be known outside the village.』

The villagers agreed to the proposal and the people of the forest took up residence deep inside the forest.

They don't know how the forest people dealt with the demons.

After that, the demons stopped coming out of the forest. Even now, the people of the forest are still protecting the villagers.

Upholding their part, the villagers raise their children to give their gratitude to the forest people, but are taught to tell no one about it.

"To lay waste to the forest people like that, what an outrageous thing to do."

The old lady bought it to an end with that.

"I see, thank you very much."

I don't know if what she said was true or not.

It's such an old story, it seems almost completely fabricated.

But, let's just assume that the people of the forest are the Supard race.

The Supard have a third eye on their forehead.

It's a kind of demon eye that can sense any living being.

If they use that, then even the invisible demons can be located and defeated.

The Supard race coexist with the village while hiding their own existence.

But about six months or a year ago, tragedy struck.

A disease, or perhaps an injury.

A large quantity of invisible demons sprung forth, and the people of the forest may have not been able to keep them under control.

The Supard who had been concealing themselves for so long came to the village to buy medicine.

Everyone had already forgotten about the shopkeeper who interacted with that Supard.

However, the news spread.

The news that an extremely suspicious guy came out of the forest.

The villagers should've hidden his existence. Especially if was true that he came to the village to seek help, but...

Just how did the story end up like the one I heard at the bar yesterday?

『We must exterminate the demons that came out of the forest』

Just what happened for it to result in this?

Since it was a year ago, blaming Gisu would definitely be rash.....

Anyway, the Supard race live deep in the forest.

It was a belief that I held close.

But then.

A question came to me as well.

Why was I just now hearing about this?

I had been searching for Ruijerd.

Everyone should know that.

Everyone.

For example, even Orsted.

.....If the Supard had been living here for so long, then why was I not aware of it until now?

The Forest of No Return was a quiet place.

In general, a large amount of monsters inhabit the forests of this world.

The concentration of magic is also great in forests, but one would encounter only one monster per day in the Forest of No Return.

Mostly treants.

Treants can be found anywhere in the world, but they are even more commonplace in forests.

You could even believe that forests are actually nests of treants, so encountering them would be the norm.

But in this forest, there is no sign of them.

It's completely silent.

There are creatures here, but no monsters.

A tranquil forest that is deadly silent.

Of course there are birds and small animals, but that's it.

It's as if we're inside a nightmare.

"Weird, eh?"

"Yeah."

Looks like Sandor is feeling uncomfortable about this place, again.

"....."

Doga is silent.

Is he unable to read the mood? He's not even surveying the surroundings.

"....."

We keep walking deeper into the silent forest for a while.

The presence of animals diminishes the farther we go.

Insects and birds are present, but no small animals.

Of course, no monsters as well.

The trees were getting larger too, and the overgrown leaves covered up the sky.

In this atmosphere, you begin to dissociate and believe you're the only living thing there, which you occasionally snap out of whenever you hear the sound of birds.

Whether the invisible demons are following us or not right now...

Paranoid, I turn around to look.

And each time I do, my eyes met with Doga's unaffected ones, making me believe that it was all in my head, as I turned forward again.

"Oh?"

Suddenly, when I glanced towards the roadside, there was a stone monument that I recognized.

It's the Seven Great World Powers stone monument.

Before, I was unable to recognize the markings on this monument, but.....

These days, I can more or less understand them.

Looks like there are no changes in the rankings.

"So this thing can be found in such a place, eh?"

"It's probably not that unusual. Since the Seven Major World Powers stone monument can only work in places of high magic concentration."

"Yeah.....they are magic tools."

You know quite a bit about it, eh?

That this type of magic tool can only be found in places with high magic concentration.

Not many people know about that.

But well, it isn't like those in the know, know it very well.

"The sun will be setting soon. Let's make a camp around here."

"That's right, then, Doga, the firewood."

".....Yup."

That day, we decided to set up camp near the stone monument.

As an added precaution, I made a tent with Earth Fortress, and there we slept.

The next day.

We continued our walk in the silent forest.

Then, Sandor suddenly thought of something.

"It feels similar to the Red Dragon Mountain Range, doesn't it?"

"Meaning?"

"The other animals don't draw near in fear of the dragons."

They won't approach a stronger animal's turf

Earth Dragon Valley exists deep within this forest.

Earth dragons are, needless to say, powerful creatures.

The wild animals won't approach a dangerous place, such is the basis of nature itself.

"So you've been in the Red Dragon Mountain Range, Sandor-san?"

"Only to the foot. It had a similar feeling; as you get closer to it, the presence of animals diminishes."

The earth dragons build their nests in the rock cliffs of the valley.

They fundamentally don't come out of the valley. They can't fly in the sky, but they can use earth magic to build holes.

Their nature is quite gentle for dragons; they won't attack humans as long as their territory isn't invaded.

Again, holding a very strange nature, they'll be defenseless to anyone who comes from above, but they'll attack in excess anyone who comes from below.

By the way, according to Orsted, the red dragons and earth dragons are mortal enemies.

Although the possibility of these two species, what with inhabiting such different environments, encountering one another is almost nonexistent.

Thus, the danger in approaching them from above is less.

For the time being, it would be alright as long as you don't end up falling to the bottom of valley.

"Oh."

Was it because I was thinking all this time?

It suddenly unfolded in front of my eyes.

A steep cliff appeared out of nowhere within the dense forest.

A cliff so deep that the bottom couldn't be seen.

It's probably 4500m to the opposite side.

It gave the sensation of standing on top of a mountain.

I'm not very well-informed on valleys, but this size makes me think of the Grand Canyon.

"Is this the Earth Dragon Valley?"

"Seems so. What should we do? Looks like we've arrived without any incident....."

"Well."

As I worried, I put mana inside my left eye.

When I keep my vision open, I can use clairvoyance.

For now, I peered into the valley's bottom.

Since I am not accustomed to using this demon eye yet, I can't measure the distance to the bottom.

But, I immediately saw it.

There are bluish-white mushrooms and moss growing at the valley's bottom, and near it, a lizard-like monster with a boulder-like body was slowly moving.

Is that an earth dragon?

It looks like a King land tortoise rather than a dragon.

It might be defenseless to anything from above since it can't possibly win against a red dragon with that body.

Now that I take a closer look at the rock cliff rather than the bottom, a lot of them are clinging to the sides – it's a bit gross.

I activate my demon eye again and survey the surroundings of the valley next.

There is nothing to the right of my vision.

Before long, my vision gets interrupted by the cliff and forest.

According to the map, the Earth Dragon Valley is supposed to be a straight line, but it looks like it's curving.

There is a mistake in the map.

To the left of my vision.

There's also nothing to see at this si-.....ah, no, wait.

"It's a suspension bridge."

The place where the cliff's width was less, there was a hanging bridge

"I see, to get to the opposite side, is it?"

"Let's try to cross it."

There are still 7 days left until we meet with the information broker again.

Calculating the time it would take to return back, it should be safe to remain in the forest for one or two more days.

Deciding on that, we began walking along the valley.

It wasn't too far till we reached the bridge.

It took about 1 hour on foot.

I was glad that I was able to see the location of the suspension bridge.

The suspension bridge was worn-out.

Where the distance between the two banks was smallest, two thick vines were laid across. On top of them was a wooden board, and that was it.

The overwhelming sense that the bridge was made by an amateur and its lack of safety were real concerns.

Although I call it unsafe, if a single adult with luggage crossed the bridge, then they should be fine.

"Should we cross it?"

But I am wearing the magic armor. If I go on, it will definitely fall down.

I can't embarrass myself by falling to the valley's bottom, after stating we should be fine so long as we stayed out of the valley.

"No, let's pass on crossing this bridge."

"Then, shall we head back?"

"No, let's build a different bridge."

While saying that, I stood at the edge of the cliff.

If the bridge can't be crossed because it's unsafe, then I'll just make a bridge of my own.

From my hands to the surface. I raise the earth with magic.

Making use of my magic by putting Earth Lance to practical use.

Strengthening it so much that there shouldn't be any concern for safety, even if I crossed it.

Apart from the durability, I should make the lance so that it reaches the opposite bank.

".....Ho."

When I release my magic, the earth lance appears.

The earth lance silently extends and pierces into the other side of the valley.

No sound could be heard.

I repeat this three times over.

Just to make sure, I increased the width so that people can pass by one another.

Over the earth lance, I build a board.

This is, again, an earth board.

A sturdy board as far as the opposite bank.

Finally, I reinforce the other side along with the base of the bridge with earth magic, and the stone bridge is now complete.

The handrail.....well, it's fine for now.

"Splendid.....I've heard from the talks, but to do this much....."

Even though I'm being praised by Sandor, we can't let our guard down.

Since I don't know anything about architecture and stability of bridges.

There is no need to strike the bridge before crossing it, but I must rebuild it again if I were to get on with the magic armor and it collapses.

"For the time being, hand me the rope."

I fastened the rope to a nearby tree and began crossing over slowly to examine it.

After several steps, I was smoothly walking on the bridge.

The stone bridge was solidly-built and holding up my weight.

It would be extremely stupid if one were able to fall from this, but it looks like this should work fine.

Just in case, I reinforced weaker spots along the bridge as I slowly crossed it.

Midway was as far as the rope could go; Sandor extended it with what he had and I finished crossing.

One rope was 50m long, and considering that I was barely able to cross with two, the bridge should be a little less than 100m.

"Alright."

I signaled with the rope to the other side of the valley.

Sandor and Doga easily crossed over the bridge while grabbing onto the rope.

They were on the bridge at the same time.

Do they think that it won't collapse?

Or do they trust me?

That I would immediately come save them if they fell.

"Now, let's continue shall we?"

As I was feeling uneasy, Sandor and Doga easily finished crossing.

"But from here on out, looks like we must stay alert."

Sandor spoke as he looked deep into the forest.

The dark, endless forest.

There was only one change since we began walking in the forest.

It's the presence of monsters.

No less than 100m in and we were attacked.

It was just a noise at first.

The noise of leaves rustling together.

But, I didn't think there was a monster near us because of the wind blowing.

It felt like a person from far away was approaching us.

It was still a ways off.

It's alright for now.

The moment I thought that, I heard a noise close to my ear.

"Wofuu....Wofuu...."

As soon as I heard that sound, I noticed the scent of blood hanging in the air.

Shortly after, something was clinging onto the trunk of the tree right next to us.

"..........!"

The moment I noticed it, the tree bent for an instant, and the leaves and branches rustled.

We were paused for just a moment, and then something, like a heavy mass, dropped down behind me.

When I turned to face it, I saw Doga had fallen with his face up.

I could only see Doga.

But, Doga's head was shaking as if it was moving against his will.

Doga's hand grabbed something mid-air that was shaking his head.

There is something there.

The moment I realized that, I hit the thing on top of Doga with all my strength since I couldn't use magic.

My hit, strengthened by the magic armor, sent the thing flying from on top of Doga.

It felt like flesh and broken bones.

The thing that was on top of Doga hit the trunk of a tree, and red blood spread in excess.

The color of blood started to reveal some kind of figure.

A four-legged animal.

I couldn't identify any specifics, but it is certainly four-legged...

I reflexively hit it with rock bullet and kill it.

Almost simultaneously, I was hit on my back with a thud.

I turned around immediately, about to use magic to defend myself when...

"Doga! Stand up!"

It was Sandor.

He was standing as if to protect my back.

".....Yup!"

Doga stood up while grabbing the axe from his back, and he positioned himself in front of me.

Oi, I can't see in front of me if you do that.

"It's an invisible opponent! Their numbers are unknown! Doga, don't rely on your eyes, use your ears! Only deal with the enemy in front of you!

Rudeus-dono, please use magic! Clear them away using your ranged magic!"

Sharp instructions fly out of Sandor.

As expected of the person known as the Golden Knight leader, his judgment is fast.

His title isn't just for show.

I load magic in both my arms as I think that.

Should I use fire magic?

No, using fire in a forest would be problematic.

It'll be double the effort in extinguishing it.

Let's go with water magic, Frost Nova.

".....Uu!"

As I was about to cast my magic.

It was only for an instant.

Doga moved in front of me.

Swinging his giant axe in an arc

Wielding a huge battle axe in this forest resulted in broken tree trunks and limbs every time it is swung.

There is no resistance from the monster, however.

As blocks of wood scattered around, I felt something slip by Doga's flank and approach me.

The magic armor is heavy, but hard.

Even if I was attacked by a monster's nails or fangs, it's likely that I won't be injured.

I judge that in an instant and was going to cast my magic when.....

"Rudeus-dono!"

I was knocked away by Sandor.

What the!?, but I had no time to think that.

Before I realized it, a spear was standing at my side.

The spear looked like it stood by itself in mid-air, but... that's wrong.

It was because something transparent was pinned to the ground by it.

It's a white spear.

Exceedingly white, as if it was made out of chalk.

It was similar to some kind of monster's bone.

Ah, how nostalgic that spear is.

A single person jumped to the ground to recover that spear.

Green hair.

A white body as if stricken with disease.

A native dress, similar to a poncho.

Ah, I have no doubt.

I know after looking at his height, I can't possibly be wrong.

"Ruijerd!"

I got up and called out to him while extending my hand as much as I could.

He looks back at me with his spear in hand.

"Nh?"

".....Huh?"

It was a face I didn't recognize.

A beautiful face, he had a Ruijerd-like appearance... but it's not him.

My Ruijerd was more like.....the side of his chin was a little.....

"Sorry, I mistook you for someone else."

I feel...

Really disappointed.

There is a different member of the Supard here.

Which means, my beliefs were right to some degree.....this is a Supard, right?

Damn, my face is all hot because I shouted Ruijerd with so much determination and confidence.

".....Do you know Ruijerd?"

The Supard male that I didn't know asked me with a curious look on his face.

Ah, that's right.

If he's a Supard, then he knows about Ruijerd.

And even if it wasn't Ruijerd, there isn't any problem.

Yeah.

There aren't any typical problems that are rising in the Bihearil Kingdom right now.

Yeah.

"Eh? Ah, yes. Comrade.....no, friend.....maybe a patron?"

"If you're a guest, come with me. I'll introduce you."

The man turned around as he said that.

"Eeh...please wait a moment, is he here?"

"He's here."

The Supard male nodded at the dumbfounded me as if it was obvious.

The village was very similar to the Migurd village.

It was surrounded by two meter high walls, and humble log houses lined the inside.

Near the log houses, there was a rather small field.

Unlike the Migurd's, they were growing many different types of vegetables.

The soil seemed like it's fertile.

On top of that, behind the log houses, an animal was being prepared for cooking.

It was a 4 legged beast with whitish fur.

That is the true identity of the invisible demon.

A short while after they die, their invisibility gets released, and even the one who attacked us just moments ago started showing its color.

It seems they're called [Invisible Wolf].

Rather frank.

In the centre of the village is a fountain, and near it is a large pot that looks like it's used to prepare food for the whole village.

Their culture really is similar to the Migurd Tribe.

But there's one difference.

The Migurd village was filled entirely with blue haired people that looked like middle schoolers...

But here, everyone has a red gem on their forehead and emerald green hair.

They are Supards.

All of them.

And so, it was here that I had a surprising revelation.

The Supards not only had red gems on their forehead and emerald green hair, but.....

They are beautiful.

They are all, without exception, beautiful.

No, in this world, there are people with much more beautiful forms and stronger faces.

But they are beautiful nonetheless.

Of course, it's not just nothing but pretty boys; everyone's features are regulated well.

Over there is a young girl with a shortcut hair, super cute.

She is slender, isn't too tall, but her shoulders are quite muscular, she has a strong-willed look, and her chest is fairly large. She gives off the impression of having the best parts of both Sylphy and Eris.....

No, it's different, this isn't cheating, I'm looking at it objectively, OK?

It's a village of beautiful men and women.

This is evil.

The people of this forest are evil.

"It's a frightening village."

".....Yup."

In response to my comment, Doga gave off something that sounded like an agreement.

For a while now, Doga has been squeezing behind me as if to hide himself.

It seems he's scared of the Supards.

He was born in the Asura kingdom, so he must have grown up on stories of the Supards being evil demons.

Although I want to deny it.....

Though the Supard race as a whole are not that bad, whether or not this village is taking the trouble to welcome us is a different question.

So for now, I'll hold off on consoling him.

"Now, I wonder where they'll take us."

Sandor doesn't seem all that scared.

Maybe because he was raised in the strife zone, he hasn't heard many stories about the Supards.

Actually, it seems that seeing so many Supards has him excited.

"It would have to be where Ruijerd is, right?"

"We won't necessarily be heading there first."

"Then following this pattern, wouldn't it be the village head?"

"If we're following the pattern then a jail might be likely.....they don't seem to need to deliberate anything."

The Supard warrior headed towards us and said, "Follow me," so we did.

As a result, we blindly followed him and arrived at the village.

We walked in silence.

"In any case, the village doesn't seem all that energetic."

It's as he says, the Supards don't look all that healthy.

There's also someone with a cough preparing the meals.

Although the children are healthy.

The children with tails are running around playing.

Ah right, so supard children have tails.....

"Considering the size of the village, the number of people is rather small."

"Have they gone hunting?"

"They have livestock, they wouldn't need to go hunting would they?"

"Ah, you have a point."

Just now, we saw an animal being prepared for food.

Which is why they would be back from hunting.

Rather than a group, it might be just one person that leaves, since that animal might be stored as food....

"It would have to be the disease."

The village has that "sick person" smell to it.

I might be biased because of the medicine information we received.....but the village still seems to have a sickly vibe.

I should be fine, but would it be better if I wore a mask?

"It's here, hurry up."

The Supard who talked to us before led us in single file.

In the village, it's the oldest house.

However, it's also the largest.

It's gotta be the village chief pattern.

"Chieftain, I am entering. I have brought Ruijerd's guests."

As he said that, he opened the door to the house.

The inside looked like some kind of hall.

Rather than the house of the Chieftain, it seemed more like an auditorium or a conference hall.

Anyhow, inside there were five Supards.

Most likely, five old men.

They had a calming atmosphere, more so than the Supard who brought me here.

All of them had green hair and white skin, they're beautiful.

Age was difficult to understand.

"Unh."

And so, one of the five.

He stood the instant I entered the room.

With a familiar native dress....

Facial scars.

White spear.

With a familiar metal head band.

His hair grew. He's no longer a cue ball.

This time there's no doubt.

"Ruijerd-san!"

A natural smile overflowed.

Out of nostalgia, I wanted to rush towards him instinctively, but I held back a few steps before I entered.

But when he saw my face, he gave a puzzled look.

"Are you.....Rudeus?"

I wonder if he's forgotten about me.

That would be rather sad.

".....Have you forgotten?"

"No, the face in my memory is different."

"Aah! I get it, this is for a disguise."

I remove the ring and show them my actual face. It caused a buzz among the Chieftains.

I understand that face.....is what I would like to say, but it's probably thanks to the Supard's third eye.

"I see, it has been so long."

"It really has."

Aah, how nostalgic.

There are so many things I want to say.

There are so many things I want to tell.

About Eris and Paul.

There are loads of things I want to hear.

About this village and what he has been doing up to now.

No, if you look at this village you can tell.

Ruijerd found it.

What he had long been searching for, he had found at last.

"Ruijerd-san...."

I might cry.

My memories of him are coming back to me.

The time when I first met Ruijerd.

When we met, he was alone. Near the Migurd village is where we began our journey. He did not appear to be alone, but he was.

But Ruijerd is no longer alone.

"Well, congratulations. You found the Supard tribe."

"Ah."

Ruijerd nodded while fondly looking at me and gave a smile.

He is surrounded by his comrades.

.....the surrounding 5 don't seem all that moved, but Ruijerd is happy.

"But Rudeus.....why are you here?"

Ah, right.

This isn't the time to be immersed in sentimentality.

Now is not the time to reminisce.

"It's a long story. There are also many things I want to hear from you. So may I have a little of your time?"

While sitting in the conference hall, I said that with a serious face.

"Chieftain, is that alright?"

Sitting furthest in the back, the pattern on his clothes was much more exuberant than the other four.

He would have to be the Chieftain.

In response to Ruijerd's question, he made a difficult face.

"Can we trust this human?"

"We can."

"Then why not hear it?"

With the permission of the Chieftain, the conversation began.

Before I told my story, Ruijerd gave me an explanation of how he reached the Supard Village.

The story started after he had delivered Norn and Aisha to my place.

After that, Ruijerd set out on a journey to find any remaining, living Supards.

While moving from country to country he planned to search the northern part of the Central Continent.

But after he left town, Badigadi quickly caught up.

"He said, 'I know where you can find the remaining living Supards'."

Ruijerd was skeptical.

But he had nothing else to go on, so for the meantime, he listened.

During the next couple of years, their journey together ended at the Biheiril Kingdom.

And so, they entered the Forest of No Return, the backwoods of the Earth Dragon Valley.

He then guided him to the place where the Supards were living.

Ruijerd was kindly accepted by the Supards.

There was much talk regarding the war of the past, but all that was taken to kindly.

He began life in this village and gained peace.

"But a plague struck the village."

An unknown plague.

The initial symptoms are similar to that of the common cold, but then you begin to lose energy and start trembling. The forehead eye gets cloudy, and it eventually leads to death.

As Ruijerd saw the villagers dying one by one, he ran about in order to search for the treatment.

Ruijerd himself was also infected, but to save the village, he forced his trembling body to Irel.

And so he succeeded in buying medicine from a peddler.

As of now, the village was heading towards recovery.

"But outside the village, demons of this forest had exterminated the investigation squad. Those kinds of rumours are circulating, aren't they?"

"When the plague hit, the beasts of the forest most likely went outside."

In the first place, why would the Supard race make their village here?

It was the same as what the old lady from the village in the Earth Dragon Valley said.

Several hundred years ago.

When the Supard race was chased from the Magic Continent, they spread all over the world.

They were persecuted wherever they went, at times they were chased by Knights or the military, day after day.

The Supard refugees, avoiding plains, walking along the forests and foot of the mountains, sought for a safe-haven.

A land where the humans couldn't tread, a place where the Supards could live.

Seeking that place, persistently, to the ends of the world.

And so, the place they found was here, the place called the Valley of the Earth Dragon in the Forest of No Return.

Because of the earth dragons, large demonic beasts didn't approach. The forest was inhabited only by the [Invisible Demons].

Of course, the [Invisible Wolf] is not on the same level as a common demonic beast.

Because of the benefit of invisibility, 3 of them could wipe out the average adventurer party.

But, the invisible demons, to the Supards' [eye], were a simple matter.

And so their strength, compared to the Supards' who had lived on the magic continent, couldn't match.

So they became livestock.

Before long, the Supard race had settled in the Forest of No Return.

Of course, they had trouble.

No matter how few humans enter the forest, as there was a human village near, their hiding place was not absolute.

After the Supards had been living in the forest for a while, the villagers began to enter.

The villagers frequently went in and out of the forest, sometimes coming close to the village.

At that time, the Chieftain of the Supards decided that the demonic beasts in the forest were to be reduced, and at the same time ordered the protection of any villagers lost in the forest; that was the promise he made.

If it's the legend of the village, and what the old lady told us before.....

But this is a story from 200~300 years ago, so it's possible that she was wrong.

Whatever the case, they have kept their promise and the humans are still alive.

Anyhow, the Supards have successfully done this while maintaining a reasonable distance.

But with the uproar caused by the plague, the balance was broken.

"The country intends to destroy this village."

After hearing that story, I reported about the rumors that were circulating in the Biheiril Kingdom and what the country intends to do.

"I see....."

Upon hearing that, the Chieftain's face showed a look of disappointment.

Not the expression of wanting to fight if destruction is imminent, but disappointment.

With a tired look, and an expression of resignation.

"It seems we can no longer live here either....."

"Where can we possibly live now.....?"

"If it wasn't for that war...."

The Chieftains gave a numbed look and Ruijerd looked apologetic.

"I am sorry."

In response to Ruijerd's apology, the Chieftains hurriedly shook their heads.

"We are not blaming you Ruijerd. We had decided together to follow Laplace as well."

"There may still be some hard feelings, but at that time, everybody looked at the warriors with pride, and would have been glad to join you. We share the same sin."

"......But why must only we meet these gazes?"

"Why would Laplace do such a disservice to the Supard race.....?"

Voicing blame is useless, nobody is entirely at fault.

It was not because of regret.

Just the voice of a man who had lost normality.

Nothing can be done.

There is no choice but to run.

Those feelings, through their tones and actions, are being expressed.

The war of 400 years ago.

To the humans, it is an event of the distant past.

But for them, it's a similar stretch of time to that which has passed since the teleportation incident for me.

For the Supard race, the Laplace campaign has probably yet to end.

"If it is alright with you, should I inform the Biheiril Kingdom?"

Before I could think, the words had leaked out.

"Eh?"

"I am a human. That, in a way, gives me power.

Up until now, the Supard race have been exterminating dangerous beasts in the forest and protecting a human village.

That is to the benefit of the country.

In short, with that explanation, I will request that they allow you to live in your corner of this forest."

Now I know what to do.

To defeat Gisu, that is my job.

Although Ruijerd and his comrades are part of the plan, if that causes us to be unable to find Gisu, then it would be better to avoid doing it.

I'm also thinking that.

But can I leave the Supards to die?

Up until now, I have been selling Ruijerd dolls and picture books.

For what purpose?

To look for Ruijerd?

But why dolls and picture books?

To help recover the honour of the Supard race.

I have always been trying to help the Supard race and Ruijerd.

My priorities might be off.

But who else besides me is in the position to save the Supard race?

"The humans hate us. Do you think they'll accept us?"

"The hate for the Supards within the human race is already fading.

In the Biheiril Kingdom, the humans and the obviously different Ogre tribe exist in peace, I feel there will be little resistance.

Within this area, the Millis Church has little influence,

While spreading good rumours of the Supard race with my own hands, if you let me help, then I'm sure they'll accept."

They began talking rapid-fire.

At the very least, there isn't any meaning for the Biheiril Kingdom to destroy the Supard race.

Without the Supards, the invisible wolves will flood out from the forest, and the village will perish.

We don't know how far the invisible wolves will spread, but it will most likely reach the second city Irel.

It should be fine to ask them to ignore the Supard race.

Rather than getting wiped out, this would be better.

"If the Bilheiril Kingdom does refuse, I'll have you be allowed into the country of someone I know."

The Asura Kingdom.....would be tough.

In that country, the Millis Church is beginning to thrive.

But to the north of the Asura kingdom, there is a large forest.

That place doesn't belong to any kingdom.

As long as no real harm comes forth while they live there, it's possible to say that the Mills Church won't be too obstinate about it.

More so, in that forest is the band of thieves that know Ariel. It would be good if they could get along and share.

With Ariel, I might be able to use the good condition of the Supard race.....

"Will it be alright?"

"Before that, can we trust this man?"

"If he is an acquaintance of Ruijerd....."

"But can we believe what he is saying?"

Those around the Chieftain began arguing amongst themselves.

So much so that you wouldn't think they were the same race as Ruijerd.

Since they all look so young, it kind of looked like a youth group meeting.

If you brought a video like this into human society, they would at least realize that they aren't demons.....

"It does not need to be decided now."

The Chieftain said that and the discussion ended.

Indeed, if a man appears out of nowhere and suddenly says something like that, you would get confused and be unable to decide.

"I understand. The humans will come to attack in 16-17 days. Although there is time for discussion, please decide quickly."

Although, if negotiations here were to break down, I would help protect the Supard village.

"......I understand. We will have our decision in a few days."

As the Chieftain said that, he stood up with a hard to understand face.

"Huh? But you still haven't heard the reason I have come here."

"Currently we are too divided to hear your story. And the sun will also set soon. For now, the meeting is adjourned. I would like to make arrangements."

I've been rescheduled.

They're an excellent company.

"We must prepare food and lodging for our guest."

"I'll do it."

Well, hearing what I came here to say tomorrow shouldn't be a problem.

Even if this village's problem isn't solved, I won't have to fight Gisu or Hitogami over it.

Priorities.

Tomorrow I will explain them why I proposed such a suggestion.

And like that, I finished my meeting with the Chieftains.

That evening, we were given a vacant house to stay in.

Doga shut himself in and Shandor, at dusk, went looking around the village out of curiosity.

I was in Ruijerd's home.

It seemed he had the position of an advisor, and was living retired in the village.

Home, Ruijerd's home.

When I see it, it somehow warms my heart.

He is no longer on an unending journey, being persecuted wherever he goes.

This is the place Ruijerd belongs to.

Even if he is absent for a time, this is a place he can return to, with a warm bed and a smiling family.

A home is a great thing.

Ah, no good, I think I might cry.

"You can sit there."

"OK."

The inside was quite plain.

The structure is definitely similar to the Migurds' homes.

There is a pelt draped over something like a fireplace, and clothes hanging on the wall.

The inside is divided into three sections, and Ruijerd seems to be in the storeroom.

It seems food, water pots, and the like are put in a separate room as the sound of water dripping could be heard from there.

But the appearance isn't that impressive.

Although the floor is covered with fur, there are grains of wood sticking out from the wall.

While a trophy of the invisible wolf was decorating the wall.....

Ah, the thing that's hanging from it, it's Roxy's pendant.

How nostalgic, so he was still holding on to it.

Still.....the house is quite spacious.

"Excuse me, Ruijerd-san."

"What is it?"

"Are you perhaps living alone in this house?"

"Yeah."

Living alone in a house this big.

Suddenly, I thought of living alone in my current house.

The bedroom would be the same as before.

I would cram anything useless in the basement like now.

I'd make use of the bathroom, dining room, and kitchen but.....probably not the living room.

Other rooms as well aren't of any use to me.

As the head of the house, I can change the layout of my private room as much as I want.

All of this would result in an empty and dreary room.

If it was the me from before, I would've thought of it as fine, but the me right now can't stand it.

".....Are you not going to marry or something?"

"Do you think I can?"

Ah.

Damn it.

Now that I recall, his wife and child, by his own hands, were.....

So he obviously wouldn't.

"Sorry."

"Don't apologize. It's not because I'm being pulled by the past, but because I simply don't have any sort of companion right now."

Ruijerd sat in front of me while smiling.

"So what has been happening to you?"

He seems to be relaxed.

This sense of distance.

I should've brought Eris along if it was going to be like this.....

No, I'll do it after all of this is over.

We can meet whenever we want if we're all alive.

Therefore, we must act together if we all want to live.

"It's a long story, is that fine?"

I thought that it would've been fine tomorrow, but I guess I should at least speak with Ruijerd ahead of time.

I, too, can't help but want to talk to him.

"Let me hear it."

"Yes."

I started talking about the time after we parted.

About my sisters, about Paul's death, about my marriage with Roxy.

My reunion with Eris, and how I reconciled with her.

Ruijerd was calmly listening to all of that.

He had a little clouded expression regarding Paul's death, but as a result of me not being particularly sad, we didn't talk about it.

Rather, the thing we did talk about was Eris.

"As I thought, so Eris did have the disease of a warrior?"

".....Ah~, I wonder. It still looks like she's suffering from it even now."

"Even so, to marry three women, it's just like you. Are there any kids already?"

"Yes. There are four."

"I see."

He didn't say 'I want to see them'.

But I'll bring them along next time.

Especially Ars.

Ruijerd wants to see mine and Eris's child.

Well, this and that can be done after defeating Gisu.

"Ruijerd-san."

I correct my posture thusly.

The order of things was sequential but now comes the main question.

"I have currently become Dragon God Orsted's subordinate."

I started talking about the present situation.

About how the Dragon God Orsted had been fighting Hitogami since long ago.

How I took Hitogami's side, but he was deceiving me from the start.

How he tried to kill my family as he deemed my descendants a hindrance.

But the future me came and how I was barely able to prevent that.

How the angered Hitogami suggested that I fight Orsted and how I did.

I lost to Orsted, but he was a surprisingly nice guy and I was able to escape from the hands of Hitogami.

And after I became Orsted's subordinate, I joined in the fight against Hitogami.

How I am currently in the midst of assembling personnel in order to bring down Demon God Laplace, whose resurrection is to be 80 years from now.

How everything was progressing smoothly until Gisu took Hitogami's side.

About Gisu's letter. About the possibility of Gisu being in Biheiril Kingdom.

In order to defeat Gisu, I sent in every trustworthy comrade towards the whole nation of Biheiril Kingdom.

While reporting on the current situation, I said at last.

"Ruijerd-san.

I've been searching for you ever since I decided to fight against Laplace in the future.

Please become my streng-.....no, please fight alongside me."

I requested as I bowed my head.

Ruijerd, too, is a person who holds resentment towards Laplace.

"....."

Therefore, I, as if it was to be expected.

Was dreaming about his acceptance to my request with all my heart.

"....."

But Ruijerd didn't answer.

He just made an unpleasant face and looked away.

"Eh?"

I hadn't even thought about the possibility that he would refuse.

When Laplace's name was mentioned, Ruijerd's face became expressionless as usual, though I always thought that when the time came he would just nod as if to say 'Got it'.

But I was wrong.

He averted his eyes from me.

That made his refusal apparent.

His attitude was saying 'no'.

'This is a lie', or so I would like to think.

But, 'so that's how it is', or so I was assenting to it as well.

Isn't it obvious?

It's because he found the members of the Supard race.

He still holds resentment towards Laplace.

There is still some residual anger.

However, that fight ended long ago.

During the final battle of Laplace's military campaign, it was all over when he struck his blow of revenge.

Not to mention that the Supard village is currently in a grave situation.

There is no need to promise until the present situation is resolved.

"Is it because of the Supard village? If it is, please leave it to me. It's been several years after our separation, and I've reached the point where I've become so influential that I can even do something rash."

"It's not that."

Looks like I was wrong.

But I hadn't given up yet.

I needed an answer immediately, so I thought of anything else I could use to persuade him.

What kind of life had he lived after Laplace disappeared?

What had been Ruijerd aiming for?

To protect the remaining Supard race?

To protect the long lost brethren that he finally found?

There is that.

But, there is one more thing, which has a greater impact.

"Then, is it restoring the Supard Race's honor? Asura's ruler and Mills's miko are also participating in the fight against Laplace. If the word gets out that you stood by them in the fight, then even the Supard Race's honor—-"

"It's not that."

Is that it, or so I thought, but my suggestion was rejected without a second thought.

Ruijerd stood up.

His expression gave off a thirst for blood and could also be seen with hints of bewilderment and hesitance.

Perhaps, there may be a different reason that I'm not aware of.

"Rudeus, come with me."

Ruijerd picked up the spear that was leaning against the wall and walked towards the exit.

I got up in a hurry and followed him.

As a result of talking for so long, outside it's already pitch dark.

Although the moon is peeking from the gaps in the trees, you can't even see your feet.

Ruijerd headed towards the outskirts of the village.

I took out a light spirit from the scroll in my hand and illuminated the surroundings.

Ruijerd kept walking for several minutes as if to say that there is no need for light, and stopped in a clearing within the forest.

"Rudeus."

"Yes?"

From here on out, I'm going to be hearing things that I didn't want to hear.

I had that premonition.

Perhaps an uneasy premonition flashed through my mind.

"Regarding the discussion before, there's just one lie."

"....."

"The Chieftain and all the warriors as well believe in that lie."

A lie.

"There is no cure for the plague. The medicine didn't have any effect. We're not going to recover."

The figure of a woman coughing in the village comes to mind.

The symptoms of a disease that can be felt from everyone in the village.

The number of villagers that Sandor had said was rather low.

"Currently, the advancement of the illness has just been suppressed."

".....How?"

When he heard that, Ruijerd put his hand on the metal headband that was concealing his forehead.

"This."

The thing that appeared from under the headband.

It was not the red gem.

The gem that should've been red, had turned into a deep blue.

Furthermore, it was surrounded by a black pattern.

Something like.....like a drawing made by a fourteen year old using their left hand, a pattern like that.

"That is?"

Ruijerd's mood and the ominous presence from the pattern is probably the reason why I can't bring myself to make fun of him.

I feel like I've become more aware to others' powers and danger since I've become stronger than before.....

"Currently, my body has been possessed by『Dark King』Vita."

Dark King Vita.

The one who lives in the labyrinth of the Heaven Continent『Hell』, one of the possible candidates for Hitogami's apostles.

"Dark King Vita fissioned and distributed himself to the infected people in the village. Due to the power of Vita's fissioned parts, the plague's progress has been suppressed."

"Pos-Possession.....are you all right?"

"There isn't anything out of the ordinary. Only the progress of the plague and its symptoms have been suppressed."

"Did he say something or do anything?"

"No."

The only thing that I heard from Orsted was his name.

From what he looked like to what goals he may have, I hadn't heard anything about it.

So he's the type who can possess.

Fission... that means, he's a life-form that can split himself.

Or possibly a bacteria type?

"But,『Dark King』Vita should've been living in the labyrinth of the heaven continent『Hell』.....just why?"

"When the village was caught in a dilemma, a male appeared in front of me with Vita in a jar."

"One male.....don't tell me!"

"It was Gisu."

So it was him.

"Gisu said that afterwards, a great war is going to happen in this country. When that time comes, he wanted me to assist him."

"....."

"I accepted.

I had doubts about relying on an unfamiliar person like Dark King Vita, but we didn't have any choice. Then, the plague's progress was actually suppressed and everyone was saved."

And then, Ruijerd expressed a disappointed smile as if mocking himself.

"To think that the enemy Gisu was fighting with was you, I never even dreamt that....."

My heart is pounding.

Even though I considered the slight possibility of Ruijerd becoming an enemy.

Now that the possibility is true, the pounding won't stop.

"It's not that the plague has been completely cured.

If Dark King Vita dies, his fissions will also die or so I've heard.

If that happens, the village will again be swallowed up by the plague."

"....."

"I must fight you."

Ruijerd said that expressionlessly with a sober face like always.

"Of course, even I don't want to fight you. If it weren't for you, I wouldn't have been able to come this far. I may still be loitering around the Demon Continent with foolish thoughts."

".....Even I feel that I have a debt to repay you. I don't want to fight you."

"Fighting is a necessity. It's been like this since the beginning of time, it's immemorial."

".....I guess so."

The fellow that I feel indebted to is going to become my enemy.

Helplessly fighting against one another, when the other dies, the heart of the survivor becomes scarred.

Something like that may happen due to the war.

But this should be different.

Why should there be any need to fight?

Exception. Right, there should be an exception.

There must be a way to avoid the war.

In order to avoid the war, the source of it should be eliminated.

That's right, as long as the source is removed.....

What's the source.....?

Orsted and Hitogami?

It's certainly that, but I've already reached a point where I can no longer betray Orsted.

Currently, it's the relationship between me and Ruijerd.

The reason Ruijerd must fight me.

It's because of comrades, the brethren of Supard race.

If the Supard race is no longer.....no that's wrong.

It's the plague.

The plague gnawing at the Supard race.

If a way to cure it is known, then the Supard race should become our comrades.

"If there is a method to completely cure the plague, will you come to my side?"

Betray them.

Hearing those words, Ruijerd gave a unwavering glance and wore a rigid face for a little while.

But I didn't leave from his sight.

Gisu had dibs on Ruijerd before me.

But Ruijerd informed me about the situation.

If he had really sided with Gisu, he wouldn't have said anything and just killed me. Yet...

The reason he brought me to this place and explained the situation is certainly because he was swayed as well.

"....."

Ruijerd was straining his lips and furrowing his brow.

I intend to make him my comrade.

He, too, should be thinking that.

But, he may also have an obligation towards Gisu who saved his brethren as well as Hitogami, who gave the instruction.

Since it's the honest Ruijerd.

"I said it before, but I was betrayed by Hitogami. And I can definitely say that the same could happen with the Supard Race. Gisu was betrayed once as well and I was told that my entire family will be killed. There is also the possibility that if you keep following him, then after the war is over, Dark King Vita will willfully leave and the Supard race will be doomed anyway."

Even if you feel indebted, the possibility of Hitogami eventually betraying you is high.

Hitogami is that kind of guy.

Of course, it is nothing more than just a malicious guess.

But I ought to tell him about the things that have happened in the past.

"....."

Ruijerd is still silent.

He remains silent and continues to look at me.

I continue to look at him as well.

And then, he slowly opens his mouth.

"If there really is such a method. Then, all right. I also wish to fight alongside you."

"Ruijerd-san.....!"

A sigh of relief escapes me.

I'm glad.

I'm glad that we don't have to kill each other now.

"But, is there such a method?"

"Orsted knows a lot about this world. If we listen to him then there is a possibility."

But, will Orsted tell us about it?

He hasn't told me so far.

That the Supard race was here, he didn't inform me about it.

No, based on the situation, I'll properly listen to him.

Whether or not I'll be fighting with Ruijerd may be decided later.

"In any case, there should be a countermeasure to the disease.

Until then, don't say that you'll become my enemy, please wait."

The problem is the delay.

But, there isn't any countermeasure, that's understood but it's still not too late.

"Orsted came once, before Gisu."

"Eh?"

He abruptly spoke, causing me to tilt my head.

Orsted came?

"When?"

"Approximately two years ago, when the first patient was discovered."

"....."

"But he didn't do anything. Of course, we didn't know that he had a connection with you and drove him away, but.....if what you say is true, at that time, Orsted should've been your comrade."

What does that mean?

What does that mean?

"Do you have absolute trust in Orsted?"

Orsted didn't do anything about the Supard race.

Though, there is the possibility that he wasn't aware of the illness, but if what Ruijerd says is true, then that can't be the case.

Trust.

The method to a cure.

Can't do it, don't know it.

"I do."

But I said that.

Orsted and I have gotten along all this time, until now.

Perhaps, even this time he may have some reason.

For example, the Supard race may become some kind of hindrance to him in the future or the like.

But, if we talk things through then a resolution can be found.

At least, Orsted had already visited the village once, it isn't like he wants to kill off the entire village.

Perhaps he came to do just that, but wasn't able to.

Now that is something to think about.

"You can trust in Orsted."

I've been working together with Orsted until now, that much is certain.

Surely, communicating with him can be difficult since he doesn't say much. But he can be trusted as he aims to defeat Hitogami and always moves towards that goal.

"He doesn't like talking too much, but please believe in me and not Orsted. I would never come to loathe the Supard race."

"....."

Ruijerd turned back.

Folding his arms as if to think, he stood like that for several seconds.

Suddenly, as if he realized something, he raised his face.

A large moon could be seen in the sky.

".....Gu!"

In the next moment, he suddenly grasped his chest and squatted.

"Ruijerd-san!?"

Just what happened?

Immediately after I thought that, I rushed over to him.

He abruptly raised his head and grabbed my shoulder.

".....!"

That was strange.

Ruijerd's face was changing.

His eyes were stained deep blue.

The whites and blacks of his eyes were transforming into a deep blue color.

His mouth was partly open; it didn't look like his face was under his control at all.

The gem on his forehead was turning red, but the surrounding pattern was releasing an ominous glow.

Looking at that, I understood.

"Are you being manipulated!?"

Damn it.

Just because he told me that nothing happened until now, I shouldn't have immediately had that conversation.

Even though I was told he was being possessed...

It was too late to think about it now, Ruijerd approached my face.

And kissed me.

At the same time, some kind of liquid infiltrated my mouth, and crawled into my throat as if it was a living animal.

"Uwahh.....!"

I jumped up.

A familiar room leaped into my vision the moment I opened my eyes.

My legs wrapped in the soft blanket.

The door which exited into the hallway from the bedroom.

The gentle breeze blowing in from a partly open window.

When I turn around, I see the pillow made from treant's material.

Roxy's figurine is placed on the side-table.

This bed, which I've grown accustomed to sleeping in.

Located in the Magic City Sharia, it's my house.

"Haa.....Haa....."

I feel like I had some kind of strange dream.

"Huh.....?"

But I couldn't remember what happened in the dream.

Just that it was unpleasant.

If it wasn't, I wouldn't have jumped up like that.

Well, a dream is just a dream.

"Nh.....Ngh!"

I got out of bed and stretched.

The weather today is nice as well.

In a little bit, summer will end and autumn will take its place.

I can't help but look forward to it.

As I walk down the stairs while thinking that, two children noisily ran up to me.

Children with dark brown hair and animal ears.

"Don't fall down now~."

"Yeeessss!"

I escort the running children into their room and continue down to the first floor.

Passing the hallway, to the dining room.

In the dining room, one female was preparing breakfast.

A voluptuous body hidden by simple clothing, but the clothing was cut, a tail coming out from behind.

When she noticed that I was in the room, she turned back while twitching her sharp ears.

"Good morning, Rinia."

"Good morning-nya."

To be told with a somewhat blunt tone of voice,

I was suddenly overtaken by a vague, uneasy feeling from when I had that unpleasant dream, so I hugged her.

"Rinia!"

"U-nya!?"

Rinia is my wife.

Just why was I married to her?

Right, now that I recall, it was during my days as a student.

I had been worried about my ED, and was trying to cure my son by various means.

At that time, Rinia and Pursena appeared in front of me..

Two people, possessing bodies overflowing with a vibrant youth, throbbing impression, and wild styles.

When I fought them, restrained them, and peeled them naked, my ED was yet to be cured.

But, after one or two years, I kept encountering them in the classroom and cafeteria, and I was gradually becoming more aware of their presence.

Soon, it reached the point where the two of them lewdly tempted me; and at that time my son, little by little, was regaining its response.

It had completely recovered when they reached their 7th year, during autumn.

It was then when the two of them, both excited and unable to control themselves due to the mating season, brought me to their room.

It's nostalgic.

That night was the best.

After that, on the day of graduation, the two of them dueled and Pursena became the victor.

Pursena went back to the Great Forest and Rinia came to my place.

And then every year, whenever autumn arrived, we made children.

"Fushaa!"

"Owww!"

My hand which was massaging her breasts was hit.

"It's forbidden until mating season! We decided on that-nya!"

"It should be fine with just a hug....."

"It's you anyway, it won't finish with just a hug-nya! A wife is nyot her husband's sex slave!"

"That wasn't my intention though....."

While sighing, I sat on the table.

Rinia's mood is always like that.

According to the rules of the beast race, it's only allowed during the mating season.

Of course, when the mating season arrives, the opposite side willingly invites you.

The children are cute, and having children with Rinia during the mating season really satisfies my sexual desires.

But still, that's not it.

Just a little bit of, how should I say this, shouldn't a little bit of touchy-feely be alright in ensuring our love?

"Hey, Everyone-nya! The meal is ready, get down here-nya!"

"Yeessss!"

Rinia strikes the empty pot with a clanging noise and the children come running down from the second floor.

It's not just the two children that were going up the stairs a while ago, there were twelve children in all.

The beast race can give birth to two to three children at once, that's why it's a large family.

My house is filled with children's rooms.

"Eat quickly, there is work for you to do-nya! The students are waiting-nya!"

"Yeah, yeah."

Being pestered by Rinia, I began eating my breakfast.

Her cooking is quite delicious.

When we were newlyweds, she was only able to roast meat, stew fish, and boil vegetables.

These past few years, she has learned quite a bit from Sharia's home cooking.

Seasoning is a bit weak, but that's because the beast race's sense of taste is different, so it can't be helped.

"Thank you for the food."

"Yes. It wasn't much-nya."

Once the meal is finished, as always, I change into my robe and go to work.

I entered the magic guild once I graduated and am now a teacher at the Magic University.

I'm teaching chantless-magic invocation.

This kind of magic style is extremely high in practical usage; that's why it's a fairly popular course.

Like this, my teaching method for chantless-magic invocation is established, and if my students produce results, someday becoming the vice-principal or even principal will no longer be a dream anymore.

"Well then, I'm off."

"Have a good day-nyan."

While parting with few words, I headed towards the front door.

For my wife and children, I'll work hard today and every day.

"Nh?"

I suddenly saw the living room door was slightly ajar.

From inside, I could feel a person's presence.

It's an awfully nostalgic presence.

"....."

As if I was being lured in, I opened the door.

There was a man.

Pretending not to see me, with one hand on the back, he's sitting on the sofa.

The back of his head had bright brown hair that was tied into a ponytail at the base of his neck.

"Nh?"

The man turned around.

"Yo."

It's Paul.

Why is he in such place?

Wasn't he dea-.....

Ah, no, he's not dead.

He gave up on the teleportation labyrinth and came back to my place.

Thereupon, coming to Magic City Sharia, he's living in the neighborhood.

Yeah, that's definitely what happened.

Lilia, Aisha, and Norn are currently living in Paul's house.

They condemned me for not going to Paul's aid, but now we're on good terms with one another.

Yeah, definitely, I'm sure that was the case.

"She's a fine wife, eh?"

"A fine wife.....it's not like you're seeing her for the first time, right?"

"No, it's my first time."

Paul laughed heartily and waved his hand.

"Are you fine with how things are right now?"

"What's that? Do you have something that you want to say?"

"No, not really? There's nothing really. I just asked because I wanted to know whether you have any complaints or not."

".....There aren't any complaints."

Rinia is a fine wife.

That is, I'm just unhappy that I'm not allowed to touch her except during the restricted period once a year.

Even that, I don't particularly mind it.

The mating season is soon; when that time comes she'll become more clingy than usual, and with a level my body is not able to endure, she'll love me.

And to be able to make kids, as a male, my instinct is satisfied.

If I have to condense a year's worth of 'action' to one season, then it isn't such a big deal.

My work is going smoothly as well.

I'm a popular teacher at the Magic University.

My teaching method is successful and widely known in the top classes of every school.

There are many students who wish to take the class, and the other teachers' trust is great too.

My future is bright.

"I see, so there are no complaints. That's the best of all."

".....Right?"

"But, something, are you not forgetting something?"

As if scolding a foolish child with a tender voice but continuing to look down on me.

"For example, look, the work you're doing right now. Who did you imitate to gain the popularity of your students and teachers?"

"That is obviously....."

Who was it again?

For a moment, I felt like a blue-coloured something flashed in front of my eyes, but I immediately shook my head.

But, the noise in my heart grew.

"Isn't there a person who taught you that? In this world, the technique to become successful."

"......From some time ago, just what are you trying to say!? Say it clearly!"

I gave into my irritation and approached the sofa.

I walked to the front of Paul and grabbed him by the collar.

Then, my hand stopped.

"Then, I'll say it clearly.....I'm already dead, ya know?"

The lower half of Paul's body wasn't there.

"Uwah!"

I jumped out of bed.

"Haa.....Haa....."

My breathing was rough, my throat dry, and my back was drenched with sweat.

It was a bad dream.

I saw an impossible dream.

What was that.....What was that.....

"What a nightmare....."

".....What's the matter?"

"Aah, no, I just had an odd dream.

"When I came to Magic University.....There was someone from the beast race named Rinia, right?

I had a dream where I was married and had children with her.

I had become a teacher, and was teaching chantless magic to our children."

"That's a nightmare?"

Was it a nightmare?

When you put it like that, it doesn't really feel like a nightmare.

Baby-making with Rinia for a short period of time each year while looking after the children, teaching the students each day.

It was a quiet and happy lifestyle.

But—.

"It was a nightmare."

As I said that, with my sleepy eyes, sitting up on the canopy I saw my wife.

She is a goddess of beauty.

Her frame neither too large nor too small, but just right.

Her breasts neither too large nor too small, but just right.

Her butt is slightly small, but it perfectly matches the size of her chest and height.

Overall, her waist is slender but also wide, it's neither one or the other.

But she is impossible to view as a whole.

It can be said she embodies symmetry, she has the perfect body.

If a flaw must be found, it would be her messy bed-hair.

Her normally beautiful flowing blond hair was somewhat disturbed.

But it does not detract from her charm.

With her messy hair, no human capable of reproduction could resist her charm.

To put it simply, erotic.

The messy hair, most likely caused by the actions with me last night, made her 30% more erotic.

"Being married to such a perfect woman, I have everything I desire in my hands. Why would I be a teacher in a rural town?"

"Is that a compliment? Such flattery."

My wife.

Ariel Anemoi Asura.

She began to giggle.

"But maybe you wish for such a life.

Lately there have been many parliamentary affairs, right?

Royal life is by no means easy.

Our work, no matter how small, bears huge responsibility, but we're not guaranteed the same amount of happiness.

The happiness people feel, it's not that important.

Perhaps teaching in a rural area, spending time surrounded by children, that living as royalty now makes the balance between responsibility and happiness different.....

More so than a woman like me, a child like Rinia may be more to your liking?"

Ludicrous.

Ariel is the perfect woman. She doesn't have a single flaw.

She would indirectly rebuke me for my failings and would even flaunt me in front of people.

She doesn't have any problem with other female relationships and would even allow concubines.

And on top of that she is great at her work, she is trusted greatly by those around her.

She is the ideal boss and a national idol, she is that kind of woman.

No, perhaps there may be some flaws.

She can be argumentative, and values logic more than feelings.

She also has a somewhat peculiar fetish.

But, for me at least, these are not enough to be called shortcomings.

"Aah, I apologize. Did I say a little too much?"

"No, I was just thinking that it just might be so..."

"If a vacation is needed, please say so.

Lately the kingdom has been calm, so taking a little breather should be fine.

Wherever you go.....Why not take a concubine with you?"

"If I got a vacation, I would just want to hold you all day."

"Geez.....nothing but jokes with you."

"It's true."

I wonder how long it has been since I held Ariel like that.

The first time, we welcomed a lot of concubines, it was the sumptuous feast I had always dreamed of, but recently such things don't appeal to me.

She alone is fine.

If someone were to ask me what currently makes me happiest, it would be that I can love the woman named Ariel Anemoi Asura.

"*giggle* Then let us make that kind of time, next time."

While she was giggling, a maid dressed Ariel.

I also got out of bed and opened my arms.

A maid immediately rushed to me.

When I saw the two maids dividing the work and quickly dressing me, I felt I had become important.

The time at Magic University seemed very nostalgic.

When I enrolled in Magic University, I met Ariel.

After being chased out of the country after a political loss, Ariel did not give up and began assembling allies.

Being the only one at the school capable of chantless magic, I was scouted.

She was beautiful from the beginning, and possessed charisma.

But as I was suffering from ED, I had an unwelcoming demeanor.

That changed because she fixed my ED.

The approach was a little rough.

She forcibly used an aphrodisiac to get me excited and made me attack her.

Initially, I didn't realize it was a ploy on her part.

I had done something unthinkable and out of a sense of guilt, I joined her side as a form of atonement.

At first, I was a high powered escort.

I did not have any special authority, I was just to protect Ariel.

That began to change when I became familiar with Ariel.

Ariel, who strived to be royalty.

But occasionally showed an expression appropriate for a girl her age.

Little by little, I became captivated by that girl.

I will not deny that I initially had ulterior motives, but it was not her body, but rather her heart I was attracted to.

I collided against my colleague Luke many times.

He surely loved Ariel as well.

But Luke died in the decisive battle for the Asura Kingdom, leaving Ariel and me behind.

Finally, I confessed to Ariel and obtained everything.

The world's greatest woman and the world's largest country.

I became the king of the Asura Kingdom.

Rudeus Anemoi Asura.

That is my current name.

Only as an extra to Ariel, my existence is something like a puppet.

Ariel reigns as queen, but it's easier to call me the ruler, that's the only reason.

From the start, my lineage was pretty high profile in the Asura Kingdom, so there were no complaints.

Magic King Rudeus.

The world has taken to calling me that.

When I power up, I might just become Super Rudeus.

Whether or not Ariel loves me is unknown.

I can't say for sure that I'm not being used only for my power and position.

The wedding may have only been to help smoothly govern the kingdom.

That causes my feelings to waver; there is also the large amount of concubines.

However, recently I've come to think that whatever she thinks is irrelevant to her true feelings.

After I married Ariel, she has been continuously maintaining the attitude that she loves me.

She is a hard worker.

She will possibly commit herself to love me.

This act might be a lie, but at least I feel satisfied enough.

Even if I am being deceived, I can say that it felt good to be tricked.

If I cause more harm than benefit, Ariel will probably betray me.

That depends whether or not I work hard.

Let's try harder.

"Well then, shall we go? We have a mountain of work today."

"Yes."

I left the bedroom by Ariel's side.

The two knights guarding the entrance bow their heads.

As we walk down the hallway, no matter who we meet, they bow their head.

This is power.

If I, for example, said I didn't like the way one of these people bowed, that person would go pallid and fall down to their knees.

If I told them to lick my feet, they just might do it.

Fufu, of course, I wouldn't do something like that, but knowing I have the position to do so is an excellent feeling.

Well then, the first job is any incident that may have occurred during the night.

There was no major emergency last night, so there shouldn't be any pressing jobs.

From experience, that should take two hours, and just before noon we have a meeting with the Knight Captain.

After a meal, we have an appointment with some nobles.

We also need to finish up with the petitions from the afternoon, was it?

I hope we can make plans for the vacation; I want to make children with Ariel soon.

Since one of my roles is that of a stallion.

"Your Majesty!"

As I was thinking that, the Knight Captain came running.

He immediately kneeled in front of me and raised his voice.

"The knight sent to exterminate a demonic beast in the forest to the east has come back on the brink of death! He wants your Majesty to hear his last words directly!"

"Huh!"

A demonic beast in the east forest?

So that happened.....

"I have not received this report."

Aah, that makes sense.

"This is the last request of the knight that have fought for your Majesty! Please, please hear out his last request!"

"Dear. There is no need."

Ariel is cold.

But today isn't especially busy.

"Why not meet him?"

It is the wish of the knight that fought for this country.

Just hearing him out should be fine.

Listen to his name and remember it.

With those feelings, I hurried to the audience room.

Ariel seemed unhappy, but followed without excuse.

In the room of the audience, subordinates had gathered.

Notos house, Boreas house, Euros house, and Zephyrus house.

Along with those were many VIPs of the Asura Kingdom aristocracy.

And so surrounded by those people, a single man was waiting on the red velvet carpet.

Resting on a stretcher, he is covered with a blanket.

He had a familiar face.

"Father...."

Paul.

Why is Paul here?

Aah, I know.

Paul heard that I became king and joined the knights.

And so, even though his relationship with the Notos was bad, he bowed his head.

As a knight, he wanted to protect me.

"Yo, Rudy."

Paul raised his hand to greet me as if he wasn't injured at all.

"Father.....the demonic beast, exterminating it, I heard from the Knight Captain....."

"Demon? What are you talking about?"

"Huh?"

I tilted my head as Paul shrugged his shoulders and sighed.

"That's not why I came here."

"As I said, what are you saying.....ngh!"

While I was talking, Paul removed the blanket.

He had no lower body.

With injuries that would cause instant death, Paul was speaking.

"Continuing from what I said earlier."

"Uwah!"

I woke up

I had a bad dream.

A nightmare.

"What's wrong, dear?"

The woman next to me asked while wiping the sweat from my forehead.

She had a curvy body and a youthful smile.

My wife Aisha.

She is, umm, how did we end up married again?

Yes, that's how it is.

Errr, I could no longer put up with her getting in the bath with me.

Aisha, every day, came to tempt me, and each year her body.....Wait, but?

"Hey~ what is it.....? Do you still want me to call you Onii-chan even after we got married? Geez, it can't be helped, Onii-chan is a pervert after all."

"....."

.....On the other side of Aisha was Paul.

Having lost the lower half of his body, he was sitting in a chair.

He's looking here and laughing.

"It's useless. You understand that too, right?"

Paul murmured that.

I know.

Aah.

Well yeah.

I should get it by now.

The reason the nightmare continues.

Why I've been feeling nothing but discomfort.

For a while now, I have been constantly waking up.

It was all a dream.

And so, this is also a dream.

"I finally noticed.『Dark King』Vita. The farce is over."

Dark King

That's right.

The Dark King Vita.

I remembered.

Before I noticed, I was in a room without a door.

The room without a door had three chairs.

There was no other furniture, but it gave off a feeling similar to my room.

The room from my previous life and my current bedroom.

It feels like a mix of both rooms.

And in that room I was sitting in one of those chairs.

In front of me are two people.

No, two creatures?

One was a skeleton.

Wearing a crown, it was a dirty, blackish skeleton.

The other was a slime.

It's most likely a slime.

An object shaped like blue jelly was sitting on the chair.

At least it appeared to be sitting.

"Nice to meet you. I am the the『Dark King』Vita."

Is what the slime said.

The translucent blue slime.

That is the true identity of the Dark King Vita.

Then I wonder what the skeleton is?

It's not Paul, is it.....?

I don't remember what Paul's skeleton looked like, but that crown wouldn't suit Paul.

"This fight is my loss."

The slime made a seriously rotten face and.....no, I don't know where its face is.

He said it in a seriously rotten voice.

Defeated, as in this battle.

He showed me dreams.

It was a very happy dream.

If I hadn't noticed, I would have continued forever in that happy dream.

"....You used some kind of illusion technique on me and showed me that vision."

"Yes. Using your memories, I predicted the future that might have occurred, and blended it with your desire. The finest of illusions."

Illusion techniques, eh?

It seems those kinds of things exist as well.

The unusualness of.....the future that might have happened... now that I recall, I feel as if it had a lot of defects.

A world without Sylphy, Roxy, and Eris.

"Your sexual desire is very strong, it was quite easy."

"Abstinence does that to you."

Oh dear me! That's embarrassing.

And being with Rinia, Ariel, and Aisha is also...

I probably am a little.....

Although it would probably be a lie to say I had absolutely none of those feelings.

No, nothing, I have no feelings of that kind for Aisha, no means no!

"But my feelings towards my wives and my memories of Paul were the catalyst that broke the illusion, right?"

I had seen this type of illusion countless times in my previous life.

Although it was mainly in manga.....anyhow, I knew how to defeat it.

I probably put that into practice unconsciously and it led to this result.

".....No, that's not it. I had you completely under the illusion. Certainly, the effect was shallow because of your special spiritual body.....but that much would never break the illusion."

Huh?

"Then how did I escape?"

"That would be.....this."

Vita pointed to the skeleton from earlier.

The skeleton which assumed a proper posture.

"This is?"

"Quit playing the fool.....You already foresaw the fight with me and prepared this in advance, didn't you? My natural enemy, 『The Bone Ring of Laxus』"

"....."

"And now that I think about it, you dramatically removed the disguise ring in front of Ruijerd to hide the ring on your left hand."

The Bone Ring of Laxus.

I have no memory of preparing something like that.....

"The Bone Ring of Laxus was a ring made by the Death God Laxus in order to kill me.

It uses the death of the person you most relied on to break the illusion, prevent the escape of the practitioner, and corners them.

Although, if you hadn't experienced such a death, the ring wouldn't activate."

Death God Laxus.....The Death God's ring!

The one I got from Randolph.

I put it on! It's true that I had it on!

"I seemed to have made light of you a bit too much."

I didn't see this far ahead.

I also didn't mean to hide the ring.

"I failed.

If it was going to turn out like this I should have controlled Ruijerd and threatened you.

Ruijerd was resolved in the destruction of the village, but then you showed up and I got impatient.

And because you didn't look particularly vigilant, I thought I could take care of you easily.

I didn't think that a plan to take care of me had been prepared.....I could not have predicted a trap to hunt me down....."

It wasn't a trap.

Somehow, I'm sorry.

But Orsted or Randolph might have predicted such a situation.

Although I wish Orsted would tell me about these things in advance.....

No, now that I think about it, he did say to take the ring.

That might be why he kept quiet about it.

By simply wearing the ring, it renders the Dark King powerless, that sort of thing.

Words without worth.

Well, this wouldn't be the first time Orsted has left out important information.

This also isn't the first time I didn't need to hear important information.

"......Well there is the saying that overconfidence leads to defeat."

"Yes, truly."

As Vita regretfully says that, he shrinks.

It's as if he's rapidly losing power.

And at the same time, the skeleton also begins to collapse.

"To think that I, the history's strongest king of the Glutinous race, will be finished off in a place like this and in this way, I had never even dreamt of that. Rudeus of the『Quagmire』. Splendid work."

.....I wonder how I'll get back.

I hadn't predicted these turns of events.

Luck, I wonder if I can chalk it up to that.

I went to see Randolph myself, so I wouldn't call that luck.

Then, would it be better if I told him not to call himself the history's strongest?

No, there's still something left that I need to hear from him.

"There's one thing I want to hear. Are you an apostle of Hitogami?"

"That's right. I am greatly indebted to that God.

He set me free from the demonic hands of Death God Laxus and told me about the route to the Heaven Continent's Hell.

Thanks to him I have lived a long time.....

And this is the result that came of that.

Is it cause and effect, or fate?"

Vita continued to shrink rapidly.

When I first entered the room, he was as big as an average human, but now he's no bigger than a fist.

"Rudeus, let me say one last thing."

"....."

"The Human God is a bad God, but there are those, although few in number, like me that he saved."

As he said that, he had shrunk to the size of a fingertip.

At the same time, the skeleton was disappearing into sand.

"Wait! Tell me who the other apostles might be.....!"

My consciousness also began to fade.

I awoke.

My consciousness was clearing up.

I remember the contents of the dream and the last conversation in that room.

"Uuh....."

There was an abrupt pain in my stomach followed by nausea.

"Blughgh....."

I dropped to all fours and the liquid was vomited out from my mouth.

A blue liquid.

A blue, slime-like substance, mixed with bile and dinner, spread on the ground.

Is it.....the corpse of Dark King Vita?

As I thought that, a sense of discomfort began radiating from the ring on my left finger.

When I took my gauntlet off, the Death God's ring broke and fell to the ground.

The ring sank into the vomit with a plop.

"....."

The fact that the ring is broken,

it means that the conversation with Vita earlier was real.

....Basically, Vita entered me and the ring caused him to self-destruct.

Pitiful.

That said, it wasn't that Vita miscalculated.

If I had been manipulated, Hitogami's victory would have been assured.

And I wouldn't have been able to do a thing.....

A coincidence.

Or should I say inevitable.

The bone ring of the Death God Laxus.

It wasn't just used to have Kishirika listen to its wearer.

It's possible that Randolph didn't even knew what it could really do.

"Aah, I wonder where Ruijerd went?"

I scan the surroundings.

I'm inside a building.

The floor, walls, and layout.....all seem familiar.

It's Ruijerd's house.

From the turn of events, after Vita transferred to me, Ruijerd brought me here.....?

"....."

It's bright outside.

I wonder how many hours have passed.

It seems to already be dawn.

I'll clean up the vomit later.

"Ruijerd-san?"

There was no reply from the landlord.

Did he go outside?

Or is it something else?

For now, I stood up and started looking around.

I have to confirm the situation.

No, there he is.

Ruijerd was lying on the other side of the hearth.

"Ruije-"

He was lying there, pale faced with wheezing breath.

Holding his own trembling body.

The moment I saw that, I was at a loss for words.

This was clearly not normal.

『Vita was halting the progression of the disease. The moment Vita is killed, his fissions will die and the plague will spread again』

I remembered him saying that.

In other words, Ruijerd's current state is.....

"The plague....."

It didn't seem like the Dark King Vita had only died.

His self-destruction might have destroyed himself, but.....

It was suicide bombing.

If Vita were to die, the progression of the plague will restart.

I was told in advance, but to think that it would be this extreme...

Perhaps Vita wasn't delaying the progression of the disease, but had merely paralyzed it.

The paralysis was undone when he possessed me and then died, resulting in the disintegration of his fissions.

As a result, the symptoms surfaced all at once.....or something like that.

'I brought Vita down', I'm not going to say that.

That was a suicide bombing.

I'm relieved that someone with the same level of stupidity was on Hitogami's side, but I can't be relieved about the present situation.

"Rudeus-dono!"

Unaware of what to do about the suffering Ruijerd, brooding over whether or not there was anything I could do, I suddenly rushed out of the house only to find Sándor running up to me.

"Sándor-san!"

"So you've finally awoken, just moments ago the people of the village suddenly started collapsing, just what on earth is going on?"

"Dark King Vita has fallen. The progress of the plague may have been affected as a result of that."

"Eh!? When? Where did you defeat the Dark King!?"

"Just now, he selfishly chose defeat!"

It's fine either way.

"Please give a full explanation!"

"Well....."

I started explaining.

What I heard from Ruijerd last night.

How Vita was transferred to me through oral contact, how I was shown illusions, and how the Death God's ring defeated him.

".....I understand. In other words, the Dark King challenged you but the tables turned on him, and that.....Ruijerd-dono was just being manipulated, right?"

".....I didn't realize it until I woke up, but if he had been an enemy, he wouldn't have carried me to the village."

"Got it."

"Next, a question from my side. Just how many are there?"

"For now, have whoever is mobile go and recover those who were out hunting.

"I also intend to give those same people the order to defend the entrance."

As expected of Sándor, he works quickly.

It hasn't been very long since the spread of the disease, he's excellent.

"And Doga?"

"Doga is assembling the sick people at one place."

I turned my gaze to see Doga noisily running while carrying a woman in his arms.

And as if to chase him, the children of the Supard race were following him with concerned looks on their faces.

They're probably headed towards.....the chieftain's lecture hall.

It is the largest building here, so it's perfect.

According to Doga, there are no deceased yet.

But more than half of the people, just like Ruijerd, are experiencing symptoms to the point of immobility.

"Rudeus-dono, what should we do?"

"......What to do."

I find myself at a loss for words being asked what to do.

This situation.

What must be done?

The village is being invaded by the plague.

We must do something to cure them.

Therefore, right, detoxification magic.

But I just tried it on Ruijerd.

Obviously, there wasn't any effect.

It's not that I was able to use every form of healing magic, but I feel as if the possibility of detoxification magic not having any effect is very high.

Since there are many such diseases and poisons.

If detoxification magic won't work, then I should leave it to the disease specialist.

Although I say that, who fits that description?

Should I ask Ariel to make preparations for a doctor?

But the one who is the most knowledgeable about diseases is Orsted.

But Orsted, and the Supard race.....

No, let's just try and ask him.

First of all, a means of communication.

Three days left until the establishment of the magic formation.....

No, I knew something like this would happen, so I had already prepared a teleportation magic formation in the basement of the office in advance.

Let's install the Communication Lithograph and magic formation in this village as well.

I'll teleport to the office and report to Orsted about the current situation.

I'll also report to the branches, from the main office, the condition of the Supard race.

If all of that was useless.....we'll think about that when the time comes.

Alright.

"We should set up a teleportation magic formation in the village, move to the office, from there contact the branches, and thus call for someone capable of a medical examination."

"Roger. Then I shall defend the village and nurse the patients."

"Please do."

We quickly exchanged words, and then I hurried towards the end of the village.

Since we're inside a deep forest, the concentration of magic is high.

A teleportation magic formation can be set up without the need of any magic crystals.

Just to be sure, I should bring what's needed for the lithograph and set it up in the village.

While deeply thinking about that, I headed towards the other side of the village.

Exiting out of the fence, cutting down the trees with magic to make an open space, I then made a hut with earth magic.

A hut with no entrance.

I dug a tunnel from beneath the hut and connected it with the inside of village. With this, the monsters won't come.

I took out my memo and verified the magic formula with compliance to the preliminaries of the magic formation.

Now to make sure that the drawing doesn't vanish from the floor, I created a lithograph from magic and drew upon it.

Impatience is a taboo.

If I make the slightest mistake, the magic formation won't be completed.

Rather than wasting time debugging, I want to make it work in one go if I can.

When you're in a hurry, that's when you should calm down.

"Ah, damn....."

Or so I was thinking. I ended up making a small mistake.

"Fuu....."

Deep breaths.

Composing myself, I decided to draw it slower than I normally do.

A plain magic formation with a diameter of 2 meters.

If I draw it hastily, I will make a mistake.

Carefully drawing.

I've drawn the teleportation magic formation myself many times over.

I should have the confidence to draw it accurately from the start.

With that in mind I calmed myself, and I carefully finished drawing the teleportation magic formation.

"How is it?"

I pour my magic into it as soon as it was completed.

The entirety of the drawn magic formation is poured with my magic. On which it began emitting a dim light. It's a success.

"Alright."

I immediately jumped on it.

After my consciousness disappeared for an instant, the basement of the office appeared in front of me.Normal operation of the magic formation was confirmed.

And at the same time, I set out for the door at a quick pace.

Not even abiding by the written message 『Those who have business with Orsted and Rudeus. This way.』 , I go towards the upper levels.

I come out of the basement, which is adjacent to the teleportation magic formation room, and ascend the stairs to enter the lobby.

"Ah, chairman, welcome ba—-"

"Is the president here!?"

To my threatening attitude, the receptionist twitched her ears. While lowering them, with a slightly frightened look, she gave an answer.

"H-he's here."

Without hearing her words, I continued towards the president's office and opened the door before she's finished.

I passed through the corridor, which was rather short, and opened the door to his office.

I thought of myself as not that rude, but I forgot to knock.

As a result, I saw Orsted without his helmet on.

"Orsted-sama."

"....."

Orsted was showing a seemingly awkward-ish face,

But he didn't hide it and was looking straight at me.

When I stared at it for several seconds, it seemed like he was saying 'Do you have any problems?', to which I felt my anger swell up.

I know that this was not the time to get angry.

Still, the words that came out of my mouth were demanding, distracted by my irritation.

"Say, the Supard Race's illness, were you aware of it?"

"I was aware of it."

"And a way to cure it?"

"There is none."

I was told bluntly.

It wasn't that he didn't know but there was none.

"If you had told me sooner, I should have been able to at least search for a cure. Why didn't you tell me about it sooner?"

As I said that, Orsted shook his head.

"When you became my subordinate, the Supard race was supposed to have already perished."

"Supposed.....are you talking about if it were the usual loops?"

"That's right. And Ruijerd Supardia never even got to meet the surviving Supard race."

They were supposed to have already perished, that's why he didn't say anything.

Ruijerd was normally unrelated to that event.

Since he was reminded of that as a possibility, he didn't say anything, is that how it is?

"But you visited them a few years back, correct?"

"......Yes."

"At that time, you found the Supard race, got in contact with Ruijerd, confirmed that a plague was spreading and yet, you kept quiet?"

"That's right."

"If you had kept quiet then the Supard race would perish and Ruijerd too would disappear. Since I wouldn't know, you gave up, is that what you thought!"

Before I realized it, I was shouting.

I felt like I was betrayed.

"Wrong. I thought it was a waste of time."

"A waste of.....time?"

"That's right. Even I tried to save the Supards.

I tried every detoxification magic, gave them medicine that would likely cure them, I tried everything.

But they weren't cured. That plague can't be cured."

So Orsted tried everything that he could think of?

"The ruin of the Supards was a pre-determined fact for me. But you wouldn't give up if you knew, and would possibly look after them until their ruin."

"That is.....of course."

But, two years ago.....or even before then?

As for the timing, possibly after that one assignment in Shirone Kingdom, unaware of the location of Laplace's rebirth, I proposed assembling war potential.

At that time, if I had been told about the Supards, I would have been running around thinking of how to tackle the situation.

At least, I wouldn't have been able to do all the work this past year.

I wouldn't have been able to call out to Atofe, Randolf, and the rest of the demon kings.

Or perhaps I wouldn't have even gone to Milis.

It's also possible that I would be unaware of Gisu being an apostle.

"But, deciding whether it's a waste of time is....I....then, no.....it might be....."

I understand the reason.

But my heart can't catch up yet.

A good excuse doesn't come to mind.

This time, Orsted hadn't forgotten.

He just didn't say it.

He intentionally schemed so to not let me help the Supard race.

Even though I understand the reason, I cannot, at any cost, forgive him.

Orsted tried to let my benefactor die without any help.

Orsted is like that, so it can't be helped.

Even though such words come forth normally.

I can't forgive him.

Not good.

At this rate, I'll think of Orsted as an enemy.

In the midst of such an operation.

With the enemy in Biheiril Kingdom, while everyone's there.....

An excuse, I must think of an excuse.....an excuse to forgive Orsted.

".....Is Ruijerd a hindrance to your plans?"

Those were the words that came out.

Words that don't go with the flow of conversation.

If this was to be true, then what would I intend to do?

But Orsted said this.

"He's not a hindrance. His daughter, who is going to fight Laplace, is the most important piece."

"His daughter? How is she important?"

"Laplace, who has become a Demon God, is immortal. But he has a weak point. The Supards, with their third eye, are the only ones who can see it and deal the fatal blow."

The only ones who can take advantage of the Demon God's weak point are the Supards.

"Ah."

Then, something suddenly struck me.

The reason why Laplace transferred his curse to the Supards to destroy them.

The reason why Ruijerd, who inferior in fighting strength against Laplace, was able to put a blow on him during the fight of the three demon slaying heroes; to the point where even Perugius expresses his gratitude.

The reason why the Supard race was struck with the plague.

The reason why the plague was slower than expected, but progressed after Ruijerd's arrival.

.....The reason I travelled together with Ruijerd to the Central Continent.

"So.....it's Hitogami."

Strength leaves my body.

Unsteady on my feet, I step back.

Something caught my foot and I sat in a chair.

Putting my weight on the armrest, the chair stopped sliding.

"In the original history, Ruijerd-san survived, correct?"

"Yes."

"Since he didn't die on the way, he created a child at the end, correct?"

"Yes."

"Orsted-sama, you would make use of that child to defeat Laplace, correct?"

"In the beginning, yes. After I learned that Laplace is mortal the moment he's born, I didn't use her or anything."

"Is that so."

Then, this is also one of Hitogami's plans.

I see.

And now, this time he coordinated in order to erase me.....huh.

Aiming to kill two birds with one stone, a strategy most befitting of Hitogami.

"Orsted-sama. Looks like we're being manipulated at the hands of Hitogami again."

"....."

"The ruin of the Supards, the rampancy of the plague isn't a natural phenomenon, it's Hitogami's work.Looks like it's convenient for Hitogami as long as Demon God Laplace is alive."

Rather than the Demon Dragon King, Laplace who became the Demon God is no harm to him.

Since he has forgotten about Hitogami anyway.

On the contrary, he's destroying the humans.

Unexpectedly, it's possible that during Laplace's military campaign, he himself was being manipulated by Hitogami.

I don't think he could manipulate the dragon race directly, possibly through an apostle.

"Haa....."

I somehow felt refreshed because of this unexpected result.

Orsted didn't talk about the Supards. Well, that's still lurking in the back of my mind though.

Even if I direct my anger towards Orsted here, there won't be any agreement anyway.

It will only delight Hitogami.

He'll just laugh with a broad grin while saying 'Just as planned.'

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Death Note anime series. }

"....."

It didn't occur to me before, but I thought up of a good excuse as a result of feeling refreshed.

Unaware of a method to cure the plague, thinking that they were already doomed, Orsted neglected them.

Before, he thought that the ruin of the Supard race was not related to the life and death of Ruijerd.

He may also be thinking of Ruijerd's whereabouts.

But then he thought 'perhaps' and went to see it for himself, only to find Ruijerd there.

Moreover, Ruijerd had gotten infected as well.

He didn't know how to tell me about this, perhaps it might even be better to not tell me. He couldn't help but think that.

"How did you intended to defeat Laplace without the Supards?"

"Using the Godsword is not that absurd of a choice. I can't avoid a hard fight, but you're currently assembling comrades, so we'll somehow pull through."

"But if I recall correctly, that Godsword? Using it takes a lot of mana, doesn't it?"

"You can't substitute your back for your belly."

On top of that, Orsted intended to take responsibility as a penalty.

"I thought about apologizing to you. But I couldn't speak, and now it took this shape. It was inexcusable."

Orsted said that and bowed his head in apology.

".....I understand."

Orsted isn't perfect.

These things may also happen.

Let's just forgive him with a big heart.

"Orsted-sama, I'll forgive you only for this time."

"Yes."

With this, it's settled.

All~right, let's face forward.

That is, for now.

"I'm just making sure, but you do need mana to defeat Hitogami, yes?"

"Yes."

Hitogami prevented the specific place in the Shirone Kingdom where Laplace would revive.

Moreover, he tried to exterminate the Supard race's last survivor by letting Ruijerd find the Supard village; Ruijerd who is the key to defeating Laplace.

If the entire Supard race is exterminated, then Laplace can be thrown at Orsted.

Orsted, in order to defeat Laplace, will have to use a large amount of mana.

This should be the winning move for Hitogami.

We'll crush that winning move.

We better not use the Godsword then.

Avoiding fights as much as possible, and minimizing mana consumption as well.

I will assemble the war potential in order to bring down Laplace, making Orsted's mana explode during the fight with Hitogami.

But for that purpose, the Supard race, who are a key point in defeating Laplace, must be kept alive.

"I've heard it already, but there isn't any method to cure them, right?"

".....At the very least, I have no knowledge."

"Although you say that, there are things even you don't know of, eh?"

"That's.....right."

Orsted said that and wore his frightening face as usual.

I've grown accustomed to that angry look these days.

This is the face when he's ashamed.

"Then perhaps there just might be a method. Let's struggle for a bit more."

Even Orsted might not have been able to try many methods, because of his curse.

He should've been able to do something, but couldn't because of the current state of his curse.

Then, we should try and do it.

"Got it.....I'll head towards the village as well."

Orsted said that and nodded.

We came back to the village after three hours.

During that time, I reported about my encounter with Dark King Vita.

I explained Vita's suicide bombing by the Death God's ring, to which Orsted hid his surprised face by instead showing an angry look.

By looking at his face, it seemed he didn't know about Vita's possessing power.

Maybe it was truly a great insurance.

After that, we used the Communication Lithograph and contacted the branches.

About the nature of the disease of the Supard race, and arrangements for a doctor.

The number of C.L was too high, so it took time contacting every branch by transmission.

The functionality of a carbon copy is necessary.

While I was waiting for the reply to my message, I drew the preliminary sketch of an additional teleportation magic circle.

To set up a teleportation magic circle, you first have to draw two. After confirming the activation, you erase wherever you had written the other down. There is a need to go through this process.

There is no need to charge it now, but when it is used, it has to be charged thoroughly.

The receptionist's job was to stand by at the office; during Orsted's absence, she would answer the mail and guide anyone who comes through the teleportation magic circle.

These days, the teleportation magic circles have grown so much that it's becoming difficult to remember which is connected to which. A guide map may be necessary for first time guests rather than me and Orsted.

I should also write down where to move in the forest after getting teleported.

By the way, Sylphy had already left to the Holy Land of Swords with Ghyslaine and Izolte.

During that time, Ariel visited as well and had a talk with Sylphy.

The receptionist and Orsted didn't hear any details, but there wasn't a message left, which meant that she just came to visit for a while.

Because I had that kind of dream, I may become a little self-conscious if I met her.

I don't want to blush in front of Sylphy while looking at Ariel.

After that, the establishment of the teleportation magic circle and communication lithograph by everyone else who went to Biheiril Kingdom had been confirmed.

Everything was operating favourably.

It looks like the others are doing well too.

I contacted them as well.

There's no problem with Aisha+Mercenary group.

Zanoba reported about a subjugation force being assembled in the capital city.

Roxy reported about investigating the whereabouts of Ogre God.

I sent them messages regarding the present situation.

At the end, I added『We'll somehow manage over here, so please carry on with your respective duties.』

If I don't, I can expect Eris flying to me.

Then, there were a lot of favourable replies from many countries.

A lot of countries gave the reply 『We'll investigate about the disease from past documents.』

Asura Kingdom was ready to send over a doctor by tomorrow.

The only reply that's left is the one from Milis, regarding reinforcements.

Sending in the Temple Knight Party via teleportation magic circle is rather difficult, so it's discouraged.

At any rate, the reply from Milis is late nonetheless.

Anyhow, after doing all of that, I came back to the village.

Together with Orsted.

"....."

Orsted is currently looking at the fallen Supards one by one.

He probably has better medical knowledge than the average doctor, but he still couldn't understand the cause for the disease, so it's not like he would understand it at this stage.

In the first place, he's not a doctor.

He may have tried to cure some diseases in the previous loops, but never had actually medically treated someone.

If pushed, I'd say it's like a RPG errand event.

{ C-Editor's note: Running errands in a role-playing game. }

On X day of X month, Rudeus becomes sick.

Rudeus, on X day of X month will die, so we must cure him before then.

At this point, you do not know the cure.

However, before that time comes, we come to know that Sylphiette-chan is experiencing the same disease.

And then Sylphiette-chan has an item used on her by Roxy and the disease is cured.

Orsted uses the item used by Roxy on Rudeus on the next turn.

That kind of feeling.

Well, by reconciling the past cases and the present cases we can look for a cure, that kind of diagnosis is possible, but I'm not a doctor so I wouldn't know.

In short, Orsted isn't too potent regarding affairs that are beyond expectations.

"I still don't know."

After examining everyone, feeling powerless, he shook his head.

"I feel like the symptoms differ a little from the plague I know of....."

"Differ, in what way?"

"The deterioration wasn't supposed to be this rapid."

".....So Vita was paralyzing it after all, I wonder if that's the only thing that came to light."

"If it's Hitogami's way of doing things, then it's possible."

Pretending to suppress the disease, but in reality he didn't do anything.

It's Hitogami's way of doing things.

"Do you have something on your end?"

".....No."

While Orsted was examining the illness, I was listening to the people helping out with the medical treatment how they used a remedy when the disease first struck.

They collected some popular herbs from the Central Continent or vegetables with high nutritional values and cooked them together to make a mash of it and gave it to the affected.

I'm not that knowledgeable about the nutritional value of vegetables or herbs, but I can't think of it as a big mistake.

This is a dead end.

We must change our way of thinking.

For example.....right.

Originally the spread of the plague was supposed to be faster.

Which means, Hitogami can control this plague. Then, some kind of poison was brought in from somewhere, so that possibility also exists?

Or perhaps the timing when the Supards were struck with the plague simply deviated because of the teleport incident.

Hitogami can simply use that and be able to.....

Ah jeez, just which is it?

The thing that is important right now is finding a cure for this disease, not Hitogami.

The more I think about it, the more I feel my thoughts sinking into a quagmire.

I somehow felt that perhaps, there might not even be a method.

An unpleasant premonition.

But, not yet.

At least, Orsted and I, together with Sándor and Doga, can't come up with anything.

But after this, a doctor is coming.

Let's just concentrate on maintaining the patient's hygiene and providing them with nutrition.

While thinking that, I spent the whole day nursing with Sándor and Doga.

The next day, a team of doctors from the Asura Kingdom arrived.

Two doctors and four nurses along with numerous food and medical supplies.

For the time being, it looks like they're all people who don't fear the Supard race.

After looking at the patients, they immediately started their medical examination.

Whether or not they would disclose info about the teleportation magic circle, I have no choice but to rely on Ariel's charisma.

"We were told in advance about it, but we've never seen these types of symptoms."

Not to mention, we took such a risk and yet the team of doctors were useless.

"We have performed medical examinations of demon race in the domestic, but.....if we're to handle a specific demon race under specific circumstances, then there's nothing we can do."

I don't get it at all.

Those are the opinions of the doctors.

At least, it doesn't come under the category of past cases.

That's understood, since the human doctors have seen them and Orsted as well.

"We will continue the examination just in case, but it would be better to not expect too much."

The doctor said that and went back to treat the patients.

But.....even so, I see.

I hadn't expected much, but to be told that clearly... My disappointment was greater than I thought.

"Fuu......."

While breathing a sigh, I survey the surroundings.

There, a great number of Supards were arranged in a line.

The ones who are moaning, ones who are dead tired and aren't moving, ones who are sleeping.

The ones who are lying down being nursed, a scene just like a field hospital.

There aren't any deceased yet, but there are many with severe symptoms.

And Ruijerd is also included among those with severe symptoms.

Currently, he has lost consciousness and is in a comatose state.

At times, he suddenly opens his eyes and starts coughing violently. By looking at him, I understand that he doesn't have much time.

I want to cure him somehow.

I think as I sit near Ruijerd.

But, we don't have anything to go with and no breakthrough solution comes to mind.

Only the time is passing by.

With this, even if doctors came from the Milis and Kingdom of the Dragon King, the possibility of finding a cure is low.

If we couldn't find a cure, what should be done next?

Whom should I ask, would that person understand?

What should be done.....?

What can I do?

"Rudeus-dono."

When I came to, Sándor was standing in front of me.

"What is it?"

"I apologize within this situation, but what would you like to do about the information broker?"

Information broker.....was there someone like that?

Ah, that's right.

In the second city Irel, we requested an information broker to investigate about Gisu.

"How many days are left until the agreed day again?"

"It took one day from the city to road, two days from village to here, you were asleep for one day, also yesterday, today is about to end, so I guess 4 days. I think we can somehow make it even if we're late by one day."

So it's already time to return.

I mean it wasn't like I slept for too long.

"The teleportation magic circle has been established as well, so the number of days are flexible....."

"That's so. When that time comes, I'll be off."

I don't want to move from this spot, but I must search for Gisu.

I don't have any choice but to go.

"Let me accompany you as well."

".....Are you going to leave only Doga with Orsted behind?"

"Rudeus-dono, going outside alone is dangerous."

I suddenly became suspicious that he has some ulterior motive, but I guess it's only fair.

It's not good if I act alone like this.

"Rudeus-dono, enough about the information broker, what would you like to do about the subjugation force?"

"Subjugation force?"

"The subjugation force being assembled by the country. Did you not hear about it being formed for about a month and coming here to attack in the future?"

"Ah...."

There was also that.

"I think we should take steps ahead of time that way as well, what should we do?"

Certainly, in order to protect the Supard race, we should move quickly and negotiate with the country.

But that is only if I have the proof that the Supard race is safe; otherwise, it's impossible.

Of course, the Supards have no hostility towards the humans.

Is it still possible to verify that.....?

"I find it difficult to say that we should leave it aside, but because of the current situation, because of this plague.....At least, until we see whether or not the disease would be cured....."

"Then, should we leave it alone?"

"......That is not a good thing to do, what do you think should be done?"

"After contacting the information broker, go to the royal palace, report about the present condition and the true identity of the demon, I think this much is significant. If we leave it alone saying it's because of the plague then we'll face war, but if we want to help the Supards, then the conclusion should be negotiations. Right?"

"Ah......quite so."

At first, try it.

That's how it is.

In any case, the next move is in 4 days.

There is a heap of things to do, but a clue for a solution can't be seen.

I feel frustrated because of no progress at all.

Don't get tired.....

While thinking that, I fell asleep that day.

In Ruijerd's empty home.

I woke up as I was being shaken.

There was a beautiful girl in front of me.

Blonde and silky-smooth hair, which were trimmed evenly above her eyebrows.

I don't even need to remember who she is.

"Nii-san, please wake up, Nii-san......!"

It's Norn.

Ah, that dream, is it that illusion again?

This time Norn is my wife, huh?

That would happen if Vita was still alive.

Then I would like the current situation to be a dream as well.

"Vita is so boring."

"Vita? Are you still half-asleep!? There are a lot of things I want to ask!"

Norn seemed to have gotten angry.

Although recently she doesn't, but the Norn before did nothing but get angry at me.

I've missed this Norn.

"Why has Ruijerd-san become like this, why did you not tell me about it!"

Ruijerd has become like this.

My consciousness was suddenly awoken by those words.

"........!"

I rose my body.

The animal fur covering the floor.

It's Ruijerd's house.

Not a dream.

"Even though I was also so grateful towards Ruijerd-san.....! To not tell me about it at such a time, isn't that unreasonable.....?"

Tears start flowing down from Norn's eyes.

She didn't wipe them and was powerfully gripping the fur.

I wiped her tears with my finger for no apparent reason.

"Yeah, sorry....."

And at the same time, a question wells up in me.

Why is Norn here?

If I recall correctly, she should have been busy right now.

"Norn, errr, perhaps this is not the right time to ask this, but wasn't there supposed to be an event at the school?"

"That was already over long ago!"

Huh!

Which means her graduation ceremony is over as well?

That's impossible.....

Well, no, that's not it.

"......How are you here?"

"Cliff-senpai told me everything and brought me along!"

Norn spoke with a high-pitched and unstrung voice and looked back.

At the entrance of the house.

Two shadows stood against the backdrop of the back-light.

One of them has a slender silhouette.

Blond hair glittering because of the falling sunlight.

The figure of a long-eared woman which was bewitching in her austere build.

And, the other person is a male.

Height lower than the average.

Even his breadth isn't that wide.

Yet, why is it that he seems to be greatly reliable?

Probably because of that eye-patch covering one of his eyes.

"Rudeus."

Cliff Grimoire was standing there.

"Sorry for coming late.

Various formalities delayed me.....the Milis Religious Organization isn't just a large slab of rock. Please forgive me."

He had come.

After reading the letter of the communication lithograph, he came at once.

"Now that I've come, it's all right. I took lessons in medical techniques just for these times."

"But, Cliff-senpai....."

"Yeah, I know. I've already heard everything. But I have this."

Cliff said that and opened his eye-patch with a pop.

One of the demon eyes he received from Kishirika.

Identification eye.

"Is something possible with one or two demon eyes?"

"Perhaps nothing can be done with just the demon eyes. But you know Rudeus, the one who is holding the demon eye, is me."

Cliff said that and puffed his chest with pride.

"I'm a genius."

Perhaps he might have said this only to let Norn have some peace of mind.

Ah, but.

Cliff's figure looks big.

Was there ever a day I saw Cliff's figure this big?

Cliff gets bigger each time I see him.

He's growing while exceeding my imagination.

Hasn't he already grown twice as large as me?

If it's Cliff-senpai.

If it's the Cliff-senpai who somehow removed the curse!

"There is nothing this genius can't do, leave it to me."

He'll somehow do it.

Even though it was supposed to be a groundless remark, I seemed to have thought it naturally.

The first place Cliff went to was where the patients were.

"It is the basics of the basics to first examine the patient's condition."

With that in mind, Cliff began to examine all of them.

Still, those were the same things that the team of doctors were doing.

Looking over the patients with severe symptoms via the Demon Eye, questioning the patients with moderate symptoms, and comparing his theories with the patients' charts.

That's about it.

"To think we would talk to someone of the Milis church.....*cough*, *cough*!"

The patients were startled by Cliff's attire, and there were many among them who clearly showed him hostility as well.

Those who persecuted the Supard race the most violently were the Milis Religious Organization after all.

There were many here who held that memory.

"Answer truthfully, where did you first feel discomfort in your body?"

Not to mention, Cliff didn't pay them any mind at all.

In a situation where those in need were not cooperating, if it were me, I'd have given up halfway.

As expected of Cliff.

"I see."

After he had finished examining the patients, Cliff came to an understanding.

But, I had a hunch that perhaps he had still not understood anything.

I felt as if.....even if Cliff may call himself a genius, there are things that can't be understood.

In the first place, Cliff may be a priest, he may be a healer, he may be a researcher, but he's not a doctor.

"Next, the attending physician's story."

Cliff said that and proceeded to consult with the team of doctors.

How did they perform the examination, and what did they intend to do afterwards?

He asked the two Asuran doctors respectively.

"Basically, we intend to use both medicine and detoxification magic simultaneously and monitor for any changes."

"I see, the doctors of the Asura Kingdom aren't that great, huh?"

One *hmph* from the nose.

The ones who were dumbfounded were both me and the doctors.

To think that Cliff would be so arrogant.....

Looks like he was feeling uneasy about the Supard's behavior.

"If that could cure it, it would have already been cured by Rudeus or Orsted."

"Then Cliff-dono, what would you do?"

"I'll be investigating that now."

The faces of the doctors warped in anger.

Ah, human doctors, restrain yourselves.

If he fails, you can criticize him as much as you want.

For now, just for now, please restrain yourselves.

But I was a little anxious.

I thought of Cliff as reliable before, but will it be alright?

On the opposite end, Norn, who was nursing Ruijerd, was looking this way with a worried face as well.

"Alright, Rudeus, let's move somewhere else."

After parting from the doctors, we left the lecture hall.

After leaving the lecture hall, Cliff stopped and looked over his results.

"Now then, I have confirmed one thing. I've heard this from the elder, but it looks like there was never a time until now that the Supards were struck with this kind of disease."

"Until now? How old was the elder again?"

"He's well over 1000 years, or so I've heard."

The Supard race sure do have a long life span.....

"They were struck by this disease after they came to this land. Which means, the source of the disease can be tied with this land."

"The possibility of Hitogami bringing in a poison?"

"It's not that. The Demon Eye can detect that sort of thing."

Cliff said that and started looking at the village's surroundings.

First were the fields.

He removed his eye-patch and carefully observed the growing vegetables one-by-one. At times he cut one and observed the inside to double-check.

Even now, the juicy tomato was cut into two.

At any rate, if it became known that the Supards are just ordinary farmers, perhaps society will view them differently?

Humans are the kind of beings who feel closer to those who are similar to themselves.

"Next."

Next we went to the animal slaughterhouse.

There were small traces of blood left, but all the meat was disposed of.

It looks like the villagers were in the middle of carving the animals when they collapsed, but it would have been unsanitary to leave the raw meat as it was. So on Sándor's order, they were thrown out of the village.

Cliff was diligently examining the cutlery and chopping board with his Identification Eye.

"......I see. Rudeus, where is the meat stored that is processed here?"

"Let me see.....this way."

I don't know what he 'saw', but I led him to the food storehouse.

A structure just below ground, there was dried and salted meat. In addition, large quantities of preserved vegetables were stored inside the building.

Cliff used his Identification Eye there as well and was examining each item one-by-one.

"Did you.....find out something?"

"Don't be impatient, let me examine everything first."

After leaving the food storehouse, Cliff began looking around the village houses.

He entered the houses, kitchens, and bedrooms. On top of that, he looked through the wardrobes as well.

This is trespassing.

Cliff is brave.

Be that as it may, now that I look around the Supards' houses, I can understand why Ruijerd's house is plain.

The other houses were decorated with flowers and drawings.....it suggested an energy and livelihood.

This small house may have been used by the children.

Of course, if there were any residents with moderate symptoms still in the house, then we asked for their permission.

"Milis church.....!"

"M-mother....."

"It's alright. Please calm down. He's safe."

After seeing the priest Cliff, some raised their spears in intimidation, but that did not prevent us from gaining their permission.

"Lies! The Milis church, just by looking at us they.....ah, aahh....."

"Mother? Mother!?"

Maybe she remembered something, because the mother started to tremble.

Watching her, the daughter hugged the mother who looked as if she was about to cry.

The Supard race and the Milis Religious Organization.

It feels like that there is still a gap that has yet to be bridged between them.

As far as I and Cliff are concerned, the persecutions of the Supards were a thing of the past.

But there are many victims who still remember that in this village.

"So, what kind of things do you eat? What is your cooking process?"

Cliff doesn't read the mood.

As if he has no consideration for the frightened mother and the child trembling with anxiety, he continued his questioning.

"Answer quickly. We don't have much time."

Until they answered.

"Hmm."

And thus, Cliff finished touring all the houses.

But I didn't think that anything in particular happened.

Just that, he only came into contact with Supard culture.

"Excuse me, Cliff-senpai."

"Rudeus. There is no need to be anxious about it, they weren't frightened by me. It was just the clothes that I'm wearing that scared them. And if I cure the disease while wearing these clothes, that would change their way of thinking as well. Right?"

Would it be that simple?

Or so I think, I hope that it's possible for the daughter to reconsider that.

I hope it's that simple.

"Now then, on to the next one."

While saying that, Cliff started looking around various areas of the village.

The fountain, the water well, the warehouse that lied in the center of the village. On top of that, he even looked around the garbage dump.

"....."

Cliff was carefully examining each of them.

His expression was serious.

Seriously rummaging through the contents of the dump while pushing through the rotten meat.

Just what was reflecting in that Identification Eyes of his?

The only thing I could do was to answer Cliff's questions.

And when he finished examining the entire village, it was completely dark.

We came back to the infirmary.

"Well then, Cliff-senpai, how about it?"

"I've determined a few things."

"Ooh."

"Lize, bring in my medicine box!"

When Cliff shouted inside the infirmary, Elinalize, who was nursing, quickly got up and began running.

She grabbed the large backpack which was at the corner of the infirmary, and came running this way.

"Here you go!"

"Thank you, Lize."

Elinalize looks delighted.

Probably because she saw Cliff after a long time.

Did they entrust the kid to my house?

"Listen well, Rudeus. I know how the disease works."

"Hoh."

"Though I say that, I'm no doctor, so I wouldn't be so sure.....

For now, the fact that the Supards were struck by this disease after coming to this land is confirmed.

That's why I tried looking at the vegetables grown in this land with the Identification Eye."

"Ooh, and then!?"

"I didn't see any abnormalities."

Hahh.....?

"It didn't look like some kind of pathogen was lurking in the land or the water."

"So that kind of thing can be found out with the Identification Eye?"

"Yeah, you can at least have confidence in the food."

It's the Kishirika-approved demon eye, can it be trusted regarding food?

Could there be someone who got ill after eating?

"But, everything was indicating one thing, 『A delicious tomato having a very high concentration of mana』"

"It's not just the vegetables. The land, as well as the water, are holding a very high concentration of mana."

"....."

"There are cases even in Milis of food having high concentration of mana, but it's quite rare.Neither the land nor water have this much."

Mana density, is it?

If I recall correctly, Aisha said it too.

That if we prepare the rice in the soil made by me, it will grow well.

That's probably because the soil had a high mana density.

"And?"

"Yeah. And I would like to know if farming was popular in the Demon Continent."

"I am unaware of the Supard lifestyle in the Demon Continent, but there were almost no vegetables or anything like that there. The variety was also limited and the staple food there was just meat."

"I see, as I thought."

Cliff raised his finger with a flick and started speaking about his hypothesis.

"Possibly, growing crops in a soil with high mana density resulted in crops having high mana density."

"Not to mention that there are a variety of soils. The soil in the Demon Continent is rich in mana, but due to the lack of fertility, only a few crops can be grown there."

"The Great Forest as well, this kind of disease can't be found there, so that place is probably special.

In this place, the soil and water is infused with too much mana.

On top of that, this soil is fertile and rich in nutrients.

As a result, crops grown here end up having a high concentration of mana.

Perhaps it is related to why there's only one kind of monster here, but let's leave that case for later."

"Although, by all rights, consuming mana-enriched crops isn't that big of a problem.

Since we keep on living without paying much attention to it.

If there was any correlation, it wouldn't be strange to see many similar cases before now.

What I'm trying to say is, in reality, we can eject any mana that we consume.

Even for the Supards, that fact should remain unchanged."

"But what happens if we keep on consuming mana?

Not for 10 years or 20 years.

I'm talking about what would happen if we keep on absorbing high density mana for 100-200 years....."

"Despite the plague, there are many adults who are infected, but many children who are unaffected."

Then, after explaining this much, Cliff turned to face me.

Certainly, there are a lot of children who are unaffected by the plague.

It's hard to figure out how many of the Supards are of old age, but it's not a problem regarding immunity, is that what he's saying?

"And thus, we should be familiar with it.

A case where the mana that was taken in couldn't be ejected from the body."

Couldn't be ejected.....?

Ah, it's about Nanahoshi!

"Then, is it Drain syndrome?"

I was suddenly struck by something.

The initial symptoms were cold, and you fall at the same time you succumb to it.

But, if that was it then Orsted would've.....

No, Drain syndrome is an old disease.

Perhaps Orsted didn't even know its name, much less a method to cure it.

Yeah.

If there wasn't anyone suffering from it in one of the loops, then even Orsted wouldn't know about it.

There's also the fact that it's difficult to ask Kishirika about it, just like how it was for me.

"But there are contradictions as well. It shouldn't have been that long since Ruijerd-san came to this village."

"Certainly.....but he was possessed by the real Dark King Vita, right?

Perhaps it's because of that.

Anyhow, it should be worth trying it out, right?"

Cliff said that and took out a box from the bag.

There were a variety of papers and materials tightly packed inside of it.

Cliff took something out.

It was dried up Sokasu grass.

"I thought that this would happen, so I borrowed a little."

His preparation is perfect.

"Let's use this as well."

Cliff took out a red fruit from the bottom of the bag.

"That is?"

"The thing that will become the source of poison. It will make the mana inside the body malfunction."

"Poison.....is it?"

"Ah. Although it's called a poison, it only works to the point of rendering a magician unable to use magic if drank."

Would it be alright to drink that?

"According to the Identification Eye, this was taken along with the Sokasu tea since ancient times.

『It improves the effects of the Sokasu tea, and can be used as tea cakes, though it will also make you slightly drunk』, or so I'm reading."

Which means it isn't a poison, according to Kishirika's judgement.

"The only problem is.....if the Supards drink this right now, I don't know what will happen."

"....."

"In my opinion, this can cure it. But it may also have a reverse effect."

It's probably fine.

Or so he thinks, but it may aggravate the disease and result in death.

There is no guarantee.

"Well, it's no use thinking. Let's just try it."

Cliff said that after a moment of hesitation.

And then, while making up his mind, he turned to the infirmary and shouted.

"I want to try a medicine in regards to your sickness!

Is there anyone who wants to drink it?"

"Ah, wai-, Cliff-senpai!"

After Cliff's words, the inside of the infirmary became still as death.

Looking at Cliff, looking at Cliff's clothes, their face grew pale.

There were also those who simply looked away.

"Just one is fine! There's no guarantee that you'll be cured after drinking it!"

In order to see the effects, there is no need to make everyone drink it.

Just one is fine.

But there's no one who would answer.

"We can't trust the Millis church....."

Someone said.

When I looked, it was one of the males present during the meeting with the chieftains.

Looks like it'll be impossible with the leader.

But what to do now?

We can't forcefully make them drink it.....

"I'll drink....."

There was one who was willing to try it.

He rose up unsteadily, and was looking at us with sharp eyes.

The one who was supporting his body was Norn.

"Ruijerd-san, so you woke up?"

"Ah, yes. Nii-san, he just woke up....."

The one who answered my question was Norn.

However, as if to drown out her voice, the surrounding voices raised in volume.

"Ruijerd, are you going to believe someone from the Milis church?"

"That's right! Who were the ones who prosecuted us the most after the war, you of all people should know that as well!"

They were mainly remarks by the youngsters of the Supard race.

On top of that, as if being enticed by their remarks, the team of doctors interjected as well.

"I have never heard of someone who would make someone forcefully drink something without any reason!"

"Do you even know how to medically treat someone!?"

The anxiety of the doctors spread to the surroundings.

Even the Supards, who were silent up till now, started to object.

An incomprehensible medicine.

Which was brought by a person wearing the Milis Church's clothes, no less.

People who spoke of uneasiness, people who exposed their anger.

Mayhem spread in the infirmary.

"Do you want to be annihilated!?"

With Ruijerd's roar, silence was again brought about in the infirmary.

The complaining people went silent with blue faces.

Ruijerd who declared that, was coughing violently and was being caressed on his back by Norn.

"Rudeus brought this man along. I believe in Rudeus. If you have any complaints, say them after I die....."

No one would rebut those calm words.

It was a scene which showed just how influential the name Ruijerd Supardia is in this village.

"Alright then, Ruijerd-san. I'll have you drink the medicine. I'll say this in advance, but there is a possibility that it may worsen and you will die."

"Fine, I've lived long enough. Even if I die, I'll have no regrets."

No, but I'll feel regretful.

I'm doing all of this for the Supard race, or rather, for Ruijerd's sake.

Look, even Norn has that 'Huh?' face. We both have the same opinion.

"If Ruijerd is going to drink it, then I'll drink too."

One male raised his hand from the quietness.

A young man who has comparatively less severe symptoms.

To be honest, he may be an old man instead of a youngster.

"I was saved by Ruijerd in the Demon Continent. I would have no future if I had died back then, so there's nothing to be afraid of."

Reacting to those words, people started saying "Me too" and raised their hands as well.

Many, many did.

"We can't trust in the Milis church. But Ruijerd is our hero. We'll abide by what this hero has decided."

Finally, the chieftain raised his hand as well.

And then he said with a calm tone.

"People of the Human race, I apologize about our attitude, about our words towards you. Please save this village."

"Yes, please leave it to us."

In response to those last words, Cliff strongly nodded.

After drinking the Sokasu tea with red fruit, Ruijerd and the rest fell asleep.

At the very least, their condition didn't suddenly worsen, and they didn't die immediately after drinking it.

The results will be clear tomorrow.

I don't think that everything would be settled with just the Sokasu tea.

But I hope for even a bit of improvement.

Despite thinking that, today was already over, so I decided to sleep.

I'll be staying at Ruijerd's house again.

For some reason, my feet naturally headed for that place.

We didn't get permission from Ruijerd, but we freeloaded anyway.

"....."

Norn wanted to stay beside Ruijerd, but there was nothing she could do since he was asleep, so she came with me to the house.

Currently, Norn and I are sitting beside the sunken fireplace.

The crackling sound of the burning firewood could be heard.

The boiling sound of the stew in the pot on top of the fireplace as well.

As for the total number of sounds, there were only two.

Within the pot, there were vegetables and meat brought in by the team of doctors.

Despite Cliff telling me that it's probably fine, I still can't eat the village's food without thinking that it might have been the cause of the plague.

"Nii-san, Ruijerd-san will get cured, right?"

Norn muttered.

She's anxious.

Even I am.

"Yeah, he'll get cured."

"Really?"

"As far as I know, whenever Cliff declared that he would do something, he always accomplished it. That's why, tomorrow may be impossible, but someday he'll get cured."

"Will Ruijerd-san even live until then.....?"

"It's alright. You might've heard about it, but Ruijerd was surrounded by over 1000 soldiers during Laplace's military campaign and came back alive. He won't be dying in a place like this."

I have no choice but to say this now.

"I'm anxious....."

Norn said that and folded her legs to hide her face.

It's a gloomy atmosphere.

There's still some time left before the stew is cooked.

It's not that I have to cheer her up, but there's no meaning in feeling sad as well.

We're going to just eat and then sleep for today.

I hope to at least make the food go down so that we could sleep soundly.

"Oh right, Norn, is school going well?"

Hearing that, Norn raised half her head.

".....I've already graduated from school."

"That, how should I say this.....well, sorry for not coming to see you."

So she did graduate.

Why didn't she tell anyone?

But, now that I think about it...I see, during the time of Sylphy's delivery.....so it was already time for graduation, huh?

Even though it would've been fine to tell Roxy and the others.....

No, well, she would've only gotten embarrassed if she had said it that time.

"Not really, it's fine that you didn't come to see."

No, but, it was Norn's graduation.....

To miss such an important event is.....

I wonder what Paul in heaven would say.....

"It's not like I was the top student or anything....."

"But you were the student council president, you did give a speech or two, right?"

"Of course, we did a congratulatory speech. But I fumbled midway, and I almost fell down the stairs, it was terrible."

I can picture it.

The figure of a person fumbling in the middle of a speech, losing her footing while descending the stairs but somehow not falling down.

I wish I could have seen it.

Norn has a somewhat ashamed face, but I would've taken a video and had it placed on my grave.

"Which reminds me, before graduation you were talking about doing some kind of event, right? What did you do at the end?"

".....Did you not duel with various people during Cliff-senpai's graduation? We just imitated that and held a fighting arts tournament."

"Fighting arts tournament! That sounds interesting. But wasn't that dangerous?"

"The danger was suppressed as much as possible. The rules were to not kill anyone, the school lent out many Saint-class healing magic formations, healers were on standby as well, and the teachers prepared many healing scrolls too. On top of that, the participants were made to write an oath. That's why there were some injuries, but 0 deaths."

That's amazing.

If it's to the level of graduates from Magic University, then there should be many who can mutually kill each other with high powered magic.

Within such a tournament, there were 0 deaths.

It might be because of luck, but it's mostly because of the well-prepared system.

"I wanted to see it too."

"I think it would be like some kind of sport in your eyes."

"But a tournament literally makes your heart pound."

During my previous life as a shut-in, I participated in several online game tournaments.

Unfortunately, I didn't have any noteworthy accomplishments.

But just watching such a scene is enough.

"So did they prepare any kind of championship trophy?"

".....We did."

She said that and pouted.

"Everyone in the student council contributed money. An honor certificate, flowers, and a magic staff were prepared."

An honor certificate, flowers, and a magic staff.

Well, that's how it is.

I suppose they didn't have much of a budget, so it's possible it was a strenuous effort.

"And yet, the moment Rimy saw a large number of male participants, she proposed:『The winner will get a hot kiss as a present from President Norn~』"

"Eeh!"

"They got so excited, both the people participating and those who were not."

What the hell? A tournament where you'll receive Norn's kiss?!

That's not good at all.

This is beyond evil, inexcusable!

If I had been there, I would've wrecked them while wearing a mask.....

No, wrecking them would be unwise.

"Then.....did you?"

".....On the cheek."

On the cheek, is it?

I wonder if it's safe.

But Norn has buried her bright red face in her knees and is moaning with a 'Uuuu'.

Is it an out for Norn standards?

After a short while, she fell sideways like a book.

"The one who won said he will never forget it.....but I already want to forget about him."

"I see, what's that guy called? If possible tell me about his address and phone number, and maybe some kind, mysterious masked magician will erase him and his memories from this world."

"Phone?"

"Nothing."

Norn raised her body and repositioned herself on the floor.

Not sitting while holding her knees, but sitting with her legs in a 'W' pose.

{ C-Editor's note: W-sitting. }

"Anyway, looks like the tournament was a huge success."

"I wonder. As for me, I was thinking whether I did a good job or not, but there were a lot of difficult things as well. I feel like I just kept reflecting."

"You call that a huge success. I'm glad."

"........Yes."

Norn blushed a little and then nodded.

She no longer has a gloomy face.

"Well then, the potatoes are almost cooked. Do you want to eat as well?"

"Rub a dub dub thanks for the grub."

I pour the potato stew and meat in a bowl and give it to Norn.

Norn was staring at the contents, but after a short while she muttered a few words.

"Nii-san."

"Hmm?"

"Thank you very much."

"Hm."

I served myself as well.

I hadn't eaten anything the whole day,

I was hungry to the point of death.

"But this isn't delicious."

Well sorry 'bout that.

The next day.

Along with Norn, I went out towards the infirmary as the sun rose.

"........."

Ruijerd's well-being was the only thing on our mind.

For now, we were able to get a good night's sleep thanks to the unappetizing potato stew.

Even if it served no purpose, it should've guaranteed the stamina for nursing.

While resolving myself to some extent, I opened the door to the infirmary.

"!"

The scene that leaped at us was clattering.

The inside of the infirmary, which was like the wake until yesterday, was overflowing with liveliness.

No, liveliness would be a bit too much.

It doesn't have that much power.

But, at least everyone's faces look better in comparison to yesterday.

"Rudeus-dono!"

The doctors came running towards me after looking at my figure.

"Please take a look. The medicine prepared by Cliff-dono made everyone.....!"

Did it work?

Did the Sokasu tea work?

"Last night, the ones who drank that medicinal water suddenly experienced bowel movements.When taken by the nurse to the toilet, everyone started discharging light-blue diarrhea. A short while after that, they all rapidly started to get healthier.

The ones who were seriously ill haven't recovered yet, but if given a bit longer, they will definitely recover!"

To think that I would hear such a fortunate thing so early in the morning.....

But wait, excreted light-blue diarrhea?

"We're currently adjusting the medicinal water and giving it to everyone.

Well~, it was absurd of us to doubt him.

I can definitely say with confidence that Cliff Grimoire is the person who even smashed the curse!

Oops, we can't be going around doing this now.

We still have our duties to do, pardon us!"

The doctor said all that to us in one go and hurried back to the patients.

Light-blue diarrhea.

Something's bothering me.

What might it be? Light-blue, light-blue.....

"Rudeus."

When I came to, a huge silhouette was in front of me.

A male with white clothes and black helmet.

"Ah, Orsted-sama."

"Did you see the stool?"

".....No, not yet."

While saying that Orsted leaned a little.

Close to my ears, he whispered.

"Those were the remaining fissions of Dark King Vita."

Dark King Vita.

The moment I heard those words, my mind suddenly crossed some strange ideas.

Perhaps.

If only perhaps.

That the plague wasn't the Drain syndrome?

Dark King Vita.

That king who distributed his fissions within the village.

And was keeping the progression of the plague in check.....

But, if only perhaps, what if that Vita had already cured the plague?

Just to threaten, by using his fissions, he was making the physical condition of the villagers worse, and after his death, while mustering his last power, he gave a job to his fissions.....

And then, the fissions that were hidden somewhere in the intestines were disintegrated by the red fruit and Sokasu tea and were washed away.....

Which means?

No, this is mere speculation.

"Just like you said, we struggled for a bit more."

"......Right?"

Well, it's fine.

For now, we have crossed the difficult part.

We've completely defeated Dark King Vita.

Let's go with that thinking.

"Where is Cliff-senpai?"

"He was looking after the conditions of the patients, but fell asleep shortly after dawn. He's currently in a nearby vacant house with Elinalize Dragonroad."

I see.

He worked hard.

Let him sleep.

Since he'll start preparation for a second child with Elinalize right away after he wakes up.

"Just now, Ruijerd Supardia woke up as well."

"Is it true!?"

"Yeah, go and see him."

"Pardon me!"

I bowed and headed inside the infirmary.

Directly towards the place where Ruijerd was sleeping last night.

Ruijerd was there.

Sitting up on the bed, with a good complexion, he was having a meal.

"Ruijerd-san!"

The moment we arrived at Ruijerd's place, Norn immediately ran to him and hugged him by his belly.

"I'm glad.....I'm so glad....."

Norn started crying.

It's the crybaby Norn.

With a worried face, Ruijerd wiped his mouth, set the bowl of food aside, and caressed Norn's head.

I didn't say anything for a while and watched the scene.

For some reason, I started to feel like crying as well.

".....Rudeus."

After a while, Ruijerd raised his face.

"Ruijerd-san.....are you alright now?"

"Yeah, I can't wave my spear yet, but there's no problem."

I see.

I'm glad.....I'm so glad.....

I'm not mimicking Norn, it's the only feeling that's coming out of me.

"I've become indebted to you again."

".....Let's not say such things to each other. Not to mention, you haven't completely recovered yet. Please don't be negligent."

"Yeah."

As I started talking with Ruijerd, Norn moved out of the way while grumbling.

And started sobbing convulsively while hiding her face with her hands.

"However, let me say this first, Rudeus."

"What is it?"

Within that serious face, small amounts of uneasiness could be felt.

Is there still something left?

Will he tell me a shocking truth right now, with this timing?

As I thought that and put myself on guard, Ruijerd said this.

"After my complete recovery, I'll become your strength."

"....."

I wonder what this feeling that is boiling up from my chest is.

Ruijerd became my comrade again.

Is it the sense of exaltation in regards to that truth?

I'm happy.

Just happy.

"Yes, I'll be in your care."

I swallow something that was welling from inside my throat,

while stopping the inner corner of my eye from getting hotter,

I lent a hand towards him.

"It is I who should say that, let's get along well."

Ruijerd's hand was warm and strong.

Q. Why did the doctor say 'smashed the curse'?

A. Maybe he noticed it by some chance. Like, he may have heard from someone about his origins from the Magic University in the Asura Kingdom.

Q. Who was Rimy again?

A. One of the pupils of the Magic University and a member of the student council. Of course, she hasn't even showed up yet.

Q. When Cliff said 'Just one is fine', what happened after that?

A. "I ain't drinking that!"

"Do you want to be annihilated! I'm going to drink it!"

"If Ruijerd is going to drink it then me too!"

".....Then, me too!"

"Please, by all means."

With such a course of events, they drank it.

Q. Cliff was able to check Elinalize's pregnancy with the Identification Eye but couldn't check for Vita's fissions that were inside the body?

A. Looks like he couldn't.

Q. In the end, it's still not clear what cured the disease.

A. Cliff's prescription cured the plague and exterminated Vita's fissions. The red fruit that cliff had disrupts mana in the body. Most likely it disrupted Vita's fissions(The blue stool that came out after they took the medicine) with this the Supard race got healthy! With this we can rest for now! We did it!

That's everything from Rudeus point of view. Perhaps someone would roughly explain it in the second half of this volume or perhaps they won't.

END AUTHOR Q & A (1 OF 14)

A silent house.

On the sunken hearth in the centre of the house, a pot was shaking.

Sitting in front of that was a man with green hair.

It was Ruijerd.

I was sitting across from him, with the hearth in front of me.

"....."

"....."

There was no conversation.

Only silence remained between Ruijerd and I.

There was nothing to say.

No, it would be better to say that there wasn't any chance to speak.

All of my focus was directed entirely on what's in front of me right now.

Failure is not allowed.

My gaze pointed directly in front, I waited for the moment to come.

"!"

And so, that time came.

Carefully stretching out my hand... I put out the pot's fire.

But, it's not over yet.

I must not rush.

And like that, for almost 10 minutes, I stopped moving.

After 10 minutes had passed, I finally raised my voice.

"Ruijerd-san, are you ready?"

"Yes, I do not mind."

As I received those words, I reached out to what was beside me.

It was completely white, with a gritty surface, and an appearance close to that of an egg.

Not like, it was a chicken egg.

"....."

Breaking the egg, and taking out a bowl, I scrambled the egg with chopsticks.

I was completing that series of events as if it was natural.

As if I had known it from the moment I was born.

The soul of a child of three is the same at a hundred.

Once you learn how to ride a bike, no matter how many years pass, you never forget. It's the same as that.

No, I may not have even learned how to do this.

From the moment I was born, I may have had this information.

In other words, it was instinct.

The egg was now being beaten.

I repeated the action once more.

There were two eggs scrambled in the bowl.

I left that as it is and reached out towards the lid.

".....Alright."

Taking off the lid and looking at the inside, I nodded.

The steaming white rice was making a simmering noise.

The uninterrupted steaminess of the cooked rice was spreading throughout the room.

The inside of my mouth began to water, and I unintentionally gulped.

I was overwhelmed by the urge to rake the rice into my mouth, but I endured it and stirred the rice mixture.

I took the bowls.

And dished out the freshly cooked rice.

A bowlful of it.

Not too much but not too little.

Therefore with the chopsticks, I opened a hole in the centre of the rice.

Into that hole, I poured in the eggs I had scrambled earlier.

And stained the white rice with a gleaming gold.

But that is not all.

From here on out.

This moment that I've been waiting for, from the instant I came to this world until now, has been my greatest wish.

I took the small bottle next to me.

While slowly squeezing itself out from that small spout, it poured onto the golden rice.

What came from that spout was a black liquid.

A pitch black liquid that looked like poison at first glance.

It was soy sauce.

I poured it only once.

Two was also fine, but for now, only once.

With just that, the top of the golden rice was now stained black.

Just like the tint of a pudding, it caused my stomach to growl.

Stay calm, I'll be able to eat it soon.

It was for this purpose that I went through 4 trials.

Also, from here on out, it will be possible to eat this whenever I want.

However, the first time is a very important moment that must be cherished.

".....Here you go."

"Yes."

I pass it to Ruijerd.

After taking the bowl, he waited for me.

I immediately repeated the process and made another.

"And so, thanks for the food, let's eat."

Hands together, we bowed.

Bowl to the left, chopsticks to the right.

I stretched my mouth wide for the first bite.

"—Mmm! —HmMmm!!"

This is it.

This taste.

It's perfect.

It is not the best, but this is it.

This is the taste I have been searching for for so long.

"*bite*.....*chew*.....*glomp*.....!"

One bite, two bites, three bites.

Silently, eating, chewing and swallowing; occasionally coughing as I choked up on some rice.

I did nothing but continue to eat.

".....That was such a feast!"

Before I realized it, my bowl was empty.

My happiness time was over in an instant.

I was satisfied after eating, but I also felt as if something was missing.

But before I made seconds, I looked at the man in front of me.

Ruijerd was eating in silence.

He's not usually a man who speaks during meals, but today he seemed more quiet than usual.

No, today it is only Ruijerd and I.

Because I was not talking, there was no conversation.

Although his eating pace is not all that fast.

It looks like he still hadn't eaten even half of his portion.

No, I was simply too fast.

"Um, Nii-san."

"Waah!"

As I thought that, Norn was sitting right beside us before I realized it.

"Norn....When did you....."

"When? You ask.....I just got here.....I tried calling you once when you were eating."

So she arrived while I was eating.

"What are you eating?"

"Something good. Do you want some too?"

"........Then, I guess I will."

Norn nodded as she glanced at Ruijerd.

I immediately served rice in a bowl,

Beat the egg, scrambled it, and added soy sauce.

The entire process took 10 seconds, but the taste isn't the tiniest bit different.

It is the technique of a craftsman.

"Eat as much as you want."

"What's this.....?"

"It's my comfort food."

"......Thanks for the food."

Norn took the bowl I handed her and began eating slowly.

"....."

I waited.

I waited while they ate.

I sat and waited.

You're still not done? Hurry up.

I want to hear your opinions. Although there's no need to, but I still want to know.

"....."

And while my thoughts raced, Ruijerd had finished eating.

"So this is what you were talking about on the journey?"

"Yes. What do you think?"

"Delicious."

His impression was a single word.

But I was satisfied.

My companion and I were finally able to eat what I had been searching for long ago on that nostalgic journey.

I was satisfied.

It's only a pity that Eris wasn't here.

".....Thank you for the meal."

Thus Norn also finished eating.

And she had only just started, that was quite fast.

"What do you think Norn? This is what I was talking about at home."

".....It was quite delicious. It doesn't taste like anything I've had before.....is it because of this seasoning?"

"Yeah. It's soy sauce, a versatile seasoning. It's delicious with anything you put it on."

"Hmmm....."

Norn seemed to be in great admiration.

I'll make it at home and let you eat it.

Today is an anniversary.

The anniversary of the first egg mix rice has been tasted in this world.

"It's just that eating a raw egg will upset your stomach, so you need to use detoxification magic."

"If detoxification is needed, then don't make someone recovering from a disease eat it!"

I made her angry on the anniversary.

Two days later.

The Supard race was steadily making its way towards complete recovery.

Although there were some who were still bedridden, those with moderate symptoms were beginning to go back to their normal lives.

I also took it upon myself to build a darkroom to grow the Sokasu herb in the corner of the village.

We still don't know whether the cause of the plague was the high mana density soil or Dark King Vita.

But if we ever encounter the same symptoms, if we have this, then the result will differ greatly.

Although if the cause was Dark King Vita, then the same disease shouldn't appear again.

If it was the soil, then the Supard race would need to change their residence.

They would have to move somewhere less deep in the forest, or at the very least purchase vegetables from the neighboring village.

Either would work.

In any case, it was still necessary to have the country's approval.

I would like to have them move to the Asura Kingdom, but there was a lot of unease and opposition from the Supard race.

It seems they dislike leaving behind a place they have lived in for so long.

On top of that, the Milis Church's influence in the Asura Kingdom is quite large.

Cliff was rather relaxed when it came to the Supard race, but the Milis Church's deep rooted fear was most likely still commonplace.

And thus, to negotiate with the Biheiril Kingdom, I decided to head towards the capital.

There were two goals.

Have the Supard race accepted.

And on top of that, have the subjugation force disbanded.

The Supard race, overall, is quite frank, and due to their continued persecution, they are quite exclusive, but they are good people.

The Biheiril Kingdom might show disapproval at first, but there are plenty of ways to get them to change their mind.

The quickest of those is to get them to visit this village.

If they actually come and see the somewhat clumsy people and the smiling children, they will know that this is a safe place.....Is what I would want them to think, but I wonder.

The Biheiril Kingdom might see the children and think, "There are even children being born here, hurry and dispose of them!"

Just like cockroaches.

But if that happens, I would recommend that the Supard race emigrate.

If they live in the Asura Kingdom, I'll owe Ariel another favor.....but if it came to that, I'll just pay it with my body.

Although I think it will be fine.

The Supard children are somewhat cute to look at.

To see such children innocently playing with a leather ball, I would like to think that Biheiril Kingdom is filled with nothing but people that would smile at the sight.

"And so, I'll be heading for the capital."

"Yeah."

"Cliff will be seeing the disease's progress, and Elinalize will be accompanying him as well. Norn will continue to nurse Ruijerd. What about you, Orsted-sama?"

"I'll stay here. Cliff Grimoire is currently investigating the plague. We may be able to cure it next time."

As Orsted said that, he returned the ball that came flying at him with a *bong* sound.

It was in a flash. I couldn't even see the movement of his hand.

But the ball gently flew in an arch and landed right in the child's hand.

"With the negotiations, it will not be necessary for me to go."

"Of course. No matter how much the helmet seals your curse...."

With another *bong* the ball was hit back.

"It's not as if the curse has completely disappeared."

"Yeah."

The ball was returned again.

"But if it comes to it, I'll be relying on your appearance. Even with the curse, it's possible that if they see you, they will be in awe."

"That is fine."

Another *bong*.

"Should I make them stop?"

No matter which direction he sent the ball flying, the Supard children continued to send the ball in Orsted's direction.

The look in their eyes, rather than hostility, was curiosity.

'Because there's some weird guy here, let's try throwing the ball at him' kind of thing.

If it weren't for the helmet, they might not be throwing the ball, but rocks.

But because the ball keeps landing comfortably in their hand, it's somewhat fun.

"There is no problem. This level doesn't even count as an attack."

"Ah, is that so?"

I wonder if Orsted was having fun.

I couldn't see his expression under the helmet, but he wasn't in a bad mood.

"Is it fun?"

"....It isn't bad."

It's fine if it's not bad.

"Then I'll be taking my leave."

"Yeah."

As Orsted said that, I left the area.

Sándor and Doga were waiting for me by the teleportation magic circle.

While I will go to the capital, Sándor will go to the second city to meet with the informant.

The destinations were different, but we decided that splitting up would be good for efficiency's sake.

I was taking Doga as an escort.

I feel like he won't be of much help, but it's better than not having him.

"Whoops."

On the way I nearly ran into Ruijerd.

While leaning on Norn's shoulder, he was walking dizzily.

"Ruijerd-san, is it ok to walk?"

"Just a little."

Although Ruijerd said that, when I saw Norn's stern face, I knew that wasn't the case.

"I will be leaving for a bit to negotiate with the Biheiril Kingdom. I may bring along the country's soldiers with me, so if that happens, please try to welcome them to the best of your ability."

"I understand. I'll tell the Chieftain."

As Ruijerd said that, I saw Orsted.

Pressed against a wall, continuously having the ball thrown at him by the children.

It looked like bullying at first glance, but for some reason it was a pleasant sight.

Each time Orsted accurately returned the ball, the children laughed.

"He's different from how he looks, eh?"

"Right?"

While saying that with a grin, I left.

I headed to the Biheiril Kingdom via the magic formation.

Of course I checked the communication lithograph when I stopped at the office.

Zanoba's group had found no particular problem.

Aisha + Mercenaries also had no problem.

Sylphy's group still had not made contact. Considering the distance of the teleportation magic formation, it's quite far, so it can't be helped.

From Roxy's group, there was little movement.

It seems that when they looked into Ogre Island, the Ogre God had already left.

We do not know the location of the Ogre God.

But the people of Ogre Island were preparing for a battle, was the kind of information that seems to be flowing around.

Also, Eris was heading here.

She wanted to meet Ruijerd.

Even so. I wished she would hold on a little longer.

I also dispatched the information that the Supard race was recovering.

I felt like I've made a big racket about an incident that was resolved in just a few days, but I guess it can't be helped.

After finishing all that, I once again equipped the disguise ring and hopped into the teleportation magic circle that connected to Biheiril Kingdom's capital.

Zanoba had set up the teleportation circle in an abandoned village inside the forest about half a day away from the capital.

"Master, I have been waiting."

At the moment I arrived, Zanoba lowered his head.

Julie and Ginger were also with him.

"Were you waiting for me?"

"Yes. From the moment I heard you were coming."

What a loyal guy.

"But this works out great. Here, there are no eavesdroppers to worry about, and I can give my report."

"I see. Then let's hear it."

"Although I say that, it's nothing major."

And with that preface, Zanoba told me of all his movements until now.

First, after finding an inn, he set up the teleportation magic circle in this forest.

After that was information collection in the capital.

It was then he came across the information that『The country is gathering a subjugation force』.

That was when he gave his first report on the communication lithograph. The part I read.

After that, he gained information that the North God would be participating in the subjugation force.

While still looking for information on Gisu, they were also looking for the North God.

That was the current state of situation.

"So basically, we don't know anything yet?"

"I am very sorry. When I had heard that North God Kalman the Third stood out, I thought we could find him quickly, but it was considerably....."

"No, there is no need to apologize."

We have only just entered the Biheiril Kingdom, so we haven't been here for that long.

Enter the city, set up the magic circle, begin actions.

It was achieved in almost seven days.

To obtain these results, that's rather fast.

"Let's work hard from here on out."

"Yes."

The North God, huh?

If he really is participating in the subjugation force, I must convince them under any circumstances.

But not being able to find someone that stands out makes me think someone was moving in the shadows.

Maybe the North God has already become Gisu's companion.

Maybe Gisu, after hearing that Vita has been defeated and their plan had failed, saw how disadvantaged he was and decided to withdraw with the North God.

There was also the possibility that Vita was a diversion; he was defeated quite easily.

It's also possible that the information on Vita hadn't reached Gisu yet, but that might be a bit too optimistic.

If that's the case, I was at least able to make Ruijerd a comrade.

Just that makes this visit to the Biheiril Kingdom worth something.

"Then Master, shall we go? I will guide you to the capital."

"Yeah, please."

In any case, what I must do hasn't changed yet.

While thinking that, I headed to the Biheiril Capital.

The capital of the Biheiril Kingdom was somehow similar to Shirone Kingdom.

Being on the central continent, it had the atmosphere of a small to medium size state.

This country, rich in wood, mostly used timber for building materials.

There were also many trees in the city.

Maybe because of that, it exudes a unique atmosphere.

It may also be because I arrived at night.

In this country, when night comes, many bonfires are lit in the streets.

Horse drawn carriages were forbidden at night.

Other than that, nothing much was different.

Near the entrance were inns and pedlars.

As one went towards the town centre, the townspeople and the nobles houses became more extravagant, and at the centre of it was a castle.

The castle was built at the intersection of two rivers.

Just like the Sunomata Overnight Castle.

Its location was similar to that of Shirone's Fort Karon.

On top of that, behind the castle was a shanty town.

Even though I say shanty town, it's not like the people there look especially poor.

It's arranged like a town you can find anywhere.

"Well then, I have got to meet the king now."

"But, I wonder if we can get an audience, Queen Ariel's influence may not reach this far."

"Hmm."

In the room on the inn, I thought together with Zanoba.

The place Zanoba was staying in was not an inn for adventurers, but a luxury inn for the nobles of the city.

He was indeed a man of a different pay grade.

Or should I say, do the standing out with a bit of moderation.

Although he doesn't stand out as much as I say.

"How about I slip into the subjugation force? The king is likely to greet us when we set out. There, I can get close, even if forcefully, and then we can surely get an audience."

"That would be too slow. After the country has completed preparations, to the point of saying 'Start!', they might begin despite our protests."

There was an order to things.

Gather the people, the food, and then the weapons.

Once they have reached the stage of heading out, it's quite possible that the words "Please wait" won't stop them.

In these kind of events, the country has their honour to think about, so it would be hard for them to stop.

"It might be slower at this stage, but before they complete the preparations, we must explain that there is no need to attack the Supard race."

We will teach them of the Supard Race's existence during the preparation phase and have them confirm that it is safe, and the subjugation force can return to hunting invisible wolves.

It would be good to have a percentage of the cost.

Orsted should be able to provide it to some extent.

That's why, before the subjugation force sets out, I want to meet the king as soon as possible.

With that in mind, we started thinking for a way.

"For now, let's try approaching directly from the front. We might stand out, but if I introduce myself as the Dragon God's subordinate under orders from the Asura Kingdom, and if it comes to it, throw Peruguis's name out there, then... And if even that doesn't work, we can try again and think of a different approach."

And so, not coming up with anything better, we decided to seek an audience.

The next day.

After finishing breakfast, I decided to look around the castle.

So the castle was similar to Shirone's after all.

In both size and atmosphere... but the large amount of wooden parts was different.

No, Zanoba said they would be the same in their weakness to fire.

"There is probably a toll gate."

"I hope Queen Ariel's name will be enough to grant us an audience."

"Though this place doesn't have any relations with the Asura Kingdom.....so following the proper procedure will be difficult."

"We're following it?"

"We're following it."

Meeting with the king of a whole country is surprisingly difficult.

For all my audiences up until now, I have skipped the usual procedure.

Normally, I would use the country's nobility(Connections), to make an appointment.

Preparing clothes and a carriage, along with a certification of identity, and on top of that, introducing myself by a civil official of the castle.

After confirming that I was someone trustworthy, and adjusting my time according to the king's schedule, we would finally be granted an audience.

This would normally be the expected flow.

So it is difficult without connections after all.

However, despite setbacks, it is definitely not impossible.

Even if someone comes abruptly, if they're important, and they wish to meet the king, then an audience is possible.

Even so, if we stand out too much, our means of finding Gisu will become limited.

Although he might have found out about us long ago.....

"So Zanoba, there are many rumours of us working together, so from here on out, it will be just me and Doga."

"Alright. I will pray for your good fortune."

I parted with Zanoba in a crowded place, and together with Doga, in front of the waterway, we headed towards somewhere abundant with royal guards.

It was still early in the morning, and the soldiers were moving around busily.

To suddenly come and ask for an audience, I would be taken as a suspicious person.

Although I made sure my appearance was like that of nobility.....

But in a country with no embassy, I did not know what kind of dress was correct.

Hmm? Is this place not stuffed with soldiers?

There seems to be some kind of reception.

"Excuse me. Can you help me?"

"What do you want?"

The receptionist was a man with a respectable handlebar moustache.

His clothes looked somewhat civilian and he didn't look like a soldier.

I guess I should complement his clothes first.

No, I should talk business since that's the reason I came here.

"I would like to request an audience with the king."

"When?"

"Um? Ah, today, or as soon as you possibly can.

Although I said that, I don't think I look all that suspicious.

Well, I have nothing to lose.

If it's no good, then let's just properly go through the steps while acknowledging our conspicuousness.

"....."

The moustached man glanced at me and began turning through a stack of paper.

"That'll be one gold coin."

"Huh?"

"An audience will be one gold coin."

I wonder if he wants a tip.

"Here."

"This is definitely....Huh?"

The moustached man took the gold coin and began examining it.

And then bit it with *clink*.

It seems there's some problem.

Did I accidentally give him a fake gold coin...?

"This is an Asuran gold coin isn't it?"

"Ah, Yes. That is where I hail from."

While saying so, I showed him the insignia I got from Ariel.

"....."

His reaction is bad.

The moustached man looked at me suspiciously.

As I thought, the influence of the Asura Kingdom doesn't reach here.

I wonder if this is bad.

While I was thinking that, he had pocketed the coin.

He then wrote something on the paper stack and handed it to me.

"Write here your name and reason for your audience."

"Ah, yes."

"When the afternoon bell rings, come back here again."

"Yes. Thank you very much."

His reaction was bad, but my money was probably good.

It seems I'll get an audience.

The power of money is great.

For now, I have gotten past the first barrier.

Noon.

I was in front of the waiting room for the audience.

"....."

I was nervous.

The audience would not be today.

Is what I thought when I went to the palace, but the moustached receptionist had a different person lead me to the waiting room, and before I realized it, I was in this situation.

My turn was next; I would be called in for an audience shortly.

I thought that I had broken through the first gate, but what was waiting for me was the last boss.

It's happening too fast, my head was completely blank.

No, calm down.

I should first hear about the audience from someone coming out of the chamber.

The king of this country, in the two hours after noon, will hold an audience with anyone.

Of course, although I say anyone, there are conditions.

First, to hold an audience, you must pay 1 Biheiril gold coin.

And on top of that, each person is only allowed 15 minutes. There are only 8 people seen per day.

If you have the gold, anyone may see the King, to state opinions or questions and even ask for favours.

If you think there is a major problem, you may petition it; that seems to be the procedure of the country.

One gold coin is an amount that an entire village might barely be able to put together.

Listening to many unimportant stories, looking for a real problem.

The Biheiril Kingdom seems like a nice place.

Although being in real trouble and not being able to pay the one gold coin might also happen.

However, for a chance to directly petition the King, anybody would come running.

Especially greedy merchants and local rich people looking to secure their own useless interests.

In any case, when we arrived, it was a full house as expected.

But due to our good luck, there was a cancellation.

Really good luck.

It was probably the Asuran gold coin, worth ten times a single Biheiril gold coin, that raised my good luck.

That aside, for now, we are good.

A fifteen minute audience.

That's not much time.

It's not very calming.

I only have two things to take care of.

If I revealed who I was and talked cheerfully and clearly to someone, then the future will also be cheerful.

"Rudeus-dono, please proceed to the audience chamber."

While I was thinking that, I had been called.

"Well then, let's go."

"......Yup."

With Doga's response, I took a deep breath and stood up, and exited the waiting room.

Following the instructions of the servant, we walked through the hallway towards the audience chamber.

The audience chamber, well, it would be around a rank C.

It wasn't a terribly large room; there were no showy carpets and eight somewhat careless soldiers were standing guard.

There didn't seem to be any special decorations.

There wasn't any majesty to it.

Originally, this was a room where commoners entered. When you think of it that way, this much was just right.

Practically speaking, it's not odd. Three stars.

"Your Majesty, it is an honour to meet you."

Continuing into the audience chamber, I knelt in a good place and bowed my head.

After a while, the King let out a voice.

"Courteous one. Face me and state your origin and business so that I may hear."

As he said that, I raised my head.

The King was an old man.

He had a tiredness about him and it was unlikely that he had much time left.

He might possibly be suffering from a disease.

"My name is Rudeus Greyrat.

A subordinate of『Dragon God』Orsted-sama who ranks second among the Seven World Great Powers."

"Ooh... Of the Dragon God.....!"

The King did not try to hide his surprise.

It's an uncommon, nice feeling.

It seems this King knows something about the Seven World Powers.

I wonder if it is because the Ogre's live near.

"What does the one who associates himself with one of the Seven World Powers want with me.....no, with this country?"

"Yes, I've heard about the subjugation of the demons being carried out in the Forest of No Return.I would like that to be cancelled."

Whoops, I didn't mean cancel.

My tongue slipped.

Well, well it's alright, I can still be fixed.

"Cancel it?"

"Yes."

"The reason?"

"What is living in the forest is not a demon."

I then told him about the Supard race.

Since long ago, most likely before this country was established, the Supard race had been living in that forest.

How the Supard race are not the demonic race that the world makes them out to be.

And how at that time they made a promise with the village nearby, that they would hunt the invisible demons and make sure that they didn't escape the forest and damage the surroundings.

However, recently, the entire village was struck with a plague and the invisible demons were allowed to leave the forest.

And, how thanks to the efforts of Dragon God Orsted, the village has now recovered and is once again hunting the invisible demons.

So in that short time, all while trying to convey that the Supards were a good race, I gave my explanation.

"The evil race and the invisible demon... That is a rather unbelievable thing."

"That is understandable, I had expected this response and have something prepared.

Once you see this, an explanation will not be needed.

Is there anybody here of this country that would like to confirm this for themselves?"

I will show them the current state of the Supard race.

Like the women cooking with pots, or the men making a living by hunting the invisible demons,or the Dragon God playing ball with the children.

"Alright....."

The King put his hand on his chin while thinking.

However I slowly shook my head.

"Assuming what you say is true, at this point I can no longer cancel it. Many men of valour have already gathered in the country."

"Then, it wouldn't be a problem as long as you give the directive that the『People of the Forest』who live at the back of the Earth Dragon Valley are not demons, so do not attack them.

That it's fine as long as they hunt the invisible demons which most definitely exist.....

Although if money is a problem, we would be willing to help out."

"Well then....."

I took another breath.

"The Supard race, since ancient times, has lived in this country in secret. However, even now, they do not request preferential treatment. They only seek to live in the corner of this country, out of the way in the forest.

...If that is still not agreeable and His Majesty wants the Supard race out of his kingdom, I will arrange a destination of migration for them."

"...You seem to hold the Supard race quite dear."

"When I was young, my life was saved by one of them."

As I said that, the King put his hand on his chin.

I glanced across and could see that the servant was worried about the time.

15 minutes had nearly passed.

"That is time. Please withdraw."

"I humbly ask you to consider! They mean the country no harm!"

Taking one last breath, one step before leaving, I bowed my head.

".....Gullickson, Sandor!"

On the King's command, two soldiers came forward.

One with a handlebar moustache and another with a thin long face.

This was the part where I'm picked and thrown out.

Although I thought the talk went well, it was still too abrupt...

This time it's a failure.

I'll try again la-

"On account of this person, go and confirm the truth!"

"Yes!"

At the King's cry, I was wide-eyed.

"Is that alright!?"

"These soldiers will be dispatched. And if it turns out that you are lying, as planned, the subjugation force will set out."

It's a little abrupt, but it seems the soldiers will be coming with me.

Do not deny it and confirm the truth with your own eyes.

He's a good King.

It must be because he listens to the problems of the people daily.

The Biheiril Kingdom's degree of trust from the Orsted Corporation has increased.

"I give you my heartfelt thanks!"

Finally, I bowed my head.

It somehow went very well.

AUTHOR Q & A (2 OF 14)

Q. I've become anxious now that Rudeus has said that everything is proceeding smoothly.

A. That's obvious, since he came here to search for Gisu but not even his name has turned up yet.

Q. It's found out that the cause of the plague was radiation or the like → The readers realized that it was especially close to 3/11 on that subject → The world takes it as satire and Magonote-san's social evaluation goes up in laughter, or so I thought would happen.(LOL)

{ C-Editor's note: This chapter of the story was publicly released on 3/8/2011. The Fukushima nuclear disaster occurred on 3/11/2011. }

A. If they did something like that, I'm afraid they won't just stop at teasing me but get angry at me while saying 'Imprudence!'.

Q. Does Zanoba's income comes from dolls and picture books?

A. That's how it is. He is in possession of a large-scale production factory and marketing store in the Capital of Asura Kingdom.

Q. I have great admiration for the poultries all over the world that provide cheap and safe eggs while carrying out thorough hygiene management and great effort.

A. The blessing of the Supermarket to provide fresh eggs constantly.

Q. Is Rudi in disguise the whole time he's in the Kingdom and the audience room?

A. Of course.

Q. Was TKG a joke reply!?

{ C-Editor's note: TKG - Tamago kake gohan is a Japanese dish in which a raw egg is mixed with rice. }

A. It wasn't. It was to give the reader an impression of a heartwarming portrayal of peace's arrival even if it was only for a moment.

Q. >if it came to that I'll just pay it with my body.

Um...(Meaningless)

A. Using Rudeus-san's body(Mana) for at least 1 month free of charge is rather very very meaningful.

Q. Make sure that you disinfect and properly wash the egg before serving yourself, LOL.

A. Of course, I do that.

Q. How do you read 鬼族 and 鬼神?

A. Oni zoku and Kishin (In japanese).

END AUTHOR Q & A (2 OF 14)

Having the two soldiers from Biheiril join the party, we headed out towards the Supard village.

We moved in a carriage so that the Biheiril Kingdom won't discover the Teleportation Magic formation.

We moved to second city Irel within a span of a day.

While lodging there, I thought of collecting Sándor as well, but the progress report ended with the informant not getting a hold of anything.

Despite the disappointment of failing to discover Gisu's whereabouts, I hastened.

Furthermore, it took another day to get to the village of the Earth Dragon Valley.

The village was the same way I remembered it with many people, and granny was yelling energetically at the mercenaries as well.

It hasn't been even 10 days since then, so it's obviously obvious.

I would like to tell granny that "It's alright. The forest people are now safe", but it's still too early for that.

Even if the subjugation force is disbanded, it will take some time.

While thinking that, we stayed at the village for a night and then moved towards the forest at dawn.

"Almost there, we should arrive at the Supard village by dusk if we enter the forest at dawn, so please have a little bit more patience."

"Yeah. Let's make haste though."

".....My legs are starting to feel heavy."

The two soldiers.

They had a lot of small complaints.

Gullickson.

He was growing a very elegant handlebar moustache and looked a lot like the receptionist soldier.

Perhaps they're brothers.

His voice and the manner of speech were the only things that set them apart.

Unlike the moustached soldier, Gullickson gave of an impression of a rude and a fairly blunt person.

He's also an impatient character that hates being kept waiting.

In the inn, as I was thinking about paying both mine and their shares, he paid my share as well before I could say anything, and one other time during our journey, the moment he realized that we were preparing to set up a campfire, he immediately started collecting firewood.

On top of that, when a monster attacked us, he took the initiative and went ahead to defeat it.

Of course, I took care of all the monsters. It'll be troublesome for me if they got hurt.

Sandor.

He's oval-faced. A long thin face can be said to vilify him.

He is calmer in comparison to Gullickson.

Always wearing a calm smile, he didn't bother to even unsheathe his sword when a monster attacked.

Having said that, he's not that much of a chatterbox.

He only says a few words when necessary. Otherwise, he stays shut like a shellfish.

He's a very curious character though. When I used chantless magic, he was surprised and started asking this and that.

He's wearing a soldier's uniform, but he might be a magician.

"....."

Sandor had sent me some suggestive gazes before.

The gazes were as if they were evaluating me.

I feel like I'm being monitored, but it can't be helped.

A male who suddenly appeared with the proposal of suspending the subjugation force.

They might have received orders to not let their guards down in case I tried to do something weird.

It's natural to be vigilant, and it's understandable that they're keeping an eye on me.

But there seems to be something more to it than that.

The duo gave of some really creepy vibes from time to time.

The strange thing is that Doga doesn't look like that much.

Doga seems naïve in regards to his appearance; I can't think of him having the wits to fool others.

So it might be that I am simply overthinking things too much after all

"The Supards are good-natured people. They are a bit blunt, but if you deal with them keeping that in mind, you can talk with them in good faith. Incidentally, they're kind towards kids as well."

I tried endeavoring a positive image campaign of Supard race towards my two companions from Biheiril kingdom.

".....We aren't children."

"Of course, I know that. But it's alright, they'll properly welcome you."

Still, it looks like they have some doubts regarding the Supard race after all.

At this rate, even if the Supards welcomed them warmly, they'll still be suspicious of the food handed to them or something.

Until recently, the village was being invaded by the plague. If that became known, then it's likely that they won't even move their hands to touch the food.

But fortunately, there's the food brought in by the doctors as well.

If it's the Asuran folks, then it may be possible for their palate.

At any rate, I intend to make them see the whole village and make them go back with a good feeling.

We arrived at the Earth Dragon Valley.

There were two bridges in front of us.

"Why are there two side-by-side bridges?"

The bridge that was there before and the bridge made by me.

"It would not be good if we were to fall down midway, so I created one with earth magic."

"Hmmm.....so, which one should we cross?"

"This one."

When I pointed to the one I created, Gullickson jumped on it right away and started walking.

Without any handrails, despite the height, he rapidly walked without any hesitation.

Perhaps he's not afraid.

I guess.

I followed him. Behind me was Sandor, and Doga was at the end of the line.

"Please be careful so as not to fall."

If I had passed earlier, I would've been able to save them if someone were to fall, but Gullickson is really impatient.

Just like Eris.

Perhaps Gullickson is a Sword God Style user.

"Are there earth dragons below.....?"

When I turned to look, Sandor gulped as he was trying to look below.

"Sandor-san, you're a resident of this country and yet you don't know?"

"I know of it, but this is the first time I've come here."

That's obvious.

There are probably not many who have seen every famous place of a country.

Since this wasn't a tourist-attraction spot.

From the standpoint of a soldier, if one enters the forest after being specifically told not to, it would prove to be somehow problematic.

There are only a few who have climbed the Red Dragon Mountain Range in the east of Asura Kingdom, it's the same as that.

"Rudeus-dono, I've heard that you've come to call yourself the subordinate of the Dragon God Orsted, but.....have you ever fought an earth dragon?"

"I have not."

"You've shown us splendid magic on our way here, but if it came to that, could you fight one?"

Sandor's voice was trembling.

Perhaps he was afraid.

Afraid of an earth dragon suddenly climbing out of the valley and attacking us.

The bottom of the valley isn't visible. What is lurking in it, what would pop out of it, those unpleasant thoughts are probably swelling inside his mind.

"Please be relieved.

I wouldn't know what to do if I was thrown inside a flock, but if there were only one or two, I think I could deal with them."

"Is that so....."

"Oi, hurry up already!"

During the time we conversed, Gullickson had already crossed over and was waiting.

We increased our pace to catch up with his impatience.

"After crossing the bridge, the Supard race's village is only a little bit further."

And from there starts the real thing.

Inspection tour of the Supard village

Guide : Rudeus Greyrat

Support : Doga

No. of participants : 2

"The Supard village only has one entrance.

The entrance is being guarded by two gatekeepers so as not to allow the invasion of monsters.

Thanks to their peculiar sensory organ, a trespasser can never be overlooked.

Of course, they have already sensed our arrival.

However there is no need for concern. Since they're a very friendly species."

"......Just what happened to you suddenly?"

"I'm giving an explanation."

Gullickson was dubious, he won't realize it by just looking.

That's why there is a need for an explanation.

For that reason, a guide is necessary.

Hence a presentation.

"We can see the entrance.

Can you see it? Those people are the Supard race.

You realize why they're facing this way even though they're inside the forest, right?"

When I pointed towards the village, both their bodies stiffened.

It's the real, genuine Supard race.

"......Looks like their hair really was green."

"Indeed. However, there is no need for concern. Since you guys were able to get along well with the ogre tribe who has red skin and a horn growing, right?

The hair color is just slightly different. What's inside of them is the same as everyone. Of course, there are some differences from person to person. If you talked with them nicely – they'll be pleasant, if you talked with them rudely – they'll be unpleasant.

It's as simple as that. Please look."

While saying that, I approached one of the gatekeepers.

First, I must make them realize that the Supard race is not a race of demons.

Greeting with a smile and getting a reply with a smile.

It's the first step in human relations.

While extending my hand, I greeted the gatekeeper.

"JAMBO!"

"........?"

The gatekeeper shook hands, made a puzzled face, and looked at the other one.

Rude.

Looks like I got a little bit overexcited.

"Sorry. I've brought along the emissaries from the Biheiril Kingdom. I want to guide them around the village, so I'd be grateful if you let us through."

".....I don't mind. I've heard about this from Ruijerd."

"Thank you very much. If possible, I also wanted to have a talk with the chieftains."

"Got it, I'll convey the matter."

One of the youngsters started running towards the inside of the village.

"Now then, please follow me."

After seeing him off, I entered the village.

Gullickson and Sandor slowly entered the village with stiffened faces.

So they were nervous after all.

I slowly began to walk towards the inside of the village so as to not make them worry.

"Just a few days ago, a plague was spreading here, but it is not something that infects humans."

Honestly, we still don't know whether or not it's infectious to humans.

It'll be cured if one drinks the Sokasu tea, but we still don't know whether it was originally Vita or a disease that caused the plague.

It's possible that I've already infected the Biheiril Kingdom and that the country will fall into a pandemic-like state within one month or so.....

I'll choose the Supards over humans I don't know.

"Food is prepared there. They'll be having the evening meal there at this time.

The fields are over there, slaughters of the animals are carried out on the opposite side.

You can see it right now, but that's the corpse of the invisible monster.

We were not attacked on our way here, but a short while after its death, the invisible monster starts looking like that.

After all it is the invisible wolf. If not for the Supards, hunting with satisfaction wouldn't have been possible."

The chieftains probably have preparations to do, so I'm slowly walking them around the village while giving an explanation.

No Supard approaches us.

Of course, we don't approach them either.....but could that make the soldiers mental image worse if they looked from a distance?

No, wherever you move your eyes, the scenery of a calm forest can be seen.

It's alright, no problem at all.

".....So there's also someone from Milis religion."

"And someone from the Long-eared race as well."

When I casually looked over, Cliff was talking about something with Elinalize.

He was probably investigating the cause of the plague as he was walking around looking at places while pointing at a bundle of papers.

"Ah, he's the genius man who saved the Supard race from the illness."

"Does that mean that the Supard race has been approved by the Milis church?"

"It would be wrong to say that the majority of the Milis followers have, but one faction has approved of the demon race.

At the very least, Milis church will not be sending in any more troops to the Biheiril Kingdom to approach the Supards."

"....."

"Won't you introduce him to us?"

"Well, fine."

As they greeted Cliff while extending their hands, Cliff shook their hands after making a sign of cross.

If he's calmly spending time in this village, that means he might've made sure of Supard race's safety.

"....."

Looking at Gullickson and Sandor, their faces were still grim.

Do they already want to go home.....?

".....Ah, please look at this. The children of the Supard race are coming from over there."

While holding the ball and giggling along the way, the children pass by us.

"Their tails are lovely, aren't they?

Those tails are held by every Supard, and become their white spears later in life.

However, children look adorable in any world.

Don't you think so?"

I tried saying that while chasing the children's figures with my eye, but the two soldiers didn't look at the children's backs.

Do they hate children?

No, that's wrong.

They were looking in the direction where the children were running to.

There stood a weird person wearing a white coat and a black helmet mounted on his head.

Within the settling sun, his figure which was standing still as a spirit looked as if he were a demon.

".....Ngh!"

As Gullickson gasped, he quickly moved his hand to the sword on his back. Looking at that, I hurriedly stood in front of him.

"Ahh well.....he's not one of the Supards. Please don't mind him."

".....If he's not one of the Supards, then who is he?"

"He's my boss, Dragon God Orsted.

He certainly looks a little weird right now but it's alright, that person will leave this country after the end of this chain of events. He's harmless."

".....That so?"

Orsted looked at them for several seconds, but then turned his face away quickly.

At the same time, the soldiers' tension dissolved.

Looks like in this state of affairs, Orsted's curse was putting this in a difficult position after all.

No, it could be that by looking at Orsted, they had realized that Supards weren't just normal villagers.

"The Supard race has a lot of warriors, but as you can see, half of them are women or children who don't hold any power.

Please throw away that preconceived notion and look at it with your own eyes.

Do they look demons to you?"

I asked a question immediately after they looked away from Orsted.

It's almost as if I'm calling Orsted more demonic than the Supard race.

I'll apologize later.

".....No, they don't."

Sandor muttered a few words.

"Dragon God? Leaving him aside, the village itself looks ordinary, just like the other villages."

"That's right. It resembles my home town a bit."

Gullickson agreed on Sandor's words.

I don't know whether Orsted was effective, but they don't seem to hate it.

And when I casually looked over, the young gatekeeper who had gone before was approaching this way.

"The chieftains will now meet you."

"I understand. Well then, both of you, please come this way. I will now introduce you to the chieftains."

Looks like the preparations of the chieftains are over.

I led the two soldiers to the building where the chieftains were waiting while having a good feedback.

The chieftain was waiting for us in a somewhat big house.

This may be some kind of temporary measure, since the lecture hall was still being used as an infirmary.

There were three people waiting for us.

There were 2 from the previous meeting, and Ruijerd.

The remaining two are still under medical care.

Norn was beside Ruijerd and put out the tea ceremony that was prepared in advanced after we entered.

This little sister of mine is a very perceptive child.

Well, she couldn't do something like this before.

Is this the fruit of formal education?

"So, Rudeus-dono, what would you like to talk about?"

"Supard race's history up till now, their present condition, and their wish regarding the country."

"I understand."

The conversation advanced relatively calmly, probably because the welcome was modest.

The thing of the past and things of the present.

And thus, regarding the circumstances after this.

They don't want to hurt anyone and want to live in peace.

That modest wish of the Supard race was delivered from the Chieftain's own mouth to the soldiers.

Unaware of it, a calm atmosphere had already begun to flow between the soldiers.

The tranquility of the village, the chieftain's gentle demeanour.

Ruijerd too looked like he was diligently trying to unfasten his vigilance.

"I understand, we'll convey the truth to his majesty. Please be relieved, we don't hate you."

Sandor finally said that and the meeting was over.

It was decided that the soldiers would stay for tonight and leave tomorrow.

One night stay at the house which was loaned to Doga and Sándor.

For the time being, Doga and I also stayed in the same house.

By the way, Norn stayed at Ruijerd's house the whole time.

She has really become emotionally attached to him.

I wonder if she looks at him the same way she looked at Paul.

"What are your thoughts regarding the Supard race's village?"

Before I went to sleep, I tried asking them that.

"It was much better than we had thought."

"Indeed."

The two soldiers were nodding to each other with a delightful face.

"I've heard that the Supards are a demon race, but.....it's different when you see it with your own eyes after all."

"It's an ordinary village. The food is good too."

"The invisible wolf? I still can't believe that there's an invisible monster though."

"But the inside of the forest was strangely quiet. It's quieter than the forest near the capital where regular hunting takes place."

"Then, I wonder if it's true that they hunt the invisible monster around here."

The two were praising the village while saying this and that before sleep.

Looks like the Inspection tour of the Supard race was a great success.

The next day, we talked about escorting the two soldiers to the capital city.

I explained that if they stayed for 2 or 3 days more – they'll be able to see the invisible monster for real, however...

"We must return back quickly and report to his majesty for disbanding the Subjugation force, so..."

Since that's how it was, it was decided to return as quickly as possible.

It's as if we had flip-flopped.

I wanted to use the teleportation magic formation by all means to save some time, but I must persevere for now.

There's this saying that haste makes waste.

Since a weak person can't do anything in a strange place.

While thinking that, I informed Ruijerd that "I'm going to escort them off." and left the village.

The Supard race will be OK with this for now.

After that, it's Gisu.

The North God's and Ogre God's whereabouts are also on my mind.

There's also the possibility that he has already left this country and is somewhere else, but.....

If so, I'll be worried about Sylphy's situation.

There's also the possibility that this 'somewhere else' is where the Sword God is.

I wonder how Sylphy is doing.

It's fine if she safely came into contact with the Sword God though.

I wonder if Eris is fine.

It's fine as long as she doesn't create any problems.

I think it's fine since she's with Roxy, but I'm a bit worried because even she sometimes makes mistakes.

About Aisha and the rest.....I feel they'll be just fine.

".....Is only one person coming with us?"

As I walked while thinking those things, Gullickson who was walking one step ahead of me turned back and asked.

"Huh?"

I tried surveying my surroundings.

Gullickson, Sandor, and me.

"If it's that knight, he was sleeping without a nick in his snoring when we left."

Upon Sandor's words, I realized that Doga wasn't here.

I didn't realize that at all.

Well, in comparison to his frame, he doesn't stand out much.

Wait, you overslept.....

"We-well.....please be relieved. Even alone I should be able to escort you back properly."

"....."

"....."

Listening to my words, both of them exchanged glances with each other.

Well, there shouldn't be any problem.

Considering that Gisu doesn't show up with the Ogre God on our way back.....it should be fine as long as that doesn't happen.

Not to mention, if that does happen, it wouldn't be any different even if Doga was here or not.

Still, it would seem that I was advised not to be alone.

Should I make an Earth Fortress and wait until one of us went and brought back Doga?

We're also about to meet up with Sándor along the way to second city Irel.....

"Mngh."

Before I realized, it was there in front of my eyes.

We'd already arrived at the Earth Dragon Valley.

There were two bridges in front of me.

This is perfect.

After we cross the bridge, there would be a lower number of invisible wolves; it'll be comparatively safer.

Let's move over there and wait.

"I'll be going first."

Gullickson started walking forwards as if it was natural, Sandor and I followed.

Perhaps it had been better if someone was behind so that the two of them would not fall.

While thinking that, I was cautiously walking and keeping an eye out for them.

"....."

Gullickson suddenly stopped midway.

"What's the matter?"

He turned around.

An expressionless face that doesn't match his fine moustache.

"Oi, will you do it?"

That inquiry was directed behind me, to Sandor.

When I turned around he shrugged.

"No, please go ahead and do it yourself."

What's going on?

What's this conversation?

"Umm, if you want to talk then would you do it after we cross the bridge?"

"Hm? Aah....."

While breathing out as if sighing, Gullickson moved his right hand to the wrist of his left hand.

As I was wondering what he was doing, he put his fingers on top the glove.

And then, slowly started to remove that glove from his hands.

"Unexpectedly, it's a thing that doesn't let out any secrets."

My heart started running fast.

The thing that was on Gullickson's finger.

It was a ring that I knew of.

"My heart was pounding when Cliff Grimoire, who holds the Identification eye, saw me. If I hadn't been wearing the glove, he might have seen through me."

I turned around.

Sandor was also removing his glove.

He had a similar ring as well.

That ring.

I knew that ring.

It was the same ring that I was wearing.

Introduced by the Asura Kingdom, a ring that can change appearances, a magic tool.

"Haaaaa~.....all that drama made my back hurt."

Gullickson said that and removed his ring.

Right before me his face started to change.

His moustache disappeared, and transformed into the face of a middle-aged man of about 40 years.

A face, similar to a ferocious wolf, which matched his tone.

He changed into a completely different person.

"".....A message from Gisu. 『Magic tools ain't limited to only one』."

I turn around at that voice.

Sandor's face was changing as well.

It's not that long-thin face anymore.

A slightly young boy with black hair.

Having someone else's face.

"All things considered, it's a pity. And to think I expected so much from you who defeated Auber....."

Words didn't come out.

My throat had dried up.

Gullickson and Sandor, I could feel a tremendous amount of bloodthirst coming from both sides.

"『If it's a narrow foothold, then even Senpai won't be able to use his trump card』 or so Gisu had said.Furthermore, to set foot in such a place willingly under the condition where both your front and back are—"

"Who are you.....you two?"

Words as if scolding them came out.

I had a hunch that I knew.

I also felt like I didn't.

"I'm Gull Farion of the Sword God style."

"I'm North God Kalman the Third, Aleksander Ryback."

Both of them said in succession.

Sword God Gull Farion.

North God Kalman the third.

The two who said Gisu's name.

Enemy.

Both of them were enemies.

The moment I realized that, I immediately extended my hand towards my waist.

To push the button of the scroll for summoning the Magic Armor『Mk. I』

My hand didn't move.

Right in front of my eyes, my entire right arm fell down.

That right arm hit the bridge and was falling down the valley.

When I saw, Gullickso–Gull Farion had unsheathed his sword.

He cut it, but it was already too late to think that.

"AAHHHHHHHHHH!"

Intense pain ran through me and I tried to stop the wound with my left hand.

Nay.

My left hand didn't move.

Wrong, it wasn't that my left hand didn't move.

It wasn't there.

In the corner of vision, my left hand could be seen falling down towards the valley.

"Oh, so that's your real face. You're quite handsome. Yup, it's better than the face before."

Due to the loss of my arms, the effects of the ring wore off.

Gull started laughing while looking at my face.

"『Since senpai uses magic from his hands, it's possible if you cut the hands from the base, he'll be unable to use it.』"

Sandor adds.

Blood was gushing out from both my hands.

It's certainly not coming out.

Magic was not coming out.

As if the circuits that fired magic were in the upper part of the arm, magic didn't come out.

"But wouldn't we have won even without knowing all of this?"

"Probably not, we don't know what would've happened if he directly opposed us. Even Gisu said to be careful around him."

"I don't think so, it would have been different if the North Emperor Doga had been here as a vanguard though, but I don't think that I would've lost."

It's wasn't coming out from the hands.

When I realized that, I immediately started channeling mana into the Magic Armor.

"Oh?"

While increasing the output in my leg, I turned back.

I charged in Sandor's direction.

I didn't intend to attack.

My aim was to slip past him and reach the Supard vill–

"—-Hmngh."

My back felt a shock.

I was hit by a slashing attack.

A slashing attack capable of cutting up the Magic Armor『Mk. II』like butter, it was the Longsword of Light.

My body was cut right in half.....or so I thought, but then the shock on my back would have been weird.

As I thought that, I was assailed with a floating sensation.

I was falling.

Within my spinning field of vision, Aleksander and Gull could be seen peeking below from the top of the collapsing bridge.

Ah, is it because I tried to tread on the bridge with a fully powered Mk. II?

That thought crosses my mind.

I was falling.

After losing both my arms and not being able to do anything – I was falling.

My body had a feeling of powerlessness.

Fear was boiling up within me.

I'll die.

The moment that word echoed in my heart, my whole body felt a strong impact and I lost consciousness.

"Uh oh.....he fell down."

While looking at Rudeus falling down into the valley, Gull Farion breathed out a sigh.

Aleksander too was looking down at the valley while knitting his brows in disapproval.

"Gull-san, did you go easy on him at the end? It seemed to me that you didn't cut him properly."

"Don't be foolish.....look at this."

The sword held by Gull was broken from its base.

It's understandable if someone were to look into it, those kind of swords were distributed among the soldiers of the Biheiril Kingdom; they were casting articles.

It's not that bad, but a person whose hobby was playing with swords would find it unappetizing.

"His armor was much harder than I thought it to be......."

Not to mention, Gull Farion was someone who held one of the strongest sword techniques.

A good artisan does not blame his tools. In accordance with those words, there was no need to use one of the famous swords to cut a flesh and blood human.

Even though he thought that it would be more than enough, Rudeus's armor was harder than expected.

The reason was that he had never once felt such a strong feedback, especially when considering that he slashed at his back.

"I should've brought my favorite sword."

As he said that, Gull threw that sword into the valley.

"I guess it can't be helped. If we had brought our favorite swords, our identities would have been exposed."

While looking down as well, Aleksander shrugged.

On his back was the sword of the regular army of Biheiril Kingdom.

Of course, it's not something a North God would carry.

"So, what to do? Should we go down and put an end to him?"

".....Hmm. If it wasn't for an act of not being able to use magic after losing both his hands, then I guess it should be fine to leave him."

"Well there are flocks of earth dragon as well."

"He said that he would be able to deal with one or two of them, but would be impossible against a flock, right?"

While thinking about the words Rudeus said, Aleksander came to that conclusion.

Of course, they also thought that specially going down to ascertain it was troublesome.

It was because their aim wasn't to defeat Rudeus.

"Well then, now that we were able to remove the first obstacle.....should we turn back?"

"The fight with Orsted. I'm looking forward to it. Ah, you dealt with Rudeus, so please let me deal with Orsted, ok?"

The two of them crossed the collapsing bridge and returned back.

While chatting as if nothing had happened at all, they turned back on the road which led to the capital of Biheiril Kingdom.

"Haah? You just want to raise your rank among the world powers, it's fine if I go first."

"That's wrong. I don't want to raise my rank among the world powers, I want to become the hero. A hero who will surpass his father, North God Kalman who surpassed his father."

"Haa."

There was none who would run after their figures.

Even among the Supards who held the third eye, there was not a single one looking at this place.

After the turmoil of the disease, they had not gone far from the village for hunting.

Even if there were any for argument's sake, the two of them wouldn't have attacked him on the bridge.

"I'm not trying to get a head-start on you. Aren't we supposed to do it exactly as planned? Because those were the conditions."

"Tch.....Irritating."

While leaving those words behind, Gull Farion and Aleksander Ryback vanished into the forest.

Stillness fell upon the valley.

Only the collapsed bridge was left.

And then, only silence remained.

AUTHOR Q & A (3 OF 14)

Author : The opinions of Rudeus' becoming so careless was a lot so I rewrote a little. He'll now want to take Doga with him and turn back.

Depicting it is really hard, isn't it?

As an author I wanted you to recognize that the two soldiers 'became comrades' during that kind of flow and while saying those lines at that time, I wanted you to realize that it didn't matter much even if Doga was there or not.

I wonder whether the number of simple events weren't enough or the writing style was awkward.....Looks like it doesn't always go as we want it to be.

Q. How should I say this...Why weren't there words like 'Rudi will die?!' or 'Is it going to end?!' in the Q&A section? LOL

A. Because simply falling down into the valley ain't going to stop it.....

Q. Is Aleksander the uncle of the Death God? Is he an uncle with a young face?

A. It's possible they're half-siblings.

Q. Why did Gull-san cut Rudi's hands instead of his head during his first attack? Were they being cautious?

If the Sword God and North God wanted to fight Orsted so bad then why didn't they attack him the first time?

I mean, even though they think they couldn't win unless they surprise attacked Rudi, it's funny that both Gull and Alek intend to win against Orsted.

I mean, was there any reason for them to expose themselves and fluently talking before attacking Rudeus?

A. Just like how it's written; it's because those were the conditions, that's why.

As an author, I intended to write it in this form : They removed their rings and named themselves, they heard it fair and square from Gisu 'a method to defeat Rudeus without letting him use his power', they executed it and were successful.

No matter how much cautious you are, the thief will definitely get in, it's fine if it's similar to this, but I guess it's quite difficult.

Q. Were the 2 of them substitutes for the ones who were near the King?

A. That's right.

Q. I won't consult with the boss when I think that it's even slightly strange.

A. But that boss doesn't give out satisfactory instructions.

Q. The amount of spelling mistakes has steadily accumulated, but.....Should I tell you about them after this volume has ended or immediately after you realize it?

A. While looking at the Q&A's and taking down memos, I'm rectifying them at my own pace. The first time I read it and find any I immediately rectify it. If after several days had passed and then there's still something left! then I'd be grateful if it's done after it's ended.

END AUTHOR Q & A (3 OF 14)

Magic City Sharia.

There was a house located in its suburbs.

In that house, an elven girl was copying the contents of the mail that came through the communication lithograph.

Her name was Faria Steer .

She's often called 'Faria' or 'Tia' by her friends, but not a single person in the company staff has bothered to remember her name yet.

This girl, during the absence of both the president and chairman, became the supervisor of the office.

And although Rudeus has yet to know it, Faria Steer was indeed the true name of the "little elf-chan".

"Let's see, the mail from Sylphiette-san says..... 『The title of the Sword God has been taken over by someone else, the former Sword God's whereabouts are currently unknown. Nina-san is pregnant so she can't aid us. I'll be heading towards Biheiril Kingdom now.』 .....Is this what I should re-direct?"

Her job was to transcribe the collected news that arrived from various places and then hand it over all at once when Orsted or Rudeus came back.

However, based on her own judgement, she was allowed to redirect any urgent news that came through.

Not to mention, the collected news had words such as 'God' or 'King', it was usually difficult for her, who was of lower middle class, to distinguish such importance.

"The Sword God has been substituted and the whereabouts of the former Sword God are unknown, this means that the possibility of him becoming an enemy is high, so let's redirect this....."

Nevertheless, she was chosen by Aisha herself.

Aisha had carefully hand-picked her through a series of strict terms.

At first glance, Orsted's office work can be done by anyone, but there is tons of information that must be prevented from leaking. Thus, the post can only be taken by a reliable person.

Faria's birthplace was the capital of the Ranoa Kingdom.

Her father was a retired elf adventurer and her mother was the daughter of the town's human merchant.

She's the youngest of the three siblings.

Since she was a girl, she didn't receive any education as a merchant.

As a result, she never thought about becoming one. But she loitered around the firms since she was a child, and grew up observing sly old merchants.

Perhaps this laid out the foundation for her.

When she enrolled at the magic university, she was able to achieve good results thanks to all the times she had observed informants.

And thus, with Aisha's sharp sightedness she was able to zero in on her.

There were many others who were far better with information management than her, but she was chosen by Orsted himself.

According to Orsted's experience, it was highly unlikely that she would become an enemy.

"I should first send this to the Supard village, but who should I send it to next.....

Ah, probably Eris-san. Since she's a Sword King, she might be able to think of something if she knew."

While muttering those words, she faced the communication lithograph in the corner of the president's office.

With a magic crystal in one hand, she was scuffling with the communication lithograph.

Faria was trying to send a message to the Supard village and to Third City Heilelul.

Behind her back, a shadow suddenly appeared.

"Phew, with this.....hm?"

Faria turned around.

A large build filled her vision.

".....Ah.....um, excuse me, are you Orsted-sama's.....guest?"

A drum like body and log like arms.

A deep red skin color and a huge horn.

And a pot like lower jaw from which two long fangs were sprouting.

It was an Ogre.

"Are ya Orsted's woman?"

"Huh?"

"....."

The moment Faria hesitated, the Ogre waved his hand with a *swoosh*.

The communication lithograph which just sent the message was blown off with a large noise.

Along with the office door.

"Ya what? Enemy? Ya fight?"

"Ah.....Uu....."

The Ogre stuck his fist out in front of Faria.

Faria's field of vision was completely filled with his fist.

A clenched fist twice as big as her face. There was coarse hair growing on his fingers and at the back of his hand, his knuckles looked violent.

And its influence was behind him.

It's easily understandable after looking at the demolished wall.

It's easily understandable what would happen if he hit you with his fist.

"N-n-n-n-no."

Faria sank down onto the floor and finally told him.

As if she was paralyzed from the waist below, she couldn't even run away.

The only thing left in her mind was the thought of not wanting to die.

"Then, get out. I.....don't fight those.....who don't wanna."

The Ogre smirkingly extended his hand towards Faria.

"Eeekk."

The now opened and extended hand made Faria curl her body up.

The thought of getting crushed by his hand was only for an instant as the Ogre gently lifted her up and threw her out of the hole he had created moments ago.

"Ahhhhhhh!?"

Faria was thrown out of the office, flew with high velocity, bounced twice, rolled about and came to a stop.

".....Ngh!"

Pain ran through her entire body.

Her mind was telling her 'Run, run, or he'll kill you.'

Her body was screaming at her 'I do not want to die, I do not want to die.'

Without saying any words, her throat only made the pathetic noise of crying.

Whether her legs restored after being thrown at the ground or not, she was standing up with her legs, although shaking like a newborn goat.

After running a few steps, she fell down.

After she repeated that almost three times, a thunderous roar echoed in the background.

She turned back.

".....Aah."

The scene that entered Faria's eyes was the destruction of the office.

The red ogre was going berserk, and while timber and building stones were being scattered about, the building was losing its structure.

Before long, Faria forgot about running away and looked at the destruction dumbfounded.

Dumbfounded, she just saw the destruction, wreckage, and the transformation.

She couldn't do anything.

There wasn't anything she could do.

While being harassed by a feeling of powerlessness, she just kept watching.

She wished that the red ogre wouldn't come out of that wreckage.

She wished that he wouldn't come this way.

She was wishing for the surroundings to go quiet, for the noises to vanish.

That someone would come to investigate after hearing that thunderous roar and protect her, she just kept wishing for that.

That day, all of the teleportation magic formations set up by Rudeus Greyrat lost their light.

At the same time, Roxy and Eris were in a forest.

The Third City Heilelul was a port city.

The oceans of this world are fundamentally filled with fishman race or sea fish race. Together, they're called the beings of the sea race.

Except for a predetermined area of the ocean, the passage of land dwellers has been prohibited.

Fishing in one part of the neighboring port city was allowed, but if one left that area, then the sea race would probably sink the ship immediately.

However, it's a little different in Heilelul.

The sea in between Ogre Island and Third City Heilelul are Biheiril Kingdom's territorial waters.

During the founding of Biheiril Kingdom, all of the sea race were purged from this area, thus giving Biheiril Kingdom complete access to the sea.

Since then, Third City Heilelul has become a popular fishing port, with types of seafood that can't be found anywhere else.

.....Or so it was supposed to be.

"......I'm tired of just eating fish these days."

"Is that so? Is it not delicious?"

On the outskirts of the city, there was a forest surrounded by large walls.

Rather than prohibiting anyone from invading, it's more for defending against the monsters that occasionally came out of the forest.

The two of them were walking within this forest while eating dried fish.

"It's delicious but salty. Why would someone sprinkle salt like this?"

"It's probably for the sake of preservation."

"If it's for preservation, then why not just use ice magic like Rudeus?"

"Not everyone can use ice magic, you know."

A smile crept onto Roxy's face as she replied back to the complaining Eris.

Fundamentally, Eris wasn't the type to complain about food.

But it was certain that pickling salt was put on the fish a bit too much.

A town with an abundance of seafood, or so they say. But really, it's filled with nothing but preserved food.

However, the reason for that has already been found.

It takes a whole day by ship from the Third City Heilelul to reach there, Ogre Island.

Ogre Island has a fine set of fishermen at their disposal.

Legally, the ogre fishermen and the human fishermen cooperate and catch fish in the vicinity of Ogre Island.

However, the fishermen of the ogre race were not fishing now.

They just kept talking about how a war was coming in the near future and were preparing for the fight.

This resulted in a decrease in the quality of goods in the port city.

Why were the ogre race saying war was coming? Roxy and Eris made sure to get the information regarding that.

It was because they were participating in the subjugation force.

On orders of the Ogre God, the head of the ogre race.

And now, the head of the ogre race, Ogre God Malta, was in Second City Irel.

They were currently heading towards the teleportation magic formation that was set up in a cave to relay this information to Rudeus.

They were a little late in submitting the news, but the last time they saw the communication lithograph, it had good news saying that the Supard race was heading towards recovery and that the negotiations went well too.

It was doubtful whether the situation over there had suddenly taken a turn for the worse.

"The ogre race will protect the Biheiril Kingdom. They probably still uphold that oath even now. But isn't it strange that he would go to neither the capital nor the Third City but to the second city?"

"Gisu is working with him anyway, right?"

"It's still too early to decide that. Perhaps the Ogre God is just inspecting the local place by himself. There's still the possibility of him becoming a comrade, so it'll be problematic if we're antagonistic."

Despite saying that, Roxy felt a little uneasy.

This shouldn't have happened if everything were normal.

Was this a scheme by the enemy?

Or have they simply not seen the state of affairs around them.....

At the very least, everything was proceeding smoothly for now.

Rudeus had rescued the Supard race and made them comrades.

The information in regards to this place, they were unable to locate Gisu, but they were able to confirm the Ogre God's whereabouts.

Perhaps Zanoba might've obtained information regarding the North God in the capital.

Thinking optimistically without any basis.

However, she had an unpleasant premonition which was unrelated to that.

This was also a baseless premonition.

When she thought about it, she felt that it was similar to when she was imprisoned in the teleport labyrinth.

Everything looked good, but it felt as if there was something important missing.

Rather, Roxy was aware that whenever things looked good, she was always able to create a mistake somehow.

"Listen, Roxy. After we report this info, shouldn't we meet up with Rudeus?"

"You just keep saying that, don't you?"

"But I just want to meet Ruijerd already. I'll introduce you as well!"

"No.....once, I've met him once before, you know?"

Ah, looks like Roxy realized the origin of that unpleasant premonition as she gave a wry smile.

Both Rudeus and Eris held no fear towards the Supard race.

In her mind, she knew that the Supard race wasn't a race of demons.

But her body stiffened up anyways, no matter what.

Possibly because she heard about the folklore so many times as a child.

However, she must meet him.

Ruijerd was a benefactor of both Rudeus and Eris, a comrade.

A fellow who she must greet properly.

Still, she naturally felt reluctant to do so.

She might be able to change after meeting them, talking with them, and coming in contact with them, but.....

If she couldn't.....that's probably why she had that premonition.

"Hmm, let's see. Now that we've come this far, I guess it's fine if we move to the second city. That way, Ogre God Malta can't change his location and we'll be able to confirm our info as well. "

For now, they've obtained all the information that they could from the third city.

It should be fine to leave their position for a bit and go see the Supard village.

While thinking that, Roxy's feet came to a halt in front of the cave where the teleportation magic formation was set up.

It was a hole that was large enough for one person to pass through while crouching, camouflaged by branches.

Its previous owner, a bear, attacked them when they approached the cave, and as a result, it was killed by Eris and then eaten.

At that time, thinking that it was just right, they ended up recycling the cave.

Moving the branch of the tree which disguised the entrance, they entered the cave.

It was twenty metres deep and fairly wide. But it stank of animal.

And deep within the cave, a teleportation magic formation and communication lithograph were set up.

".....Oh?"

But there was something slightly odd about the teleportation formation.

The teleport magic formation was set up deep within the forest to make use of the high mana density, and it continuously gave out a blue, shining light after its activation.

But for some reason, that light had vanished.

"What's the meaning of this?"

"Please wait a moment."

Roxy carefully examined the magic formation.

Perhaps she made some kind of mistake which caused the circuitry to be inoperable.....

While thinking that, she examined it, though there didn't seem to be any kind of bug.

To begin with, they just used it the other day and it worked fine.

There wasn't any evidence that someone entered the cave as well.....

"Hey, this one isn't working as well."

On Eris's voice, Roxy raised her head.

Eris was squatting down in front of the communication lithograph that was set up in the corner of the room.

It had lost that light as well.

Roxy rushed over and tried sending in mana with random words, but there was no response.

".....Just what might this mean?"

Roxy stood shock-still, dumbfounded.

That was strange, leaving the teleport formation aside, the communication lithograph was made by Orsted himself.

She did help out in its production, but it certainly wasn't defective. It couldn't possibly stop working just like.....that.

"It's obvious."

But Eris wasn't confused.

Did she know the cause of the malfunction?

Roxy looked at Eris with the intention of hearing her out.

Eris folded her arms, spread her legs apart, looked down on the communication lithograph, and spoke.

"Something happened!"

"That's.....if something didn't happen, then this....."

As she was about to complete her sentence, Roxy realized.

Something happened.

Where?

Not here.

There was no indication that anyone came here. The entrance was properly concealed, there wasn't any indication that any human or monster had come here.

Then, somewhere but not here.

Teleportation magic formations and communication lithographs only work in pairs.

If one of the pair disappears then the other will automatically stop working.

There were no abnormalities in this one.

Then, the other one?

"Something happened at Magic City Sharia.....?"

The first thing that came to Roxy's mind was Lara's face.

And then, one by one, the other children's faces.

Lucy, Arus, and Sieg.

And then the ones who were taking care of them, Lilia and Zenith.

If something strange happened in the city, then they.....

".....Ngh!"

She stood up in a hurry and started running towards the entrance of the cave.

She thought that if the one here didn't work, then the other magic formation will.....

But after several steps, her feet came to a halt.

What if she was on the enemy's side and attacked the office in Magic City Sharia?

What would happen to the other magic formations?

She would obviously not leave them alone.

She would destroy each and every one of them.

"What should I do.....What should be done....."

Should she ask for someone's help?

According to the last message, Orsted wasn't in Sharia right now.

Was there someone to protect them from the attack that came.....?

"Roxy!"

On Eris's shout, Roxy suddenly turned herself.

"Please explain the situation!"

".....The teleportation magic formation and communication lithograph have been suspended.

The one over here doesn't have any problems, it's highly likely that Orsted's office in Magic City Sharia has been attacked.

There's also the possibility that our house came under the attack as well.

There's no one at the house who....."

"I see."

Listening halfway through it, Eris stood up.

"Does Rudeus know about this?"

"I wonder. He may know or may not know."

And then Eris stopped moving momentarily.

Without changing her pose.

While pulling her chin up, she closed her lips to make a 'へ'.

But she suddenly opened her jaw.

As if she had found her answer.

"Leave the house to Sylphy, it'll be alright!"

"Umm.....but she's at Sword God's place....."

"Sylphy said that she would protect the house whenever Rudeus was away. That's why, it's alright!"

"....."

That's absurd, no matter how you put it.....

As she thought that, Roxy suddenly changed her mindset.

She didn't know just when the teleport formation stopped working.

But Sylphy wasn't using the teleport formation at the office.

She was moving using an old teleport method.

So even if she couldn't come to Biheiril Kingdom, she would at least be able to go back to Sharia.

There was nothing she could do but rely on Sylphy.

".....That's true."

And then, there's Perugius as well.

Even though he's harsh against Roxy who's a demon, he's still close with Rudeus and even named Sieg himself.

It's not clear what he will do, but in the house is the flute to summon Perugius's subordinates.

Lilia could use it if something were to happen.

It's not just that.

Something like this might've happened; that's why Rudeus summoned Leo.

If Leo wasn't able to do anything, then there would be no meaning in his summoning.

There's still a lot of relief materials.

There was also the mercenary group, the engineers from Zanoba's firm, and the teachers at the Magic University would also help if it came to that.

She reassured herself by thinking that.

There was no choice but to.

Since there's nothing that Eris and Roxy can do right now.

"Then, let's go!"

"That's right. Let's go."

They can't do anything while staying here.

There was no need for them to say what they had to do right now.

They just have to make sure to send the info which they held.

Of course, they were worried about the children in Magic City Sharia.

It's not just Roxy, even Eris had the impulse of running back to the house, and if she could...

Swallowing up that impulse, the two of them started to move.

Their destination was where Rudeus was.

It was the Supard village.

At the same time, on the other side.

Zanoba was getting impatient.

Rudeus was not coming back.

The subjugation force was steadily preparing themselves, their time of departure was drawing close.

Rudeus had triumphantly taken the two soldiers to the Supard village.

It was Master, so he would somehow be able to entice the two soldiers and negotiate peace, or so Zanoba was thinking.

Did the negotiations fall apart?

But the communication lithograph did say that『Persuasion was a success』.

It was signed by Orsted, so there's no room for doubt.

Then, why?

Perhaps, were they attacked by an assassin on the way?

At the very least, they might've gotten into trouble midway and were forced to stay there.

It can't be that they're sightseeing the Second City now that everything's safe.....no it couldn't be.

But at this rate, the subjugation force will depart in around ten days.

Should he wait?

Should he move?

The perplexed Zanoba decided to move.

Using the teleport formation to move to Supard village and ascertain the situation.

After deciding that, Zanoba acted fast.

He left the inn, taking Julie and Ginger with him.

Taking the luggage, he hurried towards the hut where the teleport formation was set up.

"Ngh.....this is....."

However, the teleport formation and communication lithograph had lost their light.

Zanoba immediately realized what had happened.

That some kind of accident happened at the office.

After thinking for several seconds, Zanoba came to a conclusion.

"Ginger!"

"Yes!"

"We'll head towards the Supard village!"

"Roger!.....and Second City Irel?"

"Not through there. If there's an enemy, they'll be waiting there."

Zanoba got out.

And put his hand in his back pocket and took out something.

It was the flute.

A golden flute with a symbol of a dragon.

He blew the flute in no time.

The breath made *fuuuu* sound.

But nothing happened.

No one came.

"Kuh, looks like it's still far. Ginger! Julie! Were there any Seven Great World Power stone monuments around here!?"

"I don't remember one!"

"I haven't seen one!"

People who could use the teleport formation aren't limited to one.

He had thought of contacting Perugius and asking for his help, however.....

"It can't be helped! If you find one on the way, let me know! Let's head towards the Supard village this instant!"

"Yes!"

The three of them started moving towards it.

Towards the Supard village.

AUTHOR Q & A (4 OF 14)

Author : Stop with the quarrelling. Everyone has a right to speak. It's fine if you leave your impressions regarding the volume but restrain your comments when you see other people's thoughts.

Also, while writing a critical impression, try to be indirect about it instead of offensive!

Q. Even though Rudeus and Co. have been overwhelmed and they've got themselves in a disadvantageous situation, yet what is this?

This earth-shattering sense of security.

Even though whenever things look good I feel nothing but uneasiness. LOL

A. You get anxious the first time you go up. That's a roller coaster.

Q. Did Hitogami send in North God and Sword God because he couldn't see the King's or Ruijerd's future, realizing that maybe Rudeus or the president had interfered?

A. This wasn't Hitogami's but Gisu's scheme.

Q. If you think about it, the president could've defeated Hitogami if he was a bit younger before even Rudeus came.

A. The president isn't young enough to form a team.

Q. So Zanoba had that gofer calling flute, eh? LOL

A. Come flying when I call for you! At the speed of light, that is!

Q. Though this is unrelated, 2714 pages of impression columns are crazy.

A. It's a well-appreciated story.

Q. Let's try to compare Gull-san and Alek with professional gamers.

"This game(Rudi) is really worth playing, ain't it? So that's how you captured that difficult place."

Were the pro Gull-san and Alek happy after being told about the capture method? On top of that, after they implemented it did they think "What is this? This was trivial."? Or so I've wanted to say that.

A. I wonder. I can't really say anything since I don't know much about pros, but if a gamer is told to "Do this action(measure) against this character(Rudi)!" then there would be many who would actually try to do it.

And then after victory, I don't think they'll think of it as 'Trivial' but rather 'Even without using this strategy I would've won.'

Q. I think there's a problem in patternizing.

I think there's no need for an event where everything goes without any hitch when you're crushing the plan of a cautious person.

For example, Rudi was cautious but as a result of being overcautious it backfired on him. Would that augmentation suffice for your depiction?

A. Let's see.

Even in the previous chapter I reconsidered doing this or that but for some reason I can't do it when writing.....

No matter what I do, I want to bring out the feeling that when a mistake happens-it happens, and when a success happens-it happens.

END AUTHOR Q & A (4 OF 14)

When I regained my consciousness, I found myself in the white dimension.

A feeling of powerlessness filled my body, as it transformed into its former vessel.

It was somehow nostalgic.

And then, a sense of defeat assailed me simultaneously.

I was defeated.

Lured in with Ruijerd as a bait.

My guard lowered with the defeat of Dark King Vita.

Growing overconfident after discovering Gisu's whereabouts and hunting him all over the Biheiril Kingdom.

And then inviting both North God and Sword God with open arms.

Finally, I acted alone and was caught in the consequences, and now I'm in such a sorry state.

A sigh came forth thinking about it all.

"....."

Gisu planned it well.

I didn't know that if you cut the arms off from the base, one would be unable to use magic.

The choice of location was also clever.

I certainly couldn't summon the MK. I on top of the bridge.

He must have chosen that place before the battle started.

Roxy has been working on a system that would somehow work without expanding the magic circle, but Gisu doesn't know that.....

I probably wouldn't have lost to those two if I had fought them with MK. II.

Not to mention, it looked like those two hadn't even thought that the bridge wouldn't be able to withstand MK. II's force.

But if you think about it like that, there was an escape route below it.....

"....."

In the end, just where was Gisu?

Was he there disguised as the King of the Biheiril Kingdom?

His voice was different though.....well, if it's Gisu, he would have been able to deal with that somehow.

After all, with your support, wouldn't anything be possible?

Wait.

Speaking of suspicion, Sándor too was quite suspicious.

His face, voice, and physique didn't resemble Gisu's in the slightest, was it because of the magic tool?

It's highly likely since Magic tools exist.

He probably slipped into Asura Kingdom from the get go and restrained the Golden Knight leader.

He was awfully accustomed to intelligence gathering, so the probability is high.

"....."

Not to mention, occurrences like this are repetitive these days.

Using dreams to attack the mind.

It was like that with Dark King Vita too.

Ah, perhaps you have a slime-like appearance as well?

That mosaic guise of yours isn't to hide your identity but it is how you originally look, or something?

"....."

Hey–, Hey!

Say something already.

Wouldn't I look like a fool if I keep talking alone?

Now that I've been defeated, at least tell me all of your secrets as you laugh.

Isn't that how you do things?

Patting my shoulder and saying "I appreciate your efforts, you persevered but it's my win, a pity isn't it? De~yufufu" won't you do that?

Hey! come on!, I'll sock you hard in my final moments.

".....Just die."

As I said, I'm already dead.

I mean, what happened Hitogami-chan?

Somehow the quality of your mosaic looks bad today.

Are you feeling down?

"My future changes every time you move."

Obviously, that is the only reason I'm moving.

"I'm constantly observing my own future. I'm watching my far distant future."

Yeah, I know that.

Future sight, was it?

If I recall correctly, a maximum of 3 people.

Uhh? You can look at the futures of 3 people, was it?

"Three? I can look even more than that. But I'm unable to take my eyes off from my own future. That's why it's three."

.....So most of your powers get consumed into watching your own future, eh?

"My future is pitch dark. It started to darken from that moment on."

A very bleak future, huh?

"There was only Orsted at the beginning. But he was just a small fry. Not my enemy. I would absolutely not lose to that ridiculous simpleton."

Simpleton, huh.....

Well, even Orsted has made some minor faults here and there.

Just recently he was silent about the Supard race as well.

I'm not in any position to criticize him though.

"But from that moment on, it came to be that one man found himself next to Orsted.

I don't know that man. A complete anomaly. He's probably not of this world.

It only became a little darker at that time."

Ah.

Perhaps he might be talking about Nanahoshi's boyfriend.

His name was.....I forgot.

"But it immediately increased with one more. A woman. After that, my future became dark and fell silent."

"As you kept moving, the number of comrades increased around Orsted."

"And each time you moved, my future became darker."

"It's already pitch black now."

Then that means, whatever I did was not in vain?

"No, everything was in vain. I'll render it all futile."

Oh, so edgy.

But if we assume that I'm already dead, then there's nothing much to do.

"If you die, I can still make it.

That future is based on one person, after all.

I can overturn it if I kill the person with strong fate.

That's how I've been doing it until now."

Would you prefer that I beg for my life.....?

Should I say 'Please at least spare my family somehow' while prostrating myself?

I guess it would be impossible considering the circumstances though.

"Die."

"Die. Die."

Saying 'die, die' like that. Are you an elementary schooler or something?

"Just die, Rudeus."

Listen to me.

I woke up.

The worst wake up ever.

If I'm told to die, die like that right in front of me, then I'll obviously be worried.

But well, even if he said 'to die' like that, he won't say 'I'll kill you', though. I can understand where Hitogami's reliance upon others comes from or rather, how should I put it?

He won't do his work by himself.

Just gives the instructions from above.

An unpleasant guy to deal with.

At any rate.

"I'm alive?"

I surely considered myself dead.

Magic Armor『MK. II』held a lot of power.

But I was just a lump of living flesh and blood; I fainted.

At that height no less.

I didn't think I would've been able to withstand the fall.

However, now that I've woken up like this, the question remains whether I did withstand it.

Maybe something cushioned my fall?

It didn't look like there were any trees.....

In any case, you've given birth to a robust boy, O-Paul-san, O-Zenith-san, thank you very much.

".....Ngh."

I rose up.

The surroundings were gloomy. Was it a cave?

I suddenly felt something out of place.

What did I do just now to raise myself up?

Straining my abdominal muscles, pressing my elbow against.....

"Huh? My arms are here."

Both my arms that should've been cut off by Sword God were sticking to me for some reason.

I don't remember myself having regeneration.....

I stared at the arms while thinking that.

"Woah! What the hell....."

My hands were pitch black.

Similar to obsidian, jet black arms.

However, they freely moved around as my nerve impulses passed through them.

Raising my arm to look up to its shoulder part, the black arm had taken root at the side of the base of my shoulder, just like a plant.

It was a little gross.

Not to mention, it looked like I was somehow striped out of Magic Armor『MK. II』 as well.

I didn't have the bottom parts either.

I'm only wearing a pair of underpants below.

Incidentally, bandages were wrapped throughout my body.

Blood was spread apart at my side.

Probably first-aid treatment.

So a person who can't use healing magic saved me, eh?

Which means, these arms were also because of that person?

".....Ah."

When I looked around my surroundings, my clothes were all folded up.

Moreover.....What the!.....An arm rolled over on the side.

A freshly cut raw arm.

Ah, that arm's mine, isn't it?

The dragon bracelet was stuck on it.

"Ouch....."

When I tried to move in haste, pain ran through my entire body.

I immediately casted healing magic and cured the wound.

And then I removed the bracelet from the raw arm and put it on my black arm.

It's working.....right?

"Where is this?"

I stood up as I expressed my curiosity.

While starting a fire in the palm of my hand, I illuminated the surroundings.

Its extent was 5 metres in all directions. The wall was made out of earth.

Looking at the ceiling, I found that it was definitely a cave.

I was laid to rest on top of the cloth or something that was spread out at the most inner part of the cave.

This cloth.....was it a mantle?

"....."

For now, let's go towards the cave's exit in order to ascertain the location.

The cave was curved, but I saw the light at once.

The exit was there.

However, someone was standing at the exit.

Having a large back.

And a huge armor that matched his physique.

He slowly turned around and raised his helmet's visor as I approached him.

A face that I recognized came into sight.

"Doga....."

"....Yup."

"Did you save me?"

"I immediately leaped in...when I saw you....falling down the bridge. You....fainted. I carried you back, but....the armor was heavy so....I stripped you. I brought you here and....treated you."

So he's the one who saved me.

Leaping inside the valley like that.....

Uuu, sorry Doga.

Sorry for saying that you didn't stand out much and that it would've been fine without you.

"I see, thank you, you're my lifesaver. Sorry, I acted alone. I let my guard down."

".....Yup. It was Sándor's...order, that's why."

Doga said that and let out a weak smile.

Even if it was an order, he still protected me the whole time when he was told to do so.

That's a good guy, isn't it?

Why did I even decide to guard those two? That was really absurd of me.

"Were these arms also yours?"

As I raised my black arms for him to look, he shook his head.

"When I found you....you were inside....some type of cocoon....when I opened it....the cocoon....became arms."

.....?

I was inside a cocoon and that cocoon became my arms?

Apart from the fact that the cocoon became my arms, then just what was the cocoon?

Did I carry something like these arms that are adhered to me like this?

As I pondered while looking at my arms, Doga said with an uneasy face.

"I found....one of your....former hands. I looked for....the second one but....couldn't find it. Probably got eaten. Sorry."

"Ah, not at all, it's fine."

Since I can grow them back anytime using healing magic.

.....If these black arms can be disconnected, that is.

"Where are we?"

"Bottom of the valley....the....deepest spot."

"I see.....How much time has passed?"

"Don't know. Here....the sun rays....don't come. I think that....2-3 days or more....may have passed."

Doga moved out of my way as he said that.

Thereupon, light leaped into my eyes.

A dim slightly blue light.

Besides the cave, there were many things like glittering moss and bright mushrooms growing in crowds.

Those were illuminating the surroundings.

However, that much wasn't enough to catch one's eye.

Outside the cave.

As if blocking the cave's entrance, there were three corpses.

Creatures possessing dinosaur like carapaces.

The earth dragons.

Also, why were there three corpses lying over next to each other?

".....Is this...your doing?"

"Yup. I....protected....Rudeus."

Now that I looked at it, Doga's axe was painted bright red with blood.

Earth dragon's blood, eh?

Nevertheless, to defeat them alone.

That's amazing.

I might've underestimated him a little bit.

If I recall, was it the North God or Sword God who said that?

"You're a North Emperor, right?"

"Yup. Master said that....I was still....inexperienced, but....monster hunting....is my specialty.

Who was it? Who said Doga wasn't useful?

Didn't Ariel send a proper war potential who is really useful?

Sorry, it was me.

I seriously underestimated him!

"I see....that's amazing."

"Yup."

When I praised him, he smiled delightfully.

But if Doga was a North Emperor, that means....

"And Sándor?"

".....I...can't say."

"I see."

Well, I may have some idea.

When we return, I'll press him about it.

"Now, how do we get out from this place.....?"

At any rate, returning back at once was the utmost priority.

Sword God with North God.

The enemy was powerful and in disguise.

Perhaps no one has even realized that I was defeated.

Thus, if they were the enemies, then the subjugation force was coming.

A force with the intention of destroying the Supard race will be coming.

The subjugation force may consist of 100-200 people that can be dealt with somehow, but it's a different story if North God and Sword God are mixed within them.

We must stop them.

".....For now, take me to the place where I fell. I want to recover the armor. Since there might be some useful scrolls that are still left there."

"Yup."

As Doga nodded, he walked forward.

While I followed his reliable back.

We arrived relatively quickly where the Magic Armor was.

Defeated two earth dragons on our way.

Both of them were defeated with just one blow from Doga.

It was just one blow.

The head of the earth dragon that was lying in wait for ambush was split open with just one swing from that huge axe.

Reliable indeed.

Recalling the fight with the invisible wolf, he looked weak in underhanded tricks, but I assessed that he wouldn't be defeated when it came to power confrontation.

Well, Doga's just fine though.....

"Hmm....."

The Magic Armor had completely broken apart.

Especially the Scroll Vernier on the back was completely crushed.

All of the scroll bundles were cut right in half.

On top of that, it was a huge mess considering how my blood was splattered within the vernier. It's useless now.

Even though I received this from Roxy, who went through great pains to make it.....

Looks like even the Magic Armor with its defensive armament wasn't of much use against a Sword God class.

But I guess that the sword was brittle.

The sword simply broke as it cut halfway into the armor

It was an ordinary sword by the looks of it.

Gull Farion had plenty of cursed swords, but for the sake of camouflage, he didn't bring one.

If he had brought his favorite sword along, the sword wouldn't have stopped at just the armor and would've cut me in two equal parts.

It's not a very appealing story.

But then again, would Orsted or Cliff have noticed if he brought those things along.....?

"We can't use this anymore."

Looks like I have no choice but to throw away the Scroll Vernier that Roxy made for me.

Even though Roxy made this for me, and went through great pains to make it.....

I'll at least come back later to recover it.

The main unit of the armor could still move.

One arm-part still remained in relation to the foot-parts which were unscathed.

It wasn't perfect, but.....

Still, it's a pain that I can't make use of the summoning scrolls for the Magic Armor.

Even though I have to fight those two, I can't become their opponent without it.

I must fetch the reserves from the office as soon as I reach the Supard village.

It would be nice if I had the time for that.

".....Nh?"

While removing the Scroll Vernier from the armor, one of the scrolls along with the piece of sword that was sticking into it fell.

No, it wasn't a scroll.

It was a box.

It's the box that I put in the vernier since it had the perfect spot for it.

It's as big as a standard dictionary.

Engraved with ominous patterns of demons, a box that might curse anyone who opened it.

"The box I received from Atofe....."

The box I was told to open when I was in a pinch.

Looks like the sword had cut on its way and fractured it.

It had been cut halfway through.

"....."

I timidly opened it and looked inside.

There was nothing inside.

It was empty.

No, there's something written on the bottom of it.

『This black lump of meat is a part of the Immortal Demon Lord Atofe's body. It will protect the owner when caught in a predicament. As if carefully treating the owner』

Black lump of meat.....

I looked at my arms as I thought that.

.....Don't tell me, these arms were that?

I didn't remember opening it but, if we think that Gull Farion's strike cracked the box, from there it sensed me being in danger, protected me from the fall, leeched onto my arms like a parasite, and stopped my bleeding, then.....

Is that what happened.....?

"Atofe-sama.....Thank you very much!"

The person who would reply wasn't there.

But I expressed my gratitude to that violent demon lord from the bottom of my heart anyway.

Kowtowing in the east direction as my gratitude.

She might be on the move right now, but if I meet her, I'll treat her to some delicious alcohol.

"Alright, let's head back."

The war was drawing close.

I must return quickly.

Although the situation was expected, we couldn't climb up the cliff.

When ascending to some extent with earth magic, the mushroom and moss area disappeared, making the surroundings pitch black.

Within that complete darkness, the ones who started attacking us were a flock of earth dragons.

The earth dragons kept coming in succession from left and right.

Before those overwhelming numbers, we were forced to retreat.

On top of the scaffold made using earth magic, no less than ten earth dragons swooped down upon us like lizards from within the darkness.

We were somehow able to deal with those, but the dragons kept coming using magic as a matter of course.

From above and below and even the walls, spears of earth came flying at us; we couldn't break through.

As one would expect of the thing called dragons.

"Fuuu....."

We tried to test one thing or another several times after that.

We tried shooting ourselves from a catapult and reaching the top in one go, while hiding our presence using earth magic and trying to rise up to the top.

But we were hindered by the earth dragons either way.

They were unexpectedly quick-witted and agile, persistent indeed.

The catapult shooting was intercepted midway and even if we hid our presence, we were attacked eventually.

Incidentally, once they had locked onto us, they followed us everywhere.

When we returned back to the place where mushrooms and moss were growing, most of them stopped their pursuit.

Looks like they hated this area for some reason.

Whether these mushrooms were not good or they didn't consider this area as their turf.

Nope, several still pursued us.

It's probably not absolutely impossible to come to this place.

"What to do now.....I mean, like, Doga, you came down here pretty easily."

".....Yup. During descent, they....didn't attack....much."

"Is that so.....well, it was like that."

The earth dragons were insensitive to the people coming from above and sensitive to people coming from below.

I knew that information.

But watching it happen right before my eyes was a first.

This was really over the line.

They had a will-power like that of a chicken.

Should I rather use a vast range of magic to blow them all off?

No, even if I did that, we'll just be buried under the rubble.

The valley was extensively deep.

The earth dragons could use earth magic at will.

There wouldn't be much significance to it even if we were to exterminate several tens of them.

I didn't want to waste large quantities of mana because I still had to fight the North God and Sword God.

As I'm sitting here confused, the North God's and Sword God's daggers may reach the Supard Village at any time.

It wouldn't be strange if they were headed to a different direction as well.

At the very least, Zanoba's location has probably been exposed already.

They might already have been done in.

I'm impatient.

Still, let's calm down, the situation won't change for better if I'm impatient.

But, the earth dragons above, that I looked at with my clairvoyance, were still vigilant of us who came down here.

"Is there some place where they are in a lesser quantity?"

"......Yup."

We set out thusly.

It wasn't dark at our feet thanks to the mushrooms and moss.

There were not only the earth dragons that were attacking us, but also insects as big as humans, like a long-horned beetle and centipedes.

Looks like these dragons lived off by eating these insects.

I just saw a dragon holding an insect in its mouth and climbing to the top.

No sooner than that, I saw the satisfied dragon falling to its death and being surrounded by the insects.

All the fodder was below, something dropping from above rarely ever happened.

It's no wonder that the dragons were only vigilant of the things below.

Looks like there was a strange food chain in this place.

"......."

However, I've been thinking as I was walking.

"It's easier to walk on this path."

The path at the bottom of valley was flatter than expected.

There were places with huge mushrooms or fallings rocks and big stones that were blocking us.

But overall it was easier to walk because it was flat.

I was getting a nostalgic feeling with this easy walk.

"........Yup, it feels just like....the Red Dragon Jaw."

"Ah!"

Those unpleasant heart-warming memories of Orsted still remained!

But it was certainly like that.

Red Dragon Upper Jaw, Lower Jaw, and Holy Sword Highway.

Mushrooms and moss were hard to find, but I felt like this when I walked around those areas.

"Then, does that mean someone built this.....?"

But there weren't any monsters on those roads.

Which means, someone built it and called the earth dragons in here.....

No, wait.

If I recall correctly, wasn't there a story in which it was stated that Laplace called the dragons in the Central Continent?

Which means, this road too was possibly made by Laplace.

For what purpose?

"....."

Let's put that aside for now.

I should look for a place to climb up rather than that.

Topographically speaking, isn't there any place where the earth dragons don't make nests?

I had been looking up at the top using clairvoyance since some time ago, and I could see many holes in the cliff of the valley since it had good durability.

Just like a street of multistory buildings built without any gaps.

I wouldn't expect them to all be in one hole, but there should be at least a considerable amount of dragons there.

One thousand or two thousand.

Among them, the underlings in particular, would go down and look for food.

But I can't imagine that there would be enough food to support them all.

But in this world, a mismatch of the amount of food and magic beasts was a daily occurrence.

....I wonder if there's something they used to climb to the top?

No, what would they use?

If they fell, they wouldn't get up again.

The Earth Dragon Valley.

'Don't fall down there' or so they say, but I guess I underestimated a bit.....

"Rudeus."

"Hmm, an enemy?"

I took a stance as if a new insect had came out, but Doga pointed his finger.

There was only a wall in that direction.

No, it was not.

It was hard to see because of the shadow of the mushrooms, but there was a hole.

The hole itself had frequent gaps at its base, but this hole was different from the others.

There were stairs.

Stairs had been attached.

Not going up, stairs leading downwards.

"....."

After all this, to go downwards...

Such a thought crossed my mind.

"Oh?"

But in the next instant, my hand moved by itself.

My right hand pointed right at the hole.

Almost as if it belonged there.

"Atofe-sama, is that the exit...?"

The part of Afote's body didn't answer.

But it was pointing.

As if it was addicted to being inside.

"Well then."

Even if I kept walking, it didn't seem like we would find anywhere to climb up.....

It was not as if this valley continued forever.

If we kept going, we would probably just reach a dead end.

Turning back here and looking for the other side was time consuming as well.

Then, if you're curious about something, why not examine everything about it?

"Let's try going down."

"Yup."

Doga nodded without hesitation.

He also might have guessed something upon seeing this staircase.

And so, we began down the dark stairs.

Right at the bottom of the stairs, there was a huge altar.

A huge altar.

I wonder if there's any other way to put it.

It was a huge cave covered with mushrooms and moss.

And as if to support it, there were two large sculpted pillars.

In between them, there was a rack which looked as if it was cut out from stone, and the interior of that rack looked like a mural which was decorated with meticulous engravings.

Were those dragons depicted in that mural?

There were lots of things drawn all over the place and it was hard to see in the dark.

But I felt like that I've seen this somewhere before.

Where was it?

"Are these the ruins of the Dragon Race?"

That was it.

The teleportation ruins.

It was a lot similar to that place.

These writings were also similar to those in the Sky Fortress.

If that's the case, I wonder if a teleportation magic formation is here.

But even if there was any, using it would only be a gamble.

Should I jump aboard that teleportation magic formation to get out of here not knowing where I'll end up?

Even though the place I wanted to go was right above me.

No, it's too early to decide that.

Looking around, there was no other room besides the one with this altar.

Besides, the Atofe-hand wasn't pointing towards this thing.

It was pointing towards the mural.

Towards the small stone shelf below the mural.

No, it only looked small because of how big the mural was; it wasn't actually all that small.

But Afote's hand was, without a doubt, pointing there.

"....."

Suddenly, Afote's face floated into my mind.

I wonder if it's ok to follow that unintelligent Demon Lord's advice.

I felt that unease for a moment.

But my legs moved.

To where the Afote-hand was pointing, to stand in front of the shelf.

On it, several bottles were lined up.

Translucent opened bottles.

And in the centre, a translucent crystal-ball like thing was fixed.

"Don't tell me there's liquor inside."

While thinking that, I tried lifting one of the bottles.

There was a dragon pattern carved on it.

I was sure if I were to show it around Zanoba, he'd start talking about its value.

By the way, it was empty.

".....So what am I supposed to do with this?"

I ask the Afote-hand

No reply.

But, instead, the Afote-hand reached out.

Going past the bottle, for the translucent crystal.

The moment my hand touched the crystal, I regained control of it.

"....."

What was that?

Is it trying to tell me something?

The bottle, the crystal, and the altar.

It seemed some kind of RPG puzzle had started.

"Rudeus, there."

Suddenly, Doga, who was behind me, pointed above my head.

When I looked, I saw that the tops of the giant pillars supporting the altar were glowing blue.

No, that wasn't it.

It was not that the pillars were glowing but some kind of blue thing that was oozing out of the top of the pillars was glowing.

And then it came down very fast and started accumulating in a saucer-like spot below the altar.

It seemed that this crystal ball——actually, this entire altar was a magic tool.

A magic tool that spouted blue liquid.

However, the light was mixing with the surrounding moss and mushrooms.

"So, I wonder what this liquid is."

I wonder if I should drink it.

Although it's giving off a bad-looking colour...

No, the fact that it came together with a bottle means that it would have to be used somewhere.

You take the water in the bottle, you take it somewhere and pour it into some device, the device activates and opens the door for you to obtain the legendary sword or the like.

I don't need a sword.

"Isn't it this?"

Doga was pointing towards the mural.

There, a huge mural was drawn.

It depicted humans and earth dragons.

When the magic tool was activated, the structure that the blue liquid flowed into made a part of it shone exposing its whole aspect.

The mural seemed to indicate the flow of the blue liquid.

At the top was the altar, and below that, a person fetching the blue liquid with a bottle was drawn.

The person holding the bottle sprinkled it on the surrounding people.

Those that had been covered in the blue liquid took up swords and spears and hunted the earth dragons and other unknown creatures from behind.

Going off what I can see here, this liquid was made to hunt the earth dragons.

There also seemed to be something written next to the drawing, but I can't read it.

It seemed a little different from the writing of the Dragon race.

"Aah, but...."

But I suddenly thought of something.

The dragons don't come to this part of the valley.

Blue moss, blue mushrooms.

And blue liquid.

It was possible that humans once lived here.

And those humans used this blue liquid to drive the earth dragons away.

The earth dragons hate whatever is in this blue liquid.

And that component is also in the blue moss and mushrooms.

No, looking at the mural, the humans attacked the earth dragons from behind and from below.

From below those sensitive earth dragons...

.....Maybe they can't see it.

The earth dragons can't see the things which emit this blue light.

Which is why they don't come here much.

So coating your entire body in it makes it so the earth dragons can't see you?

".....Should we give it a try?"

I turn back and ask Doga.

I did not give an explanation.

"Yup."

But Doga nodded as if it were obvious.

After a while, we were at the top of the valley.

We escaped.

From the Valley of the Earth Dragons.

We came out of the cave with our bodies covered in the contents of the bottle.

After that, using earth magic, I slowly raised us up.

Thinking that we might be found if we went too fast, I went up slowly.

It was bingo.

The earth dragons, looking at us giving off blue light, gave no reaction.

Whether they couldn't see us, or didn't recognize us as food.

All we did was huddle together and stay still on the platform.

It was for about an hour.

As a result of our slow elevation, the night sky was visible.

Looks like it was currently night.

In front of the somehow impressive moon, we landed on the edge of the valley.

"We did it."

"Yup!"

I slapped Doga on the back and he nodded happily.

It took a while, but the escape was a success.

We immediately headed for the Supard village to tell them about the Sword God and North God.

AUTHOR Q & A (5 OF 14)

Q. I've been thinking this for a while now but aren't you misunderstanding the meaning of 'not a very appealing'?

A. It's not a misunderstanding but rather the phenomenon that I wanted to write 'horrifying' but for some reason ended up writing 'not a very appealing'.

Q. Now that he has the black arms there's no need for the prosthetic arms, right?

I don't think it's bad but, does that mean if he's locked in a King-class barrier now then he won't be able to escape?

A. As long as one prosthetic arm remains, it's possible.

Q. The current situation is that a part of Atofe is functioning like an arm but would he be able to use magic like usual?

A. He seemed to be using it.

Q. Why did the Atofe-hand know about the ruins?

A. Maybe the Atofe-hand simply pointed towards it instinctively or maybe it wanted to touch the equipment out of mere curiosity.

Q. A North Emperor who is weak in underhanded tricks. Would he be deemed as a heretic in the school?

A. It's not like that.

Since it's a school which has developed the best way to fight.

Ah, perhaps using an axe instead of a sword is heresy.

Q. Rudeus said that his hands looked like obsidian but how about their hardness? Are they as hard as stone? Or are they flesh and blood?

A. They are as hard as a stone but flexible and have warmth, so that he can stroke it whenever he wants(The rest is omitted.)

Q. Why are there so many North God Style followers as compared to Sword God style?

A. The top users of the North God style are mostly the immortal demon tribe, to begin with it's called the school which hates dying, so there's a lot.

Q. Who's the one at the 7th rank of the Seven Great World Powers? The 2nd Gen or the 3rd Gen?

A. The 3rd Gen.

Q. Was cutting both the arms Gisu's own idea? Or was it Hitogami's suggestion?

A. It was Gisu's idea.

Q. It was only O-Zenith-san who gave birth to such a robust body, O-Paul-san only inserted the seeds I guess.....

A. Th-They raised a robust body!

Q. What if we put the Atofe-hand on head, would it become hair? If your head is in crisis then Atofe-hair is for you!

A. It'll probably take brain tissue as nourishment.

END AUTHOR Q & A (5 OF 14)

When I returned, the conference was reaching its climax.

"The enemy is at our doorstep, we must immediately start our preparations."

"That's why I'm saying we should search for Rudeus first!"

Raising her voice almost to the point of shouting was Eris, she was quarreling with Sándor.

Roxy was there as well.

"He has Doga with him. He'll come back eventually. We should first organize our war potential or set up traps during that time....."

"That good-for-nothing is not useful at all!"

"Despite his appearance, he's talented."

"Even if he's talented, why didn't you go along with them in the first place!"

"Ugh....that's...."

They were probably talking about what to do from now on.

Whether to go search for me, or wait for my arbitrary return and attack the enemy.

Far from that.

It looked like Eris was insisting on rescuing me.

I was grateful for that.

"Fine! I'll just go down there by myself."

Eris got impatient, stood up, and suddenly turned around.

Only to find me there.

"If you're going to go down there, then descend the stairs that are in the shadow of mushrooms, go down into the altar, obtain the blue liquid, and then progress forward."

"Rudeus!"

When I tried guiding her, Eris ran over and hugged me.

With force.

Force that could break my spine.

"I was worried!"

"Sorry."

When I looked over, Roxy was hugging me as well and the others were sighing with relief.

This response by just looking at me being alive.....

I was really grateful.

".....By the way, what's with those arms of yours?"

"Ah, these are.....no, I'll explain from the beginning. But first....."

While saying that I surveyed my surroundings.

And brought my vision to a halt on a male sitting over there.

"Who are you?"

I spoke to Sándor as I looked at him.

North God Kalman the Second.

Alex Ryback.

The one who defeated the King of the Dragon King, defeated a huge behemoth, formulated numerous military exploits in various places, and was able to become one of the Seven Great World Powers. The protagonist of that legendary story of the North God.

The one who was known as the world's strongest swordsman just some hundred years ago, and the most prominent person of the North God Style.

I was honestly not that surprised.

I did think about just why such a talented person was here.

But I consented for the most part.

The reason Orsted remained silent about him.

The reason Ariel sent him before Ghyslaine and Isolte.

The reason Doga was a North Emperor.

North God Kalman the Second.

I agreed to that fact.

"Why did you keep quiet?"

"In case of an unlikely event. If Hitogami can read people's minds, I can hide the fact that I'm a Kalman. It was easier to move around as well."

I see.

Hitogami may have extracted most of the information about us when I fell into the valley, but even we didn't know that Kalman is on our side.

.....

".....Really?"

"Nope, it is a little bit of that, but I thought it would be cool if I revealed myself in a time of crisis."

"Very well."

Making a mistake when trying to be cool.

That kind of thing happens a lot really.

"Since they already knew that Doga was a North Emperor, wouldn't it make it all the more futile?"

"Errr.....I dare not say that many knew Doga as a North Emperor."

But it left an adverse effect as a result of that.

If I had known that these two were this strong, I would've acted as if hiding from them.

No, if it came to that then Sword God and North God would've taken a different approach.

"In any case, I'll be relying on you from now on. Alex-san."

"But of course. Ah, but, please do keep on calling me Sándor. I want our relationship to stay that way for now."

After ascertaining Sándor's identity, we started compiling our intelligence.

Firstly, I brought along Sword God and North God to this village some 10 days ago and was then dropped into the valley.

I didn't realize it at the bottom of the valley because I fainted, but a lot of time had passed.

A day or two after that. The exact time was unknown, but the teleportation magic formations and communication lithographs all lost their lights.

Roxy and Eris, sensing that something was unusual, came to the Supard village in order to link up with me.

It was also confirmed that the magic formation in the village had lost its light.

Nevertheless, believing that I was still on the move, they decided to wait and see.

The one who confirmed that I was missing was Sándor, who came back before me.

"I kept waiting for Rudeus-dono to come to the Second City, but there was no sign of you returning.The other two soldiers who you took along didn't return as well.

In spite of that, the rumor that the Supard race were the demons from the Forest of No Return started flowing within the city.

I thought of confirming the situation via the communication lithograph, but it was already too late as the teleport formation in the Second City was destroyed.

At that time, thinking that I was being targeted, I came back to this village while hiding myself."

Sándor came to the conclusion that I was missing as he returned back to the village.

Was it the Second City? Or the Village of the Earth Dragon Valley?

Thinking that something might have happened around there, Ruijerd, who was still recovering, started his search as the leader.

On investigation, it was found that Doga's and my footprints lead to the side of the valley.

It was likely that we had fallen into the valley.

After realizing that, Ruijerd immediately decided to descend into the valley, but Sándor advised him not to.

There was no way to climb back up the valley once you fell down into it.

It was highly likely that they would be stranded the moment they went down into the valley.

Hence, it was concluded that they would wait until I climbed up by myself since it should be alright as long as Doga was with me.

Well, their judgement was probably right.

Trying to climb up with all those flocks of earth dragons was very difficult, but Doga was there, so he protected me.

"Which reminds me, did you meet up with the information broker?"

And then Sándor who returned to the village.

Information was brought by him.

It was regarding the destruction of the teleport formations.

"We were able to obtain information regarding Gisu from the information broker.

A monkey-faced person was seen heading towards the Capital City Biheiril from Second City Irel, or so I've been informed about his whereabouts."

"So we know nothing?"

"Yes. But just the other day, we were able to confirm that Ogre God Malta showed himself in Second City Irel.

If we're to think that he appeared the day after the teleport formations lost their light, then it's possible that he got into the teleport formation set up in the Second City to reach Sharia, and from there he destroyed the office."

"I see."

There were Roxy and Eris to prove this information.

Both of them arrived just yesterday.

It took them at least 10 days for a journey which normally takes 4 days.

The cause of that was because when these two went through the Capital, a ceremony was being carried out.

That ceremony was the departure of the subjugation force.

The Capital was in revelry regarding the subjugation of the Supard race, and the departure ceremony of the subjugation force was being carried out within that revelry.

Although it was supposed to be carried out a little later.

It's possible that Gisu decided to hasten it after getting the report that I fell into the valley.

Without Orsted's bracelet, Hitogami now knew that I wasn't dead.

Therefore, they decided to attack Orsted as soon as possible before I came out of the valley.

Roxy and Eris did reconnaissance regarding the premature departure of the subjugation force.

Through their reconnaissance, they confirmed that North God and Sword God were participating in it.

However, they kept holding onto their doubt despite the reconnaissance.

Their doubt being: just why have things become like this even though Rudeus should've negotiated?

Why couldn't they see Rudeus?

While pondering about such thoughts, before anyone knew what was going on, the subjugation force left the Capital.

Anyhow, they chased the subjugation force while remaining vigilant.

They were aware of where the force was heading to, so they thought about collecting any kind of information if possible.

But Roxy said that if they kept on following them, after they entered the Second City, it would be dangerous.

So they took a big detour around the town. While passing through the forest, they arrived at the Supard village.

Afterwards, they idly spent a number of days with growing doubts, but they were able to arrive safely at the Supard village.

And that's how it was.

By the way, Eris and Ruijerd had a very deeply moving reunion.

The moment Eris saw Ruijerd, she wanted to jump at him really bad.

She wanted him to look at how strong she had become.

I think that kind of feeling was running throughout her body.

But she firmly kept her patience.

She was not a kid anymore.

She was Eris Greyrat, a warrior acknowledged by Ruijerd.

As a warrior, with Ruijerd as her Teacher, she mustn't take embarrassing actions.

Warning herself of that fact, with the same usual pose, she spoke.

"Long time no see, Ruijerd. You haven't changed much."

"Yeah, Eris. You've grown so much."

"That's obvious."

They exchanged only a few words.

But that alone made Eris feel nostalgic and proud.

Before, she could only look up to him. And now she had become the same height as him.

And thus she was going into battle with Ruijerd, shoulder-to-shoulder with him.

That's right, Eris was satisfied.

"We don't have much time left. The subjugation force are most likely heading towards our way right now. Soldiers of the ogre race appearing as reinforcements may not be too far in the future as well."

"I understand. Then, I'll now report from my side."

I started reporting my part of the story.

That the two soldiers were North God and Sword God.

That they were using the same ring as mine to disguise themselves.

And thus, that Gisu was probably using it as well so that he wouldn't be found out.

That after falling into the valley, I was saved by a hair's breadth thanks to Doga and Atofe-hand.

During that time, how I lost Orsted's bracelet and Hitogami was able to look at me.

How I was finally able to get out of the valley and came back here.

"Rudeus."

After I had spoken everything, Eris said with a low voice.

"I'll deal with Gull Farion."

Eris said as she looked at my arm's base.

".....Well, let's talk about it together bearing that in mind.

I'm happy that you want to fight him as an opponent, but don't rush in alone. You don't want to end up like me, right?"

Now then, let's sort things out.

Firstly, it's Gisu. There's no doubt that he's in a position to manipulate the subjugation force to some extent.

The most likely candidate would be the King, Gisu might be disguised as him.

I don't know who the apostle was, but aside from Gisu, there were North God, Sword God, and Ogre God.

North God and Sword God were able to do some reconnaissance of the Supard village thanks to the disguise ring.

Ogre God attacked the office along with Gisu, and they were able to snatch away our escape routes.

And thus, they were currently heading towards the Supard village with the subjugation force of approximately 100 people strong.

"....."

Ogre God Malta.

Someone like him was sent into Sharia.

When I thought it over again, my heart was filled with despair.

"What happened to my house.....?"

On my inquiry, Roxy casted her eyes down, Eris folded her arms, and Sándor started stroking his chin like he was bothered.

"We don't know whether the Ogre God returned only after destroying the office, or if he attacked Sharia as well."

I tried thinking.

If it were me, then what would I have done?

Sharia was completely empty.

Neither I nor Orsted were there.

There was no one who was capable of opposing the Ogre God.

Should we leave it alone?

There was no way we could.

Even in a condition where they had low war potential, they could still attack Sharia because they had nothing to lose.

"....."

Silence dominated the place.

It felt as if even Orsted had an angry look on him.

I couldn't know for sure with his helmet on though.

"Uh-oh, seems like everyone's in a meeting."

Someone spoke up from near the entrance.

When I turned to look, there was this one guy.

"Zanoba!"

Come to think of it, he was here too.

No, it's not like I forgot!

Of course!

I was just a little bit worried about my house.

"Master, sorry for the delay. I've just arrived."

"No, it's alright. I've only just arrived as well."

Julie and Ginger were behind him.

Both of them were worn-out.

There were bruises all over them, and dark circles below their eyes due to fatigue.

It was the appearance of a person whose mana was on the verge of drying up.

"We had a hard time dealing with an invisible monster on our way. It would have been dangerous if the Supards hadn't come to rescue us."

"I see. Got it, let the two of them rest..... No, it should be good to hear them out first. Please sit down at the corner and rest."

As I said that, Ginger and Julie silently entered the lecture hall on their unsteady feet, and sat down near the pillar.

Roxy quickly approached them and started using healing magic.

"Well then, Zanoba. How much information have you grasped on?"

"A rough idea of it. However, I would be grateful if you were to explain the situation from the beginning."

Hence, we started explaining from the beginning.

Explaining the same thing over and over again is a pain but it can't be helped.

Since sharing information is of utmost importance.

"And that's how it is, so we are worried about what happened to Sharia and about the subjugation force that's currently heading our way."

"Hmph."

Zanoba suddenly started laughing.

Was there something funny?

Don't tell me, he isn't going to say like "All of your family is already here so be relieved, hahaha" right?

"About that, before coming here, I was able to find a Seven Great World Powers stone monument, so I was able to confirm the situation by Arumanfi-dono, subordinate of Perugius-sama."

"Oh!"

The one who stood up with a joyful look floating on his face wasn't me.

When bathed with the surrounding gazes, he quickly sat down.

It was Sándor.

"My apologies, and then?"

"He said that Master's family is safe."

An atmosphere of relief flew through the surroundings.

I see, so they're safe.

I wonder if it was Leo's work.

Or were they protected by someone else?

Or did the enemy judge that it would be dangerous to invade Sharia, well-known for its Magic University?

"Nevertheless, if Perugius-dono is backing us, then we can reverse the situation in just one go."

Sándor was getting slightly excited, surveying the surroundings.

But Zanoba was slightly gloomy.

"No, Perugius-sama is just going to observe this battle. We can't expect his assistance."

"Is that so! That gentleman is obstinate at a time like this!"

Sándor threw his head back with an attitude that could be said as exaggerating.

Did he really like Perugius that much?

Is he homo?

No, Sándor is North God the Second.

North God the First and Perugius both were one of the 『Three Demon Slaying Heroes』 and probably old friends.

Then, it's possible that he's an acquaintance of Perugius.

But Sándor was right.

The power of the 12 subordinates of Perugius was useful only at time like this.

Arumanfi of the Bright having the strongest reconnaissance ability and Clearnight of the Roaring Thunder.

By combining the two of them, an opponent's information can be leaked to all the comrades in an instant.

Of course, it doesn't stop at just that.

They can even focus on the finest of details of the other subordinates.

But now that he has said he wouldn't support us, it couldn't be helped.

Even Orsted's policy was not to borrow Perugius' power.

"Ogre God Malta was rough, but he's a kind person. He won't attack non-hostiles."

Muttering those words was Orsted.

"If Sword God or North God had gone, then they probably would've attacked Sharia."

Orsted's words were calm, but they resounded clearly.

I wonder if it was because of the helmet.

"But Gisu's a coward. By using North God and Sword God, he was able to confirm not only that I was here, but that the teleport formations were here too. So he didn't throw away the possibility that I could have returned back to the office.

Therefore, he used the Ogre God.

It would take some time to defeat the Ogre God even for me.

So it's possible Gisu planned to destroy the teleport formations in various places by himself or through someone else during that time."

Those were Orsted's opinions.

I see.

Sending along the Ogre God was only a safety plan.

Due to that safety plan, my family was safe.

Rather than that, it looks like they never had any intention to attack Sharia.

I came first as a target, my family after.

Sándor interrupted with a question.

"Then why didn't the three of them go together?"

"That's probably because North God's and Sword God's target is different from Gisu's."

The North God and Sword God's target.

With those words, the surrounding heads tilted in confusion.

The only head which didn't tilt was Eris's.

".....Gull Farion wants to fight you, right?"

"Aleksander Ryback as well."

Orsted was in the Supard village.

The moment they found out, the two of them didn't go to Sharia but stayed here.

I could see Gisu starting to lose control of their reins.

If they could, they should've been able to kill me simply by coming down into the valley.

Since Doga was able to come down, it's obvious.

It should've been possible for Aleksander.

Thus, the two of them weren't acting according to Gisu and Hitogami's plan.

"At any rate, I'm glad that my family is all safe. Although I'm worried about the North God, Sword God and Ogre God coming here to attack."

Three God ranks.

Strengthened by a subjugation force 100 or more strong.

The war potential of the Supard race's side was 10 people or so who could still move.

And then, the people that were currently here.

Orsted, Zanoba, Ginger, Julie, Norn, Cliff, Elinalize.

Ruijerd, Roxy, Eris, Sándor, Doga.

There were women and children, and the team of doctors that were currently staying here.

The team of doctors aside, the subjugation force's main target was the Supard race.

If they were to invade, a massacre was likely to happen.

"....."

Ginger, Julie, Norn were out.

Cliff too.....he isn't very useful in actual combat.

Even Orsted was out.

Orsted's mana recovery rate was almost next to none.

The more he used it, the more it decreased.

The only reason I was trying to collect subordinates for Orsted was to compensate for that fact to begin with.

Just because there was a fight coming, I couldn't just go and ask him 'Teacher, please fight.'

If it did come to that, then there would be no choice for him but to go, although it would have been nice if it were only 1 or 2 God ranks. However, fighting 3 of them would definitely take a considerable amount of mana.

Then there's Gisu as well, whose whereabouts were still unknown.

Perhaps there were even more war potential left with him.

Besides, if I were Gisu, I wouldn't send in someone like Sword God, who could easily be defeated by us, to directly attack us.

He definitely has some kind of plan in action.

Orsted was the last resort.

Except when he's needed the most, it should be fine for Orsted to just guard the village.

Three God ranks.

When I factor in that we'll be fighting without Orsted, the fight won't be easy at all.

The fight won't be easy at all, but.....

But it's not like we can't win either.

We have 3 powerful contenders like Sword King Eris, North God Sándor, and North Emperor Doga.

If they worked together as our support with me, Zanoba, and Ruijerd then.....

The fight won't be easy at all, but.....even if we had to run, even if we had to fight, I don't think that it would be absolutely impossible.

This all-out war.....I thought it was a little bit one-sided considering it was Gisu.

The entirety of our war potential was concentrated in the Supard village.

It would've been good if they didn't know about me, but when I fell, Hitogami came to know all about my life and death.

There's Orsted here and me too.

In such state of affairs, would he challenge an all-out war.....?

No, there was Dark King Vita as well.

Originally, Gisu used Vita and planned to turn Ruijerd and the rest against me.

If I think about it, he would've deceived me as I came to Biheiril Kingdom regarding this matter.

Arriving at the Supard village together with the disguised North God, Sword God, and Ogre God.

If you add Vita and Ruijerd to the 3 God ranks, the 5 of them could've easily killed us.

That kind of flow was also possible.

Yeah.

It's possible to say that the reason the opponent was losing control of its pieces was because my time was spent well.

Perhaps even luck had some kind of effect.

I don't know just who or which one was an apostle, but from the information I received, I could feel that Gisu was starting to lose control of both North God and Sword God.

Just how did Gisu influence them in the first place?

Maybe Gisu presented some conditions and they consented to it, and it worked.

Maybe there were some kinds of promises to hold even if it's impossible.

And those terms had just came to light from our talk before.

Sword God's and North God's aim was to fight with Orsted.

They became fully motivated after watching Orsted's appearance.

Gisu had prepared for that reaction.

That's right.

Not to mention, I could see Gisu immediately starting to move after hearing that I fell into the valley.

According to the plans, he would accelerate the departure of the subjugation force to match up with the departure of the soldiers of the Ogre race.

It's conceivable that he would think to settle things up in my absence since it's very difficult to climb up from the valley.

Gisu knew that I wasn't dead.

He thought of mobilizing the subjugation force quickly and dealing a fatal blow to Orsted.

Before I climbed out of the valley.

But I made it in time.

I was able to return before the battle, and the current situation had calmed down.

It was possible that they still didn't know about Sándor's true identity.

Incidentally, if we're to consider Hitogami's agitation, then.....

"".....This might be our chance to win."

When I muttered those words, a young man entered the room.

Holding a white spear, it was a Supard soldier.

"The subjugation force has arrived. They're about half a day's distance away."

So they've made it in time.

Though just barely.

Earth Dragon Valley.

This place, that was about to become a decisive battleground, was quite deep.

The average width of the valley was 400 metres.

It could exceed 500 metres at wider gaps, but was still 100~200 metres at shorter gaps.

The Supards built a bridge across the shortest gap, and came and went through the opposite side of the forest.

This bridge was smeared with mashed herbs that the invisible wolves disliked the most.

The number of enemies was a lot, but this was the only path.

It was different from a river, in that you can't just easily cross over. It was a place where you have to be careful of where you put your feet.

If we could drop the bridge, we could stall for time.

Moreover, clairvoyance could be used because there were no obstacles unlike in the forest, and it was within my range.

"Let's leave the bridge intact."

Because of that proposal, the bridge was left alone.

If the enemy came crossing over, we could just drop it.

I had felt them firsthand, the difficulties of trying to climb up the valley after falling down into it.

We had the advantage in terms of position.

We didn't have any time to set up traps, but.....

We decided to wait for the enemy on this side.

There were 6 people present.

Me, Eris, Ruijerd, Zanoba, Sándor, and Doga.

The 6 of us were going to keep the 3 God ranks company.

It was decided that the Supards would take care of the subjugation force.

Since Roxy only had one thing to do, she was positioned in the back.

Elinalize and several people of the Supard race were guarding Roxy.

Cliff and the rest were guarding the village.

Well, technically, it was like the combatants were the vanguard and the magicians were deployed in the rear.

When push came to shove, we could carry the wounded to the village and bring them back to the front lines after healing them.

Speaking of healing.

I decided to leave the Atofe-hand as it is.

Time, and the number of scrolls that Roxy and Zanoba were holding was limited right now.

This arm was functioning better than my previous arm, so it's better to leave it as it is for now. After the war is over, I'll use a healing scroll to cure it.

Well, it is the Demon Lord-sama's valuable gift.

I'll be making use of it to my heart's content.

After half a day, the subjugation force 100 strong were facing us.

On the opposite side, standing in front of the bridge were 3 vanguards.

Wearing a sword on his waist belt, a middle-aged man.

Sword God Gull Farion.

He had aged quite well, but his skill with the sword hadn't declined at all; that fact was proven to me through my own experience.

Carrying a long sword on his back, a young boy.

North God Kalman the Third.

Aleksander Ryback.

One of the Seven Great World Powers, the limits of his true strength were still obscure.

And with a height of almost 3 metres, having a build similar to a large tree, a globular bell-like choker on his neck, and wearing a tiger-striped rumen on his waist, the red ogre.

Ogre God Malta.

Orsted predicted the reason he didn't attack my family, but we didn't know his true motive.

Perhaps one expression of gratitude was in order for that matter.

But I didn't have any intention to thank him.

He did destroy the office.

Then it was hopeless for the elven receptionist who was in the office.

In the end, I could never remember her name. I'll take revenge for her at least.

"We can't see Gisu, huh?"

Unfortunately, we couldn't see that monkey-face near them.

Was he near but hiding himself?

Or was he waiting in Second City Irel?

At the very least, I couldn't see him with my clairvoyance.

If he did lose the reins, then it was possible that he had already fled, since it was Gisu.

The various soldiers of the subjugation force seemed afraid when looking at the Supards.

Green hair and chalk-like spears.

The very appearance of the demons that come up in fairy-tales were now in front of them.

If we win this war, then I'll give it my all to sell the Ruijerd book in the Biheiril Kingdom.

"There's no need to be afraid!"

The subjugation force were visibly afraid, looking at the Supards, but the 3 God classes were not like that.

"We have an overwhelming amount of personnel!"

North God Kalman the Third was especially full of vitality.

Raising his fist in the air, encouraging his surroundings and shouting with a voice that could be heard even from here, he was raising the morale of the troops.

He certainly looked like the figurehead of the subjugation force.

Since they were facing the Supard race within this forest.

It was actually better for them.

Everybody drew their swords and glared at us with clear hostility in their eyes.

Glaring at us, a group of just less than 20 people who were at the opposite side of the valley.

And then Aleksander unsheathed his sword from his back.

"I am North God Kalman the Third Aleksander Ryback! Follow me and you shall gain honor!"

"..........!"

Thus, Aleksander started running on top of the bridge while shouting.

After seeing that, Sándor quickly cried out.

"Do it now!"

In the next moment, my hand moved.

I shot a stone cannon with both my hands.

It flew straight ahead and destroyed the bridge's base.

Furthermore, Ruijerd moved too.

Near his side. The vine on which the bridge was hanging on was bisected with the chalk-like spear.

"AHHHHHhhhhh!?"

Everyone kept watching that dumbfounded.

The falling bridge.

And North God Kalman the Third who fell towards the very bottom along with it.

They could do nothing but watch dumbfounded.

The one who shouted, Sándor, was also looking in amazement.

It can't be.

It can't be, this is.....

This is impossible....

Well.

It's difficult to save someone who has fallen from this height.

No, it should be fine if it's Aleksander.

.....But, even if he survived, it would take some time to climb back up.

"........O-only one person of all people?"

There was no one who would cheer on those words.

There was no one who would even send criticizing looks.

The scene that happened just now was simply scorched into everyone's eyes.

.....Now's the chance.

I loaded my arms with mana.

There weren't many in this place who could launch an attack.

So let's do it.

I raised my left hand towards the sky.

Lifting up enormous amounts of mana in my left hand, I made a thunder cloud.

Suppressing the raging mana within my left arm, I compressed it.

And then I let it fall.

『Lightning!』"

Lighting fell down with a thunderous roar.

The surroundings were dyed in white, a raging roar echoed.

A cloud of dust fluttered about on the opposite side.

Many trees got engulfed in fire, and fell down one by one while making crackling noises.

I didn't know how much damage was dealt.

But there was feedback.

A feedback enough to make my hands shake.

The sensation of killing a person.

While gulping it down, I loaded my arms with mana once again.

"Once more....."

The moment I thought that.

Something jumped out from that cloud of dust.

A red mass.

It looked gentle and quiet when seen from a distance, a jump which could be seen as if it was flying.

But that speed and mass were overwhelming.

The red mass quickly closed in and then impacted.

A sound echoed as if a cannonball had fell and a cloud of dust fluttered about.

The red mass impacted on our right flank.

Two people showed up from that cloud of dust.

"....."

An ogre with a red body and a human in his forties.

Ogre God Malta and Sword God Gull Farion.

The two of them had jumped over the valley to come.

A 100-metre jump.

As expected of the Great powers.

"Now then.....who's going to be my opponent?"

A ferociously laughing wolf.

It was different from when I first confronted him.

Right now, he was standing there with a precise killing intent and holding an absolute resolution.

At his back, there was a scabbard holding one sword.

Probably a cursed sword.

It was different from the one which nailed my back armor.

Unknowingly, cold sweat started running through my back.

"It's me."

She naturally moved forward.

The Red Mad Dog.

Two swords hanging on her back.

While folding her arms, she stood in front of the Sword God with her majestic posture.

"I thought so. Anyone else?"

"It's me."

As I introduced himself, the Sword God laughed, taken aback.

"You really look full of spirit, eh?"

"Thanks to you, I'm in good health."

"Tch, that's why I said it would've been better if I had lopped his head off."

Just who was he blaming?

It was probably Gisu.

Thus, together with me.

The person holding the chalk-like spear with green hair, a veteran hero was standing beside me.

It was the three of us again.

Eris, Ruijerd and me.

The three of us will fight together.

It was the second coming of 『Dead End』

It was 3 vs. 1, but there were no complaints.

Me and Sándor originally planned to keep Aleksander company, but he was at fault for falling down the valley like an idiot.

"....."

Sándor, Zanoba, and Doga were facing the Ogre God.

Since I've heard that the Ogre God's fighting style was hand-to-hand combat, Zanoba and Doga were the best pick, as mighty power types.

I've also heard that North God Kalman the Second was used to fighting a large amount of enemies.

Their compatibility was perfect.

We can win.

Perhaps someone might be sacrificed.

Still, we can defeat these two.

"———Hoough!"

That thought only remained for a moment.

A yell could be heard from behind us.

As we promptly turned around, something was flying up from the cliff.

It wasn't something.

It was the black-haired young boy that had fallen down just moments ago.

"Haa....Haa...."

While wiping his cold sweat, he held out his sword towards the sky.

And declared with a pompous tone.

"I'm North God Kalman the Third! The one who will defeat the cursed evil god Orsted and become a hero! The ones who are going to stand in my way, prepare yourselves!"

Don't tell me.

Don't tell me, did he run up to us?

From the bottom of the valley.....?

No, it may be a cliff, but it's not completely vertical.

I could climb up the valley while using magic as well, but I would have had to stop midway many times.

He could have used that sword to break through the walls and hurriedly climb up from the bottom.....

Should I say that this too is as expected from one of the World Powers?

".....I guess it can't be helped. Rudeus-dono, let's keep this fool company together."

"Yes."

I nodded to Sándor's words.

It was unfortunate that I couldn't fight together with Eris and Ruijerd, but it couldn't be helped. We'll just be going according to plan.

"Please be careful of that sword. That's the world's strongest sword."

There was only one sword held by the North God.

It was manufactured when that King of the Dragon Kingdom was defeated, the legendary large sword.『Dragon King Sword』 Kajakuto.

".....Why?"

But the holder of that sword, while still holding up the sword, was looking our way with a flabbergasted face.

"Why are you here?"

North God Kalman the Third.

Aleksander Ryback looked at me with a shivering voice.

Fufu, was it really that strange that I was alive after falling down into the valley and even came back from there?

Gisu might've told you about my existence, but you may not have believed it.

But, falling down into the valley means a survival flag was.....

Huh?

Was he really looking at me?

Aleksander's line of gaze was behind me.

It was Sándor.

Well, that was obvious, I guess.

"Father!"

Was that shout the signal for the start of the fight or was it just a matter of time?

"Uooooaaaaaahhhh!!!"

In the next instant, Ogre God Malta yelled while raising his hands over his head and slapped the ground.

The ground rose, the cliff collapsed and the trees mowed down.

As if the peace was being washed away by that very shockwave, the fight began.

Q. The Army corps and the Magicians using the special magic invocation law of Magician Frau who appeared during the subjugation of the Kingdom of the Dragon King. Does that even exist in the original story of the Mushoku world?

A. I don't think it does anymore.

Q. I think the enemy's reaction seeing Rudeus alive might have been a little too thin.....

A. They already got the message through Hitogami.

Q. At first it was Sándor who was talking with Eris, but he was using such a polite tone that I mistook him for Roxy for a moment.

A. I'm really sorry. I'll try to make it so that it's more understandable.

Q. The red mass that came flying was the Ogre God, right?

I couldn't see the Sword God flying but could it be that he got on Ogre God's back?

A. That's right.

Q. After this war is over, let's play baseball with everyone. (Suggestion)

A. Strip rock-paper-scissors? (Disgusting)

{ C-Editor's note: This is a pun because 'let's play baseball with everyone' in Japanese sounds similar to 'strip rock-paper-scissors' in Japanese. }

Q. I have one doubt, why didn't the Sword God and North God go towards the Supard village to attack the President after defeating Rudi?

A. Because they didn't have any weapons.

Because they must report back the information.

Also, it was Gisu's request to keep up with Ogre God's pace.

Q. Why did the President say that it would take time for the Ogre God rather than the World Powers?

A. There's a variation between HP and defensive power.

Q. The Supard race's village was changed to Supard village on the way, but is it alright?

A. Well, it's fine either way. It's not like that village is a name itself.

Q. To think that Magonote-san's Q&A would progress faster than before.....this was a first for me.

A. I had some things to do so.

Q. If he were to M with the Atofe-hand that means.....!

A. It'll be crushed, he'll turn into Girldeus!

Q. Were there names written on the stone monument of the Seven Great World Powers?

Or was it just the crests(family crests)?

A. It should be only the crests.

Q. Why doesn't the President fight, I wonder?

It's understandable that Rudeus is conserving his mana, but wouldn't it be fine just fighting without using any mana at all?

Since he's stronger than anyone even without using any magic, I think it's too good an opportunity to pass to let him play around with others to be frank.

Why not use the rook? I can't understand why the rook turned inside out as a dragon, the strongest piece(President) not being deployed this time?

A. As per the conditions,『President using his mana』will result in defeat.

They could ascertain the enemy's war potential but they still haven't seen Gisu and it's not like they have completely identified all of the apostles.

It's possible that there were reserve military force as well, and in the case if someone were to break through Rudeus and the rest then the president will become a necessity in order to protect the village.

It's certainly as you say that it'll be easy victory for the President if there's only 1 God rank, but mana compensation is not zero.

Not to mention, Gisu was the one who proposed to cut off Rudeus's arms at a narrow place, so it's possible that he might have thought of something to expend the President's mana supply as well.

That's why, preservation comes first.

The President isn't a rook or a bishop, he's the King.

Although Rudeus' overprotectiveness is certainly true.

AUTHOR Q & A (6 OF 14)

Q. If they were at a distance of half-a-day then the enemy's hands would never reach them so I think that it would become an extremely easy to deal with extermination force with 0 danger if he used the clairvoyance.

A. Firstly, since it takes a whole day from the village to the forest therefore the troops had already entered the forest.

Clairvoyance can only work as long as there's no obstacles in one's straight line of sight.

Since the forest is quite deep, it's possible that even if he climbed up to a high place to use clairvoyance, he still won't be able to see the enemy troops.

The best unobstructed view you can get from within the forest is near the valley.

The enemy troops came to a stop at the valley freeing their reins for the extermination.

If it wasn't half-a-day from the village but rather『1 day from the forest』, then they could have performed a long distance attack by setting up camp near the forest's entrance, then after that retreating till the valley. They could have gone with that kind of strategy.

The above 2 may lack in description a little bit.

I'll add some more.

END AUTHOR Q & A (6 OF 14)

Before they noticed, Eris's group had gotten far away from the valley.

The moment Ogre God moved, Gull Farion began to run away from the battlefield.

"This place should be good."

"....."

The place Gull stopped at was a clearing in the forest.

Only about a minute had passed.

But Gull moved fast, he had already covered quite a distance from the valley.

Eris felt a little anxious being separated from Rudeus,

But she immediately focused on the enemy in front of her.

"It's because the Ogre God doesn't discriminate while rampaging. I don't really want to be interrupted."

Gull said that and once again looked at Eris.

"....."

But he did not draw his sword.

As if he was saying – For you, bare hands would be enough.

To Eris, it looked like a stance full of openings.

Eris confronted Gull and held her beloved 『Elegant Phoenix Dragon Sword』 above her head.

But before her, even if formerly, was a Sword God.

Eris spent some time deciding whether or not she should take that opening.

".....You look lively."

It was surprising.

Surprisingly, Gull let out a word.

No, Gull was also human. It shouldn't be surprising for him to say something.

But still, despite this sort of situation, for this man to start something not using swords but using words was not surprising to Eris.

"....."

In response to Eris quizzically tilting her head, Gull laughed.

"Do you remember Jino? Jino Blitz."

".....I remember. I didn't like him very much."

At that answer, Gull gave a surprised laugh.

"Yeah. He was strong compared to his age, but he was a pretty boorish guy."

Gull said that while looking at the sky.

The trees swayed as the wind blew and the sound of rustling leaves could be heard.

There wasn't any sign of birds or other small animals.

Only the distant sound of falling trees and explosions could be heard.

Most likely, the Ogre God or maybe the North God's fighting.

Gull's words flowed along those sounds.

"Right now he is the Sword God."

".....Huh?"

"The great I have given him the title of Sword God."

Eris didn't understand the meaning of those words.

The Sword God Gull Farion was not a Sword God.

Even after it was said, Eris didn't understand.

"That bastard, what's with him? He suddenly said that he wanted to marry Nina! And then when I said he had to become stronger than the great me if he wanted to marry her.....The bastard really did!"

Even though Gull said that with disdain, he actually seemed rather pleased.

Raising the corners of his mouth in a slight grin, he started remembering that time.

"It was in an instant! A sword that fast and heavy, even in my youth it would once or twice.....No, he was probably better than me."

Gull seemed to have remembered something as he swung his hand through the air.

He swung his hand around like a sword, with a speed that could bring out a shockwave.

He suddenly brought a stop to his swinging hand.

"Why was it that the great I, for the second time couldn't swing my sword? I still don't get it."

And his arm returned to his side.

"It's difficult for the great me to understand, as I was the strongest from the moment I was born. But I guess ordinary people have their moments after all.

Moments when they can surpass talent through hard work....."

Gull said that while looking up at the sky once more.

He could be heard muttering – No, it seems I'm no longer the strongest. – under his breath.

"In any case, he already has everything he ever wanted in his hands. The woman of his dreams, the title of Sword God.....in the Holy Land of the Sword, everyone has recognized his strength. The era of the Sword God Jino isn't far off."

Gull looked at Eris

He finally looked directly at her.

"Compared to him, what have you accomplished?"

".....What?"

"After you finally got your man, you now wag your tail towards Orsted, who was supposed to be your enemy!"

Hah!

Gull Farion laughed, but there was no smile.

His eyes, radiating rage, glared at Eris.

"I had entrusted it to you. The dream of overthrowing Dragon God Orsted with absolute animosity."

"When I remember it now, it seems ridiculous. Why did I entrust that to someone like you?"

"You've completely lost your fangs. Hah, some Mad Sword King you are! What part of you is Mad? It's nice that you've got the man you wanted and all, but what are you, the third? Are you satisfied with that?"

Words were thrown out in rapid succession.

However, they didn't resonate in Eris's ears.

She could think of nothing but to not give a damn.

She wasn't concerned.

She didn't remember being entrusted with anything.

Therefore Eris answered like this.

".....You've become effeminate haven't you?"

Sword God's pupils contracted.

His condensed killing intent headed straight for his arm.

"You are excommunicated."

"I don't care."

"You may no longer call yourself a Sword King."

"Try it if you can."

Eris was already prepared for war.

Rather, Eris wondered just why they had been playing with words until now.

"Do you think you can win?"

"Isn't it obvious? I'll send a weakling like you to the other world with a single blow."

"Hah.....That's the second time in my life that the great I have been called a weakling."

Thus, Gull Farion took his stance.

He spread his legs, lowered his waist, put his hand on the sword hilt, and took his stance as if to hide the sword.

The stance of Iaido.

Sword King Ghyslaine Dedorudia's speciality, a killing technique.

"....."

Eris clenched her teeth upon seeing that.

The Sword God Style possessed the commonplace practice of thrusting the heaviest sword as fast as you can.

However, there were three stances.

One was the middle-step.

The basic form of Sword God Style, which is capable of dealing with any kind of combat flow.

Another was the upper-step.

An offensive stance which is fit for someone who can impede the opponent's flow of combat before he/she gets to attack.

The last was Iaido.

A defensive stance which is fit for someone who can calculate the best timing of attack by sniffing out the opponent's flow of combat.

In short,

Iaido for someone who can read their opponent,

Upper-step for someone who can impede the opponent,

And those who specialise in neither take the middle-step.

Eris held a natural sense of rhythm and was someone who could assertively impede an opponent's flow of combat, so she specialized in upper-step.

As a Beast race possessing both extraordinary hearing and smell along with great intuition and hindsight, Ghyslaine specialized in Iaido.

"....."

The stance Gull Farion took was Iaido.

This former Sword God could fight with any stance.

But in this situation, he chose Iaido.

And although she understood that, Eris was not afraid.

Silently letting out small breaths in between, they slowly closed their distance.

In that moment, Gull felt uncomfortable.

Eris was strangely quiet.

The Eris that in the Holy Land of the Sword was known as the『Mad Dog』, that would bare her fangs and simply attack right from the front, was not rushing to attack.

Something had changed.

It was her expression.

Eris had a smile.

Eris was grinning with an evil smile plastered over her face, but she stood there with a clear atmosphere like a monk in training.

If you had seen the expression, you would have understood that it was a trick.

Gull was not going to be deceived.

He only waited with his stance as if time had stopped, with the large tree to his back.

"....."

"....."

It was a strange sight.

Especially to those that knew them, one could simply look and know something was off.

Both Eris's and Gull's school of swordsmanship specialized in attacking first.

Without doing so, there is no way to climb the ladder of the Sword God style.

But neither of them moved.

Only the leaves dancing in the wind like snow showed that the time was still moving.

Looking at this scene, you'd think it was the same as that time.

For example, the person they were talking about just moments ago, Jino Blitz.

He had seen it.

A battle of the Sword God style without movement.

That's right, a few years ago.

The day when Eris became a Sword King.

The fight of Eris Greyrat and Nina Farion.

They didn't move.

The two of them did not move.

Or maybe, for these two high level practitioners of the Sword God style, this stillness had become an eternity, and thus, they did not move.

Nay, they moved however.

Eris tensely closed the gap until only a finger of distance was left between the two.

At that last moment, only a short distance remained between their swords.

The gap in front of Eris.

But this distance was far.

It was too far for a finishing blow.

To land the greatest single strike, it was still too far.

"....."

In the battle between Eris and Nina, whoever moved first would lose.

If Nina released a perfect 『Longsword of Light』, Eris would be able to exceed that speed.

But it was Gull Farion.

Even if he was a former Sword God, he could easily exceed Eris in speed.

He could've easily stepped out of Eris's range and adjusted his sword so that it just barely struck her first.

But he didn't.

Gull Farion held his stance.

He neither closed the gap nor changed his angle.

He simply stood motionless, watching Eris's movements.

As if only Eris existed in this world, only her movements.

Eventually, Eris had entered the killing range.

She had confidence that her strongest slash would end it in an instant.

"....."

A small doubt, a truly tiny worry, spawned within Eris.

Gull Farion had no openings.

Right now, she had the confidence that if she released a 『Longsword of Light』, even if he was a former Sword God, she had the confidence to kill him.

But her opponent was Gull Farion.

She remembered that day in the Holy Land of the Sword, that moment of humiliation.

That moment when she couldn't see it at all and was completely blown away by Gull Farion.

".....Ngh!"

The next instant, Gull Farion moved.

Dropping his waist only by a few millimetres, he gripped the handle and gathered his strength.

Eris moved as if she was tempted by it.

She ended up moving.

Towards the certain kill hit from her perfect stillness.

『Longsword of Light』

The world's strongest sword technique was fired.

But, at that moment, something caught Eris's eyes

She saw Gull Farion holding the sword's hilt with a backhanded grip.

It was not 『Light Reversal』.

It was without a doubt, a 『Longsword of Light』

A 『Longsword of Light』 unlike Eris had ever seen before.

"Water God Style Secret Technique,『Flow』."

All that remained in Eris's hands was a tingling feeling.

The 『Longsword of Light』 that was fired by Eris collided with Gull's swift sword as if being counterattacked, distributing the impact.

The tree behind Gull was cut down diagonally.

As the swords were on the verge of colliding, Gull pressured a little bit, which made Eris's posture to slant ever so slightly.

As her posture shook, Eris was thrown off balance.

Just that was enough.

Gull's pupils reflected Eris's defenseless neck.

The retaliating sword took flight.

Was it the reparation for using the unfamiliar secret techniques from another school? That the speed of the sword was in no way fast.

The speed of the sword did not reach that of the light's.

At best, it was the speed of sound.

『Longsword of absolute silence』

But at this distance, this separation.

To kill someone in one hit, the 『Longsword of Light』 was not necessary.

A simple attack to cut the head off was enough.

Like a guillotine, the sword fell.

A sharp sound rang out.

A kling and a klang could be heard together, the sound of metal colliding.

The sword had stopped. Biting into Eris's neck, it had stopped before reaching an artery.

Gull's eyes were spread wide open.

Unaware, there was a single man behind Eris.

A warrior possessing green hair, and a chalk-like spear.

The man who was standing behind Eris's back as if hiding himself, he had stopped Gull's sword like her guardian spirit.

If that technique had been a 『Longsword of Light』.

The very instant after Gull had that thought.

"GAAAAaaaaaaaa!"

While twisting her body, the sword which was drawn from Eris's right side of her waist, mowed down Gull Farion's torso.

".....Guh!"

In an instant, Gull Farion had jumped backwards.

He landed behind with a thump.

"....."

But while his feet landed, his upper body didn't go with him.

Gull Farion's upper body flew in mid-air.

It spun around three times and fell to the ground.

Gull Farion looked at his upper-half of the body slowly falling down.

And then admitted his defeat.

"Ah, damnit....."

While facing upwards, he muttered.

He hadn't seen.

He hadn't seen the Supard warrior standing behind Eris.

Nay, he did see.

He did see him, but it never entered his mind.

He thought that nothing would change even if an enemy of that level was here.

In reality, Ruijerd couldn't see the『Longsword of Light』.

Even if he was a veteran of the battlefield, he just couldn't perceive that excessively fast sword flash.

But Gull's second attack was different.

It wasn't the 『Longsword of Light』 or anything.

It was just a normal slash attack which was loaded with the minimum amount of power and speed necessary to cut a person's neck.

For an average soldier, Eris's neck would've been bisected before one even had the time to think about stopping it.

But the one who restrained it was Ruijerd.

A veteran of the battlefield who had lived for hundreds of years.

He should be able to see it.

He should be able to stop it.

Gull had underestimated Ruijerd Supardia.

And Eris too, who had entrusted her back to Ruijerd, believing in him.

If Eris was to hesitate.

If he had thought of the possibility, even for an instant, that Ruijerd would stop his sword.

Then Gull's jump would have made it in time.

"Why didn't you use Sword God Style?"

Eris questioned the fallen Gull with blood dripping from her neck.

Despite that instant presentation of offense and defense, her forehead was drenched with sweat.

"I thought I would lose if I did."

From the perspective of a swordsman.

If Eris were to use the same move by holding the sword above her head, and firing the fastest『Longsword of Light』, then Gull would have had the advantage.

But he didn't do it.

He couldn't.

The memory of his fight with Jino Blitz floated in Gull's mind.

It was the memory of that fight.

The sword he believed in and never doubted.

The technique he believed in and never doubted.

Which were very easily destroyed and he was defeated, that memory.

His left hand with bone fractures, and his unsightly figure at the back of the dojo, that moment.

The surrounding gazes.

Jino, who was looking down on him.

That weakened his resolve of using the 『Longsword of Light』 as the first strike.

Gull Farion is a prodigy of swords.

He had taken the name of Sword God, but if he were to fight in a Water God Style dojo, then he could only rise up to the Water Emperor rank.

Therefore, a technique from Water God Style was used.

He had absolute confidence that he would win. He was also deadly serious.

If he had taken the Sword God name, then he wouldn't have been able to use it.

He had to behave accordingly as a Sword God.

He had a strong sense of judgment that he must use one of the Sword God style techniques as the Sword God.

But this time was different.

There was nothing to stop him from using one of the Water God Style techniques to distribute the 『Longsword of Light』 in the most reliable way.

Therefore, he provoked Eris through words and took the initiative.

Something he would never do during his time as the Sword God.

Now that he recalled it, he would never have obeyed Gisu's order of cutting Rudeus's arms either.

His gears had probably been out of order from the beginning.

When he was defeated by Jino Blitz, they were thrown out of order.

Gull Farion didn't have as much self-confidence as before.

He didn't have as much strength as before.

The strongest swordsman had already ceased to exist.

"Just like you said, I had become an effeminate small fry."

Gull didn't give an excuse.

The person who believed in their technique won, and the one who didn't, lost.

That was just how it was.

And the words he said before the start of the battle were such effeminate words as well.

If he was vomiting out such words, then it should've been better to just stab him at once.

That was definitely small fry talk, and Eris might've looked at him as no more than a drunkard in a bar.

I must fight Orsted, I won't let it end at this rate, I want to be successful one last time – stimulated by those thoughts, he was tempted by Gisu's offer, and thought that he would be able to challenge Orsted.

Now that he thought that, he couldn't even laugh at himself in mockery.

"......I wonder what you're doing."

While looking down on him, Eris understood.

That he was pitiable.

And then, an inexpressible sorrow welled up inside her.

That this was the end of the person who had once shaken her, who she had somewhat feared.

Therefore she asked.

".....Do you have any last words?"

Gull looked up to Eris with only his eyes.

A woman with red hair.

When he saw her for the first time, he thought that she had some talent.

He thought that she was unrefined, but she could become even stronger than Ghyslaine.

He never once thought that she would be the one to kill him.

He always thought that she would stay below him.

He thought that he could win anytime he fought her.

"The one who wields the sword only for oneself is pure, the pure sword would become sharper than anyone else's.

People change. The sword wielded for the sake of others is strong, but it will be influenced by others.

Once you hesitate, that hesitation will haunt you thereafter. Your sword will become dull.

That is how I think so.

Marrying a woman, having a child. Raising disciples. What was it that I did as a Sword God?.....as I kept thinking about such absurd things, I had gotten so dull."

Within his fading consciousness, Gull could feel words leaking out from him.

It wasn't that there was a need to convey it.

They weren't his last words.

He had never thought about what he would say before he died.

He had never thought that he would die in such a place.

His thoughts simply leaked out from his lips.

"Eris.

You're the best one after all.

You didn't become weak.

You look like you're being possessed by freedom. You continue to remain free."

A clot of blood gushes forth from Gull's mouth.

Without wiping off that blood, Gull presented the sword he was holding in his hands to Eris.

"......Take it."

"I'll be accepting this."

An incoherent action.

But Eris quickly received it.

As expected for someone who was at death's door, Gull's hands were dreadfully cold.

But the hilt of the sword was hot.

"Haa....."

Looking at that, Gull breathed out.

His lungs no longer had the energy to even breath in.

"It's nice for a person who is free to be strong....."

His hand fell.

Sword God Gull Farion died.

Eris silently went down on her knees.

And extracted the sword's scabbard from Gull's back.

She then put the sword back into the scabbard, and placed it on her back.

"Phew-....."

While giving out a huge sigh, she brought out a scroll from her bosom.

An elementary healing magic scroll.

She was given one scroll to use in time of need, and so she held that one sheet.

While applying it to her neck, which was bleeding profusely, she sent mana into it.

The wound disappeared in an instant.

".....Eris."

"Let's go and support Rudeus."

"Yeah."

While saying only a few words, the two of them turned back.....

After walking for several steps, Eris stopped.

She turned.

To remove the sight of Gull Farion's empty, pale corpse, Eris tightly grasped her fist.

She chanted a spell.

In order to remember only this one technique taught to her by Rudeus, she practiced this magic many times over with Ghyslaine.

"—『Fire Ball』"

The fireball fired by Eris's hand burned Gull Farion's body.

Eris didn't watch until the end of Gull Farion's corpse, now wrapped in flames.

She turned around and with a quick pace, left that place behind.

The surrounding trees were caught by the fire and smoke started coming out as if signaling something.

Not being hindered by anyone, until that fire was put out by Nature, it continued.....

AUTHOR Q & A (7 OF 14)

Q. Come to think of it, what happened to the pamphlet that you applied for?

A. I wonder what happened.....

I can only say to wait for it, there is no way for it but to become small as time passes.

Q. If Orsted's mana supply will recover after some 30 years, then shouldn't it be fine for him to join the fight? The Laplace is fight is going to be 80 years from now, right?

A. If the president's mana supply could recover in 30 years, then he would join the fight on his own accord.

Q. Just how much old is Sándor=Alex Ryback-san?

A. Maybe somewhere around 300 years old.

Q. Why does it look cool when Eris says it but when I say it, it looks as if I'm just ridiculing the memory.....

A. It's probably because Eris doesn't have that much memory left.

Q. Are the members on the stone monuments added according to their standard equipment? Or are they judged by their plain strength? I would like to know that.

A. The members on the stone monument aren't very related to their strength.

Jino defeated Gull and was changed to Sword God, that's just how it is.

Q. There won't be any more changes in the rank of the World Powers during this fight, right?

A. No.

Q. Did she properly burn Gull's lower half of body?

A. The entire surroundings went up in flames, taking that with it.

Q. Gull Farion died too quickly, don't you think he became a little bit too weak?

A. Even during that fight, he would be stronger than Eris in a one-on-one situation.

Q. I was quite surprised that Jino became the Sword God!

A. He had more talent than anyone else, he kept training every day since a young age, and was able to lay his groundwork.

Q. Even though he was cut in two, Former Sword God-sama still had the time to talk, but if someone were to get cut in half in this world, then just how long would that person live I wonder...

A. Depends on how he was cut!

Q. Eris used.....magic.....?.....ehhh?

A. You get surprised each time she uses it.

Q. Eris and Ghyslaine. Couldn't they invoke a chantless healing magic by themselves with Rudeus's guidance?

A. They can't.

Q. According to power levels, Eris>Ruijerd right?

Regarding simple maggots.

A. Let's see.

If it became a fight like that, Eris would be stronger.

Q. Even though Gull fired a 『Longsword of Light』 it ended up being 『Flow』 of the Water God Style Secret Technique?

Did he combine them together?

A. Yes, he did combine them.

Q. Even though you should've written approximately the same number of characters, this story felt a bit less than usual.

A. It was around 7000 characters, so it was less than usual.

END AUTHOR Q & A (7 OF 14)

We were separated by quite a distance.

The rampage of Ogre God Malta.

A gigantic ogre who was going berserk like a storm, mowing down trees and digging up the earth.

As if being washed away by the aftermath, we were separated from the battlefield.

The ones who were facing him were Zanoba and Doga.

Since the Ogre God was a simple power type monster, their compatibility was perfect.

Since he's a Miko, there is no one who could win against Zanoba in physical power, and Doga is quite powerful against an approaching enemy.

But that much was obvious.

I didn't have the time to worry about the others.

The one who was standing before me was at the 7th rank of the Seven Great World Powers.

North God Kalman the Third.

Aleksander Ryback.

One of the two adversaries who pushed me down into the valley.

Not to mention, I didn't have the MK. I on me and MK. II was incomplete.

He wasn't an enemy I could go easy on or be careless around.

The early bird gets the worm.

So with quagmire, I————

"Wait!"

Or so I thought, but in the next instant North God Kalman III's shout stalled me.

The opponent was a North God style user however.

It wouldn't be strange if he ambushed us under the false pretence of asking to wait.

So I silently set up quagmire.

And fired stone cannons in quick succession.

"Let us talk a little bit before the battle!"

He easily repelled the stone cannons.

Or did they stray away from their path?

In any case, the stone cannons changed their trajectory mid-air and were repelled.

Even though the quagmire should have been set-up near his feet, he was not sinking.

Was this the power of a North God!?

No, that's wrong.

I've definitely heard about the ability of that 『Dragon King Sword』

"Your anger is reasonable.

After losing both of your arms and falling into the valley, you would surely want to fight as soon as possible.

But please wait for a moment.

After I've talked, I'll keep you company at once.

A small fry like you can surely make time for the conversation between two strong people, right?"

A small fry.....HAH!

You underestimatin' me, I'll make mincemeat out of ya!

But I couldn't bring myself to get angry.

I certainly couldn't deny the fact that I looked like a small fry in front of one of the Seven Great World Powers.

On the contrary, it was refreshing since I'd been getting nothing but praise these days.

"....."

As for me, I didn't want to wait.

It was possible that he was stalling for time, I wanted to win as soon as possible and then go around to back others up.

While thinking that, I took a step back and exchanged looks with Sándor.

He wasn't moving, just like Alek.

If he wasn't going to fight, I wouldn't be able to win alone.

"It can't be helped."

While shrugging, Sándor moved forward.

".....So, what is it? Stranger."

"Stranger? Me? The one who knows more about you than anyone else in this world?"

"I do think that this is our first meeting though?"

"The first time we met was when I came out of mother's belly. Father."

I wonder why Sándor was playing dumb.

"Father. Please stop this.

I can tell even when you've put that clumsy helmet on....."

If Hitogami peeked into my mind, then even Alek should know that.

"You are North God Kalman the Second, Alex Ryback!"

"Alek-kun. You should've said that after I removed my helmet."

While saying that, Sándor sighed and removed his helmet.

A black-haired middle-aged man.

Alek had black hair as well.

Now that I looked again, they both looked quite similar.

"After defeating me, you would say that I was a strong enemy, and to at least respect your victory, I would then remove my helmet. Only for you to see that I was your fath————"

"Enough of that! I thought you died a long time ago.....what have you been doing until now!?"

"......I took on a disciple, and have been teaching martial arts. Recently, I caught the eye of Her Majesty Ariel and have now become a Knight."

"Disciple? You, who had entrusted this sword to me and abandoned the North God style, have taken a disciple!?"

Anger floated onto Alek-kun's face.

I don't know what went on between them.

But it seemed Sándor's words had sparked something inside him.

"Alek-kun, it's not as if I abandoned the North God Style."

"Lies, even now you do not hold a sword!"

"Hmm."

Sándor lifted his rod to show it.

A rod made of metal

"You mean this? I think it has made me stronger."

"! Are you making fun of me!? That piece of metal, stronger than this Dragon King Sword!?"

"That's not true. Alek-kun, that sword is the strongest in the world. I, who have wielded it for 100 years, know that the best."

"Then why?"

"It's too strong. That sword."

In response to Aleksander's question, Sándor answered.

As if it was reasonable.

As if it was obvious.

As if he were admonishing him.

"With that sword in hand, no matter how large the beast, no matter how agile the monster, no matter how strong the soldier, they were no match. I won countless battles and became a hero with that sword."

"But a thought suddenly came to my mind.

I became a hero. But, was there some kind of difference before and after I obtained this sword?

As a result, I began wondering whether North God Kalman II, Alex Ryback, was actually strong or not."

"Once those thoughts entered my head, I could no longer fight like before.

Of course, I didn't intend to deny my comrades and my fights till now, but.....

I simply thought that my time as a hero was over.

That is why I entrusted you with the title of 『North God the Hero』, and left to spread the『Teachings of North God Kalman I』."

Alek obviously felt left out.

I didn't really get it, but the old man Alex(Sándor) got tired of fighting, gave up his characteristic sword, and attempted to spread his teachings.

And his child who was against it was mad.

Well, it was not as if I didn't understand.

If you were suddenly entrusted with something that big of a responsibility and your father goes missing, of course you'd be angry.

"And the result was Auber, that wacky faction?"

"That was also one of the paths to demonstrate the teachings of North God Kalman I."

"I have not acknowledged that wacky faction. That is not the North God style."

Alexander shook his head without trying to hide his bad mood.

Auber huh.....

He certainly wasn't a swordsman.

More like a ninja.

"Was it even swordsmanship?"

"North God Kalman the First used a sword, but there is no need to stick to the sword."

"Is that why you're using that piece of metal?"

"Yes, with this, I can feel myself getting stronger. And when you can feel your own growth, it is possible for humans to get even stronger."

"......I don't get it"

Alek-kun looked dissatisfied.

Perhaps he's still young.

He couldn't say no to the path he had chosen.

"Alek-kun. I'll be asking the same thing, why are you here?"

"I came here to defeat Orsted. After defeating the Dragon God, I will become the 2nd rank."

"Oh, you have so much motivation. As your father, I'm proud."

While smiling, Sándor praised Alek.

Sándor-san?

You're not wrong for being proud, but you are on our side, right?

You won't just say – Alright, I'll help you out – and then become our enemy, right?

"I've become your enemy this time around, but you have permission to totally defeat me and then go challenge Orsted."

"That's obvious. Even if you have become my enemy, as North God Kalman III, I will definitely show you that I can attain grand fame as well."

What's up with this grand fame?

Well, that's desirable, but worrying about your family's or your father's greatness is also possible.

I can't support them from my position though.

"Not only just that. I'm going to annihilate the Supard race!"

"Hn? The Supard race are not demons, you know. You've seen that once yourself, haven't you?"

Alek did nothing but nod to Sándor's puzzlement.

"I don't care about something like that. The Supards are famous as demons. If I were to destroy them, then my name would be passed down as a hero for eternity."

"That isn't something a hero would do."

"Maybe. But I can't help but choose that path. If I don't, I can't surpass your exploits. I can't surpass North God Kalman II's name."

"If you surpass my name then you'll become a hero?"

"That's right!"

With his mouth partly agape, Sándor faced towards me.

And then bowed his head.

"Please forgive me, Rudeus-dono. I thought I could persuade him, but looks like this foolish son of mine is an even greater fool than I had expected."

".....It certainly seems that way."

It seemed Alek was being manipulated by the word called hero.

He didn't want to become a hero by doing heroic things, but was making a fuss about it to become famous.

It was a situation where anyone would want to say – that's not how it works.

I can't say it properly, but.....that's not how it works.

"Let's stop him."

"Roger."

Sándor put his helmet on and prepared his rod.

I widened my arms as if to support him from behind.

Alek came at us while glaring with a sullen look.

Denying his way of doing things, being called a fool by a stunned expression, his swirling anger had no way to go down.

".....Do you think you can defeat me, who possesses the Dragon King Sword, with that piece of metal and carrying that novice's burden?"

"Yeah, of course. I intend to punish you thoroughly."

Sándor declared full of confidence.

Hearing the word punishment, Alek's cord of patience was finally cut.

"Don't underestimate me!"

The fight between North God II and North God III began.

"TAAAAaaaaaaa!"

Alek took the initiative to shout first.

Easily wielding the large sword in his hands, he slashed at Sándor's shoulder.

"OOOHHHH!"

Sándor warded off that overwhelming force with his rod.

Alek lost his posture, making him defensele———NAY.

He faced his body forward with a fearsome sense of balance and struck Sándor once again.

Sándor moved as if he was anticipating for that.

While rotating himself, he parried Alek's gale-like attack a second time.

And while parrying it, using the principle of leverage, he swept Alek's leg.

Alek's posture came crumbling down all a————NAY.

Alek's body floated as if leaping over Sándor, then came back down to the ground with a speed that was normally impossible.

Moving in a nonsensical way.

But I knew that.

This was the power of Kajakuto 『The Cursed Dragon King Sword』

.....Gravity manipulation.

"OORYAAAaaaaaaa!"

But Sándor was coping with it.

As he turned his back, the blows from the Dragon King sword were parried and parried and parried.

He gradually changed his direction, and before long he was facing Alek.

Alek's blows weren't something that could be parried just like that.

The ground was being gouged every time they clashed, the shockwave from the attacks were chopping up neighboring trees which fell down.

The vacuum waves that sprung forth cut my cheeks even though I was separated from them.

But those blows didn't reach Sándor.

Although he's retired, he is still a North God.

He kept parrying Alek's attacks perfectly .

Alek could move freely in all respects due to his gravity manipulating sword. He was acrobatic and it was difficult to predict his movements.

Furthermore, it wasn't like Sándor wasn't doing anything.

At first glance it looked like he wasn't moving, but he did move his body little by little so as to gain an advantageous position.

This was a fight between two fellow North God style users.

The speed wasn't that fast.

It was probably because of my training with Eris and Orsted that I was able to see their movements.

I could see them, but the sheer number of movements was too high; I couldn't predict them, thus making it difficult to back him up.

"WWWHHAAaaaaaa!"

"TOOOOAAaaaaaa!"

Still, these guys were noisy.

Like I had the time to think about such thoughts!

I fixed my breathing and looked at them carefully.

If they were struggling for supremacy, then depending on my interruption, the progress of the battle could incline.

It was difficult to predict their movements even if I saw them with my foresight eye.

But, aside from Alek's, I could see Sándor's movements.

It was easier to predict him compared to Alek at least.

There was a pattern.

He went right and then left.

With this flow, if the opponent went right behind his back then.....

"There!"

I fired a stone cannon.

The stone cannon made a high-pitched noise and flew straight, impacting on Alek.

No, neither did it went straight nor was it a direct hit.

It curved.

While chiseling through Alek's armor, it vanished into the forest.

But Alek's posture collapsed.

"Haaa!"

Without passing up that opportunity, Sándor struck Alek in his solar plexus.

"Ugh.....!"

However, Alek leaped into the sky while groaning.

He came directly at me.

Fast!

"Don't interrupt, small fry!"

< An axe kick. A killing attack from diagonally above. >

While watching it with my foresight eye, I tried warding it off with my remaining gauntlet.

"Ough....."

The moment I took the attack, my feet were caught by tremendous gravity.

The gauntlet broke and I fell down onto my knees.

My hand flew as it was cut.....

Or so I thought, but the black arm made a heavy screeching noise while warding it off.

The Atofe-hand was strong.

"Those arms.....! Are those grandmother's!?"

『Electric』!

I fired electric from my other hand which had been stockpiling mana.

The purple lightning licked Alek's body.

I continued and built up mana in my left hand to fire a stone cannon in his face at point-blank.

"TOORYAaaaaaaaa!"

But Alek didn't stop.

Evading my stone cannon by bending himself backwards, he attacked my feet by doing a spin on one leg.

I jumped right away to avoid it.

But Alek had already reorganized his posture by that time.

A single blow to bisect my neck approached me.

"HAAaaaa!"

Just as it was about to, Sándor plunged his rod into Alek from his side.

While making a tailspin, Alek leaped with great strength towards my right.....but he softly landed with a trajectory that defied gravity.

"........Phew."

At first glance, no damage could be seen on him.

Looks like 『Electric』 didn't have much effect on him too.

Was it the power of the sword?

Or was it the performance of the armor?

Or was his endurance just for pretend?

Was it because of the difference in training? Or was it because of the difference in our body structure?

It wouldn't be strange if it were any of those.

"I've gone easy a little bit too much, I guess. Maybe I'll try becoming a bit more serious....."

Alek talked as if he was a losing player in a beat-em-up game, but the situation didn't look bad.

At this rate, we might win.

Sándor fights as the vanguard and I back him up.

If we kept hitting him one at a time, we'll definitely be able to bring him down.

North God Kalman III.

He's a formidable enemy, but Sándor is strong as well.

If there's a struggle for supremacy, then with my contribution we can win.

I'm not a burden!

"A little shoddy, huh?"

Or so I thought, but Sándor's words were unreliable.

No way!

Are we not superior?

Sándor had no damage.

My previous actions broke the Zariff prosthetic hand, but the Atofe-hand was equally or even more efficient.

We can still make it.

"He's preserving his strength right now so that he can fight Orsted-sama later. He's probably raising his power gradually."

Ah, damn.

So he was holding back.

It seems he's treating me as a small fry a bit too much.

"How much more time will Roxy-dono take?"

"I don' t know."

She'll let us know when the preparations are ready. It's already been half-a-day, so I guess it'll be done sometime soon.

As long as Zanoba and Eris don't let the enemy through and reach Roxy and the others.

"It seems he has become quite strong since the time I knew him. I might've boasted a bit too much."

Sándor said with not much confidence.

I want you to try your best without saying such words.

Since I'll try my best to support you.

"Anyway, let's try to earn some time."

"Ro-roger."

After our short exchange of words, Sándor charged ahead.

Alek too ran forward in concord.

"UUOOO!"

"DORYAAA!"

And once again, the exchange of blows started.

But Sándor was right.

You couldn't see the change at a glance.

But Sándor's parries started decreasing.

Each time he received a hit, his posture broke down a bit.

Alek's level of attacking was getting crazy.

His appearance wasn't changing, but probably his weight.

If Sándor was in an disadvantageous position, then I couldn't get a direct hit from the stone cannon.

Would it be warded off or repelled or avoided?

He could do any one of them.

"....."

I didn't fire stone cannon.

Instead I'll use magic to control the earth.

First, I'll bring a stop to his irregular aerial movement through which he's hopping around so much.

In that case, Sándor will have a little more comfort and the range of tactics he can use will increase as well.

As a result, my stone cannon should hit him as well.

For that reason.

『Earth Lancer』!"

I produced 4 earth pillars as if to surround the both of them.

And then to top it all off...

『Earth Web』!"

I made a web of earth above Sándor, some 50 centimeters above.

If the top is obstructed, then his irregular aerial movement will.....

"Irritating!"

It was torn down in an instant.

So it was no good.

"What happened Father? This is the best you can do?"

Oh no.

Sándor was steadily being driven into a corner.

It was not a difference in technique. It was unmistakably the difference between their weapons.

The more it got hit by the Dragon King Sword, the more crooked Sándor's rod became.

If I backed him using stone cannon in a panic, it will just bend away.

Furthermore, he might've been putting me off because he started ignoring the stone cannons.

Not good, at this rate we won't even be able to stall for time.

The situation will become gradually worse and we'll be defeated.

"GAAaaaaa!"

It was at that time.

Someone's figure plunged into Alek's flank like a comet.

That woman, having red hair and with the sword in her hands, struck Alek with all her might.

While receiving that blow and the one from Sándor as well, he was blown off backwards.

The red swordswoman gave pursuit.

After landing as if ignoring gravity, Alek swung his large sword on the spot.

The red swordswoman couldn't cope with that.

"HAH.....!"

But behind her. A green-haired soldier following behind her back staved off that attack.

"GAAAaaaaa!"

The Mad Dog howled.

Brandishing the sword.

A blow was aimed at the nape of the neck, but its trajectory was once again changed by something invisible.

Though the sword was driven into the top of the shoulders, the sturdy armor was able to unexpectedly stop that attack with only but a scratch left.

The Mad Dog didn't chase him too far.

No sooner than she saw that the attack was a failure, she quickly leaped back.

Immediately following that, the large sword was brought down upon the place she moved out of, cutting a bunch of her hair.

She distanced herself from him.

The red-haired and green-haired, with their backs turned against me, stood there.

"Rudeus, I've kept you waiting!"

Eris said as she glanced over here.

Ruijerd didn't turn over, but he may have already confirmed my safety via his third eye.

They had come over to save us.

If I were a girl, I would have immediately fallen in love with them.

Embrace me! Make a mess out of me!

"This can't be....."

When I became like a young girl, Alek had an astonished face.

Nay, it would be better to say that he had been shocked.

"Impossible, Gull Farion was defeated?"

So what happened? When he saw Ruijerd, he nodded.

Seriously?

Was Sword God defeated with the two of them working together?

"Though he resigned his seat as the Sword God, he couldn't have been defeated so easily.....it seems I might have overestimated that person's circumstances."

While proudly saying those words, Alek wore a sorrowful face.

If I recall when they pushed me off the bridge, he looked on good terms with Gull.

"It was only for a short time, but.....he was a nice person nevertheless....."

Alek's presence changed.

It was different from before.

The feeling that he was going easy on us vanished.

"Even though I thought that I would quickly deal with the two of them and then proceed to fight Orsted....."

Alek prepared himself as he lowered his body.

Something was coming.

Sensing an overwhelming presence, Eris and Ruijerd lowered their bodies in vigilance.

But if he was going to go all-out now of all times, then it was already too late.

In addition to Sándor and me, there were Eris and Ruijerd.

It was 4 vs. 1.

Even if he's one of the World Powers holding the strongest sword.....

"Right hand sword."

The sword in Alek's right hand raised, its tip facing the sky.

"Left hand sword."

Alek held the sword's handle with his left hand.

Using both hands.

The large sword that he had been swinging with one hand, he was now holding it with two.

I wonder if that was his real fighting style.

"Not good! Run!"

Sándor gave out a sharp shout and jumped on his right.

But it was too late.

"Brought about by both hands, a life is lost, leaving only death with but one intent."

Alek held the Dragon King Sword above his head.

"My name is Aleksander Ryback of the North God Style."

Then I realized my body was afloat.

It wasn't just me.

Eris, Ruijerd, and Sándor who jumped to the side as well.

Everyone's bodies were floating in air.

Of course, the falling leaves, the branches of the trees, everything was rising from the surface.

The Dragon King Sword's Gravity Manipulation.

Once you're up, forget about coming down. You can't even move properly.

Even if you kicked and struggled with your limbs, you couldn't move from the spot even a little bit.

A completely defenseless position.

Alek could be seen putting all of his power into it.

"Now is the time for me to avenge my sworn friend!"

Crap.

As I thought that my body moved on its own.

I loaded mana in both my hands and created a shockwave.

Eris, Ruijerd, and Sándor were blown far into the distance.

I immediately hauled in the remains of Zarif's prosthetic hand that were floating near me and pointed the Magic Absorbing Stone that was fixed at its tip towards Alek.

Something that was between me and the sword disappeared and I landed on the ground.

Throwing the Magic Absorbing Stone into the wind, I drove all of my mana into both my hands.

As I faced Alek, who was on the verge of swinging his large sword downwards————

『Secret Technique: Gravity Rupture』 !

A flash and an explosion.

————————My consciousness paused.

When I woke up, I was on top of a tree.

I was blown off.

I realized that fact because my legs had bone fractures.

The leg parts were smashed to pieces, and my leg had twisted in a weird way.

It wasn't just the legs.

Most of my body-parts had broken, and I was being assailed with intermittent pain around my chest.

Probably a rib or two had broken.

"*cough*.....ghah, ghah."

I was coughing violently and pain ran through my chest, but it wasn't severe enough to hinder my speech.

I chanted healing magic right away and cured my wounds.

"Just how far was I blown.....uuuohh!?"

When I raised my body, the branch that was holding me broke.

While cracking the branches, I fell down from a fair distance.

But I had still not fallen to the ground.

It seems I was blown off to quite a high place.

As I was thinking that, I could see the ground.

There was a crater.

A crater with a diameter possibly even of 20 meters.

Something like that had appeared in front of the valley.

There wasn't anything like that before.

It was created just moments ago.

Possibly with the attack just now.

"Seriously?"

I suddenly turned my neck around.

I could see something glittering at the Supard village.

It was a light I recognized.

"That is.....uuuoohhh!?"

The branch I was sitting on broke again.

This time I fell straight towards the ground while hitting many branches on the way.

"Owww....."

I had just used healing magic, but was injured once again.

I quickly chanted healing magic and cured my wounds once again.

At any rate, I must grasp the situation.

What happened to Eris, Ruijerd, and Sándor?

And Alek?

"!"

While thinking that, I stood up and could see a person right before me.

Getting startled, I quickly took a stance with my shaking body.

But the one before me wasn't an enemy.

"Sándor-san!"

".....Could you heal me as well?"

He was covered with injuries.

The armor was partially destroyed, the helmet was broken, and blood was coming out of his head.

His left hand was loosely hanging down.

"Yes, of course."

I touched his body with my hands and healed his wounds with healing magic.

"Thank you."

"Where are Eris and Ruijerd?"

I asked about those two immediately after I was thanked.

Even Sándor was wounded like this.

Then Eris and Ruijerd were in bad shape as well.

"They have minor injuries. It's good that we were able to gain some distance thanks to you, Rudeus-dono. They might not even need healing magic. Although they're still unconscious."

I felt relieved by that report.

"And, where's North God Kalman III?"

"It looks like he went ahead of us after seeing that we were defeated."

"He didn't deliver the final blow?"

"That technique just now was the strongest killing technique of the North God Style. He may have thought that there wouldn't be any need."

It was fine when I fell down the valley, but it looks like he really has a screw loose up there.

But we were saved thanks to that.

But we let him through.

We let him through to Orsted's place.

Orsted will probably win.

Even he should've fought Aleksander with the Dragon King Sword in one of his loops.

He shouldn't have fought him seriously if there was no need in the route, but I am sure he could defeat him just as easily as he defeated Water God Reida.

But that attack.

There were other people in the Supard village as well.

The Supards that just recovered from the plague, Julie, Norn.....

If in order to protect them he took that sword technique upon himself to ward it off, then.....

He would probably end up using a lot of mana.

A fight to protect is much harder than a fight to attack.

If Orsted couldn't protect everyone, then it would mean the death of all of them.

"Sándor-san, can you still fight?"

"Do you intend to go?"

"It's not over yet. I just saw a light coming out of the village. It's the summoning light. If Roxy's preparations are finished, then we're just getting started."

When I said that.

A green-haired male came running from within the forest.

Two of them. Both of them were Supard warriors.

It wasn't Ruijerd.

They quickly approached us after looking at our figures.

"A message from Roxy. The summoning was a success."

"Alright."

I nodded.

"Well then, I'll be going first, let me have the privilege of stalling him."

"Please be careful not to overexert yourself."

"I understand."

After a short exchange of words, Sándor began running.

"I'll let you handle the nursing of Eris and Ruijerd. When they wake up, message them for support."

"Alright!"

"Please guide me."

"Yes!"

I entrusted Eris and Ruijerd to the nodding Supard warrior and took the other warrior with me and headed towards Roxy's place.

Jumping over the roots of trees, crossing the thicket, I headed straight ahead.

I wasn't that fast because of the broken Magic Armor.

I mean it had already lost all its function and was now heavy.

I stripped out of Magic Armor 『MK. II』 on the way.

And ran with my casual clothing.

North God Kalman III was stronger than we had expected.

But we must not pull back now.

This was a critical moment.

"Rudeus.....!"

I reached my destination.

Roxy wasn't there.

The ones who were left were only Elinalize and the remaining Supard warriors.

Then, it's as planned.

"You look awful....."

Although I had cured myself with healing magic, looking at my tattered clothes and armor, Elinalize stared in amazement.

But she quickly stiffened her face.

"The preparations are complete."

Behind her.

There was an impromptu magic formation written.

But it had already lost its light.

It was something that was identical to the drawing in the scroll that I had lost at the bottom of the valley.

The name of the manufacturer of that scroll was Roxy Greyrat.

That magic formation had already collapsed.

It collapsed due to the weight of the huge armor that stood on top of it.

For the worst case scenario, this was created as a duplicate if the Magic Armor was destroyed during the war.

Not having enough space in the armory of the office, this one machine was unwillingly put in the workshop.

The only trump card which escaped the destruction of the office.

"It's the Magic Armor 『MK. I』"

Well then, it's time for Round 2.

AUTHOR Q & A (8 OF 14)

Q. Teacher, are you a little bit in confusion?

A. It was a little misspelling this time or how should I say this.

I wrote 『Second Generation』 and 『Third Generation』 as the title for the fight between Alex and Aleksander but screwed up, then I fixed the title to 『Alek』 and 『Earl』 but then again screwed up, I fixed 『Earl』 to 『Sándor』 .....

Because of what I did it became awful.

I think it's quite hard to read now. I'm terribly sorry.

Q. What kind of appearance does the Magic Armor is the most similar to if compared to any mecha anime?

I imagine it as Koubu from Sakura Wars.

A. Let's see.....it can be Koubu.

It can be Scopedog from VOTOMS.

It can be Destroid from Macross.

I imagine it as such from boorish series like that but it would be fine to imagine however you feel like it.

Q. So there were two pieces of Magic Armor MK. I, one of which was in the office and one machine at Zanoba's workshop? I do remember that there was a description of magic formation of the office set-up in the workshop. I wonder if the scrapped-up parts were used as the second installment of MK. I.

A. That's right.

Something like this might happen, so they created a second installment of MK. I.

Q. Was 2nd Gen's rank higher than Death God before he retired the Dragon King Sword?

A. No, it was the same as now.

The ranking has nothing to do with the power levels, which constantly changes.

Q. I wonder if the Magic Armor that was in the office was stolen.

A. It's heavy to begin with, and since no one can move it the probability is low.

Q. 2nd Gen or 3rd Gen, who is stronger?

A. At the very least, the 2nd seemed to be at the top during the time he handed over the Dragon King Sword.

And during those days, the child who was not swallowed up by that sword seemed strong.

Q. Sword God's battle was quite terrific but Jino is well.....

Jino suddenly came into the spotlight without any development, when he fought a stronger opponent, he defeated a person far stronger than him. That kind of development didn't correspond well. That's the only complaint I have.

A. Perhaps Gull Farion too held a similar feeling.

Q. Atofe's parts compensated for the loss of hands but if it got attached with Former Sword God after he failed to cut the neck, would it become Atofe-body?

A. Well, if there was the box around there by chance at that time.

Q. Did Former Sword God's sword break? The armor had not aged but it was thanks to Atofe-hand, Atofe-hand is black and really hard.

A. When eating something soft the hard thing inside it can nick your teeth, sort of like that!

Q. Saying that there won't be anymore changes in the World rankings would be a spoiler so I wished that you hadn't said that.

A. Gull Farion's position was taken by Jino Blitz so Eris defeating Gull won't have any effect, right? Thus is my answer to your question.

It shouldn't be a spoiler.

Q. Alex → Alexander → Alexandor → Sandor → Sándor, so that's how it is!

A. Nope, Sándor is the hungarian name for Alexandros, that's all.

Q. Please tell me about the history of Rudeus's right and left hand.

A. Right Hand : Rudeus's right hand is born. It held talent when he was little, it grew as the most reliable hand of Rudeus.

Left Hand : Rudeus's left hand is born. It couldn't keep up with the right hand, but the right hand can't always show it's talent without it. It grew as an excellent support.

Q. Since Earl is the son of the immortal demon lord so he has regeneration, why would he need healing magic?

But it could also be that his regeneration couldn't keep up with his wounds.

A. There are times when Curaga is needed rather than Regen.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Final Fantasy IX role-playing video game. }

Q. "Ah, this is father's nickname. Wow, it's been what, 100 years or so. I always wanted to talk like this with you when I was a kid....."

For a kid who could've said something like this to be such a foolish kid.....

A. This scene is probably far into the future.

Q. What are the subjugation group 100 strong doing right now?

A. After watching lighting falling down on them and the bridge falling down as well, they've lost all will to fight and have completely stopped moving.

Q. Wasn't the master of that wacky faction Aleksander?

In Ch 174, it's written that Wii Taa's master is North God Kalman III.

A. Wii Taa is Kalman III's disciple.

His growth was sluggish, but when he became independent he came to know about Auber's wacky faction, and then rose to North King.

Still, he wasn't Auber's disciple. There are many in the wacky faction who follow Alek's way of doing things.

END AUTHOR Q & A (8 OF 14)

After activating the MK. I, I set out after the North God.

Inside the forest, avoiding trees, I simply headed towards the North God.

While running, I estimated the amount of mana left in my body.

I consumed some fraction of it during my battle with the North God, but something of that level didn't even come close to 10% of it.

I still had a surplus of mana.

But a little while ago, while fighting the North God, the continuous rumbling in the background had stopped.

Zanoba and Doga.

No matter how good their compatibility was, it seems that a God class enemy was impossible.

I hope that they're alright.

Although, if we assume that those two got taken out, then...

The North God and the Ogre God.

I would have to fight those two.

I wonder if I have enough mana.

I can't run out halfway like I did in the battle with Orsted.

No, the current moment was critical.

Let's stop thinking about the past.

I have to address the things in front of me one at a time.

For now, the first goal.

North God Kalman the Third.

By the time I arrived at the scene, Sándor had already been defeated.

He was sitting at the base of a tree with his eyes downtrodden.

He didn't have a weapon on him.

His rod was lying broken near him.

The one who was looking down on him was Alek.

North God Kalman the Third had overpowered the previous generation.

"Father, how long are you going to continue this little game?

You must understand, right?

That you can't win against me if you don't have at least one of the Cursed Swords."

Sándor did not answer.

He may have already passed out.

I didn't want to imagine that he's dead.

"Or was this also part of your plan?

Playing dead. Such novelties are everyone's specialty in that wacky faction, aren't they?

No matter what happens, excel yourself and achieve the goal.

I also think that that approach is wonderful.

Although honestly, I think Auber's group was overdoing it, but.....

Why did my father, who taught them, choose to deny me.....?"

Sándor did not answer.

He just continued to remain in silence.

"Well then, it's about time I get going."

Alek said that and turned around.

To face me.

".....Huh?"

He looked like he had run into a bear.

An unexpected encounter.

He never thought that he would meet this person here.

That kind of face.

That Magic Armor should no longer be usable.

"My son. I'll answer your question."

And so for but a few seconds.

In the time Alek stood there shocked, Sándor stood up.

"Playtime is over.

As you said, without a Cursed Sword, I cannot win.

That's why I borrowed one from Eris.

But that was just a last resort. With just a Cursed Sword, the chances of victory would still be slim.

So I waited. I persevered and persevered, played dead and waited.

For certain victory."

As he said that, Sándor took out a single sword from his back.

That was the second sword owned by Eris.

The Cursed Sword 『Prominence』.

"Why did I deny you?

That is because you, who aims to be a hero, are acting far from what a hero actually does.

A hero carries out his duties heroically, using whatever he can to grasp victory.

Not kicking around the weak to gain fame; challenging an enemy far stronger than oneself without any chance of victory, and then winning to seize the title of an hero.

Not like me, but in the same fashion as North God Kalman the First."

Sándor unsheathed his sword with his aloof atmosphere and took his stance.

The Cursed Sword 『Prominence』was a short sword.

But in Sándor's hand, it seemed like a weapon fitting for a North God.

His beloved Alek glanced towards Sándor over his shoulder .

".....I get it.

Reinforcements.....

Gisu did say to not let Rudeus get into the Magic Armor.

But that is simply fighting the enemy in their best form.

With just the two of you, do you think that you can win against me holding this Dragon King Sword?"

"Who said there are just two of us?"

Sándor's words.

And as if in response to him, the bushes moved.

Two people came out from there.

A red haired woman and a man with green hair.

Eris and Ruijerd.

While I went to get the Magic Armor, they had woken up.

They both still had injuries, but the two of them were far tougher than me.

"....."

Eris took a glance at me.

That gaze held great meaning.

Those eyes said that she would entrust her back to me.

Ruijerd was also giving me a similar gaze.

Although it was his first time seeing the Magic Armor, through his third eye, he could see that it was me.

And thus, as if it was natural, he was coming towards me.

And so, I will be supporting these three.

As long as the Magic Armor 『MK. I』 holds out.

It may seem like a pathetic position.

But that's how it is.

We've been doing things like this since long ago.

Eris in the centre, Ruijerd in charge of control, and me as backup.

There wasn't any need for words.

There's an extra person mixed in, but this was the best formation.

"Now then, it's time for the second round."

On Sándor's command, the second round between North Gods began.

Coming right from the front was Eris.

She was, as usual, going for the fastest victory in the shortest distance. She was brandishing her drawn sword, and ran straight towards Alek.

Alek handled it well.

A slash too fast for my eyes to see.

It was handled safely and countered.

Eris's attack seemed to continue on without any break, but there was certainly a small pause that my eyes couldn't see.

But the counter was completely prevented.

It was Ruijerd.

Each time he swung his spear, Alek's counter failed.

Ruijerd was moving around in Eris's shadow.

No matter how many mistakes Eris made, as long as Ruijerd was there, those mistakes couldn't be taken advantage of.

But at times, Alek ignored gravity.

Just when you thought that his stance was broken, he would make some weird movement, and carry out continuous attacks or swap to defense.

From his big evasions, just when you thought that he was performing an acrobatic dodge, he would suddenly dive in for an attack.

Against those movements, not even Ruijerd could cope.

These movements, that Ruijerd couldn't deal with, were prevented by Sándor.

North God Kalman the Second, the man who knew more about manipulating gravity than anyone else, prevented them.

Aiming at where he was going to land or striking at him in the air.

Although Alek avoided direct hits, it wasn't going how he wanted it to.

It all ultimately resulted in his vain exhaustion of stamina and increase in injuries.

On the other hand, whenever he retreated back, he fell prey to my magic.

The stone cannons that even Orsted couldn't avoid were bent away by the Dragon King Sword.

But on the verge of hitting him, I activated the Magic Absorption Stone and a few shots managed to graze him.

It wasn't a direct hit, but the rain of bullets kept him from moving around and wouldn't allow him to gain distance from Eris.

Although the『Electric』that I shot with what I thought was the perfect timing was easily avoided, Alek wasn't getting any time to catch his breath.

And so, there was no room for him to use that 『Killer Move』 from before.

"Ghu.....!"

Alek was both stronger and faster than anyone here.

But because he was rushing, because he was impatient, he was getting sloppy.

To the point that sloppiness itself was exuding from Alek's entire movement.

With absolute stability, it had become a battle with us having the advantage.

The damage given was also compounding.

There was no unnecessary movement.

It's not as if we're certain that we'll be able to defeat him.

But if this situation keep getting gradually worse like this, he will eventually be destroyed.

Stamina and magic.

If this keeps up for a bit longer, he's bound to run out.

Since this battle started, who has been expending themselves the most?

From the start of the fight, who has been the most wasteful?

That was someone who, right after the battle started, revealed their ultimate technique.

".....Tch!"

Eris's face got scratched.

Just a scratch.

But as time passed, more wounds added up.

There was one flaw.

Sándor.

North God Kalman the Second.

The man formerly known as one of the Seven Great World Powers, had a flaw.

But that couldn't be helped.

While fighting the Third, after taking his ultimate technique, he had been protecting Eris and Ruijerd.

And so, until we came, he continued to stall North God Kalman the Second until he had become worn-out.

Even an outsider could see that his movements were losing their brilliance.

But he was still moving.

He was handling his job.

Or it might be that he could somehow handle the job due to Alek's sloppiness.

But he was still human; he had his limits.

Of course, Eris too, and I, who was watching the opponent's movements with the foresight eye as well.

Even the veteran hero Ruijerd, was breathing slightly harder.

It was a tough battle.

Constantly maintaining a paper-thin line between offence and defense.

Sándor was probably about to hit his limit.

"....."

But he still had some energy left.

Unlike before, I was wearing the Magic Armor『MK I』.

With its high line of sight, it was easy to oversee the battle.

The range of my support had increased.

Sándor was being overwhelmed.

Then, in order to support Sándor and those movements, it should be fine to change tactics for a bit.

The attack pattern will be Rock Spear from below and Vacuum Wave from above.

And then, increasing the usage frequency of the Magic Absorption Stone.

Alek ignoring gravity and freely moving in three dimensions was simply one of the Dragon King Sword's abilities after all.

And I've already confirmed the Magic Absorption Stone's effectiveness against the Dragon King Sword.

By increasing its usage frequency, the extent of my support will decrease, but Alek's movements will also be limited.

As a result, Sándor's burden would decrease by 30%.

But that would still only be 30%.

It wasn't enough for him to restore his stamina and continue the match.

We had the advantage.

But victory was far off.

It was something that we couldn't help but think about.

.....Rather, could I keep the Magic Absorption Stone deployed forever?

While constantly deploying the Magic Absorption Stone, my long distance magic would be wasted, but if it was the ability of Magic Armor MK. I, then close-combat was possible.

If I seal those acrobatic movements, it will become a great advantageous situation.....or would it?

No, it wouldn't.

Eris, Ruijerd, and Sándor.

Those three were standing at point blank range.

There was no room for the massive Magic Armor in there. No matter how much power and speed it has, without the technique to go with it, it will only hold them back.

But how about just stalling for time?

For Sándor to step back and recover his stamina.

Just a few minutes.

Wouldn't just that make a huge difference?

Wait.....Alek is a North God.

Even without his gravity manipulation, he must have fighting techniques.

It's impossible that he doesn't have any.

Gravity manipulation was not his true power.

Even if that had been sealed and he had fallen a rank, my close combat abilities were 2 or 3 ranks below Sándor's.

Even with the foresight eye, I still couldn't read Alek's movements.

And because of that, I may put a huge burden on Eris and Ruijerd.

They were already getting scratches here and there.

With just another finger, or a hair's breadth of difference, an artery could be cut.

Eris was going all out.

Right from the very beginning, without wasting a breath, she rushed right in.

But she was already falling apart. It was because Alek was good.

She might still be exhausted from her fight with the Sword God, or maybe she's still injured from Alek's killer technique.

Even so, as far as I can tell, Eris was giving her best performance.

But I didn't know how long this was going to continue.

Ruijerd was still recovering from his illness.

He should still have been confined to his bed for another couple of days.

He might be moving around fine right now, but it was possible that he would suddenly fall to the ground with a thump.

What to do?

If it goes on as it is now, we won't lose, but we won't win.

My magic power was still fine, but Sándor will eventually hit his limit.

What to do?

What should I do?

Fully deploying the Magic Absorption Stone, preparing for the risk, and head for the front?

Or should I use some other kind of magic to break the deadlock?

Should we start afresh?

It's hard.

"Gah!"

As I was thinking that, Alek's aim changed from Eris to Sándor.

By decreasing his interaction with Eris, Alek's outer body began to be covered in wounds from slashing attacks.

But of course, we weren't able to hit him with a decisive blow.

I could see his aim.

Alek had also realized it.

That if Sándor was taken out, then the balance would break.

A chill ran down my spine.

Sándor's death.

Following that, Eris's death.

And then Ruijerd dies, making it one on one, and then I would be killed.

We'll lose.

(Is there no way to decide the battle quickly?)

Inside me, an unthinkable worry was born. Impatience was born.

My movements dulled, and the unease that I may have made the wrong decision emerged.

A small mistake emerged.

Even if I made a small mistake, Ruijerd would do something about it.

That said, it was most certainly a burden.

At this rate, it would be no good.

Something.

Something must happen.

Something decisive must happen.

As I thought that.

"........!"

A decisive moment came.

It appeared from deep within the forest.

The first thing to come flying was a cluster of dark grey steel.

It came flying out, rolling like a ball, hit a tree, and then stopped.

The lump of steel quickly got up.

But the helmet was missing, the massive armor was covered in dents, blood was flowing from his head, and his nose was bleeding profusely. He had a hazy expression.

Without letting go of his weapon, doing his best to hide his rustic expression, he glared at the opponent that sent him flying.

It was Doga.

The next one to come flying was a lanky person.

His armour was already gone and his top half was bare.

With his thin beat up body, he slammed into Doga who came flying moments ago.

It was Zanoba.

And then the decisive moment.

That was something with red skin and long fangs.

His stature easily crossed over 2 metres, he was covered with sinewy meat, and he fell down from above like a monkey.

There was no *THUNK* nor *TMP* nor *THOK*. With a very strange landing noise, he fell near us.

"......!"

Ogre God Malta.

The second he appeared, all movements stopped.

At the same time, my body began to tremble.

A bunch of crazy thoughts began floating inside my mind.

This battle.

Why did he come over here?

Could we win?

Would we lose?

Should we fall back for now?

Or should we attack?

"Ooh! Ogre God-dono!"

Looking happier than anybody else, Alek gave an honest smile.

As soon as he saw the Ogre God, a joyful smile crossed his face.

Seeing that smile, it was possible that even he was having a hard time before.

I see. It wasn't just us having a hard time.

The battle was also difficult for him.

I get it.

He wanted to go ahead, or so he thought, but was being stalled here.

We haven't lost yet, but we have yet to find a plan to break through.

He can no longer use that killer technique.

If this situation continued for a long time, he's bound to be mentally exhausted.

"You came at an excellent time!"

Contrary to Alek's smile, the Ogre God had a sullen face.

A sullen face wondering – Why the hell are you guys here?

The face that Alek had shown when he looked at me like he had met a bear. Right now, it could be said that the Ogre God had the face of a bear that ran into a person.

But this was bad.

This battle situation.

In a situation where we would most likely crumble within ten minutes, enemy reinforcement had arrived.

"Could you please give me a hand?"

The Ogre God nodded in agreement.

We completely lost our remaining strength.

I was already running all around the battlefield, and now I had to provide support for battles against two targets.

Seeing an opening, I managed to heal Zanoba's and Doga's wounds.

But they were inferior to the Ogre God.

Each time the Ogre God moved at a speed unbefitting of his massive size, Zanoba and Doga were blown away.

Even when Zanoba forcibly uprooted a tree to bash him, the Ogre God didn't suffer any damage and counterattacked by blowing Zanoba away.

Doga continued to swing his massive axe without giving him a single wound, but was swatted away like a mosquito and blown away.

Even though neither Zanoba nor Doga should lose in strength.

They were being blown away.

Overwhelming power.

Alek continued his unchanging attack.

Sándor was mustering up the last of his strength to move around. It's a mystery how he has been able to support the front line for this long.

No, it's not a mystery.

Sándor was fluctuating and Ruijerd was beginning to tire.

He's probably pushing himself.

This was bad.

This situation was bad.

It came to be a situation where we could no longer think of breaking through.

In just a few minutes, our front line will most certainly come crumbling down.

We must retreat.

But there was nothing behind us.

We would just arrive at where Orsted was.

Still, it's not as if Orsted would die.

But is that ok?

Would that still be ok?

It would be a loss, but would it really be ok?

Is there really no way to break through this deadlock?

We have to at least take down one of them.

Think.

There has to be something.

If I used all the cards in my hand to the fullest, there has to be something.

Most of the scrolls were lost but I somehow got the MK. I back.

The MK. I's gatling gun, size, speed, and power.

Is there really nothing that can be done?

Is there anything?

Something.....!

"Gah....."

At last, Sándor fell to his knees.

And with despair, I looked at the Ogre God.

It was him.

If we didn't stop this rampaging machine, we couldn't win.

Another move.

Just one other move.

We've simply been forced from our advantageous position to a disadvantaged one.

We can still turn it around.

If we can do something about this Ogre God, Zanoba or Doga could switch places with Sándor so that he could retreat to the back and recover.

It's fine with just one move.

If it's only just one.

"AHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA─!"

It happened then.

Laughter rang out among the surroundings.

And at the same time, the base of my arm felt hot.

The voice sounded familiar. Alek and Sándor suddenly raised their heads and looked around.

"It certainly has become something quite interesting!"

In the next instant, something black jumped out of the thicket.

Wearing black armor and tightly gripping a single sword, that person headed straight for the Ogre God.

"UGAAAAAAAaaaaa!"

That person landed a single hit on the Ogre God.

A terrible *KLING* and *SCHLING* rang out simultaneously, and the sword broke.

The hand which the Ogre God had guarded with was now profusely pouring blood while he had taken several steps back.

"HAAAAAA!"

The black thing did not mind one bit that its sword had been broken.

Continuing to close in, a sharp fist headed towards the Ogre God's solar plexus.

The Ogre God slouched forward for an instant, and was then hit with a left hook.

His head staggered for a second but he did not fall.

The Ogre God raised his uninjured hand above his head and hit the black thing.

The black thing flew back a few meters, spread its wings, and landed softly.

"AAHAHAHAHAHAHA! Good, good, this is a great feeling!"

The form like that of the devil.

I caught my breath.

"Atofe-sama.....!"

Immortal Demon Lord Atoferatofe.

The person feared more than any other on the Demon Continent was here.

"Why.....?"

She turned to look at me, her face twisted with ferocity, and laughed.

"Kukuku, I smelt from my fission that you were in trouble, and sensing that the final battle was near, I hurried here! I have no idea what's going on but I've made it. The Ogre God and Alek.....Kukuku, fufu.....AHA, AHAHAHAHAHAHA!"

Atofe was laughing. Laughing so much that it made me wonder what was so funny.

With that ominous laugh echoing throughout the forest, Alek was standing there dumbfounded.

The fission.....?

Right, these arms.

The situation hadn't been completely conveyed, but she made it.

With Atofe here, our forces were more than enough.

This would work.

"TO ALL THOSE HERE! I, DEMON LORD ATOFERATOFE RYBACK WILL ERASE YOU ALL!"

Please, not everyone.

Dammit, was Moore not here?

The other Imperial Guards?

She has no reins!

By herself!

"Is what I would like to say, but....."

Atofe faced the Ogre God.

He was about twice her height.

Atofe was quite large for a woman. But still, the Ogre God was massive.

In height, width, and depth.

"Ogre God Malta!"

"Do you wish to fight me next?"

What came from the Ogre God's mouth was fluent Demon God Language.

Contrary to his appearance, his speech was quite dignified.

I guess that should be expected of the God Class.

"Your island, The Ogre Island, has been invaded by my Imperial Guards! Leave here quietly! Fail to leave and they will all be slaughtered!"

"........!"

The Ogre God showed Atofe a surprised face.

He searched for the true meaning.

Whether her words were truth or lies.

But there was only one thing that could be said.

I cannot believe that Atofe would be capable of lies or bargaining.

"Of course, I do not mind even if they're all slaughtered! In fact I would prefer it! Yes, I would prefer that! Alright, come at me!"

Atofe spread her hands wide.

That figure, those words.

It gave an incredible feel of authenticity.

The Ogre God's reaction was extreme.

In an instant, he curled up his body, and jumped like a monkey.

To the top of the tree.

And from there, he looked down at us.

"Wai.....! Ogre God-san!?"

Alek was in a panic.

The Ogre God then saw Alek's situation for the first time.

With eyes that didn't care at all of the outcome.

And then he said:

"I return. Island in danger."

What came from his mouth was the Human language.

The Human language with a country accent.

It seemed that, compared to the Human language, the Demon God language was his forte.

But he was still bilingual.

Even though Atofe cannot speak the Human language!

"Hah?"

The Ogre God jumped from that point and disappeared from the forest.

With Alek dumbfoundedly seeing him off.

Alek wasn't the only one dumbfounded.

Ruijerd, Sándor, and I all stared in amazement.

And so, one was left.

Alek was alone.

Surrounded by Eris, Ruijerd, Sándor, Zanoba, Doga, Atofe, and I.

Too disappointing.

Disappointingly, the Ogre God had left.

"Now then, the enemy is alone!"

"H-honored Grandmother....."

His father turned enemy.

A grandmother who doesn't listen to reason.

An irresistibly pitiable situation.

An atmosphere of being disappointed, dumbfounded, and not knowing what to do.

But there was one person here who couldn't read the mood.

"Gaaa!"

Eris took advantage of that opening and threw an attack at Alek with all her might.

"Ngh!"

Alek blocked.

A block.

He neither dodged nor parried, but blocked.

He blocked the ultimate technique of the Sword God style, the『Longsword of Light』.

He guarded against the unguardable ultimate technique.

When he realized, his left hand was flying through the air.

While spraying blood. Spinning around.

"Ah."

The hand fell to the ground with a splat.

That was both the sign for resumption of the fight and the decisive moment.

The fight that had started, seemed to be missing something.

The North God Style should still have techniques after losing an arm. Even after losing both arms, Alek would probably still be able to do something.

But those possibilities had quickly been cut off.

Against such a high level of offense and defense, he could no longer fight without a left hand.

From then on, it was no longer a fight.

In just 5 minutes.

Just 5 minutes.

Alek, covered in wounds, awkwardly fled the scene.

"Haa.....Haa....."

It wasn't an effective tactical retreat.

Out of breath, he was simply running away from something terrifying.

North God.

You wouldn't think that he was a member of the Seven Great World Powers.

Entering a good school, getting into a good university, and finding employment within a good company.

But then, for the first time in his life, he tasted failure like a new employee.

Driven by frustration, he fled the scene with an unsightly figure.

But it ended here.

There was nowhere to run.

Alek ran pathetically for about an hour and ended up back at the valley.

He was cornered.

The pursuit force was five people.

The second Alek ran, Zanoba fell down and Doga also sank to the ground right there.

But there were still five people.

Sándor and Atofe.

Eris and Ruijerd.

And me.

The valley was in front of us.

It wasn't a narrow place. There was a precipitous cliff exceeding 200 meters.

There was no place to run and our strength was sufficient.

"Dammit....."

Wasn't he cornered?

Or was he acting?

Alek was standing on the edge of the cliff out of breath.

It looked as if he was cornered.

But we mustn't get careless.

Although he may have lost a hand, he originally wielded the Dragon King Sword with ONLY one hand.

With the Dragon King Sword that can manipulate gravity, it doesn't matter that he's missing a hand.

There's no mistake since I'm speaking as a person whose arm was cut off.

While I thought that, fear began to cling to his face.

But he was the North God....

"Give it up already. You don't have any techniques to turn this situation around."

Sándor said that because.....he meant that Alek no longer had any chance for a reversal?

"Yeah, just die quietly!"

"Mother, right now, I'm talking with Alek, so could you please be silent for a bit."

"Unh.....Aahh....."

Atofe cut in but was shut down by Sándor.

That Atofe was obedient?

Witnessing that spectacle, I was once again reminded that they were indeed family.

Although they aren't similar at all.

"Ahem.....The energy that you were saving in preparation for your fight with Orsted.....the second that you had your hand cut off, it became your loss. Didn't I keep telling you when you were young? Don't look down on your opponents no matter what."

While holding back, he made a mistake that couldn't be undone and was defeated.

It happened a lot.

Especially while underestimating those under you.

"Throw away your sword and surrender. As your parent, I cannot hate you."

Kind words from Sándor.

『As your parent』

Over these last few years, those words had become quite a weakness for me.

Truth be told, I couldn't forgive him who tried to slaughter the Supard race.

But.

He was not directly Hitogami's apostle, but was Gisu's apostle attempt.....

If Alek were to cry and apologize.....Well, but, yeah.....

He looked quite young.

About Paul's age I guess.

I didn't know his current age, but he should be about the age Paul was when he became my parent.

To call him childish wouldn't be wrong.

Then, if from here on out, he sincerely tries to begin anew.....

When I thought that.

From such an immature child, in a very arrogant attitude, we heard his upfront answer.

"I don't wanna!"

Of course.

"I wasn't fighting at my full strength! The left hand was an accident. If the Ogre God didn't run, this wouldn't have happened!

"That is also the reason for your defeat."

"Do you mean not to rely on allies!? Even though there were four of you fighting!?"

"A Hero does not have any allies. When it comes to it, he may receive help, but even if those allies disappear halfway through, he will still win."

Sándor said that clearly.

As if to say that was the only correct answer.

Because of that, it was strangely convincing.

What kind of Heroic Legend did he wish to create? I don't know the details of it, but.....I guess that's what's to be expected from a retired Hero.

"But that wasn't the cause of your defeat. It was your strategy. You should've hit us with all your power and then retreated once. After recovering, you should've challenged us again."

"I won't have another chance to fight Orsted, you know!"

"Who was it that said that?

"......!"

Looks like he hit the bull's-eye.

It was Gisu.

Orsted was outside of Hitogami's field of vision.

And so, Orsted has been missing for a long time.

You can meet him in Sharia – was only my common knowledge.

One couldn't meet him anywhere other than here. There will be no other chance to fight him besides now. You can't blame him for thinking that.

Especially since Alek was still young.

'I want to become a Hero', 'I want to surpass my father' – were words that came from being young.

There won't be a second time. I should take the chance in front of my eyes right now.

He couldn't help but think that.

Although he was a little forceful.

His attitude itself was something that could be cheered for.

"You should look for a friend or a rival who holds the same aim as you from your generation."

"QUIET!"

Sándor's sympathetic words caused Alek to shout out and grip his sword.

Eris and the others, as if signaled by that, also gripped theirs and stood prepared.

I also prepared.

5 vs 1.

Even though he shouldn't have a chance of winning.

"I haven't lost yet! A Hero would turn this situation around! I will defeat you all! I will eradicate the Supard Race too! And then Orsted! After killing the Dragon God, I'll be a Hero!"

The second I felt something gather around his sword, I raised my left hand.

"『Arm of mine, suck it all up』"

Gravity malfunctioned for an instant.

Just like when an elevator ascends, for just a second, my body floated, but quickly returned to the ground.

"URYAAAAaaaaa!"

The next instant, Alek's sword began to shake.

The five people including me jumped backwards as if spreading out.

But Alek's wasn't aiming at anyone.

"Khu!"

It was the ground.

Alek slammed his large sword into the ground and destroyed it.

The next instant, earth and sand danced around, lowering the visibility.

So he was attacking through the smokescreen.

As I prepared for that thought, my clairvoyance saw something from the gap in the smokescreen.

I saw Alek falling backwards into the valley.....

Was he killing himself?

Did he get blown off by his own slashing attack.....?

No.

Alek's face showed a smile.

A disgusting smile.

A triumphant smile.

No.....that's right.

After Alek fell from the bridge, he came back up.

The Dragon King Sword's ability, gravity manipulation.

Even if he falls into the valley, he can easily get out.

"........!"

The next instant, I jumped.

I followed Alek into the valley.

As I was falling, I kept my eyes on Alek using Clairvoyance.

Alek too was keeping an eye on me the moment I fell.

While being startled.

As I fell down fast, the distance between us gradually became smaller.

It was because he was controlling his falling speed with his Dragon King Sword.

I extinguished that advantage first.

"『Arm of mine, suck it all up!』"

Alek's falling speed returned back to normal.

But the effect of inertia still remained. I couldn't stop my speed so abruptly.

I decreased my falling speed with Wind Magic.

No, gravity will become my weapon.

I, who couldn't use touki, will make the laws of physics my weapons.

Using the shockwave, I re-positioned myself in mid-air.

And directed my falling self straight above Alek.

"OOOOHHhhhhhh!"

With our constant relative velocity, I hit Alek.

Alek took it with his sword acting as a shield, and he was struck by the cliff, killing his momentum.

I kept using the Magic Absorbing Stone during that time.

Due to its recoil, I got closer to the cliff as well, but I re-organized my posture using a shockwave and kicked the cliff to accelerate myself.

I caught up with Alek once again.

"ORRAAaaa!"

I hit him!

I accelerated with a shockwave and hit him.

Using the relative velocity, I hit and hit him.

I hit him with the laws of physics.

"AAAAHHHHH!"

Alek shouted.

Was it incomprehensible for him that he was being hit in mid-air?

Even I didn't know.

I didn't know why I was doing this.

I simply thought that I couldn't pass this opportunity up.

I thought that if I left this kid who had a lack of morale, then someone would be put at a disadvantageous position.

And the one who would be left in a disadvantageous position would be me as an enemy.

My family, my friends, someone.

"AAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHH!"

Without any reason I shouted as well.

It's not like I hadn't heard of Alek's and Sándor's story.

It's not like I hadn't thought of this guy contemplation while growing up.

It's not like I was comparing those two things.

But I hit him.

I accelerated and bashed him, accelerated and bashed him, accelerated and bashed him, and continued to bash him.....

And then crash landed at the bottom of the valley at high speed.

Both me and Alek.

I raised my body from within the cloud of dust.

Due to the drop just now, some kind of blue spores were scattered around the surroundings.

Visibility was bad.

For now, my body was unscathed.

As expected of the Magic Armor 『MK I.』, I'm grateful.

It had developed some cracks, but it still moved perfectly.

"Phew....."

And Alek was alright too.

But he wasn't completely unscathed.

His armor was broken and one of his legs was bent in a strange direction.

But that was it.

He may have defended himself with touki at the last second.

He stood on one leg and looked at me.

He's a monster for sure.

"......Did you chase me all by yourself?"

Alek looked at me and muttered a few words.

"Some nerve you have......."

I looked at the top.

I could see earth dragons moving within the complete darkness.

But no one was coming down here.

I thought that Atofe and the others would quickly come falling down...

While flying in the sky.....

"My Honored Grandmother is quite old. When I fell, you gave chase. Then, no one else will chase after."

"That's absurd."

"No matter how old that person gets, she always yearns for a one-on-one fight between a hero and a demon lord."

I could understand that a little.

Atofe is violent but I can feel that she's obsessed with something strange.

During my fight as well, none of the soldiers made a move.

"And that's my good luck."

"......What is?"

"This injury. If the ones who came down were Eris Greyrat and Ruijerd Supardia..... or my Father or my Honored Grandmother, then it would have been the end for me."

"You're saying that it won't be your end if I'm here?"

"I don't intend to lose to someone like you."

Brimming with self-confidence, eh?

Alek was heavily wounded.

He had lost one leg and one arm.

I was wearing the Magic Armor.

It took a lot of my mana as I had been wearing it for a long time, but I was able to give support and there weren't any major injuries.

I was in perfect shape.

"Aren't you underestimating me a bit too much?"

"It's not like that. On top of your inability to wear touki, your reaction time is slow as well. You're careless and full of openings.

You didn't even realize that we drugged North Emperor Doga with sleeping pills, and as a result, you went out alone only to fall into the valley.

You don't have enough resolve nor enough vigilance. You're just an inexperienced blockhead."

I didn't even have anything to retaliate.

I certainly am like that.

Even though I have an overwhelming amount of mana, I'm just an incompetent person.

We would've been in trouble if Atofe hadn't come this time.

"That's why I'll fight here and win, and then flee. If I flee from here, then victory shall be mine."

"Even if I die, there's still my comrades you know? The Ogre God ran away and the Sword God is dead..... Even without me, you should have no chance of winning."

I couldn't confirm whether the Sword God was really dead or not, but.....

Well, it's fine right! It was Eris after all.

"No, a hero can win. That's how my style is. Even just now, you couldn't kill me during our fall. Since I was in a defenseless position, I had no choice but to continue to receive your attacks."

An attitude as if to say – that is my answer.

Full of confidence.

But he was definitely standing on the ground with his own leg.

"I shall win.

Against you, against my Father, against my Honored Grandmother, and against Orsted.

I'll defeat everyone and engrave my name as a World Power.

As the world's strongest warrior.

I, Aleksander Ryback the Third, will be known as the world's strongest North God Kalman."

He had wounds all over his body, but he wasn't in a position where he was helplessly receiving attacks.

His chances of winning weren't nil right now.

It was a situation where he could look for a chance to win.

He didn't know what percent chance he had, but he thought that he had that chance.

He was thinking of defeating me in this crucial match.

Was is it because he wanted to become a hero?

No, that was wrong.

It was because he had overcome so many difficulties on his own.

He knew that he was being cornered right now.

He was underestimating me a bit, but he wasn't going to fight shoddily like he had been doing until now.

He intended to crush me with all his might and then flee from this place.

My opponent was North God Kalman III.

The person who knew the world's highest class of swordplay, holding the highest class of demon swords, and one of the Seven Great World Powers.

He wasn't a cornered rat, but a wounded beast.

I, who was facing him, didn't really have much hope of winning this crucial match.

Whether my prior preparations overwhelmed him or I'd lose because of the difference in our strengths, there wasn't any other choice.

He had also sensed it.

He had realized that during times when you had to unexpectedly surpass difficulties, I was the type that wouldn't bring anything to the table.

Or it was possible that he heard that from Gisu or Hitogami.....

".....Let me ask this one final question. Are you an apostle of Hitogami?"

"No. I and the Sword God received information only from Gisu. But I won't deny the fact that I was aiding Hitogami."

"I see."

Then just who was the last apostle?

No, let's put that thought aside for now.

I must defeat this guy first.

Ngh?

Wait, shouldn't I just retreat if it was no good?

We had the war potential.

I didn't need to try so hard here.

If there's still one apostle left, then shouldn't I fall back for now?

Sword God was defeated and we didn't have any casualties on our sides.

Then, should I fall back now and make absolutely sure of our chances of winning?

".....No."

Wrong.

That's not it.

Orsted was behind me.

Not letting anyone through to him is the winning condition.

Even if one or two people were to pass through his nose, then it wouldn't be that big of a problem.

The only thing that was important was not spending Orsted's precious mana.

However, it will probably recover somewhat in the 80 years to come.

I was getting relaxed only because I was thinking that.

Before the start of our battle, I had gotten completely relaxed.

We defeated Sword God and Ogre God fled.

North God was in front of me with wounds all over his body and looked like he would fall at any moment.

On top of that, even if I were to let him get away, my comrades were still in good health.

Even if he broke through my comrades, there was room left for Orsted.

If it was North God Kalman III, then Orsted was probably familiar with him. He could fight him while still being able to protect the Supard village.

I had gotten relaxed within those state of affairs.

I ended up thinking that there was still some room left even if I was defeated.

This was it.

This was the Winning Factor Alek was talking about.

And if I think back upon it, it always felt like this.

I could obtain a safety margin by stepping back for now, but then taking a step would become unattainable when it really counted.

Alek had sniffed that out.

Wave, force, luck, and flow. These things exist.

Many refuse to believe in such an abstract argument, but.....there are times when these things exist.

If I fell back here or I were defeated, Alek would obtain something.

As a result, I would lose something in return.

That was something I couldn't explain, something that was beyond my expectations.

"....."

That's why I couldn't lose.

Right now, I couldn't fall back nor could I lose.

A scene where I must take the risk and just go for it.

It was this.

This was the crossroad.

This was where I will muster all of my strength and make a serious effort.

".....I am Dragon God's subordinate, Rudeus Greyrat of the『Quagmire』."

"! My name is Aleksander Kalman Ryback, the『North God』!"

I resolved myself.

"AAAAAAHHHhhhhhhhhhhh!"

I shouted.

I shouted from the bottom of my belly.

"OOOAAaaaaaaa!"

Alek too, shouted and prepared his sword.

His sword in his right hand.

He could only use that since he didn't have his left one.

His right foot was in front.

The broken left leg stepped firmly on the ground.

He ran towards me.

He didn't have any strategy.

I had the intuition that a long-ranged attack would be futile.

I ran towards Alek while keeping a low profile.

Just before we clashed.

Someone's figure floated in my mind.

It was Eris.

I quickly raised the gatling-gun on my right-arm and fired stone cannons with all my might.

"!"

But the stone cannons were annihilated.

Right before Alek's eyes, they turned to dust due to the power of the Magic Absorbing Stone.

Alek took one step forward as he saw me rushing at him.

As he saw the stone cannons pouring down on him like rain, he lowered his right foot in hesitation only for an instant.

But those stone cannons were getting annihilated one by one.

I quickly leaned towards the left side of my body.

I knew that I was within range of the sword prepared by Alek, but I still plunged in.

While plunging in, I fired from the hip with my right hand.

While bending forward as if rubbing my chest against the ground, I thrusted my right foot into Alek's left side.

"RYA.....AAAAaaaaaa!"

Alek's shoulder moved.

A silver flash took flight.

I took a hit on my right shoulder and a part of the Magic Armor went flying.

But my hand wasn't cut.

Without checking the extent of my wounds, I firmly stepped on the ground and with my right fist――

< Alek fills his legs with power >

He'll jump and then avoid it.

When I thought that, I loaded mana in my left hand.

I cut the mana supply to the Magic Absorbing Stone and then used a different magic, although I hadn't decided what magic to use.

I loaded my left hand with mana with the intention to not let him fly and then pointed it towards him when――

"Ngh!?"

Alek's foot floated for an instant.

"AAAHHHhhhhh!"

While shouting, I raised my right fist (gauntlet).

I ejected my fist with all my might which was attached with the gatling-gun.

BAM, the fist hit him.

It flung Alek to the wall.

"『Shoot out』 Hng!"

I loaded the gatling with mana with all my power.

The stone cannons hammered the cliff, creating cracks.

But I didn't just stop at that. I loaded it with even more mana.

Stronger bullets! Faster firing rate!

The moment I thought that, my right-hand felt strange.

The gatling-gun cracked momentarily, then broke into little pieces.

"AAAAAAAAAHHHHhhhhhh!!!"

Even so, I loaded my right-hand with more mana.

Producing a stone cannon.

The thing I've produced the most; the thing I was most accustomed to.

I fired it.

I fired and fired and fired.

"AAHH, aahh, hhaaa....."

I fired until my shout died out and was replaced by a sigh due to my heavy-breathing.

I kept shooting.

"Haa.....Haa....."

And then I quit.

The right-hand of the Magic Armor that was completely buried inside the wall had completely broken apart from its base.

Its base.....was it because it took that blow from Alek?

If it weren't for the Atofe-hand, then it was possible that my right arm would've been cut off.

"....."

I could see a human-body inside the wall.

Red-blood could be seen flowing out from the gap between the wall and the fist that was hammered into it.

It wasn't even twitching.

When I casually looked closer, the sword had fallen.

The sword held by Alek just a few moments ago.

『Dragon King Sword』 Kajakuto.

I picked it up with my left hand.

A two meter longsword.

I took it and then looked at the wall a second time.

"....."

Blood was flowing out.

Red blood was flowing from the gap between the wall and the fist that was hammered into it.

Nothing was moving.

Only blood was flowing silently.

It was understandable that the flocks of earth dragons were squirming around when I looked at the top, but only this region had a bizarrely quiet feeling.

Only my hand was left with feedback.

The feedback that I certainly killed a person.

"Hooray."

Unaware, a word leaked out from my mouth.

How did I win?

I thought the victory was only paper-thin.

If I had been slower for even a moment or if Alek had not hesitated.....

Alek's attack would've cut me just like the Magic Armor.

Moving like Eris played out well.

I attacked with the gun but in an irregular way, with a strange and out of sync timing.

Taking one or half a step more than usual and stepping strongly, I was able to successfully snatch away his chances.

This was Eris's offensive style.

Eris could fight in such a risky way without being conscious of it.

It was only because I was able to fight like Eris this time that I won.

I was the last man standing with blood dripping from my neck.

Although my movements couldn't be compared to Eris's.

The distinction of whether or not I could do it wasn't attached.

I shouldn't have been able to move within that area.

If it weren't for Alek's injured leg and arm or if he hadn't underestimated me, then I wouldn't have won.

And then, that thing I felt when his foot floated.

It felt as if it wasn't a type of magic that I had used until now.

Could it possibly be gravity manipulation magic.....?

No, Alek was trying to do something with gravity manipulation using that Dragon King Sword and I may have interrupted him using the Magic Absorbing Stone by activating it unexpectedly.

The final factor may have been luck.

But I don't think that this victory was only based on luck.

"I won."

I suddenly made a fist and raised it upwards.

After I climbed out of the valley while I scattered the earth dragons with the MK. I, a lot of people were in front of my surroundings.

They were the soldiers of the subjugation force.

After losing the bridge and losing the three god ranks, they appeared to be standing there not knowing what to do.

They fled in every direction after seeing me.

They might've thought of me as some kind of demon or something.

For the time being, I caught the current commander──a knight of the Biheiril Kingdom that looked like he was in charge, and several other people, and conveyed to them that the North God and Sword God were dead.

I also conveyed that if they were still intending on subjugating the Supard race, then our side was willing to counterattack.

But at the same time, I also conveyed that there was still time left for peace talks.

The contents of the peace talks will remain the same as before.

I was angry that they attacked us, but if it was true that Gisu was the King, then that was Hitogami's doing.

I don't have any intentions of changing my tolerant attitude.

But just to make sure, we caught two people and made them prisoners of war.

It was possible that Gisu was disguised as the king. Then there wouldn't be much meaning to it.

But it could be that not every soldier was wrapped around Gisu's fingers, nor that the domestic authorities were under his palm.

After they hear about the current matters and if the soldiers were brought back safely, then depending on public opinion, they should become our allies.

If it was still hopeless, then there would be no choice but migration.....well, I guess I could still stall for time.

As I was on the way back while pondering, I suddenly came across the stone monument.

The stone monument of the Seven Great World Powers.

At the bottom of it.

The mark at the very bottom had changed into a very familiar mark.

"....."

A mark with the shape of three spears combined together.

The shape of the amulet of the Migurd race.

I may have become one of the Seven Great World Powers.

I was the one who dealt the finishing blow, but he did fight 4 people at the beginning.....it just didn't feel right.

Maybe it wasn't for me...maybe it's the mark for Ruijerd and the rest?

Eris.....not really, I guess.

"....."

It honestly didn't feel that good.

But now that I've become one, it can't be helped.

I decided to return back to the place where Eris and the rest were.

After that, I crossed the valley and met up with Eris and the others.

"So, what happened?"

The one who came first was Sándor.

When I told him that I delivered the final blow to Alek at the bottom of valley, he made a sad face and wore a wry smile while saying – I see.

"You're the hero. The despicable demon lord is defeated by the hero. That's how it has been since the ancient times."

Atofe's expression didn't really change that much.

But she's probably a little sad at least. She did say sentimental words that weren't like her.

"....."

Alek was dead.

I think that he was still a child.

He had talent and only aimed to reach the top.....

He had a future as well.

There were a lot of things between Sándor's and Alek's conversation.

I had hoped for Alek to have more time to think things through, disciplining him for the time being and having him reflect on his actions afterwards.....those were some overly optimistic thoughts I guess.

There was no killing intent or hatred involved.

I only killed him because he was an enemy.

I thought that if I let him escape, I would come to regret it later. I had to do it then and there, so I killed him.

That was why I didn't feel like apologizing.

It was just a flutter.

The other side was willing to kill me too.

That was all there was to it.

"You did it!"

On the contrary, Eris was wearing a delightful face.

When I told them that the mark on the monument had changed, she folded her arms, as the sides of her mouth raised to a complacent smile, her nasal breathing got rough.

If I wasn't wearing the Magic Armor, I would've hugged her.

Such a disappointment that I couldn't.

"....."

Ruijerd didn't really say anything, but his face had become a deep blue.

I had thought about that in the middle of the battle, but I guess he did reach his limit after all.

Fighting with a recovering body would definitely be hard.

But no one had severe injuries and we were able to gain victory with everyone in good health.

But what should be done now?

While thinking that, we headed towards the Supard village.

The place which had become burnt black in order to burn Sword God's corpse, the crater created by North God's attack, and then, the many trees that were mowed down during the battle with Ogre God, and animal trails.

As we gazed at those sights and walked further, we saw the collapsed Zanoba.

Doga was crouching down on his side with a completely exhausted face.

Zanoba seemed to be asleep.

With his face upwards with a deep blue color to it.

Like a corpse?

"......Zanoba. Wake up. It's over."

I called out to him from above inside the Magic Armor.

But there was no response.

"Zanoba.....?"

After several seconds, sounds from the forest vanished.

The wind stopped and the remaining sounds vanished as well.

"Huh? Zanoba? No way...?"

"....."

"Answer me....."

Zanoba didn't answer.

Only his face was facing towards the sky. He was silent like a corpse.

Just like a.....corpse.

".....Hmph!"

Eris suddenly kicked Zanoba's head.

"Whaaaat the!?"

"We're going back! Wake up already!"

".....? OH! I apologize! It seems I had fallen asleep before I realized it."

Yeah right.

But it wouldn't have been strange if he had died.

Zanoba and Doga were in a disadvantageous position.

If we hadn't encountered each other by chance, then it wouldn't have been strange if he had become a wordless corpse.

While I pondered, I saw the blown up path that Zanoba and Doga came from.

Traces of a fight could be seen all over the path.

The uprooted trees, minced trees, and a small crater. The consequences of the attack.

It's good that they won.

No, they weren't superior to the Ogre God.

He just went back.

"Come to think of it, why were you here, Atofe-sama?"

"Nmh? Do you really want to know?"

"Please let me know."

Atofe's explanation was shoddy and incomprehensible.

There were a lot of sound effects and half of it completely went over my head.

"In short, you used the teleport formation left from the days of the past great war."

"I found it and had it ready for when the time came!"

That's bad.

If it was known that the infamous Atofe had used the teleport formation and was visiting several places using it, my reputation would probably go down the drain.

Well, maybe not. Not this late in the game.

All things considered, was this the.....end?

It was certain that we obtained victory, but it ended in the blink of an eye.

It was unknown what happened to the Ogre God, but there were only a few enemies left.

"....."

When I thought it was over, I was suddenly hit by a sweet fragrance wafting from Eris who was walking beside me.

Was it because of the difficult battle?

My survival instinct was stimulated, activating my reproduction instinct.

How about tonight?

Was it not time for the lifting of the ban on Rudeus?

"No! No!"

The abstinent Rudeus remains until the defeat of Gisu.

We hadn't even confirmed Gisu's appearance yet.

The Ogre God ran away. We don't know what'll become of that.

There was still one apostle left as well.

It's not over yet.

But Gisu had yet to make his appearance.

Our intelligence network was already in a mess. We couldn't even search for him.

We don't know if he ran away.

.....Perhaps it was his main goal all along.

This was the decisive battle and we'll be settling things here. It could be that I was the only one who thought these things and Gisu intended to run instead.

Right now, he may be taking the last apostle with him and be about to reach the national border.....or is he?

During this battle, the information that was scattered about various places ended up gathering in the Supard village.

We didn't have the teleport formation nor the communication lithograph.

Even if Gisu was spotted at the national border, we didn't have any means of catching up to him.

He'll probably run away.

With the Dark King defeated, North God and Sword God going out of his control, then.....

Using 80% of his war potential as a diversion, only keeping the people that he can control with him, tricking us into following him, and then escaping during that time.

Abandoning this time, so some other time instead...

If I was him, I'd do this.

"Phew....."

But we couldn't lower our guard right now.

However, the fight here was over for now.

I was tired.

I couldn't fight anymore today.

Let's entrust the others with the consequences.

We weren't able to bring Gisu down, but the North God, Sword God, and the Dark King have fallen.

Ruijerd and the Supard village have become our allies.

We didn't know what Gisu did with the Biheiril Kingdom and Ogre God, but.....maybe we'll be negotiating next.

The only real damage we took would be the destruction of the office.....

Thanks to that, all the teleport formations were destroyed.

We couldn't move for the time being, but I clapped my hands.

It was not bad compared to the greater damage that I had predicted.

We could see the Supard village.

Maybe they sensed us coming, as the children of the Supard race were looking at us from within the fence.

And then, the warriors protecting the Supard village came out.

Furthermore, Elinalize, Cliff, Norn, Julie, and Ginger as well.

I stripped out of the Magic Armor.

My body had become light because I used up so much mana.

Julie and Ginger rushed up to Zanoba.

Norn went towards Ruijerd.

Cliff headed towards the completely exhausted Doga.

People who hugged each other, people who talked with relieved faces.

Looking at that, I was finally hit with an actual feeling.

"....."

Orsted came out last.

Orsted started coming towards me.

"Did you win?"

"Yes."

As a proof of victory, I handed him the large sword.

The large sword which could be said was the North God's symbol, 『Dragon King Sword』 Kajakuto.

"We won."

We had won.

A complete victory was still far-off, but we were able to overcome the difficulties.

We crushed the trap laid by Gisu and took the lead all at once.

There were a lot of things going on in my mind.

Things to reconsider were innumerable.

But a victory is a victory.

"Good work."

Receiving words of gratitude from Orsted who took the sword, I bowed.

I suddenly felt someone at my side.

It was Eris.

With her arms folded, she was looking at me.

She spread her arms.

"........!"

And jumped at me.

While enjoying the sensation of those breasts, I had the same thought again.

We were victorious.

AUTHOR Q & A (9 OF 14)

Q. Isn't the title of 253 fraud?

A. I guess so. I'll change it a bit.

Q. I do think he could've at least fight the Ogre God with the MK. I.

A. Of course he can!

But if he fought the Ogre God then he won't be able to support those who were fighting the third, making the front collapse!

Q. The Dragon King Sword, Kajakuto. Is it famous?

A. It's always discussed whether it's one of Yulian's Cursed swords but it's definitely famous as North God's favourite sword.

Q. Can Rudi win against a perfectly healthy North god III?

While defending against gravity manipulation and using Gatling with the remaining hand, would he lose?

A. Probably impossible.

While defending against gravity manipulation and gatling with the remaining hand, he couldn't use the Magic Absorbing stone on top of that.

Q. Rudi finally did it.

Mister, we've know Rudy since he was a little child.

That Rudi has become such a responsible adult now.

I am happy.

A. In truth, he was a lecherous child.....

Q. If Rudi has now become one of the Seven Great World Powers then what would be his title like the Sword God and North God? Would it be Quagmire after all? Or a God would be forcefully added in front of the mud making him Mud God?

A. FYI, the mark on the monument resembles Roxy's pendant.

Q. The mark of the person who becomes one of the SGWP would become the mark which that person believes in?

A. It certainly seems like that.

Q. In the end, just what will he be known as a world power?

A. As the right hand of the Dragon God, it's likely he would be called Dragon King or Dragon Emperor. Even if he doesn't name himself, the public will acknowledge him so.

Q. In the end, was the right hand still attached or not?

A. Magic Armor's right hand was torn apart.

Q. The killing technique used by Alek where he stops his enemy's movements and hit them with the that one blow with all his might. That felt a lot like the earth-shattering Super Robot scene from the Showa era, would it be fine to imagine it as such?

A. Delta End!

Q. Atofe: "I got a shivering feeling from my fission, so I popped into the magic circle and poofed here, then with a fwoosh, I flapped my wings and flew towards the banging, and then I landed with a plop, and then jumped in here with a bang! You should be grateful!"

A. About that kind of feeling.

Q. The Magic Absorption Stone uses about the same amount of magic as the spell it extinguished right?And then the magic expended by the gatling gun wouldn't be anything small...

A.Yup, It's not small.

Q. Eehh...!? The crest should be the object of worship...!

A Rudy lacking faith should not be allowed to lift the ban.

A. It's because it's the mark he got from Roxy... (*trembling voice*)

END AUTHOR Q & A (9 OF 14)

3 days had passed after the battle.

The injured were cured and peace arrived at the Supard village.

During these 3 days, while being wary of yet more enemies, we relaxed.

It was not as if we didn't do anything, but it was just that nothing happened.

We were truly in peace as time passed idly.

Zanoba had grown considerably tired and passed most of the days sleeping.

We were worried that it might be a serious illness, but the doctor said that it was merely chronic fatigue caused by muscular pain.

It was the first time that he had muscular pain in his life so he said – My entire body feels like it'll come crumbling down.....Julie, this body of mine is going to die soon, I have taught you everything there is to know. Even in my absence, be diligent – and then wrote his last will.

Julie cried again but nodded with such a determined look in her eyes it was amusing to watch.

On reflex, I rushed over to him and held his hands – We'll definitely see the automaton to its completion. I swear to my respectful God. Leave it to me. Let the power of God be converted into a bountiful crop, and be bestowed unto those who have lost the strength to stand once more,『HEALING』- while saying those things, I ended up healing him.

After that, Zanoba rose with an amazed face and started repairs on the MK. I.

Julie just kept looking blankly.

Atofe too, remained relatively docile within the village.

I noticed that she made the guys in the village build a throne with timber and was teaching warriors the basics of battle, but it wasn't a serious matter yet.

Eris was participating at least.

Looking at that Atofe, Sándor became a little embarrassed, but at times a shadow was cast on his face.

He was thinking about Alek after all.

Even when I asked if he wanted the Dragon King Sword back, he said that those were spoils of war and wanted me to use it however I wanted.

After listening to such words, even I will lose the motivation to use it.

I have no right to say that since I rely on the Magic Armor, but if I use it too much, I'll become a no good person.

So I let Orsted keep that for now and I'll just use it when it really counts.

Ruijerd passed most of the time with Norn.

Although it felt more like Norn was following him around like a young bird.

Norn being taught all kinds of things by Ruijerd looked much like how Eris and I did before.

Norn was diligent as well.

.....Being diligent is.....fine, right?

Doga had gotten popular with the woman and children.

Although he was afraid when he first arrived at this village, he had devotedly helped out a lot during the plague, so it felt like he had crossed over a hurdle. They had accepted each other.

These days, he was carving wooden dolls with an honest face and was enjoying himself with the children.

The ball was lost because Orsted sent it flying somewhere, and so he was somewhat lonely.

The team of doctors had said that the health of the Supards was progressing favorably, and so they shifted to the researching the plague.

They were investigating the plague while examining the food of the village.....or it would be better to say that they were collecting samples.

They were bringing it all back to the Asura Kingdom and recording notes in documents for future use.

Cliff, Elinalize, and Ginger headed towards Second City Irel.

Once again, we sent a demand towards the Biheiril Kingdom with the prisoners at our disposal.

There was a need for a person who would receive the answer.

They took 2 Supard warriors with their shaved heads as escorts, but if Gisu's plan was still in action, there was also the danger of each of them getting crushed. I was worried.

This basically meant that I prepared a meeting to review the battle.

Even this time, there were a lot of things to reconsider.

Particularly, the part where I fell into the valley was dangerous.

Why was it that Gisu didn't approach us using the Magic Tool?

We must combine those parts with the next situation by boiling it down to its core.

The things that have been done can't be helped, but at the very least, we won't be biting our own tails.

Additionally, Atofe-hand was returned back to Atofe and my right-hand was restored using a healing magic scroll.

I reflexively started rubbing Eris's breast with that hand, which resulted in a one hit KO to my jaw, rendering me useless for half a day.

And then that magic.

The magic that I used during my confrontation with Alek.

I tried using that magic several times while taking that same feeling into account, but it never worked.

That was possibly gravity manipulation, but I needed some kind of impetus again.

I've already engraved the potential of using gravity manipulation.

We must also think about various things regarding the teleport formations.

If we were to set it up in various places like this time, then even the enemy could easily use them.

We must think about a counter-plan for that scenario as well.

Nevertheless, the teleport formations were still not fixed even after 3 days had passed.

We summoned Arumanfi on the second day and inquired about our family, but.....it was taking a lot longer than expected.

Maybe some kind of problem was taking place irrelevant to Hitogami.

I was worried.

Although there wasn't any meaning in worrying too much.

I must do what I can.

The fourth day.

The people who left for Second City Irel as messengers had come back.

They came as soon as possible after receiving a reply from Biheiril Kingdom.

A lot of things were written in one sheet of letter.

"The King of Biheiril wants to meet you. He says that if something is done regarding the war potential of Ogre Island, then he'll think about the circumstances of the Supard race."

Thus, that was the summary of the reply.

It looks like the continued existence of the Supard village will be allowed for now.

They came back rather quickly. The letter may have been drawn in a hurry because it had wrinkles in it, but the signature was the real deal.

The war potential of Ogre Island meant Moore and the others who were left there by Atofe.

On Atofe's orders, they took the people of Ogre Island as hostages and barricaded themselves in.

For now, it didn't look like the Ogre God was going to forcibly fight them.....

Well, it just meant that we'll be talking about negotiations from here on out.

".....Alright."

With the exception of the Supard race's matter, there weren't any difficult requests.

At the very least, they must hear about the matters regarding Gisu.

"If that's how it is, then let's go."

I'll take some people from the Supard race along.

Our primary aim will be the negotiations, but if the Supards were going to be living inside Biheiril Kingdom, then there was a need to show their faces for them to be accepted.

If they didn't, then there was the possibility that something like this would happen again.

But it's also possible that a resistance group may surface after seeing the Supards.

I guess there was a need to perform an act where the head of the Supard race and the Ogre race shake hands.....

While pondering over such things, I selected my members.

Battle ready Eris, Sándor, Atofe, and Ruijerd.

Cliff of the Milis Church for the role of negotiations, and Cliff's attendant, Elinalize.

Along with 2 warriors from the Supard race, we decided to head towards the Capital.

The rest will be staying here to defend against any attack towards the Supard village.

I wasn't taking along only my members, but prisoners of war as well.

Sadly, there wasn't a request for the return of prisoners.

But we were sincere.

Be that as it may, the negotiations may break down, so one of them will be staying with us as a card.

While thinking that, I moved towards the hut where those prisoners were staying.

Inside the hut, the two of them were just sitting absentmindedly without any conversation.

When they saw me entering, they looked at me suspiciously.

"So how about it, this Supard village?"

"....."

"It's quite a nice place, don't you think? There are a lot of beauties and the children are energetic. The food is a little wild, but its taste shouldn't be that bad.

The warriors over here are a little blunt, but you should know by now that they aren't offensive towards the Human race."

It had only been a few days for the prisoners, but they were living quite a free life.

Of course, we kept them under our watch, confiscated their weapons, and to make sure that they weren't disguised, we stripped them naked as well, but we fully attended to their needs with a hospitable mind.

Many Supards made sure to welcome them as guests and they also were quite gentle towards the prisoners.

There wasn't any need to restrain them.

They were free to roam around the village and they could also go outside of the village with one Supard escort after getting permission.

There was no concern of them fleeing.

This was because they themselves were afraid of the Invisible Wolf.

During the 2 days, when the Supards started hunting the wolves, they were able to confirm what kind of beast the Invisible Wolf was.

It is the kind of food that is eaten around this area.

They were still a little bit afraid of the plague, but there wasn't anything else to eat, so it couldn't be helped.

We did let them drink the Sokasu tea for the time being.

".....Well, we understand that the rumors were twisted a bit more than we thought."

The soldiers were in despair when they were first brought in, but now they seemed lax.

I thought that they had yet to see the Supard race's good characteristics.

But their overall impression had definitely gotten a little better.

The other one was already enjoying himself quite a bit.

However, I was afraid that the moment I got out of here, the other one would remove his mask and say –

Haha, I was actually a mole for Hitogami.....!

Well, I selected them randomly and they also went through strict examination before entering the village.

Even Orsted and Cliff properly assessed them. Some were left behind as well.....so it was probably alright.

"We'll be going to the country for negotiations, so one of you will be coming with us. I would like to leave you with one of the high officials. Would that be alright?"

"I understand."

One of the soldiers nodded and the other stood up.

He's an honest person.

I would hate it if I was cutting down some kind of personal bond between these two.....

Well, the country had finally accepted our conditions for once.

So it'll just be a meeting where we talk things out.

While pondering over such things, we departed from the Supard village.

4 more days passed after that.

The negotiations with the King went smoothly.

The King of Biheiril was scared.

His attitude was King-like, but he did pay undue attention to my speech and conduct. He was also afraid of Eris, Ruijerd, and Atofe being there.

I was only threatened by Sword God and North God.

Saying such haughty words and in such a roundabout way too, but he did give us an explanation.

He admitted that a monkey-faced person was taking shelter inside the castle and that the only time he left the castle was when I visited.

Just in case, we asked them to remove all of their rings and I used the Magic Absorbing Stone as well, but it looked like Gisu wasn't changing places with anyone anytime soon.

However, I guess Gisu was the King that time after all.

He successfully deceived me.

A terrific acting ability as one would expect from him, though it was likely his vocal mimicry.

Anyway, we turned in the names of the prisoners while assuring negotiations. They said that if something was done quickly about the military forces of Ogre Island, then they were willing to acknowledge the Supard race.

They weren't forcing us to pay reparations, asking for territory, or difficult problems like that.

The people living in this country were simply acknowledging the people who saved this country.

On top of that, the one who proposed the early departure of the subjugation force was Gisu.

As a King, he couldn't help but sigh and get drunk.

If they were to refuse our demand here, they would be cutting their ties with the Ogre race as well.

It would become a scene where the Biheiril Kingdom forsook the prisoners of the Ogre race.

This country has strong ties with the Ogre race. If those ties were to be cut, it could effectively mean the end of this country.

That was how it went, so we were now heading towards Third City Heilelul.

A volcanic island could vaguely be seen in the far distance from the port city.

I would be standing-by here while Atofe and Sándor went to Ogre Island to negotiate with the Ogre God.

I asked Atofe and Sándor to proceed to Ogre Island as messengers.

I wanted to go to Ogre Island too, but the MK. I couldn't board a ship, making it a bottleneck for me.

There weren't any ships that could withstand MK. I's weight.

We didn't know what the Ogre God was up to, so it would be preferable if I wasn't separated from MK. I. That was the conclusion that we came to.

If negotiations with the Ogre God went down without a hitch, the prisoners of Ogre Island would be released, which would end that matter with the Biheiril Kingdom.

As a result, the Supard race will be able to live at the entrance of the forest and not near the valley.

We still couldn't be sure about what started the plague, but at least they will be away from whatever caused it.

It will take some time and labor for the migration, but my job was almost over.

The last thing we must take into consideration is the possibility of fighting the Ogre God.....

Sword God and North God were no longer around.

So we should win.

Even if Gisu still had some war potential in reserve, if it became a little difficult, we would just have to retreat to the forest once and come back prepared.

"....."

While pondering on such things, I climbed the lighthouse to see the ocean with Ruijerd and Eris as my guards.

It was nostalgic to see an ocean.

The ocean was big and spacious.

It was stretching out underneath a clear sky.

The island that could be seen beyond the horizon was Ogre Island.

I thought that the island itself would have a Ogre face like shape, but it was a normal island.

It was a volcanic island so-to-speak, and smoke was rising out of the mountain.

Now that I saw it, it had an atmosphere of magnificence or strangeness, but not of evil.

To say it clearly, it was simple.

Since the Ogres were living on it, it's called Ogre Island.

Of course, we didn't climb the lighthouse only to gaze at the sea.

The reason was to look at one point of the ocean.

There was a boat approaching Ogre Island.

The boat in which Sándor and Atofe had boarded.

While standing on top of this lighthouse, I was going to keep watch over their negotiations with the clairvoyance eye.

If the negotiations failed and the Ogre God went berserk, or if Gisu shows up unexpectedly, I was to contrive a large-scale attack from this spot.

It was a plan which would involve the innocent Ogres and send the negotiations with the Biheiril Kingdom down the drain.

But if Gisu really was there, then I would definitely fire.

".....Hey Rudeus, are you looking properly?"

"I'm looking. Need an explanation?"

"Don't need it."

With a wry smile on her face, Eris continued scouting.

I could only look at one part of the island with the clairvoyance eye.

That one spot was easy to see and I could see various people gathering over there.

It was the beach.

We had decided that that would be the place for negotiations.

An ogre with a remarkably huge body could be seen there. That was Ogre God Malta.

He was surrounded by ogres that were deemed to be soldiers.

It looks like they fought several times over as the soldiers were all covered up with bandages.

On the soldiers' opposite side, ominous soldiers wearing black armor faced them.

They were Atofe's Imperial Guards. Moore was also there.

They may be a little injured, but I couldn't see any damage on them.

So they were a lot stronger than the soldiers of the Ogre race after all.

Still, we wouldn't know what would happen if the Ogre God were to fight, but we've taken the entire village hostage.

He probably wouldn't fight.

Furthermore, I could see around 5 women and children of the Ogre race behind the Imperial Guards, most probably taken as hostages.

However, it was war, so there might be deaths as well.

This may be one of those disputes.

While thinking about that, my heart started pounding, but after Atofe's and Sándor's arrival, half of the hostages were easily released. Then, Sándor and the Ogre God talked about something, after which they disbanded.

It was unknown what they were talking about, but the Ogre God relaxed.

I was held back by the clairvoyance eye's inability to hear voices.

"Rudeus!"

The next day.

I, who was sleeping in an inn in Third City Heilelul, was woken up by Eris's shout.

"......What is it, honey? Let me sleep a bit more."

While thinking that, when I reached for her breasts, but my hand was brushed away.

That was hurtful to your man. It's violence.

But am I not allowed to?

Because I copped a feel despite my abstinence.

"He's here!"

"What?"

"That guy!"

After shouting, she ran out of the room.

I would like her to stop talking with feelings alone.

It's difficult for an intellectual person like me to understand such vague words.

"That guy.....?"

While still trying to understand what just happened, I raised my body up.

After rubbing my sleepy eyes, I looked out of the window.

I saw a group of reddish-brown haired people standing in front of the inn.

"──THAT GUY!"

I quickly rushed out of the room and ran towards the first floor.

"....."

Ogre God was sitting cross-legged in front of the inn.

In his surroundings were youngsters of the Ogre race wearing pitiful faces.

As if to face Ruijerd and Eris, they were standing ready with weapons and arms.

When I stepped forward, the crowd of people opened up a path for me.

I stepped in front of the Ogre God.

And then Sándor whispered something into my ears.

"It seems Ogre God wants to strike a deal. I brought him along in order to lessen the likelihood of traps."

".....I understand."

If he didn't intend to fight anymore, then I wouldn't say no either.

I didn't know what Sándor was predicting, but it didn't seem like this was Gisu's strategy. Judging from appearances, Atofe, Eris, and Ruijerd didn't seem to be cautious.

These people had understood something, something which had relaxed them.

"....."

When the Ogre God glared at me, he asked me as if searching for something.

".....Are ya leader?"

"Yes. Rudeus Greyrat. The person in charge."

"I Malta."

When I bowed, Malta bowed too even while sitting.

"Need ta talk."

"......I wanted to talk with you regarding some things as well."

I followed the Ogre God's example and sat cross-legged on the floor.

The other side will be in the same posture, removing any discourteousness.....or so I would like to think.

When I did, some of the surrounding youngsters stood by my side and served sake cups between me and the Ogre God.

It was sake cups.

Those cups were quickly filled up with drinks.

Common alcohol was served to me.

But it was soy sauce for the Ogre God.

Soy sauce and even miso, this area might be similar to Japanese culture.

"Drink."

"Thank you for the drink."

The Ogre God drank it in one go and so did I.

It would be bad if we got drunk, so it was only one shot.

Drinking might be part of courtesy.....

But well, what should we talk about now?

First would be Gisu.

Or – are you an apostle?

Ogre God-dono's appearance didn't look too good.

I should convey it in a simple manner so that it's easy to understand such a complicated issue.

Gently, as if I was teaching Eris.

"I heard."

As I hesitated for a bit, Ogre God opened his mouth.

"Demon Lord attacked village. Stole food. Unforgivable. But people unable ta fight, all lived."

Ogre God said that and looked at the surrounding ogres.

All lived.....?

Even if it was a small battle, you would expect some deaths, but.....no, he meant that『non-combatants』didn't die.

Looks like even Atofe knew that distinction.

Well, it was Moore's strategy though.

"Your house, destroyed it, your not fighters, let live. We same."

"....."

"Ogres protect country. Country surrendered ta ya. I head of ogres. No reason in fight. Bargain."

He couldn't forgive Atofe who attacked the village.

But he destroyed my office as well.

But didn't attack the non-combatants.

That's why we're in the same boat.

The Ogre race has a duty to protect the Country, but that Country had already surrendered.

As the head of the ogres, he concluded that there was no reason to fight, thus the need for bargaining.

Something along those lines.

"What about Gisu?"

"Gisu said ya destroy Country. Thus I helped. But Gisu fled. Ya didn't destroy Country. Anymore, Country and Ogre race perish."

Gisu said that I would destroy Biheiril Kingdom.

But I didn't.

On the contrary, Gisu fled.

If Ogre God acted any more than this, then both the Country and the Ogre Race would perish.

"Gisu lied. No longer trust him."

But I won't destroy the Country.

It was Gisu's lie.

"I surrender. I die fine but please spare lives of my not fighters."

While saying that, Ogre God brought his huge body down in front of me.

Close to prostrating himself.

The surrounding youngsters wore a sad expression.

They're probably thinking that I'll be killing the Ogre God here.

Killing your enemies is a matter of course.

And they were following that rule unwillingly.

Concluding that their head will die and they will live on.

Why was it so grim?

I had that question but I guess it was only right.

If the Country had surrendered, then it only meant that the ogres had lost their support.

My side's war potential was superior and if I thought about doing it, then we could easily subjugate Ogre Island.....

Of course, that was something pointless for me.

Now then.

Should I kill him or not?

Ogre God said that he no longer trusted Gisu.

He looked like a person who couldn't tell a lie. It was fine to believe him.

The Ogre God's speech was poor, but he was in no way an idiot.

According to my interpretation of him, he was the logical type.

His IQ might be higher than the Immortal Demon race.

Then, even unexpectedly, it was possible that he could lie.

After pondering for a little while, I asked just one last thing.

"Ogre God-dono, you're not an apostle of Hitogami are you?"

"Wrong. Gisu said Hitogami name, but I don't know that. Even I knew, Island important."

The Ogre God's eyes were strong, clear and honest.

If he was lying right now, then I felt that I could no longer believe in anything.

"I understand and accept your words."

When I said that, the surroundings were wrapped up in relief.

It's fine to let him live.

That way he'll become useful in the far future.

"However, Ogre God-sama. I will have you fight Gisu. If you betray us and run away, then we'll invade the island."

If we're to take into consideration destroying Gisu's traps, then this should be fine.

The relationship between the Ogre God and the Ogre race is deep.

Threatening someone isn't too good, and it would be problematic if betrayal takes place at the last moment.

"Rogar. I fight alone?"

"No, you'll be fighting with us."

"Then, what happen ta my not fighters when I die?"

"Regarding the remaining survivors of the Ogre race, one of us will.....take responsibility and safeguard their safety."

"Hm. That not lie."

The Ogre God nodded.

And then the youngster from before poured soy sauce into the Ogre God's cup and alcohol in mine.

The Ogre God held it in his hand with dedication.

And I imitated him again.

"I swear me horn."

".....I swear by the Dragon God's name."

When I returned a suitable answer, the Ogre God nodded in solemn countenance

"Hm."

And then the cups were emptied.

Thus, the battle with the Ogre God concluded.

That night, a banquet was held at the beach near Heilelul.

The alcohol of the Ogre race was taken out from the warehouse and all of the ogres entertained themselves with us.

It seemed like the ogres had some kind of custom to exchange drinks when they had reconciled after a battle.

Drinking alcohol to forgive and forget everything.

That seemed to be the Ogre race's style.

The Ogre God made me drink a lot and after I couldn't drink anymore, I let Atofe handle the rest. After that, a drinking competition started between Atofe and Ogre God during which I slipped out of there.

After sobering myself up with Detoxification Magic, I walked around the banquet for a little while, and when I realized that a certain someone wasn't there, I headed towards the beach.

Sándor was drinking there alone.

"Ah, hello."

"Can I sit beside you?"

"Go ahead."

I sat beside him and breathed out a sigh.

Just what was he thinking sitting in such a far away place?

That was something even the dull me could understand.

It was probably about Alek.

He was urging Alek to surrender till the very last moment.

Even if he's a North God, even if his son held hostility against him, he would definitely not want to kill his son.

Not to mention, I have no intention of apologizing.

If I had retreated there, if I had let Alek escape, then it was possible that this banquet wouldn't have existed.

The North God might've joined up with Gisu, linking up with Ogre God, and then they could've come out with even more aggression.

I actually thought that even Sándor thought that that judgement wasn't wrong.

Sándor didn't say anything.

He should've already realized it.

"What happened to Alek was regrettable."

"Certainly."

However, the fact that it wasn't wrong and staying silent about it were two different things.

"That child.....had talent from when he was young.

When he picked up a sword, he could wield it better than anyone else. Whenever he fought beasts, he could see through their weakness in an instant.

There wasn't anyone in his generation who could defeat him."

"....."

"That's why even I ended up having high expectations of him.

I granted him the Dragon King Sword and he succeeded the name of the North God.

But, I guess I shouldn't have done that."

Alek was hung-up on becoming a hero.

"Something like North God is after all only just a name. But he had become obsessed over it."

Sándor said that and took another swig.

It wasn't something I could say.

From here on out, if he gathered enough experience, maybe he would've found something which would have made him worthy of the North God title.

Or so I thought but I couldn't say it.

Since Alek was no longer here.

"Well, let bygones be bygones. I am a little worried right now, but you don't have to worry about that, Rudeus-dono. That's just how wars are."

".....Is that so?"

"I've heard that you have many children. Then.....An opportunity will come where you must think about it."

The feeling of a parent who outlived his child.

That was still unknown to me.

And I didn't wish to know it in the future.

"Anyway, I pray for my son's happiness in the next world."

"Yes."

From there, our conversation paused.

The roar of the waves resounded from our front and the voices from the banquet from our behind.

When we discussed about the current battle with that kind of ambience, it felt like this battle was finally reaching its end.

Even though we still haven't even defeated Gisu, much less even seen him, it was coming to its end.

That was a tinge of anxiety that sprouted from the end of the battle.

As for the result, we were close to complete victory for this battle.

But there were times where we just barely made it through and where luck played a strong part.

What about the next move?

Would we be able to fight just like this time and attain victory?

It may be hard.

Gisu will probably make even more strategies after judging this battle.

"In the end, I wonder just who was Hitogami's last apostle."

Those were the words that came out.

It wasn't the Sword God.

It wasn't the North God.

It didn't even seem to be the Ogre God.

Gisu and Dark King Vita.

There was still one unknown apostle left.

According to the Ogre God, Gisu had fled.

Maybe he had taken that person who we haven't met yet with him as I had expected.

But, there was something.

I felt like I was forgetting about something.

A piece was missing.

One more person who should be more like an apostle hadn't come out yet.

"Let's see. Truth be told, even I can't imagine someone who would be one. Perhaps there might be a different apostle moving in a different place."

In a different place, a different apostle.

When I thought about that, the memory that came into my mind was my house.

The Ogre God hadn't attacked it.

But there was the possibility that someone else's hand was reaching out to it.

We still didn't have any means to return back.

We had struck a deal, but.....it was still taking far longer than anticipated.

I wonder if Sharia was under attack right now.

"Phew....."

I couldn't help being worried.

I was anxious, but I could do nothing but let the people there deal with it.

I just didn't want to feel like a parent who had outlived his child.

I was fighting so that I didn't get to taste that feeling.

As if to wash away that feeling, I held the cup in front of my mouth and gulped it down in one go.

I just wanted to return quickly.

"Huh?"

Sándor suddenly raised his face.

He looked at the sea.

"Is there something shining?"

On those words, I looked towards the sea as well.

It was night-time right now.

The sea was completely dark, nothing could be seen.

Only the roar of the waves could be heard.

Even when using the clairvoyance, I could see nothing.

"Where is it coming from?"

"There, there, can't you see? It's approaching us."

Same as before, nothing entered my eyes.

I strained my eyes for a bit but still couldn't see anything.

I wonder if he had gotten drunk and was seeing illusions.

"Should I bring a lamp?"

"........Can you really not see it?"

"I can't see it. Aren't Sándor-san's eyes a bit too powerful?"

Sándor knit his brows in confusion.

Surely it was possible that the holder of the clairvoyance was in fault.

Perhaps because I was drunk, I was looking in other direction.

Maybe a little bit upwards.

"......Don't tell me! Rudeus-dono, close your demon eyes!"

"Huh? Ah, okay."

I closed my eyes.

"NOT THAT, cut off your mana supply to your demon eyes!"

"........."

As he ordered, I cut the mana supply to my demon eyes.

Both the foresight and clairvoyance eyes.

"........Huh."

The moment I did, I could see it.

A being heading towards the sandy beach from the foreshore just now.

That guy was big. With a height of over 2 meters.....his size was similar to the Ogre God.

That guy had wore a golden armor on his body.

That guy had 6 arms.

That guy, that guy was carrying a person on his shoulder.

The person who was on his shoulder wore a robe with odd patterns on it.

He removed the hood of his robe, and a nostalgic face leaped in my eyes.

"Ah, so we meet here, Senpai........"

The monkey-faced person.

It was Gisu.

"For god's sake, just when I thought we'd land unnoticed, this happens. This ain't good."

"FUHAHAHAHA, You should better not think that everything will go according to plan, eh?"

"Ain't that right."

The one who answered Gisu was a male wearing a golden armor on his body.

It was a nostalgic voice.

I could never forget this way of laughter.

"Your Majesty Badi....."

Badigadi.

Why was he here? Why was he with something like that and why was he with Gisu?

Did the Ogre God betray us?

Or did Sándor call them here?

Don't tell me—no—but—this is—huh?

Various thoughts rushed through my mind, words didn't seem to come out.

My body started trembling without any cause.

That golden armor was bad.

I didn't know why it was bad, but I could feel the sinister premonition in that bad.

If I fought someone like him without any armor, then it would be instant death for me.

"It's been a long time, Rudeus and Alex too."

Despite Sándor's state of complete dumbfoundedness, his forehead was completely wet with sweat.

Even though he should've attacked at once, he wasn't moving.

I felt that from Sándor in front of me.

"Great Uncle. Why were you here?"

"Isn't it obvious!? It is because the Great I am an apostle of Hitogami!"

Badigadi spoke.

He spoke imposingly without any hesitation.

That he was the last apostle.

".....Ah."

I see.

That's how it was.

I had forgotten.

Wasn't I told before as well?

Kishirika had said that the possibility of Badigadi being an apostle was high.

And he was also the one who brought Ruijerd along to the village, it was a matter of fact.

It was Badigadi.

Just why had I forgotten it?

The final piece that fell into the puzzle.

"On Hitogami's request, I escorted Ruijerd to the Supard village. In the middle of the battle, I was to get this armor that lay at the center of the ocean.

By joining the strengths of Dark King Vita, Sword God, North God, and Ogre God, the Great I was to defeat you people who had lost their escape routes and Dragon Orsted, therefore the Great I─"

"Boss, boss."

"What is it? Just when I was getting into the mood to talk with humans....."

"You're talking too much. There ain't any need to go that far."

"Hmph, such a dull person. Isn't our strategy already out in the open?"

While scratching his cheeks with his fingers, Gisu shrugged.

But with those words just now, I was able to connect the dots.

I was right.

Sword God, North God, and Ogre God.

They weren't Hitogami's apostles.

And if I had let North God III escape then the fight would've continued.

Without dissolving the subjugation force, they would've entered the forest for the final confrontation.

During that time, they would land at Ogre Island.

Defeating Atofe's Imperial Guards to get rid of Ogre God's fear.

With only North God and Ogre God, we had such a close fight.

And on top of that, if Badigadi were to come, we would have no chance of winning.

But if it is now.

Dark King was dead.

Sword God was dead.

North God was dead.

Ogre God had surrendered.

The opponents were only Gisu and Badigadi.

"No, I know that, Senpai. I've heard from Hitogami that you've won in the forest. You're thinking that we won't have any chance to win this late in the game, eh?"

Gisu was useless at fighting.

That's why we could win.....

Could we.....win?

"But ya know, will it really go down like that? This gentleman over here is quite a legend, ya know?"

Being called a legend, Badi got arrogant.

"4200 years ago. The Great I had a tie with that Demon-Dragon King Laplace. I, the strongest Demon Lord....."

While gulping down his own spit.

The armor worn by Badi shined as if verifying his existence.

".....am named Fighting God Badigadi. I alone should be enough, right?"

So it was that after all.

So this was the Fighting God Armor after all.

A full-length armor giving out a bizarre presence.

I was getting chills similar to when I fought Orsted seriously for the first time.

I could instinctively tell that we couldn't win.

In the next moment, Badigadi spread his crossed arms.

"My name is Fighting God Badigadi! Dragon God's subordinate Rudeus of the 『Quagm─"

"My name is Alex Kalman Ryback! I am North God Kalman the Second!

I challenge the Immortal Demon Lord Badigadi to a personal duel!

I swear by the honor of the Immortal Demon Clan, accept it!"

Badigadi stalled.

And then saw Gisu with a troubled face.

"Mmmh.....the great I intended to duel with Rudeus though."

"It's fine if you refuse."

"Can't do that. It's been decided since the ancient times that a Demon Lord must always accept a challenge."

Gisu was stunned.

Rather than Hitogami, it seems Gisu's grip had already loosened on the reins.

Even I didn't have the spirit to control Badigadi or Atofe or anyone like that.

"Rudeus-dono."

During that time, Sándor whispered.

"I'll try to gain some time here. During that time retreat, assemble our forces, and then polish your counter-plan."

"And what about you, Sándor-san?"

"I might not make it back alive."

I had trouble breathing.

I couldn't answer immediately.

But I did quickly nod once.

I was right now flesh and blood.

Even if the MK. I was near me, right now I am flesh and blood.

It was not about the safety margin.

There wasn't any chance to win right now.

I would only become a hindrance if we both fought.

If I fought here right now, I would only become a demerit and nothing else.

"Please.....do."

I said that and ran towards the village.

While hearing the intense clash of the weapons behind me.

AUTHOR Q & A (10 OF 14)

Q. It won't be fitting to call the child having a rhythmical sense of innate disposition.

Even though he couldn't dance in his childhood?

A. Perhaps it might be better to say it was his uniqueness.

Q. The fact that Magonote-sensei knew about about Wing Man surprised me a little (lol).

Though it was the heat shock.

On the whole I think it seems a bit off. To raise your novel writing level, did you read a lot in the past?

A. It had nothing to do with studying, I just picked up whatever felt interesting. Whether it be book or game.

Although I have given up on old hard to get things, like things that can't be played on current OS.

But my memory is a little unreliable.

Q. "This crest is the Migurd race's!" the people who would recognize this crest won't simply charge at the Migurd village right?

A. Maybe they would.

Q. Kishirika has the superior Demon eye『Eye of a Thousand Miles』but if a Demon Eye is trained then could it not become a superior one?

Or is it some kind of event reward from Kirishika?

"Take this new Demon eye."

"Evolve your Demon Eye" ←

Like this the choices will come.

A. When Kishirika grows, while using a large amount of mana, it is possible to grant superior demon eyes.

Q. He wasn't under complete obedience of Hitogami, and on top of that, if His Majesty Badi was a friend of his then they should've been able to evade the duel with negotiations or at least delay it for a bit. He left all the decision-making to another person & escaped.....only at the critical moment he ran away from the battlefield, his mind still hasn't grown at all.

A. At the critical moment "The enemy clearly declared that they were their enemy, if it's this guy then he wouldn't be under complete obedience of his boss, but if he's a close friend of his then they can evade the battle by negotiations or at least delay it" such a naïve thought is.....growth?

Q. "Hm. That not lie." please teach me its meaning.

A. "Hmm. That doesn't seem to be a lie."

Or "Hmm, it isn't a lie, right?"

Q. Why is it that when he uses the Foresight and Clairvoyance eye he can't see His Majesty Badi?

A. Badigadi's constitution is made up of something that is irrecognizable to the Demon eye.

Q. It may be a question now but Alek's gravity ignoring attacks or evasion that he used, would it be OK to imagine it like that air hand-to-hand fighting that uses wire action in Hong Kong action movies?

A. It's more like a low jump similar to in Arcana Hearts.

While ignoring the inertia suddenly rising and diving, dashing in mid-air.

Q. Could Gisu breath underwater with those odd patterned clothes he was wearing? Was it a magic tool?

A. It's a special cloth that can block the Demon eye.

He even has many others as well.

Badigadi walked from the sea but he didn't drown.

Q. This is.....if Sándor had the Dragon King Sword then he would've been able to stall for more time.....

A. I don't think he would take the Dragon King Sword ever again no matter how hard the battle.

Q. Paul's dagger that was fit on the Magic Armor's left arm, was it still on the MK. I?

A. Yes, it's there.

END AUTHOR Q & A (10 OF 14)

After hearing of the enemy ambush, the one that stood up with great joy was Atofe.

"Where is the enemy!?"

"At the beach. It's Fighting God Badigadi! Sándor-san is holding him back for now, so we should fall back for now and gain some di—"

"AHAHAHAHAHAHA! So Badi has become an enemy! He will be a worthy opponent! Imperial Guards! Follow meeee!"

Without letting me finish what I had to say, Atofe took her Imperial Guards along and went towards the beach.

There was no time to stop her.

Of course, Ruijerd and Eris obediently followed me and Cliff quickly casted Detoxification on everyone.

After that, we assertively evacuated the Ogres.

"I fight too."

But the Ogre God was different.

As if to keep his promise with us, he quickly followed Atofe.

Atofe and the Ogre God ended up going to the battlefield.

At that moment, my mind's objective changed from retreating to fighting.

Sándor, Atofe, and Ogre God Malta.

If the three of them fought and then lost, we would lose a lot of our fighting force.

I concluded that even if it was disadvantageous to some extent, we should still fight head on and hold our ground here.

I'm not going to be at my wits' end.

With me, Eris, Ruijerd, the warriors of the Supard race, Cliff, Elinalize, and then Atofe, 10 Imperial guards, and the Ogre God.

We had more than enough strength.

Somewhere deep within my heart, I thought that we could win.

I ran towards the banquet hall and boarded the MK. I that was put there.

After giving out the instructions to evacuate, I boarded the MK. I.

Within that short amount of time, the battlefield had moved.

Not far off from Third City Heilelul, with his waist submerged in the sea, Badigadi and Atofe had started their fight.

Fighting up close were Atofe and Malta.

Badigadi was fighting both of them simultaneously while carrying Gisu on his shoulders.

The difference in their power was evident. Even while carrying Gisu on his shoulders, he was easily able to stand his ground against Atofe and Malta as if playing with children.

Overwhelming.

I couldn't see Sándor.

He couldn't be seen anywhere. Was he done in?

The Imperial Guards had surrounded Badigadi and were firing magic spells.

Ice arrows, fire arrows, and stone cannons were all pouring down on Badigadi like rain.

But they vanished just before hitting him.

The magic spells fired by the Imperial Guards weren't reaching Gisu.

Was that the power of the Fighting God Armor?

Or was Gisu using some kind of Magic Item?

If it's the latter, then I want to kill Gisu quickly.

I should've killed Gisu during the fight between Badi and Sándor.

No, Sándor should've fallen right after I separated from him.

Taking down Gisu would still have taken some time, then I wouldn't have been able to rush to the banquet hall and might have died.

Gisu should know quite a lot about me.

He had already taken steps to deal with me.

Even when I was in front of him, he had a lot of composure.

Then, it should be fine to think that hitting him with a stone cannon wouldn't have been an instant kill.

There was no reason not to.

There was also no time to think.

Atofe and Malta were both tough, but even from an outsider's point of view, Badigadi was superior in power.

It wouldn't be strange if the frontline were to fall at any moment.

"I'll go as well!"

"Stop!"

I commanded Eris who was about to rush in and loaded mana in both my arms.

Luckily, thanks to Atofe and Malta, there was quite some distance between us.

Atofe and the Ogre God.

I'll aim for the moment both of them are blown away.

"I'll be jumping in with magic first. Cliff-senpai! Please snipe and provide magic support!"

"Alright, leave it to me!"

I hesitated, thinking that Atofe and Malta would be wrapped in it as well.

But I could clearly see Gisu. I didn't know whether it would get through or not, but I could get a direct hit.

This was my chance. I didn't have time to think about my failures.

It was fine if it were just one hit.

The spell I'll use.....will be stone cannon.

No, it should be lighting.

Since the stone cannons fired by the Imperial Guards were easily getting erased.

I do think my stone cannon would have some effect, but I'll still use a different magic.

Alright.

"Suu─"

While taking a deep breath, I raised my left hand up.

I sent the blood flow inside my body towards my left hand.

And then, with my left hand raised towards the sky, I not only used my mana, but a gust as well to make clouds.

While holding down my impatience, I took my time and made the cloud bigger.

The surroundings started to rain.

Thunder could be heard from a long distance.

The wind blew and the sea was getting violent.

Cumulonimbus

Originally, before the completion of this spell, it should be compressed and then it should be dropped.

But I expanded it.

Using both the updraft and tornado at the same time, a thunder cloud was quickly getting larger.

Rain started to fall heavily on the beach.

Not yet.

The waves grew higher, and sprayed the three fighters with water.

Just a little bit more.

The entire sky was filled with dark clouds.

The surroundings became dark and visibility was only up to 50m.

But I had the clairvoyance eye.

The clairvoyance eye continued to watch the three fighters without any change.

It watched Atofe and Malta.

My right hand.

I released the stockpiled mana from it.

The clouds shrank at once.

While suppressing the violent mana, I concentrated it at one point.

I timed it.

Atofe and Malta fought simultaneously and were blown away simultaneously.

At that moment.

I let it.....fall.

『Lightning』

That wasn't a flash of lighting.

It was just a long cylindrical pillar of light.

The moment it arrived, a sound could be heard from the surroundings.

The rain paused for an instant, and the world was covered up by light and silence.

A huge column of water came out of the pillar of light.

A thunderous roar.

A sound similar to a lightning strike struck our eardrums.

".....hand.....is.....of earth....."

Within that thunderous roar, I could barely hear Cliff's spell.

But I grasped what spell he was going to use and fell back to support him.

In our view, there was a mass of surging water.

That mass of water swept everything away and approached us.

It approached us very fast──

『Sandstorm』

The sand clashed with the mass, offsetting each other.

Due to Cliff's and my magic, the mass of water became light-brown rain and polluted the beach and sea.

I cut my clairvoyance and looked for the golden armor while straining my eyes.

"....."

I could see nothing.

My clairvoyance wasn't activated, but.....

When I looked around my surroundings, I could see the others similarly straining their eyes.

Regardless, we couldn't see anything.

Nothing could be seen.

His appearance couldn't be found.

"Did we do it?"

I reflexively muttered.

I ended up muttering.

There was nothing wrong with my murmur, but those words were ill-omened.

"!"

It was too late when I realized it.

Eris and Ruijerd.

With their sixth sense, everyone was watching above them.

In the next moment, a sand pillar was standing in front of me.

Something was falling down from the sky.

It was dancing in the sky. It was glittering and sparkling, even while being bathed in muddy rain.

With a golden color.

"Ough."

A voice leaked out involuntarily.

That guy landed right in front of me.

The Golden Armor.

Was there really a face under that helmet that I would recognize?

"I thought I was done for."

That voice came from the shoulder of the armor.

That guy had boarded it while covered with mud.

The monkey-faced person.

"My name is Fighting God Badigadi! The one who has taken the name of the Fighting God only as a sworn friend of Hitogami! I challenge Rudeus Greyrat to a personal duel!"

"I-I r-refuse."

"FUAHAHAHAHAHA! NO USE IN ARGUING!"

I was hit by the golden armor.

One hit.

With just one hit, my armor was completely broken into pieces, and I took flight with my hazy consciousness.

My consciousness was receding.

As I was about to fall unconscious, I saw it.

Eris, Ruijerd, Atofe, and Malta.

Attacking the Fighting God all at once.

————That day, Third City Heilelul was annihilated.

When I came to, I could smell something nice.

I could smell a little bit of sweat too, but it was nice.

A nice smell that I was accustomed to.

I could see red hair swaying at the edge of my vision.

At the same time, I could feel warmth around my cheeks.

My cheeks were touching something.

".....Are you awake now?"

A voice came out from that something that was touching my cheeks.

It was Eris's voice.

"!"

And then my consciousness quickly came back.

Eris was carrying me on her shoulders.

"........What's going on?"

I quickly stood up and surveyed my surroundings.

Many people were walking around the surroundings like refugees.

Cliff, Elinalize, and Ruijerd.

"We lost."

After that, Eris and the others challenged the Fighting God, and were completely defeated.

Eris fainted in just one hit, and Elinalize's shield broke.

Malta and Atofe put up a good fight, but they were still sent flying every time.

Moore took over when I fainted and told everyone to retreat.

Ruijerd collected Eris and I. And then with Atofe, the Imperial Guards, Malta, and Sándor who regained consciousness as the rear guard, the retreat was successful.

"I see."

It was a shock.

It was a shock that we were so easily defeated.

I never really thought of myself as the strongest.

Even when I fought for the first time with the MK. I, I lost to Orsted.

It wasn't invincible.

But I was certainly getting victorious these days.

I defeated both Atofe and Alek.

Regarding Alek, it wasn't a solo battle, but a victory was still a victory.

But I should've always taken the assumption that I would lose.

But one punch was a first for me

It was one hit.

With just one hit, my armor broke into pieces and I fell unconscious.

.......I might've underestimated Badigadi.

Was it because I thought that even if he was the Fighting God, he would still cut corners being that Demon Lord-sama?

"What are we supposed to do next?"

On Eris's inquiry, I pondered.

Next.

What should be done next?

We hadn't run out of options.

But I wonder if we can win against that Fighting God with my impertinent plan.

We didn't have Sándor nor Atofe, nor the Imperial Guards.

They might've died as well.

Our fighting force was uncertain.

There was Eris, Ruijerd, Cliff, Elinalize, and me.....and then some warriors of the Supard race.

Even if I say that, I couldn't be counted as a war potential. I, who had lost the MK. I, was only an insect now.

The best I could do right now was to make rivers, make mountains, and set fire to the mountains.

The Three Charms.

The Fighting God would just drink up the river, jump over the mountains, and extinguish the fire on the mountains with the water that he drank and then come after us.

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the Japanese fairytale 'The Three Charms'. }

We couldn't win with our current potential.

"There's no way but to run."

"......Ruijerd-san."

Ruijerd spoke while looking at me.

"That guy is one of the Seven Great World Powers, the real deal. He's not someone who can be defeated even if we attacked him in a group."

So we should run.

We should run until the Supard village.....

And then.....what?

If it were the Three Charms, then the priest-sama that took shelter in the temple used his wit to exterminate the mountain witch.

Orsted(The Priest) was there in the Supard village.

But.....Fighting God Badigadi and Gisu.

Their aim was my life, and to exhaust Orsted's mana.

And if Orsted were to fight the Fighting God, his mana consumption would be nowhere near the level that it would have been if he had fought the Sword God or North God.

It was a substantial defeat.

To achieve their goals, they would go to the ends of the world.

No matter where we go, there won't be a place safe for us.

".....Even if we run, we can't win."

"Then there's no choice but to fight with the resolution of an honorable defeat."

A fight with a resolution of an honorable defeat would still be a defeat.

We couldn't win.

If we died, it would be over.

"........Rudeus, get a hold of yourself."

Eris suddenly held my hand.

It was a strong and warm hand.

It was a hand which had saved me many times.

It was the hand which had held my child.

"Ah."

I calmed down a bit.

Think.

Think about a way to win.

First, there's a need for information.

For example, the weakness of the Fighting God Armor.

But I heard that the Fighting God Armor was the best armor made by Laplace himself.

Even the person who built it himself was tied in his battle.

Would there even be a weakness?

But even if there wasn't any weakness, there might be some kind of capture method. There was still a way to fight.

And from there, we could probably find some kind of hint.

Who is the one who knows that?

Atofe is.....not here.

Orsted?

That's right, I must ask him.

And if we still couldn't get anything.....

"....."

No.

Even if we couldn't get anything, he was an enemy that we must fight someday.

We will fight now.

Atofe, Malta, and Sándor weren't here.

But there should be a method to win.

But still, I want to keep the damage to a bare minimum.

I didn't want to involve the Supard village with the battle.

Since Norn was there as well.

There should be a chance.

Even if it was less than 1%.

That's right.

Now that I think about it, I still had one trump card left.

I originally planned to use that trump card much sooner.

".....We'll retreat until the village and hold out there."

I decided to wager on that.

"Got it."

Everybody nodded.

Then, we returned back to the Supard village.

My trump card was still being prepared.

I wonder just what was really going on.

Would it be fine to just wait?

While suppressing my wavering heart, I sat in front of Orsted in seiza and reported to him everything that had happened up until yesterday.

"That's all. We don't know what has become of Sándor, Atofe, and Malta."

"....."

Orsted wore a rigid expression.

"Fighting God Badigadi?"

"Do you know of any capture method?"

".....No. I know about the Fighting God Armor, but I've never once fought Badigadi wearing the Fighting God Armor."

"I see."

I had expected this, but I still couldn't hide my disappointment.

But there was no need to show it on the surface.

"Then, please tell me about the Fighting God Armor."

"Fighting God Armor is the best armor made by Laplace himself.

It sank to the innermost part of the Magical Cavern, at the center of the Rings Sea.

Its surface gives out a golden spark when fired with mana, bestowing its user with the strongest power possible. But that much mana makes it sentient, and it hijacks the user's mind."

"But, it didn't seem like Badigadi's mind was hijacked?"

At the very least, I didn't feel like Badigadi was being manipulated.

It was the same Badigadi as in my memories.

Although, it was possible that he was being manipulated, but it wasn't apparent.

After all, he didn't bother arguing with Atofe and Sandor.

"......It will take some time before a complete hijack.

From the moment one puts it on, the Fighting God Armor will start dominating your mind, and you will gradually be unable to differentiate between good and evil, and will only wish to fight. Although, Badigadi's body is made up of a special meat which can't be perceived by the Demon Eye.It's possible that the Fighting God Armor can't completely take over him."

So that meant Badigadi hadn't worn it for that long.

Still, I've heard about this hijack thing somewhere before.....

"The Fighting God Armor is similar to your Magic Armor. The only difference it has from yours, which moves with the wearer's mana as fuel, is that it takes the wearer's very life force as a fuel and you can't take it off until it completely drains you of it.

If it has attached itself to Badigadi's body, it can almost operate forever.

The moment that the armor is put on, it will adjust itself to the perfect shape for the wearer. In doing so, the optimal weapon is obtained.

Although the weapon range depends on the weapon itself, if Badigadi equips it, it probably won't be long distance.

The golden light radiating from the armor will render most magic ineffective.....but there is a limit. Your full powered stone cannon may be able to get through."

He's very knowledgeable.

But I see, rather than a lightning strike, the stone cannon would have been more effective.

"Orsted-sama, when you fought the Fighting God, who was wearing the armor?"

"One of the Sea race. Although, his mana quickly ran out and he died."

"Any other cases?"

"I've put it on myself a few times, a human put it on once, and a Demon race once."

He experienced it himself before?

Well, I guess if he hadn't put it on himself a few times, he wouldn't have understood the details.

"So how exactly are we supposed to defeat it?"

"......I do not know."

"You don't know?"

"When wearing the Fighting God Armor, you feel neither pain nor fatigue. And on top of that, it is possible to fight constantly at full strength. But it is simply forcing you to move. It cannot heal injuries sustained while wearing it. Therefore, if you manage to land an attack, a battle of endurance will be in effect....."

But with Badigadi as the opponent, that becomes impossible.

The Fighting God Armor will continue to move until its wearer dies.

Badigadi is immortal.

In other words, perpetual motion.

"How did Laplace defeat it?"

"He overwhelmed the defensive limits of the Fighting God Armor by hitting it with a spell with a massive output, temporary annihilating the contents, and separating them. As a result, a large hole opened up in the continent and the Rings Sea was created."

"......I see."

Depending on the power of the attack, it was possible to deal damage.

It was just a matter of his recovery after that.

But if it was so, then this gives us one plan....

"But I heard the wearer from that time died. So it was Badigadi."

"You didn't know?"

"Laplace, at that time, also didn't seem to know who was wearing it. After I heard about his death, I lost my remaining interest. Since I never would've thought that the Fighting God would appear before me like this."

"Did you.....hear it from Laplace himself in a previous loop?"

"That's right. I am the son of the First Generation Dragon God. First Generation Dragon God also instructed me on how to apply this curse."

"....But you said that Laplace must be killed."

"That's right. To reach the place where Hitogami is, the five Dragon Generals must be killed and the sacred treasures retrieved."

"....."

I think this is the first time that I've heard him say clearly that they must be killed.

So it's like that after all.

Then I guess we really can't count on Perugius's support after all. I also wouldn't want to help someone who has the intention of betraying me later on.

But I guess there's no benefit in discussing that here.

"This is probably an unpleasant conversation for you."

".....No."

Right now, I have to think about what's in front of me.

That is, Badigadi.

If Hitogami was acting while seeing his own future, then he couldn't freely move such a chess piece like Badigadi, who acted selfishly.

Or this might even be the final trump card that Hitogami held.

When I saw him a few days ago, he seemed to be at his wits' end.

Fighting God Badigadi.

Badigadi was originally Hitogami's apostle.

It was unknown to me just why Hitogami didn't use Badi until this loop, but let's consider that he was suddenly dragged out this time.

Well, if he didn't come out in any of the previous loops, then I would have to be the cause.

"So what do you intend to do?"

"Fight. There is no escape."

"Alright. I'll come. I haven't done it before, but it shouldn't be something that we can't do."

As Orsted said that, he started getting up.

However, I interrupted him.

"No, please wait."

Orsted sat back down.

I couldn't see his face because of the mask, but I could understand that he probably had an astonished expression.

"If Orsted-sama were to exhaust his mana here, it would be a defeat overall. There wouldn't be any meaning."

"If you die here, it would also result in defeat. There wouldn't be any meaning."

"......Well, that's also true."

Should we take the chance now or take it later?

But I've tried my best until now.

I wanted to at least stick through until I think it was truly impossible.

"But even if Orsted-sama must fight, before then, it should still be possible to weaken the Fighting God."

"...You'll die."

"If that happens, then please take care of my remaining family members."

I don't want to die. I want to return back alive.

But this was definitely a do or die situation.

The Fighting God was Hitogami and Gisu's final card.

There might still be another card, but in this situation, the Dark King, Sword God, North God, and Ogre God have all been defeated.

There's only one apostle left too.

All of his cards were in the open.

There were no more cards to pull out.

If we defeated the Fighting God here, the other side should suffer in turn.

We must persevere, fight and take the victory.

"I understand. But as soon as you realize that you can't win, retreat immediately. Understood?"

"Thank you very much."

I bowed my head and stood up.

"So.....Did Roxy contact you yet?"

"Not yet."

"Is that so. When it happens, please let me know immediately."

After I saw Orsted nod, I got out of the house.

The soldiers were waiting.

With a sharp glint in her eye, radiating bloodlust was Eris.

Standing with a clear bearing was Ruijerd.

The slightly nervous, scared, and excited Cliff.

With an expression that wanted to protect Cliff was Elinalise.

Sad after hearing of Sándor's defeat, the weeping Doga.

Having lost all his clothes during the previous battle, he was wearing the Supard's local dress, Zanoba.

And the Supard warriors aiming to protect the village.

This group.

Honestly, I'm uneasy.

The gap left by Sándor, Atofe, and Malta was huge.

But Zanoba and Doga were a good replacement for the Ogre God.

Badigadi was a close combat type. The compatibility wasn't bad.

They were inferior to the Ogre God. Even if their compatibility wasn't bad, it was unknown just how much meaning that held.

It was possible that this group would be able to stall for time for 2 days, or at least 1 day.

And within that 1 or 2 days, the possibility of my trump card arriving was low.

Then, there was no guarantee whether or not I would win even while using my trump card.

But it was possible that my comrades would just die in vain.

"Let's go."

However, I walked nonetheless.

I had a plan, but no chance of success.

I couldn't even guarantee whether my decision was right.

We might have some time to lay traps, but the enemy wasn't someone who would be defeated from just that.

"....."

Everyone, without expressing any opinions, simply followed behind me.

I will fight the Fighting God.

AUTHOR Q & A (11 OF 14)

Q. Was the reason that the Ogre God's speech was crude and that he didn't use Demon God Language while negotiating because there were people around him who didn't understand Demon God Language?

→ The Ogre God who was an Ogre who surrendered to Rudi who was a human. That's why he thought that talking in Human Language to respect the winner were obvious manners.

A. That's how it is!

Q. If the President was fighting the one who was wearing the armor, then his words that the Fighting God never once stood in his way as an enemy was a little strange.

A. This is a little difficult, but bear with me. In short, he meant that he hadn't fought anyone at the level of the 3rd World Power wearing the Fighting God armor.

Q. The President knows nearly everything, it's like he's Wikipedia-sensei or Google-sensei. And the lithograph looked like his Twitter.

A. You'll often get "This article does not exist".

Q. An inertia game is better than Arcana Heart, you know!

If it's a fighting game with fighting in the sky while ignoring inertia, then I guess a Touhou like game system is close to it.

A. They don't have floating steps in that image.

Q. The person who wears the Fighting God armor becomes the Fighting God? Or His Majesty Badi who wears the Fighting God armor is the Fighting God?

A. The latter.

Among the SGWP, it becomes a somewhat special type of pattern.

Q. If the conditions for the change in SGWP monument is losing consciousness or death, then when the abstinent Rudeus carelessly reached his hand out to Eris's mountain range and was knocked out with one punch, would it change then?

A. When they realized, the Seventh rank was changed to a Sword God Style mark!

Q. When the city was annihilated, I got the image that it disappeared without leaving any traces. Shouldn't it be collapsed or destroyed? Or was it literally annihilated?

Why, in a hand-to-hand battle, was the city was annihilated?

A. It's the result of normal hand-to-hand combat and the support that Moore and the rest provided using magic for a long period of time.

At the very least, it was possibly annihilated.

Q. When Orsted wore the Fighting God Armor, was he unable to take it off until he died?

A. Yes. He died right there and then looped.

Q. It feels like the President's mana capacity absolutely can't be charged by outside factors. Would there be no other choice in future other than normal self-recovery?

A. This.....might be researched by someone in the future.

Q. A God Rank for a swordsman has made an appearance but a God Rank for a mage has yet to come out. And someone with a God Rank Magic who can cure the Magic Stone Disease hasn't come out yet either.....this work is going to be over soon, but does that mean they will never appear?

A. Probably never.

Q. It has become such a desperate situation, but there's still not that much bloodshed yet.

How come there's no fight scene either!?

A. Let's see.

I did write that Rudeus fell unconscious. I should've depicted it with more depth I guess.

Q. After fighting the Fighting God, literally everyone's still alive (expect those who are still missing). Does that mean that Badi is going easy on them?

A. Even without wearing armor, it may be that the rest of the guys are at a level where it would be hard to kill them instantly.

Q. But Orsted should've disposed of the Fighting God Armor.

A. When performing a speedrun in an RPG, the strongest most powerful weapon was in an extremely deep labyrinth. It's not required to defeat the Last Boss, and hence there was no need to get it... something like that.

There was a time when he tried it once for trial and error, but he thought that it was unreasonable and wasted a lot of mana (just hitting with the Godsword is fine), and so he didn't use it.

And for someone who doesn't want to be famous and stand out in the world for getting it, it's quite unreasonable.

END AUTHOR Q & A (11 OF 14)

The Fighting God appeared after two days.

It was thanks to Atofe and the others holding him back.

But they didn't return.

I didn't think that the Immortal Demon race would die that easily.....but the Fighting God probably did enough damage so that they couldn't follow.

In any case, thanks to them, our preparations were complete.

The Fighting God came at us head on.

Without hiding or rushing.

Calmly, he made an appearance.

Gisu was sitting on his shoulder.

As if to say that no matter what we did, we couldn't stop him.

The battle began at the entrance of the forest.

I was standing at the top of a giant wall created at the entrance of the forest.

It was about 10 meters high and 2 meters wide.

From the top of this wall, which was made as if to protect the forest, I would be hurling magic.Stone cannons.

I would hurl quite a number of them so that I could at least knock down Gisu.

The clairvoyance eye didn't work against Badigadi.

It seemed that even Orsted didn't know the reason. Badigadi was probably just that kind of Miko, or as a result of something in the past, he obtained resistance to those Demon eyes.

The Gold gleamed in the far distance.

On top of that, ever since I was born into this world, stone cannon had been the spell I had used the most.

I aimed for a direct hit.

1 in every 10 shots made it hit.

But, even from this distance, I understood that it didn't do much damage.

A direct hit would open a hole in the Golden Armor, but it would quickly be filled again.

It didn't penetrate.

Even stalling him was a failure, the Fighting God continued forward without even defending himself.

At this distance, there seemed to be a drop in power.

As I thought, it'd have to be at close range.

Incidentally, one also hit Gisu.

It was hard to see from this distance, but he fell off from the shoulder when it hit, so I'm pretty sure that it hit him.

But he got up as if nothing had happened, so it seemed he took almost no damage.

He may have simply gotten off Fighting God's shoulder as a measure of precaution and went around the back.

If he was a bit closer, Gisu might have taken enough damage to cause instant death.

But when you think about how he wasn't annihilated by the thunderfall, it looked like Gisu himself also had some kind of magic resistance.

In the end, we couldn't even halt his advance.

When the Fighting God got close enough, I casted fire magic towards the exteriors of wall and retreated into the forest.

I didn't have any intention to let him get any closer than necessary.

"So far it's within expectations."

Once I confirmed the destruction of the wall, a mutter leaked from my mouth.

Within expectations.

I knew that this would happen.

When the Fighting God entered the forest, the entire forest was covered in a wide and dense fog by me.

While activating a quagmire of the same size.

Reconnaissance and spreading confusion were entrusted to a force of Supard warriors led by Ruijerd.

Magic eyes didn't seem to be effective against him, but the Supards' third eye was; their senses could catch the Fighting God.

It was effective.

According to the report, as a result of the Supards' guerrilla warfare, the Fighting God had lost his way, and had been wandering aimlessly for a couple hours.

I hoped that he continued to wander around like this and end up at the exit to the forest.

While hoping that, I continued to extend the range of the fog and quagmire.

"The Fighting God has changed his direction."

And with that timing, Ruijerd appeared to report.

It seemed the Fighting God was now moving right towards the Earth Dragon Valley.

This was probably Gisu's contribution.

Rather than Badigadi alone, it seemed Gisu knew how to walk inside a forest with a fog this dense.

The question arises whether he could still walk even if he knew the way, but if one considers that he used some kind of Magic Tool or Magic Item, then it wouldn't be strange to think otherwise.

No, if he had a magic tool, then he wouldn't have wandered around for hours like that.

Amongst the mud and the dense fog, he probably had to use some anachronistic way, taking his time and then deciding on one path.

The fog, quagmire, and the Supards' guerrilla warfare.

Even with all that, we were only able to stall him for three hours.

There were a total of three casualties.

Three Supard warriors who got too close, were done in by the Fighting God.

But their deaths were not in vain.

Thanks to them, the sun had gone down.

And at the same time, the Fighting God's movements had stopped.

Although it was probably not solar powered, it seemed he stopped moving during the night.

But I did not stop.

I didn't loosen the effect of the Fog or Quagmire, nor did the Supards stop their guerrilla warfare.

A long distance attack with exploding stone cannons was thrown at him.

I wasn't expecting much damage.

But I would simply not let them sleep, I would keep firing to not let them rest.

It may not have much effect on Badigadi, but to Gisu it had meaning.

With those thoughts, the first day ended.

On the second day, continuing what I was doing during the latter half of the first day, we tried with all our might to lure the Fighting God to the Earth Dragon Valley.

Dawn of the second day.

I crossed the valley.

From on top of the rampart, I glared down at the forest.

Standing next to me was Ruijerd looking out in the same way.

The topography of the Earth Dragon Valley was extremely well suited for defense.

It was a chasm more than 1km deep.

I didn't notice it when I first crossed it but the cliff on Supard's village side was slightly higher.

It doesn't have much to do with magic, but fundamentally, a higher position in battle is advantageous.

One could see better from an elevated position, and with gravity working against you, it would take more energy to go uphill than down.

With that mindset, I created a rampart with earth magic from the depths of the cliff at the side of the Supard's village.

It was a little less than 20 meters high, so it's not as wide as the one at the entrance to the forest, but this was the only place that the valley was quite narrow, so it's not a problem.

I had opened a hole in it where the bridge was connected as an entrance, but I closed it up after I dropped the bridge.

This way, he couldn't just jump across and suddenly start the battle like the Ogre God did.....probably.

I never thought lightly of the Fighting God, but this was the strongest and highest wall I could prepare in such short time.

If he could jump over this, I'd have to give up on it.

Even if he didn't jump across, and simply arrived at the surface of the wall, it was possible to pelt him with the stone cannons from above.

He could render magic invalid, but he could not reverse terrain changes, I was now aware of that during the previous battle.

Again, because of the confirmation I got at the start of the battle, I realized that stone cannons were sufficiently effective.

If they were to cling to this wall and I hit Gisu with the stone cannon from the top of this wall, then Gisu, who didn't possess any power at all, will fall into the valley.

If not, then it should be possible to create a large quantity of water over the top of them, making them slip and fall into the valley.

Gisu may be a useful guy, but in a straight up fight, he's powerless.

Still, Badi was someone who was good at executing strategy and Gisu was someone who was proficient at making strategies from his ingenuity.

They have the greatest compatibility.

There was also a risk in leading him to this narrow stretch of valley.

But it was better than him crossing the valley by himself in some place I don't know and attacking from that side.

At the top of the valley were Cliff, Ruijerd, the Supard warriors, and me.

The remaining Supard warriors were stationed somewhere off the wall for surveillance.

Worst case scenario, if he crossed the valley somewhere other than here, we would know immediately.

Right behind the rampart, Eris and the rest were on standby.

If they broke through here, it would be an all out war.

We managed to buy some time.

What would have been a one day trip in a straight line took three.

We earned two days.

There still hadn't been any contact from Roxy.

The time we bought might have been pointless, but I don't have any intention of changing our decision to buy time.

From the battle at the port city, we understood that we can't win in a straight up fight.

I have to bet on my trump card.

"....."

Dawn arrived.

We did not know when he would arrive.

I was looking over the forest with the Supard warriors. According to their observations, the enemy camp was outside their range.

I wasn't sure of what to think.

".....They're here!"

As I was thinking that, Ruijerd called out.

Looking at the dim forest, I strained my eyes to the best of my ability.

I could see it.

It's only the size of a speck, but someone was standing in the forest.

But it's not gold.

It was someone in a white robe.

I recognized the feeling that robe gave off.

It was Gisu.

It was possible that it may be someone else, but it looked like Gisu.

"Who's that?"

"Gisu."

Ruijerd looked hard and confirmed it.

From here to there was within the range of the third eye.

Therefore, the probability of it being Gisu was high.

Not from the bare edge of the valley, but from deep into the forest, he was making his way to us through the thicket.

It was difficult to see since it was still dark, but it definitely looked like Gisu.

But the Golden color couldn't be seen near him.

Gisu was alone.

"Huh?"

Alone?

Was he scouting alone?

Gisu, who knew just what kind of magic I should be capable of casting, was alone?

Was he confident?

Or was Badigadi near him in standby?

No, he's about 100 meters from the valley; if Badigadi was close enough to provide backup, Ruijerd would have been able to see him.

At this distance, shouldn't my attack be able to kill him?

"!"

Thinking that, my heart began to beat faster.

The stone cannon will reach.

Gisu seems to be investigating over here, but I get the feeling he hasn't noticed me yet.

I can hit him.

100 meters.

Taking into account the elevation, it can't be more than 120m.

If aimed properly, I can definitely hit him at this distance.

"......."

Should I?

No, what would I do if it was someone else?

An adventurer wearing a white robe that just got lost in the forest.

.....No.

No one should've been able to even move because of the fog and quagmire from yesterday.

Someone couldn't have come in this far.

If they were already this close to the valley before the battle started, then they would have already been picked up on the Supards' radar.

Right now, I can defeat Gisu.

What should I do?

It has to be a trap.

But what kind of trap?

Right now, I could attack. What kind of card does the other side have?

If I attack, will he gain some kind of advantage?

Could it be that the person over there was someone who looked like Gisu?

Was it possible that it's one of my allies or family?

No, it can't be.

Impossible.

Up until yesterday, it was just the two of them.

Someone couldn't just suddenly come along.

Isn't this my chance?

Up until now, I have been focused primarily on buying time, I haven't yet made an actual attack.

From the port until here, slowly advancing backwards.

On the journey with the carefree Badigadi, it's possible that he thinks this might be an easy victory.

Was it unlikely that they let their guard down and ended up showing their faces here?

The attack would be very brief and the risk would be little.

Was there any reason not to attack?

There was the possibility that they had put a guy over there by some means or something that I wouldn't want to kill.

But what was the meaning in doing something like that, strategically speaking?

What's the meaning that I do not attack from here?

.....Confusion.

It feels like a trap, but I couldn't think of any demerits at the least if I attacked from here.

"....."

Alright.

Let's shoot.

It may be a trap, but there's no demerit in just shooting him.

I'll just deal with it when the time comes.

".....I'll be attacking."

"Got it."

I concentrated mana in my right hand.

I stressed accuracy rather than speed or power.

I couldn't see him through the clairvoyance as usual, but I was changing the scenery using clairvoyance while predicting the impact by on-offing mana to the foresight eye.

An exploding stone cannon was used if it missed the target.

I hesitated for a moment at the brink of shooting.

But immediately after my moment of hesitation, the stone cannon got released from my finger. With an almost straight trajectory, it was sucked into the opposite side of the valley.

There was no sound.

After it impacted on the person at the opposite side of the valley, that person fell down as if a doll's string was cut.

After that, he didn't move.

It hit.

There was a response.

"....."

As if nothing had happened at all, time continued to flow as usual.

The fallen person wasn't moving.

Within the morning glow, nothing could be heard other than the rustling noises of the forest.

10 minutes.

20 minutes.

No, the accurate passage of time was unknown, but time was simply moving nevertheless.

During that time, something sprouted within me.

(I want to confirm it)

I wanted to confirm just who was the person fallen there.

Was it Gisu or was it someone else?

Dead or not?

I'd quickly go there, confirm it, and then come back immediately.

Only that much is safe.

That thought born inside me.

But I sensed something at the same time.

This was the trap.

Attacking him wasn't the trap, but this feeling that was budding within me right now was Gisu's strategy.

If the person fallen over there was really Gisu at the verge of dying, and it came to that finishing him off were the circumstances.

If the person fallen over there was Sylphy who was caught unnoticed and somehow they were able to fool Ruijerd's eye, and we had to go there and save her immediately or else she would die.

When I go there, the Fighting God would appear and then I'll be killed.

I must not go there.

"....."

1 hour passed.

I was becoming nervous.

Did I do some kind of mistake that cannot be undone?

Should I not have fired after all?

Was their objective to make me shoot, and then stall me here?

Were they crossing the valley from some other place right now?

No, just in case, the warriors of the Supard race were keeping guard at various places of the valley.

I'll believe in them.

2 hours passed.

Should I go there and confirm it after all?

After confirming, would I not be able to predict Gisu's next move?

Could it be that I was running away from the act of confirming because of some kind of reasoning?

3 hours passed.

No movements whatsoever.

Various patterns came to mind.

I got tired of thinking so much already.

If making me tired in this way was Gisu's strategy, then it was working.

4 hours passed.

That was a corpse.

If it didn't move for 4 hours straight then I have no doubt that it was a corpse.

But I wonder just whose corpse it is.

Gisu was dead, but it was likely Badigadi wasn't moving.

If Roxy were here at a time like this, then I could've heard some kind of constructive opinion from her.

Cliff was just shaking his head with a sullen face.

6 hours passed.

After having a light lunch, we continued to gaze at the corpse.

It didn't move.

8 hours passed.

It was soon mid-afternoon.

The day was gradually passing.

As a result of bracing myself for so long, I was now starting to get tired.

If, if nothing happened after the day had been completely passed, I would be going out there to confirm it.

10 hours passed.

"Rudeus, he's here."

On Ruijerd's words, I looked at the forest, taken aback.

From there, an armor glittering with golden color was coming out of the forest.

When the golden armor approached the corpse, he slowly stood up.

And then after they faced each other and talked about something, he faced this way.

When he shrugged his shoulders, I realized.

That gesture was, without a doubt, Gisu's.

They quickly returned back deep into the forest.

And then silence arrived for a short while again.

".....Phew."

So it was a trap.

That was Gisu.

He made himself a decoy to lure me to him.

That was dangerous.

Still, after a little more and it will be night.

I'll entrust the Supard warriors over here with the look out and then sleep myself a little bit.

I was too tired.

It wasn't likely that they could come at night, but let's make it a quick nap regardless.

"I'll be sleeping for a short while."

While thinking that, I wrapped myself up with a blanket.

The 3rd day was over.

The night of 3rd day.

It seemed the opposing side was in a bind after looking at the rampart.

They couldn't just try to leap over the rampart.

And if they couldn't leap over then there was no way to protect Gisu, that thought hit me.

I could understand that because a stone came flying from the other side.

It was a pretty big stone at first.

Even as that came at such an alarmingly fast rate that we got goosebumps, it impacted the wall and one part of it was destroyed.

After that, logs and stones came flying towards us at a terrific speed, which were all intercepted by me, who was startled by the banging roars, and we were able to avoid collateral on the rampart.

If they didn't do something about the wall, then they couldn't break through.

That was probably why they were acting like this.

Not to mention, looking at Badigadi's fighting style until now, he could've easily broken through here if he was alone, even if it was something impossible.

So it was Gisu after all.

If he left Gisu behind, then he could break through.

But it was possible that someone would pursue him from the back, taking Gisu's life.

Of course, there was nothing like reinforcements coming from outside the forest.....

But it was possible that Atofe would revive and come chasing after them.

They were possibly afraid about this matter.

Even if that was not true, then just leaving one Supard warrior on the forest side would be sufficient for the job.

.....But it could be possible that was exposed yesterday.

Even if there's a watchguard in my absence, it would be a quick story.

It wouldn't be surprising if Fighting God leaped over here alone any time now.

And then.....no reinforcements came.

The fourth day.

The Fighting God arrived along with the sunrise.

Alone, as I had expected.

While running with long jumps similar to Malta.

And clung near the bottom of the walls.

As I had expected.

Yes, as I had expected.

Gisu wasn't riding on his back.

The moment I confirmed that, I faced towards the opposite side of the valley and fired magic.

A wide range 『Flashover』.

The forest was engulfed in fire in an instant.

The effective range was unknown.

But there was no time to confirm it.

While dedicating a fraction of my vision towards the forest fire, I concentrated on the enemy in front of me.

The Fighting God made good use of his 6 arms to quickly climb up the wall like a spider.

In order to knock him off, Cliff and I fired stone cannons and water balls in large amounts, but it was in vain.

The Fighting God ran up the surface of the wall with overwhelming speed.

"Cliff! It's useless, retreat! Ruijerd-san! I'll leave it up to you!"

"Got it!"

Ruijerd took the two of us and jumped down the rampart.

Of course, I didn't wait for Fighting God to pass over the rampart.

The moment we landed, I used magic and knocked down the rampart.

The huge rampart fell towards the valley.

It was futile.

The slowly falling rampart blew up like a dynamite being used.

The huge stones flew into the air.

A golden armor was flying within them.

The stones poured like rain.

While dealing with them with my magic, I didn't take my eyes off from the Fighting God.

The Fighting God landed nearby me, a spot 5 metres away from me.

"Hmm. Hmm."

And then he slowly turned towards us.

"Now then, once again."

With his upper arms folding themselves, the middle arm pointing towards me and the lower arms being put on his waist.

Badigadi saw me.

"My name is Fighting God Badigadi! The one who has taken the name of the Fighting God only as a sworn friend of Hitogami! I challenge you bastard to a personal duel!"

"I WANT TO ASK ABOUT ONE THING BEFORE THAT!"

I shouted at once.

While putting aside the thought that there would be no use in arguing, I still shouted.

"Your Majesty Badi, just why are you supporting Hitogami!? What does it mean to be a sworn friend!? Were you not deceived by Hitogami before!?"

"He certainly deceived me! I was deceived when in order to protect Kishirika, I tried to kill Laplace by wearing this armor, but I killed Laplace and ended up murdering Kishirika as well!"

"Then, just why!?"

"Hitogami apologized to me about that time by bowing to me! And on top of that, he requested me for my cooperation! Thus the Great I couldn't say no to him!"

Hitogami apologized?

That's a lie.

I couldn't think of him apologizing of all things.

Even if he apologized, it would be like "Ahaha, that time was my bad, 'kay " while grinning.

"He's deceiving you again!"

"Don't care! Even if he deceives me, as long as he keeps apologizing, I'll just keep forgiving him! The Great I, am immortal! Kishirika resurrected too! Even if he apologized now, there's no longer any source of resent! He may wish for anything even more than this!"

He's too lenient.

It felt like he was saying some very good things.

Even I might let it go if it was a trivial lie.

But I couldn't convince myself that killing my family was something trivial.

I wasn't one of the Immortal Demon Clan. My common sense was different.

"Would you not think about changing sides?"

"Futile! I was never on the Dragon God's side to begin with! But, if you were to gain victory in this battle, I will think about it!"

Fight and then convey your desire.

This part of him resembled Atofe a lot.

If I recall, it was also a duel when I first met this Demon Lord.

Did I win that time or did I lose?

At the very least, it ended with Badigadi acknowledging my strength.

That's why, he might have gotten along well with me.

".....I understand. I will accept Your Majesty's challenge."

But the declaration this time.

Badigadi had forgotten a few words.

"We'll fight Your Majesty with everyone here."

Eris, Elinalize, Zanoba, and Doga showed up from the thicket behind me.

Furthermore, many warriors of the Supard race, who were standing guard near the valley, gathered one by one.

And thus, an all-out war began.

The vanguard tanks were Zanoba and Doga.

Eris and Ruijerd were the vanguard attackers.

Elinalize and Supard warriors were supporting in the middle.

In the rear, I was the attacker, and Cliff was the healer.

A standard battle formation.

With standard strategy.

Basically, Zanoba and Doga would take the frontal attacks, Eris and Ruijerd would be the main offense.

Elinalize and the Supard warriors, who were inferior in fighting strength, were to go around back at times and create small disturbances.

Instant kill from just one blow was likely possible except for Zanoba and Doga.

But, by combining our efforts and covering our weaknesses together, we could avoid a direct hit.

Even if a direct hit was avoided, bone fractures or other minor injuries would still be left, all of which would be healed by me and Cliff.

We only aimed to avoid instant deaths or loss of consciousness.

Cliff would devote himself to healing.

I would be healing from time to time while firing stone cannons here and there, giving damage to Fighting God and averting his attacks.

Badigadi couldn't be seen by the foresight eye.

Even so, I cut the mana supply to the clairvoyance, and by looking at my comrade's movements through the foresight eye, I could in turn predict his movements.

Doing something like this was a first for me.

I hadn't practiced using it nor was trained to use it.

But I was somehow able to do it.

I was able to understand my comrade's movements as well as the enemy's within this battle while closing one of my eyes.

In fact, it went smoother than when I usually went about doing such things.

I wonder if it was only because of the pivotal support of my allies.

Or is it because of Badigadi's frank movements?

At least, Badigadi didn't have Alek's level of skill.

Despite being surrounded by Eris, Ruijerd, and Sándor, Alek kept fighting with almost no injuries.

But Badigadi was different.

The number of people was different this time around, but his body was getting hit by almost all of our attacks.

Things were progressing well.

I could properly see the enemy's movements and could predict them as well.

Nevertheless, a winning vision doesn't come to mind.

Badigadi was receiving all of our attacks.

But that's just it.

Even if Eris cut him, even if Ruijerd pierced him, it quickly repaired itself.

The golden armor crawled like a living being and filled up the holes in an instant.

Probably restoration was taking place even inside the armor.

At first it looked like we were giving him a lot of damage, but he wasn't getting any damage at all.

And he wasn't getting fatigued as well.

At first it looked like we would gain easy victory, but fatigue wasn't even getting accumulated like in Alek's case.

It felt like the fight would just keep on continuing forever, and our side was getting in an unfavourable position.

We had no chance of winning.

We were just holding out.

Until this battle formation reached its limits, until someone suddenly collapsed, we were simply holding out till then.

It had been a few hours since our clash, yet we held out.

We didn't know what would happen if we held out like this, but we simply held out.

But it seemed forced nonetheless.

As expected, the first to go down were the Supard warriors.

They were, by no means, weak.

But many were inferior compared to Ruijerd.

It was because these people simply hadn't fought enough real battles.

Or it was possible that these warriors were the ones who weren't born during the time of Laplace's military campaign.

These warriors who, since the time of their birth, only hunted the Invisible wolves and nothing else, couldn't keep up with the Fighting God's battle.

They fell one by one from the battlefield just like the falling dominoes.

There were those who clearly died instantly, those who were serious injured but still fought, and those who remained indistinct.

In the end, a group of more than 10 warriors was reduced to only 3.

The one to go down next was Elinalize.

She was also, by no means at all, weak.

She was practically one of the top class among the adventurers.

She was on a level where she could become a vanguard during the capture of a S-class labyrinth.

But that was still among the adventurers.

Her specialty was her skillful use of a shield to ward off attacks, and from there with as little injuries as possible she was able to control the soldiers that would be prevalent.

But the shield that she was accustomed to wasn't with her.

Although she warded off most of Fighting God Badigadi's attacks with her skills by making use of the shield I made using Earth Magic, it was still easily penetrated.

Elinalize danced in mid-air and was slapped into a large tree, rendering her unconsciousness.

It started collapsing from that point onwards.

When Elinalize fainted, Cliff's mind was preoccupied by her.

During that little window, he was dragged up into the Fighting God's charge.

As if hit by a truck, Cliff was blown off into a thicket and vanished.

Was it instant death or a grave injury? There wasn't any distinction, but he wasn't returning.

After that, I had no doubt that he had lost consciousness.

When Cliff fainted, Zanoba and Doga who were receiving healing magic from him lost their support.

They who were struck by the attacks only a few times because of my stone cannons as support and with Elinalize's backing, were now getting struck by almost all of the attacks.

They were still able to hold out for some more because of my healing magic, but that was it.

Catching up with the two of them who were getting blown each time they were hit, and sending them out after casting healing magic was impossible for me.

If I had been wearing some equipment of Magic Armor 『MK. II』 then it might've been possible.

We gradually lost our timing and the two of them were blown off simultaneously.

After that, he took aim at Eris, due to which Ruijerd covered up for her and became unfit to fight.

I hurriedly healed Doga and ran to Zanoba's side, but it was too late.

Our front had already started to crumble as quickly as Doga was blown away. And when I was healing Zanoba, what I saw at the corner of my eyes was Eris getting a direct hit by Fighting God's fist.

Eris fell while vomiting blood.

That was fatal. My brain shouted that if I didn't heal her immediately, it would be too late.

But I was too late.

Fighting God closed the distance between me and Zanoba.

"UUOOOOooooooooo!"

Zanoba howled.

He caught Fighting God's upper right fist and then upper left fist.

He was punched in the stomach with the lower right fist and his body bent in a 90°.

While being punched in the head by the middle right fist, he was blown away horizontally.

And then the Fighting God approached me.

When I thought it was dangerous, it was too late.

I fired a shockwave with my right hand and when I moved back because of the recoil, I was already being hit.

His middle right fist approached me.

I quickly thought of guarding myself with my arms, but it was futile.

I was hit by a shockwave that felt like it could tear off my upper body and was blown away.

Was it good luck that I didn't fell unconscious?

Or was it misfortune?

I could feel all of the bones from my shoulder to my ribs getting broken.

It was possible that even my spine broke since I could no longer feel my lower body.

I couldn't move.

The shockwave felt was so great that I couldn't even feel pain.

".....Haaugh.....haa....."

I quickly casted healing magic and stood up.

A hell-like scene extended right before my eyes.

Not even a single person was getting up.

During the time when I was down, the Fighting God swept up the remaining Supard warriors.

They were annihilated.

I erred in my decision of when to retreat.

We couldn't even retreat anymore.

Now that I think about it, we should've retreated the moment Elinalize fell.

We should've retreated back to the Supard village judging that we could no longer hold out.

And then entrust the rest to Orsted.

It was too late for regrets now.

Fighting God was finally standing in front of me.

".....Do you have any last wishes?"

"Honestly, I want to plead for my life."

"I can listen to it but can't grant it. Since what Hitogami wants is your life."

I just want to at least heal Eris somehow.

It didn't seem like I had the free time to think about pleading my life with my wobbling head.

Something, isn't there something that can be done?

I just needed 5─no, only 3 minutes─ to rush over to Eris while Badigadi was distracted.

It was fine even if Cliff came to and healed someone.

Somehow, someway, can't it be done?

"Then it's fine if you take my life. In exchange.....would you be willing to protect my family?"

"Oh, family huh?"

"Your Majesty isn't aware of it but I already have 4 kids. And they are 4 very lively children."

"Children are something excellent. Even The Great I want to create some with Kishirika."

Badigadi nodded.

"Very well. However, even The Great I wouldn't pardon those who would defy me."

"That is, of course."

After my death, Hitogami would aim at my children.

But, Badigadi wouldn't support this.

Even just holding onto that promise, it would be acceptable for first.

But it was also possible that this held no meaning.....

This was my final job.

"FUHAHAHAHA, HAAHAHAHAHAHAHAA!"

Badigadi laughed a lot and then raised his fist.

"Well then, farewell."

On those words, I faced both of my hands forwards.

I just wanted to at least fire stone cannons with all my might in my final mo—-

"LAY DOWN!"

I quickly laid on my fours like a dog.

Something, which was even lower than my stance, passed by my side.

That something quickly passed through Fighting God's thigh and stopped at the opposite side.

With dark skin, animal ears, having a cat-like tail, it was the black wolf.

Fighting God's area around the knee was torn into pieces. He violently shook for an instant as he was thrown off balance, but it was only for an instant.

It was quickly restored by the armor, and as if nothing had happened, he swung his fist downwards.

And then a long skirt fluttered in the wind covering my vision.

"Uowhaa!"

I could no longer see the Fighting God who swung his fist downwards.

I felt something big getting blown away in mid-air slightly behind me.

After a delay, I could hear something falling with a *BU-BAM*.

Just what happened?

The only thing that I saw, which appeared out of nowhere in front of me, was the light blue-colored panties inside that long skirt.

And the wearer of those panties, I felt like I might've seen her several times or maybe not.

But I knew one other person.

I remembered.

Like hell I could forget.

Those movements, that sand-coloured hair, that dark reddish-brown body.

A swaying tail with animal ears.

"Ghyslaine!"

Then that means, that black-haired person was Isolte!

Water Emperor Isolte!

Ghyslaine and Isolte.

The one who was moving along with them was!

"Sylphy!"

Sylphy was quickly running along the battlefield like a rat.

She approached the fallen ones and only held out her hand.

With just that, the injuries of the fallen ones were getting healed instantly.

And thus, she healed Zanoba and Doga in a flash.

Chantless Healing Magic.

When I saw it, Eris and Ruijerd came out of the thicket and were coming back towards here.

Before I knew it, our battlefront was re-organized.

Isolte as the main shield, Doga and Zanoba as the sub-shields.

Eris, Ruijerd, and Ghyslaine as the attackers.

And Sylphy as a healer was added who could use Chantless Healing Magic.

Our battlefront was reorganized.

The hell was over.

"Rudi! We will hold him back here so go to the village! Roxy is waiting!"

"! Got it!"

I caught those words and quickly began running towards the Supard village.

I ran with all my might.

I ran, putting in all of my strength for the first time in my life.

Sylphy had arrived.

Even though the valley's bridge was dropped, she arrived.

Which meant that she came from the village's side.

Then that meant the bet that I had been waiting for had finally arrived.

While jumping over the roots of trees, going through the forest, I arrived at the Supard village.

The moment I saw that thing, I was delighted.

I saw it.

I could see it at the inner part the moment I jumped inside the village.

The teleport formation that was written in advance at the inner part of the village.

The long-awaited thing was around there.

I kept running.

I ran with all my might.

"Nii-san!"

"Grand Master!"

"Ah, Honored Onii-cha─"

I saw Aisha, Norn, and Julie on the way, but ignored them.

I was simply dead-set on running and arrived at that spot.

Near the destroyed teleport formation, one girl was sitting completely exhausted.

"Roxy!"

"……Ah, Rudi."

When I shouted, she raised her face.

There were dark circles below her eyes.

Was her mana exhausted, or did she do an all-nighter?

"I terribly apologize. I made a mistake in the procedure. I started the teleport formation after digging it out and bringing it up. If I had drawn the teleport formation before and then asked you to dig it out then it wouldn't have taken so lo─"

"It's alright! You've done more than enough! At least you made it in time!"

The thing behind her.

It was a giant armor.

Its height was 3 meters.

With a deep-blue coloring.

Gatling on the right hand and shotgun on the left.

Furthermore, mounted on the tip of its fist was the cursed sword which had the effect of ignoring defense.

Small but quite wide, an armor resembling a sumo wrestler was lying face-down.

Its appearance didn't really differ from the MK. I.

But this wasn't the MK. I.

I had prepared this in advance if something like this happened, the real trump card.

Its mana consumption was twice the normal one, capable of multiplying the mobility and defense many-fold, a short-term decisive battle weapon.

Due to its concept being the complete reverse of MK. III, the name it was given was—

"It's the Magic Armor 『MK. Zero』."

The last resort.

My trump card.

If I didn't win with this.....no it's not about whether I could win.

It was clear to me that our chances of winning were low.

"Roxy! I'll be going then!"

"Rudi! Please be careful!"

I boarded the 『MK. Zero』.

While getting dizzy as a huge amount of my mana was sucked up from me, I stood up.

And then, I saw Orsted at the center of the village.

He was holding a large sword in his hand.

"Rudeus! Take this!"

Orsted very easily threw that large sword towards me.

I immediately caught it.

A large sword which was a perfect size for the 3 meters tall armor.

The 『Dragon King Sword』 Kajakuto.

I, who was horrible in swordsmanship, could feel a tremendous amount of force simply by holding the cursed sword.

"Orsted-sama! I'm off!"

Orsted didn't answer.

He simply nodded.

I moved the MK. Zero with all my might and headed towards the battlefield.

AUTHOR Q & A (12 OF 14)

Q. Since Badi couldn't take the armor off, he died once and then revived, and at that time he was able to take it off?

A. That's right. Well, if the wearer is hit by a very strong attack then the armor will be left but the insides will be dead, so it can be taken off.

It can also be taken off if the wearer is hit with an attack strong enough which the armor's restoration ability can't keep up, but well, thinking realistically, the insides are going to die first anyway.

Q. I've realized it these days but at times this 『Girldeus』 that comes out occasionally, is it Paro of Otomedius?

A. That's right.

Q. What Roxy said this time "and then asked you to dig it out then it wouldn't have taken so lo─....." wasn't above the teleport formation but rather teleporting below it, below the teleport formation of the Supard village. Simply put, teleporting it underground. Would it fine to interpret it as such?

A. Wrong!

When she realized that the MK. Zero was buried, she should've immediately connected with the Supard village via the teleport formation and asked Rudi to excavate it using Earth Magic. That's what it meant!

Q. Rudi should've volleyed shots at the fallen Gisu at once.....would that unorthodox remark be no good?

A. That way of thinking isn't unorthodox or something like that but it was unknown whether attacking itself was a trap or not and yet simply thinking about pursuing him was enough.

Q. The Magic Armor MK. Zero can't perform super-advanced information analysis and situation predictions. Loaded with the "Zero System" which can calculate and predict infinite results and transmitting it directly to the wearer's mind.

A. It's all clear to me now. So that was the mind of universe huh!

Q. Where is Paul's cursed sword attached on the MK. Zero, left hand or right hand?

A. It's mounted with the gatling. So maybe right.

Q. If it's the usual route then it's possible but I don't know how it feels to attempt a speedrun in a route that came out for the first time.

A. An example like speedrun was poor huh!

Q. I've been wondering this for a long time now but the protagonist is too worried by things like fight and strategy.

He certainly is far from becoming the strongest but he was still able to fight a formidable enemy and win(survive), that's why I think that it's better to grow his mental level even further.

A. Leaving the thought of tying his victory with his growth aside. If he didn't worry=he will grow mentally. I cannot consent to such a diagram. Rejected!

Q. If the President dies then would the current world keep on continuing? Or would it become like it never existed?

A. Until now, the outcome is that it never existed.

Q. → I might've not understood Badi's reasoning a little bit.

→ The one who tried to kill his beloved once, apologized. So for his benefit he tried to kill a friend? He thought that it was only a friend but it ended up being Rudeus.

A. The Human God and Dragon God have been at war since the ancient times.

Badigadi only maintained a lurking distance from both sides, but since the Human God apologized, so he swept the past under the carpet and joined Human God's faction.

Which meant that Dragon God's faction was the enemy.

Whether the enemy in front of him would be a friend or a blood relative, well those kind of thoughts might have risen up.

But if he was the boss of the enemy faction, and if he isn't killed then victory can't be achieved, so he would obviously kill him.

Q. Just how many more chapters will be in this volume and how many volumes would come out next?

A. This volume contains 21 chapters in all and Vol 24 will be the concluding volume.

I'm thinking about writing Vol 25 and thereafter which will contain the afterwards story or the the mundane episodes that I wasn't able to include in the real story named 『Redundancy Chapter』 with a sluggish pace.

END AUTHOR Q & A (12 OF 14)

When I returned back, Eris and the rest had managed to hold on.

Without me and without the Supard warriors, it was like back when Cliff and Elinalize had dropped out.

Yet, the sense of stability was increasing.

Ghyslaine was basically running around the battlefield on all fours.

The range of the Fighting God's fist was high.

In order to escape that, she was running around with her body extremely close to the ground, and was supporting others by firing Sword Flash from the front, back, and sides.

Her offensive ability wasn't doing much damage, but the Fighting God was swinging his hands around as if he was being annoyed by it.

Also, Sylphy's existence played a crucial part.

Her chantless healing magic went quite well with this situation where the demand for faster healing was high.

Even when Zanoba or Doga were blown away by the Fighting God, she quickly ran towards them and healed them.

She's been away from active duty for quite a long time, she probably doesn't have much stamina.

Yet, as a healer, she was keeping up with Cliff and my portion.

And worthy of a special mention was Isolte's existence.

She, who stood as the extreme vanguard of this battle, was warding off all of the Fighting God's attacks and firing counters.

Her actions were fluent and accurate.

The Fighting God's attack, which was quite capable of dealing a one hit instant kill, looked like the tantrum of a child in front of that skill.

Of course, but of course, he wouldn't go down with just that.

No matter how many times and how strong the counter she fired towards the Fighting God, even when she cut his arms or legs, there was no damage.

If she were to fight him one-on-one, she may put up a good fight, but she still wouldn't be able to stand victorious at the very end.

She would eventually be fatigued, leading to her loss.

However, if we were to say that they were only stalling for time until my return, then her presence was overwhelmingly important.

"I've made you all wait!"

"Rudi.....! Everyone retreat!"

On Sylphy's signal, everyone took their distance.

"Oh."

The Fighting God didn't give chase. There was no need to.

Without even glancing at the people retreating from him, he simply looked at me.

The difference in size wasn't that much.

The Fighting God Armor was 2.5 metres tall.

The Magic Armor was 3 metres tall.

The difference was only around 20~30 centimetres. Mine was slightly taller.

Since I had stopped some 10 metres away from him, he didn't have to look up to me.

"Is that the one? The power that was acknowledged by the Dragon God himself, and the one that took down my older sister. Is that the MAGIC ARMOR!?"

".....Did you not see the MK. I on the beach?"

"Hmm, was there something like that?"

"Well, you did break it into small pieces with just one hit."

Thinking back about that one hit...

I trusted its defense too much and ended up taking a direct hit. However, Eris and Ruijerd took similar hits and were still alive.

This might be the difference between normal defense and Touki's defense.....

If that's the case, then I'm worried about Cliff.

Although he wasn't hit directly by a fist, he probably couldn't wear Touki.

"Then, if that was the 『MK. I』, then THIS one is different?"

"About that, please look forward to it, so..."

While saying that, I looked around my surroundings.

They were looking at us from quite a distance.

They had taken quite a distance, but there still was the possibility of getting wrapped up.

Ah, Sylphy was rushing towards the injured ones as usual.

Then, I'll entrust Cliff to Sylphy.

"Well then, shall we begin?"

And thus the fight began.

The gong of the battle was rung by my stone cannon.

While moving back, I shot stone cannons, and Badigadi chased after me.

I was following the same pattern as when I fought with Orsted.

I fired stone cannons randomly while retreating.

Honestly, I thought that only doing this much would be hard, but when I loaded the Dragon King Sword with mana, the MK. Zero which was supposed to be slow was moving quite smoothly.

So this is what it meant to manipulate gravity.

I hadn't even practiced doing it to begin with. I wasn't going to make it any lighter than this.

"FUHAHAHAHAH! It's not even as effective as a mosquito bite!"

The Fighting God smashed many trees and made holes in the earth, all while drawing closer to me.

It was clear from watching that the effect was weak.

He neither dodged it nor repelled it.

Even in such short distance, his body just kept taking those hits as if absorbing them, and they were just falling in large drops from his back.

It was clear from watching that there was no damage.

It may have worked against Orsted, but it wasn't working here.

"Are you just going to keep running away!?"

Of course, I had no intention of doing that.

After I finally reached my targeted location, I gouged out the earth from Badigadi's feet.

As a large part of the ground was removed with the shotgun, the Fighting God's foothold was taken away from him.

His posture collapsed only for an instant.

I took that opportunity.

"WHooaa!?"

And purged him with the gatling.

I brandished the sword that was attached on my right hand.

The sword cut the armor like butter, and black skin was exposed on the inside.

『Shotgun Trigger!』

I drove the shotgun inside that.

One of Badigadi's arms was torn off and blown away.

"FUHAHAHAHA! Payback time!"

However, I was hit by four counters simultaneously.

The shockwave ran throughout the Magic Armor, and I was blown back a few metres.

But it's alright.

It was a direct hit, but I was somehow able to withstand it.

"Hmph!"

I moved my body back immediately and retrieved Badigadi's arm that was blown away.

The arm was pulsating timidly, wrapped up by the golden gauntlet.

I threw it strongly.

"Fuahahaha! Useless, useless!"

As Badigadi said that, his arm began to regrow.

It popped out like a certain person from N○mek.

"Mngh."

But it's quite apparent that it wasn't useless.

The arm that grew back was bare.

The armor wasn't attached to it.

"Oh, so that's how it is.....you've thought things through!"

Where I had thrown his arm just now...

I had prepared a certain magic circle over there.

Within it, Badigadi's arm and the Fighting God Armor couldn't regenerate.

It also seemed that Badigadi's size had decreased somewhat.

I hadn't actually thought about it.

But I got a hint.

Fighting God Badigadi.

Due to his armour, he possessed both high speed and power.

But his speed, compared to the sword masters I've faced before, was nothing special.

Orsted, and even Alek, were probably faster.

Although, obviously, he's faster than me, when wearing the Magic Armor, it was at a level that I could compete with.

It's thanks to the training that I've received from Eris and Orsted that I was still alive.

What's troublesome was his ridiculously high defense and durability.

The Fighting God Armor was hard.

It could be boasted that it was even harder than the Magic Armor.

At the very least, if Eris and the others were to hit it with all their might, it would leave a scratch, but the arm or head parts might not get separated.

The armor would instantly restore itself and would keep on fighting as if nothing had happened.

Normally, that would cause damage to accumulate on the inside.....

But on the Immortal Demon Lord Badigadi, it does not.

Eris's slash or Ruijerd's thrust would normally cause damage on the inside of the armor.

But with Badigadi, it didn't cause that damage.

Whether it's a slash or a thrust or a strike, it's immediately healed.

Before long, the ones who were attacking would become tired, and they would inevitably succumb to the destructive power of those 6 arms.

Then, just how should he be brought down?

This hint laid with Atofe.

Immortal Demon Lord Atofe.

The symbol of fear itself for the various Demon Lords of the Demon Continent. The one who would keep getting up no matter how many times she was brought down and would keep charging towards the enemy.

There were two methods in order to bring her down.

The first was to disconnect the limbs and seal them so that they can't be restored.

This was the most standard way and Atofe was defeated 2 times using this method in the past.

A barrier which was fit to seal them for hundreds of years would be required, but for now, simply surrounding the parts in an advanced level magic barrier was enough to stop regeneration.

The other way was to make her admit defeat.

The Immortal Demon Lord Atofe, in accordance with her own rule, would fight many opponents.

And so, by that rule, when she realizes that she has lost, she will admit defeat.

Although I didn't think that it would be a simple matter to make the current Badigadi admit defeat.

So this time, I'd have to go with the former.

For this purpose, Cliff prepared various barrier magic circles throughout the forest.

They were set to activate when Badigadi's limbs were thrown into them.

I was previously unsure about their effectiveness against the Fighting God Armor, but they were working.

Use the defense-ignoring sword to cut through the armor, separate the arms, and seal them.

By doing this 6 times, I could make Badigadi admit defeat.

I'd like to seal his whole body, but.....without Cliff here, I couldn't use the magic circle to seal his entire body.

"AAAAaaaaaa!"

I charged at him while yelling.

I no longer cared about damage.

Not even I knew just how long the MK. Zero could run at full power.

Thanks to the Dragon King Sword, the operation time may have been extended to some extent, but it wouldn't be strange if it stopped anytime soon.

There was no path besides a short and decisive battle.

"COME TO ME! HERO!"

The Fighting God spreads his arms wide to my challenge.

And at the same time, he swung his right hand.

In response to the Fighting God's flying fist, I brandished my sword and prepared for a counter.

The movement of those six arms exceeded my expectations.

But I had already gotten used to it during the fight.

I was at my best today.

I could evade it.

I cut into the lower left arm.

At the same time, I aimed the shotgun at the cut and fired, blowing it apart.

But there was an unavoidable opening in that moment.

In the moment that I blew his arm away, I was hit by a fist and sent flying backwards.

".....Ngh!"

The surface of the Magic Armor cracked.

As expected, it couldn't stand up to the Fighting God's fist. But the arms not wearing any armor could be ignored.

Four more left.

The Magic armor only had to last until I send them all flying.

"!"

I noticed something else.

(The barrier is...)

The magic circle drawn on the ground was scraped off during that exchange.

From the aftermath of the battle.

How did I not realize something so simple sooner?

Of course, there were still undamaged magic circles left, but I didn't know which ones were still okay.

"...Dammit!"

I immediately threw away the arm I had cut.

I threw it into the Earth Dragon Valley.

The more beat up Atofe became, the longer it took her to revive, and if her beat up parts were spread out, she wouldn't be able to revive immediately.

They could probably revive eventually, but it should have some meaning.

(...Hmm?)

For some reason, part of the armor wasn't getting restored.

Did dismembering the user cause a loss in efficiency?

The restoration seemed to be slowing. Have the many years of not being used caused a drop in performance even in the Fighting God Armor?

Or was it Badigadi's strategy?

No, don't worry about useless things right now.

I should take advantage of the fact that he's not restoring, and simply think of how to send all of his arms flying.

"Grrr..."

Badigadi continued to groan, but a new arm didn't come out.

And contrary to that, the arm that was restored before was now covered in some turtle like armor.

"!"

I wonder what it is.

In the next instant, from the remaining 4 arms, 2 vanished.

The arms and the gauntlets were sucked into the armor.

And the remaining two arms got thicker.

They got thicker with a gurgling sound.

The remaining two.

Now that they're thicker, can an I cut them...?

No, I can. The harder the object, the better this sword cuts. There's no meaning in it even if he reinforced his arms and increased his defense.

After promptly deciding that, I kicked the ground and closed in on the Fighting God.

An alarm bell rang somewhere in my mind.

But no matter what the enemy was planning, I had already revealed my trump card.

With every passing moment, my mana was approaching zero.

If I didn't attack, I couldn't win.

"AAAAAAaaaaa!"

I could only shout.

In doing so, power came out.

Denying both fear and uncertainty, a small amount of courage showed its face.

This small amount of courage became profound.

Charging at him to obtain victory, just like Eris.

I rammed into the Fighting God.

He staggered, but took the blow.

I swung my right hand.

Biting into his left hand, I kept cutting.

I brought out my left hand,

And pushed the shotgun against where I cut,

And then shouted.

『SHOTGUN TRIGGER!』

Both Badigadi's arm and the Fighting God armor went flying.

But at the same time, I was also sent flying.

I was knocked back.

Badigadi's remaining arm.

I was hit by it.

The entire front of the Magic Armor was completely destroyed.

The shockwave traveled to the interior and my body was assaulted by a pressure that felt like it would crush me flat.

I fell on my back.

"Ghaough.....ghaohu....."

I coughed up blood.

My heart screamed 'not yet!' in vain.

I had misread him.

The reason Badigadi reduced his arms to two was for a single devastating attack.

Let your opponent cut your flesh so that you can cut him to the bone, was it?

He drove his fist accurately into the crack, breaking the Magic Armor apart.

But not yet.

Not yet.

Just one more.

"!"

I can't move.

The movement of the Magic Armor is faltering.

The damage can't be fixed.

Right underneath the main body(me), is what could be called the core of the Magic Armor.

If that was broken, the Magic Armor will begin to fail.

I won't say that it couldn't move. It wasn't constructed that simply.

But it could only move.

In this battle, it's fatally slow.

I began transmitting mana in a hurry.

Right, I still have mana left.

It could still move.

My mana hadn't dried up yet.

I could still fight.

Then why couldn't I move?

"Good plan, good fighting spirit....."

Badigadi approached me as I couldn't move.

"And a good match. Farewell Rudeus. Not even Laplace thought this elaborately."

Badigadi raised his fist above his head.

A fist like a cannon.

And it was thrown off─

"GAA!"

Something red flew in from under his arm and knocked the fist off course.

The arm was cut off at the base and flew in midair.

"Mngh!"

There were only a few things that had the color red in this forest.

It's Eris.

Was she following us? Had she been right behind us?

I didn't know.

There's no other backup.

Only Eris jumped in.

But in the next instant, I realized something was out of place.

The sword.

Eris's sword broke.

The famous 『Elegant Phoenix Dragon Sword』 broke at the base.

Of course, up until now, even when damage was taken on the surface, the base was never broken.

If it's forcefully cut from the base, then it'll obviously break.

"GAAAAAAaaaaa!"

But Eris did not cease.

As if she hadn't realized that her sword broke, while crying out, she continued to face the Fighting God.

Looking again, it's not just her.

Coming out of the forest one after the other as if chasing Eris were Sylphy, Ruijerd, Ghyslaine, and Isolte.

But it's too late.

"It's foolish to stand before me alone!"

Badigadi approached Eris.

There was nothing to protect her.

In that instant, I activated the escape function and slipped out of the Magic Armor.

And from the back of the Magic Armor, I took out the single sword that I had stored there.

The second I grabbed the handle, a tremendous feeling of omnipotence ran through my body.

An overwhelming amount of mana.

Upon which I poured in even more mana.

With the intention of filling the sword with all of my remaining mana.

I didn't think of using it myself.

But in front of me, there was a family member whose sword broke.

Who, in order to protect me, was brandishing a broken sword.

I threw the sword with her as the target.

"Eris!"

In a loose arc, the cursed sword flew.

Eris turned around and grabbed it.

Dragon King Sword Kajakuto.

The world's strongest and most famous cursed sword. The peak of the cursed swords forged by the blacksmith master Yulian.

Eris held it above her head.

"GAAAAAAAHH!"

"GH, That's.....!"

A downwards swing.

Right before impact, just for an instant, the Fighting God's body floated.

The sword bit right into the Fighting God's body.

And at the same time, a bright flash filled my vision.

The explosion numbed my eardrums.

Something overwhelming dominated the place.

Destruction unfolded before me.

But there was no blast.

Nor a shockwave.

Only silence came.

The destruction headed towards the interior.

The mana driven into the sword became a sphere and enveloped Badigadi.

It wasn't just Eris's power.

The mana I had loaded it with was being released by the cursed sword.

And inside the sphere of magic...

I saw it.

While slowly rising up to the surface, its interior contents were being destroyed.

The Fighting God Armor was cracking and breaking.

Badigadi, without a sound, was being compressed and disappearing.

I thought that Badigadi would struggle.

But he couldn't do anything.

The Fighting God Armor stopped functioning, and Badigadi was being destroyed as soon as he regenerated.

.....

The sphere disappeared.

The fragments of the armor left in mid-air fell towards the Earth Dragon Valley.

While making cling and clang noises, the fragments rolled down into the valley.

With the Dragon King sword stuck in it.

In just the armor.

Badigadi's black body had disappeared without a trace.

I gazed at it.

I gazed at it for a while.

Until the sound was lost in the valley and the armor disappeared.

Close by, Badigadi's arm still remained.

It wasn't moving.

It wasn't even twitching.

There was no sign of restoration.

Was he dead?

Did we win?

Is there still something else?

Is it soon?

Something's not going to rise up and appear with a FUHAHAHA is it?

With those feelings, I simply stared at the valley.

Nothing rose up.

There's no sign of anything rising up.

Only stillness was left in that place.

I heard someone falling from behind.

When I turned around, Eris was on her knees.

With a ghastly pale face.

"....."

I rushed over in a hurry.

An injury?

Was she countered?

I immediately stretched out my hand to cast healing magic, but I also fell to my knees.

"....aah."

It's not an injury.

What I'm feeling, and the look on Eris's face, I recognized them.

Mana exhaustion.

The Dragon King Sword Kajakuto had sucked up all of my mana and exhausted Eris's as well.

This was probably the first time since childhood that Eris's magic had been this exhausted.

While blinking in surprise, she sat down.

"Eris."

"Rudeus.....your hair has gotten whiter again."

She said so and touched my head.

I don't know about myself.

But some portion of Eris's hair had also become white.

Her hair now had white streaks.

"Yours is too."

"Really.....then we match."

Eris said that and fell forward.

She didn't lose consciousness.

She had simply used up all of her power.

I wanted to fall down on top of her, but I held on.

"Rudy!"

Sylphy looked worried when she saw our faces.

Not just Sylphy.

Ruijerd, Ghislaine, and Isolte.....

"Sylphy, where's Cliff!?"

"Umm, after healing the wounds of others, he was carried by Zanoba and Doga to the village. We immediately chased after you, but thought that we'd be a bother, so we hesitated....but then Eris jumped in alone.....huh?"

When Sylphy felt Eris's head, she tilted her head in confusion.

She probably immediately used healing magic.

But Eris wasn't injured.

She wasn't going to get up anytime soon.

"It's magic exhaustion. That sword sucks out all of the wielder's mana."

"...Ah, so that's how it is."

"For now, Sylphy, can you put the arm fallen over there in one of the undamaged magic circles? After that, I want you to take Eris, return to the village, and report to Orsted about the current details and bring Cliff back with you."

I stood up.

The MK. Zero was destroyed.

I myself was basically entirely out of mana.....but I could still move.

We don't how much time lag there is before Badigadi revives.

At the very least, with that much compressed magic, it looked like he was obliterated.

There's no sign that the arm will regenerate.

I'd like to think that we have a lot of time.

However, wishful thinking like that may be presumptuous.

But the MK. Zero was destroyed. The MK. I was no more. In addition to my almost exhausted mana, in this situation where the barrier magic couldn't be activated without Cliff, we couldn't have Badigadi reviving from the bottom of the valley.

If we descend to the bottom of the valley and he's waiting for us, victory would be far off.

There'd be no option but for Orsted to take the front line.

I wanted him to not use magic until the very end, but we may not have a choice.

I lacked the ability.

But I'd like to wait until we're driven into an absolute corner.

I did all that I could.

It's unknown whether or not Badigadi was moving at the bottom of the valley, but we should have restrained him at the very least.

"Ruijerd, Ghyslaine, and Isolte too, please follow me."

"What will you do? Rudy."

I'd done all I could.

But there was still something that I must do.

With my almost exhausted mana, there was something that I must do.

"I'm going after Gisu!"

We immediately found Gisu.

Very easily and quickly.

I didn't even have to use my almost exhausted mana. We found him that easily.

The moment we crossed the valley and entered the burnt-black forest.

Within the shadow of a big burnt tree.

Gisu had fallen there.

He had large burns all over and he was lying there with his body completely black.

The 『Flashover』 I casted over the forest seemed to have burnt him as well.

He looked pretty dead to us when we first found him.

He didn't move a muscle and looked like a black stone.

But the one who found him was Ruijerd, using his third eye.

It wasn't a corpse.

".....Gisu."

"Yo, Senpai."

He hadn't become a corpse yet, but it was clear that he was at death's door.

I didn't feel like curing him either.

This was why I came here.

But I didn't feel like finishing him off right away either.

"Hehee, Water Magic, Earth Magic, Demon Eyes, and Magic Armor.....I had countermeasures for each one of 'em and yet look at me now."

Gisu was wearing many things.

A blue vest, a light brown chest protector, and something like a chain-mail.

Each of them was burnt now, but they were probably countermeasures for each type of magic.

This meant that him being able to withstand the Thunderfall in the Third City was not because of the Fighting God Armor's power.

"Now that you've come here, this means.....that even the final plan has ended in failure....."

Gisu was straining his now burnt cheeks.

The final plan.

Would it be okay to say that sending Badigadi out alone was a plan?

"Sword God, North God, Ogre God, Dark King.....if any one of 'em were still left, it would've been different.....if they had listened to me that is....."

"Well, they seemed like the type who wouldn't listen to others."

I responded to Gisu's delirious talk.

"Hah, you say that but... Eris, Atofe, and.....is that Ghyslaine I see over there? You have nothin' but people who listen to you."

"That's.....probably because my luck is good."

"Nope, that ain't right, Senpai. It's 'cause ya did it properly. Ya told 'em the whole story, earnestly gained their trust, and in turn, they became your perfect allies. It's all 'cause of the effort that ya put in.

That's why, in the time of need, they listened to ya properly, and they accepted your instructions properly."

Certainly, that may be true.

Atofe and Malta.

It was necessary at that time so we took them in as allies, but they didn't listen to my instructions at all.

Sándor and Doga were exceptions, but Ariel would listen to me.

"In the end, preparin' with war as a motive, gatherin' up forces, cookin' up strategies, and stealthily movin' behind people's backs..... by only doin' things like that... it was impossible after all....."

Neither the Sword God nor the North God listened to Gisu's instructions.

They simply prioritized their own motives.

As a result of that, I was alive.

"I knew that this was happenin', but didn't thought much about it.

I thought that I'd somehow be able to pull through.

Not to mention, the one who didn't understand it at all..... ain't me."

Gisu laughed.

"It's Hitogami. He shouted 'til the very end.

He said – Why? Why? It's because of you. If only you acted more cleverly."

While laughing foolishly, a scoff-like smile floated on Gisu's face.

"Ain't that obvious, eh? Just who would work so hard for someone like YOU who deceives people..... someone like YOU who keeps sneerin' at other people... just who will lend the likes of YOU a hand upfront?"

"Then.....Gisu, does that mean that you were cutting corners as well?"

"Don't know... you think so? Was it that easy? I intended to go all out for once, ya know?"

Gisu coughed violently.

Something black like soot passed through his lips.

"Well, me and Badigadi were the exceptions because we're softhearted. This late in the game, a person who would lend a hand to someone who shouts and calls their own allies useless would be soft hearted."

The black soot looked like Gisu's soul itself.

It was clear that Gisu was losing strength.

"But you know, Senpai. I was still saved by that guy, Hitogami. There were some bad things, but lookin' at the total sum of it, I was still saved."

"....."

"You wouldn't understand, Senpai. For someone like you who can do anythin' and can walk the world alone. You wouldn't understand the feelings of someone like me who can't do anythin' at all, you just can't...."

I understand.

I feel like I understand.

About the ordinary things, the feelings of someone who couldn't do things ordinarily.....I could understand that.

Gisu was me. The me from before.

But a little different from me.

The me from before didn't even try.

I just slammed the door and ran.

I only ran.

But Gisu was really not able to do it.

Within this world where beasts and violence dominated, the thing which can be said to be the most important... 『Fighting Power』, he couldn't attain that.

He was able to do anything besides that, but he couldn't keep on living.

"Wrong, Gisu. You're wrong....."

That's why I couldn't say anything but that he was wrong.

I couldn't say that I understood.

I don't even want to.

The only thing I could do was to deny him.

"Heh, Rudeus.

If you're goin' to deny me, then do it while puffin' up your chest.

Since you've won anyway.

You've defeated me.

In this world, the one who wins is right and the one who loses is wrong.

That's why, puff up your chest and say, "That ain't right, Gisu. That ain't how it works."

And then, well let's see, scold me or somethin' for my sake since I'm about to die.

You should've done this, leavin' Hitogami's side, you should've joined my side. Somethin' like that."

Gisu said this and then breathed out with a puff.

And then spoke with a blank expression.

"Me, Badigadi, and the Dark King are no longer. There ain't anyone left who would personally and assertively help out Hitogami anymore."

"It's a loss. There ain't anyone left in this world who can deal with Rudeus Greyrat in some way or another."

"Actually, Hitogami said this as well. He said that if we lost here, then nothin' can be done about Rudeus."

"That's why, Hitogami will probably remain silent until your death. But he'll probably work in the shadows."

And then something came out of my mouth involuntarily.

"......That's a lie, isn't it?"

Gisu laughed.

"If you think that's how it is, then why not?

Somethin' like remainin' silently is, well.....that's a bit too much even for my expectations after all.

You should just move with the flag of overthrowin' Hitogami from now on.

That would be inconvenient for Hitogami, but it wouldn't be an inconvenience for you, right?"

"Oi oi, that's some gloomy face ya got there.

Aren't ya Paul's son?

If Paul was here, he would've laughed out loud, ya know?

Nah, even he wouldn't laugh at the verge of my death.

Since I looked after him for a short while as well.....

But, you know, you should be more proud.

It may be a short-lived elation, but you should still rejoice."

"If you don't, it wouldn't look overwhelmin'.

I had finally won over the Sword God, North God, and Ogre God as companions by goin' around the world.

So you should be enthusiastic about overthrowin' them, and for me, since it didn't go well, I look like an idiot."

"That's because I couldn't control my allies properly.

I burdened Badi with the final risk, and sent him out.....just look at me now.

But at least think of me as a strong enemy.

Just give me that recognition."

Gisu had started crying at some point.

Tears trailed down his soot-stained face.

When I saw that, I understood that Gisu would never have cut corners.

"I get it. Gisu, you were strong.

It's true that I'm standing here like this.

But if even a single gear had fallen out of place, I'm sure that our positions would have been reversed.

This has been the single most painful and difficult fight of my life."

"Heh.....hehe. Thanks, Rudeus."

He was without a doubt, strong.

It took me a year to beat him.

I fought for a year.

There's no way that he wasn't strong.

"Gisu."

Ghyslaine stepped forward thereupon.

She looked down at Gisu.

Her expression was behind her hair, so I couldn't see it.

"Yo, Ghyslaine, it's been a while."

"Yeah."

"I'll be headin' on first."

"Yeah, give my regards to Paul."

"Sure.....maybe, when you come too, at that time, let's drink together. Paul gettin' drunk and shovin' his face in ya chest and Zenith gettin' all sullen... I'd like to see that again....."

"Zenith probably won't be there for a while. I'll probably come first."

"Heh, I get it.....well, 'til we all meet again....."

Gisu stopped moving.

He fell to the side.

Suddenly, in the middle of his talk.

"....."

Ghyslaine's ears twitched.

Her tail drooped.

"...He's dead."

Gisu died.

Gisu was defeated.

That notion should be good enough, but my heart was still unclear.

I knew that I had gotten a shock.

Someone that you know dying in front of you like that is something incomprehensible.

He was an enemy. I was aware that he must be defeated.

But it's not like I hated Gisu from the bottom of my heart.

Although, if we had lost in this battle and Eris or someone close to me had died, then it was possible that I would harbor hate.

If things had turned out that way, would my heart feel refreshed then?

Thinking that I would have been paid back by defeating the one who I hated the most.

I don't know.

The only thing I could say was that the reason I was able to think like this while being exhausted was because I didn't lose any of my loved ones during this battle.

I met the conditions for victory.

While preserving Orsted's mana capacity, I was able to finish off every apostle.

We had hard battles and there were failures as well, but it was a complete victory, that was unusual for me.

It's possible that I've embarrassed myself by letting Gisu die like that.

Perhaps I could've brought Gisu to my side. I had taken that matter into consideration somewhere deep within my heart.

Even if I say this now, it's something that can't be helped.

Well, I'll make sure to at least carry his bones to the graveyard.

I guess it's fine if I put him next to Paul.

I thought about doing that as I burnt Gisu's body.

"....."

Ghyslaine was staring at us cremating Gisu.

After it ended and we collected his bones, somehow, her ears and tail didn't seem energetic.

"Let's head back, shall we?"

"Yeah."

We crossed the valley.

Anyway, now it's finally over.

I'm tired.

I only had a scarce amount of mana left.

My stamina was completely drained as well.

I'd lose consciousness the moment I hit the bed.

Though I couldn't just sleep before completely sealing Badigadi.....

But I want to return back to Sharia as fast as possible.

I want to sleep tight on my bed.

When I wake up, I'll eat.

I'll eat rice.

Oh right, this country had soy sauce.

I can eat a perfect egg-rice mix.

I'll eat it when I get back.

I'll eat to my heart's content.

After that, it's sexy time.

The abstinent Rudeus had died along with Gisu.

Sylphy, Roxy, or Eris.....who should I choose?

How about all three of them together?

Eris might dislike it, but, it should be fine to try it out just once, right?

It's my long-awaited moment.

Yep, long-awaited.

Let's postpone the review for this battle.

I'll try to forget what Gisu said this time.

Anyway, I'll take a day-off.

I'm tired.

".....Rudeus."

As I walked dragging along my now completely exhausted body, someone called out to me from behind.

It was Ruijerd.

The one who was walking at the very back, had turned around.

Behind him, towards the valley.

"What's the matter?"

"Enemy."

"Huh?"

A hand was rising from the edge of the valley.

Hand.

It's a hand.

Something was climbing out of the valley.

Something?

No, giving it a vague description like 'something' would be a grave mistake.

That hand.

The color of the hand was gold.

It was a golden gauntlet.

"Are you serious?"

Badigadi.

This is too fast.

But I see.

Come to think of it, after throwing a number of his arms down the valley, his body was dropped into the valley as well.

It looked like his body was completely annihilated, but big parts like his hands still remained.

So it's possible that the remaining parts gathered together and regenerated in a short amount of time.

"....."

The armor climbed up from the valley as our petrified bodies gave sidelong glances.

But its shape was different.

It had 2 arms, similar to when we brought it down, but its overall design had changed.

Its helmet was different and it wasn't that tall either.

It wasn't even 2 metres.

On top of that, it was holding a sword.

A large sword.

The world's strongest sword made by the King Dragon King himself.

Wrong.

This one was different.

This guy wasn't Badigadi.

"The hero will revive no matter how much he's cornered and then turn the situation around. I guess that's just how a hero's style should be."

That voice and the word hero.

I could never forget that.

"North God Kalman the Third Aleksander Ryback.....!"

He was still alive?

Even though I thought that he had died.

Even though he didn't even twitch at that time.

He was still alive?

But I see.

Come to think of it, he's from the lineage of the Immortal Demon clan.

Which meant that given enough time, he would regenerate.

No, that's wrong.

It's that.

It's the 『Final Plan』 Gisu was talking about.

So this is it.

Did he intend to do this from the start?

Or did he change it mid-way?

I thought it was strange.

I thought that it was strange that the Fighting God Armor wasn't restoring itself.

It was intentionally not restoring itself.

And then, Alek wore the Fighting God Armor at the bottom of the valley and it was restored.

It was possible that they were making preliminary arrangements during the time Gisu was playing dead.

Something like dropping a part of Badigadi and the Fighting God Armor down the valley, resurrecting Alek.....

Damnit.

Must we do it again?

Must we fight again?

We're bored already.

Shouldn't it be fine to just end it at that?

Cut it out already! Why did someone who already died come out now of all times!?

No, it's my fault.

I didn't properly dispose of Alek's body.

I left it as is, thinking that I had defeated him, that I had won.

It might be different if I had burnt his body, but I left it as is.

But, just how was he still fine? Within those conditions. Beyond that state.

Well.....it's fine.

The past is in the past.

What to do now?

I don't even have the MK. Zero now.

No allies.

Ghyslaine, Ruijerd, and Isolte.

And I, with almost completely exhausted mana.

With no weapons and no shield.

No method.

I don't think we can win.

What should be done?

What to do? Could we win against North God Kalman the Third wearing the Fighting God Armor?

Could we at least shave off some of his power?

"....."

Alek looked at me as I gazed with my dumbfounded face.

As if to say that he had no questions as to why I was standing there.

As if to say that he had been looking forward to this as a matter of course.

"Rudeus Greyrat.....I apologize that I called you a novice.

You're a splendid warrior.

Unlike your looks, you're an enemy worthy of me.

Thanks to you, I have once again levelled up and have become stronger. You have my gratitude."

I turned my completely exhausted body towards the golden armor.

He'd just catch up to us if we ran away.

We didn't have enough of a fighting force to even stall for time.

Then, I'll struggle.

I'll struggle while putting everything on the line.

While thinking that, I stepped forward—

".....Ah?"

When I realized, I had already fallen to the ground.

"Overwhelming. The current me can win against anyone."

I realized that we were blown away by the Fighting God when I saw the three of them fall over.

Ruijerd, Ghyslaine, and Isolte too.

They were knocked down with just one hit.

"I give you my gratitude for making me even stronger, Rudeus. I'll spare your life in return."

Delayed pain ran through my body.

My leg was broken.

He's too fast.

Although he wasn't a match for the foresight eye, I still couldn't react at all.

Except for me, the other three couldn't even respond.

So that fact wouldn't change even if he was a match for the foresight eye.

I wonder if this was the real power of the Fighting God Armor.

If the one inside was strong, then it would strengthen.....

No, that's wrong.

It's not like Badigadi was weak.

Despite his appearance, he was strong.

The only difference was that if the user changed, then there would be a sudden change in performance.

Depending on who's inside, it'll change its shape.....

"Well then, good-bye."

Alek walked off.

There was no time to be surprised.

I immediately used Healing magic and healed the three in my surroundings.

The three had fainted.

They were at the verge of dying, but hadn't died yet.

Was it Alek's mercy? Damnit. Was he still underestimating us?

Well, fine.

After healing the three of them, I hid them in an Earth Fortress and then chased after Alek myself.

I just chased after him, with no idea what to do. I didn't have any plan.

Did Sylphy already reach the village? What would Orsted do now?

I didn't know.

But that destination must be protected at all costs.

To protect Eris, Sylphy, and Norn.

And the same applies for every Supard.

We mustn't let him trample it all down.

There was no reason not to chase after him.

My legs weren't moving well.

I was getting feedback that something was coming loose.

But I still ran.

While chasing after the golden armor, I advanced forward.

The Supard village was far too quiet.

So much so that, when I arrived, I thought it was already over.

"...Why!? Why isn't anyone here!?"

Alek shouted out.

When he passed through the entrance, there was nobody there.

The Supard race wasn't here.

Neither was Julie or Norn.

Nor was the injured Cliff who should have been carried here.

Neither was Eris or Sylphy who should have delivered the message to Orsted.

There were no traces at all.

The people had disappeared like a magic act.

"What is the meaning of this!? Wasn't this the place that Rudeus was protecting!?"

Yes it was.

I was protecting this place.

It's odd. Until now, everyone was right here.

How much time.....had passed?

It's about three hours from here to the valley.

Aboard the MK. Zero, it's faster, taking only one hour.

Fighting Badigadi, after that looking for Gisu and returning.....so about 5-6 hours?

At that time, everyone was indeed here.

I was in a rush so I didn't get a good look at the surroundings, but everyone should have been there.

Huh?

No, wait. Wasn't that a bit too much?

There's someone who should be here, right?

"Dammit.....Does this mean that I have been successfully deceived by you.....Rudeus Grayrat!?"

Alek turned around.

While radiating an angry aura, he turned around.

It's a misunderstanding

Even I didn't know.

If Orsted wasn't here, then why did I follow such a dangerous guy here?

Wasn't that stupid?

I should have taken advantage of my luck and ran somewhere else in the forest.

"Orsted and the Supard race weren't here from the start. Is that how it is?"

".....No, the Supard race.....and Ruijerd-san were here, right?"

While he was still giving off a feeling like he was about to attack at any moment, I took a step back.

I couldn't tell what's what anymore.

Could this be a dream that I'm seeing?

Did the Dark King survive and was now showing me a dream after I had defeated Badigadi?

"I thought I'd let you live, but I'll take that back. If you choose to fight me until the end, I'll let you have your wish..."

Not good.

I didn't get the meaning.

I had to get away.

There's no reason to fight. I had to run.

When I thought that and turned around—

Suddenly, my back froze.

My legs stopped.

Did Alek do something?

No, that's wrong.

He's also frozen.

"Wha-what's this chill!?"

He let out a frightened voice and began looking around in a frenzy.

How could he still be this frightened after obtaining the Fighting God Armor?

Why?

It's because of the curse.

A curse that fills every human with fear.

Though I was immune to that curse.

But I understood that the person emanating that curse was radiating killing intent as well.

I possessed a great trauma in relation to this killing intent.

That was why it's frightening.

"....."

The origin of the bloodlust made his appearance.

From the depths of the Supard village.

It's not the black-helmeted figure I was familiar with.

Silver hair and cruel sanpaku eyes.

The man with a terrifying face, slowly headed this way.

"Rudeus."

"Orsted-sama.....why....."

Orsted.

He threw the helmet he had in his hand towards me.

I caught it in a hurry.

"When I heard the story from Sylphiette, Cliff Grimoire's mana had already run out.

Therefore, I judged him inadequate to seal Badigadi the Fighting God and bowed my head to a certain man.

That's why I was a little delayed. Forgive me."

No, it's not about that.

I didn't want to hear why you're late.

I want to know the reason why nobody is.....

"But I never thought that this would happen....."

Orsted said that and looked at Alek.

He looked at North God Kalman the Third wearing the Fighting God Armor.

"Leave the rest to me."

Orsted took a single step forward as he said that.

Alek, looking frightened, took a step back.

I couldn't tell what was going on.

I only asked Orsted.

"But, Orsted-sama, your mana....."

"It's fine. You've done enough. I've resolved myself as well."

Orsted shook his head.

"Resolved, about what....."

He saw me and smiled a little, but his face was also slightly stiff.

The man with the most frightening face in the world declared.

"I too, want to try fighting believing in my comrades for once."

The exchange was short, so I couldn't understand.

But for some reason, it remained in my heart.

I understood that Orsted had decided on something with those words.

".....I understand. Then I'll leave the rest to you."

I stepped back.

There was nothing else to say.

I had thought that I must absolutely not let Orsted fight, but when I saw that slight smile on his face, I understood.

I had been slightly mistaken.

It's not something that needed to be said, but Orsted cared for me far more than I had thought.

Not for his own self interest, but through his feelings, he thought of me as an ally.

And Orsted wanted to fight for that ally that he believed in.

From here on out, he's not alone, but with me.

Not using me to fight, but fighting alongside me.

That was something that I was happy about.

"Now then, 『North God Kalman III』 Aleksander Ryback."

"Are you.....the 『Dragon God』 Orsted...?"

Upon hearing his name called, Alek gripped his sword.

That was the Dragon King Sword, Kajakuto.

I see, so he was going to fight with that.

The Dragon King Sword and the Fighting God Armor.

The strongest despair-inducing equipment.

If we could at least prevent him from using one of them...

Was there anything I could do?

"This is perfect."

Orsted spoke.

I was thinking that, but it seems that Orsted had something different in mind.

In response to Alek's raised sword, he showed a composed smile.

As if to freeze everything, a terrifying smile.

"Possessing the Fighting God Armor and the Dragon King Sword. I assume that you'll have no excuses when you lose with both?"

"Wha!?"

Alek's bloodlust swelled.

"Are you making fun of me!?"

"That's not it."

Orsted said that and pressed his hands in together.

And then separated them slowly.

He extracted something from his left hand.

A single katana.

The moment I saw that, I felt my legs shake.

I had only seen that katana once.

Orsted called that katana a single word, 『Godsword』.

All I knew was that it used a great amount of magic power.

"The only thing I want to do is to thoroughly defeat you and completely break your spirit into pieces."

Orsted held out the katana right in between his eyes.

Alek was openly outraged.

Releasing a prickling bloodlust, he held out the Dragon King Sword.

"Try me if you THINK YOU CAN!"

『Dragon God』 Orsted and the 『Fighting God Armor』 clad 『North God』 Aleksander.

The be all, end all, final battle began.

10 minutes later.

A fourth of the forest of the valley was annihilated.

The wilderness had become a burnt area, with a heap of large broken trees scattered about.

A boy with both of his arms now gone was on his knees.

A sword was put against that boy's neck.

The boy looked in amazement at the wielder of that sword.

The wielder of that sword was one man.

With silver hair and sanpaku eyes.

His entire body was completely unscathed.

He was standing spotless as if he hadn't even fought yet.

Only his clothes were a little bit torn.

"Will you die here or become my subordinate? Choose."

"....."

The Dragon God and the North God who wore the Fighting God Armor.

There may not be any objections to calling the matchup a legendary battle.

Perhaps they would form a companionship in their remaining lifetime.

But calling the actual battle a legendary fight would be too lame.

It was too one-sided and overwhelming.

Honestly, it's difficult even for me to explain the fight with my meagre mouth.

Indeed, I witnessed that fight.

While getting wrapped up in it and getting close to death, I witnessed it.

But it was too fast and I couldn't see most of it.

Even using the foresight eye, I didn't know what the two of them were doing.

The only thing clear to me was that Orsted constantly dominated the fight.

It was clear that even if Alek tried to reverse the situation, and each time that he did, he was thoroughly crushed.

There was a complete difference in power.

Even with the Fighting God Armor and Dragon King Sword, he couldn't even lay so much as a finger on him.

The Fighting God Armor had completely broken.

The armor itself started restoring, but it got separated from Alek's body.

The Dragon King Sword was lying with Alek's hand in his immediate vicinity.

Alek no longer had any fighting spirit left.

With the eyes of a loser, his mouth partly agape, fear clinging onto his face, he was looking at Orsted while shedding tears.

It was no longer the face of a boy who was enthused at the concept of becoming a hero.

With his spirit thoroughly broken into pieces, he had become a dog with his tail in between his legs.

".....I'll become.....your subordinate."

At the end of the long silence, Alek spoke at last.

Now, this time for sure, the final battle had finally come to a finish.

AUTHOR Q & A (13 OF 14)

Q. The number of comments has already passed 25,000, eh?

A. This, too, is all because of everyone's patronage.

I thank you all from the bottom of my heart.

Q. The President's 『Godsword』 was used a lot in this battle, but didn't it consume a lot of mana?

I think that instead of using a huge amount of mana, if the sword can obtain a terrifying sharpness, then Rudi should just use it.....A. A lot of mana gets consumed just by summoning it and it also has a time restriction on it.

This is the truth about the Godsword!

Q. Was Cliff-Senpai living a stressful life in the Religious Organization where he had to remain vigilant everyday for poisons.....?

I think that's how it is since he examined the food with the Identification Eyes many times.....

A. Even if Cliff-senpai himself doesn't become the prey of poison, he still possesses the Identification Eye, so there are many times when he's chosen as a tester for poison during meal times, or something like that.

Q. The Fighting God Badigadi or Fighting God Alek, which one would be stronger?

Is it Fighting God Badigadi after all?

A. If the capture method is not known, then it would be Badi.

If it's known, then Alek.

However, if Alek has 50 years of fighting experience against Orsted from now on...

Q. Growing out of a one-man administration.

A. And Rudeus becoming a board member!

Q. What about the possibility that nobody knew that Rudeus-chan's vast mana would finally activate the Dragon King Sword's true power?

A. That possibility is high.

Q. Was clairvoyance ever needed?

A. In the future, if there are many occurrences of baths, then it will surely become useful.

Q. I really wanted to see the grand monster play-off between the Fighting God vs. Magic Armor MK. Zero.

A. When the timer on the MK. Zero man's chest starts beeping after 3 minutes.....!

Q. Gisu or Vita or His Majesty Badi was treated so badly by Hitogami but they still obeyed him because they had to repay a debt.....was this Hitogami's curse that every living creature would like him that the President spoke of?

A. Normally, it's true that no one would want to work with such trash, but if you change the background and context, friendship may result.

Q. Perhaps Turning Point is ~

A. Turning Point basically happens the moment that the history of the fight between Orsted & Hitogami changes dramatically.

At the very least, it's not for knocking down the reader at the bottom of despair.

Q. I'm worried about Doga! I think that such a naïve young man might've been invited by Sándor to enroll in the Golden Knight Party, but I wonder if his innermost thoughts are that that this was not what he signed up for?

A. Doga-kun is honest and naïve so he won't raise those types of those questions.

Q. Was there some kind of grudge depicted towards the Dragon God?

A. The one who fought Fighting God Badi was the vanguard of the Dragon God's side, that is Laplace.

Q. Leaving Kajakuto as it is and then leaving to look for Gisu was unnatural.

A. It fell into the valley, so it can't be helped.

Q. Is the President's 『Godsword』 Laplace's work too?

A. No, it was the work of the founding Dragon God or the founding 5 Dragon Generals.

END AUTHOR Q & A (13 OF 14)

One month passed after that.

Right now, I was close to the exit to the forest of Earth Dragon Valley.

Wooden buildings that were built with a simplistic structure were standing in a row.

In an open space cleared of trees, various men and women were restlessly walking around.

Woodcutters, laborers, and carpenters of the Human race that were employed by the Biheiril Kingdom and Supard Race....which came from the Rudo Mercenary Group.

"Onii-chan, would you please open up the east side of the forest a bit?"

There was Aisha as well.

She was giving instructions to each team as if she owned this village.

Rinia and Pursena were receiving her instructions and then commanding the group members to act on them.

This made it difficult to discern just who was the Captain.

"Yeah, got it."

I was mixed up with them as well and was currently helping out in the reconstruction of the Supard village.

I opened up the forests with magic, made the foundations of houses with earth magic, and made a road up to the village of the Earth Dragon Valley.

There were a lot of things to do.

Now then.

Just why were Aisha and Rudo Mercenary Group here?

Just why was there no one except Orsted when Alek arrived at the village?

Explaining that is a must.

Although I said that an explanation was needed, I'll only finish it up with a few words.

It was Aisha's deed.

Saying it was her deed makes her look like she was guilty of a prank or something, so I should rephrase that to 'work'.

It was Aisha's work.

When the Teleport Formation and Communication Lithograph stopped working –

Aisha and Rudo Mercenary Group too were in the polar regions of confusion.

In a faraway land with their means of contact and movement sealed, anxiety and impatience were born.

Within those circumstances, Aisha was calm.

She calmly took things into consideration and thought.

If the fight had already started at the actual spot, then for them who were near the national border, it would be too late once they actually reached their destination, and the things that could be done were few as well.

The conclusion Aisha had arrived at took into consideration the possibility of Gisu escaping while trying to restore the Teleport Formation.

That is to say, the restoration of infrastructure.

Although, in addition to the Teleport Formations, the reserved formation that Aisha had took with her which corresponded with the formation at the office were all already destroyed.

There was no way.

Or so I would think, and give up.

Because I already gave up.

However, Aisha was struck with an idea.

Her gifted brain recalled the secret arts of a certain person.

Those secret arts, which had a complete grasp of the damaged teleport formations of the other side and the formations that corresponded to those ones, were a technique capable of drawing such formations and able to teleport wherever desired.

Just who was that certain person?

That's right, it was『The Armored Dragon King』 Perugius Dola.

She searched for a Stone Monument of the Seven Great World Powers near the national border in order to ask him for a favor.

Depending on whether she could find it, she would then travel to the Sky Fortress after using Perugius's flute.

Perugius, who knew that we were helping a Demon Race, was reluctant.

He declared "I'll only make one." towards Aisha's request, to which Aisha chose the option of creating a magic formation at the national border which connected to the Supard Village.

And that's how it was.

"You were able to persuade Perugius, eh?"

"He was quite reluctant, but when Orsted asked him for a favor, he quickly accepted."

After that, when I was in the middle of battle, everyone teleported from the Supard village.

They quickly made use of the teleport formation after hearing about the circumstances, and the inhabitants and the rest all took shelter at a city near the national border....or so how it went.

If we had prioritized on making a normal teleport formation rather than making one for Roxy's return to Sharia to summon the Magic Armor 『MK. Zero』, it would have been almost in vain.....

It was somehow clever that Roxy's mistake was followed up by Aisha.

Although it was inevitable that Roxy felt pretty guilty after that and curled herself up.

"Around here?"

"Yeah, clean it aaallll up. It should be fine to spread the area a little more, right?"

"I guess, got it."

"When you're done, call me again. I'll make the Mercenary group carry the wood and all."

"Roger."

And so, it had been a month since the fight.

Although we were prepared while staying vigilant, there was no sign of any more battles.

It seemed that there would no longer be any battles.

Therefore, I asked Sylphy, Roxy, and Zanoba to return back to Sharia. I also asked Eris to return back under the pretext of making her their guard.

I asked of them this because the teleport formations used for the summoning of MK. Zero and the one used by refugees were destroyed during the battle of Orsted and Alek; it took the same pattern just like the time with Perugius.

I had asked them to rebuild the office, restore the teleport formations and communication lithographs, and such.

It seemed that nothing happened at Sharia.

The receptionist Little Elf-chan was fine too.

The only damage was that the weapons and armor, and the documents in which Orsted wrote every day were buried.

The refugees of the Supard race travelled from the national border to Second City Irel, and came back to the Supard village using the teleport formation which was reconnected.

Afterwards, they were officially welcomed by the Biheiril Kingdom.

It was affirmed that Biheiril Kingdom would be accepting the Supard Race as citizens.

They weren't in any position to say no after losing both Ogre God and the third city.

They added a condition for accepting the Supards as official citizens, in that at least 3 people from the Supard Race should choose to do a profession for the sake of Country.

It was the same as what happened with the Ogre Race.

For now, the selection of those three had finished, and we're currently starting reconstruction on the Supard village.

If the reconstruction continues without any incident, then the Supards would be able to live in the Biheiril Kingdom's urban area.

We had defeated all of the apostles, and had made the Biheiril Kingdom, Ogre Race, and Supard Race our allies.

We were victorious.

But, did we really gain complete victory?

"Rudeus-dono."

"Sándor-san."

While I pondered, the lumbering of woods continued. Unaware of my surroundings, Sándor was now standing behind me.

It wasn't just Sándor.

Ghyslaine, Isolte, and Doga were there too.

Sándor came back about 10 days later after the fight was over.

He was knocked off into the sea by the Fighting God and drifted ashore to Ogre Island, where he strained himself to recuperate.

Or should I say how admirable it was that he came back alive after fighting against the Fighting God?

"Thank you for your efforts. What happened?"

"Nothing really. Just, we were thinking that it was about time we returned back to Asura Kingdom. So we came to give our farewells."

".....Ah."

The work of Sándor and the rest was over.

They were at best Ariel's subordinates.

If there was no fight, then they could only return back.

"Sándor-san. Thank you very much. If it weren't for you, then all of this wouldn't have happened."

"If it's gratitude, then give it to Her Majesty Ariel."

"Of course. Please convey to Her Majesty that if something happens from now on, then Her Majesty can inform me first. That I would be willing to cooperate."

"I understand."

Sándor, Doga, Ghyslaine, and Isolte.

Each one of them was as strong as King class or above.

I couldn't thank her enough for lending me such strong people.

"Ghyslaine-san too, thank you very much."

"No need for thanks.....but, I'm thinking about visiting the grave next time."

"I understand. I will be patiently awaiting."

Ghylaine only said a few words.

"Doga too, thank you. When I fell into the valley, if you weren't there then I would've died."

"Yup."

"If you get into some kind of trouble, please do tell me. I too, want to repay my lifesaver."

"Yup!"

Doga only said "Yup", but he looked a little lonely.

"Isolte-san too, thank you very much. If you hadn't come at that moment, I would've died."

"No, I was able to learn various things as well. It is I who should say thank you very much."

After giving an elegant bow, she smiled.

The same as before, a beautiful woman.

I wonder just what the heck the males of the Asura Kingdom were thinking if she's still unmarried.

"Please give my heartfelt thanks to the team of doctors as well."

"Yes, well then.....we'll be taking our leave."

Sándor bowed once and turned on his heels.

But after seeing his back, I recalled something that I had completely forgotten and called out to him.

"Um....it was regretful what happened to Atofe-sama."

Sándor came back.

But it was only him who returned.

Atofe was still missing.

If she was washed away by the sea then she wouldn't be found for another several years.

It was the same with Moore too.

".....There's no need to worry about Mother. I think if you give her enough time, she would suddenly make her appearance some day. I think the most regretful thing that had happened was Ogre God's death."

"That's.....right."

Ogre God's death was confirmed.

He put up a good fight against Fighting God.

But he wasn't one of the Immortal Demon Race. He used up all of his strength in the end and died.

Even though I had finally reconciled with him too...

"Although nothing can be gained by just mourning the dead."

"Indeed. We must look ahead of ourselves."

I had promised Malta.

That if he were to die then I would be protecting the survivors of the Ogre Race.

Right now, there was no one who would be a threat to Ogre Race, but if something happened then I'd want to protect them even if there wasn't a promise.

"Well then, goodbye."

"Yes. Many thanks for your hard work."

"Ah, right.....Please take care of Alek."

"......Yes."

Sándor said that and left.

And then Cliff could be seen coming my way as if replacing them.

Along with Elinalize.

"Rudeus."

"Cliff-senpai."

"Are they returning as well?"

"Yes, are you going too, Cliff-senpai?"

"Yeah. The relocation is over.....in the end, I just couldn't find out the cause of Plague, but it's been almost a month now and the people living there have moved away.....so I've decided to head back for now."

I was indebted to Cliff as well.

If it weren't for him, the plague couldn't have been cured.

It's possible that the plague was the Dark King's doing.

"Cliff-senpai. Thank you very much. If you hadn't come, then just what would've happened....."

"Well, I do think that you would've been able to something, since it's you. If the plague relapses, contact me."

"Yes.....I've been getting nothing but favors from you; just how should I show my gratitude, I wonder?"

"The reason I'm able to work hard in Milis while leaving Lize and Clive is because your family is looking after mine. We are of equal status in that regard."

I'm grateful if he says something like that.

"Well then, till next time. I'll be meeting your family on my way back, so are there any messages?"

"Tell them I'll be coming back soon."

"Got it."

Cliff said that and left.

In the end, Elinalize winked at me. I've troubled her a lot as well, but didn't say anything to her..... Well, I'd do that the next time we talk as neighbors.

But, I sure was saved by various people this time.

First was Cliff. If it weren't for him, then the Supard race might have perished by the plague.

Then Sándor and Doga. If it weren't for them, I wouldn't be standing here right now.

Atofe's timing looked like God's itself.

The Atofe-hand and the attack at Ogre Island at just the right time.

It could be said that this victory with almost no injuries was thanks to Atofe.

That Atofe was now missing, that is to say, I wanted to search for her in the sea once things had calmed down as a way of not showing too much ingratitude.

The battle was now over and everyone was returning.

A big event had ended, and it looked like we were breaking up as a result.

It was somehow lonely.

"Alright."

As I pondered such things, the lumbering of the woods was finished.

In front of my eyes was a clean, stretched-out ground.

The trees that were pulled out from their roots were neatly lined up using Earth Magic.

I had done a nice job if I say so myself.

"Now then, Aisha is.....hm."

When I turned, I could see Ruijerd and Norn walking towards me, just at the right time.

"Ah, Nii-san."

"Norn! You've come at just the right time. Won't you tell Aisha that the lumbering has been finished?"

"Yes, I understand."

Norn turned on her heels and quickly ran towards the village.

Ruijerd who was left behind was now walking up to me.

"Rudeus."

"Ruijerd-san."

"Sorry. I've burdened you with various things."

"You've promised that you wouldn't say that right? Dad."

"I don't remember making such a promise."

"Right."

Ruijerd was engaged in the reconstruction of the Supard village.

After that, he would probably come and go from our office, or be placed as the Biheiril Kingdom's negotiator.

Norn was clinging to Ruijerd.

She too, until this village had finished rebuilding, intended to help Ruijerd.

"After the village's completion, please do visit our house in Sharia."

"Yeah, even I want to see your children."

"They're super cute."

"Your kids are just like that."

Ruijerd laughed and then eyed me.

His height hadn't changed very much.

".....You became really strong, didn't you? I never would have thought that you would become one of the Seven Great World Powers."

"If it's the you right now then even you can become one, Ruijerd-san. If it's you, I would be done in by just one punch, in just one punch."

"Don't joke around."

"But I'm certain that I didn't become one only on my power alone."

"That power might be yours as well."

"I wonder."

"....."

Ruijerd looked at me a little, gave out a little laugh, removed the pendant hanging from his neck, and held it out towards me.

It was Roxy's pendant.

"I'll return this back to you now."

"But, this is....."

"You should hold onto this after all."

The pendant I gave to Ruijerd when we first parted.

Roxy's pendant.

Unaware, this pendant had become my mark.

The pendant which was my motive for setting out into the world.

"I understand."

I accepted that pendant.

Before, when I handed him this pendant, it was over a trivial matter.

When we parted, I never intended for him to give it back to me. I hoped that he would hold onto it.

Or perhaps I wanted to have a link with him.

But he had returned it now.

Because we were already brethren.

Because we won't be parting for quite some time now.

"Ruijerd-san, Please take care of me from now on."

"Yeah. Though I might lack the ability."

"We'll just have to compensate for each other's mistakes."

"Pfft, that's right."

I laughed and Ruijerd too smiled.

Norn came back along with Mercenary Group and left with Ruijerd.

I left the place as well and started walking towards the Teleport Formation.

I thought of finally returning back to Sharia.

"!"

Then I realized that someone was approaching me from behind.

It was Orsted.

Just as always with the black helmet.

He wasn't alone.

Behind him was a black-haired boy who was following like a loyal retainer.

It was Aleksander Ryback.

"....."

From that day forward, he started following Orsted everywhere as his subordinate.

Like Moore, who followed Atofe.

Like Sylvaril, who followed Perugius.

As if to say that he had been in this position since hundreds of years ago.

I wanted to make him acknowledge me as his superior, but if we were to fight, I'd lose, so I kept quiet.

However, no matter how many times I see him, I end up getting cautious.

"Is there something wrong?"

".....Nothing."

"If there is something then please do say so. I'll quickly mend it."

Although contrary to my cautiousness, Alek was quite obedient from that day.

I thought that he would hold some kind of grudge against me, but he was honest.

He was completely obedient towards me and of course towards Orsted as well.

"I can understand why you would be cautious.

However, my position was clear to me after the battle the other day.

That, just how much inexperienced and stunted I was.

I will be devoting myself under Orsted-sama and Rudeus-sama's studies for a while, and during that time I intend to search for the meaning of what being a hero means, what being a North God means.

As a proof of that and as my punishment, my dominant arm has been sealed in this way."

While saying that, Alek raised his right arm to show it.

Everything down from his wrist was now gone, and a pattern was carved into the wrist's section.

It was sealing magic performed by Orsted.

The Immortal Demon Race's blood that flowed in Alek's veins could resurrect him even if he was scattered into pieces.

Although his speed wasn't as fast as Atofe's and Badigadi's, he could still completely regenerate even if it took some time.

That is why, his dominant arm was cut off and Orsted put a seal on it so that it didn't regenerate.

It was his proof of loyalty.

Incidentally, the one who loaded the mana into the sealing magic formation was me.

"If it's just my left hand then I wouldn't be that much of a threat."

"........No, if it's you, you would be able to defeat me even without a single hand, I think. Like Headbutting or something."

"You're too humble.....no, that modest nature of yours might be valuable. Please do guide and encourage me from now on."

"Yeah....."

Orsted had faith in that Alek, so even if he served near him, he had no complaints.

But I felt like that he would someday stab me in the back.

Honestly, I'm scared.

".....Um, if you ever want your World Power position back, then tell me. I'll immediately return it."

"No, I've acknowledged that you yourself aren't that immature, so once again, please do take care of me."

"You will be diligent, right? You won't just surprise backstab me someday, right?"

"Perhaps not you, Rudeus-dono. But I might challenge someone from the Sword Temple. Of course when it'll come to that, I'll fight you head on fair and square!"

"Let's fight with the back of our swords, kay? Let's not kill ourselves at that time, kay?"

"Yep!"

As of now, I had become the Seventh Rank of the Seven Great World Powers.

First Rank 『Technique God』 Laplace.

Second Rank 『Dragon God』 Orsted.

Third Rank 『Fighting God』 Badigadi.

Fourth Rank 『Demon God』 Laplace.

Fifth Rank 『Death God』 Randolf.

Sixth Rank 『Sword God』 Jino Britts.

Seventh Rank 『Quagmire』 Rudeus Greyrat.

And so it was.

Only my name was looking terribly out-of-place, and I was getting sick of it.

From this point onwards, I was sure guys hoping to snatch the World Power rank from me would come running.

I'm bummed out.

Although my mark was the Migurd Race's mark.

There were only a few times I had shown off that mark as mine. I received Roxy's pendant just now, but I didn't intend on showing it off, so no one would be able to tell just who the real World Power was.

My popularity shouldn't be that high, so challengers shouldn't come gathering up. Yep.

Let's go with the belief that the Seventh Rank was 『Unidentified』 for now. Yep.

Incidentally, during that fight. Fighting God's rank didn't change.

According to Orsted, it seemed that unless the Fighting God Armor itself was completely destroyed, the ranking wouldn't change.

I looked away from Alek's face that was full of determination and looked at Orsted.

"Orsted-sama.....how about that condition of yours?"

I faced toward Orsted, who was silent throughout the conversation.

"Not bad. It's not like it'll get worse if I use mana to some extent."

In the final battle, Orsted used his mana.

A lot of mana.

It could be said that he used half of the total amount.

It was an easy victory in front of my eyes. Actually, his HP remained at full and only his MP was spent to 50%, so it was certain that it was an easy victory.

However, the recovery of that MP was a different story altogether.

Orsted had ended up using his mana that he was saving for his fight against Laplace and Hitogami.

We were victorious.

But Hitogami was able to meet his winning conditions as well.

Then, was it really our victory?

"Our allies have increased and our enemies decreased. The amount of times from now on that I will have to use my mana will be few, I guess."

Although Orsted wasn't paying much attention to it.

He might've made up his mind about it.

"That would be nice."

"Even if it's not, it's different this time around. As such, it's fine to take a different direction and then proceed accordingly. I've already resolved myself for that."

Orsted had wagered it on me.

He was thinking that even if he used up the mana that was going to be used against Laplace and Hitogami, if he fought together with me then he could do it.

He was thinking that we had completely won this time.

If I think that he had won, then it should be a victory.

There were almost no casualties actually.

Ogre God, some people of the Supard Race, and some people of the Imperial Guards.

That's all the damage to this side.

There wasn't any losing factor.

"Ah, then, what would be your course of action now?"

"I'll be returning to Sharia soon."

"I understand. I was also thinking of going back.....ah, but I do think that the office has yet to start its reconstruction?"

"I don't mind. There should be at least a place to sleep."

At the bare minimum, the teleport formation in the basement was dug out. Still, if repair works were going to continue, there would be a need for expansion work.

We must think about a countermeasure by taking into consideration how the Ogre God destroyed the office.

Although even now a good plan doesn't come to mind.

Perhaps it would be better to not place magic formations in countries other than the major ones.

Until now, I hadn't taken into consideration the possibility of an enemy using it to invade, and so I was quite surprised.

"Before that, I think we should go see that guy."

"....."

That guy, huh?

"Let me accompany you."

That evening, Orsted and I proceeded towards the Earth Dragon Valley.

Towards the bottom of the Earth Dragon Valley.

A leveled path where blue mushrooms and moss were growing in abundance.

There was a carefully hidden small hole on the wall.

The hole that was about 1 metre in diameter was in a slightly curved position. It looked like a dead end at a glance if seen from outside.

However, a huge room awaited if someone were to proceed some 10 metres inside it.

There, a large magic formation was shedding light with one sword as its core.

Though I say it's large, its radius was 5 metres at best.

One male was lying within that formation.

"Hmm, so you've come."

It was Demon Lord Badigadi.

His body had been separated into 5 pieces, and each of them were sealed in different places in the valley.

His main body was here.

This barrier would never get destroyed unless all of the remaining 4 seals were destroyed first.

And then, the barrier was operating using the mana of Badigadi's body, which was further amplified with the Dragon King Sword and Fighting God Armor as a catalyst.

It could keep operating almost forever.

The Barrier Magic Formation was reverently made by Perugius himself.

It was the God-Class barrier magic created in order to seal the Demon God.

If the sealing object that would become the medium and the magic item that would become the intermediary were strong enough, they could increase the barrier's strength.

In addition to the Fighting God Armor, even the Dragon King Sword was used by this seal as a catalyst. It was powerful enough that not even Orsted could break out of it.

It's possible that using two God-Class equipment as one part of the barrier was somewhat wasteful.

However, both of them would be terrifying weapons in the hands of the enemy.

Since the enemy proved this by using the teleport formations for their own gain, if these things were getting used up here then it's not such a bad thing.

As long as this seal existed, not only Badigadi, but the Fighting God Armor and the Dragon King Sword would be sealed here as well.

If this was destroyed then there would be no choice left but to give up.

That's the conclusion I'd come with.

Orsted had requested Perugius to set up this barrier.

He bowed his head and requested to borrow his strength.

And, Perugius acknowledged that.

He became Orsted's brethren, his ally.

But Perugius was someone that must be killed.

Which meant that Orsted had chosen the path of betrayal.

I owed both Orsted and Perugius a lot.

As an individual, it's a complex feeling.

But I could understand that Orsted had no choice left but to choose that path.

On top of that, if it's something that Orsted had decided on, then I was in no position to complain.

I did think that it would've been nice if we at least knew some way to reach Hitogami's place without using the five Dragon Race treasures, but it was clear that just a little bit of research wasn't going to be enough to find it.

Well, perhaps I didn't really need to think about that.

The enemy was in front of me right now.

"I must terribly apologize, Your Majesty. I had no choice but to do this if you were to become Hitogami's apostle again."

"It's quite uncomfortable. Can you let me move a little bit more?"

Badigadi said pompously while lying in a pose similar to the sleeping Buddha.

Even for my personal opinion regarding this jail, this was certainly an uncomfortable and narrow sealing barrier.

Still, I couldn't bring myself to kill him.

Please don't kill him – was Kishirika's earnest request to me.

"I'm terribly sorry, this is the best I can do right now."

"Hmm. Then it can't be helped."

Badigadi said and laughed with a FUAHAHA.

He had two arms and his body was comparatively smaller than before.

This was the result of the seal.

"So what's your business here? Don't tell me, did you come here to have a drinking bout with my charming figure?"

"Orsted-sama has something to talk with you."

I said that and handed over the scene to Orsted.

"Demon Lord Badigadi."

"Good evening, Dragon God-dono. What would be your business today?"

"Abandon Hitogami and work under me."

Badigadi looked blankly for a few seconds.

But quickly laughed out loud.

"FUHAHAHAHAHA!"

Badigadi's laughter echoed within the cave.

"The despicable Dragon Race is asking ME, one of the Immortal Demon Race to join HIM!?"

"Although you became an enemy for a while, you bastard are still Rudeus's friend. Alex, Aleksander, and Atofe have already turned to this side, so do you have any room for consideration?"

"NO!"

He declared plainly.

"But why? Respected Granduncle."

Alek, who was standing near the entrance, came forward.

"You have already lost, you know? Then in accordance with the Immortal Demon Race's law—"

"Do not misunderstand, Lil' Alek. That is not the law of the Immortal Demon Race. That's only Atofe's own rule."

"Then, Respected Granduncle. Have you pledged allegiance to Hitogami?"

"Wrong."

Badigadi raised his body and shook his head.

And then, he folded his only two arms and sat crosslegged.

"I don't like fighting anyone to begin with.

What I do like is going on journeys, laughing while drinking alcohol, making advances on casual women, sleep with them, getting shout at by my fiancee at times, drinking alcohol along with friends, laughing, singing, and looking at the sleeping but satisfied faces of tired people.

I went out of my way this time only because Hitogami requested me while bowing his head.

He wanted me to kill Rudeus Greyrat and Dragon God Orsted no matter what.

Do you know just thanks to whom both me and Kishirika were able to live up till this age?

I remembered the matter of 4200 years ago and simply wanted to repay back my debt.

On those terms I accepted, but 'only once'."

"....."

"And now, that only once is over.

I won't be becoming anyone's ally from now on!

If given the choice of getting sealed here or fight, I'll choose to get sealed."

If that's how it is, then I think that it would be fine to let him out.

Of course, on top of being Hitogami's apostle and his nature of getting deceived so easily, I couldn't just thoughtlessly leave him alone.

Yep.....

"At any rate, when the fight between you and Hitogami is over, won't you let me out then?"

Badigadi said to the perplexed me with a broad grin.

".....Yeah."

I realized after seeing Orsted nod.

That's right.

It would be impossible within my lifetime, but if Orsted wins against Hitogami, then there would no longer be any meaning to jail him.

"After 100 years."

"That would arrive before long. Then I'll just obediently wait here."

Badigadi said that and lay down once again.

Orsted nodded and turned on his heels.

The talk was over with this.

That was quick.

"Your Majesty.....it's probably not the right time to say this, but thank you very much for various things in the Magic University."

"Yeah. Rudeus, I don't know if this is the last time we'll ever meet, but I should say congratulations to you."

"Congratulations, is it?"

"I'm congratulating because you've won."

"I wonder if I've really won....."

That's what I'm worried about.

In the end, Orsted ended up using mana.

A mistake was made at the very last moment.

However, Badigadi wasn't alluding that one bit.

"Yeah. You've made Hitogami taste the sense of defeat."

"Sense of defeat, is it?"

"Yeah. You've made Hitogami realize that "No matter what I do, I can't kill this guy." Hitogami has completely lost all will to continue. Explaining how Hitogami looked the last time I saw him is difficult, but his figure certainly looked that of a loser. If it's so, then just what would you call it if not his enemy's victory?"

".....Is that true?"

"If you don't believe it, then go ahead and remove that bracelet and see for yourself."

When pointed at by him, I unconsciously hid my hand with the bracelet on.

"I'll.....pass on that."

"I see, that's fine either way."

That trick won't work on me.

I didn't even want to meet Hitogami.

However.

Indeed, when I saw him at the valley's bottom, he seemed to be at his wits' ends.

If Hitogami realized a huge sense of defeat in this battle, then it might just be true.

But I wasn't confident on the comment that he would lose all his motivation and not do anything.

"Is the talk over?"

"There's nothin' more from me."

"I see. Well then, be in good health."

I turned around and followed Orsted.

At that time, Alek leaped in with an intolerable face.

"Respected Granduncle.....I am──"

"Aleksander. If you want to become a hero, then find your true enemy. Your father could never find someone like that. When you defeat that, you will become a hero who will surpass his father."

".....I understand."

Alek turned around as well.

This might be my final farewell to Badigadi.

It would be nice if I showed myself once every few years, but it could be that through some way or another, the seal comes undone.

Then it should be fine to not come.

There's no need to tell other people at the Magic University that Badigadi was sealed here.

The only ones who knew about this place were me, Orsted, Alek, Ruijerd, and Perugius. Only 5 people.

I'd made arrangements for Ruijerd to keep watch from the village's entrance so that no one would visit this valley.

On top of that, the amount of people who could descend and ascend the valley were few.

Even for 100 years, the seal may not break even by chance.

And, furthermore──

"Rudeus, the entrance."

"Yes."

I covered up the small hole.

So that no one would be able to dig it out or able to find it.

It was my farewell.

"Young Dragon God. I pray that someday your curse is lifted."

In the end, Badigadi's faint voice could be heard from the cave.

The next day.

When the early morning was yet to arrive, before the sunrise, I returned back to Sharia.

My destination the office that was in the middle of construction.

The office which was now in front of the remaining debris.

Zanoba and the rest who were working on the reconstruction were sleeping in a huddle over there.

This time, I was indebted to Zanoba as well.

He was someone I would like to have a give-and-take relationship with from now on.

"Well then, Rudeus. I'll be relying on you from now on as well."

And along with Orsted as well.

"Yes."

I separated from Orsted outside the town, and walked in the morning mist that had covered the town.

I had many souvenirs in my hands from the Biheiril Kingdom.

Especially, a great sum of soy sauce.

If I have this soy sauce, then from now on, I would be able to live my whole life.

The town of Sharia was the same as before.

The people here didn't change as well.

People who were working in the fields, the adventurers who were training in the gardens of hotels.

The university teachers and men with robes could also be seen.

While passing by them, I walked my way back through the snow, via the open place in the central part and towards the residential district.

That scene was somehow nostalgic.

I had walked this path almost every day, but I wonder why, a feeling that I've finally returned was welling up from my chest.

From the street, I entered an alleyway.

It was a narrow path through which not even a carriage could pass.

I had become accustomed to this path, which was just a little shortcut.

After exiting the alleyway, I could see my house.

Beet, who had twined itself around the gatepost, upon seeing my arrival opened the gate.

The kitchen garden lacked a little bit of grooming.

When the armadillo Jirou saw me, he snuggled up to me.

When I crouched and started petting his head, he rolled and showed his belly. He's a cute pet.

At that time, the entrance to the house soundlessly opened.

The ones who came out were the Sacred Beast Leo and Eris.

"Ara, Rudeus. Welcome back."

"I'm back. Where's everyone?"

"They're safe."

"Not that, what are they doing?"

"......Lilia and Sylphy are preparing food. Roxy, the kids, and Mother-in-Law are still sleeping. I was just about to go running."

"I see."

I muttered and took Eris's hand.

And Eris grasped my hand tightly as if to answer to that.

I wonder if she had just done practice-swinging, because it felt warm.

When I saw her face, she looked a little red.

"Wh-what?"

"Eris. Let's take a day off today."

"I-I got it."

She said "I got it." as if to say she had already seen through what we were going to do.

Bang on the money.

"Leo, it's regrettable, but today's stroll is cancelled."

".....Woof."

Leo had a somewhat disappointed face, but he licked my other hand and then returned inside the house.

While holding hands with Eris, I entered the house as well.

And then headed towards the kitchen.

In the kitchen, Lilia and Sylphy were lined up and making food.

"I'm back."

"Ah, welcome back, Rudi."

"Welcome back home, Master."

The usual smiles showed by Sylphy and Lilia with relieved faces.

"Lilia-san, thank you very much for your effort in looking after the house."

"Not at all. I'm really glad that you were safely able to return back, Master."

"Norn and Aisha will be staying there for a little while longer."

"I understand."

After bowing to Lilia, I turn towards Sylphy.

"Sylphy, let's take a day off today."

"Eh? Alright, if it's a day off....."

Tilting her head in confusion was Sylphy.

But it seemed the Lilia had quickly realized it.

"I understand. Madam, please let me handle the cooking."

"Ah.....I got it now."

While shyly smiling, she clutched my arm opposite to Eris.

As a result of cooking and washing the plates, her hands were somewhat cold.

"Lilia-san. Let's go out to eat at noon."

"I understand."

A smile that looked as if she had seen through everything.

It's a little embarrassing really.

But, it doesn't matter this late in the game.

While holding both Eris's and Sylphy's hands, I head towards the children's room.

When I slowly opened the door, 4 kids could be seen sleeping peacefully.

Lucy, Lara, Ars, Sieg.

And as if to protect them, Leo was curled up at the entrance of the room.

In the middle of the fight, I got worried about the house many times.

But contrary to my anxiousness, the children were in peace. Perhaps some kind of fight took place in my absence and Leo protected them all.....

Anyhow, after confirming the health of the children, I slowly closed the door.

Continuing from there, I descended down the stairs and headed towards Roxy's room.

I knocked as part of my manners.

".....Coming."

After a few seconds, there was a reply.

When the door was opened, the half-asleep Roxy saw me.

She had bed hair and there were traces of drool below her lips.

"Ah.....Rudi. Welcome back."

"I'm back, Roxy. I was thinking about taking a day off today, how about it?"

After looking blankly, she caught hold of the meaning of "day off".

While playing with her bangs of her bed hair with her finger, she blushed slightly.

"I won't mind, but....."

Among the two women on my left and right hand sides, she looked at one of them.

"Is Eris alright with it?"

I looked at Eris.

With a slightly puzzled look, her face was becoming reddish.

"I was going to ask her now."

I faced Eris.

"Eris, I want to go to bed with all four of us like this, is that fine?"

When I asked, Eris seemed to have understood what I was trying to do.

Her face became even redder and she pouted.

If she wasn't holding me like this, she would've taken her usual pose.

"If Rudeus wants to no matter what, then....."

Sorry Eris.

I want to reward myself today a little.

I want to say goodbye to the abstinent Rudeus.

"Thank you."

I thanked her.

I didn't say this to just Eris because she had given me permission.

I said this in regards to all the three that have supported me until now.

I thanked that no one went missing after the end of battle.

Gisu and Badigadi said that this was the end.

That Hitogami would no longer interfere with me.

Of course, I shouldn't believe those words.

As long as Hitogami lives, he would be considered my enemy.

But let's just take a day off for today.

So that I can work with more energy tomorrow, so that the day passes calmly.

So that I can still keep on laughing──

Just kidding.

I just want to have some sexy time.

Now then, from today onwards, the ban on Rudeus will be lifting up.

While thinking that, I headed towards the bedroom, three women in tow.

—○●○—

AUTHOR Q & A (14 OF 14)

Q. That was a good finale. Thank you very much.

A. Thank you very much as well.

Q. Why didn't Gisu assumed the possibility of fire magic at all? Did he thought that it would be strange which resulted weak defense only towards fire magic?

A. Rudeus mostly used water and earth magic when it was necessary so his defense against fire and wind magic was weak.

The question why he didn't completely defend himself against all types was because he simply couldn't carry that much weight.

Q. On Kishirika's request he wasn't killed so that means there's a way to kill him?

A. The immortal demon race are only humans who can't die, that's why if some way or another they die it wouldn't be strange.

Q. I've asked this before but you didn't answer so I'm asking this question again. I'm sorry if it's a question that's hard to answer but.....

It's a question regarding mana.

If Our Great Highness President Orsted opened the Dragon Gate and Mr. Rudeus with his full mana tank stood in front of it and fired away magic at it ceaselessly which in turn would charge President's mana, would he not like to recover his mana that way?

A. I feel like I've answered this question before but it's not possible for me to answer twice.

The sucked up mana will only charge the gate in the end, in the midst of battle it could be useful to lower ma-na consumption but there aren't any other advantages.

Also, that technique has conditions like the enemy shouldn't be able to move or it should be used indoors or in a narrow path, if not the enemy can get out of it's effective range.

Q. As the story progresses, there's a saying that characters can easily move like they have a will of their own contrary to author's intention, did something like this happen in your experience, Magnote-sensei?

Something like even though you thought this way but Eris still jumped in to save Rudeus.

Or just when you made Rudeus alone he was rolled up by anxiousness and as a result became cautious.

A. Just when you thought that he was alone, he was rolled up by anxiousness, that thing happens a lot really. LOL

Q. Did Jino become a Sword God in other loops as well? Or was it just in this loop?

A. Probably just in this loop.

Q. A one punch weapon that makes you naked similar to Dragon King Sword, which one would be a more powerful weapon?

A. Obviously the Dragon king Sword.

However, that's one perfected weapon, depending on the situations or it's genericness and augmentability, and in the case it's declared a winner against the Magic Armor.

Q. Judging from President's words "I assume that you'll have no excuses when you lose with both?", does that mean he was able to come up with an excuse in an previous loop? LOL

A. Alek who held the Dragon King Sword was somehow or another powerful.

He's tenacious and doesn't hesitate.

That's why whenever he defeated Alek in his previous loops, he was prepared from the beginning to let go of the sword or do something else. So the President could win and Alek had an excuse.

Q. >>However, Badigadi wasn't alluding that one bit.

I feel like he quickly hinted something after that, was there a need for that previous statement like that I wonder.

A. I've written the part before that where it states that "ended up using Orsted's mana"

They couldn't meet the winning conditions but wasn't it a victory?

Or so Rudeus thought but Badigadi wasn't hinting at the winning or losing conditions but he thought "No, I thought that Hitogami had lost so you guys should've won."

I'll go ahead and rewrite it a little.

Q. It would've been nice if the President could be supplied mana from Rudeus, just like in Highschool DxD.

A. Yeah, it would've been nice if it could.

Q. Rudi, who had huge mana reserves similar to Laplace, used all of it to the point of exhaustion. Although he wasn't even able to fight Orsted by doing that then I wonder just how Laplace was able to blow off half of the entire continent.

A. Laplace knew how to properly implement his magic, he had something like Final Secret arts of Magic. And so you can think like that.

Q. Even though Rudi's mana, which was similar in amount to Laplace's, was exhausted by wearing the Magic Armor and yet the Fighting God Armor worn by Badigadi which had anti-magic, restoration and other gim-micks like that was able to work for days at end, and yet the mana didn't run out I wonder why. I feel like it would be difficult to explain it with just the fuel consumption as the basis for both.

A. First of all the Magic Armor is a counterfeit of the Fighting God Armor.

The Fighting God Armor was the crystallization of Laplace's 10,000 years of research and study, it's not neces-sary that Hitogami or Orsted would know every principle behind it.

Q. Are there no problem for Alek to not be using the Kajakuto just like always? I also think that especially sealing his hands wasn't important.

A. Alek might think "It's no-good if I kept relying on this sword."

Q. As expected, the way of thinking of going to bed in a harem situation just like Rudeus is uncommon in that world.

A. Rather than the world, wouldn't it better to say the thinking of the common man or perhaps each country. At the very least, Sylphy doesn't think it's uncommon.

Q. I re-read from Tuning Point 2 but the President was hated by Ruijerd which made him feel considerably dejected, just how much were they getting along until this loop?

A. At the very least, even if there's the objective of defeating Laplace, to the point of loaning out his beloved daughter.

Q. The President's documents which were written in Dragon language were now buried under the rubble but I can't help but feel that there was naming list for the Magic Armor written inside it that was quickly rejected by Rudeus or a list of names for Rudi's children when the time comes for consulting those names.

A. The buried notes of the dark past!

Q. Would the new office be constructed somewhere else than the usual place?

A. Yes. The construction of the new office and removal of the debris of old office are progressing simultane-ously.

Q. I always wondered just how Badigadi was able to play Gandhara, why he knew about such music in such a world. If someone is teleported in any time axis then could he be the reincarnation of Nanahoshi's boyfriend who were teleported

off together, or was it someone important in the after story that would make his ap-pearance. I know these are all wild ideas but still I wonder what it was.

A. It only sounded the same rhythm as that song.

He didn't know the song itself, and it seemed clumsy as well.

Q. It suddenly hit me, why wasn't the Dark King chased by the Death God?

Did the Dark King asked Hitogami to not tell about his whereabouts to Death God?

A. It's a somewhat soft topic.

Q. How much level has Perugius-sama attained in other places like healing or attack classes?

A. He's somewhat Saint Rank.

For Barriers and Summoning, he's God class.

Q. Isn't it unreasonable for the President to not fight?

A. At first Rudeus declared that "I won't let President fight this time! He shouldn't be allowed to fight!" but after looking at the situation deteriorate he thought "I guess I have no choice but to rely on President."

During Badigadi's fight there were only『The result turned out better than predicted.』 & 『Mistook when to retreat.』 but he planned to entrust the rest to President if the MK. Zero hadn't arrived, or so it was.

Q. Even though Badigadi said that he'll think about becoming an ally but didn't?

"He didn't think that he would be a character like "When I said I'll think about it, I'll only think!"

A. No, Badigadi is that type of character.

The lying Badigadi.

The type of person who would say "FUAHAHAHA, that was a lie!"

Q. If he has used up 50% of MP overall this time, and add to that the previous times he used it, then there's only around 30% left is it?

Did he not splurge too much and had become like the 7th rank of the world powers?

Does that mean he will now rely on the fighting force's weight for the most part?

A. He will be relying most of the time on the weight of fighting force, yes.

Q. As one who has joined the Roxy religion, I would've liked it if I could get my hands on those 1/10 size figu-rines if they were selling, you know? LOL.

A. It looks like there was a person who was making it. I wonder what would have happened!

Q. I'm looking forward to the final chapter. If the book is translated then just how many volumes would it take?

A. Won't it take 24 volumes?

Q. >Atofe's crew

As the Atofe Pirates it seems they would come back after conquering the Grand Line. LOL

A. Come on board and bring along~~ ♫~♪

All your hopes and dreams.~ ♫~♪

Together we will find everything~ ♫~♪

That we're looking for (Atofe who has been swept away by the sea).~ ♫~♪

{ C-Editor's note: A reference to the One Piece anime series. }

Q. Magonote-san, please write a postscript about the warriors that were KIA that fought for Atofe!

A. That so.

I'll append some.

Q. How did Atofe's father die? Or did he perish? I am curious about that part.

A. There's some kind of way to do that.

Q. Even though the Second Generation Dragon God Laplace was able to tear apart the Fighting God into two it was strange that the Dragon God was at the second place and the Fighting God at third. Were they able to get tied by a narrow margin?

A. In the first place, the rankings came into existence after the fight.

Q. So it was the Quagmire, I thought he would've become some other kind of God or an unusual God.Would you please explain how the monument carves the nicknames of the acknowledged people?

A. Only the marks are carved onto the monument.

The word 『Quagmire』 was only because Rudeus always called himself "I'm Rudeus of the Quagmire!".

Q. The setting that even after wearing the Fighting God armor only His Majesty Badi was able to rise until the 3rd rank is contradictory to the information that came from this work so far.

I'm glad about the contents, only this thing is regrettable.

A. Fighting God Armor has a will of its own.

Unlike humans, it doesn't have a head of its own, and even if it's more or less destroyed, that consciousness won't disappear.

That's why it shouldn't be contradictory.

Q. Ah right, is Mushoku Tensei as a series is a type of Prologue story or is it some kind of opening setting?Ah, but might the Second Human Demon War be the beginning?

A. All in all, it would probably be in the center of it all. It will become the start of the endgame at the very least.Maybe the fight between Hitogami and the founding Dragon God would be the prologue.

Q. Could it that you're a blue-haired loli girl with sleepy-like reproachful eyes, Magonote-san?

A. As a matter of fact, yes.

Once in a while the Magonote you see in events and such things like that is actually a familiar summoned by me.

Q. The hero named Golden Knight Aldebaran, according to one theory it's said that that human was the Hu-man God. → In the end just who is he?

A. It's still unknown just who is Aldebaran. However, he seems to have worn the Fighting God Armor.

Q. When the Conclusion Volume is over:

『Take a holiday for a while from writing activity or retire』

『Start an entirely different story』

『Start a story with a different MC in the Mushoku Tensei world』

『Nothing is decided yet』

『Secret』

Which one would it be?

A. While focusing on the published version, I'll sluggishly write out Redundancy Chapter.

After that, 『Start an entirely different story』 or 『Start a story with a different MC in the Mushoku Tensei world』 .

If I got tired when writing and lost all motivation then 『Take a holiday for a while from writing activity or re-tire』 .

END AUTHOR Q & A (14 OF 14)

Mushoku Tensei: Isekai Ittara Honki Dasu - Volume 24 Chapter 260

When I came to, I found myself in the white dimension.

The usual white dimension.

I can count the number of times I've come to this place on the fingers of both my hands and yet this place remained the same empty white place every time.

And so whenever I came here, my appearance changed to that of my former self.

With a protruding belly and flabby soft fingers.

My body being helplessly overweight.

But strangely enough, there's no longer that unpleasant feeling.

That irritating feeling that welled up from within my heart each time I came here was no longer.

And so I thought that it was nice in itself.

I wonder if it's because it's been a long time since I've came to this place.

Or perhaps....

"......Huh?"

That's strange.

I didn't remember having removed my bracelet after such a long time.

There was no need to remove it.

Despite that, just why was I in this place?

Huh.

Maybe it's because I did something in the first place that I came here.

I couldn't remember doing anything like that before I went to sleep today.

Maybe it's one of the children's doing.....

No, but I had the feeling of witnessing something that hadn't happened in a very long time.

Ten years felt like a long silence.

Somehow, my memory was fuzzy.

"Yo."

My memory was fuzzy but my vision was clear.

Within this white dimension, that guy was there as usual.

A lump of mosaic.

It was Hitogami.

But I wonder just what happened to him.

Hitogami's condition looked somewhat strange.

His body was completely roughed up.

On top of that, each of his limbs were stitched up by a magic formation-like something, and it looked like he was tied up with translucent chains.

Like an RPG's last boss.

It's like we have to bring down his right leg or his resurrection magic will be troublesome.

"....."

What happened?

Are you playing a make-believe game of a fallen angel getting sealed?

"I've been done in."

By who?

"Do you really want to hear that?"

Just who will hear except me?

Just who is here except me?

".....Try looking behind you."

When told to do so I turned back.

I saw many people standing there.

They were standing with their backs to me.

They were all unfamiliar people to me.

An unfamiliar male and an unfamiliar woman.

An unfamiliar Demon Race and an unfamiliar Human Race.

Probably a total of 8 people.

There was a familiar person within that group.

It was Orsted.

He never changes.

But there were some uncommon marks on him.

He didn't have that black helmet.

Furthermore, he had a huge scar on his face.

Due to that scar, his face looked even fiercer than usual.

However, the people surrounding him were smiling in contrast to him.

Orsted wore that same angry face as usual, but a slightly happy expression could be seen on his face as well.

I couldn't hear the contents of their conversation but I could tell that they all had mutual trust between them.

The one who was talking was....a boy.

Probably 17~18 years old.

With short hair, a good-looking guy with a sportsmanlike face.

That's definitely the face of a Riajuu.

He looked Oriental.

Still, that's a nice smiling face he's got there. I wonder if Orsted's curse was ineffective on him.

When I was looking at him, one woman stood up from their group.

That child, who was sitting among them as if hiding herself, should be called a girl rather than a woman.

A girl with blue hair.

Near her, a gigantic white wolf was waiting.

Ah, I felt like I'd seen her somewhere before.

She looked like Roxy.

But she wasn't Roxy.

I am certain that she's from the Migurd Race, but I could never mistake someone for Roxy.

Then, just who is she?

Don't tell me.....Lara?

As I pondered, she faced towards me and waved her hand.

No, it couldn't be me.

She's probably waving her hand to Hitogami who was behind me.

When she did, the man beside her started talking with her.

Perhaps he was asking what she was doing.

She answered something to him and then that man turned this way with a surprised face.

He also had an Oriental face.

People with faces like that were few in this world.

Perhaps he's Japanese?

He might be in his 20s....doesn't feel like he's in his 30s.

He faced this way and quickly bowed.

His actions seemed Japanese, so he's Japanese after all.

Possibly.

In doing so, all of them now faced this way.

There were both young and old people.

I thought that there were only 8 people at first, but it seemed that there was a whole crowd of them. Under the mist, it was hard to see.

The only familiar face was Orsted but.....

Ah, I wonder if that person is Eris.

A warrior with braided red hair was looking this way.

But she was a little different from Eris.....

Each of them faced this way and bowed in gratitude.

I wonder if it's towards Hitogami.

No, it's a little different considering their manners.

I wonder what.

As I pondered, they stepped on the magic formation made by Lara and disappeared somewhere.

All of them, suddenly vanished.

The magic formation remained and gave out a light blue color.

And then, after a while, the magic formation lost its light and disappeared as well.

Everything disappeared.

"All of them joined forces to persecute me. They did this, roughed me up, and then sealed me.

Because if I die, then the final Human World may be destroyed as well, or so they say."

It's going to get destroyed?

"Don't know. Cause I wouldn't know about the destruction."

I see.

That's obvious.

Since no one knows what would happen after they die.

"Are you satisfied now?"

About what?

"This. The conclusion you desired for.

I will continue to live here alone with all of my powers sealed.

I will continue to live here so that the world keeps on going.

I can no longer see the world anymore. I can't even talk with anyone.

After this, I will just continue to gaze at this empty white world, a scene without any boundaries."

I wonder.

I wouldn't know if you ask me something like if I'm satisfied.

My objective wasn't to bring you to this state.

I simply wanted to live my life with Sylphy, Roxy, and Eris.

Earning money from a job, coming back home to have dinner with my family, and when night came, I would make children while all drenched in sweat.

An ordinary.....yep, an ordinary lifestyle.

I would have been the most happy in that ordinary life of mine as far as I'm concerned.

"Your happiness is my unhappiness though."

I see.

Then, I'm satisfied.

Because you look really unhappy right now.

If that's what become of you, then I will definitely be happy.

"I see.....is that so.....that's quite odious."

I couldn't understand Hitogami's expression.

But his voice wasn't filled with hatred.

It just felt like he was wrapped up by sorrow.

And then Hitogami spoke like he was about to cry.

"I really hate you."

I see, but you know, I──

My consciousness paused.

When I woke up, I was on top of a bed.

A very large bed.

A bed so big that even three people could lie down comfortably, and it was a very soft bed as well.

No one was sleeping beside me.

I could move my neck and eyes but couldn't move my body too much.

The blanket seemed a little too heavy.

While moving only my sight I looked at my surroundings.

When I did, I saw a red-haired girl sitting near me.

Stern slant-eyes and a firm jawline.

She looked exactly like Eris.

But she had a docile braided hairstyle, and was far smaller than Eris. Her height and breast too.

She was probably 5 years old.

When her eyes met mine, she dropped the thing that she was holding in her hand and jumped up in surprise.

The chair fell with a bump and as she was about to fall down I quickly supported her.

I wonder how I supported her even though I couldn't move my body.

Even I didn't really understand that.

But the girl put both her hands on the ground while in mid-air, reorganized her posture that was about to fall, and after she tapped the floor with her feet, she immediately ran out of the room.

"Mama! Mama! Great-Gramps has woken up!"

As she noisily ran outside I saw the thing that she had in her hand before.

It was the bracelet carved with the Dragon God's insignia.

I didn't remember removing it but it's clear now. When I was sleeping, she removed it.

I unsteadily moved my hands and caught the bracelet.

It was awfully heavy.

No, it wasn't heavy, I simply had no strength.

My hand had become so thin that it couldn't even lift up one bracelet.

And then, I caught sight of my reflection in the mirror.

I could see the figure of an old man, whose body was sunken in the bed and looked like he could die at any moment.

With white beard and white hair.

Deep wrinkles.

The shadow of death floated on his entire face.

Ah, I remember.

I was 74 years old right now.

But, huh.

I couldn't recall anything other than that.

Looks like my memories had taken a toll as well.

Was there such a room in my house....

"Rudi!?"

The one who leaped inside the room was a white haired woman.

Probably 40 years old.

She had already become a fine woman.

When her eyes met mine, she quickly ran up to me and grasped my hand beneath the blanket.

"Is it.....Sylphy?"

"Yeah.....that's it. That's right, Rudi. It's Sylphiette."

Sylphy gently told me.

"Do you know who I am?"

"Yeah.....yeah, I know."

"What happened to me?"

"Nothing. You just slept for a long time."

I just slept.

I see.

I certainly felt a little sleepy.

"But I can't move my body."

"Yeah, looks like it.....yeah....."

Sylphy didn't answer my question.

She just kept brushing my hand as if to sympathize.

Like she was accompanying a senile old man.....

Huh, perhaps I have....

I have become senile?

Was that the reason that I didn't have any memories?

Huh?

Even though age 74 isn't an age like that.

But, was I really 74 years old?

I hadn't aged a bit more or something, right?

Did I become senile because I slept for so long.....?

Just how long have I been bed-ridden?

"I'm scared....."

"It's alright. Because I'm with you."

Sylphy, who was gently brushing my hand, was now tightly holding it.

Just from that, my fear decreased by a little.

But, I was scared again.

As I pondered that, I could see many people entering the room in succession.

A child with red hair, a child with blue hair, a child with blond hair.

Young ones, middle-aged, and old-aged people.

They stood encircling the bed that I was sleeping in.

I had seen each one of those faces somewhere.

"Look, Rudi. Everyone's here now."

"Yeah......."

But I wonder why?

I couldn't remember anyone's name.

Ah, there was someone I recognized.

The person who was at the very back. She shut the door behind her and slowly walked towards me.

A girl with a small chest and blue hair.

Her hair was in a braid.

She hadn't changed at all.

"Roxy."

".....Rudi."

The moment she saw me, she made a crying face only for a moment.

But quickly came to the side opposite to Sylphy's.

And then, she gently and slowly caressed my head.

"Rudi, thank you very much for your efforts."

"Thank you, Roxy─.....master."

Suddenly, the word master came out of my mind.

Tears started spilling out from Roxy's eyes.

Although she hurriedly wiped them and gave a smile, her lips weren't able to make a smile, resulting in a distorted face.

There, I raised one question.

"Where's Eris? Is she not here?"

I couldn't see the usual appearance of the woman who would come running to me the foremost.

"Rudi. Eris has already left, you know?"

"Where?"

"She's waiting for you, Rudi."

Ah, I see.

That's how it is.

"Was I able to take care of her in her final moments?"

"Yeah. It's alright. You cried for 3 days straight but you were nicely able to get over it, Rudi."

Ah, as I recalled it came to me.

Eris was still training energetically even after crossing 70.

Then one day, after her usual morning-run and practise swinging, she came back home all tired and collapsed on the bed. After that, she didn't wake up.

When I realized, she had already passed away.

If I had realized sooner then I could've saved her by using healing magic. I cried a lot that day.....

But I get it.

I didn't even remember something like that.

Then that means that even I didn't have much time left.....

"Sorry. Even though everyone's here, I can't tell who is who."

"Yeah. It's alright. Let's see.....from over there, they are all our grandchildren. That's Lucy's child, Roland. The one next to him is─"

Sylphy started telling me by pointing her finger to each and every one.

It seemed that most people here were grandchildren or great-grandchildren.

Then just where did all of our children go?

Ah, everyone became independent I see.

Everyone now lived away from us.

"And, that red-haired child, who looks exactly like Eris, is Ars's grandchild and Rudi's great-grandchild, Ferris."

"Ah, the one who woke me up, is it?"

The red haired child looked somewhat uncomfortable.

She's probably scared that I would get angry at her for taking off the bracelet.

But I felt like I had seen her somewhere before.

Ah....

That's right, it was during Hitogami's dream.

She was there among the crowd as well.

Yeah, that's right.

Indeed, she was there. She had grown a lot by that time but she was definitely there.

"Come closer."

When I spoke, she came out from hiding and looked like she was about to cry.

"Were you the one who removed this?"

When I pointed my finger towards the bracelet, tears came falling down in large drops from her eyes.

Thinking that a scolding was now inevitable, so she thought that maybe she could get away by crying.

"Sorry. But it was so pretty."

"I see. Then, I'll give it to you."

When I said that, she looked at me with a puzzled face.

"Is it fine?"

"In exchange, you must promise to never again take people's possessions, OK?"

".....OK, I promise."

"Alright. Good girl."

I slowly reached out my hand and brushed her hair.

Perhaps she might get a scolding after this but well I guess it's fine.

It's not as if it's my responsibility if she ends up getting spoiled.

"Everyone looks lively."

"Yeah. We're all lively."

I was relieved after hearing that.

If I had so many grandchildren and great-grandchildren, then everyone should be lively.

"I'm glad. You all must've worked hard...."

When I lost my strength, my hand slipped away from Ferris's head.

The surroundings got noisy.

It's alright.

Even I wouldn't just drop dead like that.

I could continue living like a bedridden old man for a little while more.

When I was thinking that, someone entered the room.

A tall person.

Having silver hair and an angry look.

"Rudeus."

"......Orsted-sama."

The moment he entered the room, the surrounding atmosphere changed.

Tension?

Vigilance?

No, it was something more loose.

It was relief and trust.

"Is it fine without the helmet on?"

"Yeah. Because if I wear it, one of your grandchildren will start crying."

When Orsted said that, the surroundings were filled with laughter.

Various voices flew out like 'I won't cry anymore, geez' or 'You were such a crybaby before.'

"So your normal face is no longer feared, eh?"

"No, the curse hasn't changed. It's just that it doesn't have any effect on your children and grandchildren."

Orsted's face now looked a lot calmer than I had saw him at first.

His scary face was still there but it could be said that it's more relaxed now.

"Oh right, Orsted-sama."

"What is it?"

"Just now, when the bracelet was removed, I saw Hitogami in my dream."

"......Did you become an apostle?"

"Well, I wonder about that. It's possible that it was just a normal dream.....if I have become an apostle, then what'll you do? Will you just kill me like always?"

"Yeah, of course. Because I'm merciless against those who betray me."

Orsted said that with a serious face but I quickly understood that it was a joke.

Because everyone started laughing, and Orsted wasn't giving out any killing intent.

It felt like saying something like this in front of an bedridden old man on the verge of his death was uncalled for but.....they might've let it slide as a joke.

"In the dream, Orsted-sama gains victory against Hitogami and Hitogami is sealed as a result."

"That's a nice dream."

"Yes, it definitely is."

I wonder if what I saw was the future.

It felt quite real, but then again, dreams are quite fully filled with reality.

"Please work hard so that my dream comes true."

Orsted nodded in earnest.

As one would expect, after seeing his face every day for 50 years, I could now comprehend even that face.

"You've done a lot so far. You can sleep peacefully now."

"Haha....it's still too early for me to sleep, you know?"

I want to stay awake for a little while more.

I was feeling good.

I couldn't move my body much, but the sunlight felt warm and pleasant.

"I'll stay awake for a little bit more. Just a little bit more.....okay?"

Even if I stayed awake, it's not like there was something in particular that I had to do.

Just a little bit more, a little bit more. I wanted to see the faces of all the people that were here for a little while longer.

That's all.

So to speak.

I was just a little bit reluctant about parting.

I just wanted to see them for 1 or 2 more hours. It would be fine even if it's 10 minutes.

It's not like I had something to say to them.

I had no lingering affections.

Nor any regrets.

If I just stayed here for a little bit more, I'll be satisfied.

That's it.

"Just a little bit more....."

While thinking that, my eyelids started falling.

They fell ever so gradually.

In the end, I saw the child's face that looked like Eris.

Then I saw Sylphy's and Roxy's face.

Finally, my eyelids shut.

Without change, my consciousness disappeared.

Mushoku Tensei: Isekai Ittara Honki Dasu - Volume 24 Chapter 261

I woke up.

I felt like I had seen a strange dream.

It was a very peaceful dream.

Sylphy and Roxy were there.

Eris wasn't there, but a child who looked like Eris was there.

It was a really comfy dream. I clearly remember everything.

The dream of my death.

It was somehow clear to me that after I closed my eyes, I would never wake up.

But it didn't feel bad.

"Hmm?"

When I looked around, I saw a girl with a startled expression holding my hand.

A girl with blue hair. A braided-pigtail was behind her head which collected all her hair.

Her right hand was holding my hand and in her left hand, she was holding the bracelet.

Her expression looked as if she was a frog being glared at by a snake.

".....Sorry."

She suddenly apologized.

If you do something bad, you must apologize. I wonder if this was the result of education.

"Do you want this?"

"......No. I told Onee-chan that a really amazing crest was hidden beneath father's bracelet."

"Oh."

Of course, there was no hidden crest or something like that.

Because I wasn't the chosen one.

But on closer inspection, I could see something to the side of the girl that held that bracelet.

On top of the side table, I could see a pen.

Something like that wasn't here before I went to sleep.

"Were you trying to draw it?"

".....Sorry."

That's some amazing ability of trying to make your lies come true.

Should I praise her or scold her?

No, I should scold her here. Yep.

As a father to my daughter, it was my duty to educate her. Yup.

"Lara, lying is bad. Go and apologize to your Onee-chan."

"Okay....."

When I lightly hit her on the head, Lara left the room with a dejected face.

When she left the room, I could see a huge white furball.

Looks like Leo was keeping watch outside the room.

As I put my bracelet back on, my eyes were suddenly caught by the pen.

I drew the Migurd Race's crest on my arm by myself and got out of the bed.

"Ughh.....my head hurts.....drank a bit too much."

I was getting an awful headache due to the effects of yesterday's party.

About 10 years had passed after the Battle of Biheiril Kingdom.

I'll be turning 34 this year.

These 10 years were really peaceful.

Within these 10 years, there was no interference by Hitogami.

He really came to a complete halt.

The years simply passed by without even hearing the Hi- from Hitogami's name.

Of course, I hadn't loosened my vigilance.

While being cautious for any attack that may come from any direction, I continued to prepare for Laplace's return just like before.

Still, because Hitogami wasn't meddling this time, things were progressing pretty smoothly.

We were able to call out to all the countries within 5 years after the battle.

There were places that were no good, but most of the countries had accepted our request.

Therefore, I was putting my effort into researching and coaching Chantless Magic in the Asura Kingdom and Magic University.

Adding to that, we were coaching the military authorities of various countries about the countermeasures that should be taken against the tactics that Laplace would take.

And we were concealing the name 『Rudeus』 while making the name 『Silent Seven Star』 famous.

It was unclear to me whether the hypothesis Nanahoshi was talking about was correct or not.

However, 『If a friend from the previous world does end up coming here, then I wish that something be done so that he can find me.』 after accepting this wish of hers, we were now spreading her name around the world.

There were some bad rumors floating around as well but I guess it couldn't be helped.

The first priority was to increase her popularity, and if it was someone from the previous world, then the meaning or the convenience that I was using her name to do it would surely be understood.

These days, we were researching a mana recovery medicine in hopes of increasing Orsted's mana recovery speed.

We were able to pretty much create such a potion but for some reason, Orsted's mana didn't recover.

I wonder if it's because of the difference in the quality of mana between the Human race and Dragon Race, or was it some other reason?

We'll be researching this matter a bit more, but I couldn't help but feel that this was going nowhere.

Well, the potion itself was a great hit among the adventurers so it wasn't completely in vain.

There were still a lot of things that needed to be done.

I had still some way to go before I could finally rest.

Our children had gotten bigger.

Lucy was now 17.

Lara was now 14, Ars was 13.

And did Sieg become 11 this year?

Every one of them were quickly growing up.

After that, our family grew with 2 more children.

Roxy's child – Lily Greyrat.

Eris's child – Christina Greyrat.

Both of them were girls.

6 siblings.

It's a large family.

But the female to male ratio was higher in my family. Perhaps the Greyrat lineage is a matrilineal family.

When Lucy became 7, she started attending family councils, and decided on a broad education plan.

That is to say, she enrolled herself in Magic University. After her graduation and celebrating her coming of age ceremony, she attended the Asura Kingdom's National University for 3 years.

It's my ideology to not force my children into something but I did think that there was a need to guide them towards their education.

It was Ariel's earnest request to let my child enter the National University of Asura Kingdom.

I had a huge debt towards Ariel.

I want to make blood ties with your family so make one of my child your son-in-law!

If she said something like that, I'd obviously refuse, but I couldn't say no if she just wanted to enroll my kids.

I wanted to pay back my debts little by little.

Incidentally, Ariel gave birth after the Battle of Biheiril Kingdom.

Her companion might get a hold of too much power so she didn't marry.

And it seemed that she had many concubines.

Ariel currently had 5 kids, on top of which the fathers of 4 of them were unknown, Luke said with a greatly perplexed blue face.

A question arises as to just how he knew about one of the fathers.....but if I think about it now, perhaps the father in question might turn out to be Luke.

It seemed that as part of her next plan, Ariel was planning on marrying my kids with one of those 4 kids.

I wouldn't like it if she's doing it for only political reason, but I'd permit it if the kids themselves consented to each other being their companions, or so were my thoughts.

The kids were still young but they would be growing towards adulthood with each passing year.

In particular, Lucy had already become a fine adult capable of judging things herself.

Though I say that, it's not like she simply grew older without maturing as an adult.

Honestly, even I didn't understand about change.

The moment one thinks that something bad has been fixed, a different bad thing might pop out.

And the one that had been already fixed would start deteriorating again.

It's a feeling where you keep aging while thinking the same thing over and over.

Only my face could be seen to be getting older as the years went by.

These days, my face had gotten some smile lines.

Sylphy said 'That part of you is good as well' but Sylphy looks quite young for her age so I felt a little guilty.

Sylphy was aging quite well.

But she was the same age as me so her change in appearance was slower in comparison.

Since she's the same age as me, she should be turning 34 this year too, but her body looked like she was about 20 years old.

Her skin was still spunky, and even though she gave birth to 2 children, her butt was still small.

Sleeping with her feels great as usual.

It's just that her personality had already completely become like an old-la─ a mother, and so her scoldings had increased a lot.

Roxy didn't change.

Neither her appearance nor her personality changed.

But when I told her, I get scolded, even though they were just words of praise.

As usual, she still guides me as a master whenever I do something bad.

She was still a little bit clumsy as usual, but it's just the ups and downs of life. People make mistakes all the time.

Perhaps it was Eris that changed the most in regards to her appearance.

She was aging just like me.

But as a result of her not failing to do her everyday training, she looked a lot younger than me. Her body might be somewhere in the late 20s.

Her sex drive seemed to have dipped down a bit after giving birth to 2 children, but she still attacked me sometimes.

Contrary to Sylphy, her personality hadn't changed too much.

However, she started teaching the children swordplay, so it felt like her ferociousness had dropped down a bit.

She had become patient.

Although she would still hit me if I touched her butt or breasts without permission, that's expected of her.

Lilia and Zenith had obviously aged.

Both of them were still lively but because of Lilia's foot condition which she had from the start, she was getting symptoms of lower back pains and stiff shoulders.

Although it was cured by healing magic, it came back after about 1 year.

Her complete recovery looked quite difficult.

The other guys were aging quite well.

Zanoba and Cliff had already become fine men.

They each had their family and work, and looked quite busy.

And they helped each other out in times of trouble.

Aisha and Norn, both of them got married.

Their companions.....were a little bit complex.

Well, they properly explained about those things and made me consent so there's no need for me to say something this late in the game.

"....."

Still, 34 years old huh.....

I had an emotional attachment to this age.

During the very same day, at daytime. I made a visit to that place.

On the outskirts, on top of a small hill, a place where circular stones were standing in a row.

It's the cemetery.

"Greetings, thank you very much for your hard work as always."

I thank the gravekeeper standing at the entrance with a few words as always and entered the cemetery.

This cemetery too, saw a lot of new tombs within these 10 years.

People died and were born, but the tombstones didn't decrease that much.

At the other cemeteries, when an entire family was no longer around, their tombstones were demolished, but this place was reserved for the nobles, and so even after an entire family died, their tombstones wouldn't be demolished.

And now, the Ranoa Kingdom and Magic City Sharia was slowly building up its strength.

In addition to that, noble families were increasing as well, due to that gravestones were increasing too.

I stood in front of one of those gravestones.

Paul Greyrat was written on the circular gravestone.

It had gotten quite old compared to when it was first erected.

With the cleaning equipment I had brought along with me, I cleaned the surroundings and polished the gravestone.

After that, I offered alcohol in front of the gravestone and joined my hands together.

It had been a while since I came here.

I kept visiting at every opportunity I got and reported various things before but I ended up visiting less & less these days.

Still, I made a shrine visit once a year with all my family.....

I wonder if it's the problem with my feelings.

Rather than making a shrine visit to meet Paul, it felt more like that it was an event I had to attend.

Looks like I was lacking feelings of gratitude.

"Father, everyone's lively and doing fine."

The first thing that I told him was about the current state of other people.

I did this every year as well, but just in case.

"I'll be turning 34 this year."

34 years old.

It's the age when I died in my previous world.

During the time when this and that happened, I ended up becoming 34.

But I wonder why.

It felt like it took quite a lot more time than the previous world to become 34.

I wonder if it was because I had a lot of things to do.

Or was it because it was a lot different as compared to my previous world.

"Even though I've just become 34, I ended up seeing a dream where I die at 74."

I wonder just what that dream was.

Was it just a dream?

Or was it the future Hitogami showed me?

Hitogami was sealed.

And I accepted my death with a satisfied mind.

Right, maybe the moment Lara removed my bracelet, Hitogami was able to intervene.

"If that was really true then....."

If Hitogami made me see that, then it probably meant that it was the result of my hard work.

In the Battle of Biheiril Kingdom, we were victorious.

Maybe that was really the final battle and Hitogami lost any way of winning against Orsted.

Therefore, Hitogami gave up.

Since there was no interference from Hitogami whatsoever for these past 10 years.

There's nothing anymore.

Perhaps he's stealthily moving in the shadows.

However, just as Gisu and Badigadi said, there was no news of him.

To the point where I forgot the purpose that I was moving for.

"Does this mean I don't have to work hard anymore?"

If Hitogami had really given up.

Then that meant my job was finished.

I'm halfway through my current job, it should be fine to live a little more relaxed.

I could put effort into baby-making once every three days with my wives.

I could teach various things to my children.....

It felt like I could even start living in retirement.

"Just kidding."

I laughed in disagreement.

That's something foolish.

So what if Hitogami had given up.

It's not like I was unwillingly doing my current work.

It's not that harsh either.

I was doing this for the sake of leading Orsted to victory, for the sake the last battle.

It was quite fun.

Of course, there were times when it was painful and hard, but it's not something that I would run away from.

There are still things that have to be done, there are also things I want to do and that I'm still doing.

It may be Hitogami's plan to make me think like this... to make me lax.

"Father, I'll be working even harder from now on."

I had been living like this as usual.

That was a dream.

A convenient dream where a desire was brought forth.

"Please watch over us all."

I said the usual things and joined my hands once again.

"....."

As long as I existed, that guy must be in the afterlife.

Or so I say. It's not necessary that Paul was within this grave.

He's definitely enjoying the show from some other place.

That's why coming here might be an act with not much meaning to it.

But it was fine.

This was the ceremony.

I'll be working hard again from today onward.

It was taking that pledge in front of Paul's gravestone that was important.

"By the way, Gisu too....."

I put offerings on Gisu's tomb that was near Paul's as well and joined my hands again.

I didn't know what Gisu might think of this but.....well, it wasn't like he seriously wanted to bring ruin to me.

"I'll listen to your resentment in 40 years.....well, it might take bit longer than that or I could probably die before that."

I had no intention of glorifying Gisu's death, but if 10 years pass, things like that tend to fade away.

And as a result of those things fading, the thing that would be remembered would be his smiling face.

Gisu always laughed giddily while talking about jinxes.

When I recalled that smiling face of his, I couldn't help but think of it as a nice memory.

It's not like someone close to me had died because of Gisu, and I held no resentment towards him.

Because he died, I was able make a shrine visit to his grave like this.

"Well then, I'll come back again. Next time, probably with my family."

While saying that, I stood up.

Nothing in particular would be changing just because I saw a strange dream.

While doing what I can, I'll do what I want to do.

While thinking that, I turned my feet towards my house where my family was waiting.

Mushoku Tensei: Isekai Ittara Honki Dasu - Volume 24 Final Story

And then, by the time I realized, I was already in the white room.

"Yo."

"Hey."

The mosaic guy that lived here looked healthy as usual.

Of course, he was neither sealed nor was he feeling down.

It's the same-as-usual mosaic.

"Does that mean that what I saw 40 years ago was because of the power of foresight?"

"Yep."

Hitogami was the same as usual.

Still, 40-50 years had passed since the last time I saw him.

Therefore, my memory of his 『Usual』 was already distant.

The only thing I did remember was his impudent attitude the first time I met him.

"I thought that if I showed you that, then you would become a little lax."

"Well, it missed the target by quite a bit."

"Not really, I was just trying something."

A dream like that wasn't going to stop me from doing what I'd been doing until now. I wasn't that weak-willed.

Well, if it didn't turn out like that dream, the possibility that I would stop wasn't completely non-existent.

"So anyway, you actually looked like that."

When told that, I looked at my own figure.

Before I knew it, my figure had changed.

The body with a blubber of mass.....was no longer there.

My body had changed into the one that I had become familiar with in this world.

It was the body of Rudeus Greyrat.

I couldn't see my own face so I couldn't tell exactly, but I felt that I wasn't that old right now.

"You didn't know?"

"Yeah. Cause my eyes can only see the soul directly. I knew that your body and your soul were different, but this is my first time seeing your actual form."

Well that's a first.

But, now that I think very carefully, I don't know how Hitogami looks either.

We're in the same boat.

But why, why did my body decide to take this shape now of all times?

.....I assume there's no explanation for it.

"At any rate, with this, it's over for you."

"".....Yeah."

I died.

At the age of 74.

I remember that my final moments were comfy.

I think that it was a happy ending for me, surrounded by my children and grand-children in my final moments.

At the very least, there was a world of difference compared to my previous final moments.

As compared to that lonely, powerless, miserable one, which would make you want to cry.....

"Now that you're gone, I can move more freely."

"I see."

"As long as you lived, anything I did resulted in failure.

That's why, I've thought of something.

Just like you, I was increasing my supporters little by little."

"So you still haven't given up, huh."

When I said that, Hitogami's attitude changed.

He seemed angry.

"Isn't that obvious?

Would you give up knowing that your future is like that?

Forever alone, not being able to do anything, not being able to see anything.

On top of that, I have to live like that for 10,000 or 100,000 years or even more.

Even though I know that I won't be able to bear it, why would I give up?"

Well, I guess.

If it was that grand, then I couldn't even imagine it.....

But I could understand a little bit.

What would happen to him if he didn't do anything.

Just what kind of future awaited him.

If he knew that he would regret it, then he couldn't just pass up his time without doing anything.

"Well, I would probably not give up....."

"".....What's with that carefree face of yours? Do you think you've won?"

"Do you have a plan?"

"Yeah, I now know about Orsted's 200 years time loop.

You've finished producing your descendents as well, and I've thought of a way to manipulate them.

I've prepared things during these last 50 years....."

"I see."

"Can you understand what I'm trying to say?

That foundation that you've established so far, I'm going to knock it over and turn the tables on you.

In a world without you, by using the things you laid out, I will win.

You cannot do anything now. Because you're already dead!

You can no longer stop your own descendents from fighting among themselves. You can't stop them from killing each other.

You can't even cry and beg me to stop.

On the contrary, the only thing you can do is watch!"

As compared to Hitogami who was delightfully talking, I was just scratching my cheeks.

Incidentally, I also scratched at the back of my head.

It's not really itchy though.

I'm just perplexed as to what kind of answer I should give.

"Is that so....."

Upon my reply, Hitogami stomped his feet on the ground with force.

"WHAT IS IT.....!?"

While restlessly stomping on the ground with his foot, he raised his voice with irritation in it.

"How are you SO RELAXED!?"

"That's because.....I'm already dead."

As I answered with a pause, Hitogami became speechless.

I closed my eyes.

I started thinking about the things up until now.

I was able to do what I wanted in this world.

I married and had lots of friends.

I had lots of children and grand-children as well.

I tried my best at work.

Indeed, I was anxious about the things Hitogami would be doing from now on, and I also had the thought that I could've done something more.

But for some reason...

I had no regrets or curiosity left.

No, it should be better to say that there was nothing left to regret.

Sure, I'm worried and anxious, but the thought of 'what to do' doesn't come to mind.

After listening to Hitogami now, I didn't feel like I should somehow revive myself and go protect my children.

The children or the grandchildren would probably be able to do something about it somehow.

I slowly headed towards Hitogami.

Hitogami had a surprisingly small stature.

Since I never approached him more than necessary, I could never estimate his height.

"I'm satisfied already."

I'd lived my life plenty.

I didn't think that everything was perfect. Maybe there were still some things left that needed to be done.

It's not like when I closed my eyes, only good memories came to my mind.

Memories of failures, memories of success, there were both.

However, I didn't think that I needed to redo it.

I died.

My work was now over with this.

I should just entrust the consequences to the people that were still alive.

Even though the person in front of me was saying that he would harm the ones that were still alive, it was rather strange.

But it couldn't be helped.

Strangely enough, my mind was calm.

"Listen, Hitogami."

"....."

"I wanted to tell you something before."

".....What?"

"I think that I don't really hate you that much."

I felt like Hitogami had an unpleasant face.

Of course, he might think that I was saying this because I was one step ahead of him for now.

Sylphy and Roxy both lived, and the children were in good health as well.

Eris died first but it was a matter of life-span.

It wasn't Hitogami's fault.

Of course, if there was even a little bit of change, then I think that I would've hated Hitogami to the point of killing him.

Just like my future self.

Just like him, it's possible that I would've become a machine just to kill Hitogami.

I wouldn't have been able to obtain such a calm demeanor.

As a result, I became how I am, is what I'm trying to say.

"What are you trying to say.....?"

"Even I don't really understand. I think that, the way I'm this calm right now is thanks to you.

I think if you, who was such a distinct enemy, weren't here then I wouldn't have been so satisfied up to this point."

Yep. That's right.

If not for Hitogami, I would've started to slack after I turned 20.

I would've married Sylphy, then gotten a job and would've worked hard at it.

I would've lived my life like that, been satisfied, and then died.

I'm sure that would've happened.

I would've been fine if things had turned out that way, but I have no doubt that I would never have been able to attain the same amount of satisfaction that I have now.

Not to the point of having any regrets, but I would've probably thought once more or I want to do it over or I need to return.

It was only because there was a distinct enemy, a distinct objective, that I was able to give my best until my death.

As a result, I was now this way.

"Even if you say that, I won't be letting my guard down."

"Ah.....no, well.....I didn't say this with that intention....."

I wonder why.

It's not like Hitogami has a nice side to him.

Even though I said that I didn't hate him, it didn't mean that I liked him either.

Of course, I didn't want to give him my thanks.

"....."

"....."

That's why, on that note, the conversation came to a stop.

An uncomfortable atmosphere grew between us.

Within that moment, my mind was suddenly hit by a thought.

".....I wonder why I came to this world."

I tried muttering those words.

"I don't know."

Hitogami answered while muttering as well.

"Do you really not know anything?"

"If I knew, I would've interfered beforehand. You really appeared out of thin air. I didn't realize until after that teleport incident happened. Just suddenly."

"Hmmmmm....."

In the end, during my entire life, I never found out the truth behind the teleport incident.

There was Nanahoshi's weird hypothesis, and something may happen from this point forward but.....

"If there ever comes a reincarnated guy similar to me, then please give him my regards."

".....Like hell I will."

"Thought so."

I was bluntly refused.

Well, it wouldn't be strange if Hitogami was holding a grudge towards me.

"Anyway, what's going to happen to me now? I do think that I've died."

"Well, let's see."

While irritated Hitogami looked at me.

"Ordinarily, the soul reduces itself into mana, then gets mixed with someone else's mana or recomposes itself into something else. However, you are a person from another world so I wouldn't know what may happen to you."

"I see."

I thought that after death I would get to meet Paul or Gisu but I guess that's not happening.

Even though it was obvious, it's still a pity.....

But well, my body had been buried in the same place as them. Maybe I should be satisfied with just that.

"....."

When I noticed, my body was gradually fading away.

I wonder if this was the mana reduction that Hitogami was talking about.

So this was the definition of death in this world.

Perhaps even for other inhabitants of this world, they came to this white room just before their deaths.

Probably without ever meeting Hitogami, they just waited until they faded away from the white room.

If you think that way, then Hitogami may be close to the Yama(the Judge of the Afterlife).

Scoffing on someone's entire life, grinning in front of them at the verge of their death.....

That's a detestable Yama.

"Tch....."

However, Hitogami wasn't grinning like he usually did.

On the contrary, he was unconsciously tapping his foot, unable to hide his irritation.

He wanted to feel triumphant in front of me who was vexed and disappearing.....but that ended in a failure so now he was feeling irritated.

He really is a detestable guy.

"....."

I stood in front of that Hitogami.

"Well, Perhaps it's not my position to say this but....."

Someway or other, I put my hand on his shoulder.

"Do your best from now on."

I wonder if he'll get angry.....

Or so I thought, but Hitogami breathed out a sigh and dropped his shoulders.

And then, sat down as if collapsing on his knees.

"....."

After that, he completely fell silent.

While looking down on Hitogami, I surveyed my surroundings.

It's the same as before, pure white.

Empty.

And then, my body was on the verge of disappearing too.

My consciousness was gradually dying out as well.

Would I return back to my previous world?

Or would I become someone else in this world?

Would my memories remain intact?

Or would they not?

I didn't know, but no matter which form it takes, I wouldn't care.

Even if my consciousness or memories remained, even if I was born in place much harsher than this one, or in my previous world, I would probably be able to get along somehow.

"See ya."

My final words.

As my consciousness was gradually fading away, I passed by Hitogami's side and started walking forward.

Without turning back, I simply headed forward——

Mushoku Tensei: Isekai Ittara Honki Dasu - Volume 24 Side Story

Rudeus Greyrat.

That name is extremely famous.

As of now, that name has been carved all over the world.

You can see the name Rudeus Greyrat here, there, and everywhere.

You can see it at the corner of teleportation equipments, or in the production notes of the brand new Magic Textbook that is being sold throughout the world, or below the bridges that exist on highways.

That name is thoroughly scattered in many places.

Even now, there would be few who haven't seen that name.

However, if asked what kind of a person he was, people can only tilt their heads in confusion.

That person has been recognized as the "Strongest Magician representing the 400s of the Armored Dragon Calendar".

That person has been recognized as "The God of Education who revolutionized the school system & education".

That person has been recognized as "The Intellectual who innovated cultural symbols such as paintings, dolls, toys etc."

Although there aren't many records showing that he, himself started those things.

If it's the case of magic, then Silent Seven Star,

if it's the case of education, then Roxy M. Greyrat,

if it's the case of arts, then Zanoba Shirone.

Each of those names came up first before Rudeus Greyrat.

Hence, there were many opinions like "He was a sycophant who was good at flattering strong people" or "He was an imposter who stole credit from people who actually had talent by swindling them".

Many also made claims like "The person named Rudeus didn't exist but it was a title given to the ones who achieved many exploits in the Rudo Mercenary Group. For that reason, there were multiple people in existence."

Rudeus Greyrat.

There were many theories regarding him, however, it was undoubtedly true that he accomplished great things, and had a huge impact on this world.

But from this point forward, it wouldn't be unusual if he slips into obscurity from people's minds rather than becoming famous.

That would be a great historical loss.

Hence, I have decided to add some private information regarding Rudeus Greyrat in the reference room of the Asura Kingdom.

『Armored Dragon Calendar Year 485
Asura Kingdom's Reference Room – Office Head, Jed Bluewolf』

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

Rudeus Greyrat

『Summary』

Rudeus Greyrat (K407 – K481) was a magician in Ranoa Kingdom. In K430, he became one of the Seven Great World Powers by becoming 『The Seventh Rank』.

Working alongside Roxy M. Greyrat and Silent Seven Star, he became a magician representing the 400s.

His many aliases included 『Quagmire』, 『Dragon God's Right Hand』, 『Magic King』, 『The Great Mage』, 『Chantless』.

Also, 『God of Education』, who drastically increased the literacy rate of the entire Central Continent.

In contrast, because of his cowardice in regards to battle, he was also called『Wimp』,『Startled Hare』, 『Bowing Head』,『Escape Master』.

He came to be known by many names in his last years and as such he was also called

『Rudeus of the Seven Signatures』.

『Lifetime』

- Childhood

In K407, at the Buena Village in the Fittoa Country of the Asura Kingdom, he was born as the eldest son to a father who was a low class Knight of the Asura Kingdom, Paul (K388 – K423), and to a mother who was a former adventurer and healer, Zenith (K390 – K459).

Rudeus from his infancy was able to use Intermediate Level magic when he was 3. Paul, who anticipated that talent of his, called Roxy Migurdia (K373 –) as a private tutor to educate him.

As a result of his hard training, he could use Saint Level Water Magic by the time he reached 5.

Although he displayed talent capable of surpassing his own mentor, he still honored her until his very death.

When he turned 7, and after discovering his talent, he was invited to be a private tutor by the Feudal Lord of Fittoa Country of that time, and went to the Boreas Greyrat House.

While teaching magic to Eris Boreas Greyrat (Later Mad Sword King Eris), he also commenced his work on creating dolls using Earth Magic.

Although he had talent not befitting that of a child, when his parents didn't show up on his 10th birthday, he still shed tears, acting more suitable for his age.

In K417, the Teleport Incident happened, and along with Eris, he was teleported to the Bingoya Region of the Demon Continent.

There, he made Ruijerd Supardia his ally. Ruijerd was feared as 『Dead End』 at that time and after becoming an adventurer, he started his journey from the Demon Continent to the Central Continent to reach the Fittoa Country.

During that time, he met Zanoba Shirone and Cliff Grimoire who would later become his allies.

When he turned 13, after escorting Eris to the Fittoa Country, he journeyed to the Northern part of the Central Continent in order to find his missing family. From there, he became well-known by the name『Rudeus of the Quagmire』.

- School Days

In K422, he migrated to Magic City Sharia in Ranoa Kingdom and enrolled into the Magic University there on the recommendation of Jinas Halfas.

After taking down Rinia Dedorudia, Pursena Adorudia, Silent Seven Star, and Immortal Demon Lord Badigadi, he was renowned as the Magic University's strongest magician.

The following year, when he turned 16, he became the guard of Ariel Anemoi Asura and married the magician Sylphiette, also Ariel's guard.

Around that time, he settled down in Magic City Sharia and decided to stay there for the rest of his life.

The same year, he received information from his father Paul that his mother Zenith had been found, after which he departed.

With Silent Seven Star's cooperation, he used the Teleport Magic Formation that he suddenly came across to travel to the Begaritt Continent.

Along with Paul, Elinalize Dragonroad, Talhand, Gisu, and Roxy Migurdia, they were able to successfully conquer the Teleport Labyrinth.

However, during the fight with the Manatite Hydra that resided at the centre of the Labyrinth, his father Paul passed away. Even though he rescued his mother Zenith, due to the effects of the Teleportation and the labyrinth, she had already become a vegetable. And thus, Rudeus fell down to the very bottom of despair.

The one who pulled him from the depths of despair was his mentor Roxy Migurdia. Because of this, he welcomed her as his second wife.

In K425, he fought alongside Eris Boreas Greyrat against the Dragon God Orsted at a forest outside Sharia.

At the end of a battle so fierce that a part of the forest vanished, Rudeus was defeated. After that, he became Orsted's subordinate.

The reason for the battle was unknown, though it was speculated that Dragon God Orsted was going to harm Ariel Anemoi Asura as a result of which Rudeus intervened and tried to protect her.

After this battle, Eris Boreas Greyrat became his third wife.

The same year, after making an alliance with Ariel Anemoi Asura, he participated in the Civil War of the Asura Kingdom.

He fought North Emperor Auber Corvette, North King Wii Taa, and Water God Reida and triumphed. He was known as the leading actor who helped Ariel Anemoi Asura become the Queen.

In K427, he established the『Rudo Mercenary Group』in Magic City Sharia.

Even though he inaugurated himself as the President, he entrusted all of the officework to his little sister Aisha.

That same year, when he turned 20, along with Zanoba Shirone, he participated in the Defensive Battle of the Shirone Kingdom after his alliance with Pax Shirone.

He fought the army that came from the north at Karon Fort.

It was estimated that the number of people killed by Rudeus alone during that fight easily exceeded 10,000.

In K429, after graduating from Magic University, he headed towards the Holy Kingdom of Milis along with Cliff Grimoire.

Although they are no detailed records regarding the event, it was considered that he deepened his relationship with the Miko and made Cliff Grimoire an official of the Milis Religious Organization.

In K430, he participated in the Battle of Biheiril Kingdom along with Dragon god Orsted.

During the battle, he defeated North God Kalman the Third and became the Seventh Rank of the Seven Great World Powers.

- Life as one of the Seven Great World Powers

After he became one of the Seven Great World Powers, Rudeus stopped making appearances on the front stage.

The reason why his popularity was lower than the great men of same generation as his was because of that.

(People that came out who basically replaced Rudeus from his position were 『The Seven Star Witch』 Silent Seven Star or Roxy M. Greyrat who was now the Headmaster of Magic University. They were more popular.)

Therefore, not many knew that he was the Seventh Rank of the Seven Great World Powers.

It was theorized that maybe Rudeus himself had died after the Battle of Biheiril Kingdom and the one who came out was a body double or that only his name remained. However, due to the records left behind which stated that the establishment of Ariel National University was directly affected by him, it was quickly dispelled.

It was unknown just why Rudeus was trying so hard to hide himself from the front stage.

The records stated that he became the subordinate of Dragon God Orsted, and became friends with Zanoba Shirone – President of the Doll Company, Cliff Grimoire – Pope of the Milis Religious Organization, Miko of Milis, Ariel Anemoi Asura – Queen of Asura Kingdom, Death God Randolf of the Dragon King Kingdom, and Immortal Demon Lord Atofe of the Demon Continent. In order to prepare the world for Laplace's resurrection 80 years later, he was trying to unite the world as one.

Meanwhile, he broke the taboo and brought back the usage of the Teleport Formation to the world. There were many books written that called him a great criminal for using the convenient capabilities to plot world domination.

- Death

In K481, his first wife Sylphiette Greyrat announced his death to the world.

The cause of death was old age. While sleeping in his own bed, he passed away at an old age of 74.

He was such an exceptional person that more than 5000 people came running to attend his funeral.

At his funeral, even Dragon God Orsted, who was even more discreet than Rudeus himself, made an appearance.

『Equipment Used』

He equipped himself with a staff normal for a magician, and specialized in long-ranged suppression attacks, although Rudeus was considered to be proficient in close-quarter combats as well.

- 『Arrogant Water Dragon King』 Aqua Heartia

This staff was considered to be given to him by the Boreas House on his 10th birthday and was made with the raw materials of an Elder Treant inhabiting the eastern part of the Great Forest in the Milis Continent.

The Magic Stone affixed in the staff was a Water Magic Stone, which emitted an ultramarine color. An A-rank item obtained from a now lost species of Water Dragons from the Northern Part of the Begaritt Continent.

It was manufactured by one of Asura Kingdom's Rod Directors, namely – Chain Procyon.

It was an extremely strong staff, but it's said that after the creation of『Magic Armor』, it wasn't used much.

- Magic Armor 『MK. I』

The prototype created under the joint cooperation of Zanoba Shirone and Cliff Grimoire.

It's height is a little less than 3 metres.

The right hand was affixed with a Stone Gatling Cannon and the left hand was affixed with a shield and a Magic Absorption Stone.

Although its mana consumption was quite high, it was considered to hold defensive and offensive power similar to that of the Seven Great World Powers.

It was specifically created in order to fight Dragon God Orsted, though it was still kept in use after that.

It was destroyed by the Fighting God during the Battle of Biheiril Kingdom.

- Magic Armor 『MK. II』

It was a complete set that could be separated into arm parts, leg parts, and torso part. It was a jet-black armor and helmet. A tuned-up version of the 『MK. I』.

If worn, it could provide physical ability similar to that of a Saint Ranked swordsman.

- Magic Armor 『MK. Zero』

The decisive battle weapon of Rudeus created for the Battle of Biheiril Kingdom.

Its details are unknown.

- Magic Armor 『MK. III』

The Magic Armor used by Rudeus during his last years.

Its height was a little more than 2 metres and its ability was the same as the 『MK. I』.

This Magic Armor became the basis for the mass-production of the All-Purpose Magic Armor Series later on.

- Stone Cannon Gattling

A staff-shaped magic item that was created to fire stone cannons without regard for the mana consumption.

During operation, it rapid-fired stone cannons with terrific speed and if an ordinary person were to use it, his/her mana capacity would be instantly exhausted.

It was created by a specialist of magic items, namely – Jacqueline.

- Stone Cannon Shotgun

A magic item similar to the above-mentioned gattling that could fire 12 rounds at once.

It was created by a specialist of magic items, namely – Jacqueline.

- Paul's Sword

The harder the object, the more easily it was cut. This convenient ability was possessed by Paul's Sword.

Paul's sword was quite famous in the kingdom. However, it was considered that he used a different sword during his time as an adventurer.

『Magic Used』

Rudeus was well versed in using all of the properties of magic, but as indicated by his nickname『Quagmire』, his speciality was in Earth and Water Magic.

It was said that he used various magic depending on the situation of the battle, but it's considered that most of the magic used by him were the following.

- Stone Cannon

Generally known as an Intermediate Level Earth Magic.

A magic capable of hitting the enemy at high speed with a lump of stone that could be created to be as big as a fist.

However, the same thing fired once by Rudeus's Chantless Magic had the power of bursting and scattering the Immortal Demon Lord.

There were variations like exploding stone cannon and stone buckshot.

- Quagmire

Said to be Rudeus's signature move, it's a type of melded magic.

He was said to be able to use this to swallow up an entire town.

- Mist

Similar to above-mentioned, it was also said to be one of Rudeus's signature move, a type of melded magic.

It was said that he once covered up an entire forest with this mist.

- Electric

A reduction of the King Class Water Magic Technique『Lightning』, one of Rudeus's original magic.

Rudeus could freely use this magic in close-combat, and it could be used against the Immortal Demon Clan to paralyse them.

- Shockwave

Capable of blowing off an opponent by making vibrations in airspace, a type of Wind Magic.

It's said that Rudeus used this in close-combat and fought as if he was flying in air.

『Research』

During his lifetime, Rudeus researched and developed various types of magic and magic tools.

And he was considered to have sponsored & funded various researches as well.

- Way of mastering Chantless Magic

It was said that Rudeus Greyrat could use Chantless Magic from his early childhood. His mentor Roxy M. Greyrat improved the thesis on the method of his Chantless Magic and established a proper way of mastering it. The Magic Triumvirate and Asura Kingdom assertively incorporated that method, resulting in the birth of a large number of excellent magicians.

- 『Magic Potion』 Mana Recovery Medicine

Silent Seven Star accepted the funds offered by Rudeus and developed a mana restoration drink.

This Magic Potion was developed in order to break the law that bound magicians since time immemorial, namely, mana exhaustion. With the combination of the above-mentioned method, the period of swordsmen being the strongest ended. Not only that, but it was helpful in improving the magician's social status as well.

- Magic Artificial Arm

The Magical Artificial arm helped a lot of poor people or adventurers who couldn't receive Saint or King Class Healing Magic.

It's said that the Magical Artificial arm's research was funded by Rudeus and created by the joint co-operation of Zanoba Shirone and Cliff Grimoire. The one who popularized it as a medical treatment device rather than a magic tool in the world was Silent Seven Star.

- Magic Armor

It's said that no one other than Rudeus used the Magic Armor. However, the third daughter of the Greyrat house, Lily Greyrat, inherited its research, and the production of an All-Purpose Magic Armor was completed in K483. It was useful for reducing the amount of casualties during the subjugation of large monsters.

- Magic Doll

Zanoba Shirone received funds from Rudeus and was able to successfully develop Magic Dolls.

Dolls that looked exactly like humans were capable of performing chores, tasting poisons, performing reconnaissance, care for you, and perform various such other duties.

Due to its extremely high price and low stock, the only places that these were being used were at the Royal Palace of the country where Rudeus and his friends lived.

- Teleportation Magic Formation

Silent Seven Star received funds from Rudeus and researched the Teleport Magic Formation in order to resurrect their usage, which was a taboo at that time.

As a result of these formations being put in every nation and country, the need to travel long and dangerous journeys vanished, making travel to distant countries easier and faster.

It's said that the reason he touched on such a taboo subject was because he looked back on his father Paul's death in the Teleport Labyrinth.

The one who actually did all of the research was Silent Seven Star, and it's said that Rudeus simply became a sponsor for her. For some reason or another, the nobles, merchants, and officials of the Milis Church blamed only him as『The Person who broke the Taboo』.

- Encrypted Memoirs

The records of the above-mentioned research were all considered to be written in a 52 volume book in 『Rudeus' Handwriting』, but everything was written only by him and Silent Seven Star, and was all written in a cypher no less. Because it still hasn't been deciphered yet, its credibility is low.

{ C-Editor's note: It was written in Japanese and there is no Japanese language in Mushoku Tensei. }

『Personality』

- His height was around 175 cm and despite being a magician, he held a solid and muscular physique. His skin color was white, his left eye possessed the foresight eye, and his right eye the clairvoyance eye, which made his eyes heterochromatic. There's no description as to whether he was a handsome man, but his wife Sylphiette, during the time they met at Magic University, harbored the impression that "My knees gave away just by looking at his face for several seconds". His other wives Eris Greyrat and Roxy M. Greyrat gave no comment on the topic but it was considered that his looks weren't that poor.

- He preferred his garments to be a grey robe without covering his head with any attire. He was quite careless in choosing his garments from a young age. In the Magic University, he wore a robe that had many cuts in its hem which made him look like a delinquent; in the Asura Kingdom, he wore some kind of weird outfit during an audience which made many nobles frown — or so it's written in the records. During the time when he crossed his 20s, it was considered that he started paying some attention to his attire to which the Armored Dragon King Perugius commented in K430, "He has started wearing some decent clothing these days". Other than his carelessness for clothing, he loved cleanliness, to the point where he remodeled one of the rooms in his house to a huge bathroom and bathed almost every day, or so it's said.

- During his time in Sharia, Rudeus was quite feared, but was still respected and loved more than any other magician. This assumption can be inferred by the great number of attendees that participated in his grand funeral, and Rudeus's words that were carved onto the stone monument that was erected at one corner of the Magic University to respect him.

- It was said that he had a gentle personality and was socially kind but was extremely lustful. Records said that he fondled his wives' bodies in a presumptuous way without giving any heed to public gazes, but he was actually quite a devoted husband. He never made a move on anyone other than his three wives, and as such, there were opinions that his extreme lust was simply a rumor. Once again, his personality was so calm that he never let go of his smile no matter how much abuse or violence he went through, but if his family or friends were to be harmed, he would get angry like the raging fire and was also capable of taking violent actions.

There are many anecdotes mentioned below regarding Rudeus's personality.

- At one of the parties in the Asura Kingdom, when a noble made fun of one of his wives, he grabbed him by the collar of his neck, dragged him out of the party and right in front of that noble, burned an entire forest to demand an apology.

- When Rudeus's sworn friends — namely Pursena and Rinia, destroyed one of the dolls that looked like his wife, he punished them by using a method which was considered to be the most humiliating by the Beast Race.

- Perugius invited Rudeus to the Sky Fortress to name one of his children to which Rudeus misunderstood that his child would be harmed and ended up appearing armed to the teeth at the palace. It was said that Rudeus threatened that he would be prepared to fight Perugius if his children were to be harmed.

However, most of these anecdotes haven't been deemed to be authentic.

- He's not really the typical well-known person but most of the world-famous people knew about Rudeus and either respected him or feared him.

- After death, a white cloth was discovered from his pocket, which his wife Roxy hid in a hurry. There were rumors that a very confidential thing was being hidden from public eyes, but the truth remains unknown.

- A law of strengthening the aggregate amount of mana from childhood was discovered for the first time in this world. He was known to have incorporated that law in the present education system.

- His favourite foods were rice, eggs, and the Ogre drink of Biheiril Kingdom. Also, he has been known to say that eating raw eggs was a bad habit.

- His religion was unidentified, although it was considered that he believed in an evil god. However, there was no existence of any type of crest that was in compliance with his God, and therefore it was considered that he believed in an extinct God of the ancient times or he made up a God himself.

- It was also said that he was an atheist or that he only believed in the Dragon God.

『Family & Relatives』

- Greyrat House

One of the highest family lineage in the Asura Kingdom.

There were 4 main houses, namely, Notus, Boreas, Zephyrus, and Euros. Each one of them governed over a large territory and as such, they were known as the Four Great Aristocrats.

Rudeus was the direct descendent of the Notus Greyrat line. However, due to his father Paul running away from his own house, he and his family were erased from the Notus Greyrat family tree.

- Paul Greyrat: Father

The eldest son of one of the highest aristocrats of the Asura Kingdom, the Notus Greyrat house.

He ran away from his house and became an adventurer at a young age. Later on, he met Zenith, asked for a favor from his old friend Philip Boreas Greyrat, and became one of the lower class knights in the Fittoa Region.

- Zenith Greyrat: Mother

The second daughter of the Latreia house of the Holy Kingdom of Milis.

- Lilia Greyrat: Maid. Paul's mistress.
- Norn Greyrat: Younger Sister. Novelist.
- Aisha Greyrat: Younger Half-sister, advisor of the Rudo Mercenary Group.
- Sylphiette Greyrat: Wife. A quarter elf race.
- Roxy M. Greyrat: Wife. Demon Race (Migurd). Headmaster of the Magic University.
- Eris Greyrat: Wife. Human Race. Sword King.
- Lucy Greyrat: Eldest Daughter
- Lara Greyrat: Second Daughter
- Ars Greyrat: Eldest Son
- Sieghart Saladin Greyrat: Second Son
- Lily Greyrat: Third Daughter
- Christina Greyrat: Fourth Daughter

『Relationships』

- Zanoba Shirone

A senior at the Magic University. Former prince of the Shirone Kingdom. The President of the Doll Company. A Miko of superhuman strength.

At the time of the publishing of the 『Picture book of the Supard Race』, Zanoba and Norn's efforts played a crucial part.

Zanoba came to respect Rudeus as his master and Rudeus commented, "No one can match his ability regarding the knowledge of dolls", in regards to Zanoba.

- Cliff Grimoire

A senior at the Magic University. He later became the Pope of the Milis Church. It's said that he protected Rudeus many times as he easily got into trouble with the Milis Church. Once again, Rudeus made it clear just how much he relied on him by earnestly commenting that, "If Cliff-Senpai wasn't here, then I wouldn't be here".

- Silent Seven Star

A senior at the Magic University. 『The Seven Star Witch』.

She's famous in the world as the one who established the Teleport Magic Formations in various countries. In addition, she made numerous ground-breaking inventions and made developments in cooperation with Rudeus.

- Ariel Anemoi Asura

Queen of the Asura Kingdom.

According to the Asura Kingdom's records, just before her death, she left behind her last words to her confidant Luke that, "It's because of Rudeus's great efforts that the Asura Kingdom is now peaceful, so make sure not to be hostile towards him even after my death".

- Aleksander C. Ryback

North God Kalman the Third. Former Seventh Rank of the Seven Great World Powers. 『Dragon God's Left Hand』.

It was considered that as a substitute for Rudeus who wanted to be discreet, he went around various nations as a proxy of the Dragon God.

- Rinia Dedorudia

Captain of the Rudo Mercenary Company.

As one of the Chief Heads of the Beast Race, it's considered that she acted as a mediator between Rudeus and the Beast Race.

- Pursena Adorudia

Vice-Captain of the Rudo Mercenary Company.

Similar to Rinia, as one of the Chief Heads of the Beast Race, it's considered that she acted as a mediator between Rudeus and the Beast Race.

- Perugius Dola

One of the 『Three Demon Slaying Heroes』, the 『Armored Dragon King』.

The leading authority of Asura Kingdom.

Silent Seven Star's Teacher.

According to the Asura Kingdom's records, it's written that Rudeus has been referred to time and time again by him, but his relationship with Rudeus still remains unknown.

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- Norn Greyrat's book 『The Adventures of the Great Magician – Rudeus』, Zanoba Doll Company – K470.
- Norn Greyrat's book 『Autobiography – An Average Person Surrounded by Geniuses』, Zanoba Doll Company – K482.
- Milis Church Archive Management Division 『Millis Church Proceedings』, Milis Church – K460.
- Biheiril Kingdom History Compilation Room 『History of the Biheiril Kingdom K420 – K430』, Biheiril Kingdom – K432.
- Rinia Dedorudia 『Rudo Mercenary Group activity log』, Rudo Mercenary Group – K456.
- Juliette's book 『Zanoba's Doll business management meetings – Proceedings』, K477.
- Silent Seven Star's book 『Brand New Magic textbook』, K442.
- Bloody Count's book 『Great Men of the World – Heroes』, K480.

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Recorder: Asura Kingdom's Reference Room, Assistant Office Head – Couleur Elrond.

Mushoku Tensei: Isekai Ittara Honki Dasu - Volume 24 Epilogue

Armored Dragon Calendar Year 500.

There was a young girl named the Playback Miko.

That girl had eyes similar to that of the dead.

Her pupils had looked blank since the time of her birth. Only despair was reflected in them.

The adults around her thought of her as ominous and kept their distance.

The girl was aware.

She was aware of just what kind of fate awaited her.

She was aware even before her birth.

Nay. It would be fallacious to conclude that she knew before birth.

The girl was reborn time and time again.

Nay. It would be fallacious to conclude that she was reborn.

The girl just kept repeating the same life over and over again.

Nay. It would be fallacious to conclude that she lived the same life.

The girl kept repeating a life with only some slight differences.

A life with only some slight differences.

Nevertheless, the conclusion of that life always remained the same.

There was never a big change that occurred, and she approached the same conclusion time and time again.

That conclusion was her death.

The girl died.

Death was something that couldn't be avoided by anyone. However, the death of the girl was an atrocity.

After the girl had been handed over to the country to be used as a tool, she was caught by the enemy and died.

Just like a toy being fought over by children.

At times, she was cruelly violated. At times, she was eaten alive by beasts. At times, she was drowned in water.

The girl died each time, surrounded by despair and pain.

Life was nothing but a path that lead to despair for the girl.

There was only one step before she reached the executioner's stand and she was simply taking that one step each and every day.

She had no hope.

The girl had a power.

The power of rewinding the time of an object to a maximum of 24 hours.

The power to restore something that had been broken.

The power to resurrect the dead.

24 hours.

Only by 24 hours.

However, that power that could resurrect even the dead was enough for her to be requisitioned by the Country.

The King of the Country took her into his hands, monopolizing her.

That power which could turn things back by 24 hours ridded the King of all diseases and injuries.

She couldn't perform miracles like bringing a stop to aging, but that was considered a trivial matter.

As far as the girl's knowledge went, there were three types of Kings.

When the girl died and each time a new nightmare began, there was a slight change.

However, the actions taken by any of the kings never changed towards the girl.

Thus, for the girl, all the Kings were the same.

The power of a Miko did not bring the girl any luck whatsoever.

Neither could she rewind her own time nor could she use it for her own sake.

She had no choice but to be shackled in the prison of the Royal Palace.

And then, she died.

While being kept at the corner of the Palace and meeting different people each time, in the end, she died.

At times, by the King's wrath when her power wasn't up to the task.

At times, when the country was invaded by another country and she was taken as a prisoner.

At times, when the country was invaded by Demon Races and she was massacred along with everyone else.

The girl's life always came to a tragic end.

And then, again from the beginning.

In a corner of the country, it began once again with her birth in a remote countryside.

The girl being thought of as creepy by the adults, was taken by the country, and then died.

Of course, the girl tried to run away from her own fate at the start.

While hiding her power, she tried living her whole life together with her mother and father.

Nevertheless, it was futile.

For some reason, whenever she reached the age of 5, the soldiers came from the country and took the girl away.

She tried running outside the village before the soldiers arrived.

Still, it was futile.

She would either get eaten by a beast or get caught by bandits or kidnappers.

After being caught, she was sold to various places but reached the country eventually.

Fate tied the girl to the country like the sand pit of an ant-lion, and she was killed while in despair.

It was hell.

She kept continuing forever and forever. It was a never-ending hell.

The hell completely and thoroughly destroyed the girl's mind.

It came to the point that the girl had a vacant expression on her face and obeyed the King's orders like a machine.

For 100 years, 200 years.

She no longer knew just how many times she had died and how many times she had lived.

However, her memories of being killed were clear to her as the day.

It was probably her instinct.

The instinct of not wanting to die. In order to avoid that event, her mind may have stored the memories of being killed.

As a result of that, the girl's memories were all painted over by the memories of her deaths.

She could no longer recall anything else.

Only the moments when she was killed became her consecutive memory.

Within those incessant continuous deaths, the girl thought.

She thought long and hard.

(No more.....someone, save me.....)

At that time, the law of the world changed.

There was a change in her next life.

As usual, she was born in an un-named countryside village and then headed towards the Country after she turned 5.

As usual, she used her powers exactly as ordered by the King everyday. Those things did not change.

However, when she turned 10, something different happened. An event that never once occurred in all of her lives and deaths.

The day she turned 10.

As if being taken somewhere to celebrate her birthday, she was taken along to that place.

The basement of the Palace.

She was taken to a compartment where a huge magic formation was drawn.

The girl did not know that there was such a magic formation inside the Palace.

It was because she was not allowed to freely roam around the Palace.

There were several tens of human adults surrounding the magic formation.

The adults were holding staffs, wearing pitch black robes, and hid their faces with hoods.

She was aware of the fact that those adults were called magicians because of all the hellish times she had been through.

However, she did not know what she would be doing from now on.

It was because she wasn't well-informed on the topic of magic and magic formations.

During the girl's hell, she never got a chance to study anything about magic or magic formations.

The girl was tied up with the magic formation.

But the girl's eyes remained the same as usual, blank.

A new thing had happened.

And yet it didn't even cause a ripple in her heart.

She would be dying in the end anyway.

Even if something changed mid-way, it was still all the same.

Such resignation had filled the girl's heart.

The ceremony started.

The magic formation mercilessly sucked up mana from the girl's body.

There was an enormous amount of mana contained within the body of the girl known as the Miko.

That mana was a different type from the one used in ordinary magic or swordplay. By all rights, it wasn't for use in magic or this type of magic formation.

Then, was it a coincidence that the magic formation sucked up the girl's mana?

Nay.

That magic formation was made for that sole purpose.

It was a formation which operated by using the『Playback Miko's』mana.

Just who made it?

The girl couldn't see her, but the manufacturer was standing at the corner of the room.

Known as the Kingdom's all-time prodigy, it was a Magic Knight.

She too, was watching the ceremony with a bored-looking face, although her face wasn't too similar in expression to that of the young girl's.

And then, the ceremony was a success.

The magic formation began to release a dazzling light.

Rainbow colored light.

It was the summoning color.

And when the intensity of that light weakened, one boy could be seen in the center of the formation.

"It's a success."

"It was a success!"

"The country is saved with this!"

While the magicians were basking in happiness, the boy looked around the surroundings with a puzzled face.

And then, he slowly sat down directly in front of the girl with the vacant expression.

"Excuse me.....where is this? I was with Nana and Kuro, but.....huh?"

It was a language that nobody in that place knew of.

But for some reason, the girl could understand him.

Maybe it was because her own magic power was used to summon him, or maybe she was involved in the reason he was brought here.

"Ah, my name is Shinohara Akito..... who are you?"

"I'm the『Playback Miko』."

"........Mi─? .....Ummm, I'm asking for your name though?"

Now that she recalled, within this hell, the girl was never called by her true name, especially after she came to the country.

The Mikos don't have a name.

There may be an exception if a Miko were to be royalty, but the Mikos are basically stripped of their names.

From thereafter, they are referred to as Miko and there's no need to call them by their real names.

The girl was no exception either.

But the girl remembered her real name before she took the name of Miko, before her real name was stripped from her.

It was only because she had died so many times over and over again that she remembered it.

The name given to her by her father and mother.

"──Riria."

"I see, that's a nice name."

The boy smiled.

Looking at that smile, the girl's heart skipped a beat.

The girl could feel the change.

The girl was released from the duty of a Miko by the King and was given the position as an interpreter for the boy.

With the Magic Knight as a guard, the three of them strided through the Palace.

"Riria, what's that?"

The boy who came from another world asked the girl about various things.

About the world, about the lifestyle, about the people.

The girl had died so many times and yet she did not know anything.

"What's that.....he's asking."

"That? That's a Magic item. The one that spits out fire from the tip if it's loaded with mana. It's probably used for exterminating monsters between here and the forest."

The girl who did not know asked the Knight, to which the Knight answered.

The prodigy known as the Magic Knight, answered thoroughly in a dull tone.

Unlike the girl, she knew everything.

"Hmmm, it's like a flamethrower....if I recall, you said that there were a lot of tree monsters in this world, right?.....has Riria ever seen one?"

".....Several times. It was restlessly moving around."

"Restlessly huh..... hahaha, I can't even imagine it. Ah, but I may have seen something similar in a movie."

"Movie.....?"

"A movie is──"

Everyday life as an interpreter.

It was a completely different life from the previous ones.

It was fresh.

The boy laughed without care each time he was informed about the world, and each time, the girl's heart skipped a beat.

She had thought that nothing would change at first.

She thought that it was already over for her.

But through the boy's infrequent tales of his own world, her dreams were allowed to run wild.

By listening to the words of the Knight that answered the boy's questions, she could feel the world around her extend.

She came to know just how vast the world was, and the various people and things that she wasn't aware of.

A short time after the boy's arrival, she realized that food had flavours to them.

She could now listen carefully to the singing birds when the morning arrived.

She could now feel the pleasant sensation of the warmth of sunlight.

She began to feel that she was alive.

She thought that the hell was over.

The boy had come to rescue the girl.

He had come to rescue her from the hell that she had lived in for so very long.

And that she was born in order to meet this boy.

Her real life was finally about to start from this point forward.

This was fate.

While thinking that, the boy became stronger, kind, and became the moral support for the girl.

However, that very same fate had betrayed her.

The country was wrapped up in war.

The girl was aware...

That each time she got wrapped up in that war, she died as a result.

She knew that better than anyone else.

But the girl did not know...

That the boy was summoned in order to win that war.

That the prophet employed by the country, suggested to summon a hero from another world to win the war because if they didn't, they'd definitely lose.

And, just as the prophet had said, the country spent 10 years attempting to summon the boy, and could no longer focus on anything else.

She did not know anything.

And thus, the boy fought.

But the boy knew nothing of war.

The people of the country knew that the boy was unfit for battle, and yet they sent him to battle.

They put the armor on him, gave him a sword, and made him stand at the front line of the battle.

And thus, the boy died.

He was cruelly killed in the battle and he died.

His head flew off with just one hit from the enemy general and he died.

His head was snatched away by the enemy general, and only the body of the boy reached the girl.

The people of the country could do nothing but sigh after seeing the dead boy.

The hero from another world was useless after all.

Believing in the prophet's nonsense was a foolish deed.

They could only spit on him.

The girl embraced the boy's corpse and tried to revive him with all her might.

It was futile.

24 hours had already passed after the boy's death and his body had now started to rot.

The girl could not do anything with her power.

The girl cried.

She shouted, why?

She shouted, just why only she had to suffer like this.

She cried.

It wasn't a sad feeling that she held.

The feeling of being toyed with by fate.

The girl's heart was dominated by a feeling of powerlessness, that someone was sneering at her and telling her that no matter what she did, it would be futile.

And then, right before her, the country perished.

The girl was captured, and within the usual despair, her life was taken.

But the girl thought.....

For the first time in her life, she thought hard and hard and hard and hard.

(I WANT TO LIVE.....!)

She neither wanted to die nor wanted to be saved.

(I WANT TO LIVE TOGETHER WITH HIM.....!)

The time she spent with the boy wasn't that long.

But that short amount of time had certainly dominated the girl's heart.

The girl's heart which was painted over by the memories of her deaths were very easily repainted.

The boy was her hope.

It was the first ray of hope for the girl.

That hope raised her face and made her move forward.

For the first time in her lives, the girl completely shifted her focus on her own power.

At the verge of her death, the girl bit her own lips until it started bleeding and then used her power.

She would rewind the time by one day.

She used her power while thinking that.

She strained her power as if burning off her own brain.

The girl used the 『Power to Change the Past』.

The world looped with the girl as the core.

The girl's power reached the past.

Armored Dragon Calendar Year 400.

Fittoa Region, Ranoa town.

The place where the boy lost his life.

A rift in time-space appeared above its skies.

Inside that rift, there was a being which had a strong relationship with the boy.

That being carried the same wish as that of the girl who wanted to live together with the boy.

Therefore, in order to make a future where the boy is saved, the being would change the world accordingly and a path of life would be made for the boy.

As a result, in Armored Dragon Calendar Year 500, the boy would be saved.

.....Or so it should've been.

No matter how powerful her ability, the deed of creating a being in the past which normally shouldn't exist was impossible even for the girl.

Even though the rift in space-time existed, it never materialised into the world.

The power of the girl and the power of the world clashed against each other.

K400, K401, K403.

The world continued without any change.

But during that time...

A single soul went astray and passed the rift in space-time.

That soul had no connections with the boy in any way.

At the time of the boy's teleportation, at the time when the girl's power was summoning a being, the soul of that person simply died near those phenomenons.

However, because it was in a state of being a soul, the soul found an opening, and passed through the rift in space-time that had been stopped by the world, and thus the soul was able to enter said world.

And after unsteadily loitering around, just when it was about to lose spirit, it entered a baby.

The wielder of that soul was named Rudeus Greyrat.

The existence of Rudeus Greyrat was only slight, but the world definitely changed.

The ideology of Roxy Migurdia changed, the history of Sylphiette was thrown out of order, and Eris Boreas Greyrat was granted wisdom.

Those actions, weakened the resistance of the world.

And thus, the rift in space-time expanded.

And then, in Armored Dragon Calendar Year 417.

Nanahoshi Shizuka was summoned into the world.

However, the existence of Rudeus Greyrat changed the order of the world more than the girl wished for.

Originally, the change was only intended to save the boy's life. However, that alone was inexcusable.

History took a sudden change and started walking towards a future unbeknownst to anyone.

The world changed.

It was unknown whether the change was what the girl had wished for.

But a few years after Rudeus's death...

The girl was reborn.

As payment for the loop, nearly all of her powers were drained from her and only a shell of the Miko was born.

In order to fulfill her wish...

She was born in the final world.

No one knew whether or not the girl would survive until the end.

AUTHOR'S NOTE:

This brings to an end the story of Rudeus Greyrat, a former unemployed NEET.

Although we were shown the future of Hitogami's defeat, the future may change so the fight between Hitogami and various people will still continue.

However, the story of Mushoku Tensei itself tells the tale of Rudeus Greyrat only, so please let me have the privilege of ending the story now.

The total writing time would be 2 years. And as for the total amount of characters, it should be around 2,830,000.

{ C-Editor's note: This English translation has around 1,368,142 words. }

I, myself have never in my life written a story this long.

Despite fumbling around in an unknown territory, I continued writing without stopping and we was able to reach the conclusion, I think that it's all thanks to the readers who supported me till the end.

Thanks to the huge amount of thoughts & evaluations, we were able to reach first rank as a total.

"Don't be fooled by the numbers, or believe that your ability rapidly increased because of the growing numbers, it doesn't mean that the story you've been writing until now suddenly became interesting, don't be tempted and only look at yourself as an author – or so I kept telling myself and yet I do not know just how many times I have been encouraged by that first place which shone brilliantly. Of course, apart from numbers, there are a lot of aspects that I must reflect upon as well.....

I think that the fact that my story was able to gain the top spot in the 『Shousetsuka ni Narou』 where a lot of different authors assembled will become my self-confidence in the future, enabling me to move forward with this power.

Thank you very very much.

While putting my efforts towards the published version I am thinking about writing redundancy volume which will include 10 years of Rudeus's story, i.e., from his age of 24 to 34 years old, stories after he crosses 34, stories focused on the kids, stories of characters that I didn't focus on too much, at a slow pace of 1-2 chapters a month.

I look forward to working on both the published version and Redundancy volume.

Well then, once again.

Thank you very much for your readership.

Mushoku Tensei: Isekai Ittara Honki Dasu - Volume 24 Christmas 2016 Ss

December 24th.

The Magic City Sharia was dyed pure-white in snow.

It was a blizzard that was like every other year.

However, to the people that lived in this town, it was a trivial thing.

It's been around 40 years since I, Rudeus Greyrat, started living in this town.

Something like snow doesn't matter.

"Jingle hehe, jingle hehe, bell hehehe"

Today's Christmas.

Already, all my children became adults.

They already left the house and made a family, and they all are living independent lives.

Now then, today's Christmas.

Speaking of Christmas, yes, that means Santa Claus.

To those who are always clueless and to those who want to receive things and advice, I'd want to lecture them about reality, but only today is different.

One time a year, it's a good day because everybody gets presents from a gramps that nobody knows.

Although, I don't usually give out presents to grown-up adults even if they're my own child.

Nevertheless, Christmas it is.

Even if Lara and Lily never grow up, Christmas it is.

However, they come back in this season.

And we spend the new year's together.

I'll take my little grandchildren, and

Yes, I speak differently with my grandchildren.

Grandpas spoiling their grandchildren is like divine providence.

That's why I'll become, Santa Claus.

And I'll spam, presents.

This year, Orsted isn't here.

He received an invitation from Ariel.

It seems Ariel invited Orsted as the "Christmas Surprise Guest."

Too much of a surprise will only incur a pandemonic scene of Hell, don't you think.

Alek always boasted about being able to support really well, but it probably can only get worse.

But well, I declined that invitation to the party so there's that...but anyway, let's put that aside

Anyways, it's "Today, only I am Santa!"

Well, I truly wanted for Orsted to do it, but, you know, it's hard to cosplay as Santa at that age, you know.

But, it's just me, you know, there's no other choice, you know, it's the only way, you know?

While thinking that, I prepared everything for this year.

I wore a red, fluffy piece of clothing, had a white bag, a white wig, and a fake moustache.

I'm now a perfect Santa.

Receiving my wives' protection after talking to them in advance, I'll invade my sleeping grandchildren's rooms.

Just to secretly give them presents.

That's the perfect image.

It seems like Eris finally understood what the purpose of this was, so there's no problem there.

Though, Lily and Chris still believe in Santa, so I can't be seen by those two...

Well, I'll probably be okay.

"Today is fun hehehehe... uu, it's cold... I wish I brought a vehicle."

I, who finished preparing, opened the office's gate to go to my house.

In the furious snowstorm, I took one step, and

"N?"

For some reason, there was a kachiri sound at my feet.

I guess I stepped on a twig beneath the snow?

The next moment after thinking that,

"Woah!"

Something pulled at my foot, and I was beautifully hanging upside-down.

"What the hell!?"

Who is it, who laid such a trap right at the entrance to my company!

Hitogami, maybe!

Hitogami's plot, isn't it!

Only Hitogami would stand to gain from such a plot!

That too-much-free-time bastard! Just you wait until the next time we meet! I'll damn kill you!

"Hitogami...!"

Gnashing my teeth, I was trying to somehow get out of the rope when I realized that there was a person's figure leaving from the building's shadow.

I can't see well in this blizzard...

The other person probably also couldn't recognize me.

He or she came straight towards me.

With a dignified manner of walking.

Most likely, this was the criminal who set the trap.

Namely, Hitogami's pawn.

"...Nn?"

As that man got closer, his clothing started becoming more visible.

He was wearing red clothing, and, on his head, was a red hat.

Furthermore, his moustache and hair were full of white, long hair.

And, he had a big, big, white bag.

Moreover, I saw the figures of animals pulling a sleigh behind him.

This was unmistakably Santa.

Impossible.

Orsted and Alek were supposed to be with Ariel!?

No, this is wrong.

When he moved closer, I could clearly see his face.

It was a youthful face.

Way more, compared to me.

A face I knew.

A face that vaguely resembled mine.

"Sieg...!"

He was my son, Sieghart Saladin Greyrat.

My second son that was just employed in the Kingdragon Kingdom.

The animal behind him was Leo.

For some reason, there was great anger horns stuck on its head.

On the sleigh was Lara, who was wearing a coat made of great anger horn fur. Very fluffy.

"What are you doing? You, at this time..."

I had a bad premonition.

A feeling that my son fell into the clutches of evil.

It can't be that those two became Hitogami's followers!

I'll fight the masked Sieg, and last point when I'm cornered and beat, he'll say "I'm your son..." and cut off my right arm!

With how strong Sieg has grown to recently, it's possible that he could defeat me.

"..."

Sieg didn't answer my question.

In silence, he picked up the bag I dropped and handed it to Lara, who was on the sleigh.

Lara looked inside and frowned.

"How is it, Lara-nee?"

"...No good. No sense at all. No child would enjoy this."

Guaa!

It shakes my heart, these words!

Well, sure, I might have a bit of an outdated taste...

But I chose them with all my heart! I thought my grandchildren would enjoy it!

"Papa chose it with all his power for us, so you don't have a reason to complain."

That's it Sieg, you tell them!

Wait no, that's not exactly what I wanted him to say.

I wanted an explanation.

"Sieg, what the heck is this!? Give me an explanation!"

Also, I'd be glad if he could put me down.

I feel blood rising to my head already.

After listening to me, Sieg slowly turned around, and, crossing his arms behind him, he slowly walked towards me.

He seemed to be in deep thought.

I want an explanation, but I don't want him to go on saying that he was actually one of Hitogami's followers or something like that.

It doesn't seem like that would be the case after all.

For a dad, a slightly stupid reason would be the best.

"...Papa. What kind of person do you see yourself as when you refer to yourself as an ally of justice?"

Hold on, my child.

Answering a question with another question is a bad habit.

Though, it doesn't really matter I guess, it must be some sort of preparation for his answer.

Papa understands, so I will answer your question

"...Umm, there's many kinds of allies of justice, so I can't encompass them all into a single answer"

"Yes, that is true. I think there are many ways of answering that, but you see, for me an ally of justice is someone who 'makes everyone smile'."

"U-uhuh."

I don't think he is wrong, but still, I wonder why he started talking about that now.

Sieg had a distant look, as if looking towards the day after tomorrow.

Unfortunately, today, we had a big snow storm.

The setting sun couldn't be seen anywhere in the evening sky.

"When I think about it, back when I was a child, every year I'd look forward to this time of the year."

"I see, you always looked forward to it."

"Yeah, but at that day, I knew of the true form of Santa..."

"That day...!"

It's already been around ten years.

Back then, in my job for Orsted I disguised myself as Santa and sneaked into the house.

...And then I fell on Lara's trap.

That day I was also hung upside down and the cruel Lara used her inhuman hand to strip me of my mask...or well, the false moustache and hat I wore.

I will never forget the look on Sieg's face that day.

The look that screamed...You liar, so Santa was daddy all along...

The shock from that day must have been so strong that he wanted to be buried in a blizzard like the today's.

"Back then I felt betrayed, I thought that after all, Santa was just a lie. I felt really hurt."

"I'm sorry, I was such a careless father."

I will never forget the look on Lara with the false moustache and the Santa-style hat either, so full of herself like a hunter who just defeated a bear.

I also won't forget the look on my wives that said "You've screwed up".

I was so ashamed that day.

"But I've been thinking about that recently. That all papa wanted was to make us smile."

"I see, I'm glad you understand."

"But still..."

Sieg turned to face me.

"Now that we found your true identity, you don't have the qualifications to do it anymore, don't you think so?"

"What do you mean by qualifications?"

"Santa is real, but you can't meet him. Real but can't be seen. Such a fairytale-like person tickles the hearts of children..."

"Who spouted that...?"

Now that I think about it, I feel like I might have said something like that to Orsted ten years ago or so.

"My teacher told me so."

I see, so it was Alek.

Orsted probably told it to Alek.

"Since we found you out papa, you don't have the right to be Santa again."

"So that's what it comes down to...But someone needs to be Santa to make the children smile..."

Then I finally understood why Sieg and Lara were clothed like that.

Santa and reindeers. A big sack with presents.

Even a sleigh carefully prepared.

"Yes. Papa's era has ended. From this year on, it is Lara-nee and I will be doing Santa. Hey, Lara-nee."

While Sieg was saying that, he looked at Lara.

Lara had a bored + this is stupid + sleepy face.

"A pain. I wish you'd do this yourself."

And so she said, but she was still sticking to her younger brother.

Lara is such a kind person, papa is happy now.

But if possible I wanted her to stop being like that. I wanted her to be kind to papa too.

Still, I see.

They want to be Santa...

"..."

I closed my eyes and reminisced the last ten years.

There weren't that many times I was Santa.

Still, when I closed my eyes I was able to remember the times I was Santa.

The feeling of excitement of sneaking into your own house, the thrill of leaving a present besides your kids, how I'd smirk thinking of the next day when everyone would open their presents, the feeling of accomplishment after leaving through the chimney.

Then in the next day when the smiling kids would open their presents and announce what they got, I still remember that incomparable happiness.

I won't have many chances to experience that.

Orsted does it all the time now after all.

After such a long time, it was finally my turn again.

It would be my first time being Santa after a long time.

I can't just say yes, go ahead, have fun to Sieg.

Even if my identity as Santa was known once!

"Bye, Papa. We'll get you later, so"

"...『Wind Slice』!"

I used wind magic, and the rope binding by feet was cut.

I did a somersault and landed on the floor like a superhero.

I pointed at Sieg, who stood there in shock.

"Sieg! Lara! You guys can't have this role!"

"Papa!?"

"If you want to be Santa so badly, go marry and have your own children!"

After hearing this, Sieg was even more shocked.

"Well no, I still need to rescue Pax, so marriage is something I'd rather not think of right now..."

Sieg seemed to be shrinking down at a pitiful rate.

"Umm...about that, papa, I'm really sorry but..."

Seems he was still depressed after the marriage proposal with the princess of Asura Kingdom was refused.

Marriage might be a taboo topic to talk in front of Sieg I guess.

"Fa... hebuchi!!"

When I suddenly turned around behind me, Lara seemed to be doing a yawn + sneeze combo from the wind that somehow was getting inside here. Guess she's cold.

She didn't seem to be shocked at all.

To be honest, I wanted her to show at least a slight reaction.

It's not that I want her to be flustered, but rather...be more like that.

I personally think I'd feel lonely if my daughter gets married to someone, but if she doesn't get married I'd feel even more lonelier, I wonder if there's really no one she likes...

In any case, leaving that aside...

"Ummm..."

Well.

I did't plan to hurt Sieg.

Sorry, Sieg.

Err, umm...what should I say to cheer this child up.

"...Do it with your own children, or else"

"Else?"

Arrite.

"Defeat me and go for it!"

"Uooooooo!"

The battle started.

—

"Ha!"

"Guwa!"

Skipping the full explanation, I lost in the end.

As I thought, Sieg is strong.。

Among the Greyrat family's children, he could be said to be the strongest.

Though it doesn't mean he can win against a North God Style Emperor Class.

"Papa...Why did you go easy?"

"Uh, I was relatively serious?"

They aren't just trying to sugar-coat it are they?

"But, you never used Stone Cannon."

"No, I used it?"

"I know you didn't. Papa practices Stone Cannon almost everyday. You always hit right in the center of the target that I could only see a speck of. Also, the target would disintegrate. The massive piece of Rud Steel wasn't just penetrated but completely destroyed... If Papa used that, I'd be... But, Papa never used that."

That's true, I do practice like that.

Stone Cannon is probably my best skill by now.。

It's the strongest, and fastest magic skill I can release.

I made it my goal to be able to use the best skill from the start to the end of a fight, no matter what situation I was in.

"Heh, like hell I'd ever shoot that at you..."

After all, it was a skill to crush my enemies.

It's not something I'd shoot at my family.

Or actually, this kind of quarrel was nowhere near serious enough for me to resort to that kind of skill.

"Such a thing... Papa..."

Sieg hugged the collapsed me.

"Sorry, I was wrong! Father did it all for family, and yet, I, I only thought about myself!"

"No, it's fine, Sieg. I was the one who was wrong..."

Yes, I was wrong from the start on.

Only because I was so set on being Santa, I lost sight of what was supposed to be the most important to me.

"This year, let's do it together."

Yes, both my goal and Sieg's is the same.

To make everyone smile.

For that, we'll be Santa.

Sieg isn't an exception either.

I'll make him smile while we enjoy being Santa together.

Let's make all the children in the house smile like never before!

"Father...!"

In the midst of this snow, Sieg lent a hand to my fallen body, and helped me stand.

I have no more hesitation anymore.

Lara found the whole thing to be too much of a pain or something so she went inside the office and willfully lit the fireplace and snuggled there. But I don't care.

Even if the reindeer has no motivation, Santa is eternal.

We took our white bags and hoisted them on our shoulders.

Come to think of it, I wonder what was in Sieg's bag?

Since my bag's contents are said to have no sense, I wonder what are the things that kids these days like?

For the coming years, it'd be nice if he could teach me a few things about that...

But well, I guess that could be done after the presents are placed, I guess.

In any case, this year we are both Santa.

We got twice the Santas this year!

"Arrite, let's go Santa No. 2!"

"Okay, papa...I mean, Santa No. 1"

Immersed in my thoughts as I was, we set off towards our home.

It was then...

...that the office door was opened with a bang.

"!"

Standing on the other side of the gate, there was an animal.

Wearing a costume made from snow hedgehog fur and great anger horns on its head.

Lara suddenly has motivation?

No, that's wrong.

Her costume's material was a bit different, and they weren't the same height in the first place.

His shoulder width was too big, and, incidentally, Lara probably didn't carry a huge sword on her back.

"A-Alek..."

"Teacher...why...?"

The reindeer—Alexander Raibaku—didn't answer.

Instead, he walked clumsily through the snow opening a path behind him, then turned around.

Behind him was...hmm...how could this be called.

A red, fluffy piece of clothing, white bag, fake moustache.

His hair was originally silver, so a white wig wasn't necessary.

There was someone standing with a more imposing posture than me, who was the closest person to Santa.

If that man were to stand in front of children, the children would burst into tears, carriages would stop, and dead old men would come back to life.

When that guy recognized me, he raised an eyebrow.

"Oh, it's Rudeus."

"Manager... why? Ariel-sama's place...?"

"You don't need to ask to know."

Was he too noisy and was kicked out?

Still, that doesn't matter.

It was something I had been expecting.

After that, Orsted said something I hadn't been able to guess.

"I came a bit late I guess. I'll be Santa Claus this year too."

Me and Sieg.

And then Orsted, we'd be a triple Santa.

Then, if three big grown-ups sneaked into a house, all the kids would notice it.

So, maybe I should be the reindeer again this year.

Tohoho...

In the end, I'd only be the support this year.

"Orsted-sama."

While I was thinking like that, Sieg stepped in front of me.

What does he plan to do...

I have a bad feeling about this.

Still, he started speaking before I had time to do anything.

And spouted useless stuff.

"If you want to be Santa...You will have to defeat us first!"

"Oh?"

Orsted's eyebrows twitched a bit when he heard that.

He was looking at us with a look that surpassed superiority.

He looked to be infuriated, but I knew better.

It was more of a 'So this is the entertainment I'll get this year' face.

In other words, Orsted was ready to go with this.

"Papa! Let's do this!"

Even though his thighs were trembling, probably from the cold, he smiled strongly at me.

He was telling me that no matter the enemy, we'd be able to get over it together.

If he looked at me like that, like hell I'd be able to pull away.

To be honest, I really want to pull away here, still, my pride as papa is at stake.

My pride might be irreparably tattered already, but I still want to keep it before it fades away.

Also, I was the one who had the idea of defeating the opponent first.

"Yeah!"

Let's do this.

This year I will be Santa.

I will be no reindeer, I will be Santa!

I will win that right, with my own hands, the right and qualification to be Santa!

"Alek."

"Yes!"

Hearing Orsted's call, Alec happily stepped forward.

His face was bright like that of a dog that was taken out to play.

Could it be...he also wants to be Santa...?

"Well then..."

It's two vs two.

We are evenly matched in numbers, but they are stronger.

I don't see a future where we win.

But my son standing besides me will give me courage.

Actually, I had thought that maybe the four of us could be Santa, but once we started, we couldn't back off.

"Let's go, Sieg!"

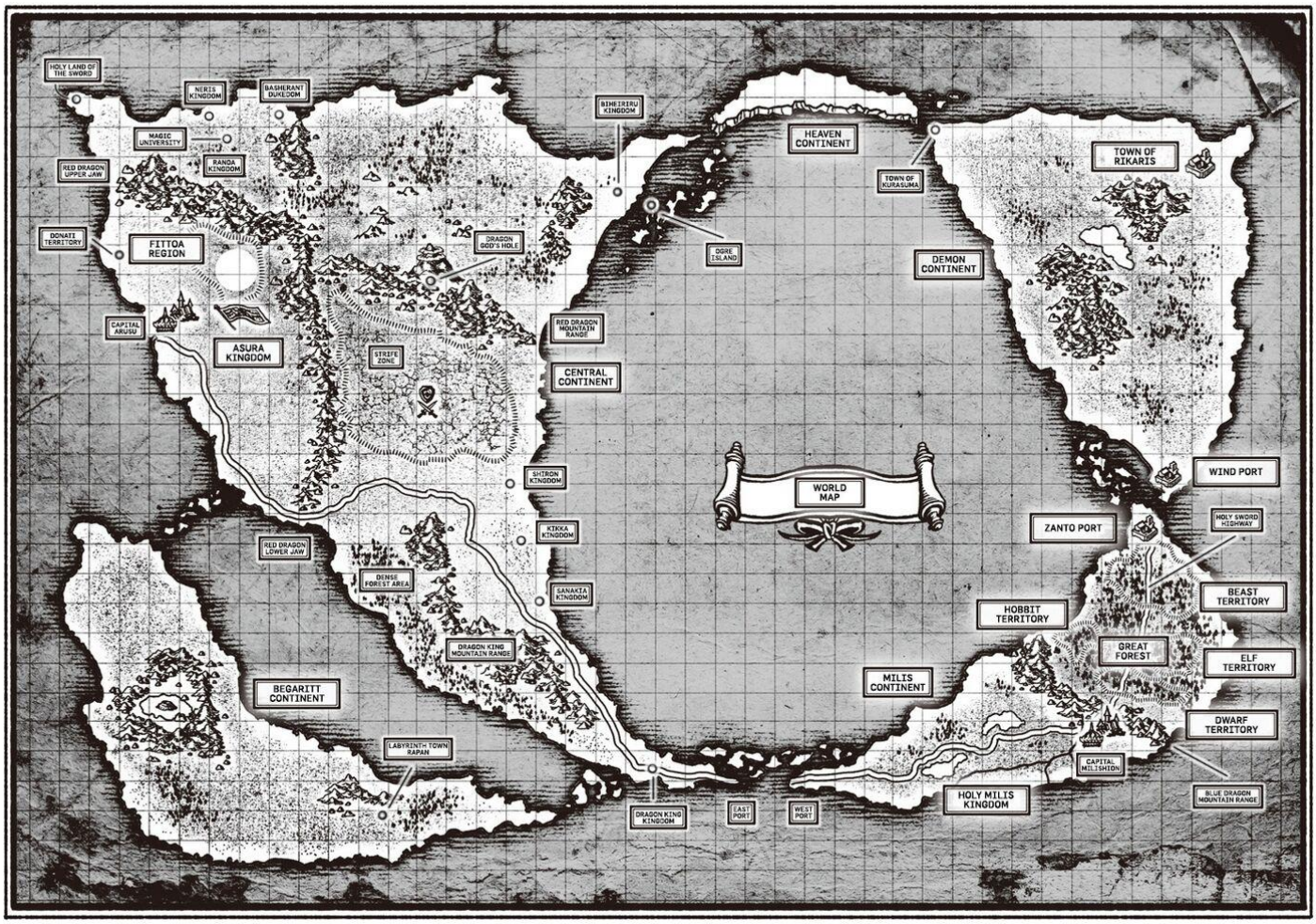
"Yes!"

At any rate, our Christmas has only just started——!

—

It goes without saying that the next day, the children's beds had four times the normal amount of presents.

This story is a fiction.

There's no Christmas in Mushoku Tensei.

{ C-Editor's note: Here is an artistic world map. ☻ }